Med Pearls

Research study

Guidelines on most innovative practices for the promotion and commercialisation of Sustainable Tourist Destinations

Title

Guidelines on most innovative practices for the promotion and commercialisation of sustainable tourist destinations

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Guidelines on most innovative practices for the promotion and commercialisation of sustainable tourist destinations

Manual

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Executive Summary

In present times, the change of global trends in marketing and the development of digital technologies—electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data, such as social media, online games and multimedia—represents an ideally unlimited source of opportunities for the promotion and marketing of tourist destinations.

Official institutions and private organisations focus on innovation, digital technologies and creativity to promote and commercialise a tourism destination. At the same time, on the demand side, the planning of a trip tends to take place almost totally, if not exclusively, online. This occurs, for instance, from the search for the destination to the first approach to the monuments to visit, or from hotel reservations and ticket purchases to the share of travel diaries and feedback on hotels and attractions.

Therefore, destination management organisations (DMOs) and destination management companies (DMCs) have a new way to promote products and destinations which is much more effective and less expensive than traditional off-line campaigns. Digital technology also provides them the opportunity to analyse the users' profiles, the modalities of interaction and the preferences to monitor and regularly boost the campaigns' effectiveness. Among other advantages, it is worth mentioning that online promotion and commercialisation can reach highly segmented targets. Here, it is also important to highlight that the new EU Programmes—such as the EU Recovery Plan and Next Generation EU—demonstrate clear attention towards online communication. In such a case, the creation and implementation of digital strategies align future projects with the new EU financial schemes.

However, we cannot talk about tourism digital marketing without addressing the importance of the online presence and reputation of companies and tourist destinations. The online experience is itself part of the tourist offering, as it communicates to the users (potential or former visitors) all the values of the destination's culture and emotions. Consequently, a good user online experience is perceived by tourists as a guarantee. This said, companies working in the tourism and travel industry should be continuously updated about the tools and strategies of tourism marketing to increase their visibility, involve and retain customers, and support users' knowledge acquisition. This manual provides guidelines and recommendations for small and emerging destinations to support them in the decision-making process related to their promotion and commercialisation.

These guidelines also consider the sectoral crisis due to COVID-19. The rules of social distancing imposed by the COVID-19 emergency have indeed strongly penalised many sectors that are based on human relations and on the reception of people. This crisis in some ways accelerates the adoption of new strategies in communication, which are necessarily based on online strategies. The recommendations of this document aim to

support the decision-making process of potential new tourist destinations about the implementation of effective digital marketing.

Recommendations are based on a qualitative analysis involving seven case studies which have been chosen for their uniqueness and creativity in the use of digital technologies, and considering the characteristics and needs of the ENI CBC MED Med Pearls project. The common denominator throughout the case studies is the replicability of their practices to other potential tourist destinations. The case studies that have been analysed are the following:

- Six destinations which are successful in the fields of promotion and commercialisation:
    - Puglia: a region in southern Italy with an extended coastline, UNESCO sites and fascinating cultural and natural attractions. The authenticity and contact with the local culture is a boosted element within the overall tourist offering.
    - Portugal: a European country where medieval castles, charming historic towns, museums and beautiful beaches create endless opportunities for tourists. Urban tourism is very developed—Oporto, for instance, has often been awarded Best European Destination—but also the small rural communities have been the object of tourist enhancement. The country, in general, offers a great value for the money.
    - Galicia: one of the most attractive regions of Spain, bordering Asturias, Castile and León and Portugal. Among green valleys, beautiful landscapes and a wonderful coastline bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, tourists find here a destination structured around typical products, religion (Camino de Santiago), culture and nature.
    - Cape Town: the most visited and lively city in South Africa. One of its most attractive features is the dual personality—European, for its cultural origins, but at the same time deeply African. Founded by Dutch settlers (1652), the so-called 'mother city' offers many hotspots for visitors, from the Waterfront, a former abandoned port that now teems with restaurants, museums and shopping centres, to the iconic Table Mountain and the Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens, vineyards, trekking routes and lovely fascinating beaches.
    - Thailand: a fascinating Asian country where tourist attractions range from visiting the lush jungle to contact with monks in Buddhist temples; from heavenly beaches to tastings of typical cuisine; and the sense of hospitality of the local population. Thailand has been a tourist destination in international rankings for a long time. Now it is investing massively in digital marketing and in the ability to recreate its brand based on a newfound authenticity.
    - The Faroe Islands: an archipelago belonging to the Kingdom of Denmark, that comprises 18 volcanic islands. An ideal slow tourism destination for travellers wishing to experience a holiday in the open air, where the pace of the day is marked by hiking in nature, walking along scenic trails and many opportunities of contact with the local culture.

- One organisation acting as a DMC:
  Zaytoun is a valuable case of general interest in the use of innovative practices. It is a non-profit organisation established to support Palestinian farming communities by helping the internationalisation of olive oil products. Recently the organisation started to act as DMC, implementing innovative practices of promotion, particularly at the time of COVID-19.

At the beginning the qualitative research aims at exploring the above-mentioned case studies. Informational and image sourcing was collected from web searches related to DMOs and DMCs. The result in the first part of the manual is dedicated to the description of the case studies. The practices used and related methodologies are summarised in a systematic way. In detail, much attention is dedicated to identifying the online strategies, digital tools, practices and aspects of each digital marketing initiative. The illustration of each case study ends with a table reprising the main practices, instruments and methodologies implemented by DMOs and DMCs.

Furthermore, the most recurrent and successful practices that emerged from the case studies have been taken as a reference for recommendations and guidelines. Finally, details are summarised in eight fact sheets, which help readers develop their marketing strategies, particularly in small destinations and slow-tourism products.

Case Studies

Puglia

Introduction

Puglia has always been one of the most attractive Italian regions, particularly for coastal tourism. Its geomorphological characteristics (longest coastline among Italian mainland regions) have favoured over time the development of a traditional "3S" tourism (sand, sun and sea). Nevertheless, in recent years the tourism development strategy has been revised and improved, with profound repercussions on the structuring of the tourist offering. The main characteristic of the new approach is differentiation and aggregation, transforming a poorly structured and generalist offering into a supply of demand-oriented products. The cultural traits of the region were the main aspects boosted in this process, in order to structure and promote a slow-tourism model. Digital marketing was involved in this process of rebranding by investing in innovative and collaborative practices for both the private and public sector.

Strategy and most innovative practices

The communication related to the promotion of the Puglia region as a tourist destination aims at commercialising the following tourist offerings:

- Art and culture
- Business (tourism related to meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, that is MICE tourism)
- Food and wine
- Events and entertainment
- Sea
- Nature, sport and wellness
- Tradition and spirituality

The engaging online promotion is based on the use of an official website as the main landing platform and completed by the use of different social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The content is varied, reflecting a strategy that uses culture as a basic element of development and management of the destination. In fact, the communication channels mainly enhance both tangible and intangible cultural elements through pictures, videos and text, ranging from music to gastronomy, from architecture to history, from nature to folklore (Figure 1). The main practice used is storytelling, emphasising the authenticity of the places and their inhabitants.
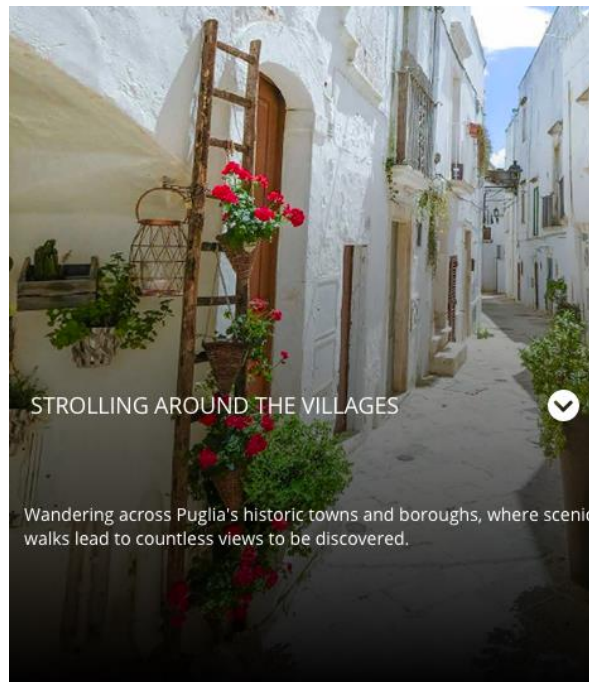
Figure 1. A section dedicated to tangible and intangible heritage, such as landscape and traditional urban setting.
Source: https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/cam/27/en/Historic-villages

Among the various sections of the website, particularly engaging for users is the section called "A Day in Casa Puglia" (https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/espe/212/en/A-Day-in-Casa-Puglia). It provides users with the opportunity to spend a day in Puglia virtually. This practice can be considered a good way to maintain the loyalty of the customer, as he/she can keep interacting with the destination even after the visit, and it can also be considered a good way to provide users with a taste of the destinations, particularly in a situation of travel impossibility, as is happening during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The link to Casa Puglia in the homepage of the landing site.

The day virtually created in "A Day in Casa Puglia" is mainly marked by the sequence of the main meals, so the gastronomic traditions are introduced. But the storytelling is built beyond gastronomy, and—along this virtual day in Puglia—the user enters into contact with local artists, museums and local radio stations, thanks to the link to YouTube channels, podcasts, local radio websites and Facebook pages.

Casa Puglia later became the title of a web series accessible from the official Facebook page of the destination. The web series reflects the content and aims of the website's section, that is, culture and daily life in Puglia (gastronomy, music, etc., Figures 3, 4 and 5).
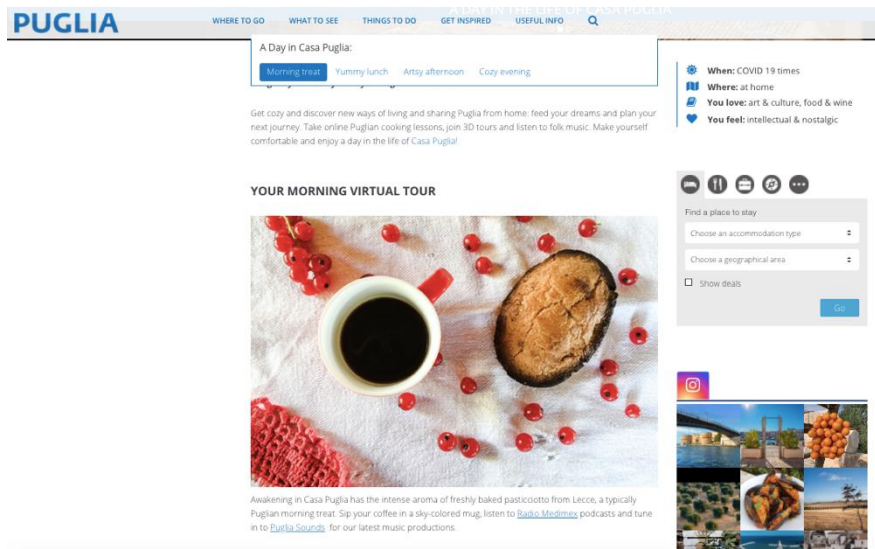
Figure 3. The user engages in a virtual day in Puglia through its gastronomic traditions during different moments of the day.
Source: https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/espe/212/en/A-Day-in-Casa-Puglia
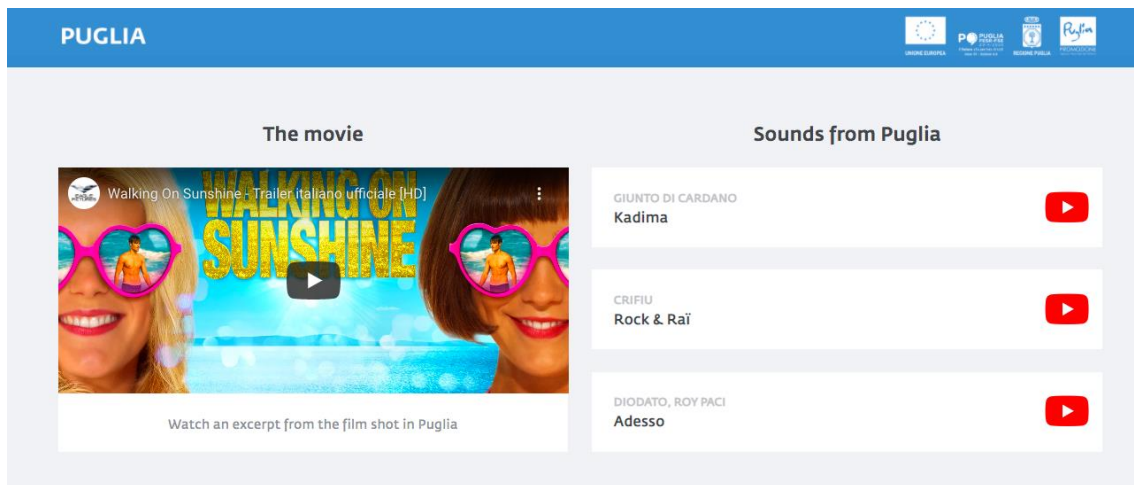
Figure 4. Links to YouTube channels, podcasts and local radio stations to provide a taste of local culture to the user.

Figure 5. Web series *Casa Puglia*.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/watch/weareinpuglia/580701546178170

Another practice to be mentioned is the massive use of 3D virtual tours. They are also supported by a partnership with the Bari Polytechnic Institute.

Customer interaction is constantly stimulated to encourage online (hashtag) and offline word of mouth (Figure 6).

SHARE YOUR PUGLIA WITH US

SHARE YOUR HOLIDAY PICS AND VIDEOS AT #WEAREINPUGLIA

TRY DELICIOUS APULIAN CUISINE AND SHARE YOUR FOOD STORIES WITH US AT #PUGLIAFORFOODIES

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING AT #PUGLIAEVENTS

Figure 6. Practices promoting online word of mouth.

Another initiative, both online and offline, is also related to the COVID-19 crisis and aims to minimise the problem of seasonality. This is a digital cultural-tourist agenda that is available on the official tourism website. In such a case, all the activities are promoted throughout the whole year (Figure 7).
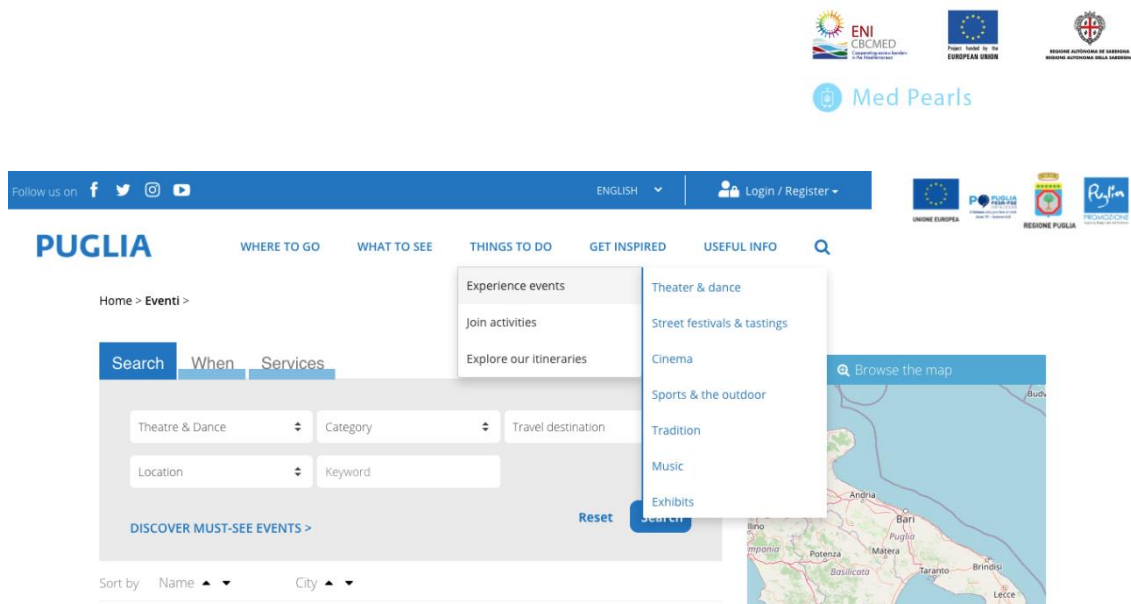
Figure 7. Cultural agenda in several languages.
Source: https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/eventi/en

Moreover, it is also worth mentioning the proposal of the innovative inter-regional partnership between Apulia and Lombardy (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The institutional Puglia tourism webpage announcing the partnership Puglia&Lombardia and campaign #doubleyourjourney.
Source: https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it

The agreement signed by the two regions was officially presented during BIT International Travel Exhibition in 2018 and aims to outline and implement a joint plan for tourist promotion, an improved quality of the tourist products and a fight against seasonality (https://www.vivibari.com/turismo-accordo-puglia-lombardia). The two destinations are promoted in a joint manner. The joint communication campaign "Puglia & Lombardia #DOUBLEYOURJOURNEY" is conveyed on the respective digital channels, as well as with important initiatives in Italy and abroad.

The official page of the tourism promotion provides users with statistics about users' interaction. From those data, it is easy to notice the effectiveness of the campaign, as users from Lombardy are among the highest number of users (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Users' interaction on 18/11/2020, 10:20pm (GMT+1).
Source: https://stats.innova.puglia.it

However, it is important to note that the agreement for the online promotion seemed to be just to promote the official website, because in other online channels there is no mention of this partnership. Joint offline promotion events, for example, include Apulian and Lombard musical performances, cooking demonstrations and tastings of the delicacies of both regions.

Finally, the platform provides "buyers enablement content", consisting of additional information to support and inform the decision-making process related to the purchase (Figure 10).
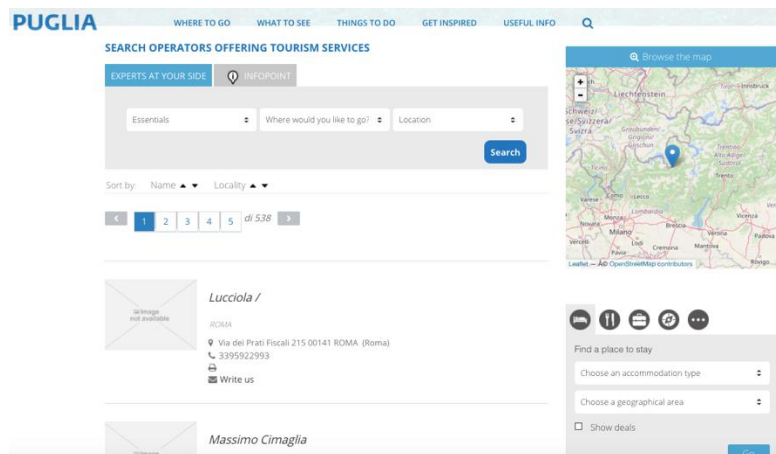
Figure 10. Buyers enablement content. Source:
https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/extratempolibero.do?r002=extraTempoLibero

Actors involved
Besides classic offline practice for the promotion of the destination (exhibitions, familiarisation trips, press trips, etc.), the Puglia region is promoted and commercialised online by both the public and private sectors. In the first case, as discussed in the previous section, the main platform is the official website, which then leads to a series

of other communication channels, in particular social networks, promoting multimedia content and stimulating interaction with the user.

On the other side, the private sector mostly uses traditional websites, with the discreet use of social networks. There is a strong coherence between the destination's characteristic features promoted by the public and the private sectors. Emphasis is given to cultural aspects, highlighting the potential of the region for slow tourism (e.g. cycling, food and wine tourism, cultural tourism and visits to villages with workshops about traditional activities).

Destination marketing organisations (DMOs)
The institutional promotion of Puglia as a tourist destination appears on the official tourism portal www.viaggiareinpuglia.it. The online portal, published in six different languages, offers several ways to engage with the destination. It is possible to download specialised apps for Visit Puglia and to create a personalised online experience, as well as to purchase tourist products online (Figure 11).
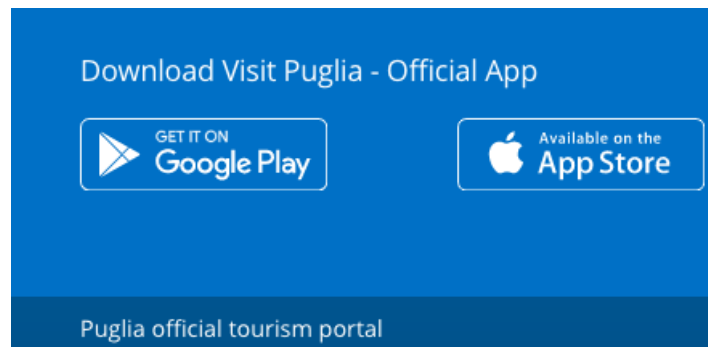
Figure 11. Official apps from the landing page of the official portal.

The portal also explores the potential of digital gamification, that is, "the use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals" (Burke, 2014). The main purpose in this case is to create traffic and innovative tourist experiences, and the main targets are young travellers and families. In this sense, a "game" allows users to enjoy and discover "your Puglia", creating in the customer a sense of ownership and belonging (Figure 12). It is important to note that, according to the latest studies, successful gamification applications generate customer acquisition and retention (Goasduff, 2020).
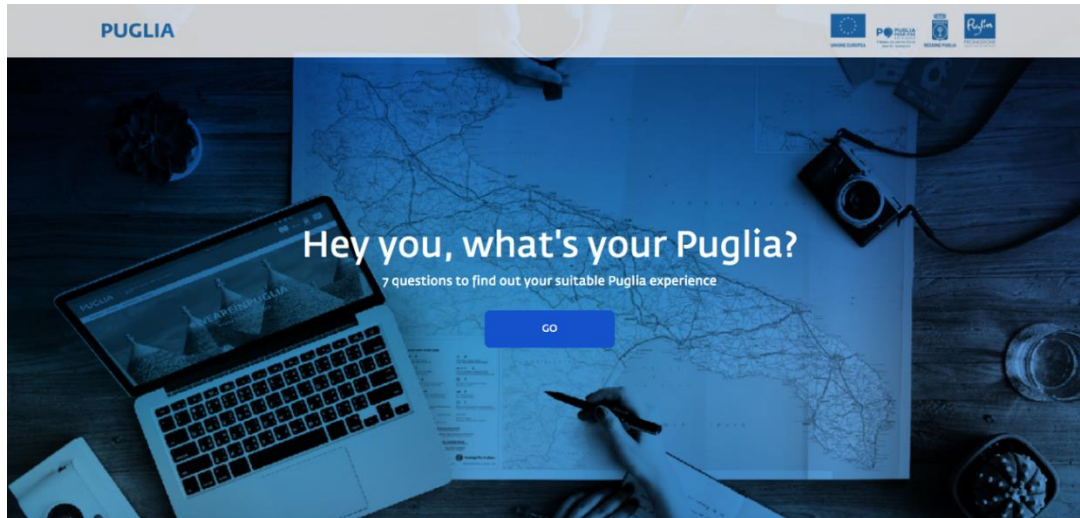
Figure 12. Gamification of tourist destination promotion.

In this case, the page proposes a game/test through which the user, after a series of questions presented in a *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* style (Figure 13), defines his or her profile as a tourist and, based on it, specific locations within the destination are proposed, as well as specific gastronomy, etc. (Figures 14, 15 and 16).
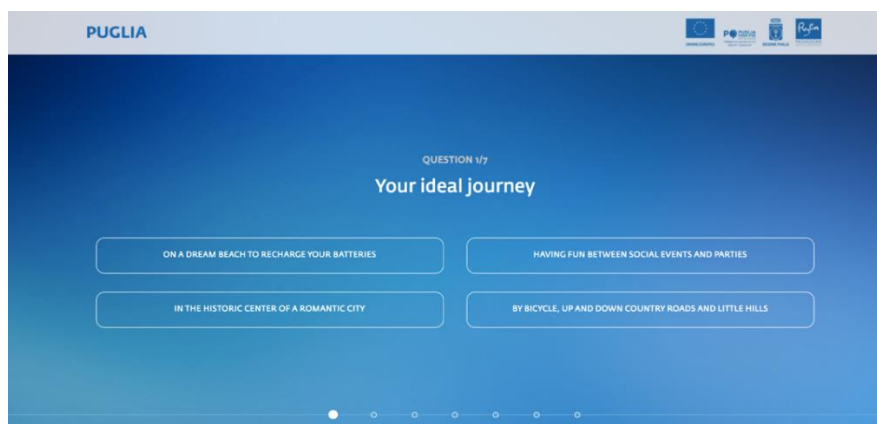
Figure 13. Questions presented in a *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* style.
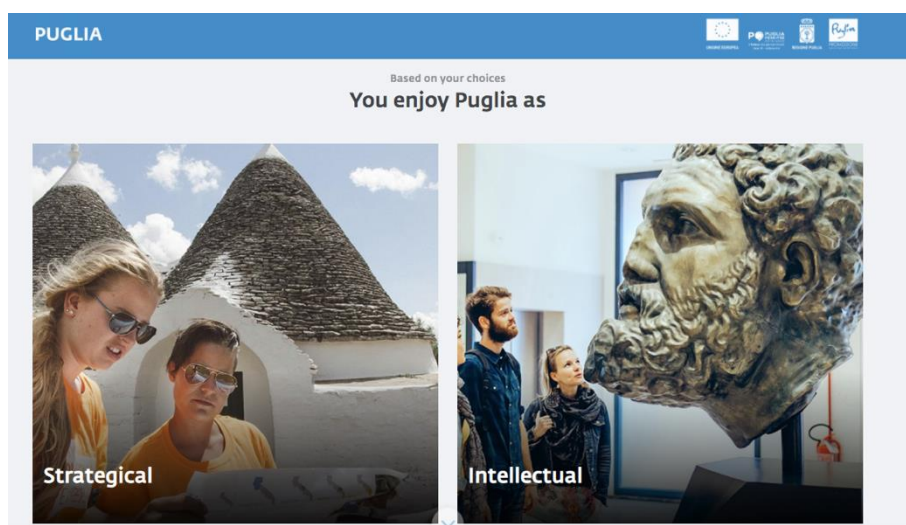
Figure 14. Graphic design to present the result of the game.
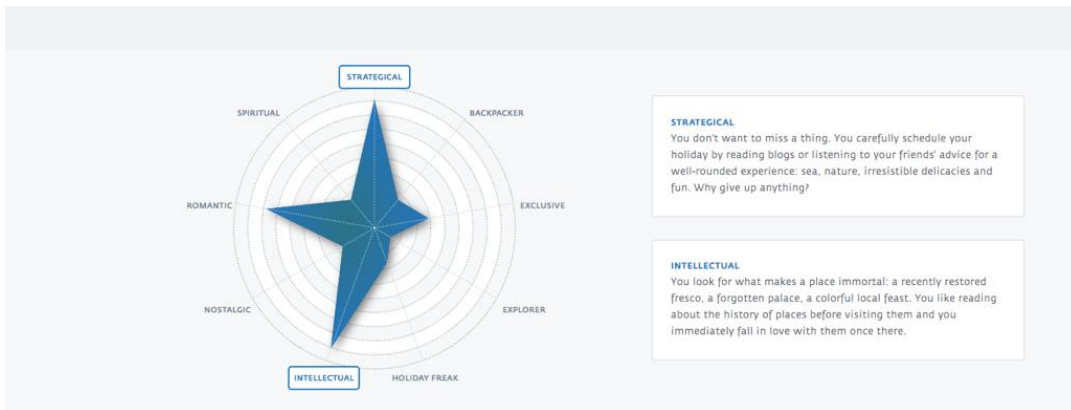
Figure 15. Graphic design to present the result of the game.

Figure 16. Itineraries chosen by the game based on the result of the test.

The game is programmed to be compatible with different devices (Figure 17).
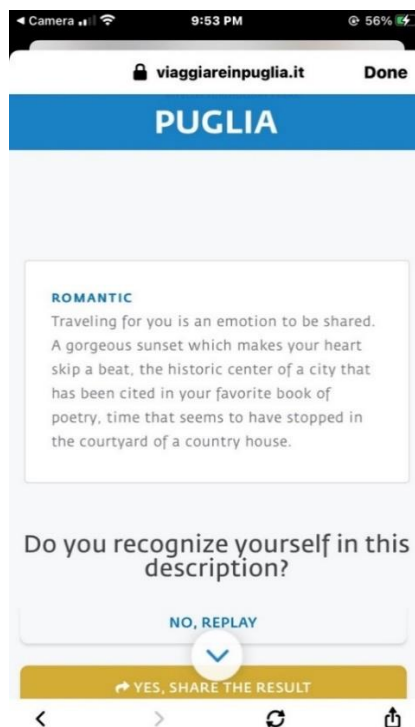
Figure 17. Design for smartphone.

The Regional Tourism Board PUGLIAPROMOZIONE is the operational apparatus for the implementation of the Region of Puglia's policies on the promotion of the unitary image of the region and local tourism promotion; it acts as a not-for-profit DMO and provides online and offline destination expertise.

From the strategic point of view, the DMO promotes several public–private partnerships (PPPs) and agreements for consistent marketing of the region. Among them, another important cooperation agreement for coordinated promotion and marketing of Puglia's tourist products was established between the Regional Agency for Tourism Promotion and the following trade associations: *Confcommercio Puglia*, *Confindustria Puglia* and *Confesercenti Puglia*. The main objective of this partnership is to structure a shared strategy for the promotion of tourism products in the context of the overall framework promotion of the Puglia brand, paying particular attention to online initiatives[1]. In this sense, one practice adopted by the destination is the use of a destination management system (DMS).

A DMS is an integrated digital system that provides complete and up-to-date information on a particular tourist destination. It handles both the pre-trip and post-arrival information, as well as integrating availability and booking services. It is used for the collection, storage, manipulation and distribution of tourism information as well as for the transaction of reservations and other commercial activities (Kanellopoulos, 2009).

PUGLIA DMS[2] is thus dedicated to management and promotion of regional tourism and culture. The portal promotes the commercialisation of local tourist services, based on a DMS that gathers local online operators. The platform provides users and B2B buyers with the opportunity to engage and interact with a constantly growing network. The latter comprises local tour operators, hotels and different types of accommodations.

Particularly innovative is the SPOT system (since February 19th, 2020, SPOT-online), which guarantees accommodation facilities to be visible and commercialised (both to individuals and B2B) and at the same time represents a form of monitoring the tourist presence in the region (Figure 18).

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[1] https://www.dms.puglia.it/portal/documents/10180/775975/Accordo%20quadro%20Distretto.pdf

[2] http://www.dms.puglia.it/

Figure 18. PUGLIA DMS's website. Source: https://iam.dms.puglia.it

This system also highlights the strong presence of the destination in social networks, where a value co-creation process is stimulated (Figures 19 and 20).
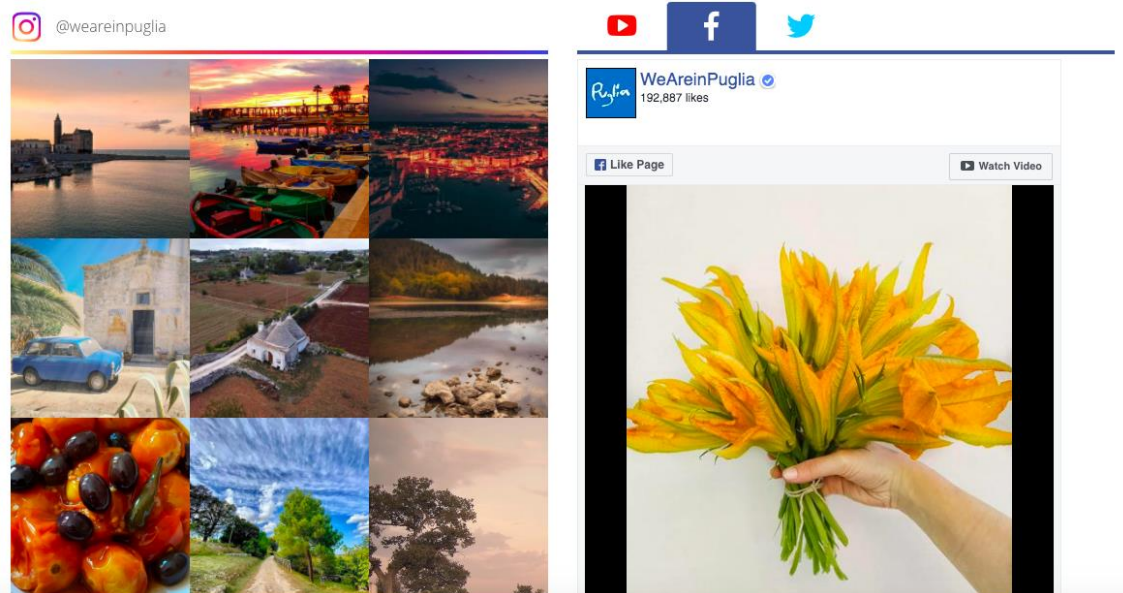
Figure 19. Massive use of social network to engage with customers and potential visitors, and to stimulate a value co-creation process.

In this context, the creation of different hashtags guarantees consistency in the process of online word of mouth.

SHARE YOUR PUGLIA WITH US
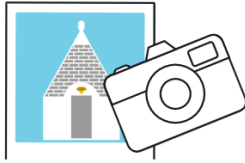
SHARE YOUR HOLIDAY PICS AND VIDEOS AT **#WEAREINPUGLIA**

TRY DELICIOUS APULIAN CUISINE AND SHARE YOUR FOOD STORIES WITH US AT **#PUGLIAFORFOODIES**

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING AT **#PUGLIAEVENTS**

Figure 20. Hashtag to guarantee consistency in the value co-creation process. Source: https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/hp/en

Destination management companies (DMCs)

Local and international DMCs, in line with the regional strategic directions for tourism development, offer tourist products based on slow-tourism principles, authenticity and culture, through engaging digital marketing (Figures 21 and 22).
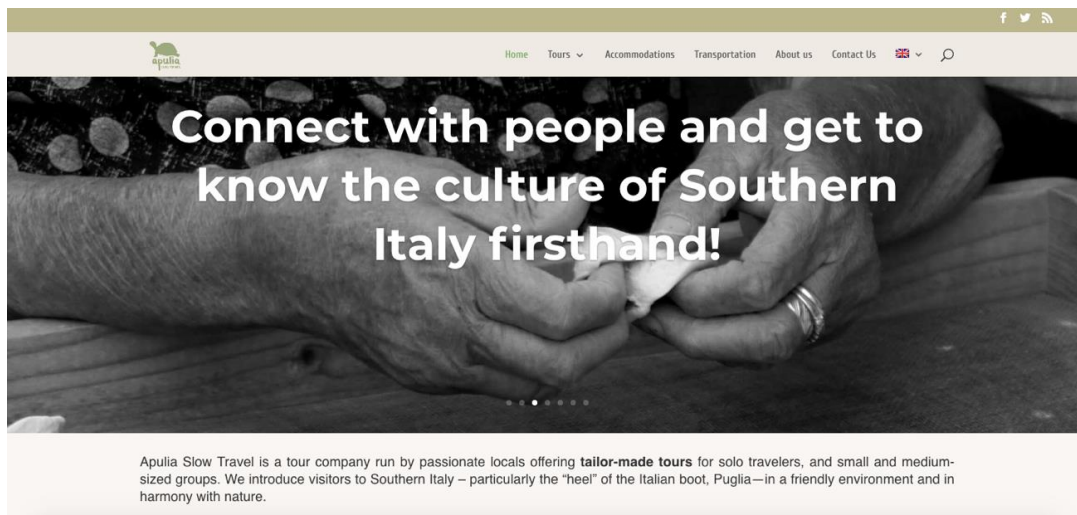
Figure 21. Online promotion of slow-tourism-based offering by a local DMC. Source: https://www.apuliaslowtravel.com
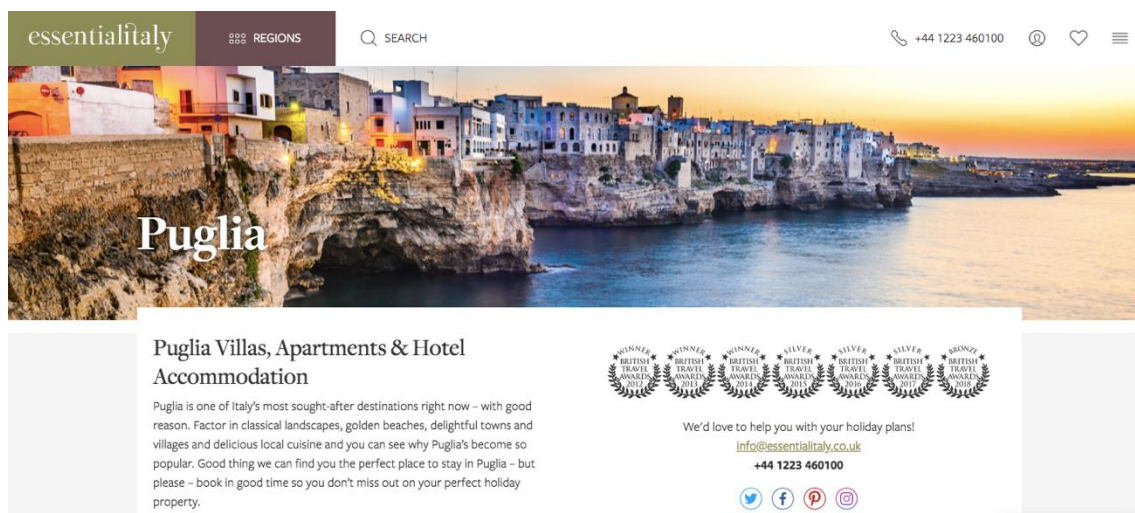
Figure 22. English DMC commercialising traditional accommodation in Puglia. Source: https://www.essentialitaly.co.uk/puglia

Several local DMCs propose experiences based on "slow tourism, which allows guests to experience directly the reality of the place they are visiting, fully in touch with local culture and connecting with local people."[3] The company's website offers detailed information about a vast number of sites (culture, traditional activities, natural heritage, etc.) as well as the possibility to engage with the page to create tailor-made tours (Figure 23).
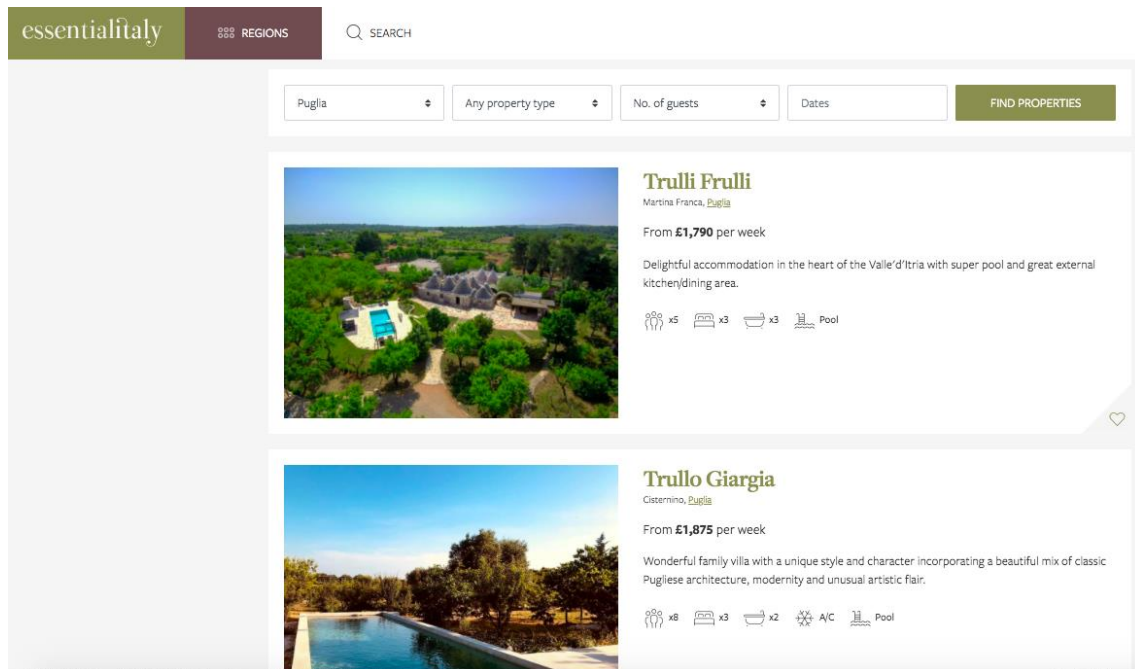
Figure 23. Tailor-made tours.
Source: https://www.essentialitaly.co.uk/puglia

The user is assisted in the process by feedback from previous buyers (Figure 24), in a "value co-creation process" (Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli, 2013).

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[3] https://www.apuliaslowtravel.com/about_us/
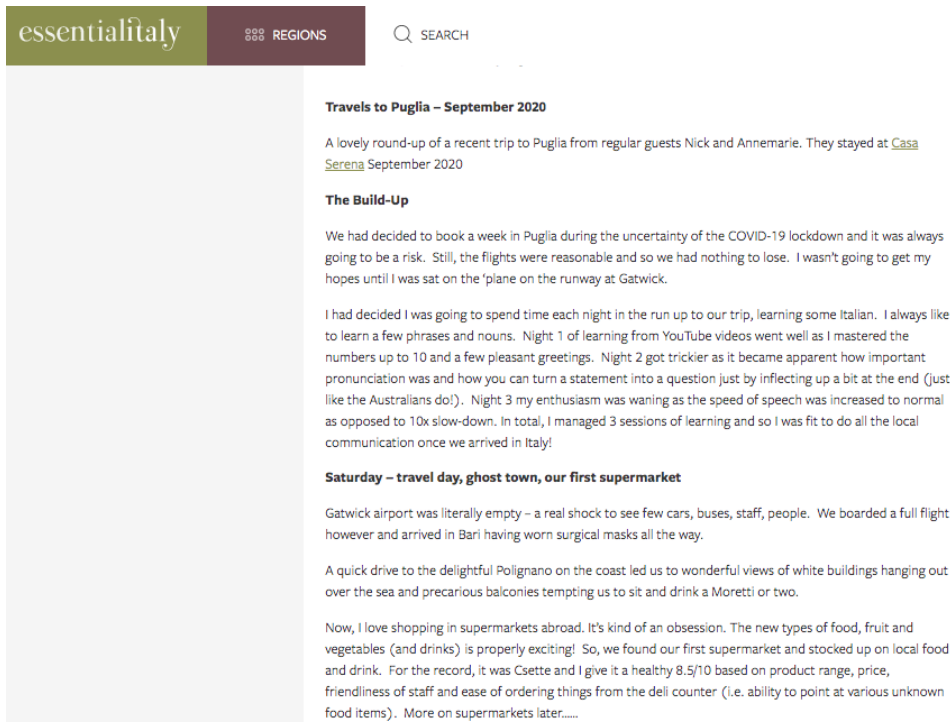
Figure 24. Experiences of travel shared in the blog of the company.
Source: https://www.essentialitaly.co.uk/blog/september-in-puglia

Here, it is also important to mention the support given by the public sector to the private one. Figure 25 shows the section of the institutional tourism website promoting local operators, made through the official institutional website.
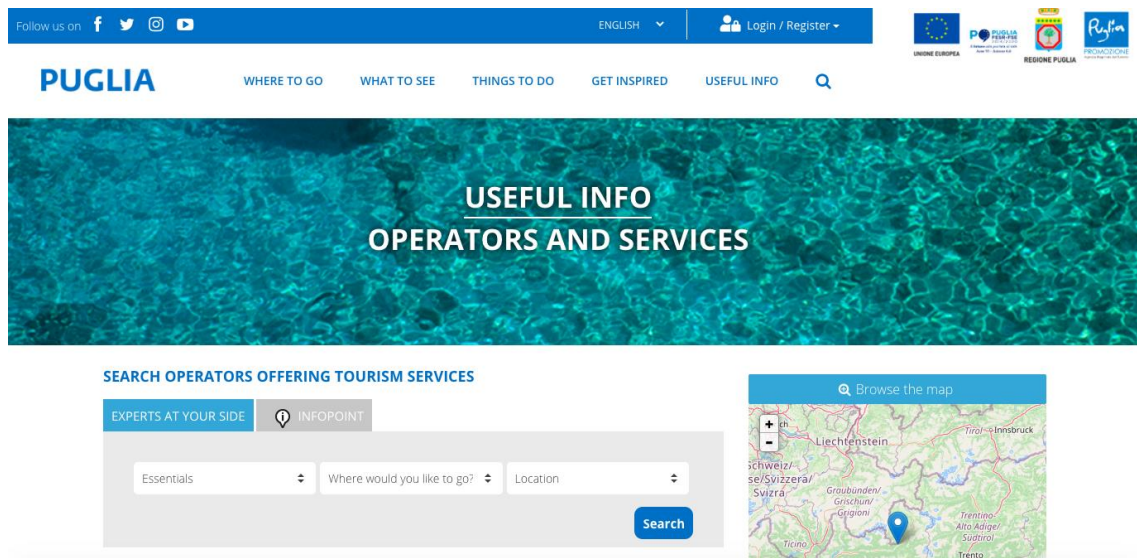
Figure 25. "Useful Info" section of the institutional website promoting local tourism service companies.

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Summary table

Puglia (Italy)	
Online and offline promotional channels	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal.
Elements used in their strategy	Networks at different scales; storytelling for local stories and authenticity; collaborative practices; combatting of seasonality (e.g. online cultural agenda).
Promoters	Public; private; PPP.
List of practices	Gamification; DMS; digital word of mouth; low-season agenda; co-creation.

Portugal

Introduction

Portugal began its positioning process as an international tourist destination in the late 1990s. There were two key moments in this sense: the realisation of Expo98 Lisbon in 1998 and the EURO2004 championships, both hosted by the country. Since then the image and quality of the tourist offering of the country have been the subject of a great work of improvement. Today Portugal is an award-winning international destination with a diversified offering.

It is important to note that the national tourism development policies have been created in line with the policies of repopulation of the inner areas of the country, and the rehabilitation of the historical centres. This has led to the development of tourism activity heavily based on the principle of sustainability and on the authenticity of the tourist experience in both urban and rural environments.

Strategy and most innovative practices

"Visit Portugal" is the official, institutional web resource for travel and tourism to Portugal, and it is based on the integrated use of the following platforms:

- (websites)
    - Visit Portugal (main)
    - Portuguese Trails
    - Portuguese Greens
    - Portugal Golf Booking
    - Living in Portugal
    - Portuguese Music Festivals
    - Can't Skip Portugal
    - Can't Skip Facts
    - Portuguese Waves

- (social networks)
    - Facebook
    - Twitter
    - Instagram
    - Pinterest
    - LinkedIn

The national strategic plan for tourism development in Portugal defines the main features of the destination to be promoted: cultural heritage, nature, weather, traditions (religious tourism), gastronomy and so on (Figure 26).

Figure 26. Landing page of the institutional Portugal tourism website.
Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en

Content is consistently related to:
- *unique assets:*
    - people and communities;
- *differentiating assets:*
    - weather and brightness,
    - history,
    - culture and identity,
    - sea,
    - nature,
    - water;
- *qualifier assets*:
    - gastronomy and wines,
    - artistic and cultural events,
    - sports and business;
- *emerging assets*:
    - well-being and living,
    - promotion of second-home tourism in Portugal.

The institutional promotion and commercialisation online (see next section for further details) is based on the stages of the product acquisition process, experience and post-purchase, namely:
1. dreaming;
2. planning;
3. booking;

4. experiencing;
5. sharing.

Turismo de Portugal provides reports containing data about digital marketing endeavours.

In order to strengthen the destination's international reputation and contribute to the conversion of the country's promotional activity into sales in the selected target markets, Portugal focuses its efforts on:

1. International online advertising campaign
2. Presence of Portugal as a destination in international markets

The campaign #CantSkipPortugal (2017–2020) launched a new way of planning a trip through emotion-based itineraries (Figure 27).
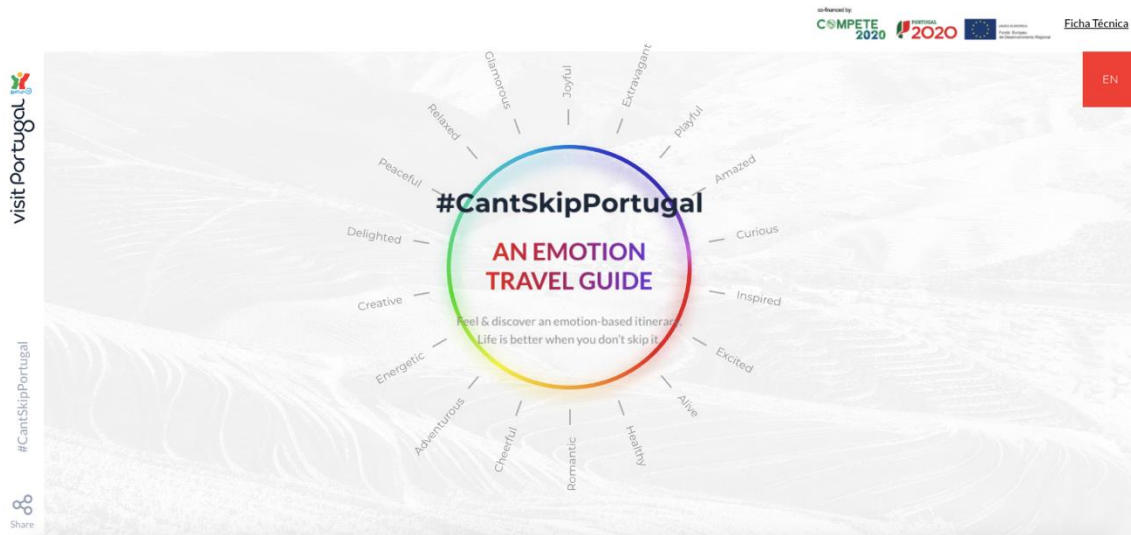
Figure 27. #CantSkipPortugal Campaign, an innovative emotion-based tourist offering. Source: https://cantskipportugal.com/en

The user can select the option corresponding to his/her mood and/or state of mind that is meant to be reached through the travel, and the user is then redirected to a tourist offering in line with the selected feeling (Figure 28).
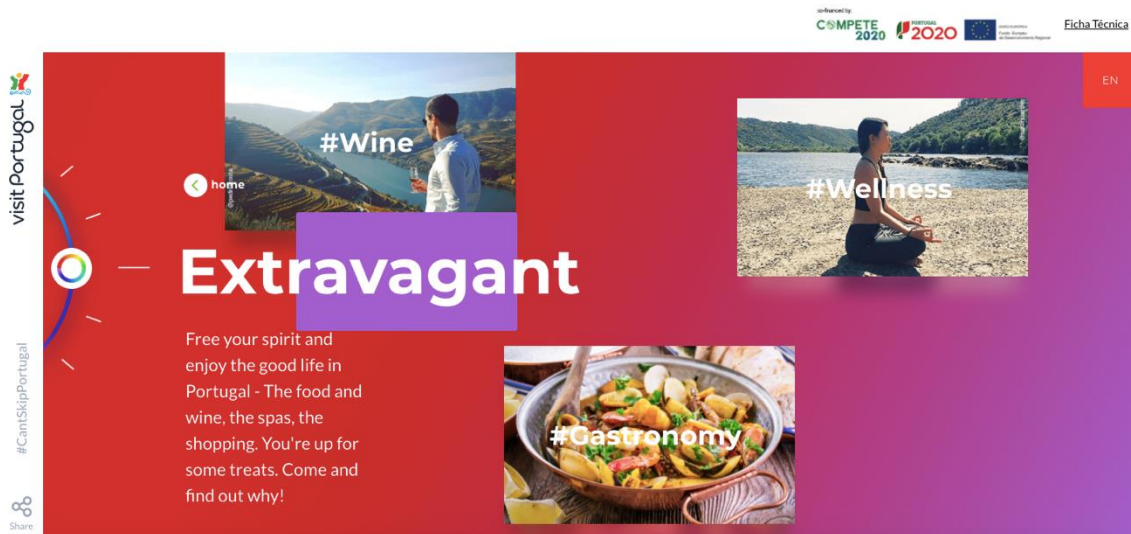
Figure 28. #CantSkipPortugal Campaign, selection of a specific option.

Finally, a campaign based on a PPP and titled *#TuPodes–Visita Muito Por Pouco* aims to stimulate domestic tourist demand in the low season and to respond to the COVID-19-induced crisis of the sector (Figure 29). This initiative by Turismo de Portugal counts on a budget of 50 million euros and is part of the Internal Demand Incentive Programme, promoted by the government to support tourism.

Figure 29. Image of the campaign *#TuPodes-Visita Muito por Pouco*.
Source: http://pressroom.visitportugal.com/en/2020/06/tupodesvisitaportugal

Hundreds of tourist and gastronomic experiences (promoted by tourist entertainment companies or organised by travel and tourism agencies), accommodation, museum visits and affordable rail travel will be available on the Visit Portugal website until December 2020, which may include discounts of up to 50%.

Online promotion is also based on paid placement in Google Search (in 11 languages) and on the use of Google Display (in eight languages), with contents related to family holidays, beach, sun, city break, nature, golf and surf, among others.

Actors involved

Portugal is promoted and commercialised online by both the public and private sector, by following the marketing strategy outlined above.

Destination marketing organisations (DMOs)

The institutional promotion of Portugal as a tourist destination counts on the official tourism portal visitportugal.com, published in 10 languages. The portal acts as a landing page providing information about the whole country by reflecting its institutional division in seven "tourist regions":

1. Porto and the North
2. Centre of Portugal
3. Lisbon
4. Alentejo
5. Algarve
6. Azores
7. Madeira

The marketing strategy, the design used, and the experience offered to the online user are consistent for all seven regions. Nevertheless, each region also promotes itself autonomously through different institutional pages (e.g. www.visitmadeira.pt , www.portoenorte.pt) and through companies specialised in Internet-related services and products in the hotel, lodging and meta search fields (Figure 30). Although there is some redundancy, this practice also allows smaller local actors to have an online presence.
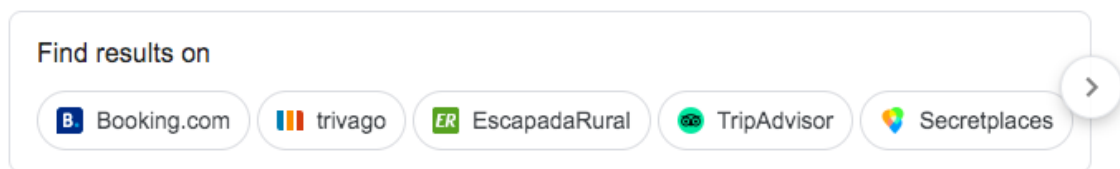
Figure 30. Google redirects users through the keywords *Alentejo tourism*

Digital marketing activities are organised around a structure following the process of decision making from the very beginning, following a well-defined flow (Figure 31).

Figure 31. The flow followed to build the digital marketing strategy.

Dreaming

A greater mix of media (Google Search and Display, YouTube, Facebook) is provided to users in order to "catch" users and potential visitors. The institutional page proposes, for instance, a landing page providing institutional information that is also immediately related, on the same page, with the memories of previous visitors, feeding the creation of the imagery about the destination in this first step in which the customer still has not decided about the purchase (Figure 32).
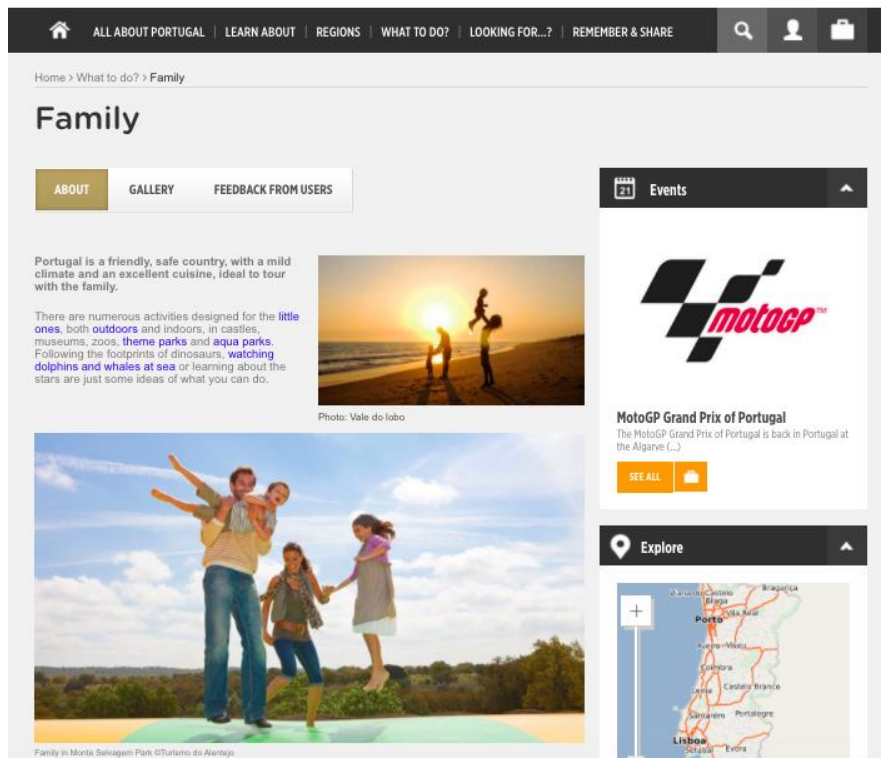
Figure 32. From the institutional Portugal tourism website.
Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en/experiencias/familia

The website also proposes a series of images as "postcards" and "wallpapers", as well as high-quality videos (Figure 33).
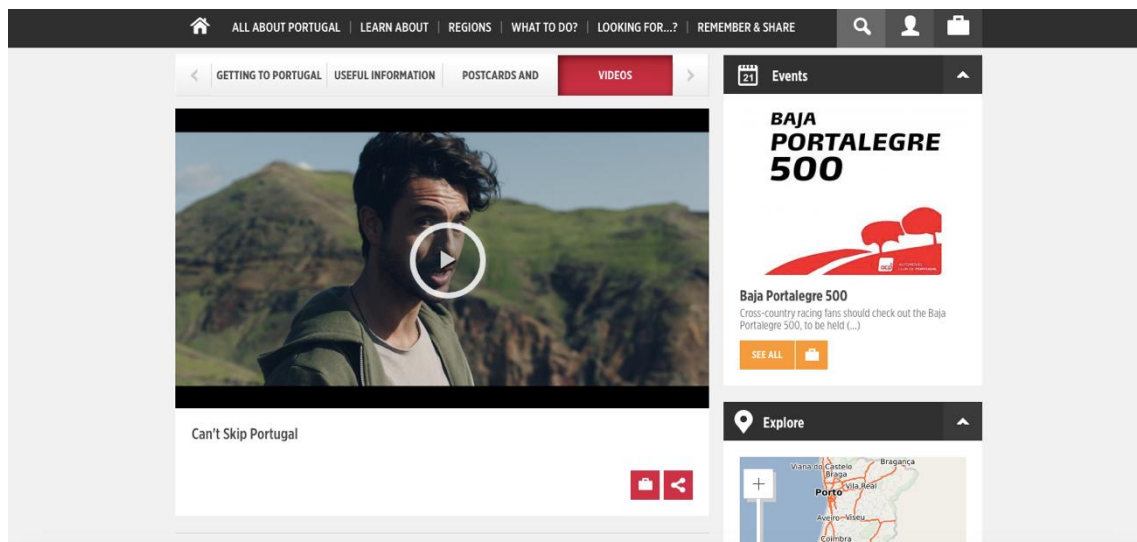
Figure 33. From the site visitportugal.com, section of postcards and videos.
Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en/sobre-portugal/videos

To further reinvigorate the image of the destination through storytelling and value co-creation, the site makes available to users a section titled "Remember & Share", containing pictures, videos and travel diaries uploaded by travellers (Figure 34).
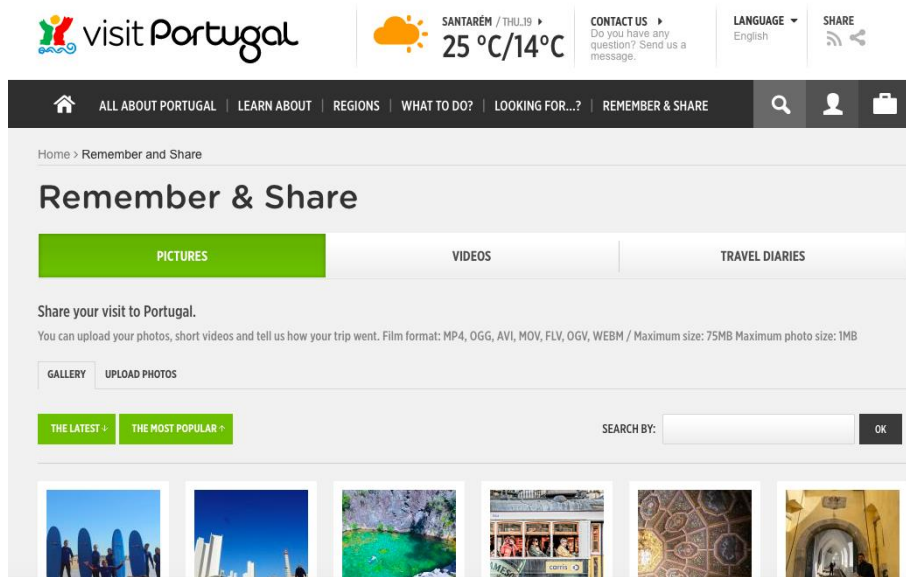
Figure 34. The section "Remember & Share". It gives several opportunities for the user to engage after, during and before the travel.
Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en/recordar-e-partilhar/imagens

Planning

The user is equally supported and accompanied in this phase through a "Trip Planner System". Within the site, each proposal (event, attraction, service) has an associated icon: a suitcase. By clicking on this icon, the user adds that specific place and/or service to a personal list, and by doing so he/she builds and plans a tailor-made trip. The different options can be marked. To have access to the service the user needs to log in to the platform, feeding a constantly updated marketing database (Figure 35).
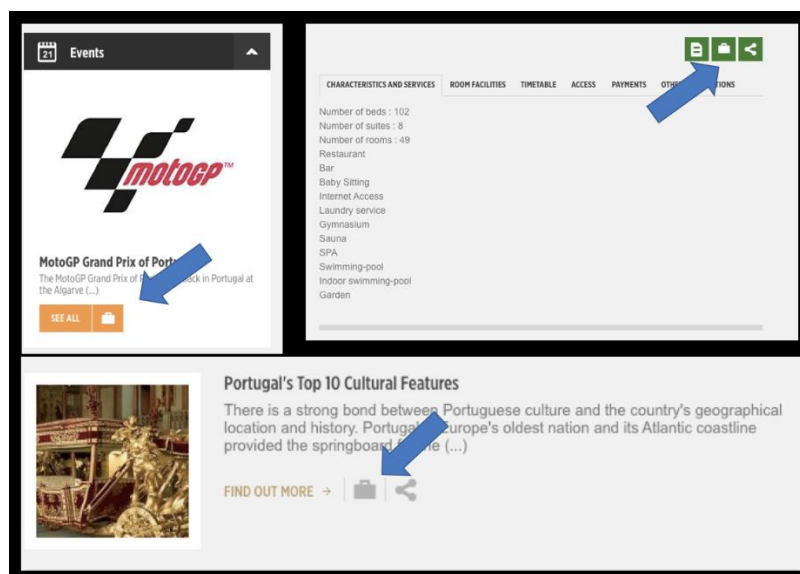
Figure 35. Different examples related to the Trip Planner System. The icon signifying where to click and select the offer is always associated with the services, events or attractions proposed.

Booking

The decision-making process ends with the acquisition of the product. The site encourages users in this sense by providing them with the possibility of acquiring services online, through an updated offer based on a DMS. The user can plan and book his/her trip directly from the institutional website Visit Portugal.

Experiencing

The user can also download directly from the site useful maps for the trip to Portugal. Another interesting service, among others, is a well-structured selection of useful phrases in Portuguese (Figures 36 and 37).
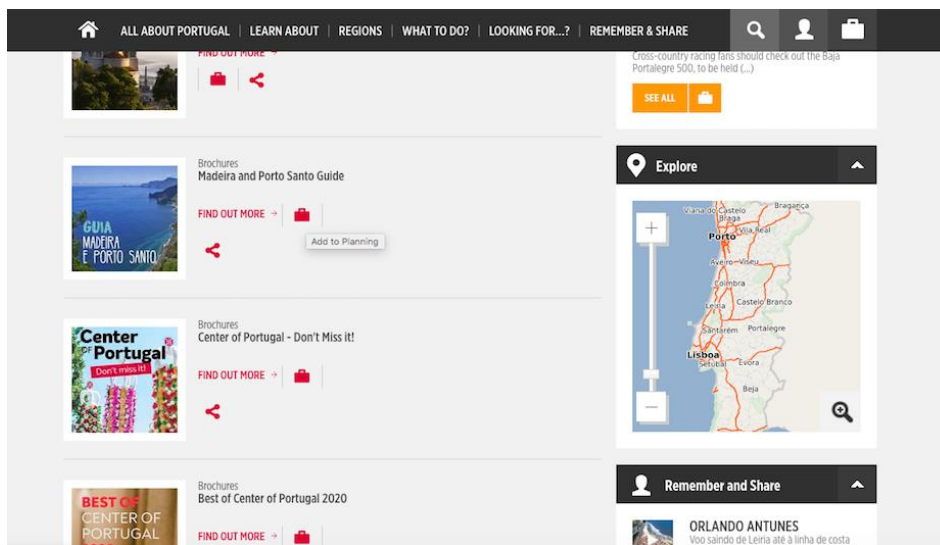
Figure 36. Maps of Portugal available for download.
Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en/sobre-portugal/mapas-e-brochuras
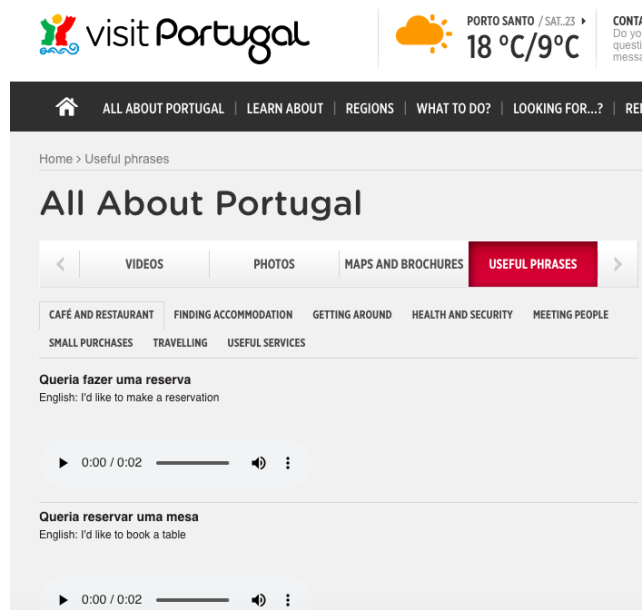
Figure 37. Selection of useful phrases (translation and audio file for correct pronunciation). Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en/sobre-portugal/frases-uteis

33

Sharing

The digital marketing strategy supports the customer in the post-purchase stage, generating fidelity among customers and promoting digital word of mouth and value co-creation. The practices implemented in this sense are the already mentioned travel diaries (Figure 38) and the possibilities to engage with each offer to leave memories and feedback by uploading pictures and videos. Such a practice stimulates what is known as "value co-creation process" (Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli, 2013).
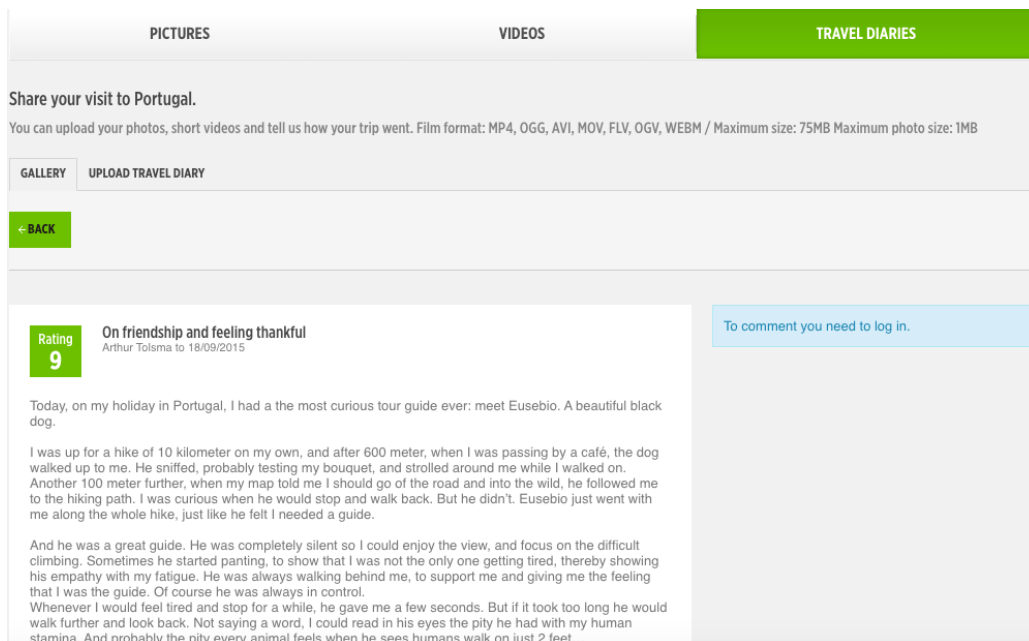
Figure 38. The section "Travel Diary", containing stories shared by travellers.

Furthermore, a selection of high-quality images is available as wallpapers for free download, with outstanding images of the destination that represent "digital memorabilia" (Figure 39) for visitors' everyday use (e.g. desktop background).
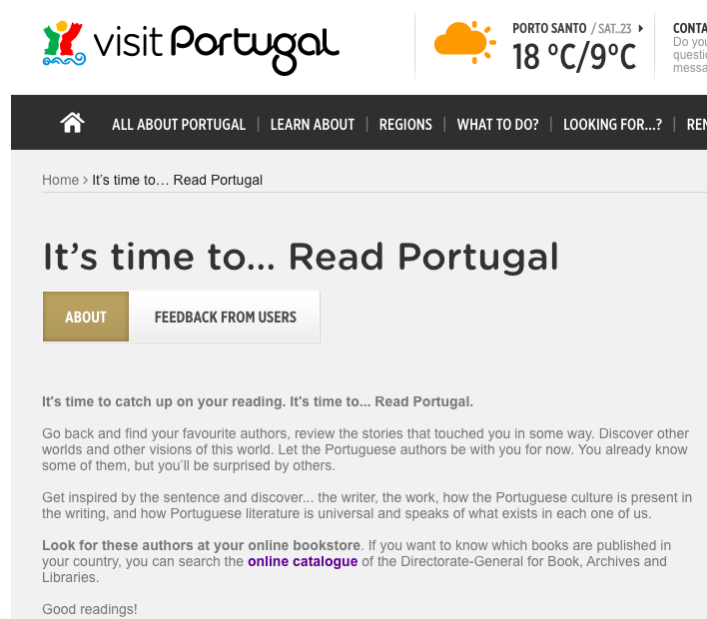
Figure 39. The section "Art and Heritage Online".

Destination Management Companies (DMCs)

Local and international DMCs have a very strong presence online, and they also use travel blogs and social networks. Despite their large number, the offer and the marketing approach is consistent with the institutional guidelines, which are reflected in the large use of images relating to the community, water (sea and rivers) and the weather, and on storytelling (Figures 40 and 41). Innovative methods of engagement are proposed, that go beyond the mere purchase of the tourist product.

Figure 40. The DMCs commercialise the product through images that are consistent with the institutional promotion (left); using storytelling as a hook for users (middle) and engagement that goes beyond mere commercialisation (right).
Source: https://portugalholidays.com
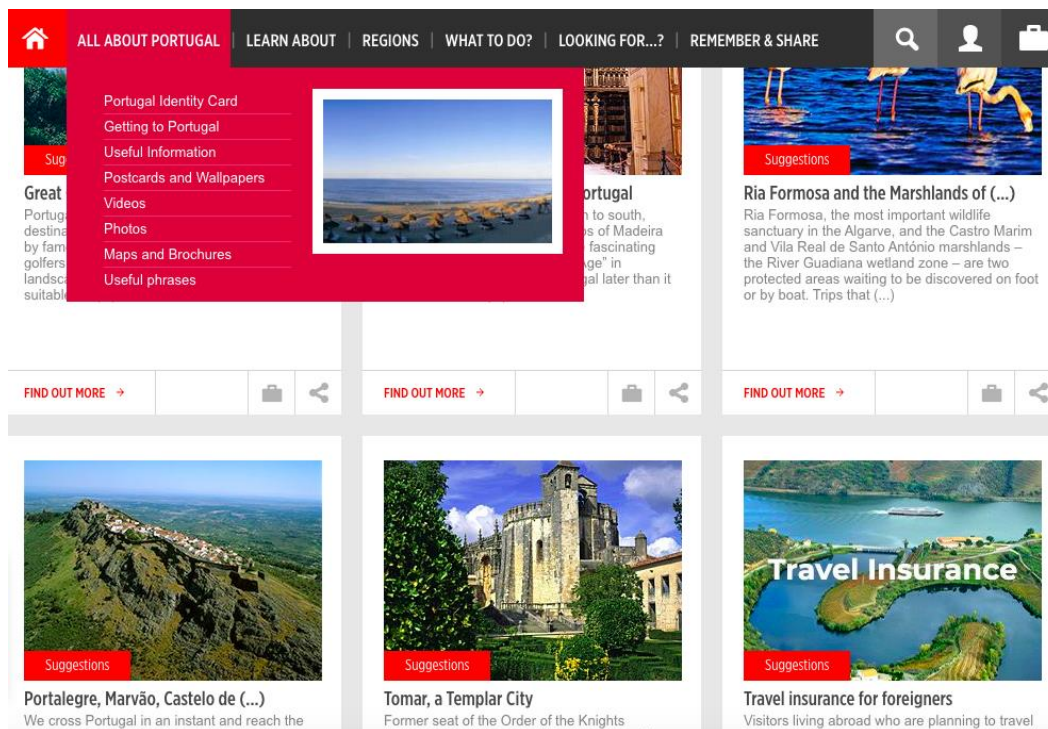
Figure 41. One more example of the recurrence of images related to water (sea and rivers), culture/community and weather.
Source: https://www.visitportugal.com/en

Summary table

Portugal	
Online and offline promotional channels	Traditional websites; "Visit Portugal", the official, institutional web resource based on the integrated use of webpages and social networks.
Content identification and analysis	Approach through different phases of the process of acquisition of the product, from the "dream" to post-purchase; storytelling, authenticity; collaborative practices.
Promoters	Public; private; PPP
List of practices	Social networking and value co-creation; DMS; trip planner system; travel diary; emotion-based itineraries; an incentive for domestic tourism (*Visita Muito Por Pouco* Campaign); and "Read Portugal and Art and Heritage" offered online mainly as a response to COVID-19, to experience the destination digitally.

Galicia

Introduction

Galicia (Spain) has been able to overcome climatic uncertainties through a complex tourism development strategy, towards the integration of cultural tourism and other tourism segments. Nautical sports such as sailing, windsurfing (but also surfing) and kitesurfing are part of the offering that has been created to relaunch the region, alongside the most traditional tourism segment of local attractiveness.

The region invests in the promotion of composite tourist-oriented products and regional networks, such as the regional network of MTB centres dedicated to Mountain Bike. The latter was created in order to boost visibility and attract specific touristic segments. The Camino de Santiago (Way of Santiago) (Figure 42) is massively explored as tourist infrastructure to which several tourist-oriented services are connected.

Figure 42. *Camino de Santiago*. Pilgrims.
Source: Google Earth

Strategy and most innovative practices

In recent years, *Turismo de Galicia* has sought to improve the status of Galicia as a tourist destination by promoting the natural, gastronomic and cultural resources of the Galician community through a consistent endeavour in the field of digital marketing. The development of the strategy and the implementation of the tools are mainly based on PPPs between the government and agencies specialised in digital commerce marketing, that involves "using digital marketing technology, techniques and channels—digital ads, email, search, mobile and social marketing along with data-driven insight and digital contents—to achieve revenue and profitability. It is a bigger and broader concept than e-commerce, and it includes the numerous channels, data inputs and content outputs and requires massive use of technology to orchestrate multichannel commerce experiences" (McLellan & Polk, 2014).

Actors involved

The Galician Tourism Agency carries out various operations. There is a strong link between the public and private sectors in all the promotional endeavours. From the

institutional website landing page, for example, it is possible to access sections dedicated to the creation of tailor-made packages where—as will be explained in more detail in the following sections—activities and local private offerings are promoted and commercialised.

Destination management companies (DMOs)
The autonomous government of Galicia promotes the region and commercialises its tourism products through the institutional tourism website of Galicia: https://www.turismo.gal.

Integrated digital promotion is thus based on the use of a website and several social networks. The official tourism website is connected with:
- a blog
- an institutional Facebook page
- an institutional Twitter account
- an institutional Instagram account
- a YouTube account

Augmented reality, high-quality multimedia content, 365-degree virtual experiences and gamification are some of the practices used to promote the destination online (Figure 43).
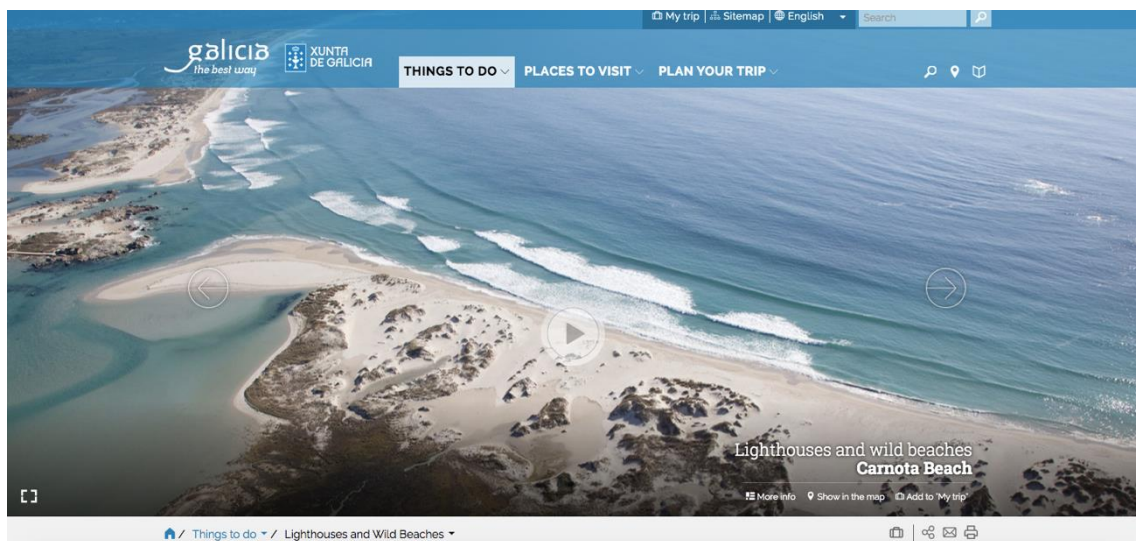
Figure 43. Official website of Tourism Galicia. Natural resources are promoted consistently with all other offerings, relying on storytelling (very effectively supported by a video and evocative music, in this case).
Source: https://www.turismo.gal/que-facer/faros-e-praias-salvaxes

Content is mainly aimed at promoting the authenticity of the destination and is strongly based on storytelling. The overall process reflects the marketing practice of revitalisation, by retargeting, relaunching and reinforcing (Billgren, 2020) the existent offerings. The main aim is to keep connected with consumers through the use of emotional inputs, such as the use of a smiling elder lady welcoming users on the landing page (Figure 44), which also recalls the perception of authenticity.

Figure 44. Landing page of the Galicia Tourism official website.
Source: https://www.turismo.gal

The way to create sales opportunities varies from social media campaigns and revitalisation actions, such as social media contests. A series of visual "challenges" is proposed to the public mainly via official social network pages, quizzes to test knowledge about the culture, lifestyle and traditions of Galicia (Figures 45, 46 and 47) or drawing contests on specific topics, such as autumn in Galicia. Thus, gamification is considered as an effective option for the promotion of the destination and an effective engagement with users for purposes of customer retention.

Figure 45. Turismo de Galicia. *Información Turística*'s **Facebook page.**
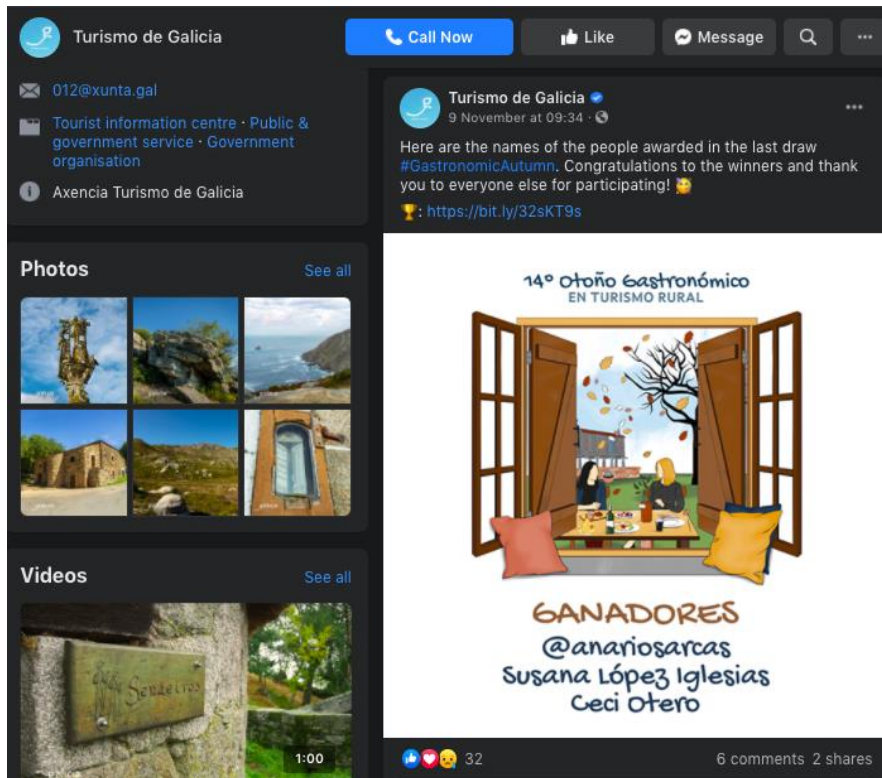
Figure 46. Turismo de Galicia. *Información Turística*'s Facebook page.

Figure 47. Main page of the contest launched by Turismo de Galicia, *Información Turística* on its Facebook page.

The centrality of mobile devices in Galicia's digital marketing approach is reflected in the section "Brochure and Publications", where a great variety of services are available for the organisation of a trip in Galicia and to interact virtually with the destination.

A series of brochures and street maps can be downloaded through a traditional download button (Figures 48 and 49) or by opting to use a QR code.
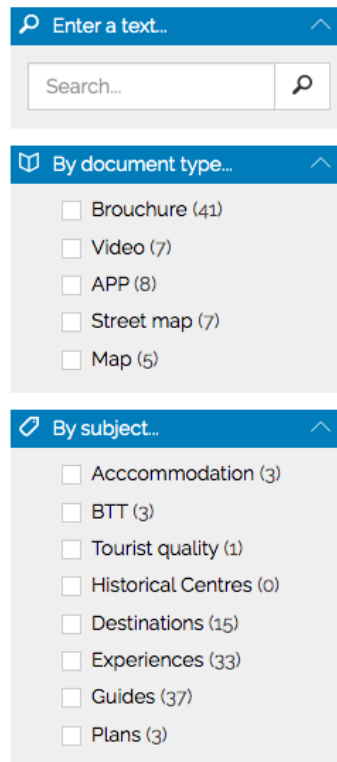
Figure 48. Service suggestions and engagement offered to users to interact virtually with the destination.
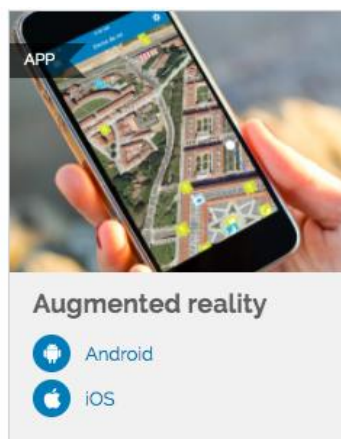
Figure 49. Augmented reality.
Source: https://www.turismo.gal/folletos-e-publicacions

The site is thus built to provide users with a suggested experience, but to create a sales opportunity it also stimulates the user to engage. Namely, the "MY TRIP" (Figures 50 and 51) service is a comprehensive package provided to potential customers to support them in the planning stage of their visit and stay in Galicia. Once the user creates an account and signs in, he/she can populate three areas while navigating the website:

- **Preparing the trip**: by clicking on the luggage symbol near each offer and sharing the preferences, the customer (potential tourist) builds a tailor-made trip.
- **During the trip**: maps related to the trip previously planned are gathered in this section for more rapid access.
- **After the trip**: the traveller can upload notes, pictures, and videos; and eventually share them with other users.
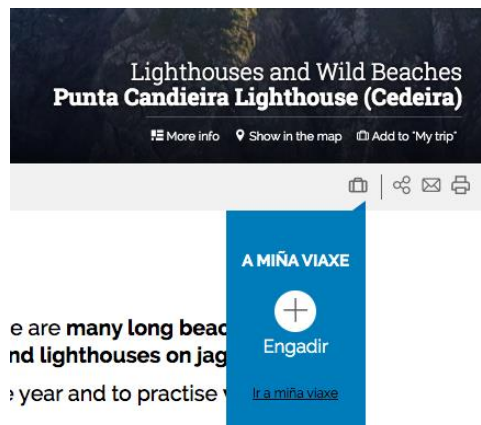
Figure 50. The "luggage" button used to add the respective article to a travel plan.
Source: https://www.turismo.gal/que-facer/faros-e-praias-salvaxes/praias-de-azucre
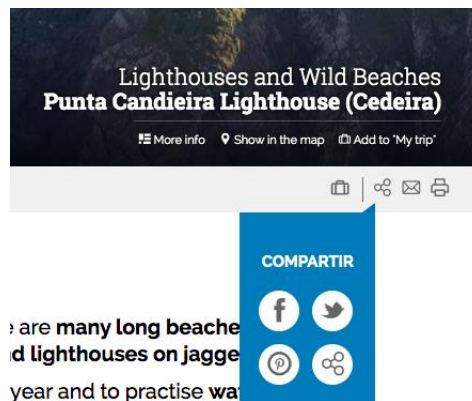
Figure 51. Same product as previous image. Users can also share their preferences in a social network.
Source: https://www.turismo.gal/que-facer/faros-e-praias-salvaxes/praias-de-azucre

In general, suggestions of tourist packages from previous travellers are constantly visible within the whole page (Figure 52). This allows the destination to gain visibility and reliability from digital word of mouth and value co-creation.
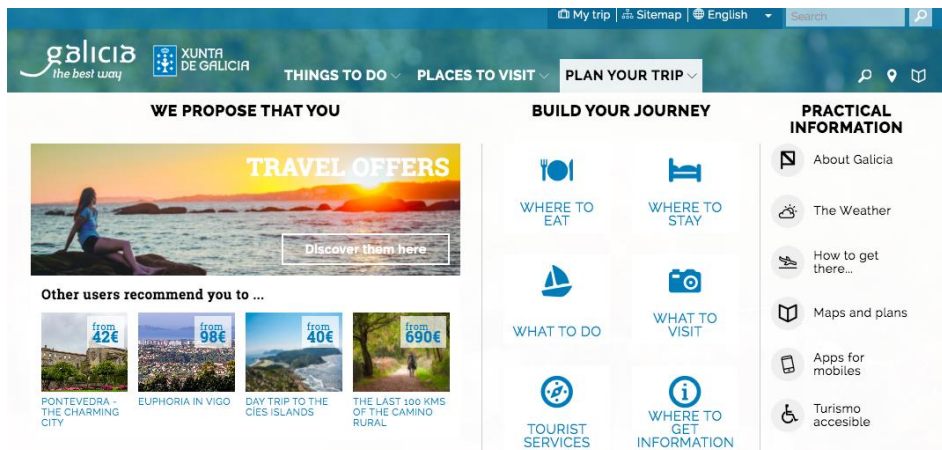
Figure 52. The MY TRIP system also suggests tourist packages recommended by previous travellers.

Finally, the platform directly commercialises tourist packages (Figure 53 and 54).
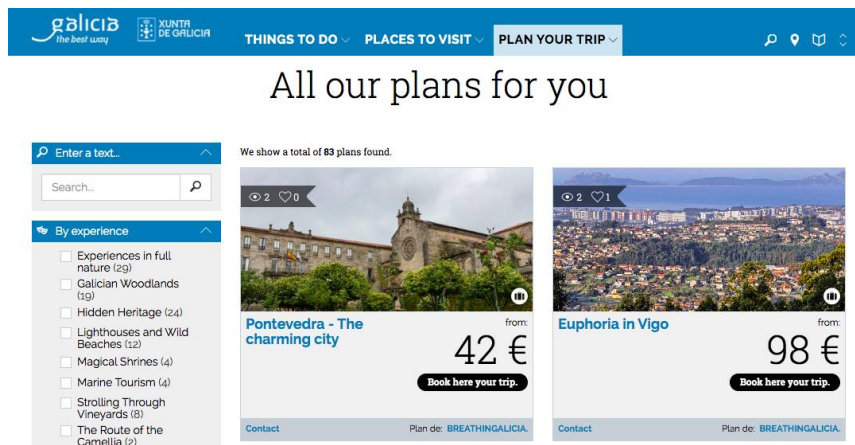
Figure 53. Products commercialised directly by the official website.

Figure 54. Product commercialised directly by the official website. Source: https://www.turismo.gal/todos-os-plans/

Destination management companies (DMCs)

The online presence of the DMCs reflects, in many ways, the strategy and the institutional message. A solid online presence in Google Search (Figures 55 and 56) is consistent with the products promoted on the institutional website. Sometimes the same techniques are used to engage with the users and create sales opportunities.
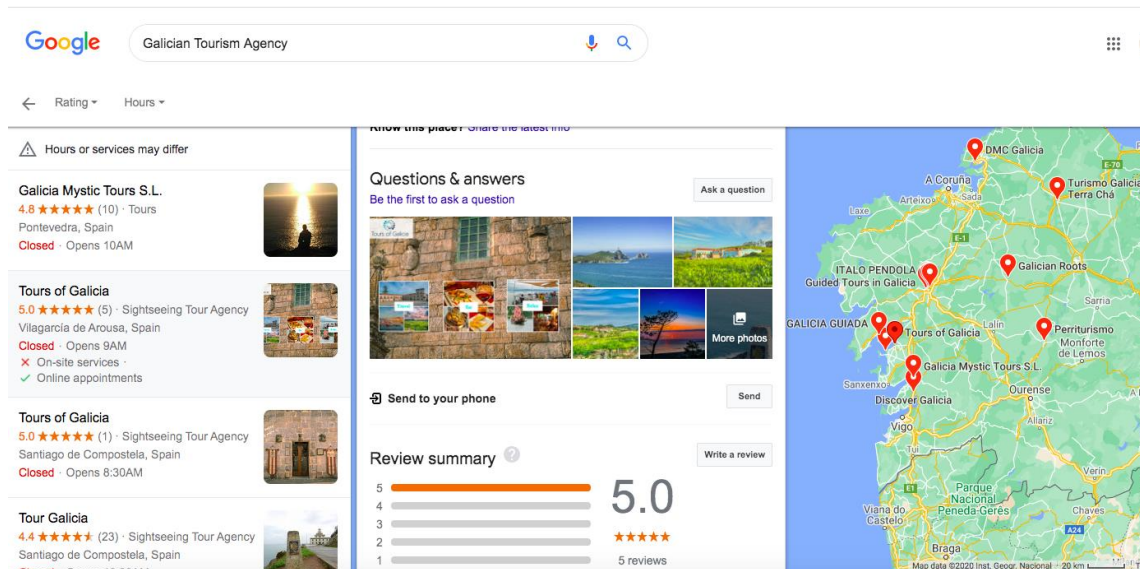
Figure 55. DMCs in Google Search.
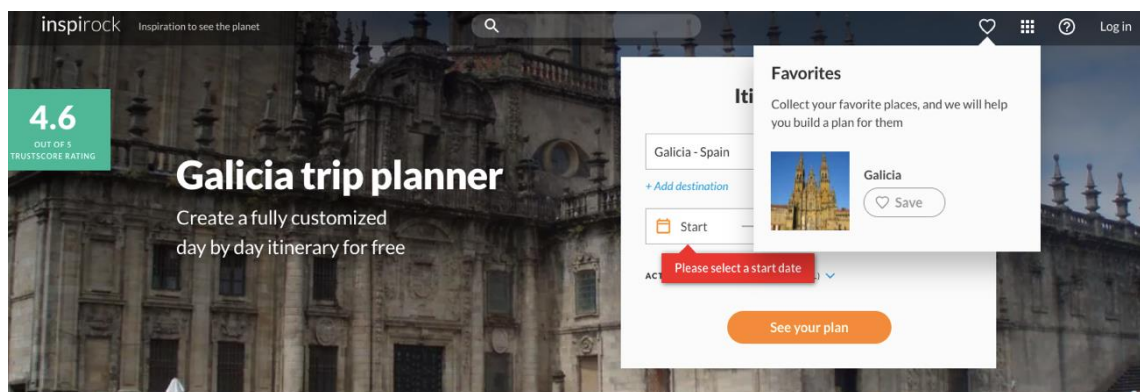
Figure 56. DMC using the same practice and system related to the tailor-made trip found on the official Galicia tourism website.
Source: https://www.inspirock.com/spain/galicia-trip-planner

The DMCs' offerings are very broad. They vary from the most traditional tourist offering, linked to culture, gastronomy and nature, to the activities of product diversification, for example aiming at the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism segment (Figures 57 and 58).

Figure 57. Landing page of a DMC promoting and commercialising Galicia's tourist products.
Source: https://www.dmcgalicia.com

Figure 58. Differentiation of the product for the Galicia destination, in this case through the promotion of MICE tourism.
Source: https://dmcgalicia.es

Summary table

Galicia	
Online and offline promotional channels	Wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal linked with several social networks.
Content identification and analysis	Storytelling and authenticity approach through different phases of the process of acquisition of the product, digital word of mouth; collaborative practices.
Promoters	Public; private.
List of practices	Social networking and value co-creation; DMS; trip planner system (tailor-made travel plans); direct commercialisation of products; gamification.

Cape Town

Introduction

The multifaceted city of Cape Town holds some of South Africa's most important cultural and historic assets as well as iconic natural resources and landscapes. Since hosting the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the city has created a tourism body and has set a challenge to adopt guidelines for the development of its tourism strategies aiming to reduce socio-economic inequalities, reduce poverty and promote responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

The city reached its highest tourism influx in 2010 after hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Nevertheless, a strong decrease in the number of visitors was registered after the international event. In this context, the industry and public decision makers started to invest strategically in digital marketing.

Strategy and most innovative practices

The tourism board Cape Town Tourism aims to promote all tourism-related ideas, offerings and news, focusing on a very transparent and community-based strategy and sustainable travel style (Figures 59 and 60).

Figure 59. Pocket-Friendly Challenge campaign on the Cape Town official tourism website. Source: https://www.capetown.travel/the-pocket-friendly-challenge
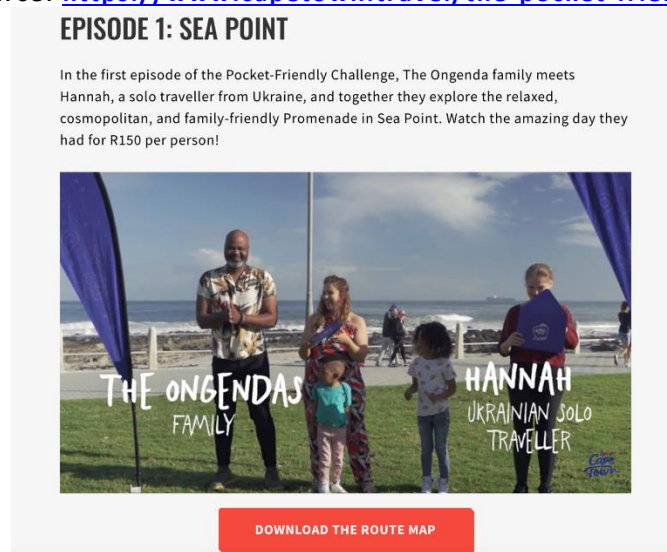
Figure 60. Pocket-Friendly Challenge Series, Episode 1.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the strong presence of the DMO in social network platforms, namely through its "LoveCapeTown" social media channels (Figure 61), on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube.
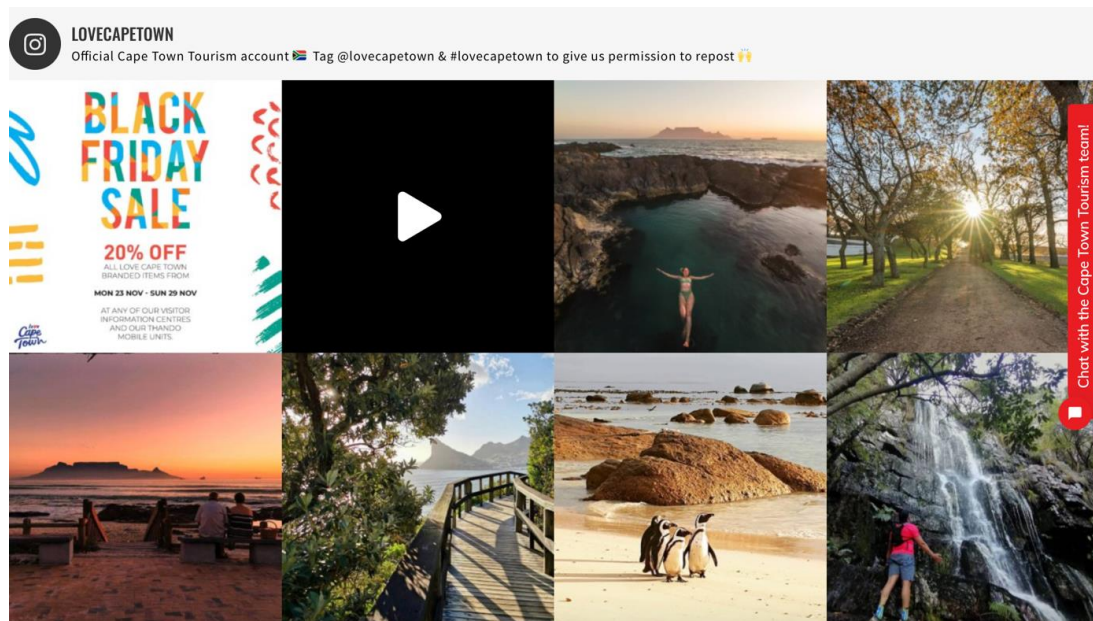
Figure 61. Direct access to Instagram account of Cape Town travel through the web portal. Source: https://www.capetown.travel

The Tourism Board has also targeted digital nomads—those who use the Internet to work remotely without having a fixed home base—to promote the key tourism assets of the destination through storytelling. A program of Media Hosting allows media influencers and travel journalists to be hosted as guests. It is also possible to gain access to the Cape Town Tourism Digital Assets Library (Figure 62), that offers high-resolution digital assets (photos and footage) specifically for promotional usage.
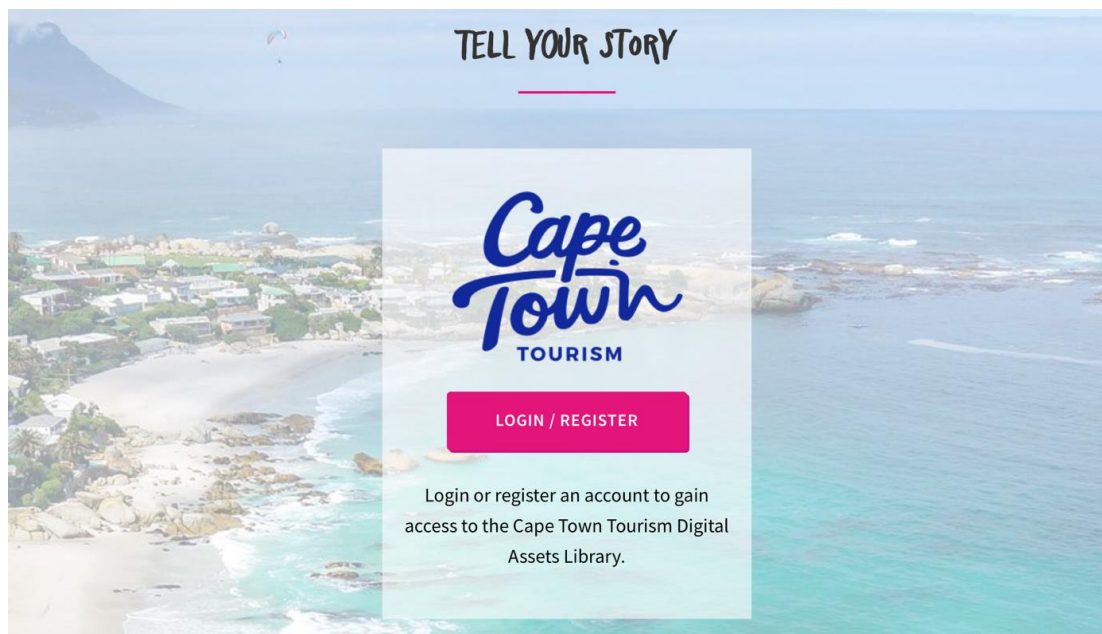
Figure 62. Trade Media Registration to the Cape Town Tourism Digital Assets Library. Source: https://trade-media.capetown.travel/media-library

Destination management companies (DMCs)

Local and international DMCs are numerous, in line with the regional strategic directions for tourism development, offering tourist services based on sustainable guidelines, featuring user-friendly access and a variety of nature- and culture-related imagery through social media platforms and websites (Figures 63 and 64).
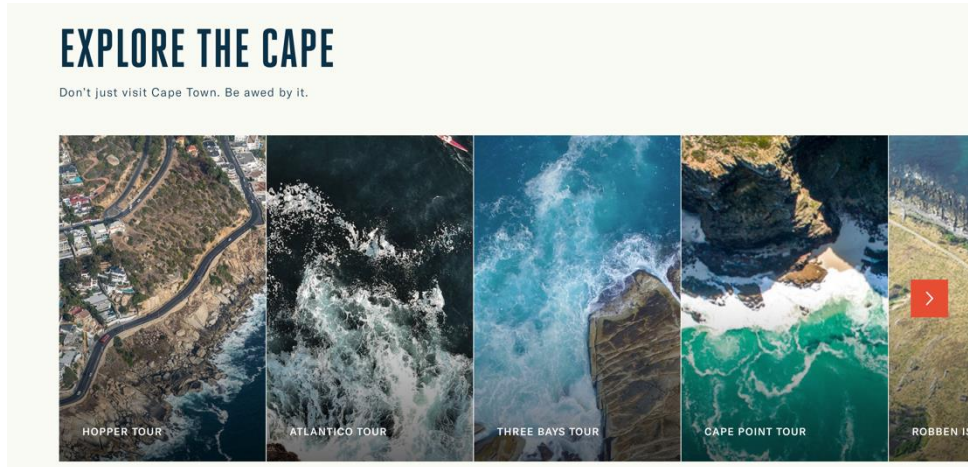
Figure 63: A DMC's landing page.
Source: https://www.nachelicopterscapetown.com
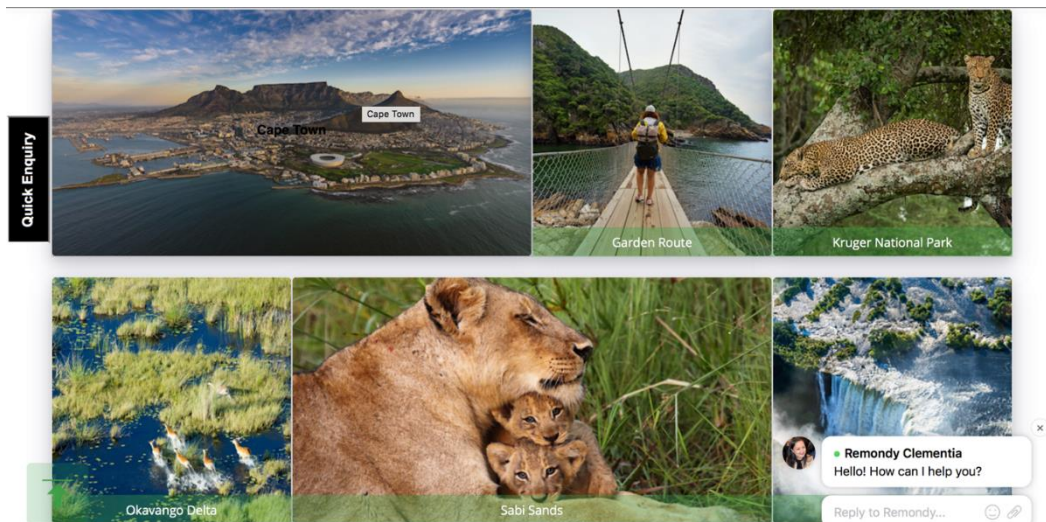
Figure 64. A DMC's web portal.
Source: https://www.privatetourscapetown.com

Summary table

Cape Town (South Africa)	
Online and offline promotional channels	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal.
Content identification and analysis	Approach through responsible travel practices, "pocket-friendly" routes and security and safety measures (including those related to COVID-19).
Promoters	Public; private; PPP.
List of practices	Series of videos, interviews, social networking; DMS; digital word of mouth; co-creation; digital nomads.

Thailand

Introduction

Thailand's emerging tourism sector goes back to the early 1960s golden era, when it hosted more than 80 000 visitors a year. The number of travellers later skyrocketed to reach a record of 32.5 million tourists in 2016. In this regard, the city of Bangkok was ranked as the most visited city in the world by *Forbes* magazine from 2015 to 2018, and second after Hong Kong in 2019[4].

The tourism sector has been recognised as one of the major sources of revenue for Thailand and has become a significant driver in the Thai economy. Nonetheless, the kingdom's main concern for the past few years has been finding a response to the negative outcomes of mass tourism. The TAT (Tourism Authority of Thailand) has accordingly aimed to pave a sustainable tourism path and practices with a range of environmental initiatives involving the reduction of plastic waste and the promotion of responsible travel through a series of online and offline campaigns in cooperation with local and worldwide organisations. These campaigns recognise the exponential growth of the market shifting towards digital platforms.

Strategy and most innovative practices

Digital marketing, as a strong drive to promote tourism in Thailand, focuses on the following strategic goals:

- Raised awareness about the importance and the typologies of existing cultural and natural heritage.
- Interaction both with local entrepreneurs and with the page by providing ways to interact (e.g. feedback requests, sharing memories, etc.).
- Support for the travel decision by providing, for instance, suggestions about the best period of the year to travel.
- Provision of different methods to purchase products and direct contact with local providers.
- Monitoring the quality of the performance through post-purchase evaluation.

Promoted offerings are proposed to a knowledgeable and experienced audience on destinations and quality of services. In this context, previous visitors are stimulated to interact online, by sharing perceptions, pictures and stories. Another common practice to promote and commercialise Thailand is to follow potential tourists step by step in their decision-making and purchasing process, keeping in mind the user's satisfaction and post-purchase evaluation.

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[4]   https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandratalty/2019/09/04/bangkok-is-the-most-visited-city-in-the-world-again/?sh=49fdbcd5f1bb

From the point of view of commercialisation, public–private partnerships are actively promoted, and the official tourism website directly promotes DMCs' contacts.

Actors involved
Besides classic offline practice for the promotion of the destination (exhibitions, fam-trips, press trips, etc.), Thailand is promoted and commercialised online by both the public and private sectors (e.g. guides, accommodation and catering). The actors involved are the Tourism Council of Thailand, local municipalities and NGOs, local communities and DMCs, which highlight the cultural and natural assets through seasonal and experiential travels, stimulating the explorative and adventurous spirit of travellers.

Destination marketing organisations (DMOs)
Organised under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the TAT manages the institutional tourism website (http://www.tourismthailand.org) titled Amazing Thailand. It contains basic guidelines for travelling in Thailand, an agenda of events and festivals, travel deals offering promotional tourist product/service discounts from partner travel agencies, as well as maps of the destination, reconstructions, etc.

The website is available in 14 languages, and travel information services, such as a newsletter, are available. An online community allows users to share their travel experience with others, and electronic media like an e-brochure, wallpaper and e-magazine are available for downloading.

The website Amazing Thailand is linked to other online channels, namely on social network platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. These channels are all accessible through the website. Facebook and Twitter and some YouTube videos are available in Thai and English to serve national and international followers. These channels are the core of the TAT engagement with users (Figure 65).
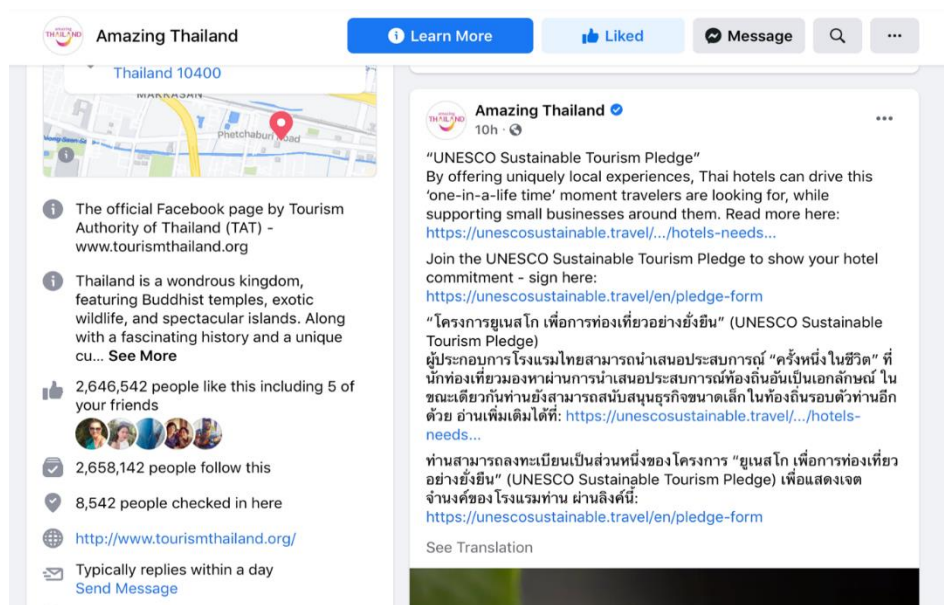
Figure 65. "Amazing Thailand" Facebook page in English and Thai, highlighting a UNESCO campaign raising awareness on Thai hotels' sustainable management and local sourcing. Source: https://www.facebook.com/AmazingThailand

By allowing consumers to share the experience by using the #explorethailand hashtag (Figure 66), the Tourism Board gathers relevant information and photos within one page, enabling users to search and find all posts under the same theme from all over the world, and eventually to secure attention from associated hashtagged words. There is also a significant post-purchase evaluation phase.

Figure 66. #explorethailand page on Instagram.
Source: https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/explorethailand

Additionally, the online consumer experience can be self-assessed through a survey available on the website (Figure 67).
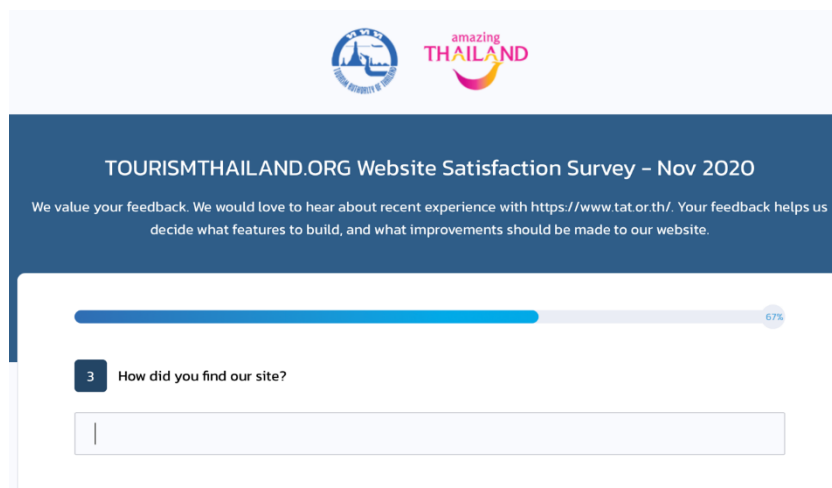
Figure 67. Customer experience satisfaction survey of the TAT.
Source: https://www.tourismthailand.org

The TAT strategically partnered with Matterport (https://matterport.com), a virtual reality platform that allows users to virtually explore and navigate panoramic 360-degree views of the top tourist attractions in four destinations each from Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Surat Thani and Phuket (Figure 68).

Furthermore, during the virtual tour, informational pop-up icons in both English and Thai are featured along with some of the attraction's major monuments or statues. The site allows the option to see the space in virtual reality, in case users have the proper headset. The service is owned and operated by Matterport.
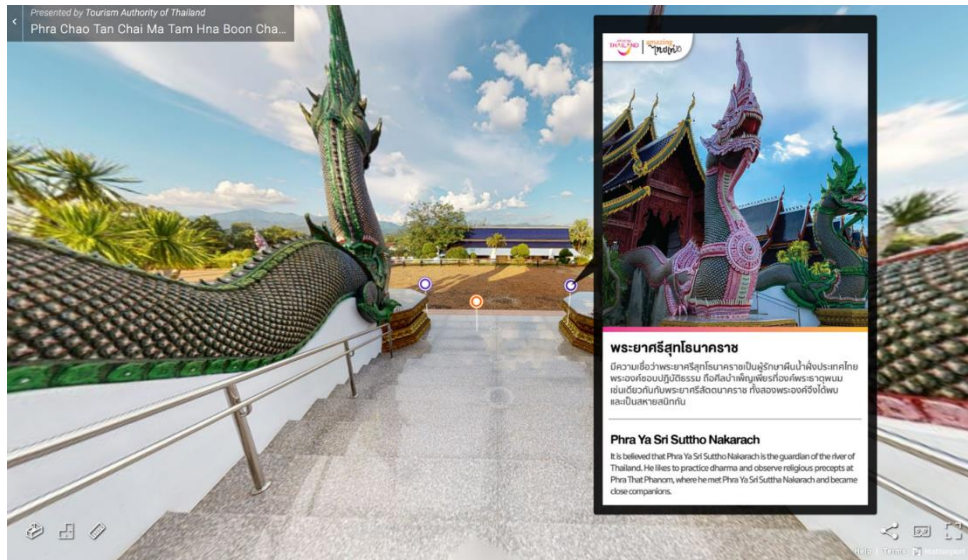
Figure 68. Virtual tour of Phra Chao Tan Chai Ma Tam Hna Boon Chapel.
Source: https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=zoC2di3izqt

The TAT also has a YouTube "Amazing Thailand" channel featuring videos of the "GO LOCAL" campaign (Figure 69), a video series started in 2017 and focusing on storytelling and local experiences all over Thailand from real travellers through short 360-degree scenic films. This provides a way to strengthen the interactive bond with a more emotional and personal touch. The aim is to offer a realistic portrait of tourism through visitors' eyes, stimulating online users to interact with the destination.
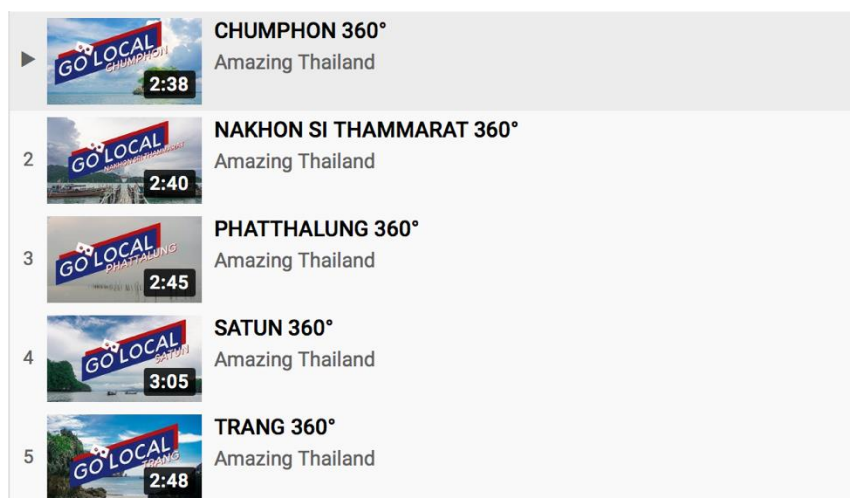
Figure 69. "GO LOCAL" video series in YouTube

To facilitate the decision-making process and enhance the traveller's online booking experience, the TAT has created an online department store for tourism-related services: exclusive packages, special sales and discounts, health and beauty amenities, accommodation and transportation among others (Figures 70 and 71).

Figure 70. Portal header promotion of the "Amazing Thailand" Tourism Department Store. Source: https://www.tourismthailand.org
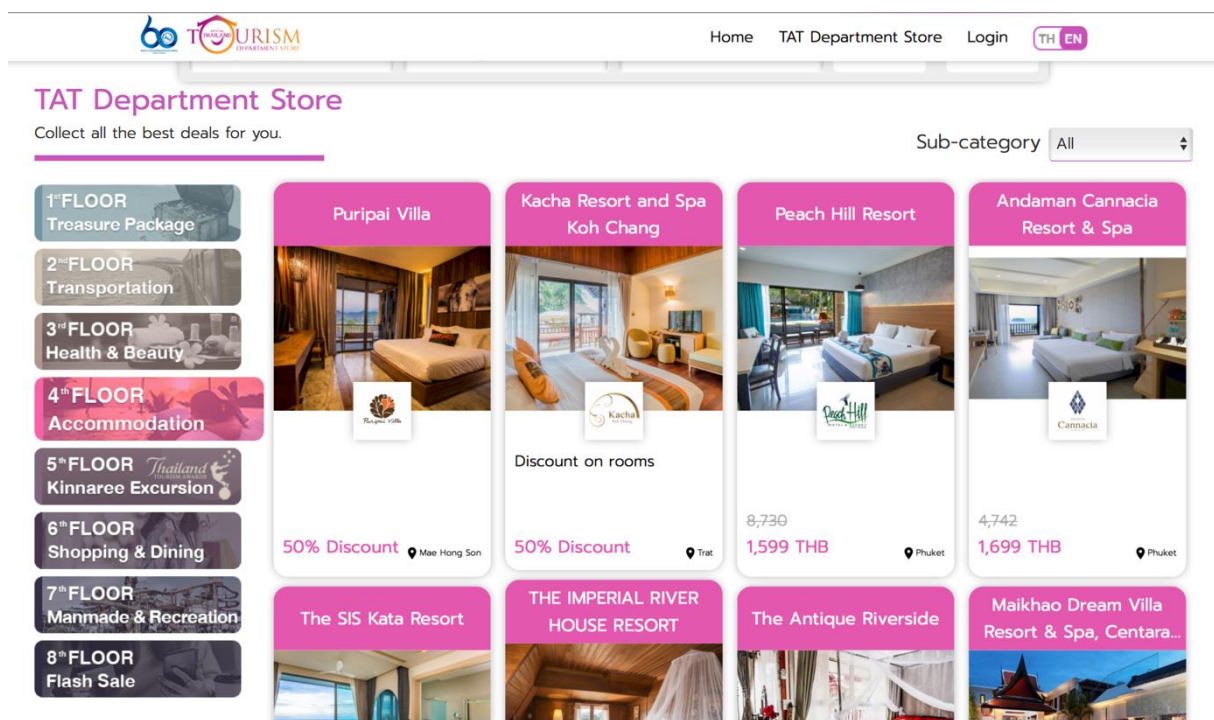
Figure 71. The TAT Department Store webpage.
Source: https://tourismdepartmentstore.tourismthailand.org

Most campaigns implemented on the TAT's digital channels and webpages are interconnected, and multiple platforms are typically used as integrated marketing combinations to communicate each campaign and gain the most interaction with users thoroughly and effectively (Figure 72).

Inspiring trust and credibility is one of the TAT's most crucial concerns. For example, tatnews.org provides users with promotional content and daily information about COVID-19 (Figures 73 and 74), as well as weather forecasts and recommendations. The desire to internationally promote the work of the Thai tourism industry is part of huge efforts to strengthen the tourist destination brand.
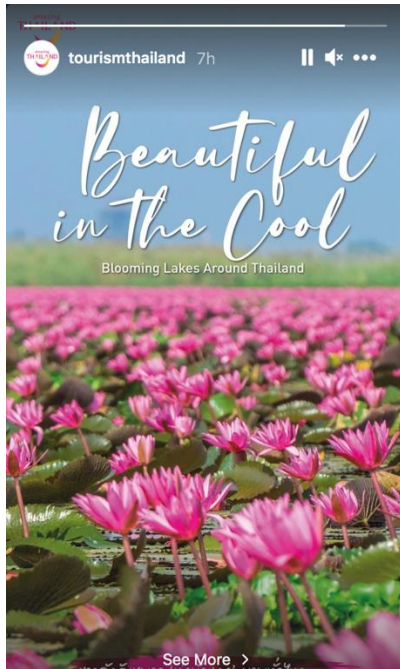
Figure 72. @tourismthailand Instagram stories and "Amazing Thailand" Facebook page post on 14th December 2020

Figure 73. Homepage for COVID-19 daily news.
Source: https://www.tourismthailand.org

Figure 74. COVID-19 detailed daily news affiliated link to TourismThailand.org homepage.

The official "Amazing Thailand" mobile application was created to increase the channels of promoting Thailand tourism to potential target users worldwide. This increases tourist databases and fans and followers on social media, and supports new marketing campaigns.

The application provides travel information, contacts, maps, and GPS, and also focuses on the user experience, allowing tourists to engage and share their travel experience through the linked social networks (Figure 75).
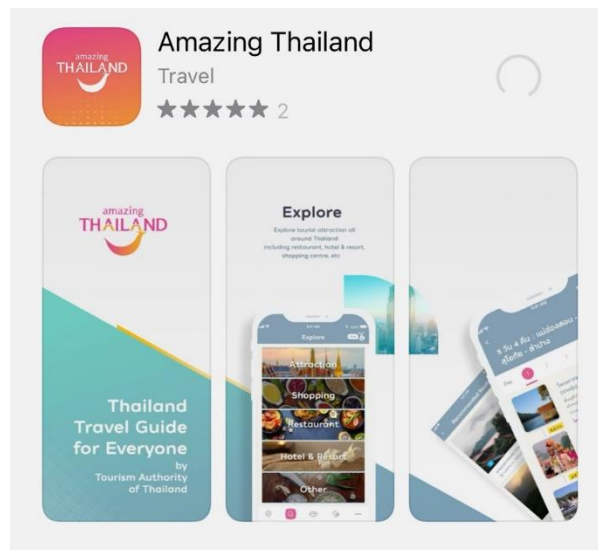
Figure 75. "Amazing Thailand" phone application. Source:
https://www.apple.com/shop

Destination management companies (DMCs)
Local and international DMCs, in line with the TAT, offer interconnected tourist products based on service awareness and inspirational imagery and videos (Figure 76) as well as interconnected affiliate marketing, promotions (Figure 77) and customer experience satisfaction (Figure 78).
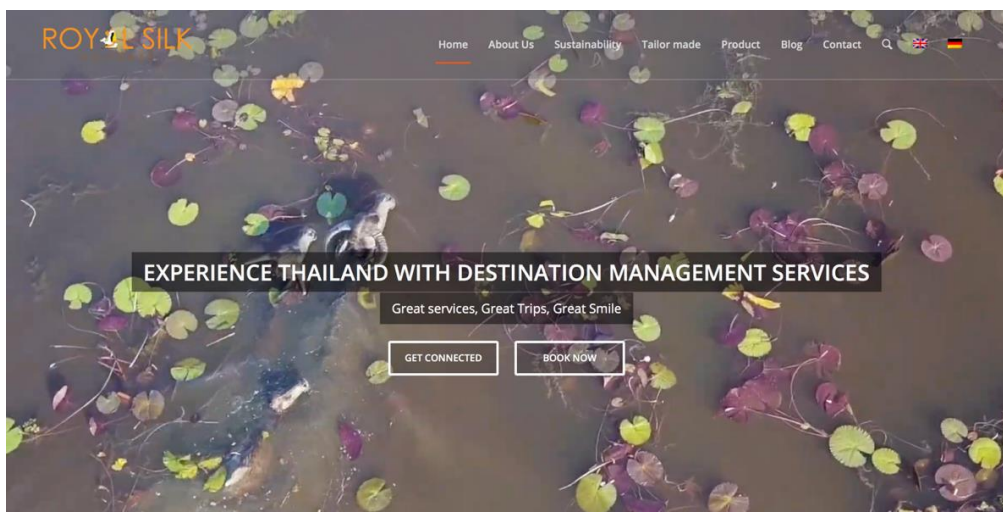
Figure 76. DMC's inspirational video on its web portal.
Source: https://www.royalsilkholidays.com

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Figure 77. Local DMC's affiliate promotions with the TAT.
Source: https://tourismdepartmentstore.tourismthailand.org

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT US

Thanks so much for arranging such a fantastic holiday for us. We had a great time and experience and we saw so many things that I'm sure we'd never have experienced if we'd had gone on a typical package holiday. I think our stay at Joys House was the most heart warming for me in terms of what Joy and her partner are giving to the young people there. The afternoon spent on Koh Samui was a great way to spend our last few hours in Thailand, rather than hanging around in an airport. I've already recommended you to several friends.

Amanda Henson & Family
United Kingdom

Leider sind unsere Ferien schon Vergangenheit. Ich möchte Ihnen herzlich danken für die gute Organisation.Unser Reiseleiter sowie der Chauffeur waren "Spitze". Alles hat super geklappt und wir fühlten uns immer sehr gut betreut.Darf ich Sie bitten, diese Dankesworte wenn möglich weiterzugeben. Wir werden Ihre Organisation mit Vergnügen weiter empfehlen

Eliane Kumschick & Hr. Mühlheim
Germany

Figure 78. Customer's testimony on DMC's web portal.
Source: https://www.royalsilkholidays.com

Summary table

Thailand	
Online and offline promotional channels	DMCs directory; social networks; official website; "Amazing Thailand" eBook.
Content identification and analysis	Approach through different phases of the decision-making process, from awareness to post-purchase; virtual onsite tours; online department store; authenticity. "Go Local" video series.
Promoters	Public; private; PPP.
List of practices	Social networking and value co-creation; DMS; trip planner system; incentives for domestic tourism; customer satisfaction.

The Faroe Islands

Introduction

The Faroe Islands, the autonomous Danish territory located between Iceland, Scotland and Norway, is promoted and commercialised online as a tourist destination by numerous sites of private companies as well as the main official site managed by Visit Faroe Islands, which is the official tourist board of the Faroe Islands.

The official portal, in particular, seems to point to specific features for its marketing, by combining authenticity and glamour, volunteering and gamification. Cheaper flights, new accommodation and—according to *Lonely Planet*—the Michelin star awarded to the fine dining restaurant Koks in 2017 (Figure 79), are among the reasons why the Faroe Islands started their development as a tourist destination, although the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and natural environment, as well as the well-being of the locals, always represent a priority.
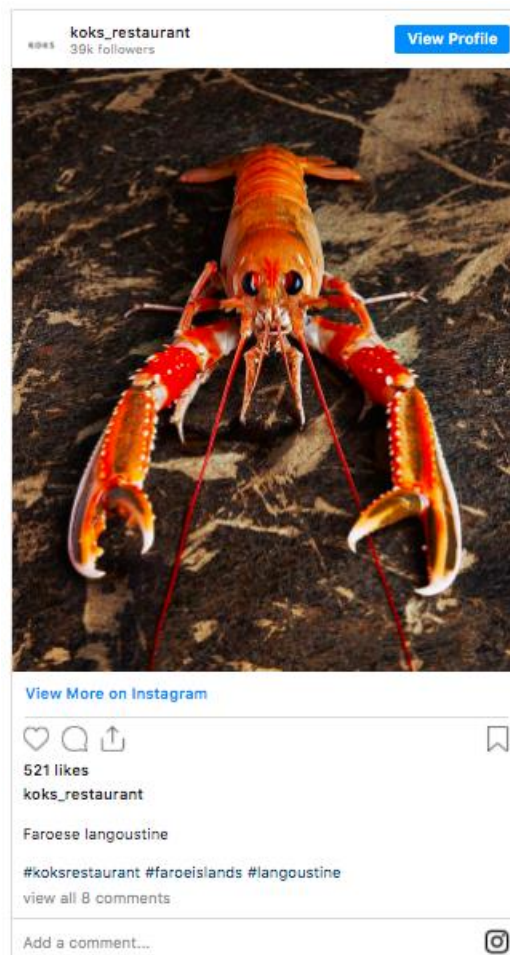
Figure 79. Instagram page of the restaurant Koks.

Strategy and most innovative practices

The destination implements a series of practices all quite innovative, both online and offline. For instance, Visit Faroe Islands launched "Closed for Maintenance"—an initiative that invited geographic volunteers to the islands for a working holiday, also promoted by *Lonely Planet* (see: https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/faroe-islands-closed-for-maintenance). Volunteers had to pay for their flights and were expected to mend hiking paths and the like for much of the day, but they were provided with food, basic accommodation and an archipelago completely free from other tourists in exchange for their time and labour.

For an increasing number of people this is changing the way to see travelling abroad. Volunteering as a collaborative practice and as a basis for the sustainable development of local communities can be a way of promoting and marketing destinations (Predețeanu-Dragne, Popescu, & Nicolae, 2019). The Faroe Islands stimulate these activities, and through institutional page feedback, photos, multimedia and reports of campaigns and voluntary fields over the years, the DMOs make volunteering a real tool to strengthen the personality, attractiveness and marketability of the destination. Volunteers can become content creators by sharing their experience and by promoting the features of the destination.

From the point of view of digital marketing, particularly in a time of restricted travel due to the pandemic, people from all over the world have been logging in to the dedicated microsite (https://www.remote-tourism.com) to watch the day's local guide traverse the islands' rugged coastlines, wide-open plains and postcard-perfect villages via a live-streaming camera attached to his/her hat. Users can also join the queue to "remote control" the explorer (available options: move forwards or backwards, run, turn left or right, jump (Figure 80).
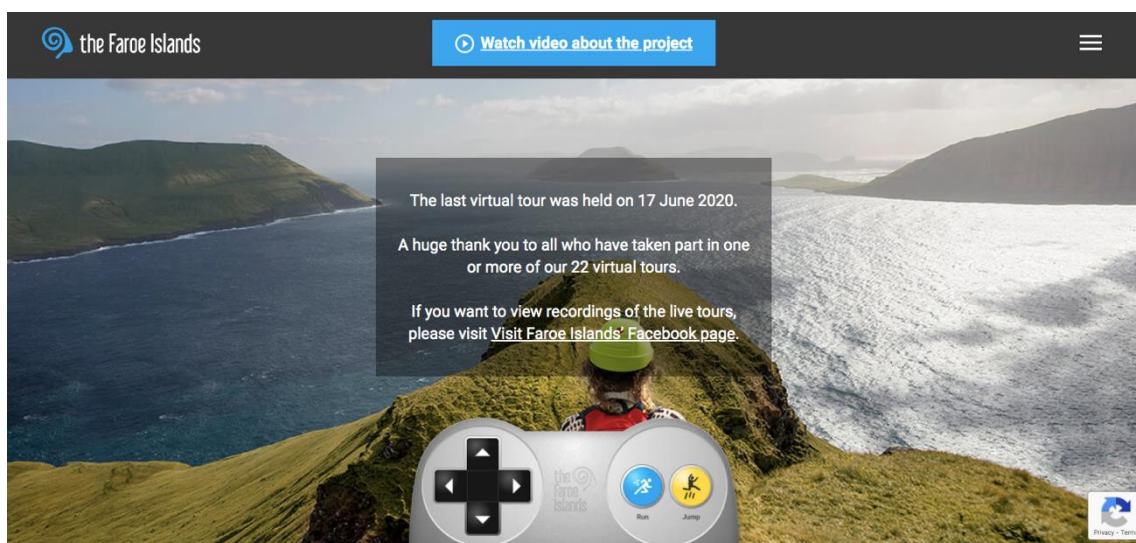
Figure 80. Dedicated microsite https://www.remote-tourism.com

The innovative project has received the attention of the international press, which has thus further promoted the destination (Figure 81). This successful example of

gamification applied to destination marketing is accessible via the institutional tourism website.

Figure 81. International press promoting the remote-tourism campaign.
Source: https://marketinggazette.co.uk/2020/06/11/virtual-tourism-takes-off-in-the-faroe-islands

Other initiatives in recent years have also been considered quite innovative. Due to the geomorphological features of the area, which are difficult to explore, Google was not able to make the islands accessible on Street View. So, a local PPP, involving the official tourist board, proposed that Google strap 360-degree cameras onto a willing flock and create Sheep View—a campaign that won gold at Cannes Lions and ultimately led Google to map the territory (Figure 82).

Figure 82. Google shepherd's sheep map the remote Faroe Islands.
Source: https://www.thedrum.com/news/2016/09/01/google-shepherds-sheep-map-remote-faroe-islands#&gid=1&pid=1

Actors Involved

The online promotion of the Faroe Islands is entrusted to private individuals and to the official tourism promotion platform. Because the latter proposes the most innovative approach and practices, the analysis will focus on the practice used by the DMOs.

Destination marketing organisations (DMOs)

The Faroe Islands have invested heavily in the public promotion of the destination. Their official website is not only comprehensive but also very attractive and different from the websites of more traditional destinations. Beyond the more traditional link with social networks (Figure 83), the landing page gives an opportunity to access several options, regarding information but also, for example, putting the user in contact with local music groups.
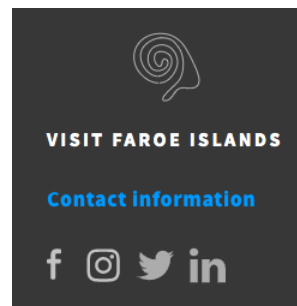
Figure 83. Links from the landing page of the www.visitfaroeislands.com portal to the main social networks.

Different types of tourist experience and activities are offered: hiking, dining, birdwatching, bicycling, diving and fishing and angling, but also shopping, sailing, surfing and horse riding.

Due to the islands' safety and slow pace of life, family trips are suggested as ideal. Four films created by family travel YouTubers are used to support this narrative (Figure 84).
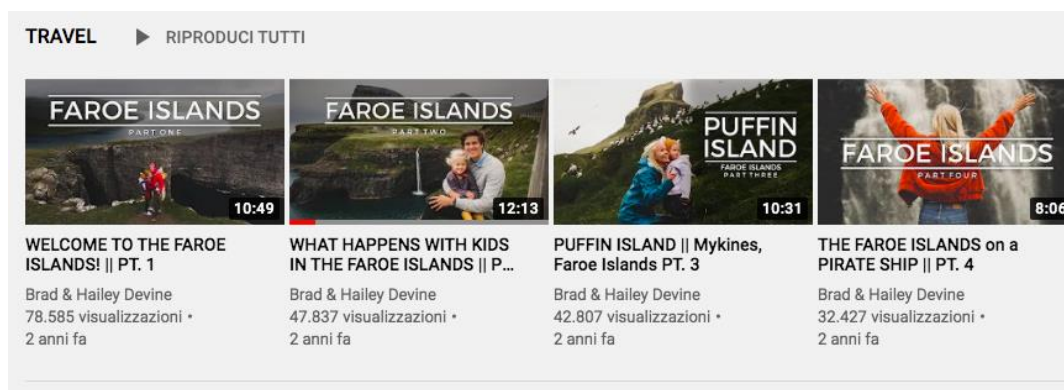
Figure 84. YouTube page from Brad and Hailey Devine.
Source: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ1eOHDT-C3AVbfjJr2bZOA

The promotion is thus based on this broad approach to tourist experience as a fashionable experience; gamification, as we saw earlier; and also on storytelling (Figure 85).

Figure 85. The use of storytelling to attract and create new sales opportunities.
Source: https://www.visitfaroeislands.com/about/people-society/a-conversation-with-a-faroe-islander

Finally, the portal puts the user in contact with hotels, hostels, camping summerhouses and B&Bs (Figure 86).
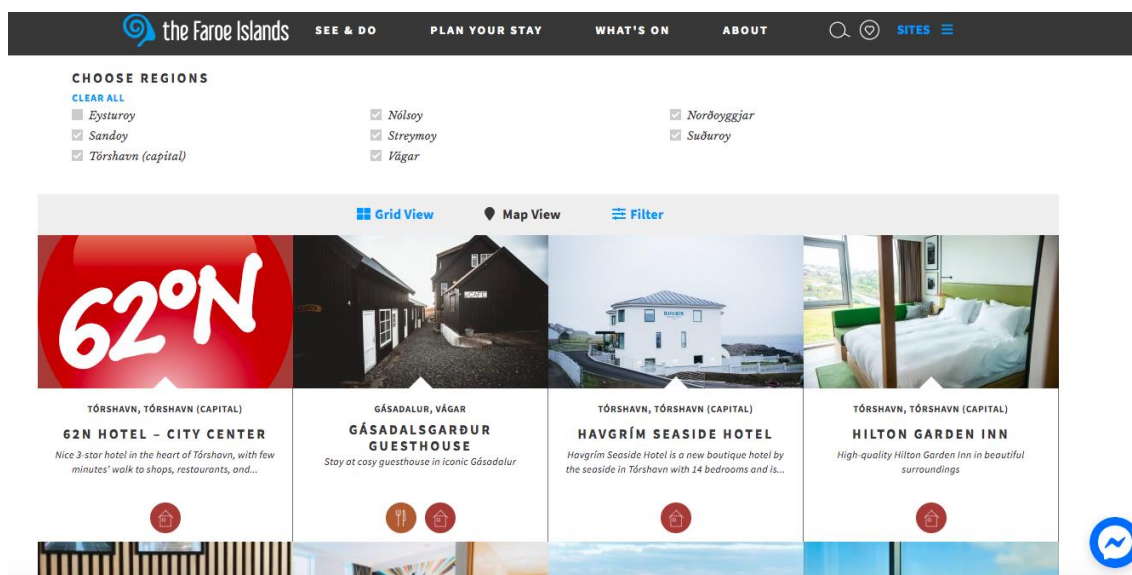
Figure 86. Direct access to accommodation offers through the official portal.
Source: https://www.visitfaroeislands.com/plan-your-stay/accommodation/hotels

Summary table

The Faroe Islands	
Online and offline promotional channels	Fair-trade channels; one main portal; social networks.
Content identification and analysis	Storytelling—local stories and narrative strongly based on locals; authenticity; collaborative practices; volunteering; gamification.
Promoters	Public, private, PPP.
List of practices	On-location coordinators; volunteers camp; remote tourism project (gamification); social networking; value co-creation.

Zaytoun

Introduction

Zaytoun is a social enterprise and community-interest company founded in 2004 to commercialise Palestinian products, with the aim of supporting the resilience and livelihoods of Palestinian farmers. In order to do so, it promotes fair trade of farm products (e.g. olive oil) and acts as a local DMC when it comes to travel and promotion of the land.

Zaytoun's main goal is to promote the community and its valuable know-how in a military-occupied and isolated area by boosting Palestinians' resource abilities instead of giving them direct aid. The enterprise has structured a particular promotional online and offline strategy and is now an award-winning certified brand for responsible trade.

Strategy and most innovative practices

The communication related to the promotion of the Zaytoun brand aims to commercialise the transparent and ethical trade of local Palestinian products through the www.zaytoun.org portal in English, which is mainly targeted to UK consumers. The communication is structured as follows:

a. Storytelling and awareness
b. Engagement and participation
c. Purchasing
d. Post-purchase engagement

The website contains a purchasing system structured around a storytelling process, engaging a feeling of belonging within the online user. The site encompasses experiences from product purchase to a tree-planting initiative, organised trips and post-purchase resources.

First, we notice the emphasis on authenticity and local products. The landing page shows the working hands of a farmer offering *maftoul* and using storytelling through an attached video conversation with an olive farmer. We can distinguish the emphasis and the effort to link human interactions and make the purchase of the product more meaningful by giving purpose to the consumer (Figure 87).
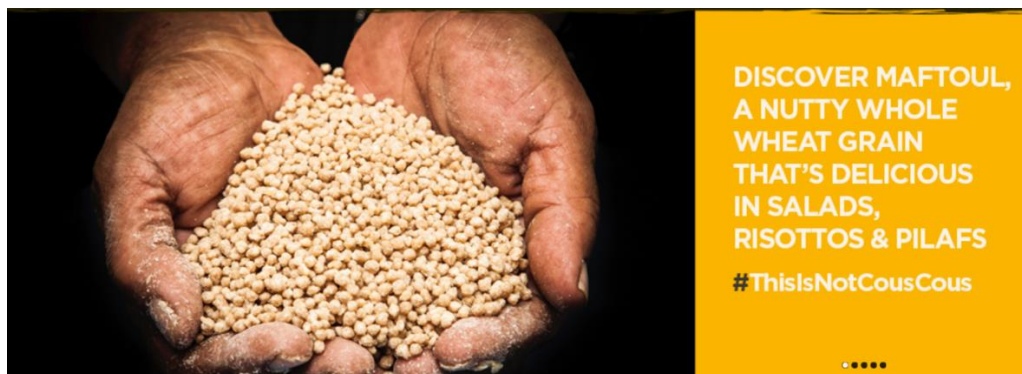
Figure 87. Landing page header.
Source: https://www.zaytoun.org

A resources page encourages the user to engage with the product purchase and get involved in the process, from culture to planting, harvest, merchandising and most importantly the people behind the project.

A series of episodes on a YouTube channel includes live conversations and interviews, meet-ups with local farmers who introduce themselves and their lands to buyers, and harvest visits for the consumer to realise the roots, effort and significance of the purchased items (Figure 88).
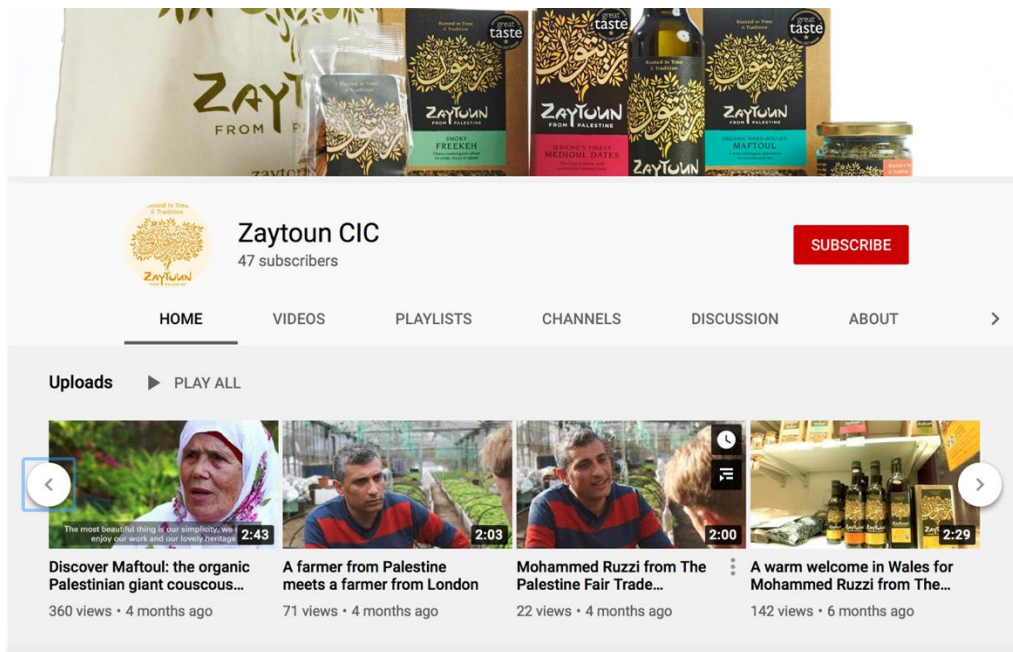
Figure 88. YouTube series featuring locals, their harvests and presentation of products. Source: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6B5KAQu98Pn2HqKjI4zIWA

Zaytoun is building a community interconnected by an emotional bond, through the proposal of activities and a brand that are heavily related to the local population.

In partnership with the Palestine fair-trade association, social enterprise created a plant-a-tree campaign, engaging consumers to participate not only virtually through the production and purchase process but also through planting and growth of the fair-trade system. The consumer is directed through the webpage donation to plant olive tree saplings in the land of Palestine in exchange for a certificate of appreciation and a 500ml bottle of olive oil (Figure 89).

Figure 89. Olive tree planting initiative. Introduction.
Source: https://www.zaytoun.org/plant_a_tree.html

Also, in the resources section, a campaign was introduced with various free downloadable recipes using Zaytoun products for the post-purchase experience (Figure 90). Moreover, the campaign was implemented on the website primarily but also interlinked on all their digital channels typically used as integrated marketing to communicate and gain the most interaction with users.

Figure 90. Free downloadable recipes on the Zaytoun website.
Source: https://www.zaytoun.org/resources.php

This campaign was particularly highlighted on the story section of the Instagram channel as follows. The products were distributed to different chef influencers in order to prepare a meal using them and sharing their recipes and photos on their personal platforms as a way to spread the word. Moreover, each product also has a highlighted section on the Zaytoun Instagram stories, sharing consumers' experiences and dishes made with each item (Figure 91).
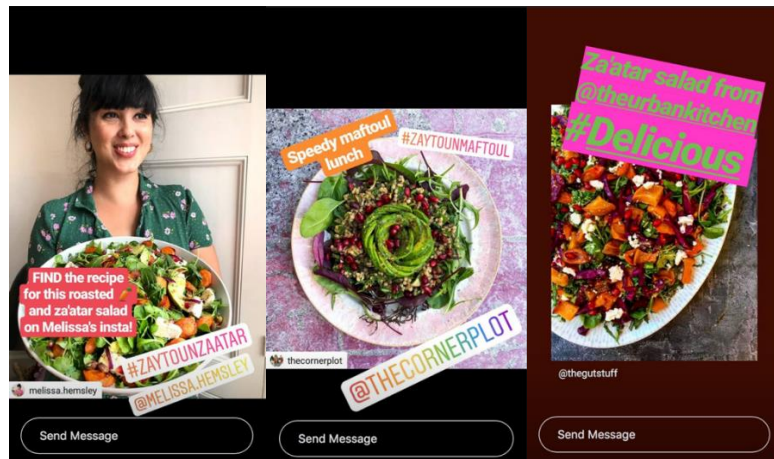
Figure 91. Zaytoun's Instagram page highlighting "Chefs" stories.
Source: https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17934603262224504

Lastly, to materialise the bond between virtual consumers and the Palestinian people, Zaytoun has been acting as a local tour operator, organising two trips to Palestine each year—"Taste of Palestine Culinary Tour" and "Protective Presence Trip"—which are promoted on the website under the section "Visit Palestine".

The trips are specifically targeted towards highlighting the local spiritual life of the farmers, participation in their livelihoods and culinary know-how and interconnectivity between the online and offline experience. The first tour involves mostly culinary and touristic activities, while the second one is oriented towards farm tourism as a volunteering opportunity in the olive harvesting season.

The tours are promoted with informational descriptions of the programs and their value to the locals, and the booking process is done through direct emailing (Figure 92). Travellers' testimony is linked to the webpage to offer transparency and a feeling of trust for the online user.

Figure 92. Visit Palestine tours, testimonials section. Source:
https://www.zaytoun.org/visit_palestine.html

Actors involved

The actors come from the private sector; promotion of the product and the experience is offered by the social enterprise in partnership with local non-profit organisations (Friends of Madama and Burin) and private points of sale.

Summary table

Zaytoun	
Online and offline promotional channels	Traditional offline channels; fair-trade channels; one main portal.
Content identification and analysis	Approach through different phases of the product acquisition process, from the feeling of belonging to the post-purchase experience; storytelling; authenticity; collaborative practices; community-based.
Promoters	Private sector
List of practices	Social networking and value co-creation; storytelling; participation; online donations.

Comparative Table

	Puglia	Portugal	Galicia	Cape town	Thailand	The Faroe Islands	Zaytoun
Online and offline promotional channels	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal linked with several social networks	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal	Traditional offline channels; wide range of companies' websites; one institutional portal	Traditional offline channels; fair-trade channels; one main portal	Traditional offline channels; fair-trade channels; one main portal
Content identification and analysis	Networks at different scales; storytelling and local stories; authenticity; collaborative practices; combatting seasonality (and COVID-19)	Approach through different phases of the product acquisition process, from the "dream" to *post-purchase;* memories and travel diaries; storytelling, authenticity; collaborative practices; combatting seasonality (and COVID-19)	Storytelling; authenticity; approach through different phases of the product acquisition process; digital word of mouth; collaborative practices	Approach through responsible travel practices; "pocket-friendly" routes and security and safety measures; combatting seasonality (and COVID-19)	Approach through different phases of the decision-making process, from awareness to post-purchase; virtual onsite tours; online department store; authenticity; "Go Local" video series; combatting seasonality (and COVID-19)	Storytelling; local stories and narrative strongly based on locals; authenticity; collaborative practices; volunteering, gamification	Approach through different phases of the product acquisition process, from the feeling of belonging to the post-purchase experience*;* storytelling; authenticity; collaborative practices; community-based
Promoters	Public; private; PPP	Public; private; PPP	Public; private; PPP	Public; private; PPP	Public; private; PPP	Public; private; PPP	Private sector
List of practices	Gamification; DMS; digital word of mouth; low-season agenda; co-creation	Social networking and value co-creation; DMS; trip planner system; incentives for domestic tourism	Social networking and value co-creation; DMS; trip planner system (tailor-made travel plans); direct commercialisation of products; gamification	Series of videos and interviews; social networking; DMS; digital word of mouth; co-creation; digital nomads	Social networking and value co-creation; DMS; trip planner system; incentives for domestic tourism; customer satisfaction	On- location coordinators; volunteers camp; remote tourism project (gamification); social networking; value co-creation	Social networking and value co-creation; storytelling; participation; online donations

Recommendations and Guidelines

Introduction

Marketing is about making goods and services available to the consumer in a given market by analysing targets, selecting the best channels of communication and distribution and finally proposing the best cost for the consumer, keeping in mind the enterprise's profit.

Communication is undoubtedly an essential marketing dimension. The increased uses of the Internet and digital technologies are rapidly changing the fields in which competition occurs, just as they are changing some of the skills required to promote and market a product or a tourist destination successfully.

Nowadays, it is not enough to develop websites or manage content on social networks. Indeed, digital marketing has replaced this way of promoting products online. Digital marketing is based on:

1. Use of all the available online tools (websites, social networks, e-commerce platforms, etc.) in an omnichannel approach that creates a single, consistent and effective customer experience across a brand by unifying sales and marketing that accounts for the interconnection between channels
2. New technologies
3. Analysis of customer data

The analysis of customer data provides useful insight into consumers' behaviour, trends and market opportunities. Such information is collected through tools such as:
- Google Analytics
- In-market audience affinity questionnaires
- Social media network data (Facebook or Instagram business) containing metrics, impressions, data and profile visits, reach and actions taken.

This helps the quality of the web content and the offering according to the consumer's preferences and satisfaction and the online experience.

Today's traveller has become more concerned about his/her experiences and wants to become more involved in the acquisition process through an easy trip planner system or direct user-friendly commercialisation.

In this respect, please see the previously analysed case studies with regards to innovative online planning and acquisition processes: Portugal, Galicia, Faroe Islands and Puglia. The evidence of this study shows that every brand aims to innovate through a strategic funnel, considering the targeted audience by specific metrics: from awareness and dream concretisation to consideration and interaction, followed by a

travel decision and trip planner process, then leading to purchase and post-purchase experience through sharing and evaluation (Figure 93).
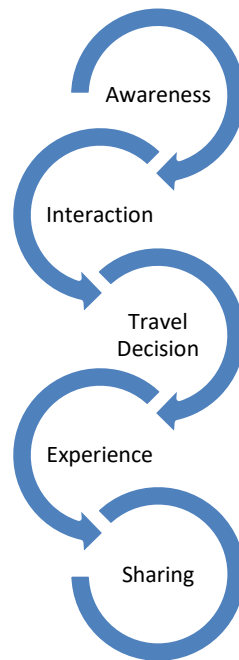
Figure 93. The awareness-to-sharing path. Source: the authors

Awareness is created through the proposals of many options to explore the specific characteristics of the destination. In this stage, the attractiveness of the means and the media used are the key to success.

The information is not static, and users can *interact* with the destination online through a hyperlink, multimedia, and the possibility to interact with other users. The *decision to travel* is mostly made during the digital experience; thus, and at this stage, the user must find at his or her disposal the way to buy tourist services directly online.

Online platforms, such as institutional pages, follow the tourist also during his/her *experience*, by making available maps, useful tips on culture, language and useful numbers, and/or by recommending routes. Finally, the platform allows visitors to share his/her experience in various ways, from posting "travel diaries" to pictures, comments and videos posted on social networks.

Innovation is a fundamental component of digital marketing, and tourism is among the most dynamic sectors, with the opportunities offered by digital technologies in the field of promotion and commercialisation. However, the high level of competitiveness that characterises the industry requires companies to make effective and well-planned choices to be successful.

This manual provides the reader with useful insights, recommendations and guidelines for the decision-making process about the implementation of a digital marketing strategy. To this end, it represents a tool which is mainly aimed at:

- public bodies, e.g. destination management organisations (DMOs)
- private organisations, e.g. destination management companies (DMCs) and/or incoming travel agencies.

The guidelines discussed in this section are based on research developed to outline the most innovative strategies for promoting and commercialising tourist destinations.

The ultimate goal of the study is to help slow-tourism DMOs and DMCs to promote their products and destinations through digital marketing, in line with the scopes of ENI CBC MED Med Pearls project. To this end, the manual is grounded on seven case studies that were considered to be particularly effective and innovative and are in line with the Med Pearls project (see the Case Studies chapter for more details). Thus, the qualitative research carried out is on the basis of the recommendations provided by this manual. The outlined practices are those considered highly recommendable for tourism entrepreneurs and public agencies of tourism promotion.

Recommendations on Social Media Marketing

A social network is a group of people connected both at the human and virtual levels. Therefore, it can be understood as a network of people connected to each other through family, work, friendly ties, and as a network of people (or community) connected only virtually and without any physical and knowledge link.

The use of social networks is an important part of our social life, with incredibly high numbers of interactions per hour at a global level. That is why the messages related to a brand, a project, a product and, of course, a destination, need to find space and be successfully managed and conveyed in this virtual environment.

The widespread use of social media marketing (SMM) is one of the main findings from the research carried out for the present manual. SMM is a branch of online marketing applied to social networks. This practice uses the capacity of social media and web-based social applications (apps) to generate interaction (engagement) and sharing (social sharing), and to increase the visibility and recognition of a brand, a product or a service. It includes activities such as:
- promotion/sale of particular goods and services
- generation of new business contacts (leads)
- increase of traffic to the official website of a brand.

Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest and Snapchat are the most commonly used social media platforms. It is important to mention that, at the time of writing, TikTok is growing rapidly and is particularly recommended for those who want to reach users under 30.

It is important to have a space of discussion on social media to interact with visitors and answer their questions, in particular about their doubts before their arrival at your location. In this sense, it is interesting to follow the example of Galicia that uses its institutional tourism Facebook page as a discussion platform for customers, responding quickly and comprehensively to users' questions. You can do the same on Instagram or Twitter. Moreover, keep visitors aware of events taking place in your destination.

Sharing videos on social networks—about the destination or a specific attraction—allows you to convey a large amount of information in a short time, and in a suggestive way. Furthermore, you give users the opportunity to share the content.

Another recommendation is the use of social networks to launch challenges and competitions to attract attention. This actively involves your users, who take action, like sharing a photo of a trip, a dinner or an overnight stay at your destination.

Finally, get the most out of mobile. Make sure your site is optimised for mobile devices, as—for instance—the majority of millennials prefer to navigate the web through their smartphone.

You can associate other forms of online promotion with SMM, to increase the effectiveness of your promotional endeavour. A SMM campaign, in fact, cannot represent the only way to promote and to commercialise a product. Associated actions usually are:

- Search engine marketing (SEM) (see later in this chapter)
- Search engine optimisation (SEO) (see later in this chapter)
- Social media optimisation (SMO)
- Social media advertising (SMA) or social ads
- Digital public relations (digital PR).

In the travel sector, social media platforms represent a key asset to support online marketing campaigns for the targeted audience to find inspiration and meaningful engagement. They are generally used as integrated marketing combinations to gain the most interaction with users thoroughly and effectively. These practices promote value co-creation by allowing users to actively contribute to constructing the narrative of the brand (storytelling strategy).

Therefore, your main purpose is to create and dynamise communities that share interests and values expressed by the organisation on social media, and to stimulate discussions about the brand. The interaction of the customer with this content can produce loyalty and "social media advocacy".

Users' likes, comments and shares activate the online word of mouth (see the fact sheet dedicated to this specific practice) by involving their network (friends, fans, followers) in the discussion. The customer himself/herself, thus, becomes an ambassador of the brand. In this sense, see the case studies of Portugal, Puglia and Galicia (see the Case Studies chapter for more details), and you will discover how they use hashtags strategically in the institutional tourism website to amplify and spread the messages of their specific campaigns through users' activities online.

This manual also shows other ways used by the destinations investigated to build relationships with consumers through SMM. For instance, Puglia and the Faroe Islands stimulate users' interactions by giving them opportunities to share stories and travel experiences.

Remixing—the practice of taking existing formats, templates or ideas and recreating them to express a user's personality or ideas—is on the rise through apps like TikTok, Koji, and Instagram Reels. Remixing allows brands to engage with new audiences and creates additional content that stands out from the crowd. In the future, this practice will bring even more opportunities for SMM.

The main criticality to be considered in applying and managing SMM is directly related to the nature of social media and its users' freedom of expression as well as the speed of the spread of news and comments: a negative post of a client and/or its poor management can become viral, thereby seriously damaging a company's reputation.

Recommendations on Gamification

The travel industry has lately shifted almost all its marketing budget to online and virtual technology. This is also due to the COVID-19 crisis that prevents off-line interactions with the audience. Gamification is one of the practices increasingly used to attract, engage and promote users and potential customers, and to promote brand loyalty. This technique allows consumers to get involved with the destination or product and creates playfulness and a fun culture. It has the power to develop people's motivation and behaviour in a ludic, shifting society.

"Gamification is the use of game design elements in contexts other than the game" (Deterding et al., 2011) for a purpose such as the inspiration of a positive perception of a product or brand. The global gamification market was valued at $6.8 billion in 2018 and is projected to grow to $40 billion by 2024 due to a growing demand for customer experience enrichment and improved engagement of employees (BusinessWire, 2019).

It is important thus to note that gamification is not a practice used only for digital marketing purposes, but it can be used with or without the support of specific technologies also off line, as a way to present the destinations and/or the attractions to tourists.

You can implement practices of gamification in different ways, from virtual experiences of monuments and cultural heritage to manipulative remote online travel adventures by live broadcast, immersive map experiences, augmented reality games or remote tours of urban or rural environments.

The reasons for adopting gamification in marketing are different, but it is possible to outline four main reasons to implement gamification within a digital marketing strategy:

- Engagement. By using games, you stimulate a strong engagement of the users. A recent study (Xi & Hamari, 2020) demonstrates that gamification appears to be an effective technique for brand management, and it can positively affect brand engagement.
- Motivation. Your gamification project should be based on a study of the users' profile and psychological features. Users are motivated throughout the customer journey, improving the effectiveness of digital marketing.
- Loyalty. For technology, gamification and relevant content can engage millions of users around the world.
- Data collection. Engaging online with the games you are proposing will allow you to collect a large amount of data. Every action made by the players is tracked and monitored. Gamification can amuse users and at the same time generate a whole series of behavioural and profiling data to be used in marketing and research and development.

Gamification is used to stimulate certain behaviours, but it always starts from the motivation of the users. A good gamification project can greatly strengthen the sense of ownership of an individual or community towards a brand or message.

Cases of success of gamification (very different among them) applied to digital marketing have been analysed in the case studies of Puglia, Galicia (albeit to a lesser extent) and Faroe Islands (see the Case Studies chapter for more details).

Recommendations on Storytelling

Building storytelling for your destination is an important task that can help you define your identity and communicate it effectively to users, as well as to attract new travellers. The narrative of your destination is something far beyond an advertising campaign. It means establishing a constructive dialogue with anyone who comes into contact with your destination. Importantly, the storytelling should be effective and suggestive in the case of a slow-tourism destination, particularly based on authenticity and the involvement of the local community. The example of the message shared by Galicia and Puglia (see the Case Studies chapter for more details) is paradigmatic in this sense.

Stories can be of local communities and their cultural traditions, stories told by expert local guides or stories about the travellers themselves. They can be a way of interpreting experience through credible characters with unique perspectives or genuine thoughts.

Every destination has sources to tell about what makes it the most attractive: the culture, people, food, nature, adventures or activities. The usage of emotional and authentic footage from trusted individuals, such as local hosts or real travellers, accentuates the sense of the industry's credibility. Zaytoun—a company specialised in fair-trade olive oil—has recently acted as a DMC for Palestine, using storytelling as one of the most used techniques within its digital marketing strategy.

In the case of Zaytoun, the engagement with users is done by promoting an authentic image of the local livelihoods and the tourism sector in the land of Palestine (see the case study). Cape Town (see case study for detailed information) also uses a series of videos with travellers participating in their "pocket-friendly challenge" to promote one of the strategic characteristics defined for the development of becoming a low-budget tourist destination.

Visual elements are essential to describe and explain a concept, especially in the tourism field. They help keep the user engaged and push him or her to act on a social media post or envision the destination's reality. These elements give more credibility to the written words in standing out, accentuate the dream process and motivate the consumer in decision making.
- Photos: illustrations, landscapes, food, cultural aspects, people
- Videos: live, 360-degree view interviews with travellers or locals, or encompassing games, information or adventure
- Data-driven content: charts or graphs that make the explanation or facts easier to comprehend.

Finally, it is important to mention another step in the creation and use of storytelling: from storytelling to story living. Telling a story serves to transmit the DNA of a brand: its essence and values.

The narratives are made through communication channels chosen for their ability to involve the target audience of reference and with specific languages, because the language is constantly evolving and follows the changes that occur.

Precisely for this reason, storytelling is evolving into a more advanced form. Storytelling and story living take up the challenge of a consumer who is no longer satisfied with a promotional message but wants to verify the goodness of a brand in the stories and facts, adding, in the second case, the possibility of interacting with the story. In fact, the user will be the protagonist and the one who can vary the story according to his or her choices.

We recommend considering the particular role that virtual reality can have in story living, as it places users at the centre in the form of digital avatars, making them feel in full control of the environments they explore. More information about virtual reality can be found in the next section.

Recommendations on Virtual Tours and Remote Tourism

Experiential marketing has the task of attracting attention through sensory experiences, stimulating or recreating certain moods and feelings, creating stimuli and inviting the user to action.

One of the ways to implement this experiential marketing is through virtual reality (VR), which has been used in the travel industry to provide virtual tours. Personalisation is a theme which is growing in importance within the tourism industry, and because of this, an increasing number of companies are realising the potential of VR in terms of creating bespoke marketing campaigns for aspiring travellers, instead of viewing it as a gimmick (Research and Markets, 2019).

The main advantage of this use is that it allows potential customers to visit the destination remotely before the arrival. This content is generally provided on the institutional DMOs' websites. Nevertheless, a private organisation can use this practice too.

The virtual experience can consist of a simple 360-degree image, which is also compatible with social media platforms. VR offers hotels, travel agents and other businesses in the tourism sector the opportunity to offer potential customers a virtual travel experience, as in the case of Rimini, in Italy (Figure 94).

Figure 94. Virtual tour offered by the tourism board of the city of Rimini, Italy.
Source: https://www.riminiturismo.it/virtualtour

Another successful project was developed by an innovative start-up in Italy to promote the Trentino region. The app "Trentino VR" was developed in 2017 by DigitalMosaik Entertainment, using VR to promote local tourism and culture.

Through a VR headset and a mobile app, people can discover Trentino, with the aim of being stimulated and then motivated to visit Trentino live. Through this app, the user is transported to unique places, acting as the protagonist of a story that develops around him/her (Figure 95).
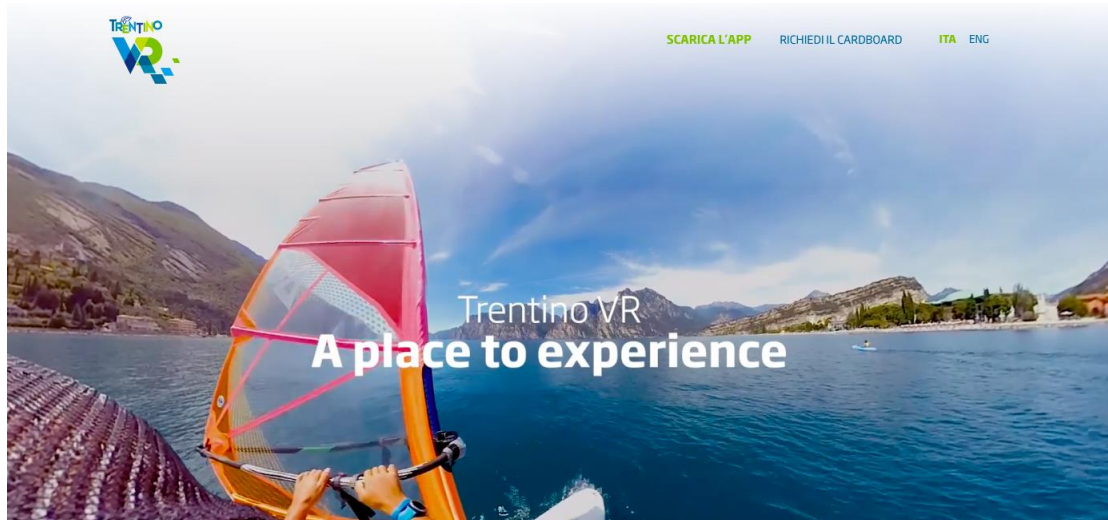
Figure 95. "Trentino VR" project. Landing page of the website dedicated to the project.
Source: https://www.trentinovr.com

The choice to create an app that can be downloaded by anyone makes it a mass marketing tool. Indeed, an institutional tourism site such as www.visitdolomitipaganella.it uses the app as a promotional vehicle (Figure 96).
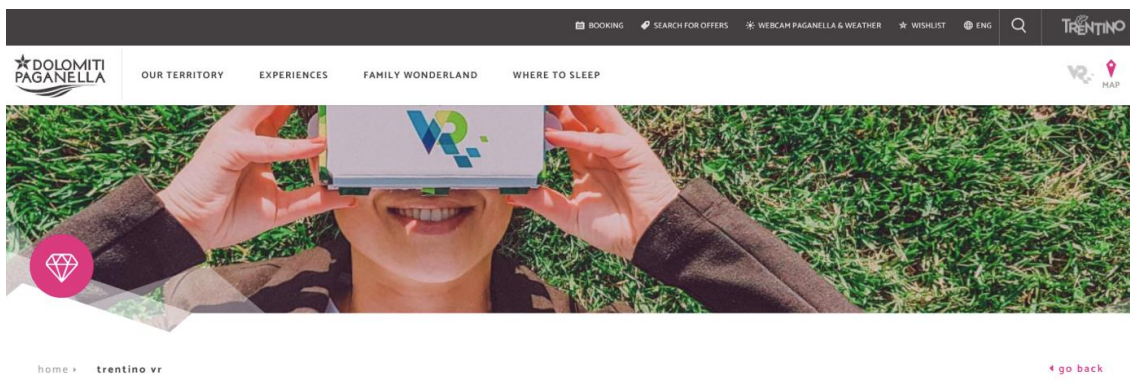
Figure 97. Institutional website *Dolomiti Paganella*.
Source: https://www.visitdolomitipaganella.it/en/trentino-vr

Nowadays, the possibility to experience a destination through a virtual tour has gained relevance due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions. Virtual approaches to travel, although still in aseptic and primordial form, can really be among the main assets for recovery, and innovative campaigns have arisen, such as the remote tourism campaign designed and implemented by the Faroe Island Tourism Board (see the Case Studies chapter for more details). From their institutional website, it is possible to experience live some of the most iconic places of the destination, thanks to a mix of the latest

technologies, gamification and human interaction on the site (Figure 98). For details see the Case Studies chapter.

Figure 98. Remote tourism campaign by Faroe Island Tourism Board.
Source: https://www.remote-tourism.com

VR for the world of tourism is an interesting marketing opportunity if exploited well. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that VR is not a strategy but a tool that can valuably support the promotion and marketing of a destination. But VR must be in line with a well-defined marketing strategy.

Finally, here are some applications that can give people—particularly in the period of travel restrictions due to the pandemic—an escape and maybe help us plan the next trips, for when the emergency is over.

- Google Earth VR. The VR version of the famous Google app is undoubtedly the most noteworthy and interesting VR application. With Google Earth VR, it is possible to fly over a city, dominate the peaks of the highest mountains, walk on unknown roads and even float in space. This is yet another venture by Google that translates into a sensational experience, which allows you to visit almost any place in the world with the perception of being there.

- National Geographic VR. This app, released in 2019, brings the user to many live experiences around the world. The app is constantly updated with new content from the world of travel, culture, art and science (Figures 99, 100 and 101). National Geographic VR is available for Oculus Go in the 360 version and Oculus Quest in the VR version.

Figure 99. National Geographic VR.
Source: https://www.oculus.com/experiences/quest/2046607608728563/?locale=en_GB

Figure 100. National Geographic Digital reconstruction of the ancient Inca citadel at Machu Picchu
Peru. Source: https://www.oculus.com/experiences/quest/2046607608728563/?locale=en_GB
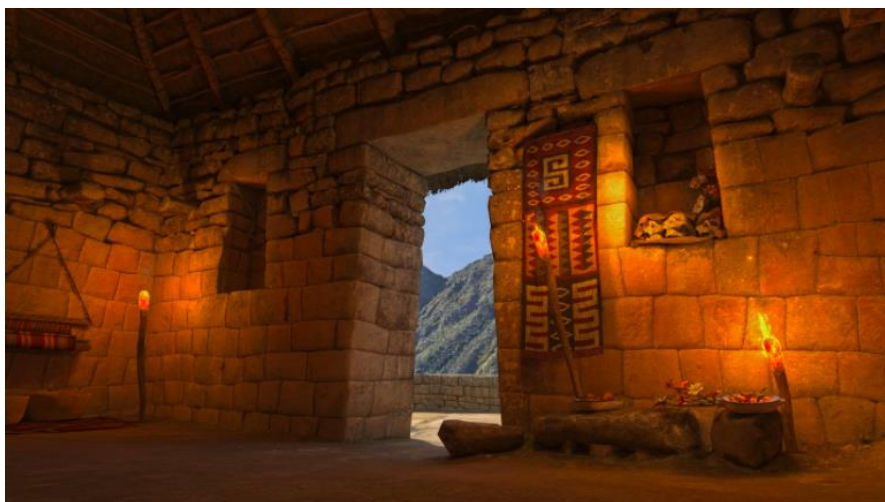
Figure 101. National Geographic VR. Digital reconstructions of the ancient Inca citadel at Machu
Picchu, Peru. Detail of the interior of a house.
Source: https://www.oculus.com/experiences/quest/2046607608728563/?locale=en_GB

The use of VR is recommended, particularly in this period of travel restriction, to reduce the possibility of contagion from the coronavirus. VR is among those tools that can help us move and meet without putting our health and that of those around us at risk.

Indeed, VR allows people to explore the world in a protected environment or preview attractions such as museums without the need to physically travel. It is a technology that does not aim to replace real experience, but which can give many advantages.

There are already numerous free applications, accessible to all, which can be experimented with immediately to "escape" from the walls of the house. Obviously, in order to use them, the use of a VR viewer is required. The most famous apps are part of Oculus (to which Facebook belongs); by order of level, they are Oculus Go, Oculus Quest and Oculus Rift S (the most advanced, which requires integration with a PC).

While VR is getting more affordable and reachable, the quality of the experience still depends on the quality of the gear that users deploy.

Recommendations on Electronic Word of Mouth and Value Co-Creation

The term eWOM indicates "electronic word of mouth", that is, the electronic version of the traditional word of mouth, which can be defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or a company which is made available to multiples of people and/or institutions and is spread on the internet" (Cheung & Thadani, 2015: 329).

Word of mouth has always played a very important role in decision-making processes in which the consumer seeks recommendations in order to reduce uncertainty and the amount of information to be analysed.

The main features of eWOM are the following:
- Interaction often occurs between people who do not know each other and have no relationship with each other.
- Interaction may be anonymous, and this encourages consumers to express their opinions.
- Online reviews can reach all people who have access to the Internet.
- The effect of online reviews does not fade with time.
- The content may be particularly detailed, as it reflects the opinion of more than one person in written form.

Thanks to the Internet, therefore, the information and advice of friends and relatives can be systematised, and the user will no longer have to limit himself or herself to the advice of a small group of people, but may gather opinions from the web overall.

This can come in different forms: writing online testimonies and reviews of the brand or service on a website; meta-sites, such as TripAdvisor (Figure 102); influencers or hashtags; page tags; and sharing experiences post-purchase on social media platforms from regular consumers.

Moreover, users add content directly to the main sites, and this gives more credibility to the promoted service or product and allows the potential traveller to gain valuable insights on the service or destination, a motivational aspect for product acquisition.

It is thus highly recommendable to face this new type of word of mouth proactively, trying to exploit it as a marketing tool at no cost. It can allow destination promoters to understand what the consumer appreciates, to encourage the communication of positive aspects or improve the quality of negative aspects in order to increase the satisfaction of customers. This can be achieved through:
- the use of hashtags, which indirectly represent a form of promotion made by users
- encouraging travellers to share videos, pictures and travel diaries, in order to leave other users a positive message about the destination (value co-creation)

- making systematic use of social networks, stimulating user engagement
- using influencers as ambassadors of the destination (see dedicated session)
- encouraging on-site travellers to leave positive feedback.
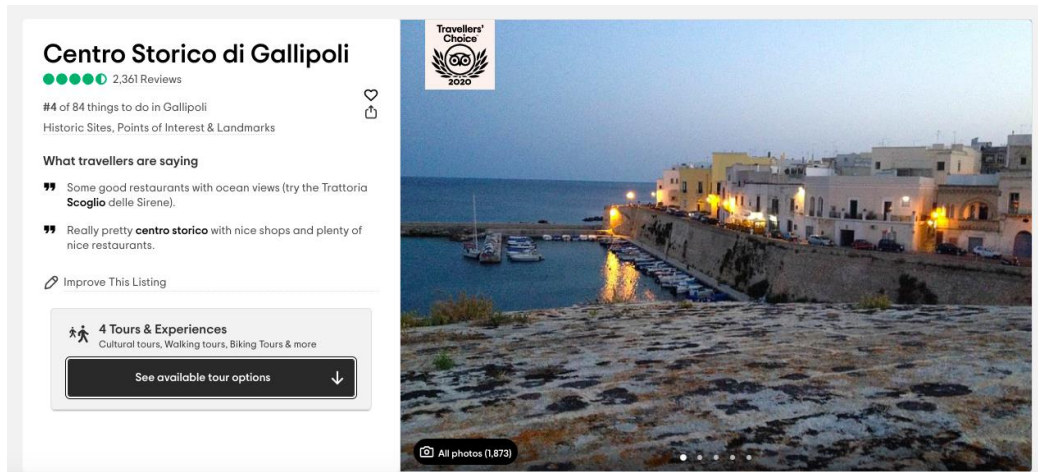
Figure 102. Example of eWOM about Gallipoli, Puglia (Italy) in TripAdvisor.
Source: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g616185-d8093652-Reviews-Centro_Storico_di_Gallipoli-Gallipoli_Province_of_Lecce_Puglia.html

Please explore, in particular, the cases of Puglia, Portugal and Galicia to find out how these successful destinations use eWOM proactively.

Recommendations on the Involvement of Influencers and Digital Nomads

Being a digital nomad represents a choice of life, thanks to a trend that is changing the way we think about the balance between career and private life (smart working). The same technological development that induces many persons to work at home allows a new generation of travel enthusiasts to work virtually anywhere, thanks to a simple Wi-Fi connection.

Differently phrased, a "digital nomad" is one who chooses to embrace distance work as a choice of life and uses technology to earn a living, so as to have maximum freedom to move. It is worth considering that the growing number of people opting for the smart working modality due to the COVID-19 pandemic could likely increase the number of digital nomads in the near future.

Furthermore, the term "influencer" is used in marketing and advertising to indicate people who, being decisive in the influence of public opinion, are an important means of targeting advertising messages, in order to accelerate their acceptance by a wider audience.

Both figures, digital nomads and influencers, often work to promote emerging and unknown tourist destinations. This is highly documented in the case study of Cape Town (see the Case Studies chapter for more details), but it follows the same rationale as the tourism promotion campaign of Portugal in 2007. In the latter case, internationally well-known figures were associated with the tourist destination in domestic and international promotion (Figure 103).

There are various ways to classify influencers. For instance, when the audience size, that is, the number of followers, is taken into consideration, the ANA (Association of National Advertisers, 2018) identifies four categories:
- micro-influencers (up to 25,000 followers)
- macro-influencers: (up to 100,000)
- mega-influencers (up to 500,000)
- celebrity (over 500,000)

On the other side, Forrester Research in 2010 identified three main categories based on the level of influence these individuals are able to exert. They are:
- Social broadcasters with high recognition value who have built their popularity outside the net (examples are stars of the entertainment world, sports etc.). Their visibility guarantees companies a wide spread of messages, even if these influencers do not always have specific or sectoral skills.
- Mass influencers are individuals with a strong presence on social media and a large following. They are recognised as experts in a specific field by the communities with which they interact.

- Potential influencers, by virtue of their communicational and aggregative power, are potentially influential for their network of knowledge. This network is usually composed of small communities. Potential influencers are very active users in social networks who are committed to building their own reputation in the networks with which they relate.
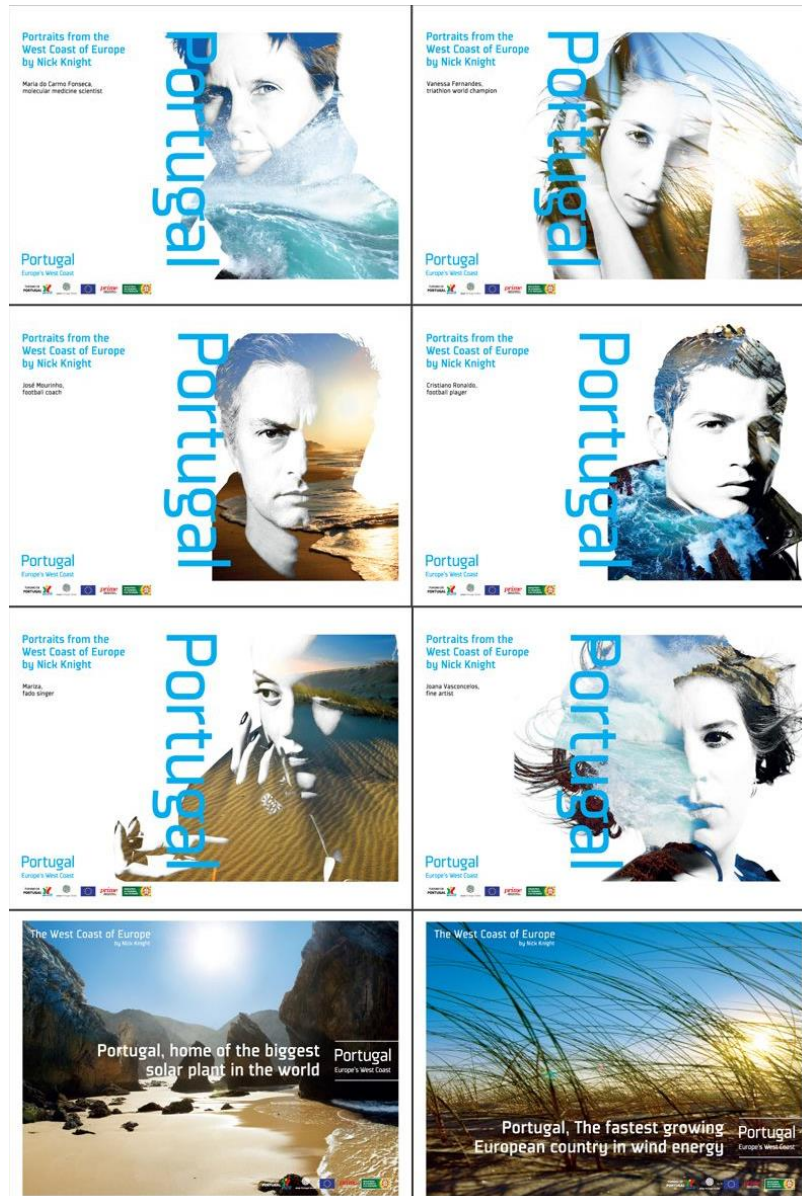
Figure 103. Promotional images of the "Portugal–Europe's West Coast" campaign by Pedro Bidarra (BBDO). In the campaign Portuguese global celebrities were embedded in the promotion of the destination.

Finally, with regard to the presence of digital nomads in a destination, it would be of great interest to navigate digital nomads' forums, where one might promote specific destinations as ideal places for remote working. For instance, a page at https://locationindie.com/digital-nomad-forum contains information on the most used digital nomad forums.

Recommendations on Online Travel Planner Systems

Online travel planner systems (OTPSs) have been developed by hoteliers and sightseeing agencies. They allow the user to select a range of services in order to create an à-la-cart trip. OTPSs can be considered both as a promotional tool and a planning platform for travellers. Nowadays, institutional sites, major DMOs and DMCs provide the same service on their platforms. In addition, and in order to optimise the efforts for the marketing of displayed content, OTPSs are designed to follow users during their online experience. For instance, in the case of the institutional tourism website of Galicia, the system reflects the future phases of the travel (Figure 104).
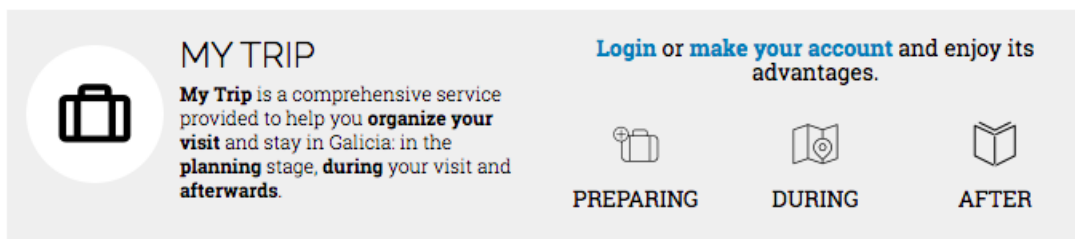
Figure 104. The "My Trip" service in www.turismo.gal
Source: https://www.turismo.gal/preparando-a-viaxe?langId=en_US

The user explores the site, and he/she is able to select the favourite offers and add them to an individual list of preferences in a personal account previously created (Figure 105).
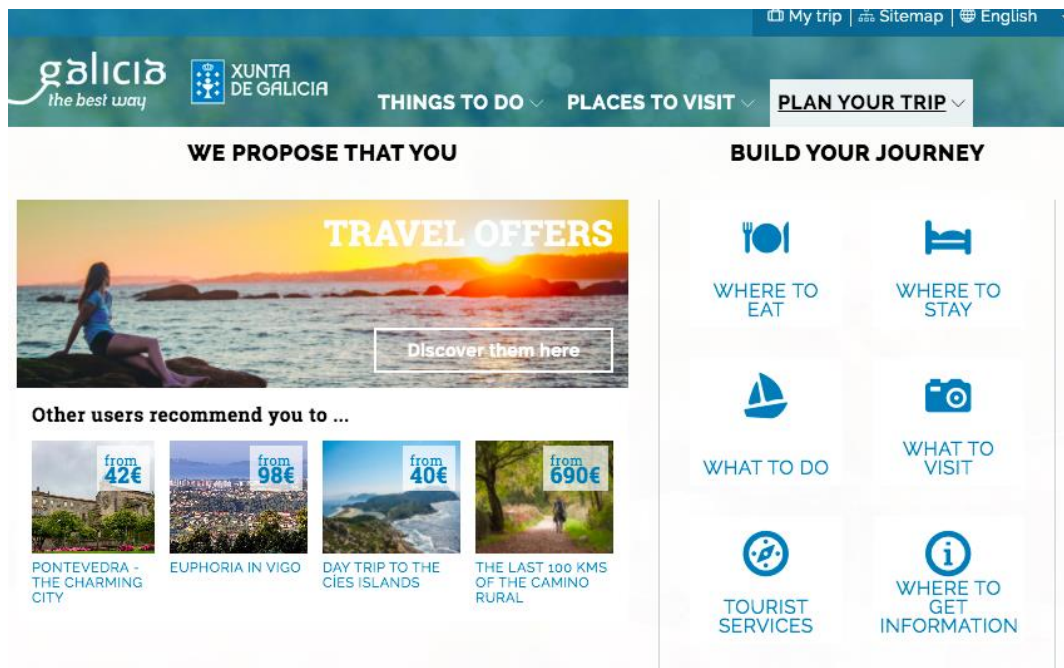
Figure 105. OTPS of the institutional tourism website of Galicia.
Source: https://www.turismo.gal

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Such a strong interaction motivates loyalty towards the brand because the customer is incited to return to his or her personal account, especially if this practice is associated with others, such as, for example, the distribution of newsletters that sustain the interest of the user. In this sense, it is recommended to provide the system with an automatic email system that contacts the user after a prolonged period of absence from the platform.

This system enables travellers to get an accurate travel plan and allows DMOs and DMCs not only to commercialise their offer in a direct and personalised way but also to monitor the interaction of users with their online pages. The utility of the collection of this large amount of data, which retains the profile of visitors, their behaviour and their preferences, has been discussed previously in this document.

Recommendations on Search Engine Marketing

The advantage of using digital marketing consists of being able at any time to control and influence the behaviour and the interaction of users through digital technologies, tools and media. For instance, tools such as web analytics, the science of web data measurement, provide meaningful support for the success of inbound marketing initiatives, and/or to plan a digital strategy and improve the digital marketing activities in progress.

The online presence and reachability of a company/product/organisation are essential concerns. Search engines such as Google are competitive by nature: each search's top five results capture almost 70% of all web search traffic (SEM Studio, 2021). Thus, websites will always be competing with each other to gain visibility and generate targeted traffic, in order to appear, as a consequence, in the top positions of the Internet browser/searcher. Therefore, companies must integrate their web marketing strategies with so-called search engine marketing (SEM) techniques.

SEM produces qualitative and quantitative increases in traffic towards the organisation's products site. Following a SEM strategy is a very powerful sales option for entrepreneurs in tourism, as in many other sectors. In digital marketing, Google Tools represent useful instruments to monitor the popularity of search queries in Google Search as far as different regions and languages (e.g. Google Trends) are concerned. They also provide important support in analysing the content of a webpage and generate fruitful suggestions to make that page faster (e.g. PageSpeed Insights).

The main SEM tools are:
- Search engine advertising (SEA), referring to the promotion of a product, service or company for a fee paid to a specific search engine;
- Search engine optimisation (SEO), which is a non-paid optimisation technique that aims to achieve ranking in the first positions of a search engine results page (SERP) those websites that are believed to be the most relevant with a given search query (organic results).

The difference between SEA and SEO in practice is highlighted in Figure 106.

Regarding SEO, it is worth mentioning that the popularity of a website (thus its rank in the list of organic results) is mainly determined by how much users are linking back to the site (back-linking).

In this case, improved visibility is obtained by optimising the content of pages, making them easily understandable by search engine crawlers (on-site SEO) and/or through activities of website optimisation and structuring internal and external links. The latter could increase the site's authority in the eyes of algorithms that define the website's popularity (off-site SEO). The more attractive and engaging the website, the more back-

linking activities are to be expected, which will provide a more visible position in the list of the organic results.
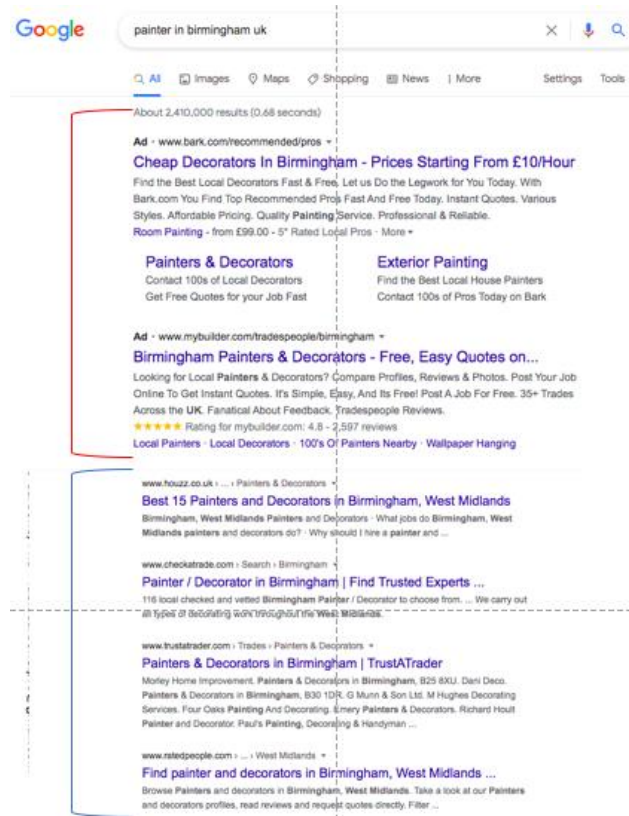
Figure 106. Difference between SEA (in red bracket) and SEO (in blue bracket) on the Google SERP.

In this context, it is interesting to analyse the following example: in Figure 107 two Google searches are shown, regarding respectively "tourism in Canada" and "tourism in Portugal" (the latter being one of the case studies conducted for this manual).

In the first case, it is possible to see that the institutional website promoting tourism in Canada appears as a second choice in the SERP, while Portugal appears as a first choice.

To be successful in a SEM endeavour, a website must be attractive and able to communicate in an engaging way its structure and its services. It must comply with accessibility requirements that make it accessible to all users, including those with visual, auditory or motor disabilities.

Whether the site is promoting a hotel, a museum or a destination, it must be a showcase in which users can find all the essential content to be able to make a choice. The text content and multimedia content can make a difference if they are of quality and, of course, if they correspond to the organisation's services.
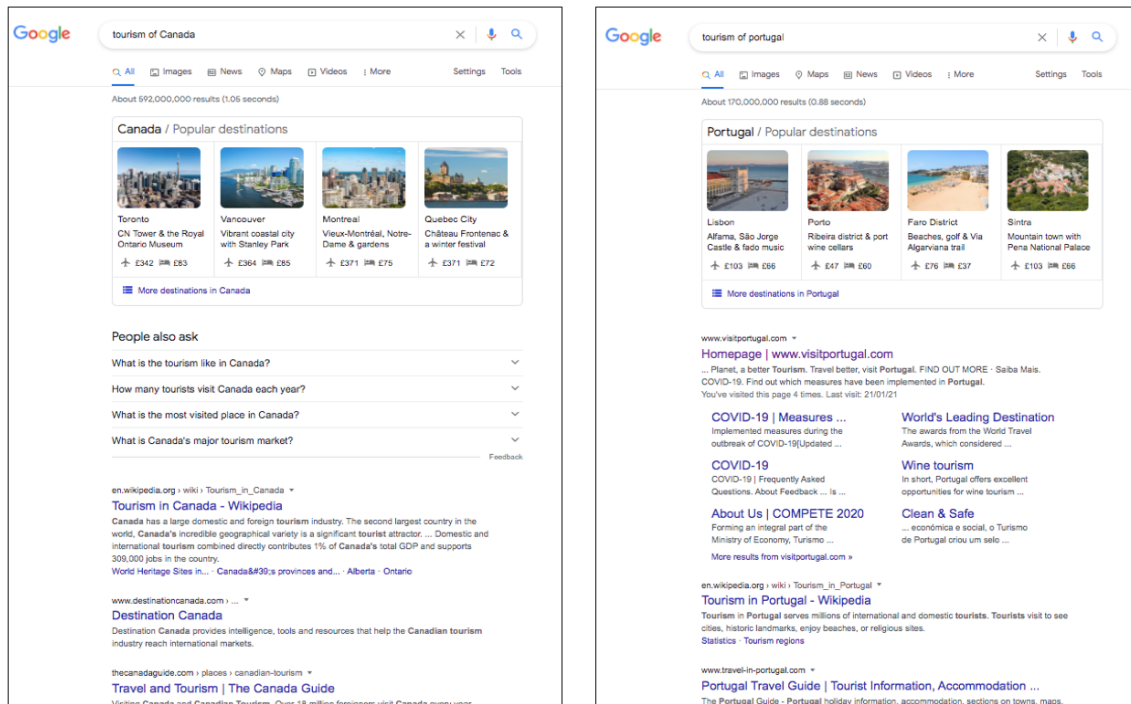
Figure 107. Difference between the organic results of a Google search using the keywords "tourism of Canada" and "tourism of Portugal".

Do not forget that content creation is essential. Take a look at what Thailand is doing by using 360-degree video technology and VR to allow potential customers to go inside the cultural attractions. There is increasing growth for destinations that are also using conversational marketing as another method to engage customers through chat-bots, social messaging, calls, and more.

This practice was observed mainly in the case study of Cape Town, as the destination uses this practice to maximise the interaction with users. To stimulate brand loyalty and back-linking, Cape Town institutions build relationships through the massive use of newsletters and personalised, one-to-one recommendable content.

Finally, in order to provide further content and stimulate backlinking—that as we see is fundamental to the aims of SEO and a good organic position in the SERP—blogging is an additional practice we recommend integrating within an official website. It should include informational assets, news, achievements and recognitions.

Fact Sheets

Action 1: Social Media Marketing

Description	This practice increases the brand's visibility and engages directly with the potential consumer through visuals, competitions and giveaways, as well as valuable insights and information, or sharing updates and the latest news on the following platforms: Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat. It is important to mention that, at the time of writing, TikTok is growing rapidly and is particularly recommended for those who want to reach users under the age of 30. A well-managed SMM could represent great support for the SEM (see specific fact sheet) by increasing the popularity of the main website, its popularity and consequently the visibility of the site on the main search engines (e.g. Google).
How it works	The first step to implement SMM is to perform an audit and to gather some important information, such as: • On which social platforms is the company currently active? • Which social networks bring more value? • What kind of content do competitors post? • What is the best style in which to communicate? • What types of content are posted by our company on different channels? How frequently? What results from investing in social media advertising? • How would the SMM strategy be monitored? Once the SMM is launched: • Consider creating and always sharing videos, photos and multimedia with high technical quality, in order to guarantee a good experience for users. • Be consistent with the message spread among the different platforms. • Engage users with games, competitions and campaigns. • Give users the right digital assets (such as logos or branded templates) to encourage creativity, to stimulate the practice of remixing effectively and to ensure the integrity of your valuable brand. • Use hashtags to stimulate online word of mouth and promote the role of brand ambassador among users. • Consider managing paid partnerships with influencers and digital nomads (see below Action 6). • Boost the shared content with paid promotions and ads.
Budget	Implementation costs can vary considerably, as they depend on a large number of aspects, such as: • content quality level • translations • use of specialised human resources SMM indeed requires time and human resources dedicated to it. However, it is possible to say that this type of practice is relatively inexpensive because the creation of social profiles is free. Creating and managing social networking campaigns will be easier if a specialised social media management team is already part of the human resources department of the organisation.
Timing	Variable, according to the strategy.

Action 2: Gamification

Description	Gamification is the use of game design elements in contexts other than the game to achieve a certain goal, such as to entertain, motivate, engage and sell. Tourism marketing campaigns based on (or supported by) the practice of gamification guarantee a particularly high level of interaction. It has the power to develop people's motivation and behaviour in a ludic way.
How it works	Quite often, the support of a specialised company or consultancy is required. Consider contacting some of them to mutually define steps, costs and a possible schedule. Study the motivations and psychological profile of your target audience. Integrate a user-centred design by identifying the player's interests, social boundaries and competencies. Always remember that fun is the key to the gamification experience. Define the best game components to share your message and at the same time to engage your users. Define the rewards. Focus on game dynamics and aesthetics, which is the interaction facility creating the game's experience, enabling the value co-creation between the traveller and the brand.
Budget	Medium to high. Using gamification practices to attract audiences and boost their interaction online with the brand/destination/product is more expensive than other practices. This is due to the programming work that is necessary to develop specific games.
Timing	The creation of the software to play online may be relatively short, but the timing of this practice depends on the use you make of it. For instance, it can be limited in time if associated with a specific marketing campaign.

Action 3: Storytelling

Description	Storytelling conveys and interprets experiences or stories in a way that engages the potential consumer you are sharing the experience with. Every destination or brand has a story to tell about what makes it the most attractive, from culture and livelihoods to people, food, nature, adventure or activities. The story should convey value and meaning to the listener to engage his or her emotions and dreams.
How it works	• Identify the type of story and theme based on audience and campaign topic. • Choose the storyteller character to be genuine with a unique perspective. • A campaign could involve the local community, or local guides. It could be in the form of eWOM through a digital influencer (a photographer, blogger, YouTuber, journalist) or sharing by local guides or travellers themselves. • Select the means of storytelling through interviews, series or tours presented with visuals such as videos or photos with a narrative caption, or gamification on mobile apps.
Budget	Low to high. The use of specialists for advice/consultancy, as well as the media used and their quality, increases the cost of the activity.
Timing	N/A

Action 4: Virtual Tours and Remote Tourism

Description	The use of technology such as VR and other mixed systems based on digital technologies and human interaction represents a stimulating way of promoting a tourist destination. Particularly now, with the absence of travellers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, DMCs, DMOs, tourism agencies and hotels have turned to VR to keep the interest of potential, future visitors. Virtual tours are essential elements to create enthusiasm in potential customers towards tourism products and provide inspiration for future real-world travel.
How it works	• Select the appropriate technology to use (VR, augmented reality, mixed methods, other innovative methods). • Define the content to be promoted. • Design and develop the digital tool. • Promote the tool online.
Budget	Medium to high. This practice's costs are mainly related to the use of digital technologies and highly specialised human resources.
Timing	N/A

Action 5: Digital Word of Mouth and Value Co-Creation

Description	"Electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) is any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or a company which is made available to multiples of people and/or institutions and is spread on the internet" (Cheung & Thadani, 2015: 329). eWOM is a key advertising asset and metric of the awareness variable of the consumer acquisition process. It consists of user-generated content that helps build a sustainable relationship with the traveller. It can impact and target other potential consumers and increase the visibility and credibility of the brand.
How it works	• Involve bloggers, influencers and partner brands and motivate them to promote a brand/destination in their own pages and profiles directly. • Stimulate previous travellers to share their experiences either by the use of hashtags or page tags on their social media channels, via travel diaries and multimedia content. • Motivate travellers to publish their reviews via meta-sites such as TripAdvisor and Expedia.
Budget	Low to medium. The budget for this practice can be considered negligible, as the platforms to stimulate positive feedback are accessible for free. If you want to rely on digital marketers or brand consultants to maximise the results, the cost depends on the fees required for consulting.
Timing	N/A

Action 6: Influencers and Digital Nomads

Description	Persons who, being decisive in the influence of public opinion (influencers) or a specific community (digital nomads) are personally involved in the promotion of the destination. The high relational potential (influencers) and a consolidated reputation deriving from the high degree of interest and knowledge of a certain topic or type of product (digital nomads) validates a product's authoritativeness, generating confidence on the part of its followers.
How it works	• Identify the influencer in line with the target you want to attract to the destination. • There are different types of influencers (for instance, depending on the number of followers in their social networks, or on the real capacity to influence the market). Choose carefully the right one who suits you and your objectives. • Invite influencers and/or digital nomads (photographers, bloggers, YouTubers, journalists and others) to learn about the destination, offering a period of stay (that eventually could be longer for digital nomads). • DMOs (or DMCs) commonly pay the influencer/digital nomad to actively promote the destination using their own channel. The amount of compensation varies and depends on the potential audience and the modalities of promotion, ranging from supplying a free T-shirt with the name of the destination to a more consistent campaign to present the destination. • Make and share online interviews, series and tours presented with visuals such as videos or photos of the influencer's experience.
Budget	Medium to high. The more famous the influencer, the higher the cost required. Less expensive will be the presence of digital nomads. As for digital nomads, in contrast, no budget is needed (unless you want to create specific incentives for these figures to encourage their presence), but it is necessary to promote the destination as an ideal place for digital nomads, in order to attract them to the place.
Timing	Variable, depending on the marketing strategy.

Action 7: Online Trip Planner System

Description	An online trip planer system (OTPS) is an online system associated with the main website. It offers users the opportunity to select the attractions, activities and favourite offerings found on the site. Based on its selection, which remains registered in a personal account previously created, the user can then decide to plan (and possibly purchase) a totally tailor-made trip.
How it works	• The OTPS is associated with a page that promotes the destination. • Each component of the offering displayed on the page is associated with an icon. • By clicking on the icon, the user chooses to select a specific offering. • User preferences are saved in a personal account previously created. • The user can finally use this selection to plan his or her own travel and eventually purchase it directly online.
Budget	Medium. The cost of this practice is mainly related to the specialised human resources for the creation and maintenance of the online system.
Timing	N/A

Action 8: Search Engine Marketing

Description	Search engine marketing (SEM) is the complex of web marketing activities aimed at bringing targeted traffic to a website, increasing its visibility on search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.). In recent years, search engines have taken on mediators' role between companies and users and have replaced, or otherwise integrated, traditional means such as newspapers, TV, word of mouth and specialised magazines. The vast majority of users and potential buyers search, analyse and compare products and prices online using search engines. For this reason, the integration of SEM with traditional web marketing guarantees not only the mere online presence but also a boosted visibility.
How it works	To appear among the first results in the list provided by a search engine for a given search query, a company can choose two methods: • Search engine advertising (SEA) • Search engine optimisation (SEO) SEA is a paid service and guarantees immediate visibility. SEO is based on a search engine's algorithm that displays a search query in a ranking according to the popularity of the webpages. In this case, a site needs to be attractive, clear, engaging and easily accessible, and capable of promoting new visits from the same users from other web resources (back-linking).
Budget	The budget for this practice may vary depending on the tool chosen (SEA or SEO). It is important to note that even if an organisation opts for SEO, the need could emerge for collaboration with specialists who can be entrusted with creating a particularly effective page. In this case, although the SEO service is free, the specialised work has a cost.
Timing	Variable, according to the digital marketing strategy (albeit six-month time is the minimum).

Conclusion

Tourism has always been a very competitive industry. Today, an unexpected occurrence has made—and will continue to make—this competition even more fierce. The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for travel, such as travel restrictions and social distancing, have led to an unprecedented crisis in the sector.

Fear and uncertainty are and will be the biggest challenges for the tourism sector. On the one hand, it is necessary to restore the confidence of tourists and the host community. On the other hand, destinations will need to be very effective in their promotion and commercialisation, as the competitiveness is expected to become even more ferocious.

This manual is intended to help both the public and private sectors in tourism to face COVID-19-related difficulties by providing insights on successful practices of promotion; and by improving the capacity to commercialise the destination and/or tourist products through innovative marketing strategies, particularly related to digital marketing.

The analysis of case studies helps to understand the context in which these practices are successfully applied, and the recommendations alert you about critical aspects of each practice, together with very practical fact sheets.

Although the manual was conceived to focus on slow-tourism destination, nevertheless the seven digital marketing strategies presented can be applied successfully in several contexts. We hope that everyone finds this manual a fundamental ally for the future of tourist destinations and/or for the tourism that will come.

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