

Guide for Promotional Practices of Destinations

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GUIDE FOR PROMOTIONAL PRACTICES OF DESTINATIONS

The Digital Tourism Think Tank (#DTTT) researches and collects the most innovative international practices for the promotion and the development of tourist destinations. The work for CHARM consisted in the creation of a guide that unveils the best methods and approaches to promote and commercialise destinations to tourists, as well as reinforcing the intrinsic value of local communities. Besides more traditional practices, the project has taken a step forward and has identified those cutting-edge actions, which can deliver inspirational content and innovative ideas.

A collection of the most innovative international best practices has been created, categorising different approaches under three main objectives:

- Development of Destinations and Communities
- Creation and Management of Products and Events
- Branding & Storytelling

UNDERSTANDING & ALIGNMENT

The aim of the Guide for Promotional Practices of Destinations is to provide the Villages of CHARM with inspiration and guidelines on what and how to apply new methods in order to promote and commercialise the destinations.

Examples have been selected amongst bigger and smaller destinations, as well as businesses that can provide destinations with the most innovative and helpful tools to promote experiences and products of the destinations. Besides a variety of traditional approaches, such as events, exhibitions, press trips, fairs and attendance to promotional initiatives that can enhance the commercial aspects, this guide includes a collection of best practices in terms of branding, messaging and content that can enhanced audience engagement and tap into the people's interests.

Although the final users of this Guide will be Charming Villages, several examples refer to bigger destinations, with an apparently different audience, budget or message to be conveyed: this helps increment the amount of inspirational content shared in this document, boosting the exploratory process and presenting a series of big, innovative ideas, that can still be delivered by and adapted to smaller destinations.

This Guide will also investigate the role of the villages, not only as tourism destinations but also as leaders of their industry and supporters of local communities, pioneering a model that can be

shared across different European Tourism Communities. In other words, this Guide will explore the synergy and define the roles of the destinations, public authorities and SMEs.

METHODOLOGY

From a wider perspective, the general aim is to gather ideas on how to develop and promote rural areas. With this in mind, the research conducted by #DTTT has been based on a wide and diversified knowledge and expertise in travel trends and destination best practices, which have been selected and presented according to parameters of relevance and feasibility.

Once a first selection of examples has been presented on an **interactive Mural board**, which was developed according to two main objectives, Promotion and Development, it was possible to start building this Guide. Every example will be presented with a short description, relevance to the project and quick recommendations and takeaways that serve as 'How-to' guidelines.

1 Development of Destinations and Communities

The key to putting villages on the map



Wider knowledge
of sustainability
within communities



Local People that
become 'Sustainability
Ambassadors'



The creation of a
Community-Led
Sustainability Plan



Networks of Villages
aligned by similar
sustainable objectives

1 DEVELOPMENT OF DESTINATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

1.1 COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

One of the most fascinating aspects of small villages and the core of what has to be communicated about them revolves around local people and their communities. Communities are part of the assets of the destination; hence investing in the development of local communities and ensuring the wellbeing of people is part of the duties of destination management. This has the potential to put the small villages of CHARM firmly on the map, as places where people can enjoy the countless opportunities available to them.

The sustainable development of these communities is, of course, a key topic right now for destination management organisations. Small villages all across Europe are facing different challenges. Amongst the challenges that affect the sustainable development of the destination, there is the loss of services, depopulation and a too-rapid growth, which leads to loss of community.

Some key actions can enable communities to cope with and react to these challenges. For instance, it is essential to learn how to lead communities towards a scenario of resilience, strengthening the ability of coping with challenges. Furthermore, it goes without saying that applying innovative thinking is fundamental to switch towards the creation of new ideas and the implementation of improved scenarios. Digital and technology have contributed to the development of Smart approaches, boosting the development of the destination and rural planning. Finally, as it has never been more relevant than today, destinations development has to be driven by a sustainable choice and a sense of purpose, respecting the environment and local communities.

Working on a community development programme, it is worth considering different results in relation to the sustainable development of a small village:

- **A wider level of knowledge of sustainability challenges and opportunities** within communities.
- Developed skills of a core team of people (Community Development Teams) from different segments of the population who become '**Sustainability Ambassadors**'.
- The creation of a **Community-Led Sustainability Plan**.
- The creation of a network of small villages that are driven by the **same sustainable development objectives** and that can align their strategy.

Best Practice: West and South Cork, Ireland

The regions of West and South Cork have partnered with a Local Development Company, SECAD Partnership CLG, which supports the sustainable development of communities through a range of initiatives and programmes. The communities targeted in this programme are:

- Older people
- Youth
- Traders, professionals, employers and farmers
- Parents of 12 y/o pupils
- Parents of 12 y/o students
- Unemployed and underemployed
- Other Specific Groups who may not ordinarily participate in community planning e.g. travellers, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

Aims of SECAD Sustainable Communities Training Programme

There are the five main aims of the SECAD Sustainable Communities Training Programme;



Invitation to Tender for the Development and Delivery of the 'SECAD Sustainable Communities Training Programme' - West Cork Region

This is a great example of development through community partnership, local governmental leadership and the appropriate application of public funds to support development of local businesses, sustainability planning and knowledge sharing between communities.

1.2 SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES FOR THE COMMUNITY

How to turn a destination into a sustainable destination in 5 key stages



Evaluation

Initial analysis of what attributes, services, attractions and existing infrastructure the destination has and whether they combine to create tourism and development potential.



Institutional buy-in

Relevant political stakeholders must make a clear commitment to promoting the destination, with a focus on sustainability. The agreement between public and private sectors must be aligned and endorsed by all key institutional stakeholders in the destination.



Community involvement and support

Support and consensus from the local community as a key element of any future programme. The active participation of locals is essential, as well as the use of under-utilised resources, such as spare rooms and empty homes.



Training and coordination

Community and local business training plans, including hands-on workshops to help demonstrate the power and potential of technology. Training participants should represent local business, culture, technology and any other influential segments to ensure that knowledge is shared, as fully as possible.



Regulation

Activities pinned under sound regulation, giving legal legitimacy to any wider initiatives.

Best Practice: Fiskars Village, EDEN Initiative, Finland

Fiskars Village in Finland is an EDEN award winner for its visitor experience, with local stakeholders coordinating efforts to improve the interaction between visitors and locals and promoting sustainability. Visitors can have experiences exclusive to an ironworks village that combines local foods, extraordinary natural beauty, versatile outdoor activities, world-class exhibitions and performing art events.

The village, which was founded in the 17th century, is known today as the centre of Finnish art and design. For visitors it provides various workshops, events and plenty to see and do throughout the year. Fiskars Village could be from a storybook with its old buildings each telling a different tale. As an 'artisan village' it offers visitors an authentic experience, telling the story of Finland's industrial history with the added value of interaction with local artists and craftspeople. It promotes authentic and sustainable tourism, with nature, history and art attracting visitors who want a unique local experience.

Best Practice: New Destinations Summit, Spain

The '[Healthy Destinations Lab](#)' in Igualada, Spain, was an initiative that has been put in place by Airbnb and the local government, which consisted in a number of workshops and discussion based events over a period of 3 months, open to locals, small business owners and representatives from public administrations. The activity culminated with the 'New Destinations Summit', an international event that brought together more than 300 tourism and policy stakeholders, including 30 mayors. This is also a great example of the kind of event and summit that can be brought to the Small Villages of CHARM with the aim of promoting them, as well as boosting their development.

Airbnb asked an independent tourism expert to define the key learnings from the activity in Igualada: the aim of this study was to create a blueprint for how technology can be leveraged to drive tourism to off-the-beaten-path destinations, both within Spain and beyond. In January 2020, Igualada City Council and Airbnb presented the [Sustainable Tourism White Paper](#) as a proposed model for how private-public collaborations can help destinations develop their tourism potential in a sustainable way.



Best Practice: Britain in Bloom

This nationwide **initiative** is designed to transform and promote British communities through gardening. Creating cleaner, greener streets and a great community spirit. It aims to bring the community together, to promote care of the environment, wildlife, health and well-being. Britain in Bloom strengthens community values, traditions and cultures and has transformed neighbourhoods into places people can be proud of and want to visit.

This community initiative ensures that each charming village has nationwide visibility, that showcases its attributes and appeals to potential visitors. Britain in Bloom creates a strong brand presence for each community and puts them firmly on the map as a must-see place to visit.



Best Practice: Villes et Villages Fleuris, France

Villes et Villages Fleuris is a national and notable competition in France that has become a real social phenomenon. It consists of allocating a series of "Flowers" (one to four) to the municipalities in line with strict criteria. Around 12,000 towns and villages participate in the competition annually. It rewards the commitment to improve quality of life and environmental standards. It focuses on the place given to plants in the development of public spaces, respect for the environment (management of natural resources and preservation of biodiversity), the development of the local economy, the level of tourism and the preservation of social ties.

Villes et Villages Fleuris represents a real tool for tourism promotion as a tourist product in its own right as it creates an experience that brings locals and visitors together whilst promoting and sustaining the destination.

Best Practice: North Carolina Quilt Trail

In rural areas across North Carolina, where old, rustic barns are almost as commonplace as mailboxes, bright paintings have transformed the landscape. The square murals are called barn quilts because they're meant to look like traditional quilt blocks. Painted in bold colours, they often incorporate patterns and other familiar designs. This American folk art has created an entire movement around barn-quilt trails, where visitors in North Carolina can follow maps to find each piece, scavenger hunt-style. Combining road trips with eye-catching designs to create a fun adventure, it's a great way for visitors to discover the local heritage in different towns and charming villages.



The **North Carolina Quilt Trails** are a great example of effective product development that focuses on the local heritage and community pride. It is about creating a highly thematic experience that allows visitors to create their own itineraries whilst learning about the history and story behind each trail.

1.3 DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH INCUBATORS AND LABS

The Small Villages of CHARM have the power to lead and transform their industry. Every destination also has a responsibility to their industry, to help them develop and keep the destination competitive. Therefore, it is good to gather businesses that operate in the travel industry to align under a defined brand, recognising and becoming ambassadors of the core pillars of the brand, to help translate them into strong brand-rich visitor experiences and expand the social footprint through a coherent content plan.

If the DMO plays, or aims to play the extremely relevant role of leader of the industry, it is important that the challenges of small businesses are understood and addressed. Every tourism industry, even in some of the most successful destinations, is made up of a myriad of small and micro-enterprises, all working to succeed in their individual business ideas. With an acute understanding of the needs and challenges of micro-enterprises - often 'one-man band' outfits - the DMO helps them with highly tactical steps they can take, as well as shifting mindset to embrace the wider strategic opportunities.

There are various areas where it is possible to see major shifts in the way destinations grow and innovate. Innovation is creating a more seamless customer journey, as well as making it 'wow', unique and outside of traditional expectations. Further attention is drawn on micro-social networks and communities, reaching out to niche markets through a well-defined brand offer.

And, finally, innovation has a lot to do with technology, tools and platforms. More and more destinations are becoming incubators for new immersive experiences, where innovative ideas are implemented, benefitting the whole industry. Innovation Labs have taken place in big cities, such as [Paris](#), [London](#) and Singapore, as well as smaller destinations like [thecamp](#) in Southern France.

Best Practice: Guam Innovation Lab

In the U.S. territory of Guam, the [Guam Visitor Bureau](#) is working on an interesting and ambitious project: becoming the next Sun Valley of Travel Technology. To do so, they have launched a conference that gathers smaller tour operators as well as big brands like Airbnb, Booking.com or United Airlines.

In the summer of 2019, they hosted the first digital tourism summit, #InstaGuam Travel Talks, which focuses on building connections between local travel operators and global brands. The final goal was the acceleration of the Guam's tourism economy and the creation of new business opportunities for the inspiring young entrepreneurs on the island. Influencer marketing and social media strategies were the main topics of the presentations, allowing the audience to learn about strategy from people highly engaged in the market.



This event is the first step of a longer innovation-booster journey. The outcome of this effort is the creation of a Hub for Tourism Innovation, considering the key importance of the industry for the destination, providing 21,000 jobs on the island. The result of this, other than boosting conversation and interest around the destination, has allowed a series of concrete developments and investments. Both Airbnb and Booking.com have increased the number of offers in the destination on their platforms. The Guam Visitor Bureau is collaborating with United Airlines and Line Travel Japan to launch new routes to the island from Japan - this is the power that the conference had.

Guam is working hard to keep an eye on new trends to be ahead of other destinations. Innovative start-ups have contributed to making this summit memorable: for example, Zero Zero Robotics has presented the prototype of their drones, that will hopefully one day substitute the selfie stick. A 5G Open Lab is allowing to create a hot test bed for other innovative initiatives and applications, making innovative ideas become reality at a really fast pace. Every DMO has the potential to commit to innovation on a daily basis for the growth of the destination.

Best Practice: Smart Villages Scotland



The **Smart Village** initiative in Scotland provides small towns and charming villages with their own digital tourism portals and online services so that they can better showcase themselves to a global visitor audience. The initiative combines promotion and technology to enhance the visitor experience, with each village using technology to meet its unique requirements, such as integrating smart data feeds like weather and flooding alerts.

The initiative cultivates sustainable economic development that benefits the community and aids businesses and tourism. It is an exciting approach that responds to the needs of potential visitors.

Best Practice: Mirabilia Network

This initiative provides a connection that brings destinations together. It showcases thematic promotion through a network of clustered UNESCO sites. The aim of the network is to raise awareness of the lesser known sites and increase their exposure to a larger audience. By developing themes, for example food and wine heritage, destinations can attract tourists with themed itineraries and experiences that showcase these elements and promote them.



1.4 COLLABORATIVE METHODS AND TOOLS

Design Thinking

Human-centred design thinking is a method that allows us to find solutions and be productive in every situation. It puts users at the core, in order to design initiatives that can improve the experience of people. When creating new initiatives, both to develop and promote the CHARM villages, it is extremely beneficial to design them according to what people expect to experience in these villages.

For this reason, it is relevant to learn how to work collectively and interactively, also from remote locations. As well as applying Design Thinking, it is important to use the right tools that can facilitate the creation of a space where people can gather ideas, collect best practices, discuss and start to build together a new amazing project.

mural.co

MURAL is a digital workspace for visual collaboration: it is the most straightforward tool to create templates and spaces to develop new innovative ideas through design thinking and brainstorming.

MURAL enables innovative teams to think and collaborate visually to solve important problems.

People benefit from MURAL's speed and ease of use in creating diagrams, which are popular in design thinking and agile methodologies, as well as tools to facilitate more impactful meetings and workshops.

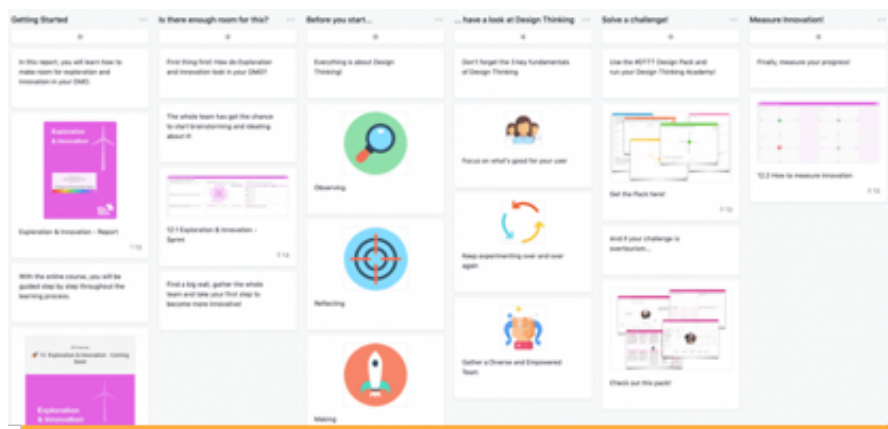


Project Management Tools

At the #DTTT, we very much believe in the importance of building an agile, multidisciplinary empowered team. This requires continuous and seamless communication and interaction between the people involved in the project. Fortunately enough, many tools are now saving us from piles of paper, endless email exchange and impossible meetings.

Tools like Asana, Trello or Monday.com are project management tools, which help a digital team and can easily be applied to community collaboration inexpensively to bring different people together to work on common projects and initiatives.

Each one allows you to see the big picture, helps perfect timing by viewing work in a calendar, easily spot holes and overlaps in your schedule and quickly make adjustments. Communication, comments, files are all in one place, deadlines are set and tasks are assigned for an overall alignment of all the people involved in a project. This makes life much easier when it comes to being consistent in terms of branding and driven by the same objectives.



Best Practice: Magdalen Islands, Province of Québec, Canada



Magdalen Islands (Iles de la Madeleine) applies design thinking to develop promotional initiatives responding to visitor needs. We have continually followed their development which has a strong community approach. They have created “Circuit des Arts”, a thematic trail focused on discovering the local creative and artistic scene that draws inspiration from its surroundings. It allows visitors to tour the have you tour the seascapes and discover local stories.

For a period of 9 months, the [Magdalen Islands Tourism Cluster](#) implemented a content creation strategy with different tourism companies. Over the years, the DMO organised social media conferences and provided training for tourism businesses. However, they felt that businesses needed help to promote themselves online and required a more personalised and in-depth approach.

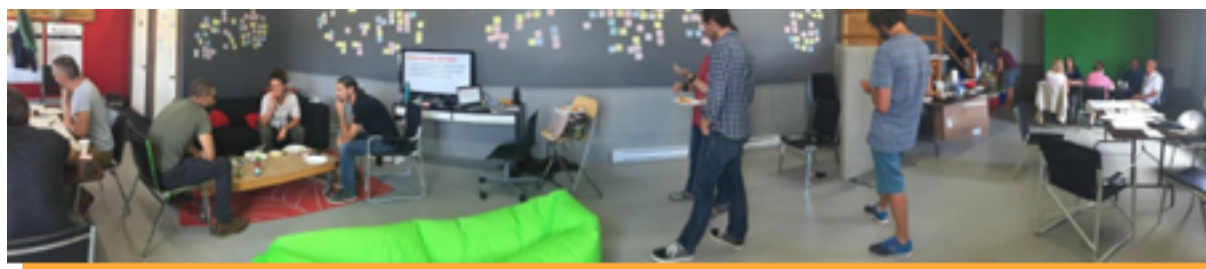
Different professionals gathered in the region and designed a hands-on approach to help tourism businesses plan their content strategy and build confidence in creating and distributing it. The group of professionals consisted of a local photographer and teacher, a video production company located in the archipelago, a local communications consultant, a local soap maker and YouTube content creator and a web and social media trainer and speaker.

The project included three workshops as well as coaching services to support a group of tourism entrepreneurs during the course of the project. The workshops were given during the winter and spring season (before the high season). The first one focused on strategy: before diving into the different elements that make up a good strategy, it is essential to take a step back and deliver the results of an online presence audit of all participating businesses. This provided a good portrait of the situation and served as a reference point throughout the project.



Two workshops focused on content creation and distribution. The group was divided into smaller units and participants rotated from one workshop to another. Topics included practical skills in photography, video production and use of different applications like [Canva](#) and [Snapseed](#).

In the workshop, participants were given an assignment and had a few hours to create, edit and publish their content on a Facebook page created specifically for this activity.



The professionals and participants were given the opportunity to exchange opinions about their content strategy and provide feedback to each other at the end of the activity. The DMO endorsed the project and provided technical and administrative support to the Tourism Cluster.

Training sessions on customer experience, crucial skills for supervisors, storytelling and a culinary event to help restaurants innovate and find solutions to the many challenges they face have been organised in the industry as a result of this cooperation. A project to help a group of tourism entrepreneurs assess the performance of their organisation in terms of quality and best practices is also underway.

The «Island Tales» mobile application came together in 2019. The Tourism Cluster supported this collaborative project which was the result of a design thinking approach involving the island's

museums. The Creative Tourism Network has also been invited to promote the wide array of workshops offered by local artists and artisans to position the destination as creative-friendly. Sustainability remains a key pillar of every activity offered in the destination: maintaining a positive balance between visitor satisfaction and the population is essential. The realisation of a 2020-2025 destination plan and further collaborative projects are bringing value to the tourism businesses.

1.5 TECHNOLOGY AND PLATFORMS

1.5.1 Use of Microsites

A site where the initiative can live and be promoted, a place where all the related activities can be gathered together. A microsite offers compelling benefits in terms of making a campaign really stand out. The UX experience is extremely important in terms of acquisition, engagement and retention. Microsites must create a visual language designed specifically to the user segment that they are trying to reach. It must be easy for users to find information and also be easy to connect users to the parent site. To ensure a seamless UX experience, microsites need to provide a more focused experience, ensuring the user's attention is purely on the campaign and the associated calls to action.

Airbnb

Airbnb has created a new trend in the development of products, bringing together hosts and guests and creating unique experiences. For small communities, AirBnB is a particularly interesting opportunity. It offers many opportunities for individuals to be incredible hosts, where their welcome, the uniqueness of their story or heritage is the product. Through AirBnB, those involved in tourism in the respective villages can build a strong offer, as hosts, experience providers and guides. Through a coordinated effort in a network of villages and actors, it's possible to curate an incredibly unique offer and provide fulfilment through campaigns, curation and micro-sites channelling storytelling through to bookability.

Cool Cousin

Cool Cousin is a start-up that allows a connection between users and local people who share the same interests and hobbies. The 'Cousins' share with visitors a list of tips and recommendations and a map with their favourite places in the destination. This is both an interesting platform to consider due to the highly personalised nature of 'hosting' but also an interesting model to consider, in creating a series of welcome hosts or ambassadors for the different destinations



concerned. At a village level, the individual ambassadors are often directly part of the village's identity, therefore considering interesting ways to incorporate them into the experience is key.

1.5.2 Messaging and Conversations

Connecting with potential visitors means delivering the right message to the right person at the right time. Every destination brand needs a voice and the right messaging provides the words to ensure potential visitors understand not only the destination's values.

Destinations should start an open conversation with visitors, because it is really important to create a human link between potential visitors and the local people. It is now fundamental to create space for people to have a proper and genuine conversation. In doing so, you can already build an authentic relationship between the visitor and the local.

Intercom

Intercom is a unique messaging tool, great when integrated to a website, application, etc. This platform allows the reception of messages from visitors or people who are on Intercom, Messenger, Facebook or Twitter, the registration of visitor profiles, measurement of performance and results to apply an efficient strategy. Intercom is far more than a simple messaging tool.

For local people and businesses, ambassadors of the small villages, it is a means to communicate directly with the visitor in a personalised and immediate way. The objective is to create a unique customised human-centred link, responding to the human need of visitors, which starts online and then materialise. For the 10 small villages, this is an opportunity to be explored, in order to catch the attention of the audience, convert and retain. The multiple features, including the chat and the integration of other applications, can boost the relationship with visitors. Just imagine if prospective visitors can connect with real ambassadors when visiting a local community? Today this is possible with the right digital setup.



2 Creation and Management of Products and Events

Key steps to designing new experiences



CHARM
Villages Pass



Events & Festivals



Trails & Itineraries



Expert-led Tours

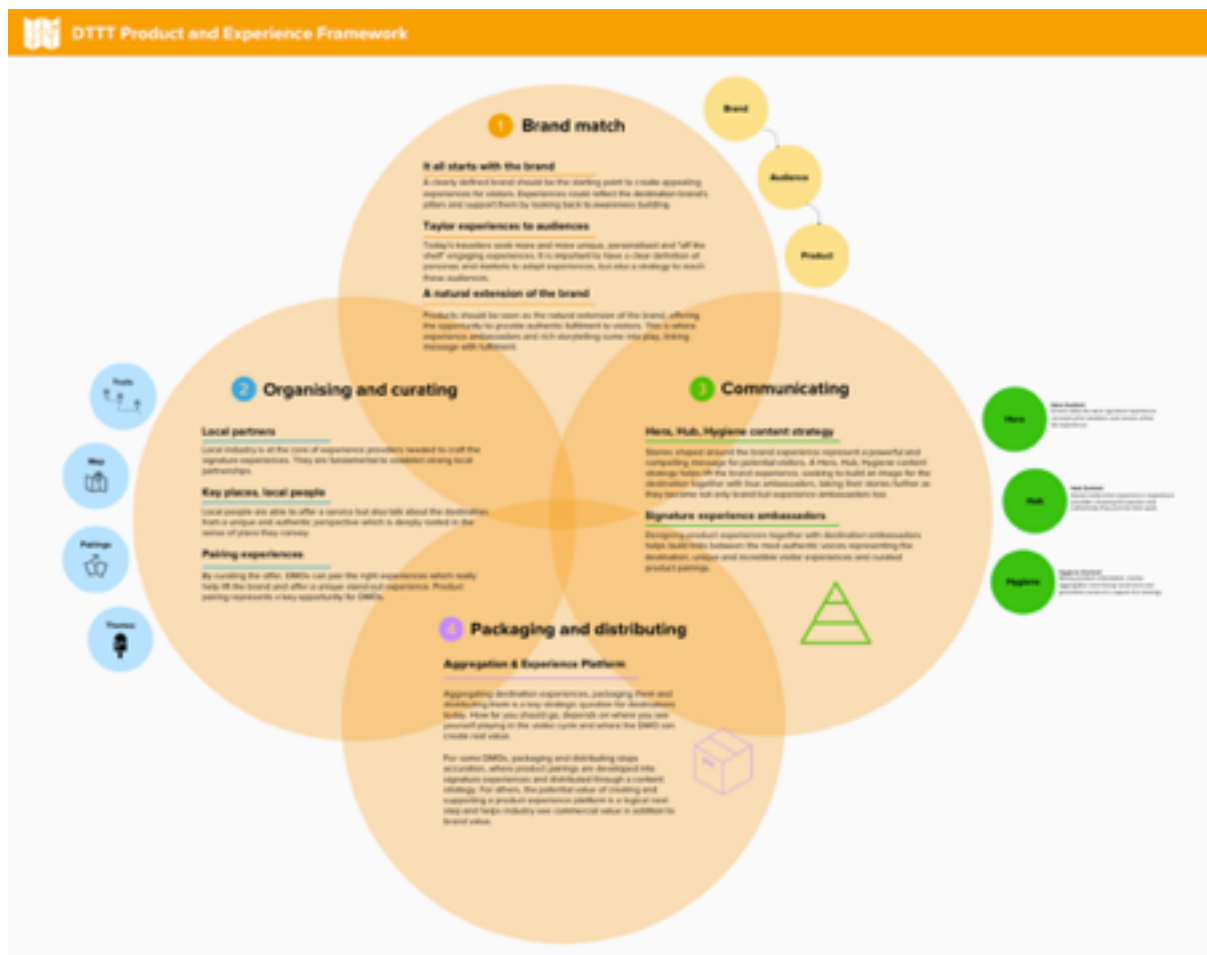


Curated
Experiences

2 CREATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PRODUCTS AND EVENTS

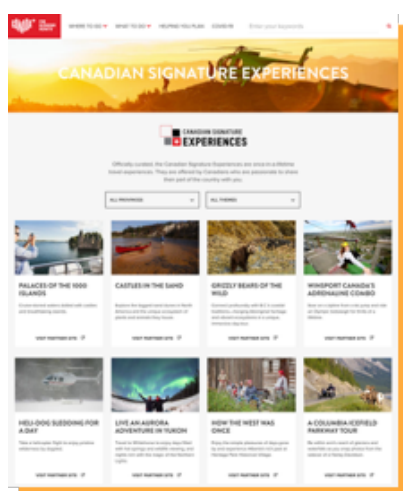
2.1 LEADING DISCOVERY THROUGH SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

Signature Experiences are engaging and immersive visitor experiences that represent the destination brand's essence and pillars. In other words, a Signature Experience is not just a way for visitors to enjoy the destination, but it is a unique and authentic way of building a strong feeling of fulfilment that will make your destination remain as a beautiful memory forever.



Many destinations have enhanced their product strategy by including a series of Signature Experiences, as [Visit Jersey](#) have done, highlighting many of the lesser-known locations. On their page they state: *"It's not always about the places you visit and the things you do when you're on holiday, it's about the memories you make while you're there."*

Is there a better way to explain it? There are various experiences that are offered as a unique way to experience the Island of Jersey. You can, for instance, watch the sunrise from a historic fort over the sea or sail to reach a desert island and do yoga on the beach. The element that makes these experiences incredible is not only the amazing set of landscapes, but also the fact that local people and businesses lead visitors along the journey.



Another example is Destination Canada; they offer a higher number of experiences than Visit Jersey. The **Canadian Signature Experiences** are “once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences”. Once again, they are led by local people who are passionate and want to share their stories with visitors.

In this case, the destination website provides travellers with a database, a unique space, where it is possible to find all the different experiences that the destination offers. People can filter the different activities based on geography as well as themes. Every experience presented is linked to the external website of the company that organises the experience: although being always checked for consistency with the brand and authenticity, this system guarantees a lower level of involvement in the creation and curation of experiences.

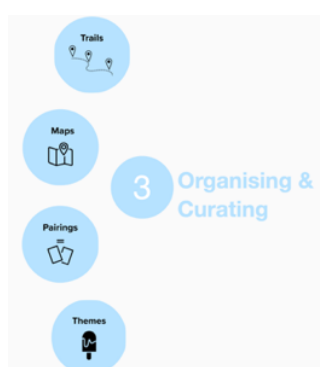
2.1.1 A FRAMEWORK ON HOW TO BUILD SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

When designing signature experiences, it is important to consider how they match the brand. A clearly defined brand should be the starting point to create appealing experiences for visitors. They should reflect the destination's brand pillars, promoting them in view of building awareness about the destination, since the very first stages of the visitor cycle. Today's travellers seek more and more unique, personalised and “off-the-beaten-path” experiences. It is important to have a clear definition of personas and markets to adapt experiences, but also a strategy to reach these audiences.

Seeing these experiences as a natural extension of the brand offers the opportunity to provide authenticity to visitors. This is where experience ambassadors and rich storytelling come into play, linking the brand message with the experience.

Signature experiences should be the coming together of local people and key places in the destination. That's why it is essential to identify local partners across the local industry. Local people are able to offer a service, but also talk about the destination from a unique and authentic perspective, which is deeply rooted in the sense of place they convey.

By curating the offer, small villages can pair the right experiences and enhance the brand and offer a unique, stand-out experience. Product pairing represents a key opportunity for destinations, which should select locations' highlights and pair them by theme or following a rationale for which it is possible to create visual references, anchoring stories and content, attracting specific target audiences to live unique and memorable signature experiences.



- **Trails** allow to curate a range of individual itineraries, based on different audience needs and thematic clusters.
- A **map** clustering experiences by theme or by geographical area is useful to guide visitors spatially while experiencing the destination.
- **Pairing** tourism products is the secret to craft a signature experience, where the essence of the brand is intrinsically related to local people's lives.
- Experiences can be grouped under specific **themes**, coherent with the destination's image and appealing to specific audiences.

New products and experiences often differentiate a destination from its competitors. Ambassadors are the major players, who help promote experiences in a highly bespoke and authentic way. Identify great ambassadors for the Small Villages of CHARM and integrate them into the products and experiences offer. This will ensure that the visitor experience delivers on the brand. The stories shaped around the brand seek to build on the already powerful content shot with ambassadors, taking their stories further as they become not only the brand, but also experience ambassadors.

When it comes to distributing experiences, how to aggregate, package and distribute them is a key strategic question for destinations today. For some DMOs, packaging and distributing products on their own website or channels enhances accuracy: product pairings are developed into signature experiences and distributed through a content strategy. For others, the potential value of creating and supporting a product experience platform is a logical next step and helps industry see commercial value in addition to brand value. For example, with **Bókun** as a technology solution, providers can expect global distribution, including Viator and TripAdvisor.

Bókun allows businesses to add their experiences and create joined-up multi-experience product pairings with other businesses, with minimal effort. This means that the destination creates the structure, framework and support for signature product experiences, whilst businesses take responsibility for shaping and building their own experiences and cross-selling with partners across destinations. The focus can then be the creation of an incredible experience platform, packaging and crafting the message around experiences.

2.1.2 HOW TO PACKAGE AND DISTRIBUTE PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES

- **Passes** - Many cities already have city cards. Think about how these might work well, shaped around themes or designed to drive discovery beyond the traditional set of attractions. A regional or country-wide pass can really drive discovery specifically around a thematic pillar of the brand. For example, Ticino, the Italian-speaking Canton in Switzerland, has developed a **Ticino Ticket**, extremely useful for data collection and to increase loyalty. With this Ticket, overnight visitors are granted with free public transport and discounts on mountain railways, boat trips on the Swiss part of the lakes and on the main tourist attractions of Ticino.
- **Events & festivals** - These are great opportunities to create demand for the destination and, if it is a good brand fit, it makes strategic sense to focus on them. Great examples include the **Tour de Yorkshire**, where the Yorkshire Tourist Board capitalised on the value of the Tour de France starting stage to develop an annual cycling event, which is now a big draw to the region. On the opposite end of the scale, Saalbach created **Saalbach Storybase**, an annual event for carefully selected influencers only, supporting content and awareness needs.
- **Trails & Itineraries** - Start with a number of 'hero' trails and continue to develop from there. Once you've developed the first ones, you will then be able to go more granular or deeper, according to the themes you have identified.
- **Ambassador Curated Experiences** - Fostering your local ambassador relationships is going to be key for powerful authentic brand storytelling. Ambassadors might be notably famous and help you create large-scale awareness. They might also be locally known, bringing a strong connection to a theme, such as a well-known local chef. Work with ambassadors and co-create both trails, menus, experiences and/or events.
- **Expert-Led Tours** - This is not to be mistaken with the traditional model of tours. This is about having a great expert-led experiences ran by people who are passionate about their knowledge, interest or the place they're rooted in. Here's where you can really look outside of tourism and also see how locals, in particular those who are missing out on the value of tourism, can be brought into the fold. For example, in Dublin, a **social commerce** outfit does just this, training and hiring homeless people to become local tour guides. A win-win for visitors and the city alike and really demonstrating the positive value of the visitor economy.

2.2 EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE DESTINATION

A great promotion strategy for destinations is to create local events and festivals that attract and inspire people. Events and festivals are a very effective communication tool, particularly on an external level. They enable and foster interpersonal relationships and promote local businesses. Events and festivals are important, as they allow for a more engaging experience for potential visitors, which ultimately leaves a lasting impression and is more memorable than any traditional form of advertising.

Niche events and festivals are becoming increasingly popular, as people seek new experiences. They are a great chance for destinations to stand out and showcase their USPs. Events and festivals can be built around Poetry, Culture, Food and Harvest, providing a great experience to visitors, as well as benefitting to local people. For small villages, it gives a chance to raise awareness about their food, produce and cultural heritage.

Here is a list of best practices for organising an event or festival:

- Determine a reason or theme
- Involve the local community and local businesses
- Prepare what you will showcase (local food, music, dance)
- Provide a secure and easily accessible location
- Find sponsors to offset costs
- Create a marketing strategy
- Prepare the event or festival well in advance

Local Produce Festival in Small Destinations

Sustainable travel means supporting local communities and businesses. Local produce festivals allow visitors to sample local food and culture and experience local life. Local produce festivals celebrate the uniqueness of a destination and its gastronomic offering. Visitors can try delicacies they would not find anywhere else in the world, fully supporting the local economy, local farmers and community efforts. When it comes to best practice for local events and festivals, here are some great examples.

Best Practice: Broadstairs' Folk Week Festival

Based in the seaside town of **Broadstairs**, this traditional folk music and dance festival is for people who love authentic music, local food and discovering new bands. There's a Craft and Music Fair, with a huge variety of ceramics, clothing, musical instruments, paintings, jewellery and gifts. Complete with Morris dancers and a range of singing, dancing, workshops and sessions for all ages.



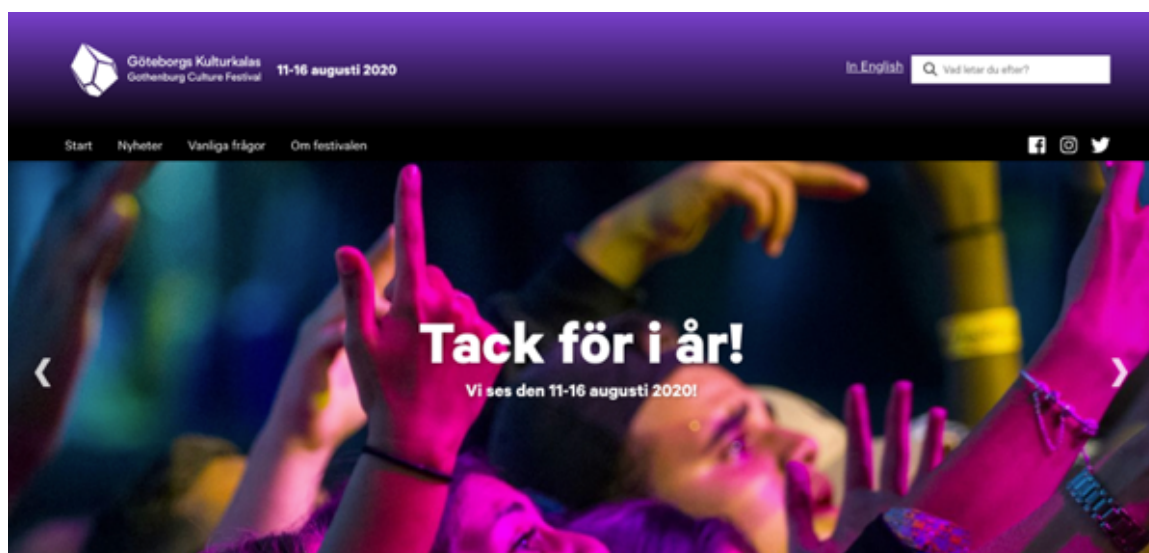
Best Practice: Porthleven Food Festival

The festival is located in the stunning historic harbour of **Porthleven** with a national and international chefs show, food stalls, street food, music and entertainment.



Best Practice: Gothenburg Cultural Festival

This festival offers a vast range of cultural experiences, such as opera, art, music, street craft work, theatre, literature, film and live music. It also offers traditional Swedish food and entertainment.



More examples of really well-curated events and festivals in relatively small destinations:

Best Practice: Faversham Hop Festival & Green Hop Festival

Faversham is a small market town home to Britain's oldest brewer, Shepherd Neame. The town's long-standing heritage in brewing is deeply rooted in the landscape of this part of the UK, where hops are harvested and used to make local beers. This heritage today is very much a part of the local visitor experience, whether it's discovering the local landscape or the experience of visiting small villages, where the pub and local beers form part of the experience.

The Faversham Hop Festival and similarly themed Green Hop Festival are two events which celebrate the local harvest, at particular times in the year when it can be sampled freshly harvested. It demonstrates the value of creating an event which celebrates local produce and creating a unique offering which drives discovery, local heritage and new visitors.

Best Practice: Shetland Wool Week

Shetland Wool Week is a world-renowned celebration of Britain's most northerly native sheep, the Shetland textile industry and the rural farming community on these islands. Just like the Hop Festival in Faversham, Shetland Wool Week has become a key driver of visitors to Shetland, who make the journey to Shetland to experience the festivities which celebrate wool, something which is deeply rooted in Shetland's identity and where, as a destination, Shetland can really demonstrate a unique identity.

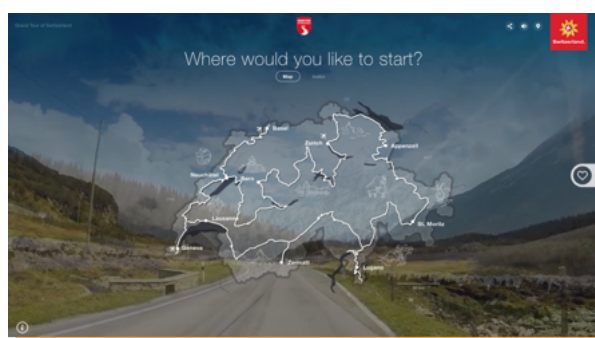
Just as with the beer theme, this is about putting a small destination on the map through events by tapping into niche global communities and strengthening the offer and appeal around that.

2.3 THEMATIC ITINERARIES

Thematic itineraries cater for the modern visitors' taste, as they are looking for authenticity in their travel experience. Designing diverse thematic programs for visitors allows destinations to provide those much sought after local, authentic experiences that suit their visitors' unique needs. Many destinations now use thematic tourism to develop new tourist products and to focus on various consumer segments. Examples of thematic itineraries include wine tours, historical tours, educational tourism and adventure tourism.

Best Practice: Switzerland Grand Tour

The Grand Tour of Switzerland is one of the best examples of how to organise and curate road trips across the country. Not only is the website pure gold in terms of interactive interface and engaging content, but it also represents the perfect combination of online and offline discovery of the territory.



The strategy includes building products and experiences around '[The Grand Tour of Switzerland](#)' and challenging visitors from different markets to experience the Grand Tour for themselves.

The Grand Tour site is heavily immersive, focusing on top-of-funnel branding and inviting discovery through interactive maps, whilst the route itself features signage to support the actual product on the ground and represent the perfect spots for the creation of content that travellers can share on their social media.

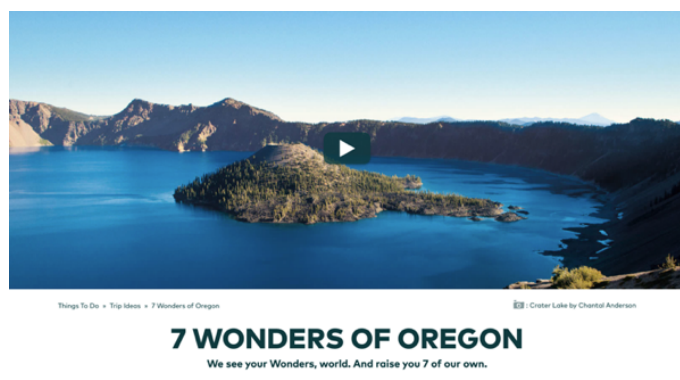


The ultimate addition to the product is the Coupon Pass, a collection of “2 for 1” offers to be used along the journey, and Spotify playlists to be enjoyed during the different itineraries of the road trip.

Including Spotify in the platforms where the experiences take place is an exceptionally clever way of enhancing the products and stand out in a competitive market such as Travel.

Best Practice: 7 Wonders of Oregon

At a regional or state level, there are a number of good examples of thematic developments. Travel Oregon's '[7 Wonders of Oregon](#)' are a great way of driving interest in the different natural wonders of their impressive nature. By taking the concept of the 7 Wonders of the World, they've managed to build a state brand around their awe-inspiring nature and then, using the 7 Wonders Concept, drive further differentiation around the uniqueness of different parts of the state.



Travel Oregon used this to build a serialised set of content working with bike-makers to design a bike representative of each region, with a bike builder in each region and tell beautiful stories which support discovery and create depth on the brand USPs.

Best Practice: Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme has been launched by the Council of Europe in 1987. The Cultural Routes demonstrate, by means of a journey through time and space, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe contributes to a shared and thriving cultural heritage.

An example of it is the Via Francigena, the ancient way to Rome, which starts in the UK and reaches Italy crossing France and Switzerland.



Best Practice: Cotswold Discovery Trail

The Cotswold Discovery Trails are designed on trail maps, placed in a Trail Pack along with everything else needed and then delivered in the post to visitors.



There are 2 circular trails to follow, one in the north and one in the south Cotswolds. Each takes a day to complete, ensuing visitors learn about the Cotswolds as they discover different places. The trails are designed to be completed by car but with frequent stops where visitors are encouraged to explore different places on foot. Included in the trails is a mixture of Cotswold market towns, picture postcard villages and sites of significant cultural and historical interest. It's all designed to allow visitors to have fun, learn about the Cotswolds and visit it independently. The Cotswold Discovery Trails offer a unique way to promote various villages in the area, through exploration and discovery, allowing people to design their own experience. The trails are successful because they incorporate the local story with the brand story. The highly stylised trails provide a great incentive for people to discover nature and charming local villages.

Best Practice: RAVeL in Wallonia, Belgium



RAVeL in Wallonia promotes multiple itineraries for cycle tourism and outdoor excursions. The Autonomous Network of Slow Ways (RAVeL - Réseau Autonome des Voies Lentes) is made up of greenways with more than 45 local marked routes for family outings, hikes, cycling, horse riding and roller skating.

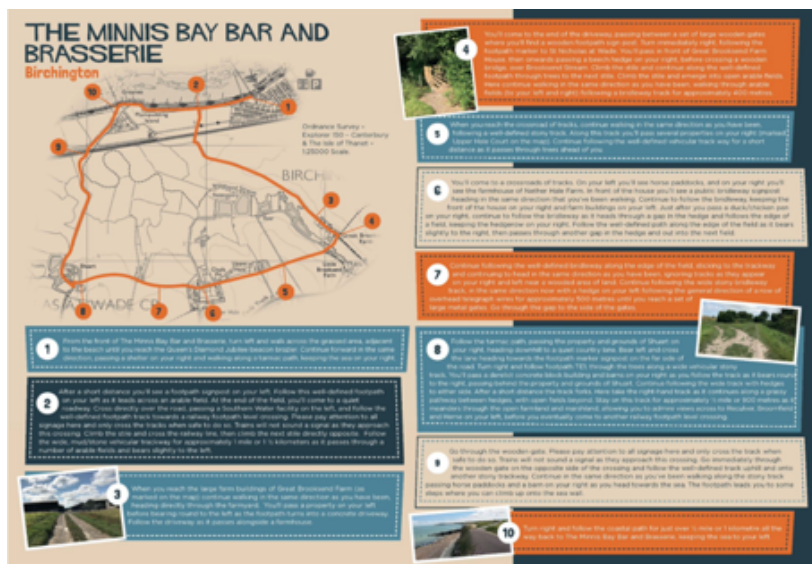
These greenways are gradually linked together to form 10 regional routes and 4 international routes which cover the whole of Wallonia territory and are intended for cycling tourism. This initiative specifically focuses on creating routes which allow visitors to discover villages as part of the itinerary. The RAVeL, the greenways and the cycle routes ensure expansive exploration of Wallonia, enabling people to discover large cities, rural areas and preserved natural areas.

As the direction of tourism changes, RAVeL is a great example of how destinations can develop a product that has a sustainable legacy. The Slow tourism approach to discover the most beautiful local villages through trails, responds to the current needs of visitors looking for unique itineraries, natural places to discover and freedom to explore. By connecting villages along a theme, RAVeL has created a product ensures visitors will want to discover new places time and time again.

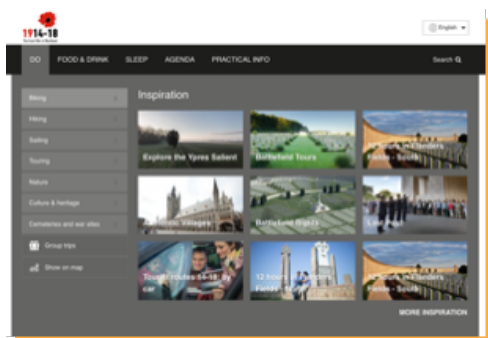
Best Practice: Shepherd Neame Pub Walk

The **Shepherd Neame Pub Walk** is an all year round concept that has a strong link to the local heritage and identity of the brand. It is based on five Pub Walk guides, with walks taking between four to six miles over a variety of terrains and along some of Kent's most beautiful scenery. The events and independent trails have proved to be extremely popular with locals, who once they complete one trail, want to try another.

An important element of the trails is that they start and end at Shepherd Neame pubs, adding that extra incentive. Pubs are traditionally places for the community to meet together, therefore it is fitting that the walks follow that theme. The events and trails are successful in bringing the community together, inviting everyone to discover the charming villages and scenery en route.



Best Practice: Flanders Fields, Belgium



The **Flanders Fields** Region is home to a collection of authentic Flemish villages around the theme of the First World War. From 1914 to 1918, Flanders Fields was a major battle theatre on the Western Front. As a historical location, it offers visitors authenticity and allows them to learn the stories, experience the historical sites and discover the history of Flanders Fields. The villages enable visitors to step back in time and embrace history as they visit must-see locations and participate in WWI themed tours and events. They are also famous for their beautiful natural landscapes, authentic charm and gastronomy.

For visitors, discovering villages through the history and storytelling is a huge part of their appeal. Within Flanders Fields, the villages are central to experience. The destination presents a best practice example of how to cluster villages around a prominent theme and create an authentic experience.

Best Practice: Well Olive

In the heart of Europe, olives are not just a source of food, but a product that contains history, tradition and culture. Well Olive understands the connection people have with olives and have

created a product for food tourism. It has been developed around the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes and the Olive Tree route to promote slow, sustainable tourism. The theme for product development is the heritage of the Olive Tree. Well Olive has recognised that rural destinations are becoming more popular for tourists who are demanding more varied and personalised experiences. There is growing interest in the cultural heritage of destinations, the natural environment and learning about local traditions.

The olive routes are described as a “road to wellness”, incorporating rural tourism with wellness and wellbeing activities across the Routes of Olive Tree. The tourism product combines education with entertainment, making rural destinations more attractive to discover. The development of a tourism product around the olive oil and tree, brings together rural tourism, wine and food tourism, wellness and wellbeing tourism, cultural tourism, eco-friendly tourism. For visitors looking to experience a healthier, more sustainable way to discover charming villages, this is it.



2.4 AUGMENTED REALITY

While AR and VR are not new players in the technology realm, both are still largely untapped in tourism. One in four travel marketers used to not anticipate investing in AR or VR until further advances had been made. However, the worldwide AR and VR market size is forecast to grow 7.7 times between 2018 and 2022 (Source: Statista, Greenlight Insights) and worldwide spending on VR content and apps is forecast to reach \$3.77B in 2021. (Source: Statista). That's huge! So, what are the opportunities for destinations to tap-into?

Virtual and Augmented Reality can enable destinations to drive conversions and interest through a highly immersive, engaging and three-dimensional experience. Connecting visitors to the destination in new and exciting ways can spark more interest from target audiences.

The potential for creating and delivering innovative and unique tourism experiences through AR is vast. The areas of application for augmented reality in tourism span across the various stages of the visitor cycle, thereby highlighting the potential impact that this technology will have on travellers and the opportunities to engage with brands.

Although major investments into AR technology have been made, it is such as automotive, gaming and retail rather than travel, which already led the way in showing how AR can give them a competitive edge in the marketplace. For villages, AR can be a powerful medium in bringing heritage and nature to life in the absence of physical tourism infrastructure, where the digital can often step in.

Best Practice: VisitOSLO's AR App

In 2019, VisitOSLO worked with leading tech and theatre professionals to pilot an AR app, bringing famous playwright Henrik Ibsen back to the streets of Oslo over 100 years after his death. They used cutting-edge motion capture technology to create an augmented reality app that sparks new interest for the world's famous author of 'A Doll's House' and taking visitors around the city at the same time.

The app successfully brings the story to life, highlighting key spots in Oslo, where Ibsen lived, had drinks, walked, etc. These points of interest trigger Ibsen into a pre-set monologue, followed by some information about him and the setting, such as The National Theatre, in a specially designed app with a map guiding users to the spots.

Prior to this, VisitOSLO integrated AR with its City Museum attraction, creating an augmented reality app City Detective, where both children and adults can look into Oslo of the past and solve puzzles, whilst visiting the City Museum.

These examples show that AR can help to enhance historical experiences in a destination, connecting visitors in a more engaging and immersive way.

2.5 VIRTUAL REALITY

VR on the other hand allows potential visitors to 'try before you buy', experiencing the virtual world of a destination from the comfort of their own home.

Through Google cardboard and other VR gear available on the market, virtual reality content is now more accessible than ever for visitors to engage with and for destinations to add a new layer of immersive content.

Best Practice: Destination BC — ‘The Wild Within VR Experience’

‘The Wild Within VR Experience’ is an interactive, 360° video that allows travellers to experience the pristine coastal wilderness of British Columbia, Canada, in an immersive way. Back in 2014, Destination British Columbia was the first DMO in North America which started to use virtual reality in the promotion of the destination. The use of latest technology is a part of Destination BC corporate strategy, which focuses on increasing resonance and engagement with the destination brand. This development also aims to support the long-term goal of ‘Creating a Magnetic Brand’.

The footage is shot in both first person and third person view and follows general touristic experiences from the view of the visitors. Viewers are taken on a journey along the coastline, in a commercial whale watching boat, and later have the option to either go visit a sea lion colony or to go hiking in the mountains, adding an element of interactivity.



As pioneers in the field of VR destination promotion, Destination BC had to use 3D printers to create a custom rig for multiple GoPro cameras that they were able to either mount on a backpack or a drone used for filming. While the VR experience was initially designed for the Oculus Rift, the DMO kept in mind the impending release of consumer-grade headsets of several brands, making sure that the content of its production could be adapted to different platforms. You can take a look at the making of this VR Experience [here](#).

Best Practice: ‘Remote Tourism’ by Visit Faroe Islands

The brand new initiative launched by the Faroe Islands is definitely one of a kind. Remote tourism has been redesigned. Visit Faroe Islands has created an innovative virtual experience, where virtual

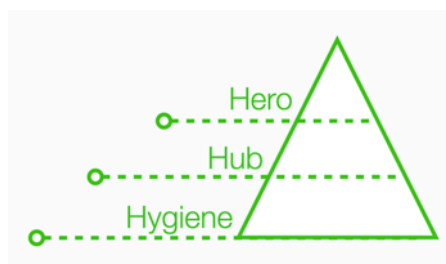
visitors can control where and how they explore the island. Travel has changed and this is only the beginning.

Staying at home but looking for something exciting to do? How about controlling a helicopter in the Faroe Islands? Well, now this is possible... Pushing the boundaries and taking virtual tourism to a whole new level is what Visit Faroe Islands did with their ground-breaking and highly innovative and interactive remote tourism experience. This initiative is a great example of creativity, using new technology and how to inspire visitors. Visit Faroe Islands offers visitors the chance to experience the virtual trip of a lifetime, whilst giving them a glimpse of what the Faroe Islands has to offer.



Since the COVID-19 outbreak hit the Faroe Islands, tourists have had to cancel or postpone their trips. However, 'Remote Tourism' has now been redesigned. Through the Visit Faroe Islands remote-tourism initiative, visitors will be able to explore the Faroe Islands by interacting live with a local Faroese, who will act as their eyes, ears and body on a virtual exploratory tour of the country. Visitors will be able to visit the country virtually, with no limits.

Just like in a real-life computer game, virtual visitors will not only be able to see the views from an on-the-spot perspective, but also control where and how they explore the island, by using their computer or phone keypad to turn, walk, run and even jump. This innovative technology allows visitors to explore locations on foot, by boat and also take to the skies by helicopter, getting a bird's eye view of the beautiful, unspoilt, wild and natural countryside in the Faroe Islands. For people who are missing travel at the moment, a virtual tour with Visit Faroe Islands offers the



3 Branding and Storytelling

To shape an identity and curiosity to visit



Telling Authentic
Local Stories



Interactive
Discovery Trails



Local Heroes &
Ambassadors



Social Stories
& Insta-trails



AR Trails &
Discovery

3 BRANDING & STORYTELLING

3.1 STUNNING CONTENT & STORYTELLING

Storytelling has proved to be the most effective way of promoting a destination through content. Beautiful imagery is not enough to enchant the audience and deliver an authentic glimpse of what the destination is like. Authenticity and uniqueness need to be conveyed in the most original way so that people continue to be inspired and dream about travelling. The aim is to lead the audience through a journey of discovery and explore the hidden secrets of different destinations.

Campaigns and more general marketing deliverables need to be consistent with the brand and reflect what destinations offer. In the case of the CHARM, it is possible to build content around the discovery of different villages, which are all unique, but have a *charming* effect on visitors.

Stories shaped around the brand experience represent a powerful and compelling message for potential visitors. A Hero, Hub, Hygiene content strategy helps lift the brand experience, seeking to build an image of the destination along with collaboration from destination ambassadors, who can take their stories further and share their experiences.

Best Practice: Newfoundland & Labrador, Tall, True & Tangled

Newfoundland & Labrador's microsite is currently one of the best examples of destination websites for some key reasons. Storytelling is at the heart of the destination. Local people share exciting stories with visitors who experience the destination. Content is created in different formats, very rich in terms of videos, images and text. The branding is extremely strong and effective; every little part is highly consistent with the rest and really reflects the story told about the destination.

The stories featured on this page are clustered under specific topics such as food, locations, people, etc, that builds a content series in a smart and straightforward way. The idea is to create a space online where people can lose themselves in engaging content about Newfoundland & Labrador.



The ability to transform every little experience into a unique story is outstanding. This is a great example of how to curate and package consistent to brand-driven content.



Best Practice: Brand USA, The Sounds of America



Brand USA, in partnership with State partners and The Telegraph, curated an interactive timeline presenting a cultural history of American music. The aim of '[The Ultimate Guide to America's music](#)' was educating and inspiring the British audience on American music and the integral part it plays in its culture.

The compelling information from this campaign would then hopefully inspire the British reader to visit one of the many music festivals. The campaign was highly informative, enabling those who were interested in a particular genre to delve deeper and learn more. For instance, an overview of American music is supplied with a timeline that displays the chronology of various genres, many of which originate in the United States.

Each of the genres is connected to a follow-up article that reveals a more in-depth look at the genre's historical significance, cultural impact and information regarding key musicians. Furthermore, each genre has a Spotify playlist of quintessential songs of the genre made for fans and people have a genuine interest. This example illustrates the multi-faceted approach taken by Brand USA, that uses various platforms to showcase the campaign.

Brand USA together with their state and commercial partners ran a rich native supplement together with the Telegraph, that invited readers to discover American music, through the eras and genres with an interactive timeline. This is an extraordinary example of content, multimedia, interactivity

and discovery rich features. It was a unique campaign, with individual curated articles by ambassadors of each genre, Spotify playlists and an interactive map to discover festivals.

The map ensures that fans of every genre will find plenty of inspiration to plan their visit with the incentive of the large festival to look forward to. The campaign is far reaching, due to the range of genres covered in the articles. The wide variety ensures that there will be a distinctive rise in visits from various demographic groups.

Brand USA is highly successful at supplying 'top of funnel' inspiration for visitors to the United States. It excites and engages the reader in American music culture. The campaign is also successful at providing more 'middle funnel' content, detailing key areas of interest that a person could visit in conjunction with a music festival. 'The Ultimate Guide to America's Music' is a thoroughly comprehensive campaign designed to increase visitation to the United States.

The imaginative use of native advertising is highly evocative and symbiotically inspires and educates the user with the various articles and playlists. Hence, Brand USA is a great example of a DMO that has created a clear goal and objectives to achieve this. The long form content and interactive map registered engagement times to over six minutes. It achieved a clickthrough rate to the relevant offers and trips of 5% and an 18:1 ROI ratio.

This incredible partnership has become the launchpad for other big projects that have involved big brands, such as Beautiful Destinations. United Stories of America is a content series based on the journey of a group of young people, travelling around the USA and meeting people, telling the story of their culture and heritage. Once again, storytelling is key; amazing content has been created during the journey as well as 'behind-the-scenes'.

Best Practice: How to play with content on another level with Travel Oregon's Only Slightly Exaggerated

The latest campaign of Travel Oregon is unique, captivating and diverse, based on the idea that it's almost impossible to really capture what you're seeing when you visit Oregon. Here, Travel Oregon has made use of animation to leverage this, creating something that really does differentiate itself from what we usually see from the travel industry and as a result of this it went viral!

Only Slightly Exaggerated was launched in Spring 2018 and received over 4 million views in the first week. It's not what you would typically expect to see from destination content, but the campaign saw a 2,563% increase in Facebook organic reach (YOY), 1,533% increase in PR stories (YOY) and features in leading publications such as Entertainment Weekly, Lonely Planet, Huffpost and AdWeek. This is a great example of how a DMO experimented with something completely new which proved to be highly successful, achieving off-the-chart results.

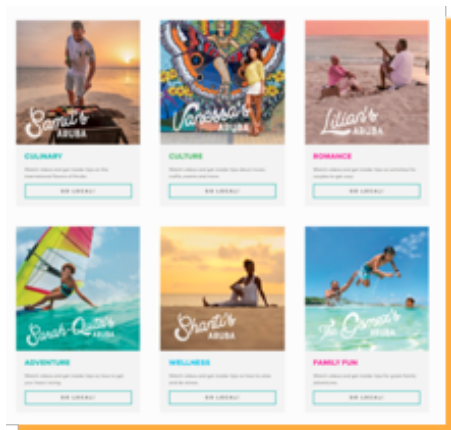
3.2 STORIES TOLD BY LOCALS

To promote the destination, it is fundamental to tell a story. Stories move people and take them to places they dream of. The vast majority of DMOs would agree that telling the stories of local people is a better content strategy than focusing on highlighting beautiful imagery within a destination.

A combination of both can definitely be the key for success. The real opportunity lies in creating the right connection with local people, involving the best characters that represent the destination. Beautiful imagery serves to frame the story and make it more appealing.



Best Practice: Aruba, Locals Travel Guide



The involvement of local people in the promotion of the destination is now a given. As presented in the previous example and in the section about Community Initiatives. It is impossible to define what a destination can offer without engaging with the locals. More and more destinations are now using destination ambassadors to put a face to a destination or an experience. In other words, according to Aruba, there is no better way to find out what the destination can offer than asking its local people.

Ambassadors represent certain segments of the market and match with a particular activity experienced within the destination, such as Culinary, Culture, Romance, Wellness,

Adventure, Family Fun. Of course, this is not the main channel to promote the destination, however, this is a great way to build content for the official website of the destination, as well as stand-alone and be complete at a more 'campaign-level'.

Best Practice: Visit Scotland, Tour Guide Tales

A smaller, yet interesting example of local people involved in the creation of content to promote and enhance the awareness of the destination is the case of the Tour Guide Tales of Visit Scotland. This project involves a host of Scottish tour guides and consists of a video series where people can watch and learn interesting aspects of the history and heritage of Scotland. The faces of the destination are, in this case, a professional storyteller. This makes it simpler to convey a message and share knowledge about the destination.



Best Practice: Fucecchio Local Heroes Initiative

Italy has around 6000 small villages where everything connects to the country identity and local life. Most of the street names of these villages have no connection to local history and are repeated from village to village. In Fucecchio, a small village in the heart of Tuscany, the local leaders decided to launch the **Local Heroes** campaign to replace the original street names with those of living local personalities who had a role in the recent history of their community.



This campaign, dedicated to local people and their contribution to the community, has been a source of inspiration in the village of Fucecchio and brought local heroes to life. The focus on community pride through the video stories encouraged people to get behind and support the campaign. Activating the local people with a theme that is close to their hearts ensured that the campaign was a success. With the streets now telling the stories of locals, the village of Fucecchio is now known for its heroes around the world. The project has also been adopted by other villages in Italy.

Best Practice: Les Plus Beaux Villages de Wallonie, Belgium

Les Plus Beaux Villages de Wallonie is an initiative that works with 30 villages and their inhabitants to make the places unique and showcase their remarkable rural heritage and local flavours. The goal is to promote, preserve and enhance the image of a rural Wallonia through picturesque villages and landscapes.

This initiative is aimed at preserving the authenticity of villages. It implements a policy of sustainable development based on the protection of architectural heritage. It also promotes a good standard of life for locals and visitors. By identifying these beautiful villages through a strict selection process, they become must-see places and more visible when they are promoted. Visitors are drawn to them because they have demonstrated and promoted a good quality authentic experience.



All the trails and stories from Wallonia form an integrated part of the Tourism Board's promotion. The destination offers Hyper local and Pan-European discovery through trails, road trips and more isolated experiences. The destination promotes a different way of touring and has attracted a strong following for its local events in the charming villages. The Regional NTOs use constant storytelling about the villages and link stories to Facebook events, making them extremely popular.

Best Practice: Les Plus Beaux Villages de France

Les Plus Beaux Villages de France promotes a selection of 159 villages spread over 14 regions. The aim of the initiative is to protect and promote the remarkable heritage of these exceptional municipalities and thus offer them as an alternative to rural desertification. The selection of villages is based on a quality approach with few applications accepted. The villages that are selected gain credibility and are more appealing to potential visitors who are aware of the positive attributes that the destination has to offer.

By promoting the beauty, heritage and high standard of living, Les Plus Beaux Villages de France is making its villages stand out at a national level and highlighting them as must-see places to visit and explore. For visitors, the experience of visiting a village with such a high accolade will be enhanced, as people are curious to discover how the good reputation of the charming village has been earned.

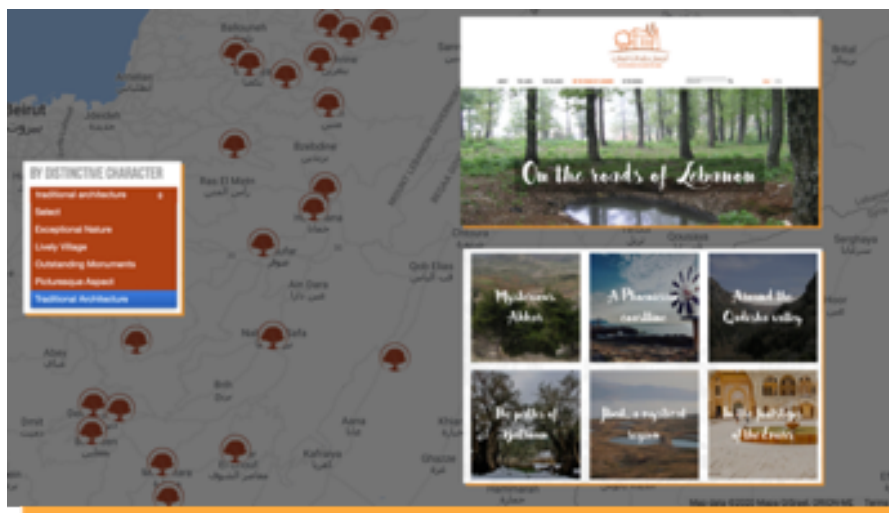
Best Practice: Foodtopia, Asheville, USA



Asheville brands itself as “**Foodtopia**” a destination for “foodies”. Local restaurants support local farmers by purchasing directly from the farms. The driving motivation behind Foodtopia is to support the local community and the local economy. Asheville's aim is to bring the most unique and memorable food and drink experiences to visitors through their farm-to-table movement. Its uniqueness is also attributed to preserving its historic downtown, the live music scene and the awe-inspiring scenery of the Appalachian Mountains.

Foodtopia is successful because it activates local communities and encourages them to be part of a themed concept and become destination ambassadors. It is a destination that promotes itself and the surrounding environment through local storytelling and an inviting food scene. It welcomes people to experience amazing, local gastronomy, healthy living and an active lifestyle. All these elements are particularly attractive to both local and international visitors, who are looking for a real, authentic experience.

Best Practice: Lebanon



On the Roads of Lebanon promotes the discovery of villages through an interactive map. You can filter the map by different themes, traditional architecture, picturesque aspects, monuments and lively villages. They've clustered the content on the website and built it around these different themes. This is a great way for visitors to discover charming villages through a thematic, content-rich, itinerary.

Best Practice: Japan

Japan promotes the most beautiful villages through an interactive map. It creates content for each village, with a constant stream of social media stories to promote the villages. By using this approach, Japan is providing a different way to access different villages. It's very inspirational, using editorial and video content to support their charming villages. The charming villages and stories are deeply woven into a wider content plan that the destination supports.



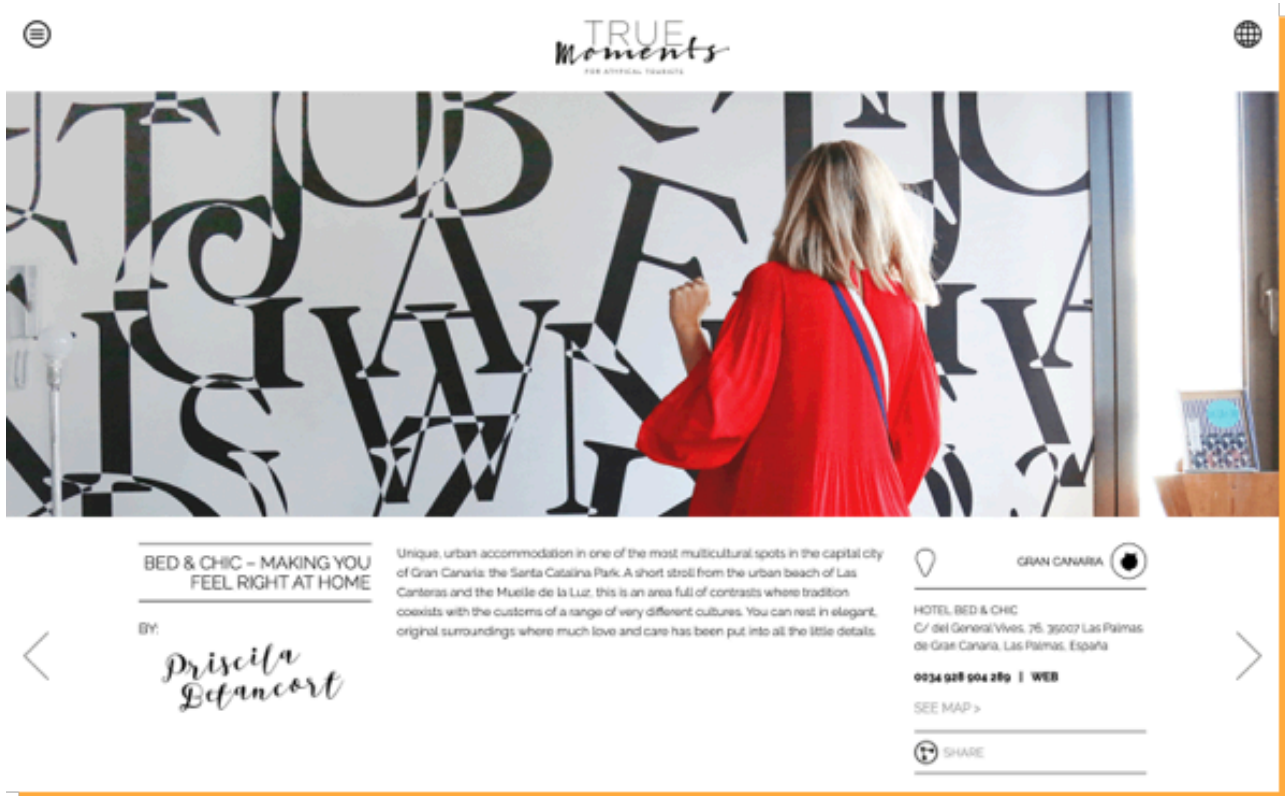
3.3 MAPS

How can we successfully connect different villages, across Europe, when they are far apart and have different things to offer? By highlighting different features of the different villages, it will be possible to guide visitors through the discovery of them all using thematic paths. The main objective is to encourage people to not stop in one village but keep exploring. Creating a connection with village stories strengthens the bond within destinations in the CHARM project and promotes the initiative in a more direct way.

If the aim is to get visitors to feel really captivated by your locations, it is essential to provide them with a tool that could make them feel truly captivated, like in the case of [Visit Finland's map](#).

Best Practice: The Other Map, Canary Islands

The traditional way isn't always the best way. That is what the Canary Island tourism board probably thought developing True Moments, the "[other map of Canary Islands](#)". The dedicated website provides the opportunity to explore the archipelago with maps created by travel bloggers, describing an alternative way to see the islands. The maps contain the bloggers' favourite spots and experiences, targeting at millennials and different types of travellers. It is a great strategy to attract a specific tourist segment and boost tourism through influencer marketing.

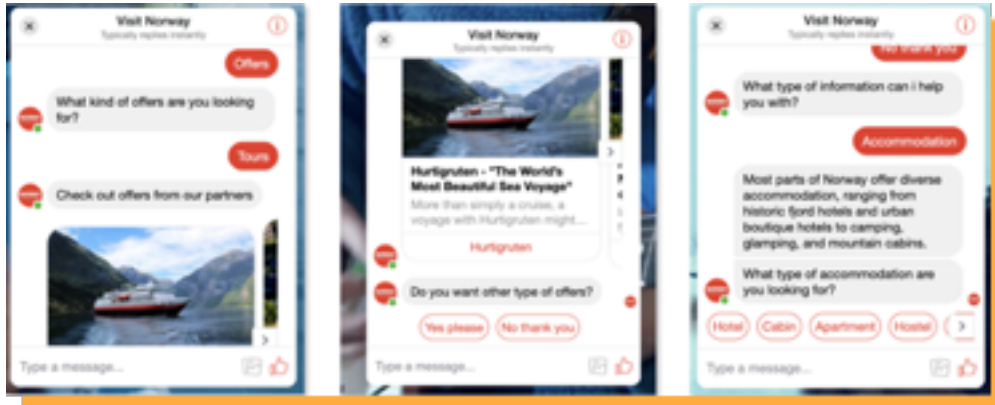


El Hierro in the Canary Islands is taking a different approach to promote itself. Its campaign consists of telling stories away from traditional themes. Its main focus is on food, wellness, developing new skills. The initiative aims to boost the economy and tourism appeal of El Hierro. It is also to show that El Hierro is different from the neighbouring islands.

With the True Moments brand concept, El Hierro tells the other story of the Canary Islands. It focuses on individuals and individual themes. It's about going away from traditional tourism and going right to the heart of fulfilment and personal development as part of the reasons to travel. The stories are key, but the experience must match the offer.

3.4 CHATBOTS

We see this trend growing every day, and although we believe there are still some limitations in this technology and there is much room for improvement, we see there are different approaches to create a chatbot that can be both useful and innovative. Three in five travel companies offer customer service via live chat while 28% are experimenting or actively using artificial intelligence.



The logic behind it is that, although we are moving towards an automated world, people still seek for human interaction and trust more conversational approaches which is important to consider when developing a chatbot. On the other hand, we live in an era where we seek instant information. If you put yourselves in the shoes of a consumer, or visitor in the case of travel, chatbots are the perfect platform where instant answers are required. For example, where is the nearest train station?

Powered by artificial intelligence, chatbots are able to not only respond instantaneously, but are able to provide accurate answers and solutions, and a level of customer service that meets customer expectations.

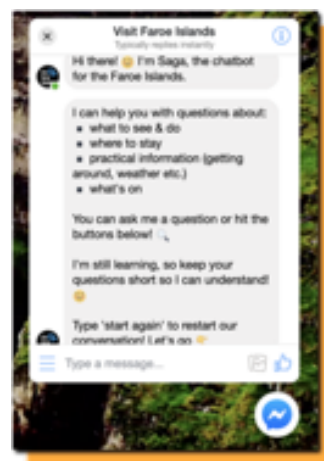
This way of communication is native to the new-age traveller where multiple apps and online messaging is part of everyday life, therefore it is a service many travellers now expect. Many destinations and travel partners have already integrated a chat facility in their website. Here are some examples.

Best Practice: Visit Norway

Visit Norway created a chatbot integrated in their website which is connected to Facebook Messenger. The idea behind it is to automate the communication with the visitor and give them all the information they are looking for in a quick and easy way.

Automatic prompts appear as clear buttons at the bottom of the conversation, allowing the user to conveniently select the information they are interested in, followed by relevant questions and instant responses with corresponding links.

For example, questions are based on the most commonly asked questions which means in some cases, the user may not even need to type anything and will receive an answer in just a few clicks.



Best Practice: Visit Faroe Islands

Similar to Visit Norway, Visit Faroe Islands have integrated the automated Messenger chat, called Saga, which greets you with a friendly message upon visiting the site. The visitor using the chatbot on the website, has the impression they are connecting with the DMO; however, the chat platform is active via Facebook Messenger.

This is an easy solution to integrate the chat on the website, but it may have limitations as above. The messenger allows the user to quickly select what they are interested in from a selection of popular topics; See & Do, Stay, Practical Info and What's On.

3.5 DESTINATION'S PROMOTION CHANNEL GUIDES

3.5.1 WEBSITE

The website is at the heart of the digital presence of a destination. In today's world, the key to success for any brand is all about the customer experience and the answer to maximising the customer experience as much as possible is personalisation. While digital has evolved and marketer's strategies have successfully evolved along with it, there are some capabilities that can be achieved only through artificial intelligence.

It allows companies to analyse and correlate vast amounts of data from a plethora of sources, utilise data in the most efficient way, and identify patterns to make predictions for future activities. In terms of the visitor, it successfully delivers personalised information and recommendations with virtual assistance to ensure a seamless experience throughout the whole visitor journey.

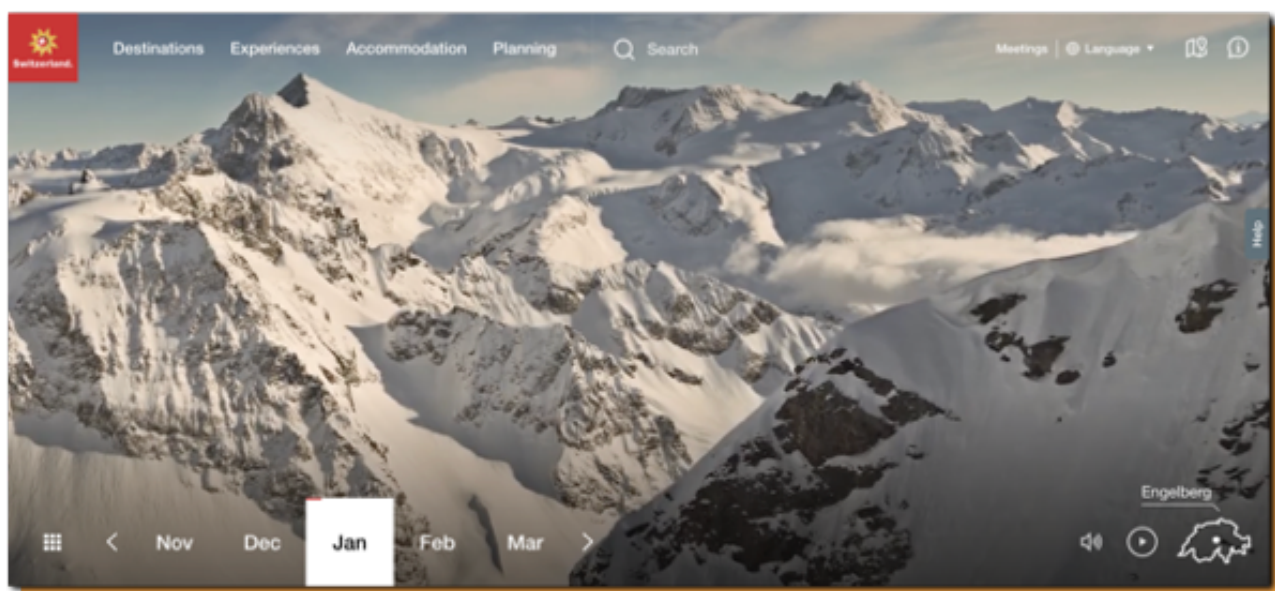
Best Practices: Switzerland Tourism's best destination website

Switzerland Tourism recently launched its [new website](#), a project developed over 4 years, and it's a really fantastic example of a destination website that has been thoughtfully crafted around market behaviour and the user journey to create something different and completely immersive. If you haven't seen it already, take a look with the sound on!

Artificial intelligence and VR was successfully used for on-site personalisation and optimisation to create an interactive inspiration calendar, optimised for all devices. Research showed that 2 out of 3 users to the website were new users. In order to capture the interest of these users, the goal of the new website was to inspire, showing the diversity of Switzerland across all products, regions and seasons year-round.

Powered by AI, the project focused on three main parts:

- Inspiration to make it a truly immersive and aspirational experience
- Listening to guests to build its digital services
- Developing personalised content tailored to different audiences and levels of accessibility



A total of 48 virtual reality videos were created, 4 videos per month, allowing the visitor to deep-dive into the sights and sounds of Switzerland. AI and machine learning were used to deliver the best image results. The technology automatically recognises the focus element of the image most relevant to the user, and crops to suit each possible device and format - e.g. the castle below.

This image delivery service facilitates the editing of over 400,000 images on myswitzerland.com - an amount simply too vast for a manual editor to process.

Roughly 98% of the image delivery is automated however, it takes time for the machine learning algorithm to learn and improve so errors may still occur. Therefore, a manual capability is still needed as back-up. Personalisation is at the heart of this development, which is key to optimising the customer journey, especially when trip planning.

3.5.2 HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE.

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter are all highly active social networks and having a great social media presence will ensure that your business grows the right way. In order to do this, you must do the following:

- Identify your goals and objectives, know what you are trying to achieve.
- Let your audiences see you are human and interact frequently with your social media accounts.
- Understand the needs of your audience as this will help you interact with them.
- Link your profile to your website so that people can learn about your company.
- Share your social media accounts with all your connections.
- Create an integrated social media policy to stay organised.
- Produce valuable content to showcase your business and bring in more customers
- Engage with everyone on your social media pages.
- Optimise your social media accounts using key words.
- Use hashtags often.
- Add social media icons to your emails.
- Provide a benefit to your audience such as a free trial or liking their pages.
- Use trivia games and ask your audience questions.
- Post at a comfortable rate.
- Manage your social media accounts yourself to ensure they are authentic.
- Do your research, observe other similar social media accounts.
- Give customers a reason to like your page and follow you.
- Tackle customer issues efficiently.
- Provide Q&As.

- Ask clients to share and connect.
- Create a plan and continue with it if it is working.
- Treat each social network like an individual one.
- Go the extra mile in customer service.

Best Practice: YouTube Series

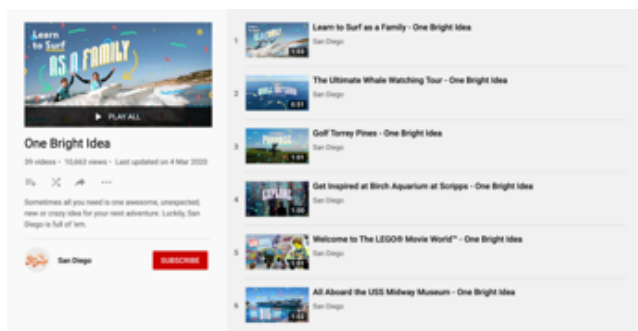
Over 1 billion people use YouTube each month worldwide, watching nearly 1 billion hours on the platform each day. Of these users, approximately 90% are millennials and Generation Z. In many countries, more people watch YouTube than watch any single TV network. On the web, YouTube is one of the most used search engines and one of the most visited websites, after Google and Facebook. Additionally, users can navigate YouTube in more than 78 different languages, thus servicing 95% of the global internet population. For years, YouTube videos popped up in viewer searches and they are easily accessible on your YouTube channel: for destinations worldwide, they offer long-term returns. YouTube is a great hub for immersive video content, but few destinations have mastered how to take full advantage of the channel and grow their YouTube presence.

The range and type of video content changes consistently but the popularity and influence of video content has continued to grow, as the figures show:

- 72% of customers would rather learn about a product or service by way of a video.
- 92% of users watching a video on mobile will share it with others.
- 95% of messages are remembered by viewers after watching a video compared with 10% when read.
- There is a 100% Increase in mobile video consumption YoY.

Organisations are responding to the consumer thirst for TV series by building their own branded series on YouTube. The creation of the first video is the beginning of an endless process of content generation. Places, people, food & drinks are quite simple subjects, but interesting enough to build great content on.

Sequential or serialised content gives the audience a reason to keep watching more videos from a particular source. Even without a sustained narrative, videos presented in playlists are curated collections of content which is easy for consumers to digest at the start of the visitor cycle. **San Diego** has confirmed the immense expertise in the creation of amazing and engaging content.



Best Practice: Instagram

Visit Greenland has got one of the most inspiring Instagram profiles: together with a feed rich in stunning images of the destination, Instagram Stories are always curated and crafted by the destination itself. Using an app called **Unfold**, it is possible to publish polished and branded stories, without the need of major content production. The personal touch of the message is what really resonates from the content they create.

MyHelsinki is another excellent example of use of Instagram Stories and Highlights. They have created a neighbourhood guide around the city to bring people around the destination, following an *Instagrammable* trail. As it is clearly shown in the frames, there is a bigger work behind the creation of this kind of content, which is packaged and scheduled in advance. In order to beat the algorithm, it is really important to be online as much as possible: MyHelsinki publishes content every day of the week with a different topic. For example, publishing stories about local people on Thursday or new itineraries around the neighbourhood on Friday.



IGTV is a feature of Instagram which allows for a longer form of video content. In order to really succeed in delivering high-quality IGTV content, videos must be vertical and it is better to create a serial follow-up. One of the best use of IGTV is done by **GoHawaii**, telling stories about local people, one episode after another. One-minute videos have a very simple style and layout, which still reflects the brand of the destination and link to further content on the website, encouraging the discovery of different locations, stories and people.

4 Conclusion & Key Takeaways

4 CONCLUSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Small villages are of significant importance in tourism terms, because of the inherent attractions they have to offer visitors. Promotion plays an essential role in developing and preserving a location's popularity and, consequently, it improves a destination's competitiveness. Effective promotion of a destination's unique features, heritage and local produce will ensure the destination continues to attract visitors and is able to stand out in a competitive global market.

Small destinations must proactively shape, adapt and respond to their visitors' preferences and embrace the latest technology, adopting and implementing strategic solutions for their benefit and satisfaction, as well as for the local community.

Here are the key takeaways for the best promotional practices of destinations:

4.1 FOCUS ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The local community is at the heart of a destination, it is the human link and the first impression visitors get when they arrive in a destination.

Developing a Community-Led Sustainability Plan with the local community and working with other small villages, driven by the same sustainable development, will provide huge improvements and benefits to a destination. By aligning the destination strategy with the local community, people can become 'Sustainability Ambassadors'. Effective destination promotion involves a wide net of stakeholders, who are responsible for creating the complete offer. A collaborative approach will lead to innovation and developments that will improve the overall product.



4.2 STAND OUT WITH SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES AND THEMATIC ITINERARIES

A Signature Experience is not just a way for visitors to enjoy the destination, but it is a unique and authentic way of building a strong feeling of fulfilment that will make your destination remain in their memory forever.

The villages of CHARM have the opportunity to enhance the brand, by offering a unique, stand-out experiences. By selecting certain locations and matching them with a similar theme, destinations can attract specific target audiences, who are looking for authenticity in their travel experience. Designing diverse thematic programs for visitors allows destinations to provide those much sought after local, authentic experiences that suit their visitor's unique needs is a key opportunity for CHARM.



4.3 CREATE AN UNFORGETTABLE CONTENT EXPERIENCE

Many visitors will research a destination thoroughly before arriving, therefore inspiring content will be the key to conversion. Nowadays, destinations must think outside the box to stand out, the way to do this is to create memorable content.

Destinations must embrace technology and incorporate it into their content and its design. It is important to regularly review content, build digital services and develop personalised, inspiring content tailored to different audiences and levels of accessibility. The key to success for any brand is to focus on the customer experience and maximise it as much as possible. For example, inspiring travellers with a VR experience.



