# SMART VILLAGE

DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

## Training COURSE
# SMART VILLAGE RURAL TOURISM

### DEVELOPING BUSINESSES THROUGH CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

**O2/A3 - Handbook**
"Digital Tourism tools for development and promotion of a rural tourism business and destination"

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# 1. Introduction

This handbook takes a closer look at some of the opportunities of digital technologies for tourism. It explains some features of widely used digital tools and it presents some of the findings of European-wide research that brought important insight into how small and medium-sized companies view digital opportunities in the development of their businesses. The second part of the handbook hosts several examples of cases studies of the use of digital technologies in the tourism sector in Slovenia, Romania, Greece, Ireland, Bulgaria, and Belgium.

Digital technologies have permeated every aspect of our life and have become indispensable in our daily life. In this, there is no exception for the tourism sector. The use of booking platforms, reservation systems, consulting website reviews, applying mobile apps and GPS systems are part of our new touristic experience. Nowadays, a tourist tends to prioritize research on destinations. He or she is inspired by tourist attractions that are reached via social media.

With the new technologies, tourists can get in touch with accommodation providers much easier, they can book a plane ticket in a few minutes, and can enjoy the touristic area in advance by any digital presentation.

On the other hand, tourism businesses make use of digital technologies to attract new or maintain old customers, to present their services, to manage their business, to promote themselves and sell their services and products, to develop innovative tourism products like virtual and augmented reality. With the aid of digital technology, tourism businesses can reach more potential customers than ever before.

We hope that this handbook will equip you with a basic knowledge of the opportunities that digital technologies offer to rural tourism, and inspire you to use them or learn more about their benefits and potential.

# 2. Technology and tourism development

Technology has had an immense impact on tourism and "has made tourism an interactive and efficient industry" (Suneel K., Shekhar: 744). It has improved tourist's experience in numerous ways. Technology assists in tour planning, travel management, it provides weather and climate data, it helps schedule a tour, it also enhances tourist's security and digital payments have eased transactions. Moreover, tourism businesses have expanded and are able to market themselves more efficiently (Suneel K., Shekhar: 744)

According to experts (Suneel K., Shekhar: 744-745), digital technologies have brought numerous advantages to tourism such as:

– travelling is more convenient (paying in one click, using booking platforms, review sites etc.)
– security features such as GPS (Global Positioning System) enhanced security
– ease of database management (e.g., software for hotel management, visual tours).
– extended reach of stakeholders: social media marketing, for example, enables marketing providers to advertise themselves globally and at a low price
– some tourism products could only develop due to technology such as virtual tourism and space tourism

Further, with digital technologies new roles emerged with the tourism consumers acquiring a more pro-active and independent role. The rise of digital platforms has increased the variety and volume of tourism products, services, and experiences, with on-demand functionality accelerating the speed of economic transactions, market awareness and feedback. According to a review article in Open Geoscience literature, the use of technology in tourism revolves around the field of marketing, travel management and other applications of technology. Another important topic identified is the importance and benefits of technology for the tourism (Suneel, Shekhar: 2020) industry.

Table 2 shows trends identified from research papers.

**Table 1:** Trends identified from research papers on rural tourism

| Word | Count | Weighted percentage | Papers covering the word |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism | 10,417 | 2.96 | Aall [19], Suneel et al. [20] and Qian et al. [21] |
| Dark | 1,980 | 0.56 | Bittner [22], Dar and Reshi [23] and Fonseca et al. [24] |
| Rural | 1,804 | 0.51 | Bhatia and Kiran [14], Bilali et al. [25] and Berjan et al. [26] |
| Development | 1,659 | 0.47 | Bhatia and Kiran [14], Bilali et al. [25], Reddy & Shilpa [27] and Mann [28] |
| India | 1,411 | 0.40 | Bhatia and Kiran [14] and Chavan and Bhola [29] |
| Community | 1,283 | 0.36 | Hamzah et al. [30] and Imran and Nguyen [31] |
| Local | 967 | 0.27 | Na Songkhla and Somboonsuke [32] and Verma et al. [33] |
| Death | 744 | 0.21 | Bittner [22], Dar and Reshi [23] and Fonseca et al. [24] |
| Management | 742 | 0.21 | Berry and Ladkin [34], Choo [35] and Deshwal [36] |
| Length | 735 | 0.21 | Lal et al. [37] |
| Niche | 712 | 0.21 | Kumar et al. [38] |

Source: Author's compilation from several published literature.

In this handbook, the focus is put on the opportunities of digital tools for the marketing of rural tourism. Before presenting some of them we would like to shed light on some of the key findings of a study commissioned by the European Union to examine the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in tourism.

## 2.2. The study Digitalisation in Tourism

In 2016 the EU commissioned a study on the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation in tourism. The report published in 2018 draws from a quantitative survey of 2.897 SMEs, 73 public administration and 85 professional associations. The study aimed to analyse the specific challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in tourism, their impact on different stakeholder groups, and to identify the needs of industry and member states in addressing these aspects. The study searched for answers to the following three key questions:
- What are the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in tourism?
- What is being done?
- What policies and actions might be appropriate to facilitate digitalisation in tourism?

Before we present some of the findings, we would like to present three key phases of technology development in tourism. These are:
Phase 1: Sales and Marketing (1990-2000)
Phase 2: Digital Business ecosystems (2001-2010)
Phase 3: Integration of systems (from 2010)
*(Xiang, Z. & Fesenmaier, D.)*

Phase 1 saw the arrival of the Internet and was characterised by using technology as a marketing tool. Websites, web-based reservation systems and distribution systems played an important role. SMEs benefited from digital point-of-sales and supporting software.
In the second phase, the Internet became the primary source of information and its further development resulted in a virtual marketplace where services were searched, compared, and transacted online. Visitor experience became the central focus, and consequently, tourism businesses became more interested in individualising customer experience and developing personal communication with customers. Expedia, an American online travel shopping company, disrupted the traditional travel agency business model while Tripadvisor, an online review site, made a customer acquire more control over their purchases and more influence on the decisions of other customers. The importance of Visitor Information Centres as points of contact decreased whereas online booking and online transactions increased.
The third phase started in 2010 and is characterised by cloud computing, mobile and wearable technologies, GPS, virtual and augmented reality and increased interconnectivity between digital and physical worlds.
*(Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. (2018: 9)*

Examples of digital technologies transforming tourism

| Phase 1. 1990-2000 | Phase 2. 2000-2010 | Phase 3. 2010 onwards |
|---|---|---|
| Electronic cash registers | Smart phones | Augmented reality |
| Financial software | Computer graphics software | Virtual reality |
| Mobile phones | Property management systems | Mobile Apps |
| Email | Computerised ticketing systems | Cloud computing and online data storage |
| Intranet | Computerised stock control systems | Wearable technologies |
| Internet banking | Online booking systems | Social media |
| Office software | Customer reservation systems | Google analytics |
| Video conferencing | Email marketing | Review websites |
| Websites | Customer relationship systems | Collaborative online environments |
| Destination (city) cards | | Web 2.0 |
| | | Chatbots and instant advice |
| | | Peer production, e.g. platform collaborative economy; commons collaborative economy |

Adapted from: Xiang, Z. & Fesenmaier, D. (2017) Big data analytics, tourism design and smart tourism. Cham: Springer

(Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. 2018: 10)

2.2.1 Types of Technologies used by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

The study included 2.897 SMEs from the EU. 51,7 % of SMEs that responded to the questionnaire were located in urban areas, 33,6 % were in rural areas, and 17,3 % were in coastal areas. Only 11,7 % of responses were from SMEs in island or mountainous areas. According to the report, SMEs in rural and regional areas may have limited access to infrastructure and need to invest more time and effort in building networks. The survey asked SMEs about technologies they were currently using in their businesses. The answers showed that low digitalisation was prevalent while technologies associated with medium to higher levels of digitalisation were less common.

The following table shows the difference between medium and low levels of digitalisation of SMEs. The results show that many SMEs have adapted many basic technologies as seen in the table below. On the other hand, technologies associated with medium to higher levels of digitalisation were far less common (for example those using analytics tools, mobile apps, chat/instant advice, or online professional networks).
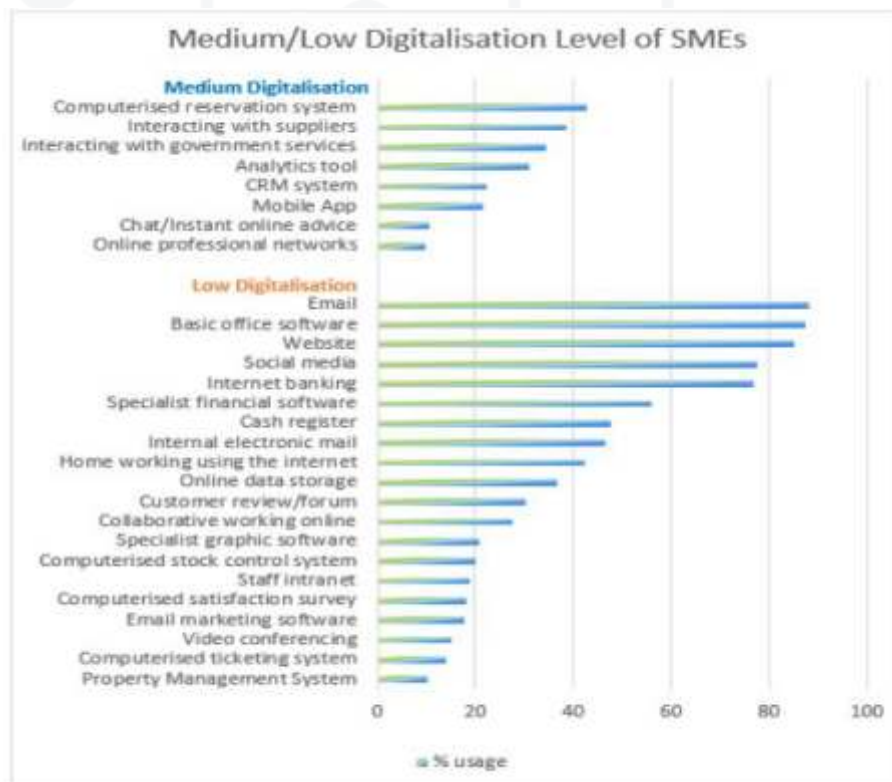


Graph 1: Digitalisation level of surveyed SMEs
(Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. 2018: 12)

The study also revealed opportunities that SMEs expect from digitalisation. The top 5 opportunities they expect are:
- to acquire more customers
- to improve online brand visibility
- to expand their reach internationally
- to improve service quality
- to increase customer satisfaction.
- (Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. 2018: 19)

On the other hand, SMEs identified some difficulties when using digital technologies. The top 5 difficulties they identified are:
- training on new digital technology
- costs and uncertain return on benefits
- lack of knowledge to identify opportunities
- lack of technical knowledge
- lack of suitable "off the shell" products within budget
- (Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. 2018: 20)

Further, the study revealed the top 5 motivations for improving digitalisation identified by SMEs and the top 5 obstacles.

The top 5 motivations are:
1. Improving online presence for competitiveness
2. Improving growth
3. Optimistic about future opportunities
4. Addressing seasonality
5. Improving networks
   (Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. 2018: 20)

The top 5 obstacles to further implementing digital technologies identified by SMEs:
1. Lack of finance
2. The current technology level is insufficient
3. High training costs
4. The rapid pace of technological change
5. Cost of highspeed broadband
   (Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E. & Popescu, E.S. 2018: 21)

The study has revealed that SMEs see great potential in digitalisation and yet they face numerous obstacles. To help them use some of the opportunities identified in the next chapters present some digital tools with a focus on digital marketing.

## 2.3. Digital marketing

Digital marketing has transformed how businesses build their brand, how they promote and sell their products and how they communicate with their customers. Digital marketing was first used by some companies who sold their products through the internet in the early 1990s (Minculete, Olar: 2018: 63).

Digital marketing can be defined as a "set of strategies and tactics that are executed through digital channels to achieve corporate goals [...] in a time and budget defined period of time"                (Minculete, Olar: 2018: 63).

Digital marketing was first defined as a "projection of conventional marketing, its tools and strategies, on Internet"
(Machadom, Paulo Davim: 38).

Some of the potentials that digital marketing presents are the following:
- interaction with customers enables building long term relationships
- digital marketing offers image- and video-based tools to reach the audience in an attractive way
- it enables relevant advertising by enabling customisation and easy segmentation
- it enables organisations to connect with their audiences and users among themselves which can improve their experience and foster the relationship with the product, brand or business
- content can be disseminated easily and can expand exponentially
- it enables measuring the output

(Machadom, Paulo Davim: 38).

According to some experts, there is a difference between digital marketing and marketing on the internet understanding internet marketing as a subsystem of digital marketing and its most important component
(Minculete, Olar. 2018: 64).

(Minculete, Olar. 2018: 64)

2.4. Common digital tools for the promotion of tourism

Nowadays, many businesses' survival depends on the proper use of digital marketing tools. On one side, digital promotional tools encourage growth and ensure visibility to the public, and on the other side, those who fail to take them to their advantage might find themselves defeated by the competition.

Under this chapter, the handbook focuses on five different digital tools for promotion, namely:
– social media channels,
– website pages,
– online booking platforms,
– email marketing, and
– mobile applications.

2.4.1. Social media

The rise of social media users has led individuals who own a business or want to start one to explore efficient ways of securing their space in the online world. New business models have been adopted by entrepreneurs, no matter their age, which allow them to take the opportunities the internet and social media have to offer. Some predictions about the numbers of social media users were made before the COVID-19 pandemic happened:
[i]t was anticipated that, in 2020, the user base would reach 2.96 billion, which would further grow to 3.09 billion in 2021. According to the latest reports, in 2020 when much of the world was in lockdown, the number of social media users grew at its fastest rate in recent years and reached 4.2 billion, thus surpassing the forecast by an enormous margin.
(Chawla and Chodak, 2021: 49).



Figure 1: Social media user (taken from Pixabay)

Social media has become a powerful and important promotional tool in the modern world because it connects (directly or indirectly) the online elements with the physical ones. We all know that the business world evolves all the time and people should evolve together with it; therefore, those who are not yet efficient in digital advertising with the help of social media should do so. Social media is widely used which makes it popular among all generations, even the elderly who want to get to know why the youngsters are on their phones all the time.

Individuals can see the exact amount of time they spend on their social media accounts on their cell phones (there is a special feature in settings). Have a look at how much time you spend on social media. During that time, you probably see many advertisements and you stop and take a closer look at those who are in your interest. This is how promotion on social media starts and works.

2.4.1.1. Facebook

Facebook advertising is one of the more useful promotional tools because it has more information on users' interests, buying behaviours, and activities than any other website in the world. It is also one of the more used social media channels with more than 2.74 billion active monthly users.



Figure 2: Facebook logo

Facebook provides targeting options to ad managers which makes it possible for them to find any audience online. One can see the ads whether they are browsing through Facebook on their laptop or their phone. Ads are usually linked to an individual's past searches and likes on different pages. Some could also appear because people we have as "friends" on our account have liked a certain page. This way, the word of one company spreads even faster among Facebook users.

Individuals who try to present their services or products can target users based on their interests, their actions online and who they are as a person. It can be a great way to target potential customers and reach them directly where they spend a lot of their time. In comparison to TV or radio ads, posters or billboards, Facebook remains the cheapest. The traffic to business sites can be measured because one can see how many people have been reached through the post or ad. This way, you also know whether the specific amount of money gives you good results.

Facebook advertisements can work well, but no advertisement is ever a guarantee that it will work.

According to McCoy (2021), there are 8 ways to promote your Facebook page which are free and easy:

1. Give your page a personal touch.
2. Use high-quality photos and videos.
3. Enable the "call to auction" button.
4. Join or create a Facebook group.
5. Promote your Facebook Page everywhere.
6. Use Facebook stories and Facebook live.
7. Maintain a regular schedule: consistency is the secret sauce.
8. Engage your audience and peers.

Individuals and businesses maintain their presence on Facebook and engage with their potential customers. Facebook pages or accounts invite potential customers through photographic, textual, and video content. Nowadays, more and more people plan their vacation or purchases through social media advertisements:

[g]oing to a travel agency's office is a thing of the past now. Vacations are planned right from their homes or offices, via the internet. They get to plan everything by themselves, seeing their convenience and preferences. People usually choose a destination on the basis of word of mouth or reviews of vacation experiences. This is backed by the pricing of the entire trip. Online is the place to market a tourism business […].

(Rahman, 2017: 87)

Figure 3: Promotion through social media channels (taken from McCoy, 2021)

Technology constantly develops and social media channels with it. The creators of Facebook have renamed Facebook for business to Meta for Business which is now a common site for growing businesses across several social media channels (Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp etc.).

2.4.1.2. Instagram

Instagram is another free platform built around sharing photos and videos instead of words which provides a highly visual twist. It connects the user with several brands, celebrities around the globe, friends, family and much more. Instagram is a part of Meta for Business and is widely popular among different generations:

[w]ith over a billion registered accounts, Instagram, which was bought by Facebook in 2012, has become a part of daily life. It seems like everyone is on Instagram nowadays, from small businesses to big ones, news organizations to cultural institutions, celebrities, photographers, and musicians, and not to mention the cottage industry of influencers that have come in its wake.

(Antonelli, 2020)



Figure 4: Instagram logo

Like in other social media channels, the profile page of an individual or a business is the most important part because it is the first thing people visit when they browse through the app or search for something. It is best to keep the information on the profile page accurate and up to date (profile picture, username, and bio). Bio is a section that offers the visitors a brief description of the individual, a company or a brand and can include a link to the website page. Once the profile page has been set up, it is time for the creation of content. As already mentioned, photos or videos can be shared on the platform. It also provides the user with many filters to edit the posts to one's preferences. Filters are not the only assets that enrich the post – according to Antonelli (2020) there are a few more optional things one can do before sharing the content:

– Add a caption: Captions are always a good idea. You can use words, emojis, or hashtags. Just like in comments, you can also "mention" friends by placing "@" in front of their username. Keep in mind you can edit captions at any time — or delete them if needed in the future.
– Tag people: Instagram allows you to "tag" someone in your photos. When you tag someone, they'll get a notification in their activity feed.
– Add location: Location tags let others know where your photo was taken. Clicking on a location tag brings you to its corresponding location feed, where you can peruse other public posts.
– Also post to other social accounts: Instagram also gives you the ability to publish a post to other social accounts at the same time. By linking accounts, you can cross-post to Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr.

(adapted from Antonelli, 2020)

Digital marketing through Instagram is not only about sharing photos on your profile page. Even though one can reach potential customers this way, there are also additional features due to being part of Meta for Business. With Instagram Ads, one can reach the customers with precise targeting and further actionable insights into the brands, companies, or certain products. Instagram for Business names the following possibilities of the Instagram Ads function:
– BOOST your posts with a tap (turn any of your posts into an ad instantly).
– Inspire NEW AUDIENCES (decide who matters most to your business, then reach them with adjustable targeting options).
– Set a BUDGET that works (the cost to advertise is up to you. Select a budget that fits your business goals and update it at any time).
– Track your ad PERFORMACE (deeply understand your ad performance with insights, so you can learn what works and improve over time).

(taken from *business.instagram.com/advertising*)

2.4.1.3. Pinterest
Many people find themselves on Pinterest when they browse through the internet for travel ideas, recipes, advice for DIY (do it yourself) projects, and many more. It is visited and explored by millions of people and another social media website where you can find it all.

 Figure 5: Pinterest logo

Pinterest is a virtual network where the user can "pin" photos and videos, either their own from their phone or computer or the content from other websites. It allows the user to store and organise the most interesting things they find online or create by themselves. The use of this site is extremely easy – when registering, the site offers the user a range of different areas, and one chooses the ones that interest him or her most. The most interesting posts can be tagged or saved, and the users can comment on them – similarly like on other social media. Each photo on Pinterest contains a URL link to the original website where it is located. This way the user can easily access a company's website, blog, online shop etc.

Why should a company or an individual use Pinterest for the promotion of their business, rural tourism in their (local) area, or for any other promotional purposes? Pinterest can help you:

– with advertising of your services or products,
– increase website traffic (every time someone clicks on a photo you've posted, they will be taken to the original post and your website),
– make a presence on other networks (others can share your images on other social media networks – as a result, your posts will be seen by more people, which means you can gain even more followers and visitors to your website), and
– getting to know your visitors and customers (you can learn about the latest trends and find out what your followers like which allows you to tailor your posts to their interests and needs).

Pinterest is easy to use which makes it a user-friendly social media network. If someone wants to use it for business purposes, he or she can open a business account (make a brand new one or convert your personal account to a business account). One of the required information is the name of the company which will allow the visitors to know who posted the content and will acknowledge the company easily.
Pinterest does not leave new business users to figure its use on their own – within a few days after the creation of the business account, the user will receive an email with practical tips (how to get started, how to make the most of it out of one's business etc.).

### 2.4.2. Websites

According to Cambridge English Dictionary, a website is "a set of pages of information on the internet about a particular subject, that has been published by the same person, company, or organization, and often contains pictures, video, and sound."

For businesses, it is essential to have a website page because it provides knowledgeable content to individuals who are interested in them. They do not have universal forms – they can range from (personal) blogs, entertainment networks, corporate or e-commerce websites.

Due to technology, the very first interactions in most cases are made online. Nowadays, users are more likely going to check the information about an individual or a company before making the first contact.

### 2.4.2.1. SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is when someone uses "methods of making sure that the address of a website is shown near the top of the list of results of an internet search" (taken from Cambridge English Dictionary) in various search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, and others.

This is important because most people only look at the first page of results on Google and if someone is on other pages, even if it is the second one, it is as if they do not exist. The more visits one page has, the higher are its chances of making any profit or getting a further promotion.

"There's no better way to get your website to show up higher in search results than by driving traffic from other highly visited and credible sites (sites with high domain authority)" (taken from *acenta.si/vsebinski-marketing/*). Someone can wait for this to happen on its own by waiting to get enough visits on their webpage, or they can pay for the higher place: "paid listings can help your website rise to the top of the listings very quickly, but this is only a short-term solution. The long-term solution is to optimise your website so that it consistently ranks high in search hits" (taken from *mladipodjetnik.si/novice-in-dogodki/novice/kaj-je-seo-in-kako-deluje*).

Many companies offer their services to help with SEO. They compile publications on someone's website, analyse them, and suggest new content that will present someone's business in the best and most relevant way for the target audience. People prefer to read, watch, or listen to various types of content and they spend a lot of their time online. Marketing specialists will maximise the impact of someone's website page content potential customers will see.



Figure 6: Content management system (taken from Tech Library, 2019)

### 2.4.2.2. Google Advertising Programs

Google Ads is Google's advertising network and is used by businesses all over the world to advertise their products and services, discount codes, products on sale and much more directly to potential customers. The most used advertising options on Google's search engine are the ones you see at the top of the search results and display ads (graphic and visual advertising) which can be seen on millions of websites.

Figure 7: Google Ads logo

It works by allowing businesses to display their website page when individuals search for something specific on the Google search engine. These ads are based on an automated auction system where the business (the auctioneer) tells Google how much they are willing to invest in pay-per-click (PPC) on an advertisement, or for a pay-to-display advertisement to appear when a specific search string is typed on Google. For the display ads, Google must track individuals across all their visited websites first and then it links those activities to services and products relevant to the individual's interests. There are several advantages to using Google Ads for the promotion of a business, product, or service, namely, in quickly increasing website page traffic and consequently growing the volume of the business in comparison to other options where the growth takes more time. Without this program, it usually takes months or even years to reach the top of Google's search results, but with Google Ads, one can achieve this goal virtually instantly. Users will get more effects when advertising via Google Ads is run over a longer period and is continuous.

This way, the program allows a thorough analysis (about the customers' behaviour, sales, etc.) and gives the payer the best results out of their advertising money.

There could be some problems when using Google Ads because enterprises compete for words and phrases that are among the most searched and profitable. This means that competing companies can be displayed close to each other and other factors then contribute to the success of the business (e.g., price of the products, quality, location, services, the visual impact of the website, etc.). Google Ads can be rewarding because of its fast results, but for individuals who are not familiar with setting up and executing ads, it can be extremely time-consuming. Many companies focus on providing experts for designing, executing, and monitoring the impact of advertisement campaigns.

### 2.4.3. Booking platforms

Booking platforms are another beneficial digital promotional tool that more and more people nowadays use:

[o]ver the past decade, the use of global Internet-based reservation systems for accommodation has grown massively. This development appears particularly relevant for rural properties, empowering even very small enterprises to reach a large global customer base cheaply and easily. However, a limited number of reservation platforms now dominate the market, with consequences for existing, often locally owned non-profit, national and regional reservation systems. *(Gössling and Lane, 2015: 1)*

Marketing of rural areas was problematic in the past because of the lack of skills and knowledge in marketing and the development of technology. Airlines introduced the first online reservation systems in the late 1950s and by the late 1970s, it developed to the extent that it was also possible to make reservations for accommodation. Online bookings are available to anyone with an internet connection and are instant and global.

Booking platforms have made it possible for customers to book accommodations in rural areas and enabled rural entrepreneurs to offer their products and services. All of that contributes to the growth of rural tourism.

### 2.4.3.1. Booking.com

Over recent years, Booking.com has become the major global player in the world of making reservations online. The power of its brand has an extreme value because it is the platform most of us think of first when we make travel plans without a travel agency. Their success was achieved through a good marketing strategy (a combination of both digital and traditional channels) and heavy financial investment.

Booking.com does not own or operate accommodations. It also does not charge a booking fee to the customers. How does the brand finance itself? "The answer is by charging the hotels a percentage of the booking price, so they earn money whenever a hotel gets a successful reservation through their platform. That might sound like a bad deal for hoteliers, but it helps them boost bookings and revenues" (Ward, 2019). The satisfaction of tourists is crucial in tourism, and they are more likely to make a reservation if the price is good and by being exempt from paying the booking fee. Another marketing strategy of Booking.com is their slogan, called "best price guarantee" which helps with the competition in the sector and brings the customers to their site.

This online reservation platform invests many financial resources on pay-per-click advertising through Google Ads: [s]o, Booking.com has a massive focus on driving traffic through paid search, which is perfectly logical, given that so many people conduct their research and make bookings with Google as their starting point. This is not so much concerned with spreading the brand message, rather it is generating traffic based on keywords and phrases which already show intent, i.e., these consumers are making travel plans and are likely to book.

(Ward, 2019)

Even though they spent billions there, it paid off because they continue to bring customers to their site and make money with every confirmed booking – "they also utilize organic search very well, with search engine optimization (SEO) specialists working on the website's content and design to ensure it brings in high volumes of traffic, again with a big emphasis on the most important keywords" (ibid.).

2.4.3.2. Tripadvisor
Tripadvisor is the largest travel guidance online platform in the world. It helps people become better travellers by providing guidance all the way from planning to booking and finally to take the trip:
[t]ravelers across the globe use the Tripadvisor site and app to discover where to stay, what to do and where to eat based on guidance from those who have been there before. With more than 988 million reviews and opinions of nearly 8 million businesses, travellers turn to Tripadvisor to find deals on accommodations, book experiences, reserve tables at delicious restaurants and discover great places nearby.

(Tripadvisor Media Center, n.d.)

 Figure 8: Tripadvisor logo

This online platform works differently than Booking.com. Not everyone who offers accommodation can be listed on Tripadvisor. According to Tripadvisor – How the site works,
several criteria must be followed to be listed on their site. Below are the criteria for accommodations, restaurants, and attractions (further explanations are available on Tripadvisor – How the site works link).
In order to be listed on Tripadvisor, accommodations must meet all of the following criteria:
– Must be open to the general public
– Must have an official name
– Must have an official address at a single and permanent location
– Must be open for 12 consecutive weeks of the year at a single and permanent location
– Must have multiple rooms/units
– Must be able to accommodate more than one guest/group of guests at a time
– Must not require guests to stay more than 7 nights
– Must be currently open or taking reservations for a future opening date

In order to be listed on Tripadvisor, restaurants must meet all of the following criteria:
– Must serve prepared food
– Must be open to the public
– Must be open on a regularly scheduled basis
– Must be open for at least 12 consecutive weeks of the year
– Must be stationary and have a permanent address (Food trucks may be listed as long as their schedule and locations are posted online. Requests must include a valid website for confirmation.)

In order to be listed on Tripadvisor, attractions must meet the following criteria.
Permanent attractions:
– Must be of interest to tourists
– Must be family-friendly

– Must abide by our animal policy
– Must have an official name and a permanent address
– Must be open and available to the general public on a regularly scheduled basis
– Must be open for at least 12 consecutive weeks of the year (Exception: Performances must operate at one venue for at least 24 consecutive weeks of the year)
– Must be currently open or taking reservations for a future opening date

Tours, cruises, and classes:
– Must be of interest to tourists
– Must be family-friendly
– Must abide by our animal policy
– Must have an official name and published phone number or email
– Must be a tour company, not an individual tour
– Must operate for at least 12 consecutive weeks of the year
– Must have an official website that offers a sample itinerary, which includes: o duration of tour o description of what is included in the tour o name of the city where the tour departs
– If offering classes, must offer single-day classes.

(taken from tripadvisor.com/pages/serviceEN.html)

2.4.3.3. Google Maps
Google Maps is a mapping and navigation application from Google. People got so used to using it on their trips to new places, but it can be used for more than just navigation – it is also a powerful digital marketing tool:
[i]n a nutshell, Google Maps marketing is the process of using Google Maps' functionality to make your business easier to find. Although this can be very useful (and expected) for large companies, it's even more indispensable for smaller businesses. However, Google Maps marketing isn't just about visibility – it's about positioning and not just that of your store. If used correctly (and strategically), Google Maps can play an important part in your digital marketing strategy.

(Shewan, 2021)



Figure 9: Google Maps logo

Businesses need to make sure to be visible in their local areas. If someone cannot find a local store, restaurant, accommodation provider or something else on Google Maps, it will harm the business because it will lose potential local or foreign customers. Another for entrepreneurs is Google My Business, which enables businesses of any size to display information about them that people might find useful (e.g., address, opening hours, customer ratings etc.). The information provided in the profile must be precise and thorough – if important information is missing, people may have difficulties finding a certain business and it could result in less visibility and poorer ranking on Google Maps.
According to Shewan (2021), Google Maps Marketing Optimization Checklist should include:
– complete address information (ensure that you use the exact same address information used by the postal service where your business operates),
– specified areas in which the business operates,
– verification of Google My Business profile,
– the main category of the business, but also the additional categories that are relevant to the business,
– optimized introduction (a summary of the company, what makes you different from the competition etc.),
– photos (for a better visual appeal that will make a business stand out since it is a visual platform), and
– customer reviews (encourage satisfied customers to write something positive about their experience in your business; they will not appear on the profile until you receive five reviews).

(taken from Shewan, 2021)

Luckily, the Google My Business profile is free to use; therefore, it is advised that businesses create a profile and potentially benefit more from it in the local or broader area. It is worth taking the time to create the account, even if it will take more of your time. If Google My Business profile is not enough, one can increase the advertisement of a local business on Google Maps via paid-per-click Google Ads.

## 2.4.4. Email marketing

Email marketing is another well-known and powerful promotional tool. It is a form of a direct digital marketing system that uses email messages to promote business' products or services:

[i]t can help make your customers aware of your latest items or offers by integrating it into your marketing automation efforts. It can also play a pivotal role in your marketing strategy with lead generation, brand awareness, building relationships or keeping customers engaged between purchases through different types of marketing emails. (taken from mailchimp.com/marketing-glossary/email-marketing/)

Customers that voluntarily subscribe to the mailing list receive information about new products, discounts, services, or any other information that is relevant to the business. The mailing list's purposes are the education of customers about the value of the company's brand and customer engagement between purchases. Other than that, its popularity comes from the fact, that people on the mailing list are forced to act – an email can be read, deleted, or archived and all three options require the action of the customer:
[n]o matter what type of business you operate, an email list is the most important element of a successful marketing strategy. With that list, you can share your story, promote your business, and showcase your products, all while turning subscribers into paying customers. (taken from mailchimp.com/resources/how-to-build-your-email-list/)

According to Mailchimp.com, there are several advantages of email marketing:
– emails are among the most cost-effective tools for promotion,
– they can help you build a relationship with your audience while also driving traffic to the business' website, social media profile, blog etc.,
– emails and target users can be segmented by demographic (only send the emails about content that interests them the most), and
– allows you to run A/B tests of a subject line or call to action to identify the best performing message by using email marketing software that can also be configured to easily send out emails.
(adapted from mailchimp.com/marketing-glossary/email-marketing/)

Be aware that due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) one must know the national (and international) email regulations when sending automated emails. Use emails to only contact people who willingly agreed to share their email addresses with you. Also, do not overflow people with emails: "flooding your audience's inbox with superfluous emails will cause them to lose interest or unsubscribe entirely. Focus on sending them relevant, engaging messages about the stuff they like, and they'll be loyal for a long time to come"
(taken from mailchimp.com/marketing-glossary/email-marketing/).

## 2.4.5. Mobile apps

We live in the age of smartphones; therefore, the development of mobile apps plays an important role in digital marketing. Each day, more and more people use their mobile phones and tablets to browse through the internet and this is the main reason why businesses must adjust their operations online: "from decreasing loading speeds to making websites mobile-friendly, taking into account the experience of mobile users is a must these days. […] If you want to stay ahead of the curve, you need to consider the possibility of using mobile apps in digital marketing" (Chaturvedi, 2021).
More people are likely to browse for something of their interest on the go these days (e.g., looking for directions on Google Maps, posting on or browsing through social media channels, searching for good restaurants or stores on our trips etc.). Mobile internet traffic has overtaken desktop traffic and it seems that this fact will not change any time soon (if ever).

It seems that mobile apps are an obvious choice for the promotion of businesses, their brands, products, and services. Chaturvedi (2021) pointed out a difference between mobile apps and mobile pages. Even though some might think they are similar, this is not the case. Mobile pages are existing website pages that have different versions depending on which device is used to access them. They are adjusted to fit different smaller screen sizes, contain smaller pictures and a larger font of the text. Differently from mobile pages, mobile apps are explicitly developed.

They do not only adjust to mobile devices as mobile pages but have custom software that helps with the improvement of mobile experience (easier navigation, special design for smaller screen sizes, better performance and responsiveness etc.).
Even though having a mobile app can help with the promotion, its development costs money which can be an additional expense alongside website maintenance.

According to Chaturvedi (2021), there are some benefits that one can only get from having a mobile app, namely:

– gain a direct marketing channel (apps give you direct access to users all the time because we have our phones with us all the time unlike computers, and because they allow in-app notifications and personalization features with which you can target individual customers anytime, anywhere),
– provide a unique and personalized experience (not all apps require the user to log in, but most of them are likely to do that – this allows them an adjustment of the content to their preferences and guarantees the improvement of user satisfaction),
– be more responsive (mobile apps increase the amount of interaction with your users – they contact you easier and it is easier for you to respond to them which will result in appreciation of improved response times), and
– improve user experience (this is the most obvious reason to have a mobile app because happy customers will stay loyal to you and keep coming back). (adapted from Chaturvedi, 2021)

If a business already has a website and has just developed a mobile app, then the latter must be promoted.
The company can encourage the users to download the app through pop-ups on their website pages and social media channels. Once the app is set and downloaded by people, do not stop adding features and improving it as time goes on. Keep up with novelties and do not stagnate because people get bored easily. Like in email marketing, keep the audience engaged, but do not overdo it as it may backfire on you.

SMART
VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

# Țara Dornelor - NGO

You came to Ţara Dornelor, this fairytale land, located in the heart of Bucovina, which preserves its naturalness, tradition and custom. Cross its threshold and you will enjoy welcoming hosts, ready to offer you the best dishes from local products, such as: mushrooms with cream, boiled cheese polenta, delicious „tocinei" with cream, fragrant strawberry, raspberry or blueberry jams, picked from the forest, or smoked trout in fir cob.

After such goodies, you quench your thirst directly from the source, with pure waters, carbon-mineral water, an important resource for Ţara Dornelor and, at the same time, one of the brands specific to the area. These waters are used both for curative purposes, within the treatment base of the Vatra Dornei spa, and for economic purposes, by bottling at Poiana Negri, Dorna Candrenilor and Panaci.

These lands welcome you with the fresh air of the mountains that guard the Dornas depression: Suhard, Giumalău, Călimani and Bistriţa and accompany you with the unique symphony of the crystalline springs and the fast rivers of Bistriţa and Dorna.

Bears, foxes, deer, wolves, lynxes, mountain roosters live wild here, in the spruce-dominated forests that make up the natural landscape of Dornelor Country.
Another characteristic element of the area is represented by the mudflats, those swamps poor in mineral substances, which preserve the floristic elements specific to the interglacial periods, similar to the tundra area. Tinovul Mic Şaru Dornei and Tinovul Mare Poiana Stampei - the largest natural peat reserve in Romania, testify that the spectacle of nature knows no bounds, even in places where the climate does not seem too friendly.

The alpine meadows are beautified by emerald juniper bushes, axes, gentians, bells and mountain peonies. Going down to the hearth of the village, you can admire, in peace, the simplicity of traditional households that are buzzing with activities specific to different seasons: grazing, milking milk, making cream and cheese, mowing and drying hay, decorating eggs. This is how the authentic is revealed in the nine communes that make up the rural universe of Ţara Dornelor: Poiana Stampei, Coşna, Dorna Candrenilor, Cîrlibaba, Ciocăneşti, Iacobeni, Şaru Dornei, Panaci, Dorna Arini.

✓ Boosting of territorial potential

✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism

✓ Circular and local economy centred, based on the economy of local businesses

✓ Valorize community at different levels


SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# My Transylvania - NGO

🌐 www.mytransylvania.ro

⬛ www.facebook.com/mytransylvania.ro

We contribute with great joy to the development of rural and mountain areas in Romania and we promote intangible heritage through alternative programs, projects and events and innovative concepts. We are especially concerned with small communities, the movement in nature, trades and crafts, gastronomic culture, education and health. That's why we are waiting for you every weekend outside in nature. Let's tell you, get involved, connect and eat together!

Mission: We develop communities through education and creativity, reconnecting them with our own territory. Vision: I had woven the contemporary with elements of territory and stories with meaning from Transylvania. Values: Sustainability, connection with nature, trust, sustainable development, creativity and innovation, joy in involvement, continuing education. What do we love? small villages and alpine areas :)) How do we promote these places? through alternative events, development programs and projects, innovative services and products.

Our rural and gastronomic events support the development of rural areas by promoting local products, recipes and culture.
We invite you to discover our villages, where the quality of people and stories but also of food compensates for the apparent lack of comfort.
You can't reserve fixed seats at the tables and we often resort to blankets, benches and other seating options. We do not want in any way to change those in the villages, but, on the contrary, to adapt ourselves and our guests to the local conditions.

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SMART VILLAGE

DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Bison Land 360 - Digitall touristic guide

🌐 www.bisonland.ro

ADL ECO LAND together with its collaborators developed a software platform with specific operating interface type APPLICATION tourist guide.

Bison Land 360 will provide through the platform data on objectives, activities, events and operators in the field of tourism and related fields of activity, which are located in the area of Targu Neamt, Vanatori Neamt Natural Park and in its vicinity.

The 'Bison Land 360' APPLICATION is available online 24 / 24.7 / 7 (except for maintenance periods).
It identifies the best local places for your unforgettable vacation.

You can search for events by address, category or your current location, check the event's details,  and bookmark events that appeal to you. The app is available on the web, iOS and Android.

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SMART
VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

# Digital Tourism Tools in Ireland by iHotelligence

www.ihotelligence.com

Digital tools and digital inclusion are becoming increasingly intertwined with development and well-being in developed societies, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the numerous lockdowns that this has imposed. Even so, there is still a significant number of social groups and localities (mainly rural regions) that have limited access to digital knowledge and tools. The resulting digital divide overcharges already existing social challenges.

In the case of Ireland, limited access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is critically threatening large parts of the population -namely older, vulnerable, and marginalised people who do not have the means or the infrastructure to adjust to this new reality. The National Economic & Social Council of Ireland has recently published a detailed report where it highlights the importance of a national strategy for digital inclusion and digital training (NESC, 2021). Acknowledging the digital gap in the Irish market, iHotelligence has developed a hotel management software that facilitates hoteliers' transition to the digital era.

iHotelligence has designed a product "based on the Software as a Service (SaaS) cloud distribution model but can be hosted on-premise or in the cloud" (iHotelligence, 2021). iHotelligence's software solution allows entrepreneurs and customers to enjoy a digital experience with automated facilitations. The program consists of a Property Management System (PMS) with numerous hotel management tools, a Guest App that enhances guests' agency, a Booking Engine to increase direct bookings, Channel Integration linking all major online channels to the PMS, and a Point of Sale System (POS) that is flexible and easy enough for the hospitality industry (iHotelligence, 2021). The company has also made additional technical changes to facilitate contact-free services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

iHotelligence's innovation lies in the fact that it provides a full-service solution that enables businesses with limited resources -like niche markets or family hotels, to benefit from the technological advancements that increase competitiveness in their domain. The National Tourism Development Authority (Fáilte Ireland) has recently announced future investments in the country's digital transformation of tourism activities and attractions, thus hastening respective adjustments in the hospitality industry (Fáilte Ireland, 2021). iHotelligence responds to the urgency of the matter by offering access to full-service digital technologies that increase efficiency, decrease costs, and enhance customer experience.

In this context, iHotelligence enables the digital inclusion of various actors that would otherwise be excluded: it makes various services available to them through an easy-to-use innovative system that does not require digital expertise and responds to technological challenges that affect competitiveness and productivity. With a highly-skilled management and support team, the company also offers personalized customer services with the scope to facilitate improvements and/or add new features.

Overall, iHotelligence responds to the challenge of restricted access to knowledge and technology in a society that increasingly invests in automated systems and antagonistic features. Through the development of its PMS, the company offers the opportunity of full digitalization to previously devoid and isolated businesses.

 • iHotelligence has developed a dynamic tool with the potential to enhance the development of smaller businesses in the highly competitive hospitality industry. In an era of high-level requirements in both technological advancements and features, as well as in technological expertise, iHotelligence offers the opportunity of digital inclusion to underprivileged areas and populations.

 • With digital inclusion as its social innovation, iHotelligence can have a high social impact, as it can help develop businesses in isolated areas, offer a competitive advantage to actors of lower education, and cover the gaps of insufficient infrastructure where appropriate. It is a socially responsible investment plan that seeks to offer equal opportunities to all and, hopefully, reduce social inequalities and marginalization.

# Full-Service Solution

## Property Management System

Our Property Management System will allow you to automate your guest's journey, from the moment they make their reservation right through to their departure.

Read More

## Guest App

Automate your customer's journey from start to finish. Give your customer the control to register their guest information, confirm your terms and conditions, check-in, and pay their balance all from their own device.

Read More

## Booking Engine

Our commission-free booking engine has the tools to help you grow your direct bookings and fully integrate with all major OTAs.

Read More

## Channel Integration

Enjoy two-way integration with all major OTAs using our Property Management System.

Read More

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

# Digitalization and Rural Development in Ireland by Ludgate Hub

www.ludgate.ie

Digitalization is quickly evolving into one of the most essential parts of entrepreneurial development and competitiveness globally. This creates numerous challenges, especially for rural areas that are less equipped to overcome the resulting digital divide (Dyba et al., 2020, p.51). With the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) increasingly affecting populations' quality of life and development, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, innovative approaches to digital inclusion become vital for underprivileged areas. Internet access and digital skills (ICT widespread in general) can be transformative tools for areas previously devoid of substantial technological advancements and underdeveloped businesses that seek to expand.

In this context, digital hubs "offer a number of opportunities, including the possibility to get fast, reliable internet access, physical workspace and a range of business and community support services aimed to satisfy local needs" (Dyba et al., 2020, p.52). This is the case of Ludgate Hub, in Skibbereen, which aimed at and succeeded in making a social impact in the whole region.

Ludgate Hub was established in 2014, in a West Cork small rural town that lacked proper access to ICT advancements till that moment. Ensuring high-profile strategic partnerships, Ludgate Hub brought high-speed internet access to Skibbereen and provided the physical space and facilities for the operation and development of entrepreneurial and educative activities (RTÉ, 2021). Available for "businesses, start-ups, entrepreneurs, creatives and artists," Ludgate Hub provides working, networking and development opportunities on both individual and corporate levels (Ludgate, 2021). It also hosts informative and networking events (real-life and virtual) that keep people and practices up-to-date.

Ludgate Hub offers education programmes that promote innovation and webinars aimed at ensuring easy-access knowledge and boosting inter-professional cooperation. Moreover, its curriculum adheres to the principles of a holistic education that strengthens and extends civil society, promotes sustainability, and works toward social inclusion (Ludgate, 2021). Subsequently, Ludgate Hub's operation extends far beyond the basics of incubator and accelerator programmes, thanks to its commitment to making small changes that will immediately improve the well-being of an entire community.

Ludgate Hub's changes revitalised Skibbereen by making it "the trailblazer for digital hubs across Ireland" (RTÉ, 2021). By improving connectivity issues and offering physical space, facilities, and training for business and educational matters, Ludgate Hub eventually contributed to the increase of economic activity in various sectors and the whole town. West Cork was previously relatively isolated, but the company's innovative presence and development radically changed its scenery.
This was not only the result of digitalization; rather, it was the result of seeing work in rural areas from a different perspective.

## LIVE THE LUDGATE LIFE – LOVE WHAT YOU DO, LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE !

We invite all businesses, start-ups, entrepreneurs, creatives and artists to collaborate with us and join our innovative West Cork community. Ludgate provides a space to network, expand and scale your businesses in a beautiful part of Ireland.

Book a Hot Desk    Book a Meeting Room    Become a Member

## THE LUDGATE IN NUMBERS

**55**
Full Time Members

**146**
Jobs Created

**3500**
Hot Desks Enjoyed

**€4M**
Contribution to Local Economy

## CURRENT CLIENTS

We are delighted to have the below companies currently choosing and enjoying what Ludgate has to offer as their place of work. We are ready and waiting to welcome you too to West Cork.

**FIND OUT MORE**

## CURRENT CLIENTS

xsellco    GRANITE    teamwork.    SIX WEST
Your Trusted Auditor Partner

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Digitalising ecotourism in Ireland with WWOOF™ Ireland

www.wwoof.ie

Ecotourism is a broad term used to describe numerous variants of sustainable tourism and environmentalism. In general, it embraces such ideas as nature conservation, sustainability ethics, training and education, cultural exchanges, and beneficiary attitudes towards the enhancement of local communities. In this context, ecotourism seeks to reduce the environmental footprint and make a social impact.

While in academic research various definitions assign different qualities in the description of this movement, it is generally accepted that conscious ecotourism often combines recreational elements with active participation and volunteering in local frameworks to promote local natural knowledge and cultural exchanges (Fennell, 2014, p.17). As part of a wider ecological movement pressing for sustainable practices, solidarity, and an ethical economy, WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms, Ireland (WWOOF™ Ireland) was created with the scope to connect eager travellers with organic farmers and create a network of cultural and educational exchanges in the context of organic farming (WWOOF Ireland, 2021).

WWOOF™ Ireland is an online platform with advanced search features and contact exchange possibilities for its members. It contains an extended directory of organic farmers in Ireland who are willing to host dynamic and enthusiastic visitors and teach them organic farming techniques and sustainable lifestyles (WWOOF Ireland, 2021). Through online reviews and profiles, visitors have a large choice of potential hosts and can reach out to them to organise their visit. Depending on the sort of help that each farmer needs on their farm, the communication proceeds with an action plan provided that all parties are in agreement. All applications are thoroughly examined to ensure safety and satisfaction for all.

Promoting an evolved form of volunteer or alternative tourism according to literature (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p.121), WWOOF™ Ireland guides its members to fully benefit from their exchanges: hosts may benefit financially from volunteer work, and tourists can rejoice by actively participating in meaningful cultural and educational exchanges that support the "agroecological movement" (WWOOF Ireland, 2021). For a small country like Ireland, this initiative offers unique opportunities for growth and connectivity, even in areas that are considered remote and isolated.

As part of the global WWOOF movement, WWOOF™ Ireland commits to the same ethical principles and invests in sharing knowledge per sustainable practices and environmentally respectful attitudes. As an online tool, it connects people and promotes inclusion, all the while contributing to the development and sustainability of organic farming and rural Ireland, as well as educating on the importance of volunteer work, solidarity, and cultural exchange.

WWOOF™ Ireland adopts the social innovation practices of the global WWOOF movement. Its social design seeks to empower local communities and, at the same time, offer valuable knowledge and experiences to tourists. In this context, it promotes the importance of collective impact and civic engagement. Volunteering and free-of-charge hosting also offer unique opportunities for bonding and cultural exchanges; they also enhance solidarity under the same goals: preserving nature and applying ethical and sustainable practices.

WWOOF™ Ireland is a form of digitalised ecotourism that offers key tools for communication between its members and actively promotes social inclusion. Furthermore, it introduces its visitors to the benefits of the circular economy by helping them navigate organic farms and learn about responsible farming and other sustainable activities.

# IDM for the sustainable development of South Tyrol

🌐 www.idm-suedtirol.com/it/chi-siamo.html

IDM Alto Adige, whose name stands for Innovation, Development and Marketing, is the facilitator of economic development in South Tyrol. At IDM we provide services with the aim of promoting sustainable development of the local economy and consequently increasing the competitiveness of South Tyrolean companies.

We support internationalization and innovation especially of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and we support filmmakers in the realization of film projects. With tourism marketing, on the other hand, we strengthen South Tyrol as a brand and with agri-food marketing we promote quality products.

IDM's vision and mission guide us in our daily work.
"Making South Tyrol the most coveted sustainable habitat in Europe" is our vision, which allows the company to define objectives and plan activities.
Our mission, on the other hand, is our task: "IDM is the impetus and driving force for the sustainable economic development of South Tyrol".

✓ Boosting of territorial potential

✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism

✓ Circular and local economy centred, based on the economy of local businesses

✓ Valorize community at different levels

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES
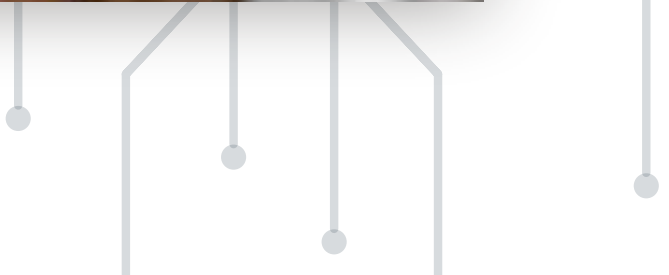
# BLAWALK APP

🌐 www.blawalk.it

BlaWalk is an app that was created to bring together enthusiasts of outdoor activities who in this way can agree to share their passion together. Would you like to be able to hike and walk in company or find people who like you love to ride paths and mountain bike trails?

Well, from today all this is possible thanks to BlaWalk, the new smartphone application that allows you to easily find friends with whom to share your outdoor activities. BlaWalk operativity

Very easy. After registering, then decide whether to join an exit that another user will have created, choosing the time and place that suits you best or create an event yourself.  To create an event just indicate the time and place of meeting, some characteristics of the exit (duration, pace of walking or running, any difference in height) and you're done.

✓ Boosting of territorial potential

✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism

✓ Based on the economy of local businesses

✓ Valorize community at different levels

✓ Creates community and community awareness

✓ Stimulate well being, healthy living, cooperation and team work

SMART VILLAGE

DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# LIVE EXPERIENCE FVG APP

🌐 www.blawalk.it

An application developed to encourage local tourism in a region full of treasures still little explored. A video concept that convinced for the vision of the mobile world and the tourism experience it expressed. A challenge that immediately fascinated us.

The result is called "Live Experience" and is the app of TurismoFVG, the tourist soul of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region - available for tablets and smartphones The app is a tool for organizing your holiday in Friuli Venezia Giulia that is useful before and during your stay, through a personalized filter system and the construction of personal thematic itineraries, but also after returning home thanks the possibility of sharing the stages and the pictures of your trip.

✓ Boosting of territorial potential

✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism

✓ Based on the economy of local businesses

✓ Valorize community at different levels and in different sectors

✓ Improve rural areas visibility

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DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

Rezervă acum! ☎ 0755 813 558  ✉ contact@tastingromania.ro

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## Vine România la tine

Mai mult

Gastronomie Locală

Manufactură Premium

Cosmetice Naturale

Închiriază un Povestitor Local

# Tasting Romania – travel website

🌐 www.tastingromania.ro

Degustă Romania offers you exclusively premium local products and authentic experiences. Quality time for your family, for your partners.

tastingromania.ro is an online store with Romanian tourist experiences. You can enjoy them as such or you can give them as a gift to someone from far away, from anywhere in the world - you buy them online, the giver receives the vouchers by email and has 6 months to decide when to consume them.

The travel website offers one-day experiences, 2-4 days experiences, circuites (4-10 days), an experience called „Visit legendary products"; workshops and courses in arts and crafts; spa experiences; adventure travels, holiday vacations.

This online tool connects, in a fast and friendly way, local producers, accomodation owners, service providers with the tourist, focusing on promoting local products, cultural heritage and authentic tourism experiences.

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Discover the Best of Romania

| Destination | Check In - Out | Guests | Advance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Where are you going? | dd/mm/yyyy - dd/mm/yyyy | 1 Adult - 0 Child | More ▾ | SEARCH |

## Trust and Safety
All the hosts are carefully checked to make sure they meet our standards

## What are you looking for?

Traditional Homes | Resorts | Cabins | Manors | Castles | Vineyards | Tree Houses | Bungalows | Glampings | Beach Houses

**Hygge Hut, Bucovina**
Hygge Hut, Strada Parcului, Vama, Romania
5 /5 Excellent · 3 Reviews
from €125/night

**Casa Criț 164, Transylvania**
Criț, Romania
0 /5 Not Rated · No Review
from €50/night

**Poiana Creasta Cocosului, Maramures**
Poiana Creasta Cocosului, Breb, Romania
0 /5 Not Rated · No Review
from €105/night

**Casa Veche, Maleia Garten, Carpathian Mountains**
Casa Veche Petrosani, Strada Maleia nr. 151, Petrosani, Romania
0 /5 Not Rated · No Review
from €99/night

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Stay in the most wonderful authentic Romanian houses. Experience old crafts and local traditions in one of the best European rural destinations.

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### BEST PRICE GUARANTEE
With No Extra Fee!

**Luxury Lake House with Infinity Pool: The Experience of Living in Paradise**
Luxury Lake House, DJ102I, Teșila, Romania
5 /5 Excellent · 1 Review
from €348/night

**Casa Filip, Sarichioi, Danube Delta**
Casa Filip din Sarichioi, Sarichioi, Romania
0 /5 Not Rated · No Review
from €100/night

**Vilegiatura | Florica Socolescu Villa, Sinaia, Bucegi Mountains**
Vilegiatura I Vila Florica Socolescu I Private Guesthouse, Strada Cumpătu, Sinaia, Romania
0 /5 Not Rated · No Review
from €600/night

**Berg Cabin: A scandinavian cabin in Somesu Rece**
Sat Paltinei, Somesu Rece, Romania
0 /5 Not Rated · No Review
from €308/night

# Travlocals and Wildventure travel websites

🌐 www.travlocals.com          🌐 www.wildventure.ro

f travlocals                    f wildventure.ro


Degustă Romania offers you exclusively premium local products and authentic experiences. Quality time for your family, for your partners.

tastingromania.ro is an online store with Romanian tourist experiences. You can enjoy them as such or you can give them as a gift to someone from far away, from anywhere in the world - you buy them online, the giver receives the vouchers by email and has 6 months to decide when to consume them.

The travel website offers one-day experiences, 2-4 days experiences, circuites (4-10 days), an experience called „Visit legendary products"; workshops and courses in arts and crafts; spa experiences; adventure travels, holiday vacations.

This online tool connects, in a fast and friendly way, local producers, accomodation owners, service providers with the tourist, focusing on promoting local products, cultural heritage and authentic tourism experiences.

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

# Hellas Agrotourism's blog

🌐 www.agroxenia.org

ⓕ www.facebook.com/Agroxenia.org

AGROXENIA - Hellas Agrotourism is a non-profit organization which operates all over Greece. The organization's base is located in Chania Greece and has developed a network of eco-tourism and rural tourism factors. Its blog page includes a list of accommodations, multifunctional farms and activities r elated to eco-tourism and rural tourism, which became known through their page.

The aim of the network is to strengthen rural tourism accommodations and common learning - in conjunction with the development of activities aimed at fostering relations of communication, solidarity and mutual understanding among young people regardless of their nationality, gender, religion or ideological orientation.

Agroxenia promotes meetings of all types of travelers, young people, families and groups on tours and trips, their contact with the nature, environmental awareness and healthy living, the development of their personality, as well as opportunities for using leisure time through sport, games, culture and joint actions. In general, in long-term this action aims to identify the tourist product in Greece as well as its visibility to a wider public in our country and abroad.

It seeks to establish the networking of rural tourism associations and their member enterprises, to ensure and upgrade the quality of locally produced agro-tourism products and services, to facilitate this promotion to local and wider markets, and to finally attract and facilitate visitors from the wider Greek and international arena.

It supports its members, secures and upgrades the quality, derived from local agro products and services, facilitates the development of local and wider rural and eco-tourism markets and finally wishes to attract visitors from the all over Greece and internationally.

✓ Boosting of territorial potential

✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism

✓ Circular and local economy centred, based on the economy of local businesses

✓ Valorize community at different levels

SMART VILLAGE

DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Live Like Local platform

🌐 www.livelikelocal.gr

Experience the Lo

Volos & Pe

M

Live Like Local is a brand new and innovative destination management platform, which provides unique experiences by inducting a travel to the real world of the locals and the local lifestyle. LLL is founded on the principles of sustainable tourism and experiential tourism.

The project was implemented in the regional state of Magensia, in the city of Volos, Mount Pelios.The core elements of the project is based on the cultural legacy, as it's inherent in every single moment of the modern lifestyle.

The platform offers eight sections through which a visitor can find information for the preferred destination, This information is provided by an actual local resident, more specifically the visitor is able to ask any registed local any question related to the area which is visiting.

Additionally the paltform provides traditional recipes and tastes linked to the destination and infromation on sightseeing, activities and local products.

The platform invites the visitor to feel the region's vibrant character, live it, experience how tradition and mythology revive nowadays and become part of it digitally.

✓ Boosting of territorial potential

✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism

✓ Based on the economy of local businesses

✓ Valorize community at different levels

✓ Creates community and community awareness

✓ Stimulate well being, healthy living, cooperation and team work

# Be my quest app

🌐 www.bemyquest.gr
f www.facebook.com/bemyquest.gr

Be more than a guest. Be my quest.

Be My Quest is a new start-up that was established in Greece in June 2017 and operates in the tourism sector.

The primary goal of the Be My Quest team is the redevelopment and economic regrowth of abandoned villages and areas that do not have steady financial and tourist flow.

The team of experts contacts owners of potentially usable properties in rural areas and proposes unique alternative tourism activities, which will provide an economic boost to the local community.

These activities will be promoted through the specially designed Be My Quest website. This way, potential tourists will be able to quickly and easily choose alternative activities, such us agricultural tourism, history tourism, medical tourism, and volunteering.

The key element of these activities is the concept of Quest, which adds an educational and social purpose to the business.

✓ Encourages the growth of alternative tourism in regions and villages in Greece which currently have a lack of tourism.

✓ Creates community and community awareness

✓ Boosting territorial potential

## THINGS TO DO

# in Ostbelgien

Summer

Ovelo
Itineraris

Hiking route
planner

High Fens

Accommodation

Travel offers

# Audio guides - a new way to discover the traditions of rural areas

Usually, the tourist who arrives for the first time in a certain region is provided with either concisely written maps or leaflets that fail to capture the charm of the place, or voluminous guides, which too few still have the patience to go through. A modern and affordable solution would be an audio guide, provided that it is not simply a recorded version of existing guides. In these terms, he thought of the project L'Agence du Tourisme de l'Est de la Belgique (Eastern Tourism Agency of Eastern Belgium), a non-profit organization operating in the eastern part of Wallonia. Here, the German-speaking population is the majority, which has left its mark on local traditions. In order to be able to present in a colloquial and interesting way the peculiarities of the area, but also its history, not infrequently tumultuous, the agency initiated a collaboration with a profile association from SaintVith, Zwischen Venn und Schneifel. This is how the "Sound Routes" (Circuits sonores) was born, an initiative to promote the German-speaking region of Belgium, adapted to the way in which tourists nowadays consume information about the area they visit.

From the beginning, the emphasis was on the accessibility of information. The records should not be exhaustive in terms of the data provided, nor too technical, but as much as possible sprinkled with anecdotes and details that a historical guide could not have provided. Therefore, local history enthusiasts or locals were interviewed, in order to offer the listener a more authentic perspective on the region.
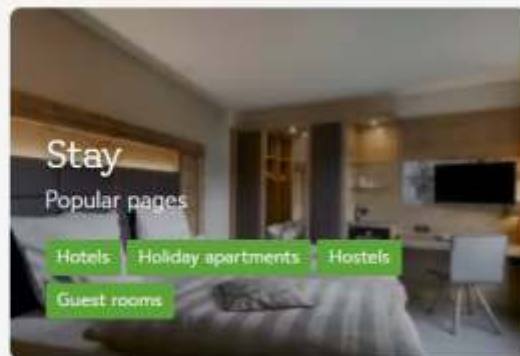
🌐 www.eastbelgium.com/audioguide

The audio files have been made available free of charge to those who wish, and can be downloaded and then played on a smartphone or mp3 player. In principle, the project has proven to be as simple to implement as it is innovative. This does not mean, however, that the agency did not face some implementation difficulties. The recordings have not always managed to keep the colloquial tone that those who proposed the project wanted, so for some locations there is still no audio guide available. For others, it would have been necessary to print detailed maps to accompany the guide, and the additional costs would not have been included in the funding received through the LEADER axis (worth around € 54,000). In addition, the agency is still looking for a technical solution that allows files to be downloaded directly to your smartphone without the help of a computer. At the same time, however, the results of the project are encouraging.

On the agency's website there are already three itineraries proposed to discover the region, commented in three languages (Dutch, French and German), and tourists can learn the history and local specifics of this border territory at their own pace, without having to to be accompanied by a guide.
Information (contact):
Andrea Michaelis - andrea.michaelis@eastbelgium.com

# The ECOA

opportunity for the development and enjoyment of creativity. Rise to
paying tribute to the territory, recreating its legacy in contemporane
people together around new meanings of being and doing.

## DzLoulé Criativodz Facebook supports community building in the field of creative tourism

There are many interesting examples of how to build (and maintain) an online creative travel community, and "Loulé Criativo" is definitely one of them. Located in the Algarve region of Portugal, a short distance from the famous Faro holiday destination and its attractive beaches, Loulé has opted for the development of creative tourism in order to protect and promote traditional heritage based on art, crafts and culinary experiences.

For example, we recommend their Facebook page, where they regularly update their activities, newsletters, workshop data and ways travelers can interact and participate in their many activities, are listed here: www.facebook.com/ loulecriativo / Screenshot Facebook page "Loulé Criativo", illustrating communication through Social Media.

"Loulé Criativo" is an initiative that focuses on enhancing the identity of this territory located in the Algarve, with creativity and innovation as its driving force. It supports the training and activity of artisans and professionals in the creative sector, contributing to the revitalization of traditional arts and to stimulating new approaches to intangible heritage.

Tiles painting

Workshop Hand Spinning Wool

From Market to Kitchen - Algarve Cataplana.
creative experience
📅 Several Dates

Chocolate Truffles with Aromatic Herbs
creative experience
📅 Saturday
2021-11-13

🌐 www.loulecriativo.pt/en/home

This project promoted by the Municipality of Loulé intends to provide a set of services, to residents and visitors, that provide: adequate and up-to-date training in traditional arts and crafts; the continuous induction of innovation in professionals' products and work processes; conditions for research in arts and crafts and related topics; support for the installation and business of artisans and professionals in the creative sector adjusted to their needs; an artistic and creative residency program that mobilizes the international critical mass; a dynamic and attractive offer of creative experiences that put tourists in contact with the unique aspects of regional identity and heritage based on the "do it yourself" philosophy; a cultural program that promotes events related to the theme of creativity, heritage, arts and crafts. Take part in workshops, courses, theme weekends and experiences inspired by this territory's ART, HANDICRAFTS, GASTRONOMY, HERITAGE and RHYTHM.

Live the local culture, mingle with the locals and discover an enriching learning experience.

The ECOAThis is a space and an opportunity for the development and enjoyment of creativity.

Rise to the challenge of inventing new ways of paying tribute to the territory, recreating its legacy in contemporaneity and bringing people together around new meanings of being and doing.

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

## Marketing Platform
## Creative Iceland

Authentic experiences offered by local artists and experts Visitors to Iceland who are interested in getting involved in Icelandic culture are offered the opportunity to book typical Icelandic activities, including activities in knitting and crocheting workshops, writing workshops, Icelandic cooking classes, walks for photography, visits to a creative cluster, pottery workshops, island language courses or creative seminars.

Artists and experts who want to offer an activity can get support from Creative Island to create an offer that will promote online and are invited to market it on the Creative Island website. Participants in the activities are then encouraged to share the experience on the organization's Facebook page. Regular updates of their activities, newsletters, workshop data and how travelers can interact and participate in the number of activities are listed here: creativeiceland.is, www.facebook.com/CreativeIceland Screenshot "Creative Iceland" website

### Cold Fire Northern Lights Photography Tour

**Photography**

The most unique and memorable Northern Lights photography tour. Come and join us, bring your camera to hunt the Northern Lights and get the shots of a lifetime!

Learn more ↗

### Get Your Own Icelandic Viking Portrait

**Photography**

Dressed in authentic, hand made Icelandic Viking costumes. It's easy to get into character, find your inner Viking and live the legend. Take home stylish on-set photographs to share a unique, imaginative adventure.

Learn more ↗

### Reykjanes Peninsula Photography Tour

**Photography**

Reykjanes peninsula, the Geothermal wonder of Iceland. Surrounded by dramatic landscapes of steep cliff formations, black beaches and lava fields flowing into the ocean, it is indeed a photographer's haven.

Learn more ↗

### Reykjanes Landscape Photography Tour And Workshop

**Photography**

Reykjanes peninsula has many great photographic opportunities. Its rugged and wild landscape is perfect for dramatic pictures in any kind of weather and season.

Learn more ↗

### Explore The South-Coast Of Iceland & Hunt For Northern Lights

**Photography**

Experience the south coast of Iceland, one of the most scenic routes in the country with a local guide and professional landscape photographer.

Learn more ↗

### Reykjavik Photo Shoot Walk

**Photography**

We'll walk past some of Reykjavik's most famous landmarks, and some of my favorite locations, taking interesting and memorable photos along the way...

Learn more ↗

🌐 www.creativeiceland.is

Artists and experts who want to offer an activity can get support from Creative Island to create an offer that will promote online and are invited to market it on the Creative Island website. Participants in the activities are then encouraged to share the experience on the organization's Facebook page.

Regular updates of their activities, newsletters, workshop data and how travelers can interact and participate in the number of activities are listed here: creativeiceland.is, www.facebook.com/CreativeIceland Screenshot "Creative Iceland" website

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Naselo.bg

Naselo.bg is a Bulgarian platform for rural tourism, which gives you the opportunity to discover the typical local foods, to make reservations, to participate in tastings or tours to try them in the places that prepare them.

The site is part of the long-term project "Pendara" of the Foundation "Localfood.bg". This is the modern guide for any traveler looking for authentic local tastes, farms and exciting stories about the people behind them.

We believe that rural tourism destinations are not just accommodation, but have an absolute advantage over all others - and this is the traditional home-cooked food they offer. That is why Naselo.bg is the first site in Bulgaria that promotes only registered guest houses, farms and restaurants through the food prepared by their owners.

Each place is special, brings its own spirit, taste and emotion, which can sometimes make your choice difficult. That's why we offer accurate descriptions and useful tools to easily find the right place for everyone.

Our support for gastronomic rural tourism in Bulgaria is not limited to its promotion. Our team consists of experts in rural areas, food control nd farmers' markets and festivals. As such, we develop advocacy for the benefit of micro-enterprises in agriculture, food and tourism - we develop adequate regulatory documentation and conduct training for operators in the sector.

✔ Innovative solution for promotion of a rural tourism business and destinations and boosting the local economy;
✔ A combination of rural, eco and food tourism;
✔ The platform offers an innovative way for increasing  the tourist flow to the province, thus providing additional income and employment creating conditions for the development of rural areas and communities;
✔ It supports the exchange of information, experience, ideas, solving daily problems such as: job seeking, realization of their potential in various public areas, establishing links between different rural areas and regions;
✔ Increases the prestige of the province, not only in terms of tourism, but also as a place for permanent residence and as opportunity for developing a profitable business in the Bulgarian countryside

# Rural Balkans

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

Rural Balkans is a platform for rural tourism.

The purpose of this platform is to promote tourism in the rural areas of Bulgaria and the Balkans. The platform is maintained by the traveler Gavrail Gavrilov and contains interesting and useful information in several main categories:

1. Directions - Ways to discover. Present the most interesting destinations beyond the cities.

2. Personalities – Present stories about the inspiring people we met along the way.

3. Events – Present village parties you cannot read anywhere about.

4. Cuisine - The taste of travel. Present original recipes from the rural cuisine of the Balkans.

5. Places - Where we are greeted like friends. Hospitality in pleasant company.

6. Analyzes

✓ Innovative solution for promotion of a rural tourism business and destinations and boosting the local economy;

✓ A combination of rural, eco and food tourism;

✓ The platform offers an innovative way for increasing the tourist flow to the province, thus providing additional income and employment creating conditions for the development of rural areas and communities;

✓ It supports the exchange of information, experience, ideas, solving daily problems such as: job seeking, realization of their potential in various public areas, establishing links between different rural areas and regions;

✓ Increases the prestige of the province, not only in terms of tourism, but also as a place for permanent residence and as opportunity for developing a profitable business in the Bulgarian countryside.
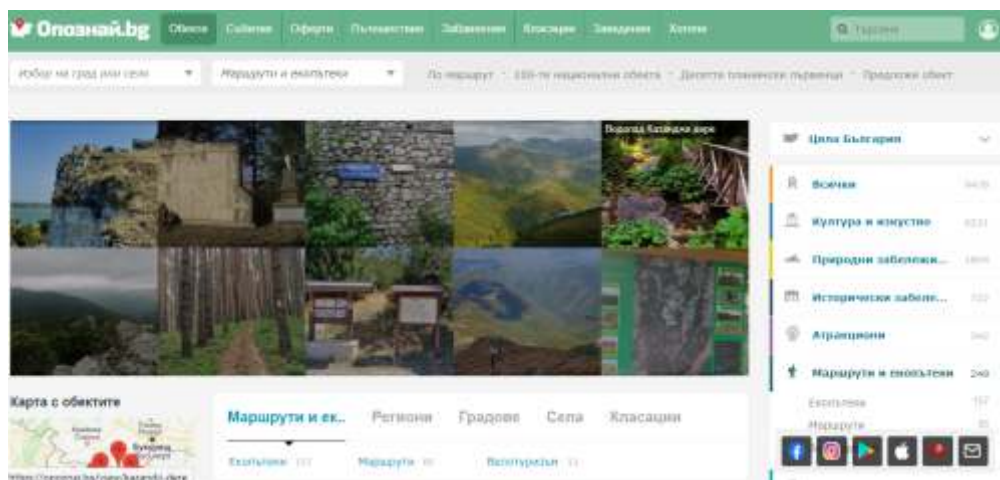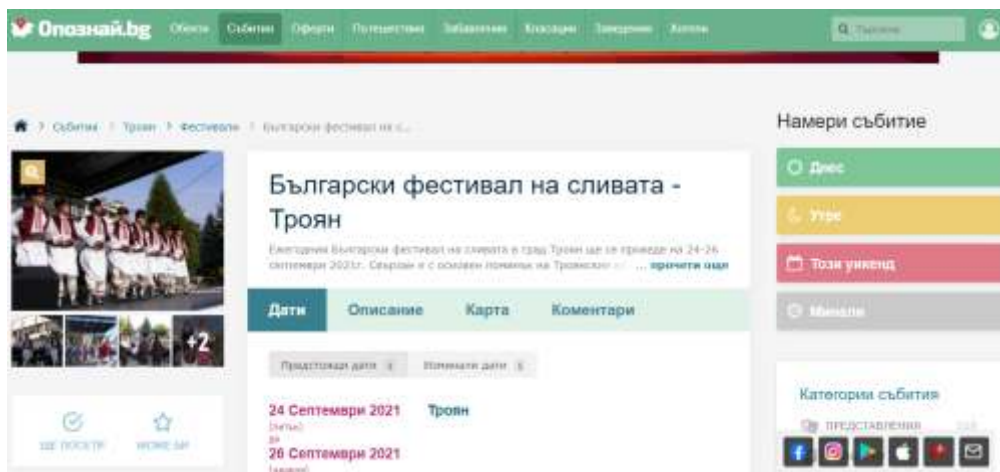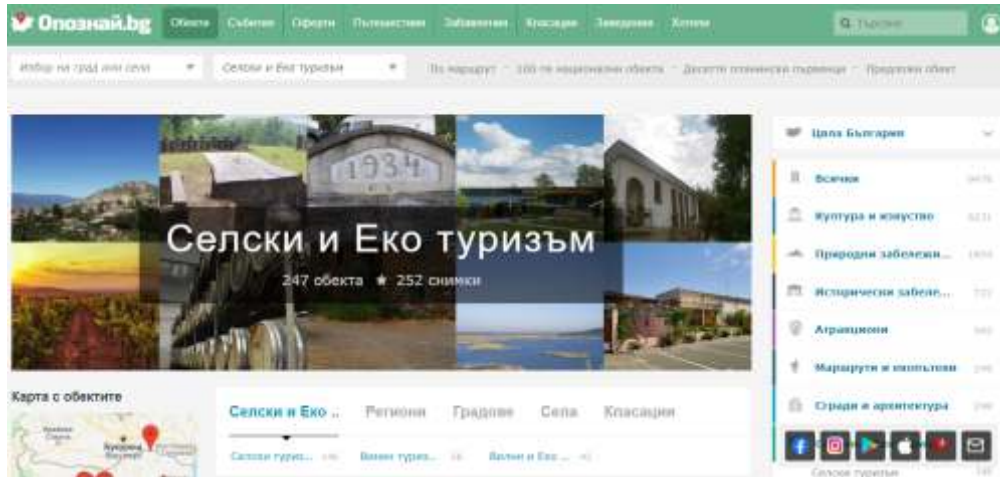
# Opoznai.bg

🌐 www.opoznai.bg

[f] www.facebook.com/opoznai

Opoznay.bg is a project for everyone who loves to travel and discover interesting new places in the country. The most comprehensive catalog of landmarks in Bulgaria - with over 7,000 articles on natural landmarks, culture and art, attractions, events, entertainment and shelter spots and much more.

Collecting all the pieces of our centuries-old history and traditions and adding the vagaries of nature, Opoznay.bg gives you the opportunity to rediscover an unknown Bulgaria. Get to know places you would otherwise miss, unaware of their magnetism and grandeur. Places that tell our story and way of life in the most accurate way. One of the main categories is Rural and eco tourism, which includes various accommodation facilities in this category, accompanied by information, many photos and comments of people who have already visited them.

The site provides an opportunity for its visitors to receive information about various events, sights, restaurants and offers, including rural tourism. In addition, the site contains various ideas for travel in Bulgaria, which are actual stories of different travelers, containing valuable information about the various sites.

Website visitors can also take advantage of the rankings made in various categories - the most popular, most desired, most sought after, most commented, most shared landmarks and more. There is also a ranking of the most popular attractions in Rural and Eco Tourism where fans of rural and eco tourism can see and receive information about the top 100 attractions in this category.

✓ Innovative solution for promotion of a rural tourism business and destinations and boosting the local economy;

✓ The platform offers an innovative way for increasing the tourist flow to the province, thus providing additional income and employment creating conditions for the development of rural areas and communities;

✓ It supports the exchange of information, experience, ideas, solving daily problems such as: job seeking, realization of their potential in various public areas, establishing links between different rural areas and regions;

✓ Increases the prestige of the province, not only in terms of tourism, but also as a place for permanent residence and as an opportunity for developing a profitable business in the Bulgarian countryside.

Read more

## Hops na kolo – A Webpage That Connects Cycling with the Valley of the Green Gold

Hops na kolo is a webpage that promotes cycling and familiarizing oneself with the town Žalec and many of its surrounding villages (otherwise known as the valley of the green gold – hops). Slovenia is quite a cycling country because we have so many beautiful places, people are excited about the success of our professional cyclists, and they also want to live a healthy lifestyle.

Beautiful experiences are within the reach of our feet in the Savinja Valley, where Žalec and its surrounding villages are located. Another option, when someone wants to visit the hop fields and other nearby places, is with a bicycle – either with an electric, regular, or a road bicycle. Žalec is friendly to everyone – cycling families, serious recreational cyclists, fans of mass cycling events (such as Cycling in the Savinja valley each year at the end of June), or mountain and touring cyclists, and is becoming one of the most comprehensive cycling destinations in Slovenia.

There are 7 cycling tours available in this area, namely:
● road tour,
● hop fields,
● Hom tour,
● Šmohor tour,
● Kal tour,
● Mrzlica tour, and
● Hmeljko.

Altogether, there are 21 bike routes, up to 50 kilometres long. The maps of each cycling tour mentioned before can be found on the website Hops na kolo or in a printed version in the local Tourist Information Center (TIC). The routes are furnished with markings, signposts, and warning signs to ensure safety and guidance. The work is still in progress; therefore, all the routes are not marked yet, but they are set and can already be visited by the locals or tourists.

www.hopsnakolo.si/en/
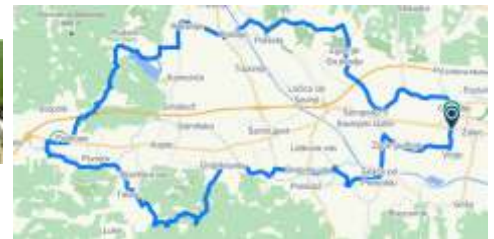


"Guided" cycling in such a way offers a wonderful experience through the land of green gold and is paired with local culinary discoveries and beer tastings. Locals and tourists can enjoy organically grown food or home-made food from the local tourist farms. On the cycling tours, a top-quality chocolate shop in Žalec awaits tourists and locals with a sweet tooth.

The webpage also offers some local accommodation options which means, that the community wants to work together and promote each other and local food production. The Hmeljko Hops app for phones is still in progress. The idea is to find several information tables along the Hmeljko route where you can find more information about hops, hop fields and the Savinja valley. With the help of 7 information tables, you can answer the questions in the application. All you need is a bike and a smartphone. At the moment, it is possible to take the quiz on the webpage Hops na kolo and learn something new.

✓ Promoting local business through a guided cycling tour (stops along the way, where guests can eat local food, taste local beers, book their accommodation etc.).

✓ Local businesses promote each other.

✓ The Tourist Information Centre in Žalec promotes the visit to the nearby villages by promoting the webpage (or cycling movement) on one of its printed bilingual maps (Slovene and English) which tourists can take for free.

# Online junction
# Naše podeželje

Naše podeželje (Eng. Our Countryside) is a Slovene online junction where rural practices and innovative solutions for rural areas are presented. It was created in cooperation with Mreža za podeželje (Eng. Network for countryside) and Slovenian Rural Development Association.

The key points of this online junction, available to the public are:

- the countryside of the future,
- good and exemplary practices,
- innovative solutions,
- self-sufficient smart villages,
- e-video market and store "Naša dežela" (Eng. Our Country),
- news and events, and
- sponsorship and donations.

The examples mentioned on the site present several "smart" solutions for environmental, social, economic, and other challenges of the Slovene countryside. Due to the fact that those rural areas and their challenges differ from each other, the solutions and approaches to them must differ as well. The website Naše podeželje presents the countryside of the future through different practices, proposals, and models. They show different possibilities within the concept of smart villages. Digitalization and new technologies must be integrated wisely into the rural lifestyle and traditions and the results of new approaches must enable new, green jobs, self-sufficiency in food and energy, and ecological awareness. New concepts enable a brighter perspective for the younger population and their return to the countryside. The Slovenian countryside is still underdeveloped and has not reached its full potential. It is our "treasure" and creative approaches could bring harmony between cities and the countryside. Nothing can be done on its own and the development of rural areas requires active participation from the villagers. Solutions must be adapted to the local needs, be simple and be based on a development strategy.

PAMETNE VASI

This online junction will present more solutions and proposals in the future. In the presentation and cooperation of various projects or arrangements of the rural areas, (rural) stakeholders play a crucial role. In the future, the stakeholders and the inhabitants of rural areas also intend to cooperate with digital and TV media to inform more people. Naše podeželje is an efficient digital promotion tool due to its presentation of innovative approaches and successful stories, and the additional website page links which direct visitors to a wide range of online shops.

✓ This website is efficient and can reach many people.

✓ It promotes rural businesses, ecological and home-made products, social innovations etc.

✓ Good practices are shared with the public and villagers can find certain stakeholders or sponsors easier.

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

# Website page Glamping.si – An Easy Way to Book Your Next Camping with Style

Webpage Glamping.si is the first and only BOOKGLAMP in Slovenia, used for making glamorous camping (a.k.a. glamping) reservations. It collects all the locations for glamping vacations in one place. The emphasis with locations and accommodation providers promoted on this website is that they provide top services, a great deal of privacy, and exceptional cuisine. Glamping places from this website offer relaxation in nature and a complete disconnection from all the hustle and bustle of our busy everyday lives.

We could say that this webpage functions similarly to Booking.com with the exception that it only provides glamping places (which is also stated in their name). Glamping.si allows the visitors of the page to easily find and book their dream glamping vacation. The accommodation providers offer several kinds of glamorous tents, treehouses, top quality wooden and eco houses, and even elite hotel accommodation or apartments.
When deciding on which accommodation to choose, individuals can take several options when searching on the website Glamping.si:

- choose among the highlighted glamping options, shown on the main tab,
- have a look among the "last minute" options and book one (or more) of them,
- click the "region" tab and select the accommodation based on the region you want to visit, or
- open the "map" tab and decide among different filters (region, cultural heritage, natural attractions, transport, shops, wellness, culinary, and free time/sports activities).

Part of their business plan is also selling gift vouchers for different gift packages. They are great for birthdays, anniversaries or for a simple weekend getaway. Ordering them is very simple and the vouchers are sent to the desired address the same day upon receiving the confirmation of payment. All the voucher options have a description of what is included in the price and how much each of them costs. The pictures on the site are also carefully chosen; they present the glamping places in their best ways and are alluring.

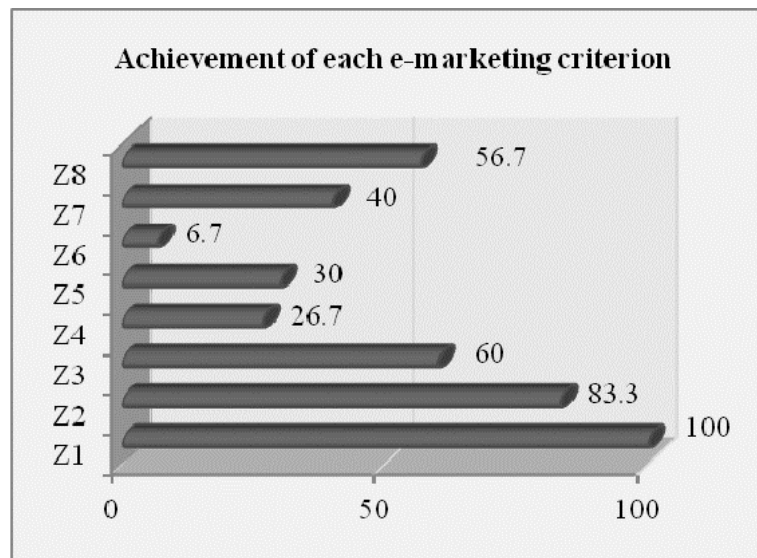# Vineyard Glamping



**SEE MORE**

🌐 www.glamping.si/en/    📷 www.instagram.com/glampingslovenia/
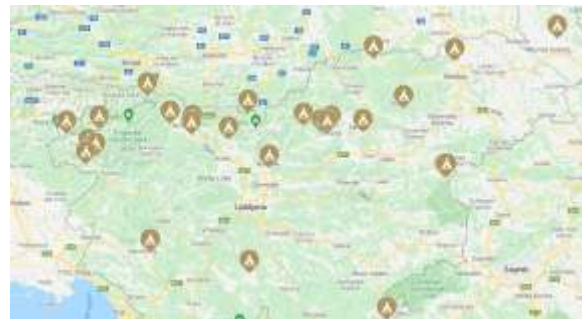


✓ Promotion of rural areas through glamping accommodations.

✓ One website under a well-known phrase (glamping) to find and book this kind of accommodation – it is more organized and user friendly because it offers everything in one place.

✓ Guests can promote these places on other social media, for example, Instagram, by placing the #glampingsLOVEnia next to the photo description. Nowadays, social media channels play an important role in promotion. The more people it reaches, the better. All the accommodations from this website offer top service and are glamorous (from which the name glamping is also derived) which is another advantage for the social media promotion strategy. It is a fact that people like taking photos on their vacations and share them with others.

SMART VILLAGE
DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Internet marketing for sustainable development and rural tourism

**Achievement of each e-marketing criterion**

| Z8 | 56.7 |
| Z7 | 40 |
| Z6 | 6.7 |
| Z5 | 30 |
| Z4 | 26.7 |
| Z3 | 60 |
| Z2 | 83.3 |
| Z1 | 100 |

| Total ranking | Rural Tourism Enterprise | Net flow φ |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | E_15 | +6,476139 |
| 2 | E_28 | +4,043755 |
| 3 | E_12 | +3,800265 |
| 4 | E_4 | +3,407609 |
| 5 | E_3 | +3,024786 |
| 6 | E_29 | +2,674551 |
| 7 | E_19 | +2,19192 |
| 8 | E_2 | +2,152487 |
| 9 | E_26 | +2,04798 |
| 10 | E_5 | +1,811224 |
| 11 | E_11 | +1,561609 |
| 12 | E_7 | +0,713596 |
| 13 | E_9 | +0,437513 |
| 14 | E_23 | -0,25569 |
| 15 | E_10 | -0,39743 |
| 16 | E_6 | -0,49148 |
| 17 | E_8 | -0,54147 |
| 18 | E_20 | -0,66943 |
| 19 | E_27 | -0,83161 |
| 20 | E_17 | -0,8562 |
| 21 | E_30 | -0,88256 |
| 22 | E_11 | -1,19382 |
| 23 | E_24 | -2,41094 |
| 24 | E_14 | -3,33752 |
| 25 | E_13 | -3,33752 |
| 26 | E_25 | -3,33752 |
| 27 | E_21 | -3,69016 |
| 28 | E_22 | -3,74015 |
| 29 | E_1 | -3,84522 |
| 30 | E_16 | -4,5247 |

Internet is very widespread in all business sectors and has been an extremely important tool for the promotion of business sales. Moreover, internet-based marketing is widely accepted by tourism enterprises. Sustainable tourism refers to development in such a manner and at such a scale, that it remains viable over an indefinite period.

There is a special relationship between the concept of sustainable tourism and the rural tourism. This paper assesses internet and e-marketing adoption for the sustainability of rural tourism enterprises, for the case of Greece. Rural tourism enterprises are analysed and further ranked as to their e-marketing features and ICT functions accomplished.

An integrated-dynamic framework is developed for ranking the enterprises based on the multicriteria method PROMETHEE II and the results are discussed. Finally, we identify and describe the optimum enterprises to be used as a model for designers of websites promoting e-marketing activities for rural sustainability.

SMART VILLAGE

DEVELOPING **RURAL TOURISM** BUSINESSES

# Technology and innovation: Changing concept of rural tourism – A systematic review

🌐 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343958734_Technology_and_
innovation_Changing_concept_of_rural_tourism_-_A_systematic_review

This study aims to carry out a systematic review of the literature on the impact of technology in the tourism industry and its application in rural tourism research to serve the objective of socio-economic development.

Research articles were selected from journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or those that are listed in the Australian Business Deans Council or University Grants Commission – Consortium for Academic & Research Ethics list. This study provides a summarized conclusion of research trends undergoing rural tourisms area while simultaneously highlighting the themes and areas that could be addressed through the tourism industry.

This study tries to establish a link between the use of technology and the development of the rural tourism industry.

Also, it concludes that the use of technology has evolved the way that rural tourism could be conducted. Furthermore, it has opened up ways to use rural tourism as a means to solve existing socio-economic challenges in society. This study is new and it certainly adds to the value of researchers and academicians working in this domain by providing them with research areas that require a thought to ponder upon.

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# Perspectives on Cultural and Sustainable Rural Tourism in a Smart Region: The Case Study of Marmilla in Sardinia (Italy)

🌐  https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/7/6/6412

This paper is being inserted into the current debate on the topic of sustainability, as it applies to rural tourism. In particular, it addresses the need to identify strategic actions that will enhance the dissemination of cultural resources to facilitate cultural planning. Balancing the dynamic tension that characterizes the relationship between tourism development and protection of the landscape is key to finalizing appropriate planning strategies and actions, especially in the context of marginal rural areas.

In support of theoretical and methodological reflections pertinent to this relationship, this paper presents a case study of the region of Marmilla on Italy's island of Sardinia. The absence of both a "cultural planning" philosophy and a strategic approach to systemic and sustainable rural tourism in this country has been acknowledged.

This paper concludes by discussing the results that emerged during the preparation of this case study, with respect to smart, sustainable, rural tourism development, while accepting the need for compromises between the force of globalization, nature, tourism, places, and people.



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