

Marketing advice for destination management organisations to achieve more sustainable tourism

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For the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project partners

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What is sustainable marketing?

Marketing is responsible for an important part of the impacts, both negative and positive, at a tourist destination. The types and number of clients that we receive, the expectations that we generate, the behaviour we promote, the services we promote, etc., are the reasons why the visitors create these impacts, and all these behaviours are the result of the marketing and communication strategies we adopt.

Marketing actions have nearly always prioritised short-term needs of visitors, without giving much importance to the impact they have on the residents, or to the capacity of the destination to serve the needs of all their stakeholders in the future.

Sustainable marketing is the application of marketing techniques so that a destination, a resource or a product serves the needs of the visitors and residents today, and has the possibility to do so in the future. This implies that the entities in charge of the marketing strategies have a wider vision of their responsibilities, and evaluate the impact of their actions in a more holistic way.

The Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project is supporting local businesses, organisations, and individuals to develop ideas for activities into unique **autumn and winter experiences**. But incorporating these new experiences into old marketing practices can actually increase negative impacts (such as increasing carbon footprint per person/day or reducing the residents' acceptance of tourism). This report will provide advice to destination management organisations on how to adapt their marketing activities to promote sustainable tourism.



Section 1. Sustainable marketing criteria

The main aim of sustainable marketing is to attract a volume and type of tourism suitable to the conditions and needs of the destination. **Designing off-season experiences is a start, but it's not enough.**

The destination is always the priority, and how tourism is used to improve where people live. Tourism is a means to that end, and not the end in itself.

We reiterate that to be sustainable the hierarchy is clear: it is the destination to use tourism; and not the tourism industry that uses the destination.

We can achieve this if we change the traditional marketing goals of increasing the volumes of sales and expenditure, which we present as follows. The format in which we present these criteria is:

- **Criteria** of sustainability
- **Goal** of marketing resulting from the criteria
- **Explanation** of how the goal reflects the criteria
- **Indicator** for the marketing actions of the destination

FOLLOWING THIS CRITERIA OF SUSTAINABILITY...	... WE SET THIS MARKETING GOAL...	...AND WE MEASURE THE SUCCESS WITH THIS INDICATOR
1-Reduce the negative environmental and social impacts	To normalise the consumption of more sustainable products and services	Percentage of the tourism services engaged in the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project in your destination that are certified or known to be sustainable
2-Reduce the carbon footprint of the transport	To reduce the distance travelled, increase the length of stay and optimise the transport methods	Carbon transport footprint per visitor/night
3-Normalise the behaviour of visitors	To increase visitor loyalty	Percentage of repeat visitors
4-Reduce overtourism	To reduce the seasonal nature of tourism and redistribute tourism geographically	Rate of tourism overcrowding per season
5-Maximise the economic benefits of tourism	To increase the local expenditure of the visitor	Visitor expenditure that benefits the destination
6- Pump prime innovation and creativity amongst most in need	To select to work with stakeholders that make a destination more sustainable	Percentage of Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project beneficiaries in need of help



01 Reduce the negative environmental and social impacts.

Goal: To normalise the consumption of more sustainable products and services

Tourism has an impact on the quantity and quality of the natural resources that we have, and the quality of the life of the residents. There are sustainability standards that allow the visitor to be served better without consuming so many resources. Many destinations already have initiatives in this respect, even though the results are limited. What often happens is that very few companies are certified or otherwise known to meet minimum standards. These few companies, therefore, have to promote themselves independently, without the support of the public sector.

A destination can't do marketing of its efforts in terms of sustainability when the majority of its product and experiences aren't sustainable. In mature destinations, being certified as sustainable should be something normal, and not an exception. Certification should be used to improve the transport, the accommodation, the restaurants and catering, the attractions and activities, the meetings, the congresses

and trade fairs, and the infrastructure, amongst others.

Therefore, the destinations will need to introduce important market incentives so that the tourism and leisure services become certified. This includes demanding certification for companies that want be suppliers to the public sector, to be members of promotional entities, "convention bureau" or product clubs.

The Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE



project ought to require minimum sustainability standards from the organisations it chooses to partner with, and train.

Indicator: Percentage of the tourism services engaged in the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project in your destination that are certified or known to be sustainable.

02 Reduce the carbon footprint of transport.

Goal: To reduce the distance travelled, increase the length of stay and optimise the transport methods.

The carbon footprint to travel to a destination is the responsibility of this destination: first and foremost, it is the destination who decides which markets we want to attract, from where, for how long, and which products to consume.

The average annual carbon consumption in Europe is 6.5 to 10 tons per person, and to fight against climate change, we need to reduce this consumption to the equivalent of 2 tons of carbon per year. A two-way 2-hour flight represents an average of half a ton per person. By the middle of the 21st century, these flights can signify more than 40% of the carbon footprint, given that currently we don't have technological solutions to advance as quickly as in other



sectors.

The Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project can reduce the need to fly overseas to have a satisfying winter tourism experience, by providing options at short distance from home.

Typically, low season visitors stay for shorter periods than high season visitors, but they also travel shorter distances.

Given that transport represents $\frac{3}{4}$ of the carbon footprint of the whole trip, we can use these new experiences, so our visitors increase their stay, proportionally reducing the carbon footprint per night, encouraging fewer trips whilst obtaining the same economic benefit. We can try to attract visitors who use the train or the bus, and even comparatively the car (in which there are normally various occupants), all of them with lower carbon footprints than an airplane.

When flights are unavoidable, we can choose to market in those places of origin where there are direct flights and not in the places where people have to take connecting flights to reach our destination, given that this increases the footprint. But ultimately, marketing to target groups that require flying is not a sustainable thing to do, when alternative markets are available.

Indicator: Carbon transport footprint per visitor/night.

03 Normalise the behaviour of visitors.

Goal: To increase visitor loyalty

Visitors who behave more like residents have a better impact. Repeat visitors may spend a little less per day, but that expenditure has a greater effect on the local economy. Visitors who buy in the shops and do activities similar to the residents are helping the local economy more, and their expenditure provides an added stimulus to the local economy. It should be taken into account, however, that visitors should not displace the residents, and must not make the services and products that they enjoy more expensive.

Repeat visitors have greater respect for the culture and customs of the destination. They learn more about the culture and the language, visit a greater variety of places, and depend less on the icons of the destination, therefore creating less crowding.

There is evidence that it costs less to retain a customer than to attract one for the first time. And yet, the marketing campaigns of DMOs often focus on attracting first-time visitors, or treat all visitors as if it was the first time they are coming to visit us, giving a message, to the visitors who are considering returning, that there are only things when you are visiting for the first time. If you think this is not the case, just analyse a destination brochure or website, to see that it is probably highlighting the “must see” locations for first time visitors. Therefore, mature destinations should

focus their efforts on the repeat visitor market, particularly aiming to attract them in low season.

DMO statistics suggest that visitor satisfaction when repeating a destination is lower than on their first visit, when there is a novelty value. There is also evidence that, in general, a visitor who repeats tends to spend less than a first-time visitor. However, knowing this, both variables can be improved with a marketing that focuses more on the needs of those visitors who repeat, giving more emphasis to the variety of attractions and activities, and to new ways of visiting already known attractions. **The Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project is an ideal avenue to achieve this.**

For a destination to thrive, we need novelty-rejuvenation of products and markets. Clearly attracting visitors who never change their behaviour leads to destinations ageing. But relying on attracting visitors only once, and selling them a whistle stop tour of landmarks, is not sustainable.



Indicator: Percentage of repeat visitors

04 Reduce overtourism.

Goal: To reduce the seasonal nature of tourism and redistribute tourism geographically

Visitors are often concentrated in certain times of the year and in specific places, this congestion creates negative social and environmental impacts which are much higher than necessary if only they were better distributed. Over-tourism can also mean that the local economy is unable to serve the needs of the visitors in an efficient way, leading to a loss of revenues, while the lack of off-season visitors is added to this sub-optimal performance.

Destinations should change the way they promote themselves, and stop using the icons/attractions that are saturated. Systems need to be defined so that the visitors who want to visit iconic place leave more benefits for the whole destination.

The marketing function of a DMO should be to spread the visitors, providing them with many more options of "things to do", and creating sub-brands that highlight the personality of the different parts of the destination so as to efficiently serve different markets, without causing more with the needs of the locals.

It is essential to spread the excessive pressure that already exists in overcrowded points but not as a way of facilitating greater growth. Many destinations have plans to geographically

and temporarily spread visitors. However, it is important that a plan such as this is not seen as a way of growing with the same tourism model that has caused negative impacts in the current hotspots.

The spreading of tourism flows should also be temporal. Distributing the demand to create regular flows of visitors, who can be received more efficiently. Marketing strategies can help both from the programming and promotion of the activities, as well as for ensuring that the image that we give attracts visitors also during the off-peak seasons.

This requires DMOs to reshape the marketing segments to include more domestic and local markets, who are more likely to be less seasonal. Since Covid-19, more DMOs have been given this mandate, and this fits well with the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project objectives.



Indicator: Rate of tourism overcrowding per season

05 Maximise the economic benefits of tourism

Goal: To increase the local expenditure of visitors

It is important to find ways of creating visitor expenditure which benefits the locals at a destination, instead of ending up elsewhere. This will help a destination to offset the unavoidable negative impacts of tourism. To do this, it is necessary to calculate how much of the visitor spending actually stays in the destination, and not just how much they spend.

When the products are imported, the labour force is not local, or when the establishments are owned by entities that pay taxes in other places (or have tax exemptions), the money that visitors spend does not benefit the destination.

The money that stays locally has a secondary positive indirect economic impact, because the local purchases create

more jobs, and the purchasing of more local materials. This money then has a third level of positive impact, which is the spending in the local economy done by people working directly or indirectly in tourism.

Tourist destinations should adjust their marketing to develop products and attract markets that have a greater economic impact at all three levels, and not only the first, which could be misleading. Typically, tourist destinations do not collect figures by segment and by destinations, in a format that is useful for decision-making.

Investments and training in the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project have been designed to favour these three layers of positive economic impact.

Indicator: Visitor expenditure that benefits the destination



06 Pump prime innovation and creativity amongst those most in need

Goal: To select to work with stakeholders that make a destination more sustainable

The priority of the public sector (and all the entities which are involved) should be to work with the companies that contribute most in the sustainable development of the destination. That means giving priority to working with companies that most need help, understood to be:

- In the process of creation or small
- With implicitly or explicitly sustainable products
- Managed by women
- Located in the poorest areas of the city
- Which contract staff with difficulties of labour insertion
- Far from the main tourist circuits/areas



The priority is to work with the organisations within destination that can benefit most from tourism. This will contribute to making the destination more sustainable, and support those that require more help and that are unable, for example, to access the market alone, as opposed to collaborating with large companies that already have easier access to the market.

In this way, the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project helps DMOs to act as an "incubator" of entrepreneurial projects, in collaboration with actors, which need the know-how and the support of the public sector to launch new products in the market based on sustainability criteria.

The incubator format guarantees a rotation of available products and services which allow a certain novelty of the offer to be maintained. At the same time, it allows the partner organisations to undergo a learning process until they grow and are able to fend for themselves. In doing so it is important to avoid the creation of a dependence the from the public sector, and, mainly, from large companies.

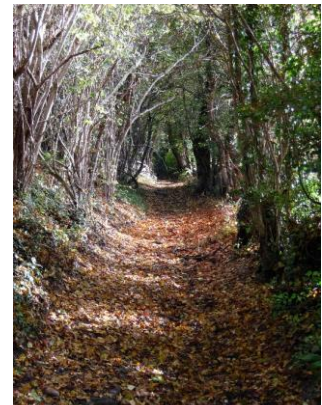
Indicator: Percentage of Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project beneficiaries in need of help

Section 2. Principles for a more persuasive marketing and communication of sustainability

Now that the criteria are clear, it is necessary to look at the main tools available to us so that our marketing and communication efforts have

greater chances of success. Here are some examples that are applicable to tourism. The format is as follows:

DEPENDING IN THE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION GOAL...	... WE WILL UNDERTAKE THESE ACTIONS SO AS TO BE MORE PERSUASIVE
7-To avoid the perception of "greenwashing"	Consider the needs of stakeholders and analyse the "reputational risk" of the communication of sustainability actions
8-To lead the consumption of sustainable products from the public sector	Introduce criteria of sustainable procurement for the chain of providers of all the services of the public and private actors in relation to the tourism sector of the destination
9-To redefine sustainable products based on market needs	Once we have an agreement that guarantees the fulfilment of basic criteria on behalf of the providers, it is necessary to think of ways to communicate how we are taking customers' need into account
10-To communicate how the customer benefits from more sustainable products	Change the reasoning of why we communicate sustainability: the emphasis is on communicating the benefit for the customer first. Then only if necessary, we can consider communicating the sustainable features of the product contributing to such benefit.
11-To communicate the quality of the experience that results from sustainability	Change the vocabulary and tone of the messages highlighting the emotional elements of the sustainable product. Avoid abstract concepts of sustainability or technical information that is difficult to understand.
12-To improve the credibility of the explicit messages	For business tourism, use international standards which enhance credibility for the customer. For leisure tourism, communicate experiential messages. In both markets, provide evidence of the impact of the action.
13-To segment markets according to the emotional significance sustainability holds for them	Experiment with specific campaigns and messages for specific markets and contexts, to evaluate the impact they have on the change of behaviour.



07 To avoid the perception of "greenwashing"

There is a lot of scepticism regarding the communication of sustainability, and rightly so, given that there have been many examples of companies and tourist destinations that have communicated actions of sustainability in a partial and interested way, a concept called "greenwashing". No destination (nor company) should therefore create a narrative around being sustainable based on limited actions, when, at the same time, there are more serious impacts that they are not tackling. This risk of criticism, often done by NGOs, is highly probable for destinations that, for example, do not take into account the impact of transport.

Hence when we design new experiences, we need to consider the environmental impact of visitors reaching the destination,

as well as the impacts of their activities once they are there.

We need to avoid the reputational risks of doing campaigns or actions that have a low impact. Particularly when this Interreg project is very visible, due to its high amount of funding.

If we want to explicitly communicate messages of sustainability, they need to be significant. Trying to communicate that a destination is sustainable because, for example, we have a few small firms sourcing their goods locally or because we have a winter festival, is extremely risky, especially when there are other destinations that do a lot more. Look for example at [EDEN-European Tourism Destinations of Excellence](#), for inspiration.

Action: To consider the needs of your stakeholders and to analyse the reputational risk of the communication of actions of sustainability.



08 To lead the consumption of sustainable products from the public sector

We cannot expect visitors alone who generate the demand for tourism businesses to act more sustainably. Given that the process of change is slow, we first need to take a look at the public sector as a driver for the demand for sustainability.

Public sector governance can influence individuals and actors to change their behaviour. In addition, the public sector is one of the most important purchasers of services of events, meetings, taxis, hotels, catering services and restaurants. One of the best ways for the public sector to create a chain of changes in the supply is to be the agent that demands standards of sustainability from amongst its providers. A change of this type creates confidence in the process.

This represents a change in the role of the public sector, that has often been seen as a driver of the supply (creating systems and providing incentives). In this case we propose an intervention from the demand side. This type of behaviour has the potential of making the medium and large-sized companies, who are often the providers of the public sector, to fulfil the sustainability standards required. This then leads to medium and large-sized businesses in tourism sector, restaurant and event

managers, to demand standards of sustainability from their own suppliers and providers.

For example, all travel arrangements made as part of the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project, including our choice of accommodation, venues and restaurants, ought to favour those with clear sustainability credentials. Equally, we ought to extend this criterion to all other purchasing activities in our organisations.

A government can calculate the value of its purchases in services of tourism, transport, restaurants, catering, events, etc., and use this purchasing power to create changes. It is possible to start with the public entities that manage tourism in the destination, and this can serve as an example for other public entities.



Action: To introduce criteria of sustainable procurement for the supply chain of all the services of the entities of public and mixed management in relation to tourism in the destination.

09 To redefine the sustainable product according to the market needs.

The criteria of sustainability that are used by eco-labels provide a measure of which products and services are sustainable and which are not (see for example the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#)). But the criteria are often defined without taking into account market needs.

The agency that promotes a destination has to think of how to use these criteria as a base, and see which features these products have that can be used as a 'Unique Selling Proposition.' If possible, sustainable products should be designed thinking about the customer through 'User Centred Sustainable Design'. Being mindful of how the customer will be able to better enjoy the experience that we offer them.

That means that we have to go further than having lists of products certified by criteria such as those of Green Tourism or La Clef Verte. It is true that we need to have a justification of why a series of products/services are sustainable, but in terms of offering gratifying customer experiences, the list in itself doesn't help us to sell.

In many cases we find that there are experiences that we can offer to a destination that would intuitively be sustainable, but that for a variety of very valid reasons, we won't be able to certify. Hotels in outlying neighbourhoods that

promote activities and restaurants within the same neighbourhood will improve the economic impact. Companies that hire staff with disabilities will improve the social impact, and companies that provide offers to customers who come by train will improve the environmental impact, to give a few examples.

It's often here that we will find the most creative options that can have a more emotional value for the customer. They will also represent learning opportunities for other businesses, and it will be necessary for the promotion entities to be flexible enough to assess these options. Overall, the promotion entities of the destination find ways of highlighting these actions.

Destinations participating in the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project ought to have clear guidelines to identify what makes a product or company sustainable, and to justify their inclusion in the project. This cannot just be based on intuition.



Action: Once we have an agreement that guarantees that the providers fulfil basic sustainability criteria, we need to think of how to design experiences that consider customer needs.

010 To communicate the benefits for the customers of more sustainable products.

There are many surveys that state what percentage of customers are interested in sustainability, but there is also a lot of evidence that even though the intention is good, the customers take purchasing decisions based on the benefits of the product for their experience, and not necessarily for "altruistic" reasons. The market segment for travellers aiming to buy tourism products because they are sustainable is small, but the market segment interested in the personal benefits to be gained from a more sustainable product is much higher.



It is more realistic to influence the purchasing process when we communicate what the benefits are for the customer when buying a sustainable product. All customers, whether they are predisposed to be more sustainable or not, prefer messages in which it is very clear who

benefits from a sustainable action. If the sacrifice that we demand of the customer is low, it is possible to present the benefits for the destination. If the sacrifice is high, such as requiring a change of behaviour, we have to find a way in which there is an explicit benefit for the customer.

When there are benefits for the customer, it is important to make these benefits tangible with a persuasive communication. Saying that a product is sustainable leads to few results, but saying what the customer wins with this product (without necessarily saying it is sustainable), is more successful.

In an analysis of more than 1,800 messages of sustainability carried out in 2014, we found that only 21% explained the benefits to the customer, and the customers only drew a positive experience from 6% of the cases. Therefore, there is still a lot of potential to be unleashed as a result of a better communication.

In the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project, we propose a change of reasoning in the communication of sustainability: we do not communicate that a product is sustainable just because it is, but because there is some benefit to be taken from it and that the customers value.

Action: To change the reasoning of why we communicate sustainability: the emphasis is to first communicate the benefit to the customer, and only if necessary, communicate the features of the product that provides us with this benefit.

011 To communicate the quality of the experience that results from sustainability.

As a consequence of the previous points, we have found that it is better to sell products and experiences which are sustainable without mentioning the word sustainability. The word sustainability is not useful for communicating value to leisure customers, because they do not understand it, given that it is a very abstract word, which means very different things depending on the product we are talking about.

The products we are talking about are only "relatively sustainable", given that there is always something more we could do. Hence, we could enter into the dilemma that when we use the word 'sustainability', we begin to receive criticism from people who think it is not enough. Moreover, there are other products that are partially sustainable but deserve to be promoted for other values that they contribute to the



destination.

Furthermore, not everyone sees sustainability as something positive. The word 'quality' is also abstract and means many different things, but it has the

advantage that all the customers understand it as a positive factor. Sustainability is often understood as an excuse for providing less service (heating, towels, quantity of food, etc.).

The advantage of communicating the technical aspects of sustainability less, is that the business owners feel more comfortable with this form of communication. This is because by not referring explicitly to the sustainability of the product, it is less risky. These are some examples of language we can recommend to organisations involved in the Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project to use in their communications:

- Attractive language, not just listing facts;
- Aspects of normality ("reuse the towels as you do at home" is more successful than "reuse the towels to save planet earth");
- Personal and social norms (explaining how it is part of how you would do it, or how other people already do so);
- An active tone, and not passive;
- Possibilities of experiencing the sustainable product, instead of speaking about things that happen in the background;
- Incentives for buying the sustainable product;
- Making it easy to be more sustainable, for example, making it a standard option (a menu with less meat and more local vegetables, for example).

Action: Change the vocabulary and tone of the messages, highlighting the emotional elements of the sustainable product, and avoiding concepts of abstract sustainability or technical information which is difficult to understand.

012

To improve the credibility of the explicit messages.

There are cases in which it is convenient for us to explicitly communicate that a product is sustainable. For business travel in particular, sustainability criteria are increasingly incorporated as part of the decision to select suppliers and destinations, because the multinationals have to do corporate social reporting accounting for their carbon footprint. For business travel, sustainability messages should be communicated using ecolabels that are recognised and valued by the customers. For leisure markets, that don't know about sustainability standards, it's possible to work with messages endorsed by people or institutions with credibility, so as to be more convincing.



However, the majority of leisure tourists do not use ecolabels or explicit sustainability information to inform their holiday decisions, and the minority that does is

unlikely to be sufficient to fulfil the capacity of tourism businesses. Tourists take decisions to choose a form of transport, or an accommodation supplier, because of a combination of price, perceived quality, location, convenience... and not sustainability per se. Hence, it is necessary to find more persuasive ways of communicating what sustainability means. Ecolabels have a limited impact when they are the unique differentiating feature of the product, but, nevertheless, we can use them to give authority to the emotional and experiential messages that we want to communicate to customers.

Before deciding to explicitly communicate an action or to carry out a sustainability campaign, it is necessary to analyse if it is congruent with the type of experience or service we are offering the target group. Messages are more credible when the customer can experience first-hand what makes that product or experience sustainable, and when they feel this, it enhances their enjoyment of that experience.

Finally, to gain credibility, it is necessary that we explain what the impact is of the action or change of behaviour desired, and it will therefore be necessary to measure these impacts.

Action: For business tourism, use international standards with credibility for the customers. For leisure tourism, communicate messages highlighting the customer experience resulting from a sustainability product. In both markets, provide evidence of the impact of their action.

013

To segment the markets according to the emotional significance of sustainability.

We need to understand what sustainability means for each market, because the significance of the same product or experience can vary in each market segment, and it is necessary to think how to sell in each one. In certain markets, sustainability sells because it signifies the uniqueness of an exclusive product, while in other markets it sells only if customers see it as the most normal thing to do.

It will be necessary to know how we can use the norms, personal and social values so that customers find that the behaviour we are asking of them, and the experiences we are offering them, are normal and the most adequate for them. For example, if we promote the purchasing of farm-laid eggs of 0Km to a family, we do so according to the experience of seeing where they come from, while communications to an elderly couple may work better with messages that appeal to nostalgia.

For visitors who repeat a visit to an Experience partner destination, messages of sustainability can be used that link their loyalty with the destination. Messages that give them a certain “status” in comparison with those who visit the destination for the first time. For visitors who visit us for the first time, the messages should be made so that they understand that behaving in a

sustainable way is what is expected of them, and that the majority of people already do so.

Normally, sustainability messages in tourism are simply descriptive of the characteristics of the product, without being segmented by the customer needs or their knowledge of the destination. We propose changing this, by designing specific messages for a certain context and to achieve a certain behaviour.



We are aware that this change is difficult for destinations used to translating information about the resources they have in different languages, without adapting the contents to the needs of the different markets, either by nationalities or by other variables. It will be necessary to begin with specific situations where there is a certain homogeneity of expectations and behaviours.

Action: To experiment with specific campaigns and messages for specific markets and contexts, so as to evaluate the impact they have on the change of behaviour.

Section 3. Sustainability applied to the marketing plan

The criteria and bases we have described beforehand can now be applied in the strategy and actions of destination marketing. Direct implications, therefore, in the way in which Interreg FCE EXPERIENCE project destinations should be represented by their DMOs, the promotion to do and the products, services and experiences that it decides to prioritise, that we have analysed above.

The DMO normally does, following guidelines, the function of Marketing and

Management, and not only information, promotion and sales. This should also include taking risks in the development of concepts and products that private companies can't do on their own (particularly SMEs). Marketing a destination that aspires to be sustainable and responsible can imply rethinking the governance, the financing and the functions of the DMO so as to be able to efficiently fulfil the above-mentioned aspirations.

THE FUNCTIONS OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION...	... CHANGE IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS, AS THE RESULT OF INTRODUCING CRITERIA AND BASES OF SUSTAINABLE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION
14-More complete marketing goals of the DMO	Redefine the goals of the DMO according to the contribution of tourism to the sustainability of the destination
15-A segmentation of markets according to the total value of the visitors	Calculate the rate of sustainability by market segment, awareness of its added value, segmentation according to this value, and proposal of specific marketing actions according to its positioning
16-A range of possibilities of positioning	Think how we position the significance of the sustainability of the destination for each market segment
17-Investment in future products	Create products to reduce seasonality, diversify geographically, increasing the stay, promoting loyalty, and including the day visitor and resident
18-Managing demand through prices	Use the prices and taxes to influence demand
19-Communication and distribution that benefit the destination	Promote the services and resources that benefit the destination most, and influence communication and distribution channels to do the same



014 More complete marketing goals of the DMO.

The sustainability strategies of the majority of DMOs are tangential to the main functions for attracting visitors. It is often not clear what is aimed as a result of communicating to the tourist or to the resident that a destination is working on becoming more sustainable. We often find that staff in the same DMOs have different contradictory goals, and the sustainability rhetoric is used to pay lip service or to access external funding. If sustainability is a central value of the destination, it is necessary to rethink the main goals of the DMO. There are key benefits for a destination, and the DMO that represents it, to work on sustainability:

Making the customers feel good. Often sustainability campaigns are for the tourists, residents and businesspeople to have the feeling that they are doing something. To a certain extent this is a valid goal, if the action in itself is effective. We can, for example communicate to the tourist or resident actions that are taking place in the background, that are not visible, but help to improve the experience – for example, all the food of a congress is ecological and from OKM. Following this goal, we don't aim to change the behaviour, it is simply a way of improving the satisfaction of the different stakeholders.

Awareness-building and achieving changes in behaviour. It is necessary, however, for the majority of the campaigns to go further. People attach higher value to things with which they feel an emotional relation. We can create empathy and respect for a tourist destination improving the visitor



satisfaction by means of creating a storytelling of the values of the destination, which we share with the visitors, provided it is clearly believable.

Offering new products. You need to have a programme of development of original activities and attractions, which are authentic and with added value, which differentiate a destination. The emphasis can be on activities of interest both to the residents and the visitors, where there is more chance to interact, and where the residents feel themselves to be beneficiaries of the services of the DMO. The activities should provide opportunities to the visitor to come off-season, to repeat, and to feel empathy and emotional attachment to the destination.

Attracting different markets. We can use the credential of “sustainability” to attract events, conferences and company meetings. We can use the benefits of the experience taken from a sustainable product to attract leisure markets. But it will be difficult to use our learnings from these corporate markets to reduce the seasonality of our destinations, by communicating explicitly that our products are sustainable.

Action: Redefine the goals of the DMO according to the contribution of tourism to the sustainability of the destination.

015 A segmentation of markets according to the total value of the visitors.

A marketing plan will need data so as to analyse the total value of each market. Apart from using data about the impact that this market has at an economic level (current and potential), which is currently done, it is necessary to take into account the social and environmental impact of each market.

It will be necessary to calculate the rate of sustainability of each market, based on the data that we will represent graphically in the matrix. In one axis, a variable will be represented that combines data about the value of this market for the destination (volume of customers, daily spending, level of satisfaction). In the other axis, the cost will be represented that the destination "pays" for using this market: social and

cultural cost (conflict with the residents, etc.), environmental cost (of arriving to the destination, of enjoying the stay, etc.).

It will be necessary to compare the results of this segmentation with the decisions taken currently in the destination. Within what is viable, we will take decisions about marketing actions for each of the markets depending on where in the four squares they are placed.

It will be necessary to propose specific marketing actions so that each market segment is a little more sustainable, understanding their needs as a consumer, to find the changes we can make to the products that are more acceptable to this market segment.

<p>How do we reduce the negative environmental and socio-economic impact to justify the positive economic impact? Increase length of stay, reduce the distance travelled, improve the public transport links, improve the energy efficiency of our suppliers</p>	<p><i>Positive impact Economy</i></p> <p>How do we increase the size of these markets? Product development, loyalty actions</p>
<p><i>Negative impact Environment and socio-culture</i></p> <p>How do we reduce this market? Demarketing</p>	<p><i>Positive impact Environment and socio-culture</i></p> <p>How do we improve the economic impact without worsening the environmental and socio-cultural impacts? Increase length of stay, increase expenditure per day, reduce seasonality, redistribute geographically</p>

*Economy
Negative impact*

Action: Calculate the rate of sustainability by market segment, awareness of its added value, segmentation according to this value, and proposal of specific marketing actions according to its positioning.

016

A range of possibilities of positioning.

Each destination wants to develop a unique storytelling of its identity. A destination with ambitions to be sustainable often tries to use it as part of its positioning. Sustainability provides us with contents to explain the values and experiences with emotional storytelling that create connections to a destination. In turn, this allows us to improve the visitor experience, given that we can propose more unique activities to them. More sustainable products and experiences are often more authentic and autochthonous, and we can therefore use them to differentiate a destination and highlight its unique



character.

Instead of using just one message ("our destination is making an effort to become sustainable"), we will break down this more generic value according to what it means for the experience of the customer, in a hedonistic use of sustainability. It will be necessary to create a series of consumer messages that complement each other, and that contribute to the image that the

destination want to give of itself, creating, at the same time, a competitive edge. Here we have some examples that can work for specific markets and products, which are not mutually exclusive:

- *Enjoyment*: I will have a better experience because I consume sustainable products and visit sustainable places.
- *Cultural Immersion*. I will get to know the authentic side of the destination thanks to sustainable experiences.
- *Better service*. I will be welcomed better by my hosts because they are concerned with the wellbeing of the destination.
- *Trust*. I can trust that the services I am offered are of quality because my host has similar values to mine.
- *Nostalgia*. I am enjoying the destination as I did so in the past (for example eating the food/cooking of the 'grandmother', etc.).
- *Modernity*. The services that I am buying are up-to-date and well cared for, with the latest luxuries (for example in accommodation).
- *Status*. Few people can have access to a unique experience like this - I am special (for example, to activities, festivities/parties, etc.).
- *With a clear conscience*. I can enjoy my trip knowing it has a positive impact (for example on business trips/MICE).

Action: Think how we position the significance of the sustainability of the destination for each market segment.

017 Investment in future products

The DMOs have to play a more active role in the creation and coordination of products so as to achieve sustainability goals. Their work should not be limited to information, promotion and sales. The success of the destination today is the result of the promotion, but its future success depends on the innovation in sustainable products and experiences, including their efforts to reduce seasonality. A way of tackling the issue of sustainable innovation is by analysing how the actions that a DMO 1) contribute to the sustainability of a destination, and 2) are innovative (from more to less risk):

New products in the world. The DMO is creating a sustainable product which isn't known anywhere yet, and for which a segment/market must be identified. This is highly unlikely.

New product lines. The DMO is adopting innovative products and experiences, with sustainability criteria in mind as has been done in other competitor destinations. The DMO may provide incentives for the private sector to carry out investments, or the public sector may take the initiative in reconfiguring infrastructure and organise its own events to reduce seasonality. Or, it may create new brands and seals that promote the consumption of foods or experiences that attract winter tourists, among others.

Additions to the existing product lines. The DMO boosts and coordinates the diversification of the supply of accommodation, of attractions and events and of transport between others, so as to fulfil the goals to benefit the destination from a sustainable point of view. It can be

done vertically for a location you want to enable for tourism, transversally by product line, temporarily creating low season offers, or by market creating packages of complementary services for a segment, etc.

Improvements and revisions of existing products. The DMO can revise the quality criteria of tourism services to incorporate elements of sustainability. For example, the DMO can request that accommodations install energy and water saving technologies. That restaurants compost, or that tourist attractions provide discounts for people using public transport, for example.

Repositioning. The DMO can help the private sector to identify new markets for already existing products, particularly markets for the low season. This often happens with products that already exist in the destination for the residents, which the DMO chooses to promote to national or international markets, as part of increasing the sense of place. During COVID-19 we have also seen examples of the opposite occurring, with businesses and destinations alike repositioning products and experiences typically targeting the international market, now being adapted to the needs of day, local visitors.

Reduction of costs. Creation of new products that provide a similar performance at a lower cost. The sharing economy has followed this model, but also companies have reduced costs by stripping their core product from ancillary services that customers did not value (hotels reducing or outsourcing services, etc.)

Action: Create products to reduce seasonality, diversify geographically, increasing the stay, promoting loyalty, and including the day visitor and resident.

018

Managing demand through prices.

Price is often the most neglected variable in the marketing mix. It is the variable that is least understood, of critical importance in many cases, and the easiest to copy for the competitors (in the short term). We propose using techniques of yield management, which are well known to marketing professionals, to achieve a more sustainable management of the destination.

A myth should be tackled: “sustainable products should be cheaper”.

Quite the opposite, we want to promote forms of sustainability that aim to provide more quality and added value to the customer, and this should be paid for. Sustainability should help us increase the customer spending, not only because we have offered more products (and sustainable products are often more costly), but also because we can increase the prices by making these products more attractive.

It's true that DMOs have little or no control in the pricing of the services they promote, at any season. Even so, we cannot rule out their influence in working with stakeholder to use the prices and taxes (provided they are legally possible) to manage demand.



Here we have some examples of prices (the same principle can be applied to taxes in the destination):

- **Identification of markets.** You can charge different prices to different markets, depending on where they buy from. Admission to overcrowded attractions should be more expensive for customers who spend little on additional services. Conversely, the main attractions should provide a better service to customers who spend more at the destination.
- **Moment of purchasing.** Charge more for tickets at peak times, and less off-season or at the end of the day.
- **Purchasing point.** Charge more at the ticket office than online or than for pre-purchased tickets.
- **Volume of purchase.** Only charge less to groups during off-peak season or on resources that are not saturated, but not for the most popular attractions of the destination, which should be protected.
- **Multi-attraction offers.** Provide incentives (preferential entry to overcrowded tourist attractions, for example) to the markets that buy a package that provides greater benefits to the destination. Destinations can create packs of preferential services for customers who are in specific types of accommodation, or customers who stay more than a certain number of nights.
- **Loyalty.** Loyalty systems, giving additional benefits to the customers who return to the destination.

Action: Use the prices and taxes to influence demand

019

Communication and distribution that benefit the destination.

It will be necessary to define different messages for the different communication channels, not only because these channels are aimed at different audiences, but also because each channel has a specific and different use. Once the different messages have been established, we have to plan how to adapt them to the different channels. It is necessary to analyse how channels have different potentials if we wish to change the behaviour of visitors and residents alike.

It is necessary to bear in mind that many direct messages to users, be they either visitors or residents, are not persuasive because direct communication is seen as a form of advertising, and therefore of little credibility. Those destination stakeholders that want to be more sustainable should search for ways of influencing third parties to present the storytelling we want to be identified with.

A realistic marketing of what can be expected from the destination helps us to manage expectations. Using realistic photography and text that represent the reality of the destination, instead of idealising it, helps the customers to be more satisfied with what they find.

The DMO can be more successful by facilitating normal visitors or bloggers to share unique experiences (when they are implicitly sustainable) rather than doing expensive direct marketing or promotional actions themselves.



The DMO should orient its promotion to take into account the new goals of benefitting the destination all year round. Therefore, the DMO shouldn't promote those attractions and locations that are already popular, at a time of year when they are overcrowded. The priority is to promote the services and resources which benefit the destination most, or the services of the companies that don't have access to the markets themselves (particularly small companies and start-ups).

The DMO has a series of tools, such as, for example, specific campaigns for product lines that are more sustainable; the establishment of rigorous sustainability criteria (although scalable in time) for product clubs or programmes; more ambitious criteria for companies with which it has high visibility partnerships, among others.

The DMO should *demarket* actions (that discourage or at least don't encourage, their visit) for overcrowded resources at peak season, not using it in their own promotion, and encouraging the private sector to do the same.

Action: Promote the services and resources that benefit the destination most, and influence communication and distribution channels to do the same.