

EXECUTIVE REPORT

# The Future of the Digital User Journey For Tourists

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# Introduction

This Research Report and Executive Report set the scene for VisitDenmark to establish the development of its digital position between the years 2025-2030 based on how the tourists' digital journey will change and evolve during the established period. The report will set a clear number of recommendations (not demand specs) that the Danish tourism industry can implement looking into the future.

It will confront 'the elephant in the room', the role and importance of DMO websites as well as how the content on it should be developed, looking at other questions such as national databases and commercial alternatives that could be considered to alleviate certain concerns.

The Research report explores how the digital user journey for tourists will evolve in the future through the analysis of five different hypotheses.

- Hypothesis 1 - Tourists will still need public destination websites as part of their digital decision-making process from 2025 – 2030.
- Hypothesis 2 - Using as few digital channels as possible (as an entry point to Denmark) is an advantage for the tourist – both for digital guest service and for marketing use.
- Hypothesis 3 - It still makes sense to have a common national tourism database in the form of GuideDenmark.
- Hypothesis 4 - As a public DMO, we should focus more on non-commercial products that are not covered by commercial players such as Google, booking.com, TripAdvisor, etc.
- Hypothesis 5 - Web 3.0 will challenge DMOs to reassess and reevaluate their digital structure.

These look into the role of destination websites, digital channels as entry points, common national databases, non-commercial products and the importance of considering changes that Web 3.0 will imply for the destination's digital structure.

# What does the digital user journey look like?

As destination management and marketing organisations, we are used to hearing this term almost on a daily basis, but to describe what it looks like in today's context in a precise manner can be complex and involve large heaps of research.

As we explore this question, not just from a tourist perspective, but looking at society too, we will also shine a light on VisitDenmark to understand how progress brought about by technology trickles down to the everyday experience of visitors and the opportunities that exist to better serve them and attract them to the destination.

When we think about the digital user journey, the question we often arrive at is: "where and how should we be creating the biggest impact?"

Can we capitalise on the opportunities or remove barriers in today's world? Which of the many technological advancements

should we consider and, crucially, in what form?

As we assess the opportunities of emerging technologies, be it machine learning, automation, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics or autonomous mobility, we're often met with perplexity, excitement or curiosity, depending on who we ask.

Which side of the fence you sit on depends on many factors, including your exposure to technology and your ability to see its potential. With Denmark being a digital leader, this creates significant digital opportunities that need to be exploited and developed to attract as many tourists as possible in an effective way.

In the following chapters, we're going to look at progress from the perspective of digitalisation and how this term finds its way into our everyday lives, as tourists,

destinations and businesses living in a digital world.

We're going to explore tourism's unique needs and how the industry is both impacted but also uplifted by digital transformation globally.

Sizing the opportunity is key to understanding untapped potential and to shifting that key question of mindset, so that embracing digitalisation in whatever form leads to the opportunity to succeed digitally.

Nowadays, to have an overview of what the digital user journey of tourists looks like, we need to look at the data points that exist across this journey.

From taking a quick look at this, it is clear that it's overwhelming and it can't be done on our own as individual organisations, thus requiring collaboration with stakeholders in the destination.

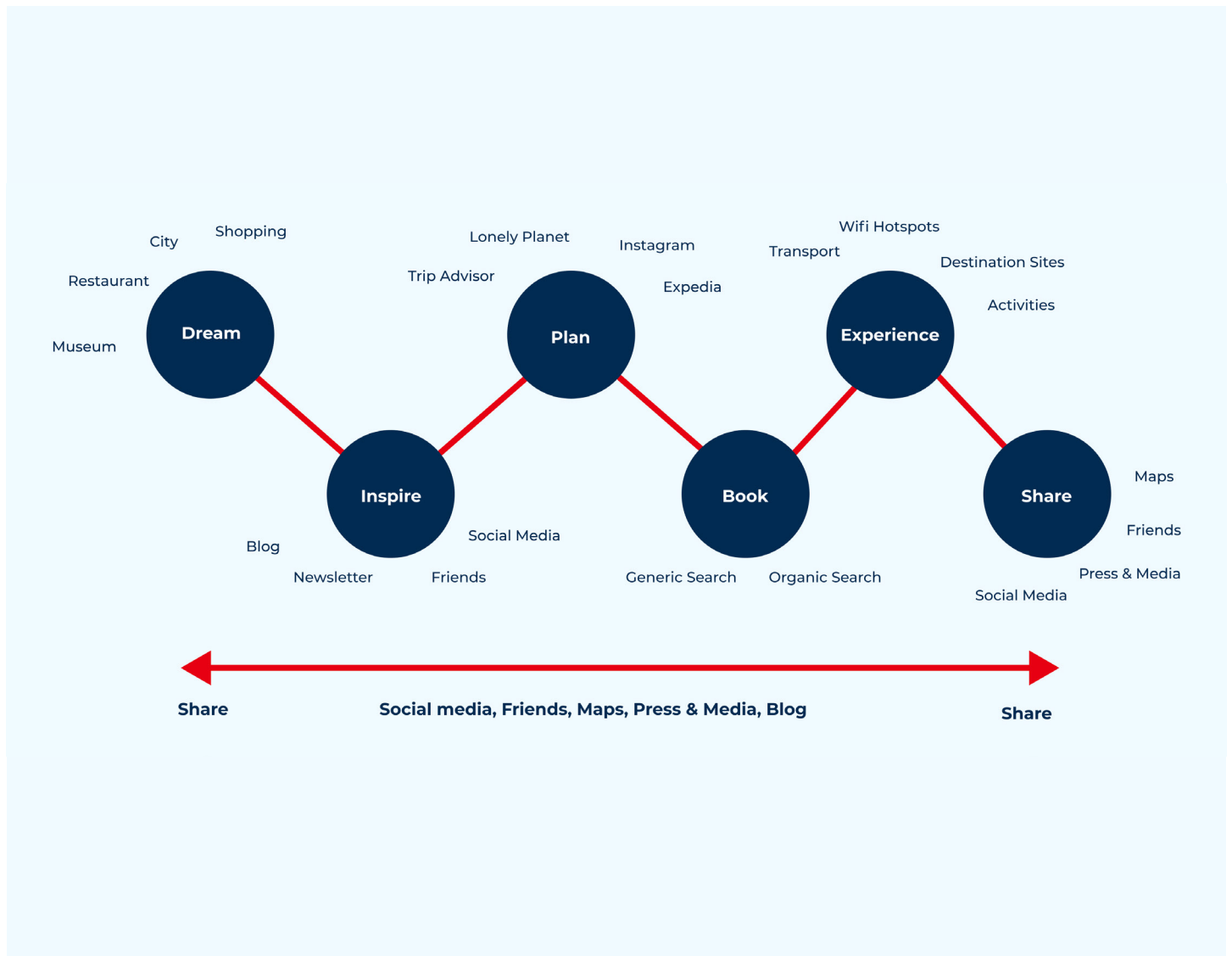
## Digital Journey Mapping

The customer journey has evolved together with touchpoints, needs and technologies; therefore, it is essential to explore what the customer journey looks like for the digital customer. An example of this can help go through each stage and better observe and understand how to make the most out of every phase.

This includes everything from dreaming, which can come from attractions or Word of Mouth (WOM), to inspiration and planning, which currently take place online (social media, newsletters, search engines, etc.). This also includes booking, experience and sharing, which again are strongly influenced by online channels to support in-destination exploration, but also to spread awareness of destinations post-trip.

## Digital Touchpoints

Prospects will become aware of your brand through touchpoints. In the digital world, people will connect through an interface with a tool or through an invitation from one of their friends. Touchpoints will remain and transform along the journey. Understand the impact of each touchpoint, where they drive customers and what actions are taken.



Few need convincing about the transformative force of digital in the way we now live our lives. In 2020, when the real world stopped, the digital landscape accelerated and this momentum is only set to continue in the years ahead.

Yet, at the very same time, consumer online habits have changed drastically, with mobile-first searches growing considerably and placing the focus on quality and easiness.

With that in mind, the question remains, what will the future user journey for tourists look like between 2025 and 2030, and how should VisitDenmark and the whole industry reconsider its digital infrastructure to respond and adapt to these changes?

**Ready to explore the future?**

**Let's jump in.**

# Methodology

The Digital Tourism Think Tank (DTTT) has involved VisitDenmark in every step of the project, acknowledging the critical role that regional and local DMOs, relevant stakeholders and tourists play in defining the way forward for Denmark's digital transformation process to improve the country's tourism digital ecosystem.

This project has been led by a 100% design-driven and integrated approach which has put Design Thinking at the core.

The research process has been carried out in three different phases:

**Data Collection & Analysis**

**Knowledge Validation**

**Key Recommendations**



# Data Collection & Analysis

In the first phase of the conducted research, with a focus on accuracy and quality, the DTTT collected diverse perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders, including the internal team at VisitDenmark, regional and local DMOs, as well as experts and digital leaders from other destinations from across the world.

Furthermore, data from trustworthy and relevant sources in the tourism industry have been used to complete the picture painted, including organisational reports and industry-specific research journals.

The following subsections provide an overview of how data was gathered and how stakeholders were involved in some of the data collection processes, thoroughly reflecting on the importance of this.

## 1. Desk Research

This part of the project consisted in analysing existing research and reports on topics such as destination websites, digitalisation, technology advancements, tourist behavioural changes and preferences, as well as trend reports.

In addition, the desk research involved the selection and development of a number of case studies that allow the reader to gather a better idea of how some of the propositions could be worked around and solved, based on what other destinations have done already.

## 2. Design-Led Workshops

Through two different workshops, an internal one with the team at VisitDenmark and an external one with regional and local DMOs, the DTTT team explored the five different hypotheses from the perspective of these individuals and organisations.

This allowed analysing at a granular level what challenges, opportunities and successes exist when it comes to understanding the role of DMO websites, the database they work with, and the products they focus on promoting.

The workshops were run by providing different templates and exercises based on Design Thinking techniques and principles, which allowed exploring the above from a distinct point of view and with the freedom of being anonymous, therefore being able to express thoughts and feelings in a completely transparent way.

The first workshop facilitated by the DTTT involved ten people from VisitDenmark's internal team.

These individuals ranged from Department & Project Leads to Strategic Directors and Digital Execs & Creatives to provide diverse perspectives that could present an overview of the organisation as a whole.

Through the different templates and

exercises covered during the workshop, we explored with VisitDenmark the role that their website plays in the different phases of the tourist buying cycle.

### Internal VisitDenmark Workshop

We covered all hypotheses, from analysing the current opportunities, challenges and successes, the digital tools and platforms they use and how they present different opportunities for them, to analysing the benefits and downsides of GuideDenmark for users, as well as critically evaluating existing alternatives in the market, defining the non-commercial products that they work on as the National Tourism Organisation, to existing opportunities that would allow the destination to become smarter, more seamless and more intelligent through new applications of technology.

### Regional & Local DMOs Workshop

In this workshop, employees from fifteen different regional and local DMOs from across Denmark came together to dive into the hypotheses. Additionally, some

members of the team at VisitDenmark involved in the project also joined and contributed to generating ideas.

Using different templates to those used in the internal workshop, the activities provided during this day looked at establishing the challenges, opportunities and successes within the DMO websites, as well as what the future relevance and influence of these will look like, the challenges and successes faced by having a high number of digital entrances for tourists in Denmark, the existing feelings around GuideDenmark and its functionality and ways in which the role of DMOs and destination products could evolve in the future through technological developments.

### **3. Stakeholder Interviews**

In looking at how Denmark's digital presence should future-ready itself for digital developments on the horizon, interviewing key stakeholders and getting their opinions and experiences has been key.

With three different stakeholders, representing different sectors within the industry (transport, accommodation, etc), our team has explored the five hypotheses as a guide to see how they have experienced the role of VisitDenmark in providing visibility for them through partnerships, but also to consider what these relationships could look like in the future.

This should allow for strengthening these relationships and driving stronger results, both for the destination and the organisations that operate within it.

Carried out separately, these three one-hour interviews uncovered key takeaways to be considered in the future to develop new products in the destination, through collaboration with the stakeholders, amongst other things.

## 4. Industry Experts Panel

Getting expert insights from two of the leading entrepreneurs in Denmark's tech and tourism landscape (Anders Mogensen and Tine Thygesen) provided us with valuable understandings in order to consider an alternative perspective to those outside of the tourism industry bubble.

Additionally, it allowed us to inform and validate our observations on some of the challenges faced and how they see the role of DMOs in this hotly competitive digital landscape.

Additionally, two members from the VisitDenmark's team joined the panel in order to follow the flow of the conversation and add any thoughts that may be deemed

relevant towards the establishment of a new direction for the NTO.

These experts allowed us to validate and challenge a number of our opinions at the DTTT.

The conversation flowed covering topics such as UGC, opinions and curated content in destination websites, the relevance and choices to be made in terms of the number of entry points to be considered based on resources available, the power of having owned data - although only if it is superior to everything else already available - and also the behavioural changes that can be observed in users and travellers, but also what the change might look like over the coming years.

## 5. Digital Leaders Panel

Following a decade of transformative evolution in our digital world, the technology landscape for National Tourism Organisations has matured considerably, presenting many new strategic choices which are perhaps more fundamental than ever to consider.

Today, the ever-more competitive environment of rich digital brand experiences continues. Increasingly immersive, better-targeted and more sophisticated engagement tactics are key to getting cut through amongst a significant amount of digital noise. Not to mention the importance more than ever of relevance.

With this panel, comprised of 10 experts working on DMOs, we wanted to create a discussion space to test some of our hypotheses and challenge the conclusions reached after two months of the consultation process.

The discussion followed the hypotheses put forward, focusing mainly on the first three: destination-owned channel relevance in a competitive landscape, balance of rich content experiences vs. technology and platform investments, models for successful cooperation with local & regional DMOs and Industry, and opportunities to leverage data and APIs for effective cooperation with digital partners.

## 6. Digital Audit & Benchmark

Digital competitiveness is a complex mission and there is no single way of achieving it. Conveying the DNA and essence of the place is key, whether that is coming from VisitDenmark, regional and local DMOs or businesses in the destination.

The DTTT has conducted a digital audit of VisitDenmark's website to understand what's driving visitors to it, have a comprehensive overview of the content that performs best and also to identify the digital structure that is currently in place.

Additionally, we have benchmarked some of these results across the industry, visualising different destination websites and the trends that are observable in these.

The digital benchmark has looked at the home page of five competitor websites of VisitDenmark, specifically those of Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Germany.

Through this analysis, some of the key trends, features and content formats have been noted by the team, allowing us to make objective observations and recommendations for future web developments of the destination based on the different sections found at: [visitdenmark.dk](https://www.visitdenmark.dk).

# Knowledge Validation

In the second stage, we validated some of the early assumptions and conclusions obtained through the previous methods with the testimonials of visitors from all around the world.

The need for a user-centric approach to establish the future development of the user journey led to the creation of an interactive consumer video panel to truly embrace a digital-first approach.

## Interactive Consumer Video Panel

Establishing a truly unique approach to gather deeply qualitative views from visitors about the digital user journey, we created an interactive video experience that has allowed us to explore how tourists perceive, use and find relevance in destination websites, amongst many other digital touchpoints.

The immersive and interactive video survey tool used was embedded as a pop-up on VisitDenmark's site, providing an incentive prize to participate.

This has allowed us to gather individual viewpoints formed independently in the consumers' natural environment when online. The great prize offering, together with the intuitive design of the 'survey' has resulted in +100 responses from online users.

Our favourite tools:

**Typeform:** sleek design, UX at the core with multiple integrations, like Mailchimp or Google Analytics.

**Videoask:** bringing assessments and surveys to the next level, makes everything more interactive, allowing you to ask and answer questions via video.

# Recommendations

The aim of this project is to provide recommendations for VisitDenmark and the tourism industry to take future action on its digital strategy and landscape to adapt to the visitor journey between 2025-2030.

Therefore, we have created an extensive number of actionable recommendations based on the research presented in Chapter 3 of this report, but also on the views of the experts, digital leaders, stakeholders and tourists interviewed during the consultation process.

Following a logical order and responding to every hypothesis and subquestions, the recommendations provided stand out for being:

**Good value for money** - we have set out recommendations that make it easy to evaluate the effort needed to implement specific actions by assessing their value for money.

**Sharp and concise** - very clear recommendations of how to proceed with the transformation process.

**Step by step** - we explain in detail how VisitDenmark and its partners should lead the digital transformation process.



# A direction for the future



This is where we turn ideas, creativity and theory into a deep and concrete analysis of what VisitDenmark's digital presence looks like and what it could look like in the future.

To explore the directions set in this chapter, think of the below sections as a deep dive into the five hypotheses set in this project and the overarching areas they cover.

We are setting out a number of observations, conclusions and recommendations within which the whole thing, part of it or just some of it, can quickly be transformed into an actionable programme ready to go when you are.

## User Tourism Organisations

Tourism Organisations include those governmental or semi-governmental organisations principally responsible for the development and promotion of destinations. These would largely be considered as the Destination Marketing, or Management, Organisations (DMOs), locally, regionally and nationally.

The importance of Tourism Organisations in this process is crucial, as their perspectives on governance and leadership, as well as their interactions amongst one another, is fundamental to DMOs serving as leadership networks.

In addition, DMOs are one of the online sources attracting visitors to the destination through inspirational content and relevant information, being best placed to provide trust-worthy data, calling for attention to their actions and development.



## User Industry Partners & Business

Industry partners, defined as those playing a leading and overarching ‘connector’ role in the industry, have an active part to play in the excellence of VisitDenmark’s digital presence.

The wide ranging nature of these organisations means they are, by nature, very different. However, industry partners are often better exposed to wider industry trends, aware of the importance of tackling these and adopting digitalisation throughout the industry, often providing different perspectives and views on the visitor journey.

Businesses are often extremely busy, juggling many tasks at the same time and sometimes find participation in industry-wide initiatives difficult to justify or to see clear benefits from. This is why adopting a user-driven approach to involve them in any new initiative and plans is key, which starts by testing even the diagnosis approach before rolling it out fully.



## User Tourists

In digitalisation, first-person expertise can play an important role in identifying, incorporating and tackling the opportunities.

Taking into consideration the many technological advances that have taken place in the last years, but also the ones that will continue to emerge. It is important to consider the role that technologies and cyber-physical systems play in tourist decision-making processes as they become extensions of tourists.

In addition, research has shown that Destination Management Organisations need to provide relevant and useful information in appropriate amounts to be of relevance and interest to tourists. Therefore, understanding what their perspectives are and the role this plays for their experience is key in defining future strategies.

# The Big Five: Conclusions

**1.0**

# Destination Websites

## 1.0 Destination Websites

# Tourists will still need public destination websites as part of their digital decision-making process from 2025 - 2030.

The short answer to this question is - sort of. There's no doubt about it, the public does not 'need' destination websites. Answers, information, ideas and recommendations are plentiful online and vary from individual recommendations by publications, blogs and sites, through to rankings from users and visitors on Google, booking sites and elsewhere.

If the destination website were to disappear tomorrow, tourists will still come. So how do we measure the value of our contribution to making Denmark's tourism economy thrive?

The real question lies in how important is it for destination websites to form part of the choice offered to tourists planning travel. What level of influence can they have and how much value does this bring back to the destination and industry?

**Our research would suggest that for a significant number of travellers, it plays a critical role. In fact, according to more than 66% of those we surveyed, official sources of information are used often or always as part of the planning approach when it comes to seeking information online.**

When factoring this as a percentage of website users on visitdenmark.com there is no doubt that the influence of the site alone is already considerable.


This means that for these visitors the existence of such a resource is invaluable and without a doubt plays an important part in informing their choices.

With the right strategy, that can then help surface discoveries not by 'most popular' but revealing 'hidden gems' - those lesser-known places to visit.

**Nearly half of those we surveyed said they were likely to use official destination websites**, in parallel with Google, as the two most important channels when it comes to seeking travel inspiration.

It is relevant to share that according to our survey, younger age groups tend to use Google a bit more than destination websites, which may reveal a shift in user preferences. Nonetheless, until 2030 (project timeframe) we won't see any relevant change in the digital user journey - perhaps only in 15 or 20 years.

Another key conclusion we can draw when looking at the survey results is that the VDK website users are mostly over 34 years old (around 90%). This suggests that younger generations are stepping away from destination websites and replacing them with other sources.



**“Destination websites have to be inspirational, trustworthy and wide if they are to play a role.”**

Tine Thygesen,  
**Tech Entrepreneur**

An [ETC study on Gen Z](#) travellers confirms that there are sources far more relevant for younger generations. In this study, **travel review sites (49%), such as TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet, were more important for them in terms of sources of inspiration in trip planning than destination websites (36%).**

What can be even more surprising is that social media feed is only the 4th main source of inspiration (35%), even though having a significant presence in the life Gen Zers.

Lastly, the level of trust is key here, **where official destination websites ranked the highest out of all major channels, with 90% saying they either generally or always trust destination websites for information and planning.**

The existence of the destination website is an important pillar of trust in a market of heavily competing commercial forces. For some demographic, this is a significant factor both in providing a level of confidence when going online for inspiration and planning.

This sentiment is further supported by our consumer interviews, where many described the importance of seeking out official sources of information when planning travel.

But of course, there are just as many who don't - preferring to seek information simply by googling or using other tools, sites and networks, whereas 'savvy' users are confident to get the answers they're looking for elsewhere.

For these uses, a good official site is nothing more than a lucky find - but this is not insignificant.



**“Well, the planning is just too obvious, really. It’s what everyone would do these days. You just get on the internet and you start talking to people.**

**You go to websites, the most obvious ones, like TripAdvisor, and it’s easy to get into conversations with people.”**

Corbin Wilcox,  
Consumer Video Panel

## 1.0 Destination Websites

# From a tourist perspective, how will the digital journey evolve in the future?

Despite many exciting developments, the big step-changes in digital for most brands will all be in the detail of how we discover and plan travel, whilst the way in which we experience travel is expected to become smarter and more personalised.

Digital marketing will increasingly be overtaken by digital service design, where premium digital user experiences will become the central driver of the product experience and in turn be the key factor driving reputation, loyalty and awareness.

In the destination context, loyalty can also be considered through the lens of usefulness - the reasons to return to a site because as a digital service and if it reliably meets a need or even adds value.

This shift means that marketing without fulfilment can somehow be considered as a rather 'blunt instrument'.

Incredible digital experiences which truly

deliver on the basic principles of 'improving the lives of users', will find that to some extent success is self-perpetuating, as long as brands stay resolutely focused on user needs.

To give a simple example of this, it is well known that search engine optimisation depends, amongst other things, on relevance and social authority.

Relevance is not only a question of content where keyword optimisation remains key, but also functions where it specifically responds to user needs.

Couple this with a strong linking strategy and the site will earn its authority and strong search engine results page rankings.

Providing the right content and function means strengthening all of these, whilst partners will be more inclined to provide referrals, not because of agreements but because they consider it an invaluable



resource.

So how does this correlate with user needs today? Well, it is clear from our research that there are two distinct user groups, which are distinctly different from one another.

## Information Gatherers

The first, an older demographic, turn to official sites like VisitDenmark to gather information, where planning and gathering ideas is an important part of the pre-trip information gathering where value is placed on reliability and trustworthiness, whilst the more extensive the resource, the better it is out of a mix of channels used.

For these travellers, it is clear that putting time aside to research travel is something done with intent and is a more conscious part of the pre-travel preparation stage.

The reliability and trustworthiness of sites based on the depth and range of information provided are key, hoping to use this information to decide what to do and where to go as part of a largely pre-determined set of activities for a trip to be taken at a later date.

## Savvy Collectors

The second, generally a younger demographic, is digitally savvy and

determined to use every bit of digital know-how to find the best ideas.

Their approach to finding hidden gems can be described as highly skilful, whilst using many sites and resources to collect different tips and ideas is part and parcel of planning.

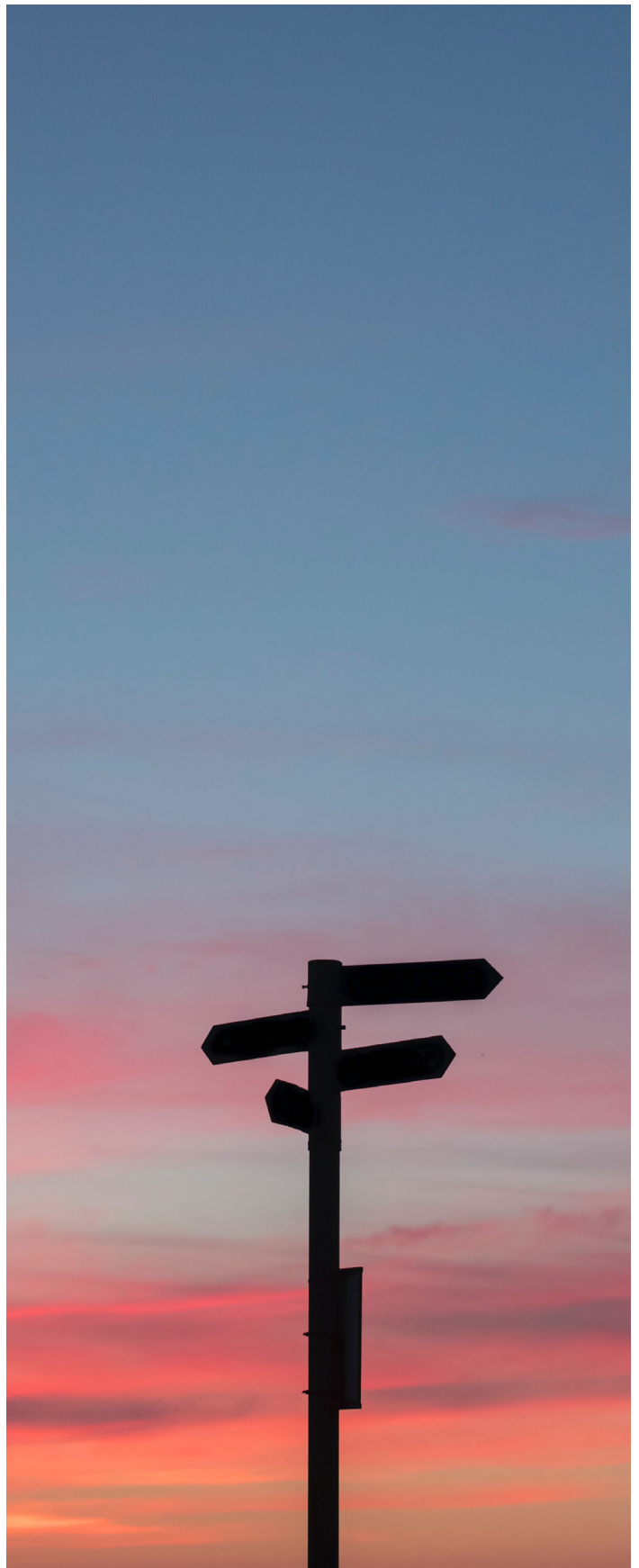
The 'next actions' are often taken with the intent to either:

- **Seek the best price** - using OTAs and meta-search to analyse thousands of offers and drill down the most competitive product and price with a clear bias towards the best-known sites, such as Booking.com
- **The most convenient way** - saving places in Google Maps or even searching for ideas directly on maps in-trip, searching visuals for inspiration and getting ideas on the go.
- **Socially conscious actions** - such as booking directly with a provider, with the knowledge that by doing so they will keep all of the money from the transaction.

It is clear that whilst VisitDenmark may be a natural 'useful resource' for visitors in the first example, being aware of the needs of the digitally savvy consumer highlighted in the second example is particularly important.

This is a market that is growing and one that has a very low tolerance for poor experiences. To exist in their digital journey, content, user experience and convenience must be second to none. They might not specifically seek an official site, but if a good search engine ranking leads them there, the stickiness of the site will be determined by how well it meets their expectations.

There is nothing to suggest that these users are loyal or drawn to any particular site or platform when it comes to planning in particular and by any measure, it means that the official destination website can absolutely form a key part of trip planning and inspiration beyond the initial awareness stage, but it needs to earn its place.



Source: Unsplash, Javier Allegue Barros

## 1.0 Destination Websites

# Is there still a “need” for public destination sites to promote digital guest services and for marketing use?

What is becoming clearer more than ever before is that destination sites cannot be measured as marketing tools alone.

In fact, to respond to this we might perhaps want to consider what marketing is today - in the context of the digital visitor journey.

If we revisit the classical model of the visitor journey, we should consider what role the

destination website plays in the overall marketing mix.

It is important to also consider what marketing function it plays at each stage - is it the central driver of a message, or a useful resource playing a key part in an overall marketing mix?

**“Maintaining a one-stop shop for information is crucial - somewhere where [people] feel like they are getting reliable information and everybody can sort of be pointed in the same direction. [...] It’s very important for us as the NTO to be able to have like a neutral position.”**

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson,  
Director of Marketing Communications  
at Business Iceland

## Awareness - Paid

Today, the trigger generally happens outside of the destination site and is driven actively by awareness building, generally falling into two key areas; paid campaigns and year-round content & storytelling.

Campaigns should actively drive interest from that 'trigger' stage, sparking interest and discovery through impactful, creative-led thematic concepts, designed to tap into sizeable audience appeal, whilst developing interest further through the 'un-peeling of layers'.

For destinations, campaigns should be inherently digital-first, even if they include above-the-line media channels. This is particularly important today where data and audience acquisition and achieved through the active 'intent' of users, holds greater value than ever in an environment of increased privacy restrictions.

This early awareness stage is crucial if the

**For destinations, campaigns should be inherently digital-first even if they include above-the-line media channels.**

goal is to actively target audiences, create awareness about the destination and actively push visitors through the discovery funnel towards conversion.

Partners, such as industry partners as well as regional DMOs, can actively 'co-op' into such campaigns, increasing the overall campaign value and crucially, investing in the conversion stage.

This is important, so that VisitDenmark's investment in the brand-building component of campaigns, that is the creative concept and execution, is supported with a clear call to action leading to a quantifiable 'conversion'. This is where industry co-investment in the second stage comes into play - retargeting offers and fulfilment.

Excellent creative, on-brand content and storytelling, natively integrated product 'call to action' and a well-designed, coordinated and targeted omnichannel paid media campaign all play an important part in campaign success.

## The Destination Website

In this example, the destination website serves as fulfilment.

Whilst not entirely necessary and not the endpoint for every campaign call-to-action, it serves as a central 'home' for campaigns and a platform which can offer endless sequential content discovery, with the potential for strong engagement and a more native/premium brand experience.

It also forms an essential part of the omnichannel mix, ensuring that awareness building in different media environments always has a natural 'home' on the destination's website. For example, a campaign ran on TV or programmatic display designed to keep the destination 'top-of-mind', may result in a search where the destination's website should naturally align with the message and offer further discovery through content.



VisitDenmark  

**So... what do you want to do in Denmark?** 

Photo: Viggo Lundberg

### **Welcome to Denmark, the Land of Everyday Wonder**

Get ready for simple pleasures and unexpected delights. We're here to make your visit to Denmark the most wonder-full experience. Before you pack your bags be sure to [check out](#) all of our updates on safe travel to Denmark. Ready? Let's get exploring.

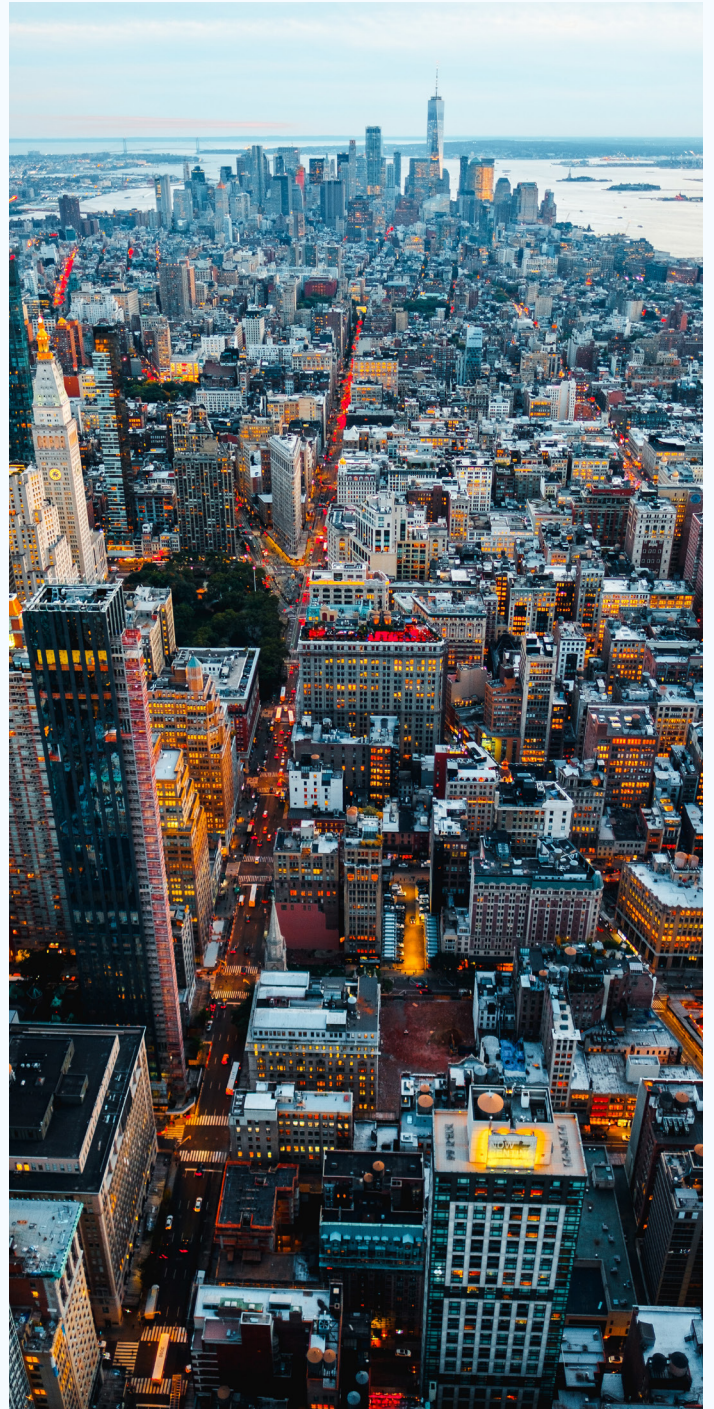
Source: Visit Denmark / Homepage

## CASE STUDY

# Brand USA

Brand USA's Sound of the USA is a good reference here, where a theme which is clearly strong and unique for the US is played out across an omnichannel environment, supported by both hosted micro-sites and similar digital interactive tools hosted on publisher sites (e.g. The Times) encouraging an interactive map-based discovery of US music through the years.

Campaign investment was massively boosted thanks to partner fundraising, which increased the overall campaign budget and allowed results to be measured by the number of bookings driven, as well as brand reach and awareness.



Source: Unsplash, Jan Folwarczny

## CASE STUDY

# Slovenian Tourist Board

For Slovenia, the main aim of the website is awareness. Answering key questions such as what to do or where to visit are all central to the role of the destination website in responding to the individual needs of travellers.

Slovenia's consumer site is dynamic, adapting according to seasons and thematic topics and providing interactive and personalisation features to ensure the user is immersed and engaged throughout the site.

Market adaptation of the content is also really key for getting the site right, not only in terms of languages but also the content selection and getting this right for the market - for example, focusing on hiking for the German market.

Market adaptation of the content is also really key for getting the site right, not only in terms of languages but also the content selection and getting this right for the market - for example, focusing on hiking for the German market.

Automated, personalised content based on users' interests is key to strengthening

the performance of all activities. For example, shaping stories, messaging and campaigns around the needs of those who are seeking inspiration on outdoor activities helps ensure the messaging is focused only on the needs and interests of this market segment.

## WHY IS UX KEY TO SUCCESS?

- Brand identity - be memorable
- Images - be authentic
- Tone of voice - build relationships

## Awareness - Earned

Awareness should also be driven year-round through a wide mix of strong well-performing content initiatives resulting in earned media.

Earned media can vary significantly - as a destination it is important to seek a mix of everything to earn credibility and trigger interest along the destination's key brand pillars across a mix of channels and media, such as:

- **Social content** - reaching new audiences where engagement extends its reach.
- **Influencers** - tapping into their audiences and offering a nuanced take on the destination.
- **Creators** - working with creatives with a unique angle, style or connection with the subject.
- **Digital PR & Media** - achieving positive coverage and authoritative recommendations.
- **Community** - encouraging users - locals and travellers to share experiences on social.
- **Partnership** - joining forces with brands and platforms where values are fully aligned.

The key here is that amazing content experiences can be played-out natively on different platforms where an authentic voice has significant influence.

Is the destination website 'needed' in this stage of the visitor journey? We think so.

Earned media forms part of an active year-round effort to achieve good traction across the key channels where your audience exists. So does this mean that the official destination website plays no role? Not at all.

For some, such as digital publishers, being able to link through to 'official' information sources is key to offering their audiences links for more information.

Where earned media is less formal, such as social content, shared experiences on social, or influencer content, further discovery may indeed stay within that social channel or environment, but here being able to connect official social accounts is key.

This allows destination brands to build a following and engage them through regular inspirational posts, but later down the line it also brings followers closer to a call to action - which may be on the destination site or a partner site.

In any case, this 'earned media' means visitors are one step from owned media. A trigger around Danish Design, for example, might then lead to a search, which may



then lead to a special content feature about “Unique Design Experiences in Denmark”.

## Inspiration to Planning

VisitDenmark’s SEO strategy has demonstrated that it’s able to deliver a strong volume of organic traffic, which performs significantly better when it comes to engagement than any other source (when we look at data sources from VDK websites).

This is a testament to the important role the VisitDenmark site plays in supporting the visitor path to purchase, even if we can accept that it won’t form part of every visitor’s planning and inspiration search, nor will it be the direct driver of conversion in most instances.

Whilst the quantifiable value of each visitor may be hard to exact, there is an undeniable value which can be attributed to each and every visitor who demonstrates interest through some form of on-site engagement.

This is a sizeable volume, yet importantly, the organic traffic represents only a fraction of the overall site visitors, for whom it represents fulfilment as an important stopping point in an omnichannel visitor journey.

Combining organic search traffic with referrals from social, newsletters and other

sites demonstrates the important role the website plays for many visitors, one that is not to be overlooked as insignificant.

**53% of users state that they always trust destination sites while 39% saying they generally prefer official destination sites,** the weight this channel plays, amongst others, is perhaps more significant than any other channel - ranking higher on trust than Google, business sites, booking sites and review sites.

In this sense, the question of whether destination sites are needed to promote ‘digital guest services’ as well as for marketing seems clear.

The majority of visitors who arrive at the site through organic traffic sources, cannot be considered simply as ‘audiences’, deriving from effective marketing.

**53% of users state that they always trust destination sites while 39% say they generally prefer official destination sites.**

Source: Consumer Survey

They are better considered as ‘users’, seeking ideas, tips and orientation. In this sense, their ‘needs’ have to be considered first and foremost, with the site’s design, content flow and functionality built entirely around user needs, with a specific focus on optimising the user experience at this stage in the visitor journey, both at a content level and functionality level, ensuring that it over-delivers on expectations.

Respecting individual user needs, which might mean considering a certain level of stickiness on the site as long as it is supporting these needs, may bring better results than only offering surface-level content as a fast conduit for partner referrals.

This is because our research shows that users are seeking good information, valuable finds and suggestions they can’t find elsewhere. Treating the site only as a marketing tool risks focusing only on acquisition and not fulfilment.

## Should we consider GuideDenmark as a digital service in this context?

Probably not in isolation. The fact is that in today’s digital ecosystem a DMO cannot

compete if its only value is to offer listings or a directory, but there is a clear opportunity to deliver on a DMO’s strengths, offering exceptional curated content and features, where relevant product data is natively pulled into that offering fulfilment, context and a clear call to action.

In this sense, the lines between marketing and services have become blurred, whilst the value of a database is the content and data that exists within it and how that content is integrated natively in relevant instances.

## Booking

As is the case with the majority of National Tourism Organisations globally, VisitDenmark is not currently offering any bookability.

This is undoubtedly the right call in a space dominated by aggressively competing OTAs and brand loyalty amongst a sizeable proportion of consumers towards certain preferred booking sites.

There is however a clear and growing market for consumers seeking to book direct, as consumers are increasingly aware of the high level of commission that is lost to online intermediaries.

It seems a given therefore that whilst this market might be small, there is an

opportunity for destinations to work collectively to use their voice to speak up for the industry and increase awareness on this critical issue that even the larger industry players are working hard to battle.

Putting that into practice when it comes to the website can be as simple as offering a 'Book Direct' link wherever there is a clear place for the fulfilment, such as a page dedicated to the business, as is currently the case.

There are alternatives, such as integrating booking technology which can facilitate direct no or low-commission bookability with optional third-party distribution but this would be a strategic choice and there isn't enough evidence to suggest that users are looking to book accommodation through destination websites.

Where other forms of booking are concerned, there has been an increasing move from other National Tourism Organisations to take a proactive role in helping the industry to create and distribute more bookable experiences. Experience development has widely been seen as an opportunity to surface an alternative offer to the mainstream commercial choice of attractions.

A well-designed experience development programme can see the creation of a product which encourages off-the-beaten-

track discovery and connects visitors with more authentic or localised experiences, whilst also actively promoting the creation and distribution of experiences specifically designed to meet sustainability commitments - such as experiences which deliver on specific Sustainable Development Goals.

Supporting the creation of such an offer is well aligned with both consumer trends, where visitors are seeking more authentic, local and unusual experiences as well as wider trends around purpose-driven tourism, where positive impact experiences can form a core part of the competitive proposition.

In this respect, there is a clear gap in the market where VisitDenmark can play to its strengths but also find a unique position in the market where unique experiences underpinned by values create clear differentiation from the current commercial offer.

An experience programme can align strongly with existing content, digital and campaign strategies, offering clearer fulfilment from curated trails, trips and experiences all the way through to unique destination experiences which are bookable.

How might such a strategy come together and benefit the wider industry -

complementing and not competing with the current offer?

- **Product Development** - An initiative led from at a national level can then be delivered at a regional and local level - in a search to identify unique experiences seeking 'hero' products for each region and locality, whilst seeking stronger business collaboration and pairings.
- **Communication** - The backstory behind each experience feeds into the wider brand narrative and offers many degrees of storytelling to create layers of depth behind each destination through rich and immersive storytelling and impactful social content.
- **Distribution** - A joint omnichannel effort to get experiences into the market activated by all DMOs with linkages made to third-party distribution to also deliver on global distribution channels. Conversion can therefore happen on-site, or off-site, whilst the technology and brand framework serves as a backbone for distribution, not a distraction.

This is perhaps one of the best considerations of how the NTO might play a role, where the official destination website is the primary 'home' for both content and experiences, whilst bookability offers fulfilment on-site as well as through local, regional and global distribution channels.

Initiatives led by others such as VisitEngland with TXGB combine funding and support programmes for experience development, with marketing and distribution value by investing in campaigns and distribution technology.

The goal has been to enable suppliers to manage accommodation, tours and attractions with live availability across multiple distributors with an overall experience development programme designed to bring unique destination experiences to the fore.

## CASE STUDY

# Visit Finland

The Visit Finland Academy is a training selection aimed at tourism areas and business groups operating there to speed up the development of tourism products, the aim of which is to offer internationalization, product development, sales and marketing training to tourism companies that are already ready for the international market or are interested in them.

The programmes are divided into three levels; **Ready, Steady and Go.**

The Ready-level training package is training that promotes the internationalization of a tourism company, including separate training sections: product, pricing, distribution channels and marketing communications. Based on the starting level mapping, the coaches tailor the training level to meet the company's needs.

Through this case study, the importance of supporting your industry when digitalising the destination's offer becomes clear.



Source: Unsplash, Tapio Haaja

## CASE STUDY

# Failte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland is the national tourism board for Ireland and they work with travel agencies and tour operators and encourage a front and centre approach to online experiences and presence. Their 'Digital that Delivers' strategy supports the digital transformation of destinations.

The Digital that Delivers programme intends to help the Irish tourism industry compete in the international market, allowing destinations to operate more efficiently and cross-sell each others' products and services.

The '**Digital that Delivers**' vision can be outlined as follows:

- Enable consumers to discover & book experiences, accommodation through convenient channels.
- Help the Irish industry to recover from Covid impact and operate efficiently in a sustainable fashion.

The assessment strategy for 'Digital that Delivers' reflects a range of strategies from experience developments to connected distribution and optimising analytics & reporting capabilities. It identifies gaps common in the industry, provides

businesses with transformation roadmaps, and offers grant schemes.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Connected Booking Systems are advantages for both travellers and tourism operators.
2. Destinations can operate more efficiently and cross-sell each others' products through connected booking systems.
3. A connected booking system dominates consumers' path to purchase and supports travellers to make decisions more conveniently.

## Experiencing & Sharing

In the last part of the visitor journey, experiencing and sharing have taken on an entirely different meaning based on the way in which we use technology in our day-to-day experiences.

Today, experiencing the destination is deeply intertwined with the digital experience, whether the destination has any role to play on that depends on whether it wants to actively engage in that space.

Clearly, the advice from experts is a word of caution - in abundance. Trying to compete with the technology race in most cases is futile, however, there are also examples of destinations that have taken decisive action and seen positive results in doing so.

Whilst the in-trip experience is perhaps a concern more for regional and even local DMOs to take action on, it would be wrong to assume that there is no relevant role for VisitDenmark at this stage in the visitor journey.

Whilst it might not be from a key focus strategically, the evidence shows that many travellers today plan on the go and are generally more whimsical about where to go and what to do than ever before.

The always-on, ever-connected nature of today's travellers means that the necessity to have everything planned in advance just isn't there - whilst the joy of sometimes planning as you go can also be seen as a positive.

This is where GuideDenmark, as an open-source resource, together with a more functionally designed site, more context-aware and tailored to individual user needs, can continue to deliver on inspiration and planning well into the trip stage with a minimal diversion from the core strategic aim of supporting upper-funnel marketing needs.

When it comes to sharing, there are three clear ways to consider the role of a destination in this part of the journey:

### **Increasing the social footprint**

Here examples such as iAmsterdam are world-famous as an iconic image which has helped spread and reinforce the image of Amsterdam globally owing to this visual 'social' landmark which has featured in so many stories.

Elsewhere capital investment in flagship tourism structures and products has played a key role in the shareability of the destination's image globally. A good example would be the Burj Khalifa in Dubai or the Sydney Opera House, perhaps the

Little Mermaid is a comparable example for Denmark.

A more contemporary take on both is the recent Singapore 'Here is SG' sculpture. This commissioned sculpture stands in a prominent waterfront location, a key point for social gatherings and photo spots, where now this iconic 'SG' image is shared around the world, creating a prominent connection with socially shared content.

The uniqueness of this sculpture also tells a rich digital story, one of 100% sustainability, local artists and a concept developed to represent the many different sides of contemporary Singapore.

### **Social Proof**

Whilst we have already covered social in the earlier stages of awareness, inspiration and planning, there is an additional point to make at this stage and that is the importance of social content within the VisitDenmark site.

Whilst social content does form part of the current experience, it could be implemented in a richer and more native way, alongside relevant content.

In doing so, it serves to always offer social proof, with user-generated displayed alongside every experience. This can reinforce credibility and will reduce the bounce rate, whilst the integration of

reviews and ratings from leading review sites is likely to increase the confidence and trust placed in the content, thus keeping users on-site longer with less need to 'verify' claims elsewhere.

### **Sharing Features**

Whilst social sharing is not prominently used in the current site, functional sharing features can be considered if they are designed to support a better user experience.

For example, being able to 'collect' ideas and send, plan or save them in a single package can deliver a great user experience if offered intuitively using cookies to track behaviour instead of cumbersome account sign-ups.

Likewise, helping to get itineraries into tools used by travellers every day, such as Google Maps, can be seen as added benefits of planning and gathering trip ideas within the VisitDenmark site, if they can then be seamlessly shared elsewhere - or even to a companion app.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that even leaders in this space, such as Airbnb who have successfully designed an all-in-one trip-planning experience have struggled to compete with apps, services and go-to references that travellers are naturally inclined to lean towards.



## 1.0 Destination Websites

# Will public DMO websites still be a part of the digital journey and decision-making process for tourists from 2025 to 2030? Or will other technologies dominate?

This has probably been answered extensively in the visitor cycle feature. It seems that there is a resounding case for destination websites, with the need to be accepting of the fact that it comes down to effective digital strategy whether or not they surface in that crucial inspiration and planning phase.

There also needs to be recognised that for many users they won't be part of the trip planning experience, yet for those whom it does play a role the influence is significant.

This case has been made firmly against the likes of Google, which drives similar levels of trust but perhaps plays a slightly different role in the visitor journey, neither supporting the broader discovery nor providing a curated set of perspectives.

When it comes to Social Media it seems clear that one serves to generate, and trigger inspiration and can help to keep the brand top of mind and does not present itself as a

key channel when a user is actively seeking inspiration or planning a trip.

The weight of social content is clearly recognised and when working in tandem, natively integrated alongside website content, it can help drive better engagement and conversion.

Likewise, review sites, have gone down in popularity since the height of their growth and this has driven the likes of TripAdvisor to change their business model to replicate that of an OTA.

The fact is, the integration of reviews and ratings, alongside listings, is now something that is expected by consumers, to verify and gather the opinions of other travellers, whilst forming their own personal opinion.

The convenience of natively integrated reviews and ratings retains visitors on-site as it adds a layer of trust thus not requiring users to check elsewhere to verify claims.



**“The website still is really important and will be. It’s sort of a place where we have the chance. I mean not only to give the information but to keep inspiring the people that we have managed to get the attention from and to drag them down the funnel.**

**Sort of warming up the audience and then making the audiences available for the different parts of the industry. I think having first-party cookies, being so important, more important now.”**

Katrine Mosfjeld,

**Chief Marketing Officer at Visit Norway**

# 2.0 Digital Channels

## 2.0 Digital Channels

# Using as few digital channels as possible (as an entry point to Denmark) is an advantage for the tourist, both for digital guest service and for marketing use.

In Denmark, we have 100+ digital entrances to public tourist information that we, as VisitDenmark, think is too many. The presumption is that Denmark as a tourist destination can maximise the total effect of the overall investment by having fewer digital entrances, apps etc.

It is clear from looking at the research that a large number of digital channels, brands and platforms that exist today only serve to weaken efforts to promote the destination and establish a clear and distinct destination brand for Denmark.

The proliferation of competing brands somehow seems unsustainable, not only from a strategic point of view but also from the point of view of those managing the different digital channels and platforms.

There is clear acknowledgement amongst both those who participated in the DMO workshop and the industry partners interviewed that in order to deliver an

effective and impactful digital strategy, a clear, unified and streamlined brand approach is necessary.

Speaking with candour, industry partners were even more direct in their view that VisitDenmark is the only logical partner when it comes to international campaigns and promotion.

With increasing expectations from users and more resources needed to deliver on these expectations digitally, it is clear that at best smaller DMOs can allocate enough resources for a generalist to assume responsibility for the destination's digital presence.

At the same time, these resources are often split between supporting the local industry with digitalisation efforts, whilst trying to maintain digital content and channels.

This leads to resources being spread too thin, whilst efforts also risk being

undermined with different destination brands competing for the same top search engine results position, weakening each other's efforts.

Whilst consumers may not necessarily be aware of the presence of different competing brands, if they do arrive at a sub-par digital experience this may harm their impression of Denmark and limit discovery and brand trust.

Furthermore, as user data has shown to be a key tool in the marketing toolkit, splitting this across different channels instead of focusing on a joined-up approach can only be described as a missed opportunity.

**“We’re such a small DMO, geographically we were quite large, but our population is very small, with about half a million people.**

**We have an extremely small budget. The purity of the brand voice is so important to us because we simply can’t afford to have a diluted one.”**

Laurie Dempster,  
Digital Lead at Newfoundland & Labrador

## 2.0 Digital Channels

# If VisitDenmark were to develop the optimal digital solution for the tourist – which digital channels, should we cover within the digital user journey - and how many digital entrances should we have?

Firstly, looking to other destinations there is no clear answer to this. In every comparable destination, the same challenge exists. This is a question facing both National Tourism Organisations as well as Regional Tourism Organisations, where at both levels frustration is felt over this same issue.

The fact is that as independently ran tourism organisations, it can be difficult to stipulate whether or not they should have websites or social profiles and in what languages.

Their individual strategic justifications and motivations for establishing an independent online presence may be specific in nature, for example, they might see an opportunity in targeting very specific markets where they feel a tactical approach can deliver direct results. So how might this look if we envisage a streamlined approach?

## Marketing

A streamlined brand approach should allow sub-brands to exist within it.

If we take inspiration from other destinations, such as Ireland, we can see a move away from politically defined boundaries towards thematic regional brand concepts, such as ‘The Wild Atlantic Way’, representing Ireland’s West Coast as a uniquely invigorating brand concept, marked by rugged cliffs, and an awe-inspiring coastline.

As a product, the Wild Atlantic Way has earned its notoriety as the home of many epic films, such as Star Wars: The Force Awakens, where the Cliffs of Moher have become an iconic landmark alongside others such as the Giants Causeway.

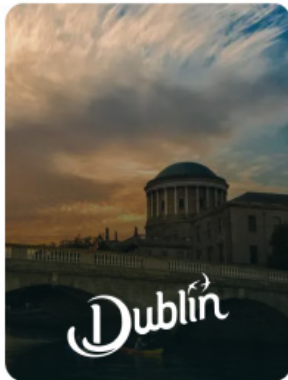
This brand concept of the ‘Wild Atlantic Way’ is complimented by two others, alongside

Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, whilst for the international market, this also includes Northern Ireland and Belfast as key brand propositions.

## Explore Ireland's regions

Think you have seen it all? It's only the beginning of what this island has to offer.

*#KeepDiscovering*



Source: Failte Ireland

For most destinations, the brand and digital presence of the National Tourism Organisation bares no relation or resemblance to local or regional destinations; they simply operate in brand silos each doing their own thing. However, this isn't the case for all as Ireland has shown us.

Likewise, we cannot simply rule out differing brand identities at a regional and city level as something that is necessarily a bad thing.

If those regional and city sites are able to establish an extremely clear and differentiated brand proposition, whilst

supporting a clear digital user journey which meets the needs of visitors further down the funnel, where the destination is already chosen, or at least a serious consideration, then individual destination brands can deliver great results.

Take the example of Switzerland, for example. An extremely strong global brand proposition is developed by Switzerland Tourism, with a compelling and immersive digital presence designed to strengthen awareness and discovery through interactive content, inspirational feature-length articles and thousands of ideas all focusing on rich and immersive storytelling

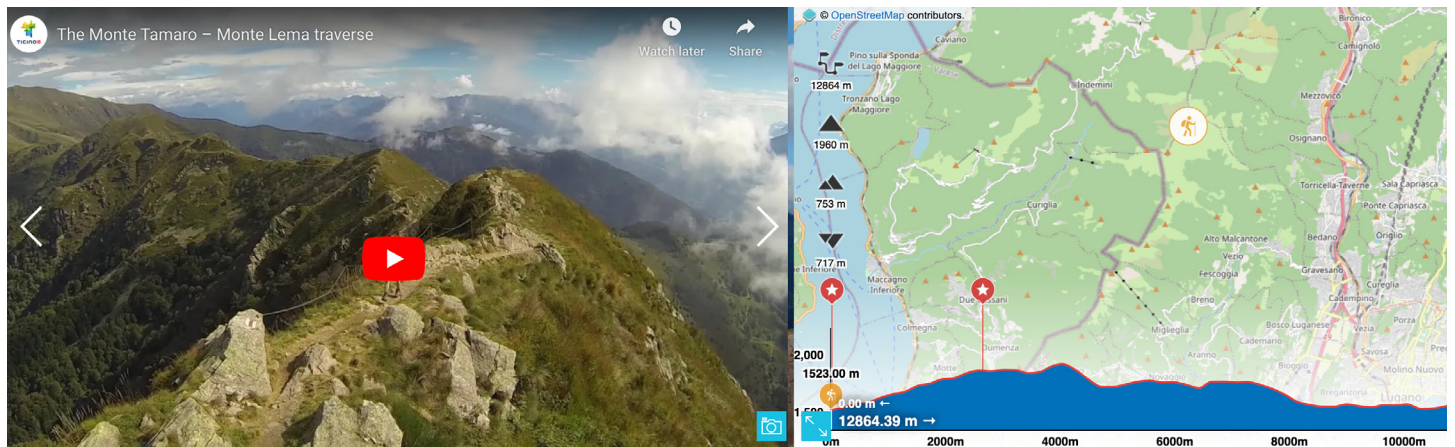
and inspiration.

Destination discovery is equally focused on inspiration, whilst maps, related content and experiences all support a gradual development of the user journey and brand discovery process.

On the other hand, regional DMOs, such as Ticino Tourism, clearly understand their markets too and have been able to develop an equally distinct digital brand experience, focused on emphasising the region’s unique identity, its uniqueness and the discovery of products to a granular level which supports detailed planning.

In fact, this goes so much further, for example where a trail - also a product - shows a route from [The Monte Tamaro to Monte Lema](#). The page pulls in database content visually depicting the route, showing an altitude chart as well as a detailed interactive topographic map with detailed information about features, altitude, visitor information and even includes exportable GPX files, to be sent to trail-building apps for hikers and cyclists.

If we take this granularity a level further, we see that even more granular destination planning and discovery takes place further



Home / The Monte Tamaro - Monte Lema traverse



## The Monte Tamaro - Monte Lema traverse

### DESCRIPTION

Discover the beauty of the traverse taking you from Monte Tamaro to Monte Lema. You'll face a challenging hike but one which offers breath-taking views over both the Locarno and Lugano regions, and their valleys and lakes. Along the route you'll come across the spectacular Santa Maria degli Angeli church, designed by renowned architect Mario Botta, as it reaches out towards infinity.

**Track**

Departure: **Rivera** → Arrival: **Miglieglia**

→	⬆️	🕒
Typology <b>Linear</b>	Difficulty <b>Average</b>	Time required <b>5H</b>
↔️	Length <b>12.86 KM</b>	

Source: Ticino / Monte Tamaro



down the funnel on the Bellinzona Valley and Lugano Region's website, two specific places within the Canton of Ticino. Each of these website pulls database content in, such as with the [Cable Car Monte Carasso-Mornera](#) on Bellinzona or the [Funicular of Monte San Salvatore](#) on Lugano's website, both with a similar page design and layout, whilst the brand identity for each sub-region remains unique and distinct, allowing them to focus on different brand propositions and create a unique look and feel.

The quality of the digital experience, the uniqueness of the look and feel, as well as the site design and layout all help to differentiate both the Canton's identity dramatically from Switzerland Tourism and then the city identities from the Canton.

**PARADISO**

## LA FUNICOLARE MONTE SAN SALVATORE

Just a few steps away from the bustling city, Monte San Salvatore rises majestically to the skies and gives you the opportunity to enjoy a moment of peace while facing the seemingly endless horizon.

Since 1890 la Funicolare Monte San Salvatore bring from Paradiso to paradise! Symbol of Lugano, also known as the Sugarloaf Mountain of Switzerland, Monte San Salvatore offers an interesting 360° view of the lake and the city of Lugano, but also of the Alpine peaks.

The funicular is located in Paradiso, 500 m from the motorway exit of Lugano Sud and 5 minutes from the Paradiso-Lugano railway station, and with a comfortable panoramic trip takes you to the top in just 12 minutes. Monte San Salvatore not only offers stunning panoramic views, but also numberless trails for hikers, nature trails, the via ferrata, culture and gastronomy.

**DISCLAIMER**

The information on this site, concerning services or products is provided by external partners. This information is liable to change frequently; for this reason Lugano Region cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies. Due to the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic situation, we suggest that you check with the indicated contacts directly for possible activity restrictions.

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Fax +41 91 985 28 29  
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[www.montesansalvatore.ch](http://www.montesansalvatore.ch)

**NOTES**

**CLEAN & SAFE**

**ALTITUDE**

912

**OPENING**

Source: Lugano Region / Funicular Monte San Salvatore

## Marketing vs. Guest Services

From a marketing point of view, it is clear that having fewer entry points to Denmark will be a benefit in terms of establishing a stronger, more impactful brand experience which isn't harmed by disjointed fragmentation.

Whilst when considering guest services, the conclusion isn't so easy to reach - it also depends on the user's expectations "am I planning for a City Trip or a visit to an entire country?".

For visitors to Copenhagen, planning what to do and see in the city just doesn't make sense on a site where the focus is on Denmark and whilst the aim might be to entice them to travel further or stay longer, this reality risks simply failing user expectations.

Learning from the example of GuideDanmark and other destinations such as Switzerland, it is also clear that database content, if it is complete enough, can help to enable entirely different digital experiences or more functional applications, meeting a need not served further up the funnel.

If everyone is able to leverage content and data from a single unified database, then the applications can be powerful and wide-ranging allowing each destination to leverage this valuable asset to serve their

individual visitor needs.

Likewise, it is possible to invest in shared technology solutions which can be pooled across sites.

A good example of this is the customer relationship tool [Intercom](#), which offers both in-depth CRM and user engagement functionality, as well as automated, bot and chat support with heavily customised integration - both with existing technology stacks as well as user data.

As a shared resource, a single chat can sit on many destination sites, whilst enquires and chat conversations can be assigned or routed according to complex behavioural rules.

A guest relationship is retained and passed between platforms, including individual support history and even natively within visitor apps, providing a single information point delivered at scale and managed by multiple teams across destinations.

## Leadership & Combined Approach

It is clear that VisitDenmark should lead the international marketing and branding effort when it comes to the digital brand hierarchy, developing a regional brand proposition which is easily understandable to visitors, whilst offering a playful concept to visitors as they explore the types of experiences Denmark has to offer.

If we take inspiration from Ireland, brand propositions can stand out clearly within the overall experience and then be translated down the funnel, including onto other sites.

It is also important to recognise, as mentioned above, that there will never be a 'single destination site' experience. Different destinations have their own needs and will establish brands and sites regardless. Some will feel their destination has a unique identity and tone of voice which needs to be elevated with a digital experience that reflects this, whilst others will have more tactical needs, such as providing a rich planning resource for cyclists, if this represents a core part of their market.

For its good intentions, the current approach also leaves a lot of constraints which prevent destinations from developing a more distinctive digital experience where it

would be warranted, whilst it also prevents a mushrooming of confusing and below-par experiences from emerging too.

To overcome this, clear leadership is needed, setting out a model followed by strong guidelines where a strongly aligned digital brand approach is achieved might focus on:

- **Regional brand proposition** - conceptual for international markets
- **Flagship city brand concepts** - focused on key cities with International connections

Smaller cities, towns and municipal destinations should fall within the regional brands, where a professional presentation and trip planning can be supported for each destination ensuring standards are maintained.

## Neighbouring Markets

It is clear from the research that whilst VisitDenmarks' global marketing efforts help raise overall awareness and interest in the destination, there are limited circumstances where clear tactical opportunities exist in neighbouring markets, where direct sea and land connections might lead to more localised tactical marketing and digital product.

An example of this was shared by DFDS, where their North Sea ferry routes between Norway and Denmark present rich opportunities to cater to the opportunities and needs of the market, whilst similar opportunities exist with Stena Line and Scandlines, connecting Sweden and Germany respectively.

Here, short weekend breaks and day trips are part of a compelling offer, whilst specific messaging and digital products catered to touring can better support discovery, for example amongst German travellers heading through Denmark towards Norway.

Nonetheless, despite this, most commercial partners we spoke to expressed a strong desire to work with VisitDenmark.

Primarily, they had more confidence in the digital and technical capabilities to drive a successful awareness campaign, whilst also

expressing frustration at the fragmented, diluted and competitive nature regional and local DMOs.

### SO WHAT SHOULD VISITDENMARK DO?

If this can be addressed with a clearer brand hierarchy, it might also give way for discovery and digital guest services to exist at different stages in the funnel, sometimes co-designed with industry partners - such as a touring app developed in partnership with a ferry partner.

## Domestic Marketing

Much of the conflict on digital brand experiences stems from the difference in roles and market focus on DMOs.

For most regional and local DMOs, their primary motivation for an independent digital presence is to focus on the domestic market, where listings are more complete in Danish language and the overall proposition is more up-to-date.

Likewise, much of the extremely localised content is considered not relevant for international audiences, yet it may be relevant for local and regional travellers.

The GuideDanmark database doesn't create this differentiation, so attractions and events that are not of significant value to international visitors will still surface on VisitDenmark.

By the same token, the limitations of the database may also prevent certain listings from being useable, trustworthy or actionable for domestic visitors both due to categorisation but also the need for reliable trip-planning information.


An example of this would be for electric car drivers, can they reliably plan a visit to a region knowing that they can plan in charging stops and overnight stays at hotels with charging facilities?

At present, the data isn't granular enough to support that, yet electric car owners have specific needs leading them to look elsewhere for reliable information.

Fáilte Ireland's [discoverireland.ie](https://discoverireland.ie) is an exception here, where most NTOs only focus on international marketing, their work focuses on domestic marketing.


The brand proposition aligns with the international brand, including the regional brand concepts. However, the content is far more timely with specific seasonal guides for different regions and towns, a strong focus on 'keep discovering (your own country)' and a strong focus on non-commercial products such as walking, hiking, cycling and free things to do - with a lot of outdoor activities highlighted.

Events also have a personal touch with feature boxes such as "Why we like it" and "Tips from locals" bringing a subjective nuance to what might otherwise appear uninteresting.



### Why we like it

- Stunning coastal forest park with nine different trails for all ages.
- Beautiful views of the Atlantic and many different habitats to explore.
- Picnic area and playground near the beach.
- Discover many historical treasures throughout the park.



### Tips from locals

You can stitch together a number of trails in Ards Forest Park and hike for over 15km through five different types of habitat.

←
→
• •

Source: Discover Ireland

The example of [The Milk Market](#) in County Limerick is a good example of this, featured in a homepage article [The best Irish Christmas markets to explore in 2022](#), categorised under 'food experiences', shown as 'part of the Wild Atlantic Way' and strengthened further with an upcoming performance by a band called [The Stunning](#), pulled automatically as an upcoming event taking place in the same location.

This intelligent user journey creates both inspiration, discovery and a clear call to action by constructing a well-designed user journey, connecting different database listings in a way that is totally relevant for the user.

## More to discover at The Milk Market



### The Stunning

Dolan's presents The Stunning, live at The Big Top at The Milk Market, ...

📅 9 December 2022

Search for destinations, things to do, what's on and more



📍 What's nearby



## The Stunning

📍 [Limerick City](#), Co. Limerick 📅 9 December 2022

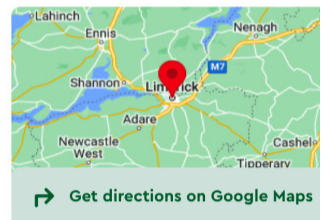


Dolan's presents The Stunning, live at The Big Top at The Milk Market, Limerick on Friday 09 December 2022.

In the seven years that The Stunning were initially together, they toured relentlessly building up a following that would make them one of the most successful Irish bands ever. With 2 hit albums, they toured the US and the UK with the likes of Bob Dylan and the B52's. "Brewing Up A Storm" has become an anthem of sorts and is to be heard everywhere from football stadiums to clubs around the country where it is still a guaranteed floor-filler.

They split up in 1994. Roughly ten years later they reformed to promote the reissue of their debut album and the ensuing tour was a resounding success.

Readers are advised to check with the venue before relying on the details published here.



[Visit Website](#)

[Book now](#)

### Event details

Source: Discover Ireland

### Contact details

## 2.0 Digital Channels

# What are the benefits of having fewer digital entrances for accessing tourist information?

The benefits from a brand perspective have been set out above. However, there is also the question of resources. Our research has shown us that the burden of maintaining database content is resource intensive for most and prohibitive for some destinations to keep up with.

It would appear that it is the database, rather than the number of digital entrances, which is burdensome to maintain, therefore it is important to focus on the problem, not the symptom when addressing this point.

Firstly, human resources are already allocated within the different regional and local DMOs to digital and development activities and it is clear that the tourism economy can benefit greatly from this investment.

Rather than seeing the opportunity to free-up resources as a cost-saving (unless this is a specific objective, it is better to consider if a more efficient use of resources would help to drive more impact for the destination as a whole.

Without any question the conclusions reached would suggest that this is the case. Significant human resources are tied up in manually chasing businesses for information and updating the database in a manner which is inefficient and time-consuming, whilst putting the responsibility for doing so entirely on the local DMO.

The people carrying out this work usually have broad 'generalist' profiles, with strong digital knowledge and capabilities that could be put to good use elsewhere within the destination.

There are two clear ways in which their strengths and capabilities can be better used:

- **Digital Development** - helping businesses to improve their digital presence, take advantage of opportunities, navigate and understand trends and get connected to digital distribution channels.
- **Digital Storytelling** - working as an extended team to support the

wider digital marketing efforts, such as building campaign partnerships, identifying local ambassadors, crafting authentic content or activating storytelling to feed into the wider brand proposition.

Freeing up these valuable human resources would in-effect lead to greater cost savings, where their expertise can be put to use in other areas also seen as a valuable investment priority for the destination.

Furthermore, as the overall user journey is part of this question, the focus on their knowledge and expertise can also be directed better to filling content gaps, developing innovative product experiences and generally strengthening the impact and utility value of the wider digital experience.

To achieve all of this, however, the question should not be whether to 'scrap' GuideDanmark or not, but whether it can be made smarter, using technologies and AI to automate listing creation, speed up data acquisition - such as auto-populating fields from Google Places API or rapidly transforming things like translation with technology enhancements which automate much of the process.

It is also clear that for GuideDanmark to become less resource-intensive, the responsibility for updating and populating it must be that of those who serve to benefit

from it the most: businesses.

A 'MyBusiness' management pane should be established, whilst an ultra-intuitive interface with intelligent features such as reminders, routine health checks and content guidelines should support businesses to populate and maintain data.

The key to shifting the emphasis to businesses is also in making them understand the quantifiable business value it represents to them.

Therefore, actively building a clearer case, highlighting large-scale distribution and the value of this, alongside other benefits such as business intelligence metrics, would be necessary in order to shift perceptions entirely.



## 2.0 Digital Channels

# What advantages within the current digital infrastructure do we lose if we were to have fewer digital entrances to tourist information?

We've spent significant time looking at the question of SEO, which is particularly complex when considering the fragmentation of visits across the different destination sites.

### **WILL THERE BE A LOSS OF SEO IF A DECISION TO MOVE TO FEWER DIGITAL CHANNELS IS TAKEN?**

Undoubtedly there will be a short-term impact, but it may be worth the long-term gains.

At present, our estimate is that GuideDanmark is responsible for driving approximately between 30% to 50% of all organic search traffic to local and regional sites, where visitors land on a specific product page as the first entry point to the site.

There are cases in which over 50% of the web traffic is GuideDanmark content - 63% of VisitMors' web traffic or 61% of VisitAarhus', according to estimates.

Furthermore, a significant proportion of non-GuideDanmark pages, which generally perform better in search, are built off the back of product listings - e.g. 'Top 10 things to do in Kolding'.

This is not insignificant and there would undoubtedly be a loss of traffic without these sites or pages in the short term.

Our belief however is also that this reputation can be rebuilt stronger over time, as part of a more impactful digital brand hierarchy, where high-performing organic content can re-establish itself in a new environment, yet perform significantly better as a result of design improvements which focus on the user journey.

Looking at the question of whether there would be a loss of general content, it seems that whilst the best content should be retained and strengthened, there are also significant pages which represent poorly performing content, either in quality or number of visits.

In any redesign the loss of content is inevitable, but it can also be intentional, with a view to establishing high content standards which meet the brand's expectations and deliver a premium user experience.

**GuideDanmark is responsible for driving approximately between 30% to 50% of all organic search traffic to local and regional sites.**

# 3.0 GuideDanmark

### 3.0 GuideDanmark

## Does it still make sense to operate and develop the GuideDanmark database or is the same, higher quality, master data found on other open APIs that Danish tourism could make use of? (e.g., Google My Business API).

Does Google do it better? There is no simple answer to this question. However, it is clear that whilst a lot of the interview and workshop-based research suggested that data ownership was more sentimental than practical.

This in fact is where many of the doubts stem from with regards to considering if maintaining a database in the future can be justified, the question being 'is there any point?' and 'does Google do it better?'

When looking into this further, it indeed appears that in many scenarios Google does it better and for obvious reasons.

If you're looking for a business that is open now you are more likely to be searching in Google Maps, whilst if you're looking for specific information, such as to find out if the hotel you are staying in is dog friendly,

you'll likely google the business name and hope to find the business listing or reviews.

In many situations, Google provides quick and accurate answers, which is entirely the point. The more accurate and complete the industry's data is in Google, the better this is for the destination overall.

Put simply, we shouldn't see Google as a competitor but as an ally. It is thanks to this that visitors have the confidence to arrive and plan on the go, to be more whimsical in taking decisions on the spot, more confident to go off the beaten track and more likely to take a bus or a train. Ten or twenty years ago, barriers such as uncertainty or language would've prevented travellers from doing so.

## Exploring a Hybrid Model

The focus of this question has always been on an either-or scenario. However, looking at it like this might be too simplistic.

The benefit of APIs is that they offer flexibility, to take as much or as little as you need and to consider the relationship model for the data being exchanged.

So, considering 'replacing' GuideDanmark with data pulled in from other sources is perhaps too drastic, as indeed it confirms the inevitable fear of losing control of data in doing so.

It also risks compromising the integrity and objectivity of the DMOs role, something that our research has shown is critical, where users have shown the greatest level of trust in official sources.

An example of this would be [Inspirock](#), used by many DMOs to offer itinerary planners as 'add-on' subdomains to their site.

The content is largely pulled from Google and whilst it offers generally good functionality, it simply doesn't hold the same level of quality or integrity as that of a well-built destination trip planner.

[Slovenia Tourist Board's Trip Planner](#) is an example of this, where you can see that the [Trip Planner sits](#) apart from the rest of the destination's website, whilst the functions

are heavily tipped towards commercially dominant sites and attractions, linking to major booking sites like Viatour and Booking.com.

We believe that there is a middle-ground approach to be achieved, where instead of replacing GuideDanmark with Google data, partially automated functions can help to improve the quality and completeness of listings, whilst retaining ownership of original database content and improving the overall quality and front-end user experience.

By using Google Place API, it would be possible to integrate lookup functionality that helps users to complete certain key information accurately and quickly, whilst content authoring tools, including translation assistants can help to improve content quality, write more creative texts or quickly translate into other languages with an assisted listing model.

Third-party integrations can also help aggregate social or user-generated content or display other enhancements such as reviews and ratings.

## Single Source of Truth

An issue in today's digitally fragmented visitor journey is the lack of consistency or reliability when it comes to information.

This is in part owing to the fact that every platform demands businesses to create and complete individual business profiles, maintain key data such as opening hours and engage with their unique audience features, such as posting stories, posting updates and working with Q&A features.

Tourism is largely dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, where resource businesses struggle to establish or maintain a strong digital presence, in part owing to the time and complexity of maintaining multiple channels.

Today, the DMO database - whether GuideDenmark or any other destination database - represents yet another channel on a long list of profiles, sites and channels to maintain.

Businesses naturally prioritise those where they can see the best results, which will inevitably lead them to Google, Facebook and other dominant channels.

It's an ambitious idea, however, one possible way of addressing this is to establish the **DMO as a Single Source of Truth** for tourism businesses in the digital landscape.

This aligns tightly with the natural role of the DMO in today's digital world and we believe the technology exists to make this a viable consideration, if not one that requires significant investigation and testing with different business users.

This would require a number of things to take place:

- **Clear Vision** - A clear vision of where the DMO sits in the ecosystem as a central connector between businesses and their digital presence. In this sense, visibility on destination websites would be only one clear benefit alongside appearing in many other channels.
- **UX Driven** - An incredibly strong user experience will determine uptake and engagement from business users. The process asked of them must be intuitive, playful, clear and concise with a clear business user journey helping them to accomplish significant goals in bite-sized and easy-to-complete steps.
- **Interoperability** - The ability to aggregate and syndicate content through two-way API synchronisations to all key publishers. Tools like [Yext](#) offer the ability to write to many publishers at once, whilst the web services of all major channels need to be evaluated. A good solution should save businesses time and take away the burden and

complexity of maintaining multiple profiles by bringing them together in a simple interface.

- **Technology Expertise** - Working with the right partners to develop solutions will require a strong team of technology partners and extensive consultation before fully determining the technical scope and requirements. It is important to identify existing solutions on the market as well as specialist developers, such as Google's directory of [featured partners](#) for Google MyBusiness.

It is important that such a decision is arrived at through further consultation, testing and technical research as the decision to pursue such a project has the potential to be transformative, but the risks must also be carefully considered to avoid failure.

### **Would a switch to open data or other open APIs be worth the investment?**

The question of whether the switch to a hybrid model, where open data is pulled in to supplement content gaps is highly subjective.

There are clear risks as well as opportunities, which may require further research depending on the overall direction considered as an outcome of this process.

Here's what needs to be considered:

### **Cost**

This will be determined by how ambitious a new model is, here's what to consider:

- **Hybrid Database** - If the database is upgraded slightly with a new user interface and additional functionality such as business look-up supported by Google Place API, the cost can be estimated quite accurately.
- **Single Source of Truth** - A major overhaul, for example in pursuit of a Single Source of Truth model, will require complex technical scoping, investigation of the potential costs of each API and consideration of build and ongoing development and licensing costs. In this case, it is important to develop an extensive budgeting and scoping exercise, whilst a clear business and cost model will be needed to be developed in order to make a clear business case.
- **Third-Party Integrations** - The cost of third-party integrations, such as translation tools is something that needs to be considered in scoping solutions. The development cost is only part of the cost, the ongoing license fees are another, where these are generally based on consumption - e.g. the number of characters being processed.

## Ownership

- **Hybrid Database** - In the case of a simpler hybrid model the strength lies in maintaining a similar set of entries, with strengthened metadata deriving from both field improvements and content improvements achieved from an improved user experience and intelligent improvement features. In this case, data ownership is retained.
- **Single Source of Truth** - A licensing model will need to be established if a Single Source of Truth is established, which takes into consideration the complexity of having mixed sources of data in a single system. However, the overarching goal would be to retain ownership of data.

## Advantages & Disadvantages

Analytics data demonstrates the value that database content offers for the VisitDenmark site and especially the local and regional sites.

Traffic generated ranges from 10 to 50%, whilst many of the strong feature 'original' content pages are built in tandem with database content.

A major advantage of the availability of a good owned database model is the ability to furnish content with product data, create calls to action, and easily build listings.

Competitor destinations who have similar databases have also been able to leverage this to their competitive advantage, not only building content experiences but also going much further with interactive maps and planners too.

Without this advantage, it is difficult to see that the destination is offering any real unique-selling points other than creating interest and awareness through content, but not providing fulfilment or a complete user journey.

## Non-Commercial Product

The example of destinations like Switzerland, Austria and Ireland all show the benefits of having a strong non-commercial product offering.

This can sometimes be difficult to obtain, which is where data licensing agreements with partners can often fill gaps and greatly strengthen database quality and completeness.

Specialist areas like trails and nature can often benefit from data feeds provided by partners, whilst the database structure and meta tags can certainly go further to provide more granular data and content in specialised areas, such as GPX files for routes.



## Loss of SEO

GuideDanmark has proven to be highly valuable in terms of SEO, whilst at the same time, there are hundreds of entries which generate extremely poor bounce rates or no page views or visitors.

A clean-up of the database should start by removing or improving the lowest-performing entries, which can be easily done simply by drawing up a list of the worst-performing content - where there is no SEO value.

A hybrid model which maintains original content would not harm SEO, whilst improving it would actually improve performance.

On the other hand, a like-for-like replication of existing content will of course provide no SEO value and may harm site credibility, meaning the authority of the site will be built only on original content authoring.

## Traffic to partners

Connecting to open-source business data may not change the impact on partner click-throughs if pages perform well and they only serve as fulfilment.

However, a hybrid model will allow you to change the goals and measurement strategy to valorise things a little differently, quantifying value according to performance indicators, but also strategic stage in the visitor journey, e.g.:

- **Awareness & Inspiration / Brand Lift** - Measured by content engagement, such as time on site, pages viewed, bounce rate, user journey
- **Consideration & Interest** - Measured on product page views and specific user actions such as building collections, trip and itinerary planning, sequential product views
- **Business Leads** - Measured by click-throughs and hand-offs to business both from within texts and rich content as well as direct links out of product pages.

**4.0**

# **Non-Commercial Focus**

## 4.0 Non-Commercial Focus

**As a public DMO, we should focus more on non-commercial products that are not covered by commercial players such as Google, Booking.com, TripAdvisor etc.**

It is clear that in a digitally competitive visitor landscape, VisitDenmark needs to focus on where its unique value proposition lies.

From the expert point of view, this is firmly in content and storytelling, where the destination's strengths mean they are able to convey a powerful and impactful brand message, free of commercial bias or a hidden agenda.

So does this mean excluding the commercial offer from the story? Not entirely.

In fact, Denmark's leading commercial tourism industry stakeholders have a major role to play in the overall success of a coordinated digital approach.

Just as with small businesses, they too suffer the challenges of operating in an environment dominated by heavily competing commercial forces, led primarily by OTAs.

Whilst they depend on them for the sales distribution, they would also rather sell direct - a challenging space to be in and one where they see the clear value of the DMO.

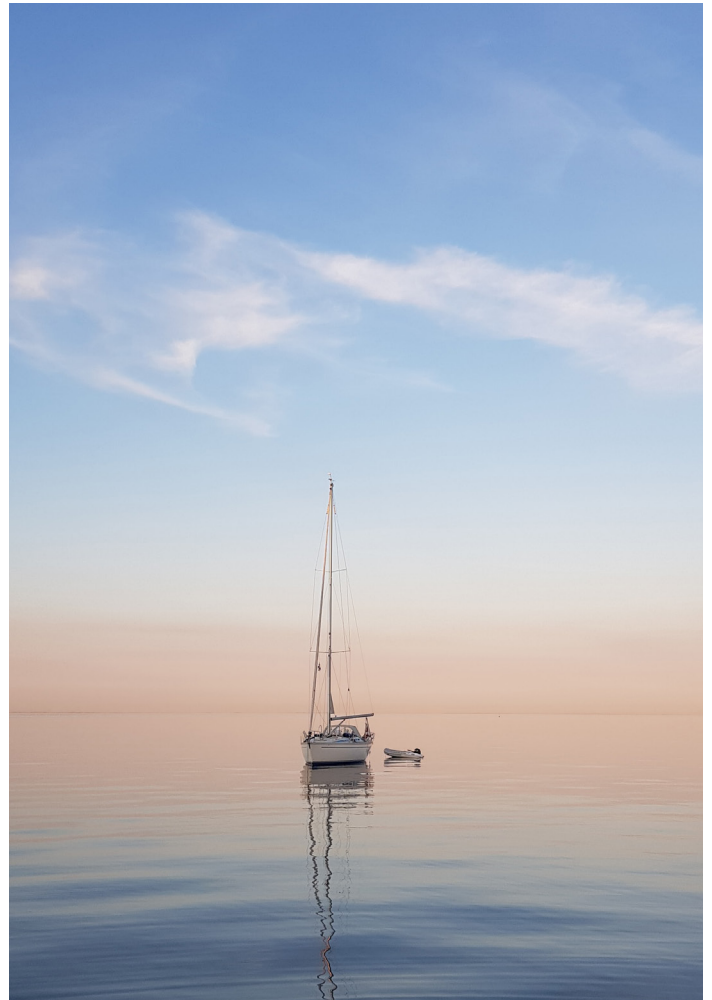
Denmark's larger commercial tourism industry operators are ready and willing to co-invest in cooperative marketing campaigns, where VisitDenmark's strengths in content and brand lie.

This can aid in serious awareness

generation in key markets, whilst advertising contributions brought by commercial partners in full-funnel digital campaigns can also demonstrate a clear return on investment, leading to bookings and overnights.

It is clear that there will always be a role for this in the digital strategy and with a renewed digital brand experience we believe VisitDenmark can assert itself better in this space and demonstrate clear commercial value, in particular through campaign partnerships.

Embedding campaign planning as routine and year-round is key, whilst establishing stronger and more consistent partnerships to raise campaign funds will help deliver continuous performance through a stronger omnichannel digital approach.



Source: Florian van Schreven

**It is clear that in a digitally competitive visitor landscape, VisitDenmark needs to focus on where its unique value proposition lies.**

**From the expert point of view, this is firmly in content and storytelling.**

## 4.0 Non-Commercial Focus

# Should VisitDenmark focus more on non-commercial products like parks beaches and local events?

Absolutely.

These incredible products create clear aspirational value and differentiate the offer Denmark has to bring to the table from a collection of nice hotel rooms or unusual lodging choices to true experiences where the emotional and transformative value it can bring as a destination can be conveyed.

The power of a destination and the motivation to visit a destination is more than that of a collection of rooms, products and suggestions.

The DMO's ability to convey an inspirational message, which creates an evocative draw is absolutely key and these are inherently linked to the DNA of the destination - rooted in its nature, culture and people.

Tourism BC's ['Find Yourself'](#) campaign demonstrates this perfectly, where the entry-point to discovering and creating inspiration is told through a series of stories which educate and convey the region's strong indigenous cultural connections.

In this example, evocative and powerful content makes the hair on your skin lift, whilst exceptional content, photography, imagery and texts develop interest further down the funnel, supported by relevant product information further down once again.

What is key to consider here is that the product data is only part of the picture. Seeing the database as more than a product database might lead us to consider for example the use of a headless CMS to collect, organise and curate extensive content resources which can be tagged and categorised appropriately to cross-pollinate content and product data within a single digital experience.

## 4.0 Non-Commercial Focus

# Can we as a public DMO make a difference for the tourist by presenting commercial products as part of our digital user journey - all in one place?

Commercial products are a natural part of the visitor journey and there is no strong argument to exclude them from the journey.

It is the role of digital editors to find a taxonomy and curation approach which considers products based on the value they (may) bring to the traveller and how they support the overall brand experience.

In the case of a City, a particularly chic and modern hotel from a leading hotel brand may enhance the overall experience.

For example, Manon Les Suites, a well-known spot for visitors in Copenhagen forms part of the overall visitor experience and serves to enhance the uniqueness of the destination, where it stands out to a particular type of visitor.

There is no doubt about it, the focus of content and database listings should emphasise and prioritise those truly unique experiences, whether commercial or non-commercial that can be considered a strong reflection of the overall brand experience.

We are proposing in the recommendations to have categorisation to help make this job easier, whilst the taxonomy or editor's choices should be driven by the experiences which best represent the destination's uniqueness.

As a database, GuideDanmark perhaps doesn't need to include every commercial listing but includes those that are worth talking about. Those that editors are likely to want to feature.

The strategy might involve switching from becoming a directory of every single product to a directory of every product relevant for visitors discovering the destination.

The nature, landscapes, routes, itineraries and beauty are all key drivers which shape the wider experience and should therefore dominate the overall content and discovery, alongside product and experience that is uniquely Danish - in character, style or tradition.

## 4.0 Non-Commercial Focus

# Can we as a public DMO make a difference for the commercial products through our platforms or are there enough marketing offerings out there?

Measuring the impact of the DMO based on sales conversion is a mistake, except in the cooperative campaign example at the beginning of this sub/chapter (4.0 Non-Commercial Focus).

This is where a clear value can be demonstrated, where the DMO builds awareness and establishes a creative concept and the private sector drive sales through remarking.

The brand, awareness and discovery impact achieved through VisitDenmark's owned channels and content distribution should be measured differently, as explained in Hypothesis 4, with a multi-layered approach relating intent shown in the visitor journey identified by user actions or engagement.

- **Awareness & Inspiration / Brand Lift** - Measured by content engagement, such as time on site, pages viewed, bounce rate, user journey.
- **Consideration & Interest** - Measured on product page views and specific user actions such as building collections, trip and itinerary planning, sequential product views.
- **Business Leads** - Measured by click-throughs and hand-offs to business both from within texts and rich content. as well as direct links out of product pages

# 5.0 Web 3.0



## 5.0 Web 3.0

# Web 3.0 will challenge DMOs to reassess and rejuvenate their digital structure.

## The Bigger Picture

The reason for this study has been to explore how DMOs will play a role in the future digital visitor experience.

In evaluating this, there have been some uncomfortable questions to be asked, most importantly whether the destination website will be at all relevant for visitors as part of the digital visitor journey, or whether destination databases are in effect defunct, considering the reliability of Google MyBusiness as a go-to source of information for users today.

In exploring these questions, we have reached some conclusions that are perhaps somewhat surprising.

A clear, strong user base has been identified on the destination website and whilst demographic trends do suggest a general shift away from destination websites, the value and trust offered are indisputable.

This research revealed that for older users,

representing a sizeable share of the visitor market, appreciation is considerable for the availability of a reliable, intuitive and user-friendly resource which is packed with good, reliable and trustworthy information.

For younger demographics, the site can be equally valued - the difference being that this is not a given.

An exceptional digital experience of content, tips, discoveries and features can prove invaluable and hold its own in a highly competitive space, whilst SEO plays an increasingly prominent role for both types of visitors who seek the best sites and tools with an increasingly low tolerance for bad experiences, yet an openness to engage with exceptional experiences.

DMOs are therefore competing for attention in an already competitive landscape, but our research has shown that there is ample opportunity to compete effectively. Those who have a clearly thought-out

strategy, strong and impactful digital brand experience, clear consideration of the user journey and clarity in the brand hierarchy can demonstrate their worth, re-establishing the unique role they can play in bringing unique value to visitors and the industry.

## Hidden Optimisation

A lot of the problems explored in this document are addressed through under-the-hood optimisations, where technology has evolved significantly since the original inception of many of VisitDenmark's digital brand assets.

These changes have been gradual and incremental, yet the implications today are significant in determining its ability to be competitive in today's distributed environment.

The structure of all content and data held by the DMO now needs to be clearly marked up and organised so that it can be fully leveraged or distributed to any environment.

A vision that was once reserved for GuideDanmark as a product database, is now demanded for all product and content assets in the destination, meaning the task at hand is sizeable and the approach required must be clearly defined and coordinated.

As excitement builds about the Metaverse, we might jokingly dismiss it as a passing fad, yet the wider implications of immersive 3D experiences, whether on the web, through mobile AR experiences or in virtual reality are no passing fad.

**Do we have content assets which can be delivered in these environments? Can we actively distribute stories and content in every format, for every channel, context and the environment from vertical for social, to structured queries for chat and voice, to 3D rendered content in VR?**

The answer is almost certainly no, yet future technology developments demand that we structure our data and content so that it can be deployed in any environment.

Vienna is a great example of a DMO which has started to get hyper-organised with data and content after developing an extensive library of content related to Beethoven's anniversary in 2020.

They developed a [voice app](#), whereby an enormous library of content was adapted to allow a conversational approach to discovering the heritage and story of Beethoven in Vienna, requiring a huge learning curve but as they soon realised, the return on investment couldn't be measured on the Alexa App alone, but on the wider impact of the campaign and the value of preparing content for a multi-

channel digital environment.

Not only did this experience help teach them about the importance of structured data, but it also aided the transition to their next ambitious project, the truly exceptional Vienna ivie app.

This app is driven by incredible content experiences, such as walking tours, audio guides and many personalised recommendations built by establishing a content experience based on user behaviour and interests.

The increasing role of structured content means having content prepared, available and marked up in different formats, for a range of distribution needs. Case Study found in Case Studies Chapter.

For VisitDenmark, careful consideration has to go into the right approach to rebuilding its backend architecture, to support multi-channel distribution.

We have made recommendations around the use of a headless CMS as one way of addressing this, whilst the question remains as to whether one solution could meet the needs of both content and product data in a redesigned information architecture.

Whether it's voice, mobile or VR, we now need to consider the structure, utility and relationship of data and content as a primary focus in designing our digital brand scope.

The experience layer we design is limitless, but it depends on the solid architecture and powerful distribution.

For a fresh perspective, take inspiration from the [Louvre Abu Dhabi app](#), a visitor companion allowing visitors to browse the museum and listen to detailed audio guides on every artefact in a wide range of languages.

## **SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DESTINATIONS?**

With open source content, data and a coordinated effort, any digital solution can be imagined led by or facilitated by the DMO, from digital companion guides to open access data to power innovation elsewhere. This is where the DMO becomes a key connector in the process.

## 5.0 Web 3.0

# Are Danish DMO websites ready to implement interactive user experiences and is the technology infrastructure able to cope with opportunities emerging?

Danish DMOs may not need to, with a well-structured data model the market can be fully opened-up allowing any developer to create incredible brand experiences.

When supported with a Digital Design System, it's easier than ever before to ensure third-party creations are 100% aligned with the brand's principles - from design to content tone.

From start-up communities receiving competition or seed funding, through to commission projects designed to create unique experiences, the strength of VisitDenmark's back-end content and architecture is what will determine its ability to play in new environments, such as

the burgeoning gaming market.

It is also clear that today, neither the VisitDenmark nor regional DMO websites have the design flexibility to accommodate or incorporate more immersive or interactive experiences.

Consideration, therefore, needs to be taken as to whether the current Drupal build offers the right platform and environment upon which to build upon, or whether other development and design environments might allow a faster go-to-market solution for rapidly developing impactful and creative brand experiences to tap-into new needs and opportunities.

## 5.0 Web 3.0

# Will visitors value if interactive experiences are offered by DMO's websites? Or will they prefer if they are offered by other technologies like Meta or Google?

It is clear that opportunities come and go. Jumping in head-first usually ends up being an error of judgement, although sometimes there is a PR opportunity to be had.

Nonetheless, we can clearly see that Google and Meta are creating marketplace environments for content and communities to exist within them.

Whilst Google is dead set on surfacing relevant results and answers for users in the most accurate way possible, Meta is aiming to create an environment in which users 'live' online.

Both companies' solutions exist at different points in the digital visitor journey and their developments need to be followed carefully.

Instead of fearing the next iteration, we should look with curiosity and examine how each iteration might shape and shift the way users discover, explore and engage digitally.

We need to be able to ask if such shifts or permanent trends or passing fads if they're showing signs of gaining traction and how we might play a relevant role in those environments if they do.

We can't fully predict the next iteration, but as developments surface we can continue to iterate in tandem, ensuring our content, data and technology are ready, prepared and able to play if it is strategically smart to do so.

# Data Stories

## 01

# GuideDanmark Content is Key for Local & Regional DMOs

Around 30% to 50% web traffic of local and regional DMOs websites takes place in GDK pages - this is therefore considered as a vital resource for their websites. There are examples of destinations in which GuideDanmark represent over 50% of the web traffic - 63% in VisitMors and 61% in Visit Aarhus.

If we take a closer look at the VisitAarhus analytics, we see the importance of GuideDanmark pages (highlighted in red). The first result is “Helligdage i Danmark” which represents around 7% of the total traffic - see image below. The 4th and the 5th pages with more traffic are also GuideDanmark pages.

## Organic Pages 1 - 100 (3,057)

URL	Traffic	Traffic %
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...</a> 1954	22.3K	7.11
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen</a>	15.8K	5.02
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhus/overnatning/...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhus/overnatning/...</a> ller	10.3K	3.29
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...</a> 2198	10.2K	3.24
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...</a> 3286	5.7K	1.81
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/byer-og-steder/aarh...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/byer-og-steder/aarh...</a> nter	5.7K	1.80
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/byer-og-steder/soeh...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/byer-og-steder/soeh...</a> borg	4.8K	1.53
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...</a> 3981	4.2K	1.32
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/byer-og-steder/anholt">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/byer-og-steder/anholt</a>	4.1K	1.30
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...</a> 5406	4K	1.27
<a href="https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...">https://www.visitaarhus.dk/aarhusregionen/plan...</a> 3415	3.9K	1.25

Source: GuideDanmark

The “Helligdage i Danmark” shows public holidays in Denmark, which means this content is not specifically related to Aarhus. The same content page can be found in VisitDenmark, as seen below.

This is an evidence of duplicated content across destination websites which does not seem logical, despite driving significant traffic to some of them - potentially then forming part of the digital visitor cycle.



## 02

## Mobile First Users

It's not new that websites have to be mobile first in their design to ensure a great mobile user experience.

What we see with the VisitDenmark website is that mobile is far more significant, in comparison with the global averages. In 2022, 54% of global web traffic came from mobile phones (We Are Social/Hootsuite 2022 report) whilst in the case of VisitDenmark this amounts to 70% of users were mobile.

### Mobile Traffic:

- 2022: 70%
- 2021: 67%
- 2020: 72%

This shows us that mobile browsing plays a significant role, both in serving inspirational content as well as planning and product pages.

It's not new that websites have to be mobile first in their design to ensure a great mobile user experience.

It is also worth mentioning is that there has been a significant improvement in mobile

user experience since 2020 with bounce rates dropping from 62% to 37% in 2022, which is quite significant.

**Mobile Bounce Rate** (organic and non-organic sessions):

- 2022: 37%
- 2021: 66%
- 2020: 62%

This shows us that mobile browsing plays a significant role, both in serving inspirational content as well as planning and product pages.

**In 2022, 54% of global web traffic came from mobile phones whilst in the case of VisitDenmark this amounts to 70% of users were mobile.**

## 03

# Search Drives Significant Results

In 2020, traffic to the site comprised both organic and paid.

Since then, organic results improved significantly - with the percentage of organic traffic doubled from 2020 to 2022, contributing to an overall increase in page views.

Furthermore, there were other campaigns where VDK sent traffic directly to DMO partners.

## % organic traffic:

- 2022: 63%
- 2021: 45%
- 2020: 37%

## Organic traffic page views:

- 2022: 1.644 million
- 2021: 1.139 million
- 2020: 863k

## Top 3 pages that bring organic traffic: (excluding Covid-related)

- [Denmark's Best Places to Go](#)
- [8 Traditional Danish Foods](#)
- [Tivoli in Copenhagen](#)

These pages are highly inspirational and provide great user experiences.

Images are of an excellent quality and Tivoli is even embedding vertical Instagram posts to promote social and authentic content.

These are some of the best practices that help explain why they are so successful and is something that should be replicated more widely in any future offer.

# 04

## Inspirational Content is Key to Driving Traffic

VisitDenmark's inspirational content (highlights, articles, etc.) is attracting nearly 90% of organic visitors to the site - a steady figure over the past two years.

When we look at page views, we realise that users, after visiting the first page, tend to look for more information that can help them in planning - more specifically product content delivered by GuideDenmark. As a result, the percentage of page views is always a bit higher than the percentage of website entrances.



Source: Unsplash, Sountrap

## EXAMPLE

## Die schönsten Strände in Dänemark

This is one good example that demonstrates the relevance of inspirational content in moving the user along the funnel.

The users tend to click on GuideDanmark related content - the first 9 results correspond to GuideDanmark pages where information about beaches is provided - usually picture, location and a brief description. The 10th most clicked page is "Highlights" which brings them back to more inspirational content.



## 05

# GuideDanmark Performs Well

We concluded before that non-GuideDanmark pages attract more organic users to the website - 88% of entrances in 2022.

Nonetheless, non-GuideDanmark pages correspond to only 80% of page views - which is what they are meant to - to redirect users further down the funnel to planning pages.

When we look at their performance in 2022, we clearly see that both GuideDanmark and non-GuideDanmark pages are at the same level - with a bounce rate between 30% to 32%; exit rate between 37% and 38%; and time on page between 1.18min and 1.28min. There was a clear improvement in all these KPIs regardless of the page type.

## Top 3 GuideDanmark pages:

- [Amalienborg Palace](#)
- [Hammershus Castle Ruins](#)
- [Vesterbro](#)

## WHAT DO THESE PAGES HAVE IN COMMON?

All of them have detailed information. Image quality is again something that can be applied to all.



Source: Unsplash, Elliott

# 06

## Content Favouriting is a Missed Opportunity

Over time, users have been looking at more pages on VisitDenmark websites.

In 2020, an average of 1.92 pages vs. 2.62 in 2022, which is a significant increase.

This also tells us that VisitDenmark is missing a major opportunity, by not offering users features which allow them to save or favourite attractions or experiences that they would like to take a look later.

This is key to supporting or retain visitors on the site to continue discovery and planning.

Page sessions:

- **2022: 2.62**
- **2021: 1.99**
- **2020: 1.92**

# 07

## Poorly Performing Pages

Today the VisitDenmark website has over 113k pages and around 78k are GDK pages - 69%.

Our analysis found that around 13k (12%) pages have a bounce rate of at least 100% (2022 data) - almost all of them are negligent in terms of page views.

This means that a significant part of the website and database has no impact, no results to the destination. In other words, there is no point in maintaining these records if they bring no value - they serve no purpose.

We suggest VisitDenmark request owners of poor performing listings to update and improve them or have them removed by default.

# 08

## Regional & Local Differences in Search Authority

VisitDenmark's site has a significantly higher authority score in Google (between 50 and 60 in 100), whilst most regional and local DMOs websites have scores below 50.

This makes VisitDenmark stronger in attracting organic users in comparison with other regional or local site and is a compelling argument for reducing the number of sites and focusing on those with more authority.

Whilst Google's algorithms are not entirely public, we can conclude that providing a good user experience is a great way to start if destinations want to improve their score. Adding backlinks, creating good content and optimising the website structure are all priorities that should be prioritised.



## Site Authority Scores

A compound metric used for measuring a domain's or webpage's overall quality and SEO performance.

- 54 <https://www.visitdenmark.dk>
- 63 <https://www.visitdenmark.com>
- 49 <https://www.visitdenmark.de>
- 44 <https://www.enjoynordjylland.dk>
- 26 <https://www.visit-laesoe.com>
- 40 <https://www.visitvejle.dk>
- 35 <https://www.visit-kolding.com>
- 38 <https://www.destinationhimmerland.dk>
- 32 <https://www.kystlandet.com/>
- 50 <https://www.visitaarhus.dk>
- 10 <https://www.aarhusregionen.no/>
- 38 <https://www.destinationlimfjorden.dk>
- 44 <https://www.visitnordjylland.dk>
- 44 <https://www.vadehavskysten.dk>
- 34 <https://www.visitvesterhavet.com>
- 50 <https://www.visitcopenhagen.dk>
- 38 <https://www.wonderfulcopenhagen.com>

These links were randomly selected.

## 09

# The 'Shelter in Kolding'

Kolding is an example of a local DMO which tells an interesting story when it comes to performance.

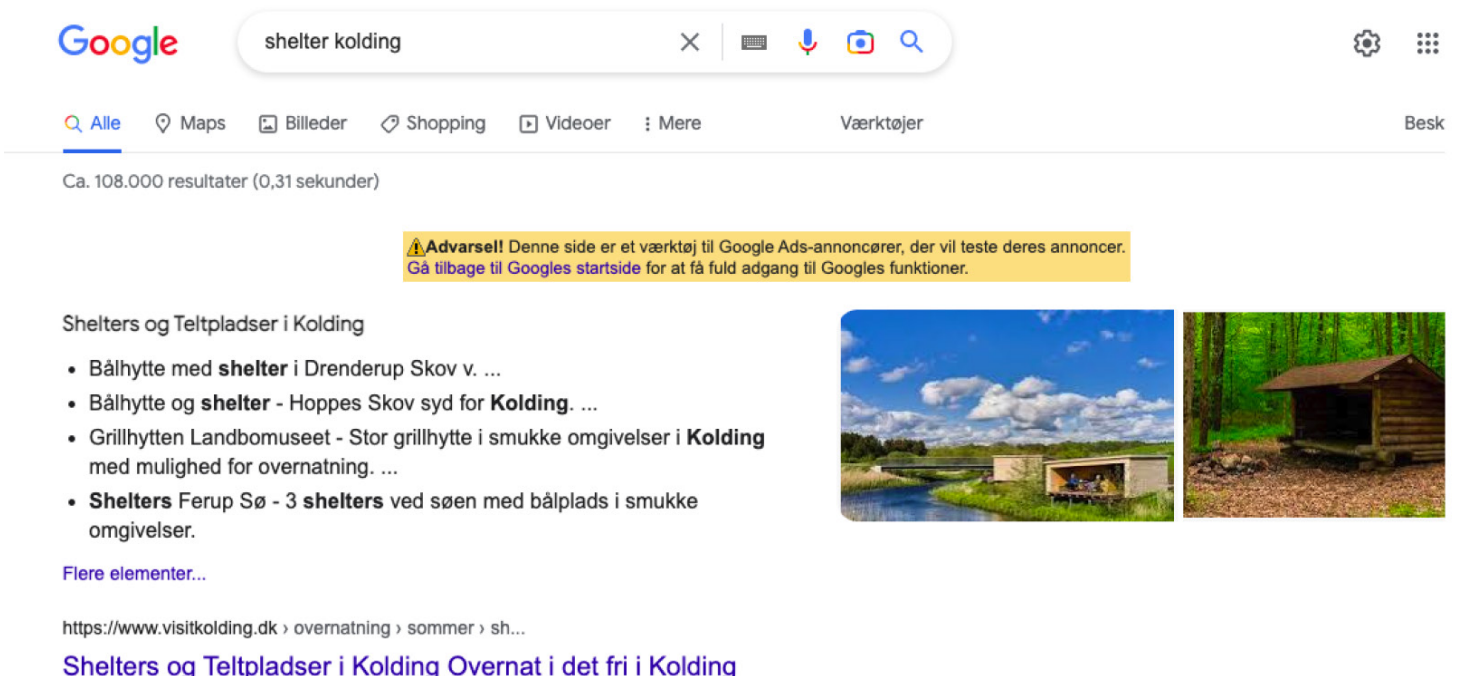
We have analysed their website and reached some interesting conclusions regarding the short-term impact if their website were to be closed down in a restructuring of the overall digital environment.

“Shelter Kolding” is the SEO term that today brings the most organic traffic to their website - the first result in the Kolding DMO website - leading users to [Shelters i Kolding](#) - a page that shows a set of local shelters that visitors can book before redirecting

them to GuideDanmark pages.

The first VDK website result only appears at the second results page (when browsing from Denmark and in Danish). This means that a significant part of those users (who would click on the local DMO website) will end up clicking on other websites (oplevelkolding.dk; kolding.dk; uদিনaturen.dk; among others), at least in the short-term.

As we see, featured snippets are an opportunity to get more clicks from organic search results with less effort (the CTR is way higher).



The screenshot shows a Google search for "shelter kolding". The search bar contains the text "shelter kolding" and the search button is visible. Below the search bar, there are navigation options: "Alle", "Maps", "Billeder", "Shopping", "Videoer", "Mere", and "Værktøjer". The search results show "Ca. 108.000 resultater (0,31 sekunder)". A yellow warning banner reads: "⚠️ Advarsel! Denne side er et værktøj til Google Ads-annoncører, der vil teste deres annoncer. Gå tilbage til Googles startside for at få fuld adgang til Googles funktioner." Below the banner, the search results are displayed under the heading "Shelters og Teltpladser i Kolding". There are four bullet points listing different shelter options in Kolding. To the right of the text, there are two images: one showing a modern shelter structure near a river, and another showing a traditional wooden log cabin in a forest.

Google

shelter kolding

Alle Maps Billeder Shopping Videoer Mere Værktøjer Besk

Ca. 108.000 resultater (0,31 sekunder)

⚠️ Advarsel! Denne side er et værktøj til Google Ads-annoncører, der vil teste deres annoncer. Gå tilbage til Googles startside for at få fuld adgang til Googles funktioner.

Shelters og Teltpladser i Kolding

- Bålhytte med **shelter** i Drenderup Skov v. ...
- Bålhytte og **shelter** - Hoppes Skov syd for **Kolding**. ...
- Grillhytten Landbomuseet - Stor grillhytte i smukke omgivelser i **Kolding** med mulighed for overnatning. ...
- **Shelters** Ferup Sø - 3 **shelters** ved søen med bålplads i smukke omgivelser.

Flere elementer...

<https://www.visitkolding.dk> > overnatning > sommer > sh...

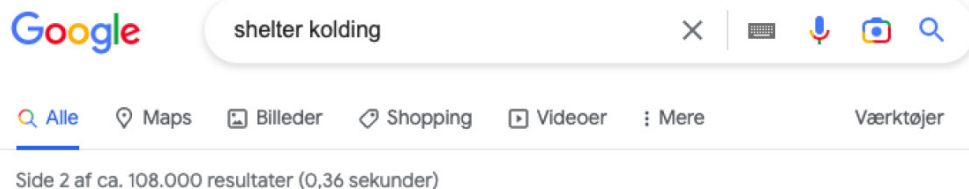
[Shelters og Teltpladser i Kolding Overnat i det fri i Kolding](#)

Source: Google / Shelter Kolding

We can look at it as the “Position #0” because it appears above the traditional #1 spot which turns into a huge opportunity for websites.

We can estimate that this specific feature snippet attracts between 110 and 190 users each month (1,320 to 2,280 every year) to the destination website. Furthermore, research suggests that less than 2% of users click on results from the 2nd search page onwards (firstpage.com).

That would be a direct loss as a consequence of closing the local destination site - which we would need to accept as a reality in any change. Nonetheless, it would be reasonable to much stronger future performance with such content living on fewer sites which command better authority.



<https://www.visitdenmark.se> › danmark › planera-resan ▾

### Overnat i shelters ved stranden i Kolding - VisitDenmark

Skibelund Strand Shelters · Booking Booking skal ske gennem Naturstyrelsens hjemmeside. · Parkering Nærmeste parkering til shelterpladsen finder du ved Kolding ...



<https://www.visitvejen.dk> › overnatning › naturlejrpladser ▾

### Naturovernatning | Shelter og teltpladser - VisitVejen

Du kommer tæt på natur og ro, når du vælger naturovernatning i området, der ligger syd for Billund med Leqoland, Esbjerg, og Kolding. Der er lanas med åer ...



Source: Google / Shelter Kolding

# **A Concise Action Plan: Suggestions and Recommendations**

# 01

## Digital Return on Investment

Whilst the return on investment seems clear, this needs to be considered against the overall cost of resources invested and more in-depth research into visitor spending and the correlation between visitors who use the site for planning and inspiration and the contribution these visitors make in terms of tourism receipts.

Quantifying this and creating a clear value-based ROI model will help understand the overall impact of the destination site in the wider marketing mix.

A digital ROI exercise can also take into consideration how to qualify engagement on other channels, whilst also offering a flexible model that can be applied to other destinations, with variables related to audience value for the destination etc.

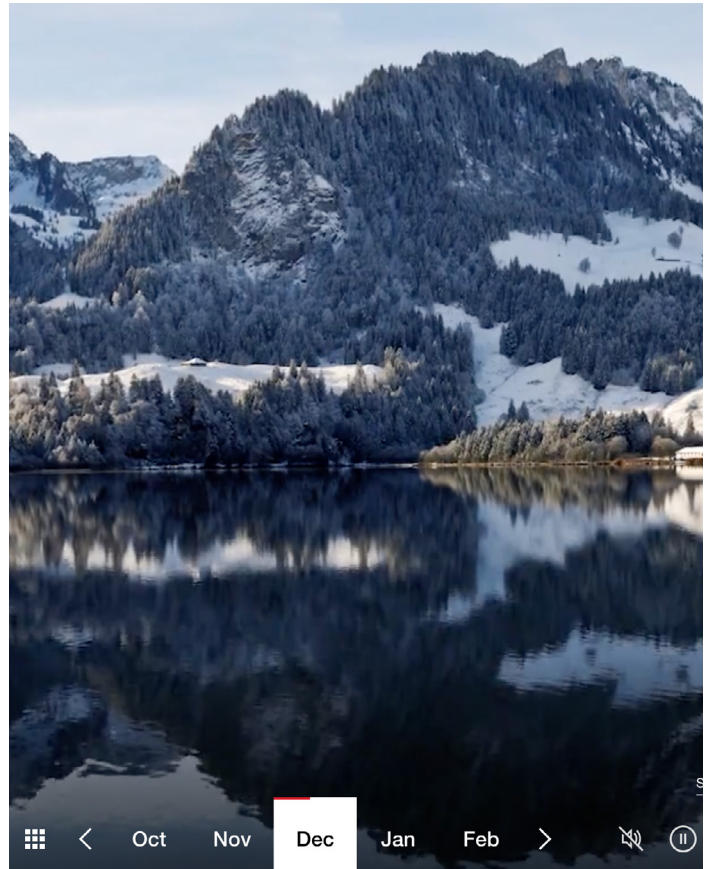
Any such exercise is likely to require significant research, we, therefore, recommend this as something done collaboratively with other destinations with a shared interest, or as an open-source collaborative model.

## 02

# Redesign Visit Denmark's Digital Presence

Regardless of decision taken on the number of entry points for VisitDenmark's digital presence, there is a general observation that the site design and functionality are in need of an overhaul to bring it in line with today's strongest digital brand experiences. In an extremely competitive digital travel environment, SEO is only part of the story, on-site user experiences are key to measuring impact.

To provide a truly competitive digital brand experience which meets the expectations of today's highly demanding users, a complete digital brand overhaul is recommended. What would this include?



Source: MySwitzerland.com

## Design

Design trends evolve continually and it's important to maintain a strong competitive edge while reflecting trends in the overall user experience. Design approaches are subjective, however, the current approach feels somewhat flat and static and would benefit from a more accented 'stand-out' experience.

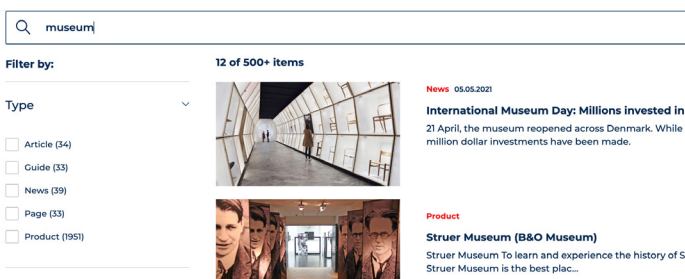
This can be visually story-led like [VisitCalifornia](#), ultra-immersive and interactive like [Switzerland Tourism](#), or functional yet comprehensive and consistent like [Fáilte Ireland](#).

## UX Design

Offering a clearer and more intuitive visitor journey, better-supporting discovery all the way through from inspiration as the entry-point to discovery, where content stickiness should be a key performance indicator, and planning, where specific user actions should deliver measurable results further down the funnel, such as building collections, sharing or exporting itineraries.



Source: Unsplash, Daniel Korpai



Source: VisitDublin.com

## Design Trends

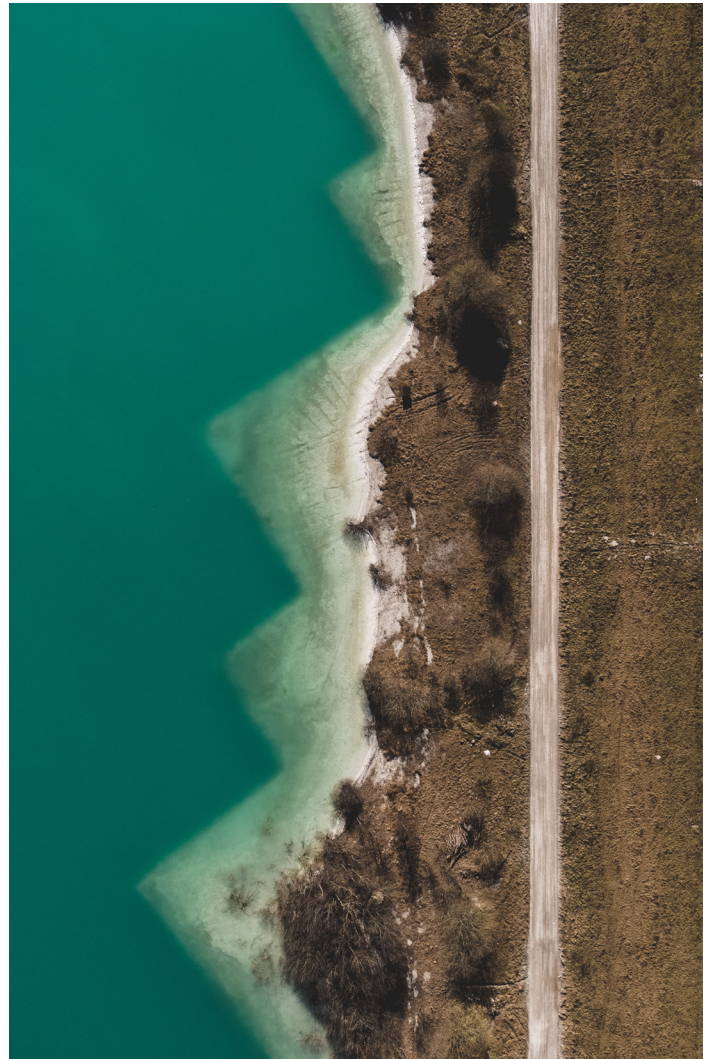
Today's digital design trends tend to incorporate more fluidity, with design approaches that are less rigid or constrained from the traditional frame and grid designs, whilst offering more dynamic and free-flowing content, a stronger design nuance, such as with [Dublin](#) or [Maine](#) or stylistic approaches which give a nod to replicating familiar design elements of the mobile, social, environment - such as portrait card collections, or visual stories similar to Instagram stories.

## Immersive Content

Consideration should be given to how top-of-funnel brand discovery can be supported natively in the site through the use of immersive, interactive and multi-sensorial content.

Lightweight and fast-loading experiences can be achieved today with the right technical solutions, interesting references include Switzerland Tourism's web adaptation of 180 - 360 video Hero content, Slovenia National Tourism Board's interactive video experiences, or Newfoundland's ultra-immersive thematic sites.

It's important to note that not all enhancements are dependent on web design, popular solutions such as Vimeo's Enterprise services offer quick and easy tools to build immersive brand stories such as the option to include a call to action or video branching in embedded videos.



Source: Unsplash, Rahbek Media

## Integrations

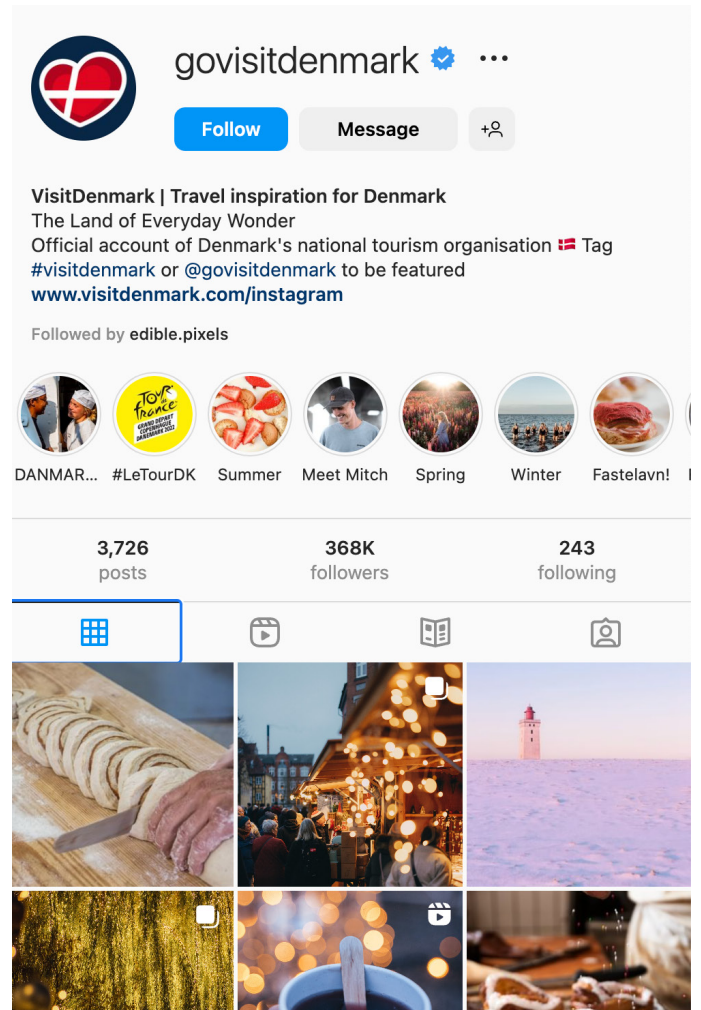
Generally speaking, content integrations where data being is being pulled from external services could be integrated more seamlessly throughout the site with more bespoke integration to future page templates, allowing specific data snippets to be selected or shown based on relevance, availability, selection or quality and completeness so that it can be seamlessly blended with editorial content.



## Product Database

Integration of product content from GuideDenmark can be more dynamically integrated into long-form content features and offer an overall more visually integrated design approach to strengthen awareness and inspiration objectives, a higher frequency of calls to action and allow product suggestions to be surfaced in a wider array of pages.

This can be achieved with a library of databased derived design components showing more information, less information, selected details or leveraging certain data points.



Source: GoVisitDenmark/Instagram

## User-Generated Content

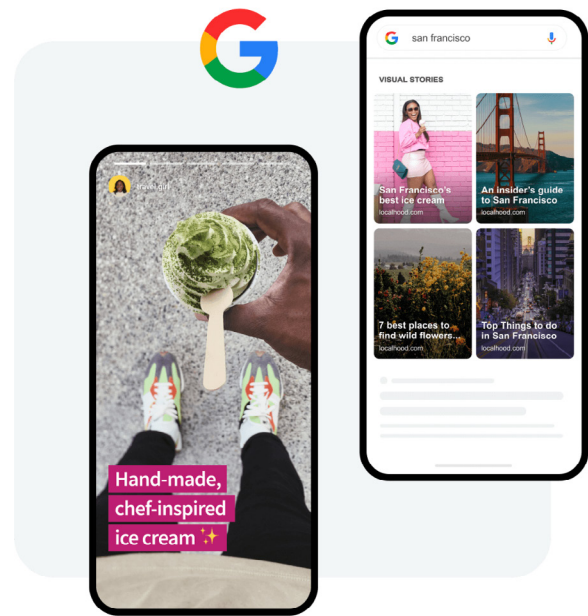
User-generated content is an essential integration to be prioritised throughout the site, including natively alongside database and product content.

Social authority matters, in particular to a younger demographic of users and it should work in tandem with authored content, encouraging and extending discovery further down the marketing funnel, providing further engagement and links back to social.

## Partner & Curated Stories

Sequential discovery of user-generated vertical 'stories' also offers a highly engaging format in which partner-curated content, created in a similar style and format to Instagram stories can retain and drive 'top-of-funnel' brand engagement, whilst offering a format and medium to work closely with partners on.

CrowdRiff's [short-form storytelling](#) features are particularly well designed for such purposes.



Source: Crowdriff / LocalHood

## Reviews & Ratings

The best-performing commercial sites integrate user reviews validated by third parties as well as own customers, this offers confidence and reduces the need for users to exit the site to verify elsewhere.

A similar principle should be considered with seamless native in-line review snippets sourcing reviews from multiple trusted sources to establish authority and credibility beyond a single TripAdvisor link, graphic or rating.

## Licensed Content Services

There are many brands with significant authority amongst users, where integration of their content through licensing arrangements can enhance the credibility of on-site content discovery.

This may take the form of editorial content, e.g. The Culture Trip Guide to Copenhagen, but it may also include functional content, such as a feed of major concerts from TicketMaster.



Source: Unsplash, Anete Lusina

## All Trips

59 Trips



JAPAN

### JAPAN: THE GRAND TOUR

From Osaka to Tokyo, explore the Land of the Rising Sun on this in-depth trip

From **£3439** · 12 days



SOUTH KOREA

### SOULFUL SOUTH KOREA

From pulsating cities to majestic mountains, this 10-day trip is the complete South Korean experience

From **£2509** · 10 days



MEXICO

### MAYAN MEXICO

Discover the best of the Yucatan Peninsula, from jungle-shrouded temples to the party town of Tulum



GREECE

### SPEEDY GREECE

Skip from the graffiti-decorated streets of Athens to the sleepy Cycladic island of Serifos

Source: The Culture Trip

## Features

Feature-rich sites are now expected by users, but not necessarily as consciously as they once were. Intelligent features, offering smart ways to collect content, plan or build trip ideas or quickly personalise choices can be seamlessly built-in, no longer requiring hurdles such as cumbersome sign-up forms.

Today, smart features help create a slicker and more useful experience, supporting the user journey, whilst extensions and integrations should present no loss of time, burden or learning curve for the user - instantly enhancing their experience.

## Maps

There is a need to address the current map experience so that it is clearly either ‘design-led’ or ‘feature-led’. The current solution is rather flat and doesn’t encourage discovery.

A design-led map serves to ‘simplify’ the country’s main regions into a set of brand propositions, e.g. ‘The Wild Atlantic Way’ helping to orientate visitors unfamiliar with the destination, whilst a feature-led approach invites deep discovery where rich map layers can offer brand design elements and product can be a seamlessly featured alongside categorisation features and suggestions.

Solutions such as [Mapbox](#) have shown how product integration to interactive maps can be very powerful, such as with [Travel](#)

[Oregon’s interactive map](#) or [Visit Jersey’s interactive map](#).

Specialist solution providers such as the Google-approved [Snowdrop Solutions](#) are also highly specialised in taking maps to the next level, whilst in Switzerland the map solution was built upon in partnership with the [Federal Office of Topography](#).

[Estonia Tourist Board’s interactive maps](#) are also worth a look, where product database content also offers filtering and fulfilment as well as GPX exports, whilst [Explore BC’s Interactive Maps](#) feature a range of maps for different purposes, as well as database integration, including content and article features per location.

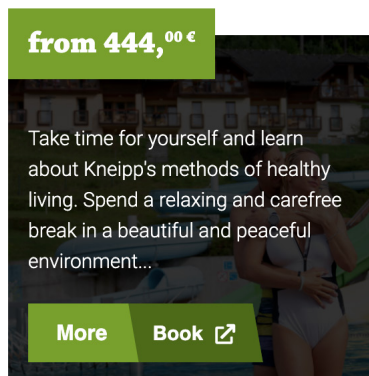
The screenshot displays the Visit Estonia interactive map interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the placeholder text "Enter keyword" and a "Directions" button. Below the search bar, a teal banner reads "Information on search results display in Article 12 of the Terms of Use." The left sidebar contains "Options" and "Type" sections. Under "Options", "Parks & Gardens" is selected. Under "Type", "Parks & Gardens (16)" is checked. Below this, there are sections for "Price" (Any price (16), Free (15), 1-10 EUR (1)) and "Features" (Wheelchair accessible (6), Suitable for children (6), Free parking (4)). The "Holiday type" section shows "Families with kids (3)". The main map area shows Tallinn and surrounding areas with various filters and search options. A search bar at the top contains "Enter keyword". The map displays several location cards, including "Löwenruh Park", "Tallinn Song Festival Grounds Park", "Japanese garden in Kadriorg Park", "Danish King's Garden", and "Tondiraba Park". The interface includes a search bar, filters, and a map view with location markers.

Source: Visit Estonia

## Content Favouriting

Features that aid planning and discovery, such as content favouriting, are easy to implement and dramatically transform the user experience and function of the site.

Simple additions such as a ‘heart’ button on content allow users to save content as they browse and then look at a collection of favoured items later, which can be turned into a travel guide or shown on maps with the right development. Good examples of this include [Slovenia Tourist Board's favourites feature](#) or [Visit Finland's saved items feature](#).



### Following in Kneipp's footsteps to Terme Snovik

Health and well-being  
 Persons: 2 Nights: 2  
 Kamnik  
 Terme Snovik - Kamnik, d.o.o. ★★☆☆  
 ★ ☆

## Trip Builders

Trip Builders are common amongst some of the best destination sites that exist today and go a significant way in accentuating the role of the destination site as a resource that stands apart from anything else available.

This usually comes down to a strong digital design, intuitive user experience and the integration of excellent database content, alongside editorial content, such as itineraries.

Whilst many destinations use services such as [Inspirock](#) to offer interactive trip builders, this is not ideal as it's content from Google and doesn't necessarily offer the best view of the destination with a lot of commercial bias.

Best practices include Fáilte Ireland, which is tilted towards the domestic market, with features such as 'What's Nearby' whilst Destination BC offers mapped and staged routes which show the best of the destination for road-trippers.

A uniquely original example in this respect is also the [Grand Tour of Switzerland](#), which offers a pre-configured series of touring routes in an ultra-immersive digital experience, including favouriting locations and PDF downloads.

## Conversational Tools

Whilst less common on destination sites, chat is increasingly being seen as an opportunity to offer greater levels of personalisation to the destination's digital experience. The research shows that for many users the website is a valuable source of information and inspiration, whilst the decision to close tourist information offices is a major absence for certain types of travellers, such as German travellers. The function this can serve is three-fold:

### Important Information

Chat offers a first line of communication during an emergency and can provide critical answers, official advice and guidance on short notice. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Slovenia National Tourist Board updated guidance 140 times and launched a newsletter to provide information which had a 60% open rate.

The example of Bespoke, a Japanese AI-based chatbot, shows how critical such services are in times of natural disasters, with compelling data supporting this fact. Integration of chat-based on-site information can support many needs, whilst offering a go-to solution at critical times, which are unfortunately inevitable.



Source: Unsplash, Austin Distel

### Inspiration Search

Leveraging structured data to provide inspiration in different contexts and forms can be highly valuable as an asset to leverage within a conversational search environment. The example of Contiki and ProColombia's 'Pack my bags' Alexa skill is an example of exploring opportunities in this area.

A well-designed on-site chat integration can also offer richer levels of inspiration and personalisation, highlighting content, making suggestions better tailored to individual needs and interests or redirecting users to partner sites where a specific recommendation is sought.

## Personalised Services

Human chat is a premium that shouldn't be overlooked, in particular where specific markets have placed great value on being able to seek personal recommendations and advice. In addition, the older demographic of users on the site will find the availability of support in their native language of particular value, whilst all users, in general, can benefit from a local and human connection with the destination.

A good example of this is the [Voyage a Nantes](#), which has built itself upon both a strong brand experience with a very clear nuance in terms of style and tone of voice, as well as a personalised and accessible support through a human chat, with a rapid response time and personal recommendations. Similarly, Switzerland Tourism has developed a 'Live Chat with Locals'.

There are many chat solutions available on the market today, the choice depends on how advanced the features should be and how deeply conversational support should be integrated. Solutions such as [Intercom](#) allow multi-department and office customer service solutions to be deployed at scale across multiple platforms.

For VisitDenmark, this could enable a multi-DMO solution to provide both bot-led support and recommendations, as well as human-operated support - including redirecting support to local advisors, transforming both discovery and in-destination visitor services. This is one example can also provide a powerful CRM integration with other marketing solutions.



**Product**

**Starbucks Odense**

Well known café chain in the center of Odense with a large selection of the popular coffee drinks wi...



**Product**

**Landcafé Odense**

In the small, narrow Pogestræde - close to the pedestrian street network - you will find Landcafé Od...

Source: VisitDenmark

## Personalisation

Good content personalisation doesn't need to be obvious for the visitor, if they allow tracking for service improvements, or personalisation through simple filterings, such as 'adventure', then the entire content experience of the site can be adapted based on this knowledge.

AI solutions can also achieve this without logic-based personalisation tools, by providing 'individual' content experiences based on browsing behaviour using machine learning to understand their likely interests based on that.

## Search

The current search feature on the site works well, an abstract search such as the word 'frog' turns up a surprisingly relevant list of events and products related to either mythical fairytale 'frogs' or nature-based experiences where frogs are part of the environmental interest.

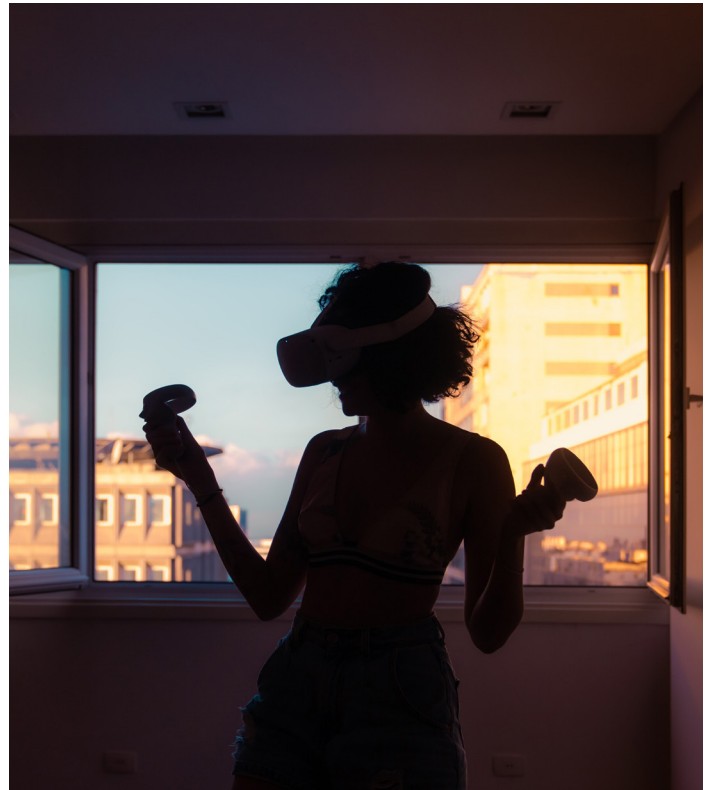
The search however only considers one database - the product database - therefore having no taxonomy or differentiation when it comes to the presentation of results. This is where search result categorisation is needed. A search for Odense should feature the City of Odense, along with a smart set of 'popular' recommendations, maps and rich snippets, before showing a list of database results. At present, it surfaces a list, including places like Starbucks Odense above the actual city feature - somewhat of an injustice to the unique offering that Odense has to offer.



## Technology

A lot of the progress and change witnessed in the digital landscape has been more ‘under the hood’ than surface level over the past five to ten years.

This means that instead of only focusing on the most visually recognisable trends and developments, such as Metaverse, attention has to be paid to the overall technology architecture and how various technologies and solutions integrate to create powerful real-time enhancements - such as personalisation and content authoring.



Source: Unsplash, Vinicius Amano



Source: bd4.ai

## Content Personalisation

Solutions such as [BD4](#) analyse on-site user behaviour and build individual content experiences based on activity. This allows an on-site user journey to be established based on how the individual user is interacting with content, ensuring an experience which increases with relevance the more they use or return to the site - rather than using crude segmentation, every content feature is individually curated helping achieve incremental conversion improvements.

## Advanced Content Logic

Offering different layers and versions of content experiences can help to elevate content relevance on the site for different user types - a key opportunity in achieving content optimisation.

For example, having multiple versions of the same product imagery for spring, summer, autumn and winter allows you to build instances which automatically show content relevant to upcoming seasons. Likewise tagging content more granularly according to what it shows, may help in the selection of relevant visuals, such as for a specific market or for a traveller type.

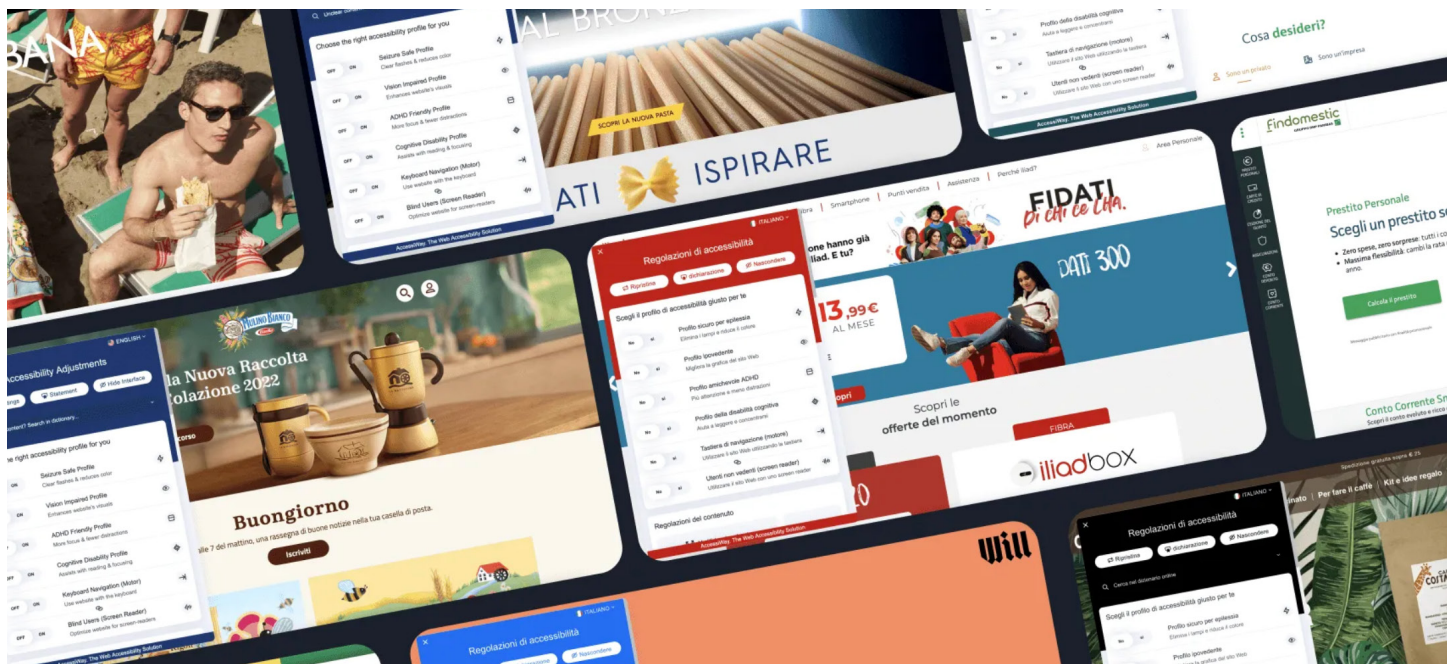
Switzerland Tourism have begun doing this in order to surface relevant imagery alongside product, which is adapted according to the seasons.

## Automated Translations

Translation technology has come a long way thanks to AI and machine learning. There are hundreds of solutions available on the market today, such as Google Translate's developer tools or Amazon Translate's Neural Machine Translation tools, which offer affordable pricing and incredibly accurate solutions.

This offers the possibility to provide more complete content in more languages, overcoming many of the weaknesses of the current GuideDenmark offering, whilst tools like Weglot offer out-of-the-box solutions which offer in-line CMS authoring and editing of multi-lingual content with auto or auto-human translation solutions for fast live translation, publishing and adaptation by editors.

With one of the biggest benefits being market access, investing in strong translation solutions can transform how content and discovery are delivered in the markets.



Source: Accessiway

## Accessibility

Delivering exceptional user experiences for all visitors means also prioritising web accessibility. Whilst the current site is verified between FFW and Diversa, it may be worth taking additional steps to build future web experiences with accessibility as a leading criteria.

Solutions such as [AccessiWay](#) are widely used by brands, including destinations, offering a mix of instant accessibility widgets as well as specialised advisory and training services.

With users turning to destinations out of trust, where other online solutions may fail them, this is a clear opportunity to support the significant number of users with accessibility needs.

## 03

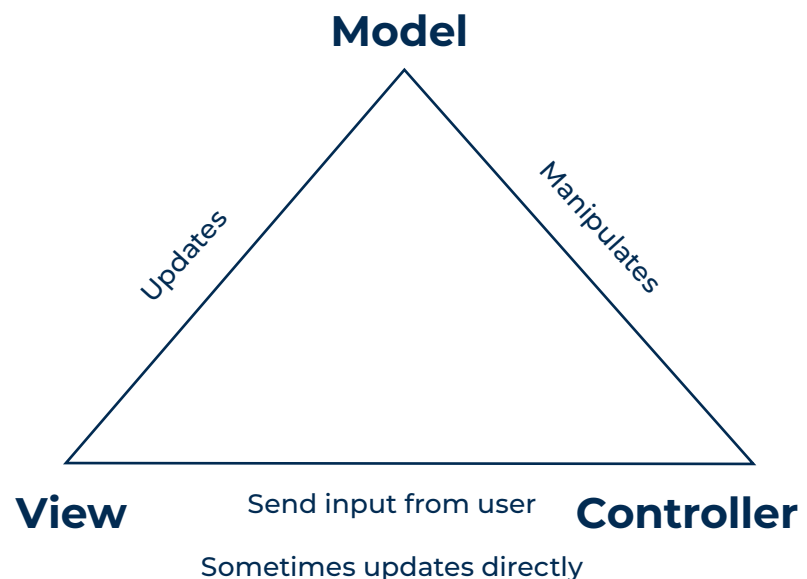
# Carefully Consider Build Choices

Deciding on the right technology approach if a site redesign is considered is key, but so too is the back-end technology supporting that. There are merits and pitfalls in any approach but the right solution should be considered, keeping in mind the principle structure in any MVC application:

- **Model** - Defines the data structure - e.g. sends data to enable user experience.
- **View** - Defines the user experience - e.g. user filters choices on maps.
- **Controller** - Contains control logic - e.g. notifies model to 'add-item' against a rule.

In terms of web design, there are a wider range of solutions on the market today than ever before, offering infinite scalability for the omni-channel environment we have to operate in.

VisitDenmark should consider a number of choices in deciding which way forward is right for the team and the needs of the wider industry. This might include:



## Scale & Distribution

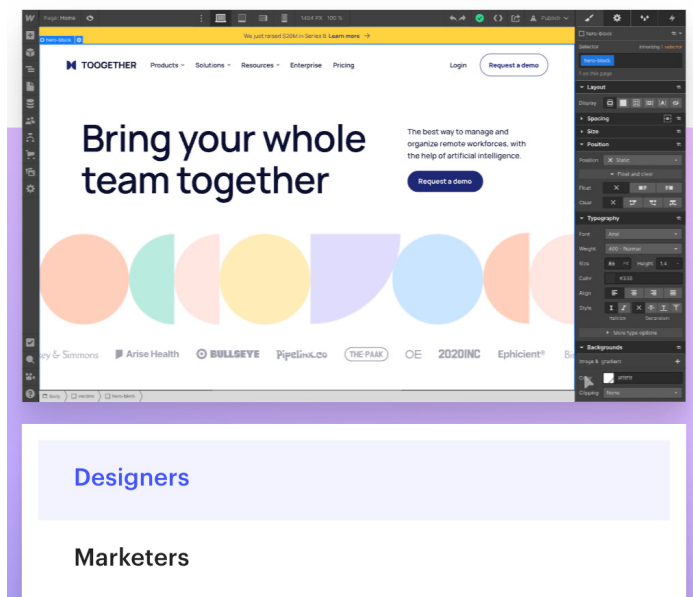
Does the technology environment offer headless CMS capability through a backend management environment, to manage content in a structured format, whilst allowing content to be distributed or deployed in any other digital environment in standard formats such as JSON or using modern javascript frameworks such as React, ReactNative, Vue.js etc. or using a REST API?

Long-standing CMS solutions like [Kentico](#) have transformed into DXPs, adding headless functionality as a feature, delivering on both, whilst Headless CMS solutions like [Magnolia](#) focus on enterprise-grade scale content curation, analytics, audience customisation, authoring and performance, where unique user experiences to be built upon it.

## Extendability

Can existing enterprise-level SaaS-based technology solutions be easily integrated and connected to facilitate data exchange offering interoperability of data between CRM, website, marketing tools and other application requirements?

Can site enhancements be deployed easily within the chosen designer, CMS or digital experience platform with native or third-party apps and extensions which don't compromise performance?



Source: Webflow

## Technical Resources

Are the technical resources required to maintain day-to-day needs, as well as small-scale upgrades, digital experience designs or integrations available in-house?

No-code solutions such as Webflow, a rapidly rising alternative in the web design world, for example, are proving popular amongst leading brands, as a design-led solution where in-house designers can quickly build and deploy digital experiences in hours, whilst the [Webflow API](#) offers infinite platform integrations features and integrations.

## Brand Needs & Workflow

Most important of all is to understand how the technology environment will fit within the day-to-day workflow of its users and support the day-to-day brand needs and likely extensions to be built in the future.

Key questions will form part of this decision-making process:

- Can pages, sites and digital experiences be designed in-house?
- How resource hungry is it on maintenance and future development?
- Can content and features be authored, designed and deployed at scale?
- How smoothly does it fit into the day-to-day workflow for the entire team?
- Can it deliver advanced back-end user experiences that are fast and intuitive?

## 04

## Clear Destination Hierarchy

At present, there is no clear hierarchy when it comes to how destinations are presented on VisitDenmark, whilst the many entry points that exist through the regional and locally branded sites can cause confusion, both for those arriving at the local site, as well as those arriving from the VisitDenmark site.

This should be addressed with a clearer hierarchy, according to level of interest, awareness and connectivity to each market.

For example, Ireland's international proposition on [ireland.com](http://ireland.com) highlights a narrowed-down number of destinations at first glance in 'where to go' including just two cities, Dublin and Belfast and four regional brand propositions, Northern Ireland, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ireland's Ancient East. This destination hierarchy recognises the traditional or likely visitor experiences and the unique characteristics of each city or region.

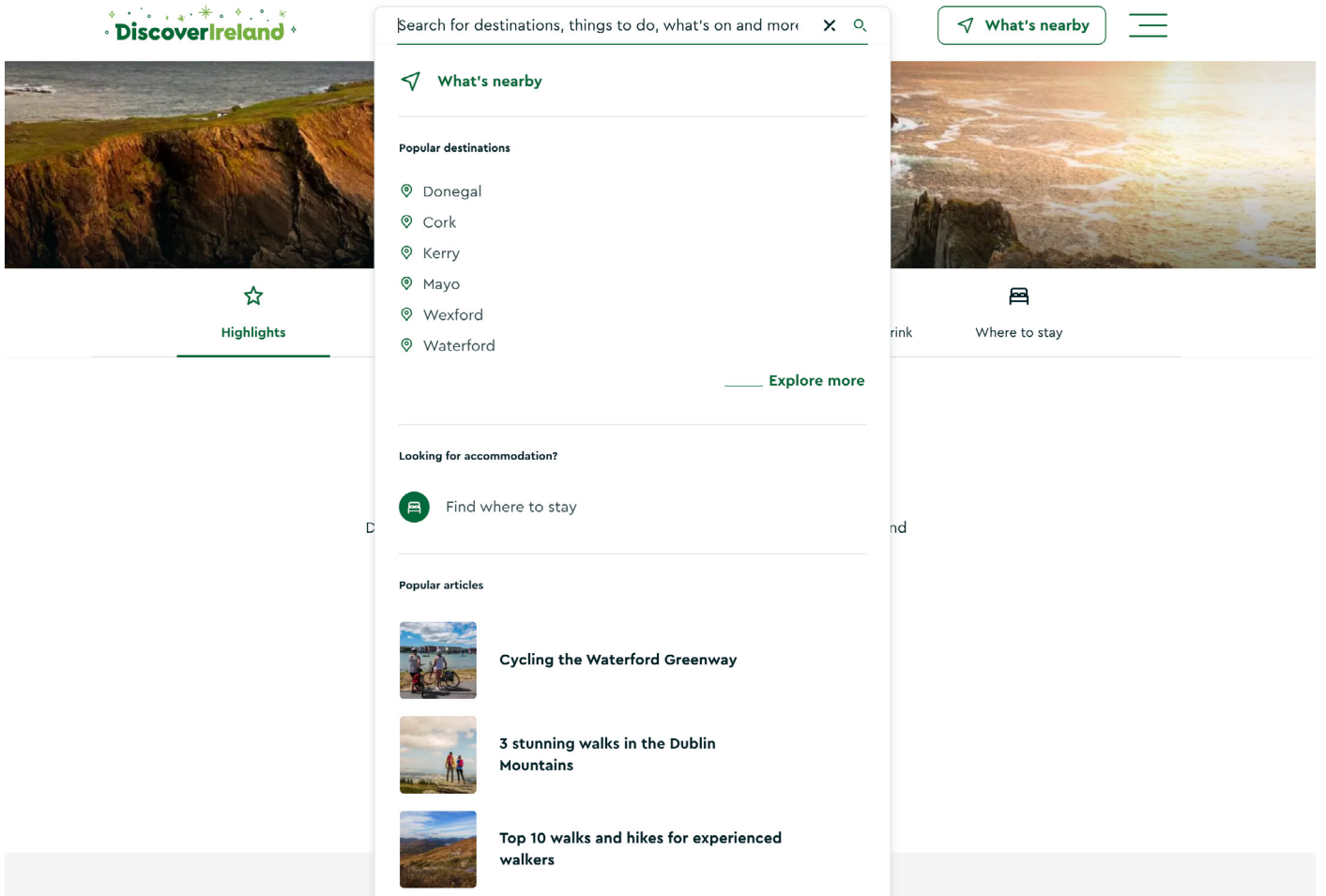
On the other hand, Discover Ireland which is designed for the domestic market on [discoverireland.ie](http://discoverireland.ie), showcases the same four regional brand propositions, as well as [Donegal](#), [Cork](#), [Sligo](#), [Kilkenny](#), [Mayo](#), [Waterford](#), [Galway](#), [Clare](#), [Kerry](#), [Limerick](#) with a rich entry-point for each within the same site.

Then, if we take the example of Limerick, a smaller municipal town are featured such as [Limerick City](#), [Newcastle West](#), [Adare](#), [Foynes](#) and [Kilmallock](#), alongside an interactive map, listings, experiences and feature articles, where content surfaces according to its structure, categorisation and relevance.

Because of the depth of content within the site, external linking focuses on product listings rather than handing visitors over to other 'official' sites, where they risk getting lost, confused and not finding the right relevant content to meet their needs.

External linking to other destination sites

is limited to [Dublin](#), where Fáilte Ireland can guarantee similar design and quality standards where Dublin's unique look and feel delivers an equally premium brand experience.



Source: DiscoverIreland.ie



## 05

# Digital Brand Framework

There is a lack of a clear brand framework between 'Denmark' as a destination and the different regional and city offerings it has to offer.

The current approach is 'unmanaged' - a regional brand proposition should be considered as a solution that can deliver clear marketing value for destinations and partners.

A regional brand framework will enable a clear proposition to be established based on the uniqueness of each region and city, whilst brand toolkits and guidelines can help them to thrive as brand concepts co-existing in multiple digital spaces, allowing DMOs to play to their strengths and use resources effectively.

A regional brand framework should also aid a shift towards fewer, stronger and more differentiated destination brand propositions to thrive.

In doing so, more resources and focus

can be invested in driving awareness and discovery around each sub-brand, whilst local and regional product, experience and content initiatives can help each brand to further accentuate its unique selling points and gain traction and differentiation amongst visitors.

A clear **Digital Brand Framework** will also enable natural extensions, such as a Digital Content Framework to succeed, informed both by the brand's characteristics and tone, but also SEO research etc.

Sub-brands, therefore, become complementary companions rather than confusing competitors.

A clear framework for brand and content will also allow a more unified response to support the entire digital visitor journey, from awareness to experience.

Ireland's regional approach is a clear example of how this can be achieved, where the [Wild Atlantic Way](#), [Ireland's Hidden](#)



## 06

# Atomic Digital Design System

Atomic Design allows designers and developers to use different design elements and combine them to create an overall coherent design experience, allowing for a mix-and-match design approach which simplifies the design process with a set of atoms - helping to establish base styles and molecules - offering guidance on simple groups of user interface elements such as buttons and input field design and organisms - more complex user interface components including groups of molecules and atoms. Templates and Pages are then the final elements of Atomic Design.

Atomic Design is popular because it is scalable, simplifies digital design and allows anyone working with the brand from designers, to agencies, to partners to replicate consistent digital experiences through reusable design components.

Many leading brands have created their own Design Systems to ensure consistency across digital experiences, including [Apple](#)

[Human Interface Guidelines](#), [Mailchimp Design System](#), IBM's Open Source [Carbon Design System](#), [Atlassian Design System](#) and [Google's Material Design System](#).

In tourism and place branding the best reference is without a doubt the [Brand Estonia](#) design system, which is extensive and provides clear guidelines on the design principles, as well as extensive brand assets from typography to icons to templates.

Elsewhere in the public realm, [Scotland's Digital Design System](#) also provides a good, more functional reference.

A good Design System will provide extensive access to resources and assets, whilst also considering installable design libraries with applications such as Figma, such as the [White Theme - Carbon Design System](#) for Figma from IBM.

Ensuring VisitDenmark's digital brand is clear, consistent, recognisable and follows design and usability principles, it

is important to establish a Digital Design System in tandem with a redesign and rethink of VisitDenmark’s overall digital presence.

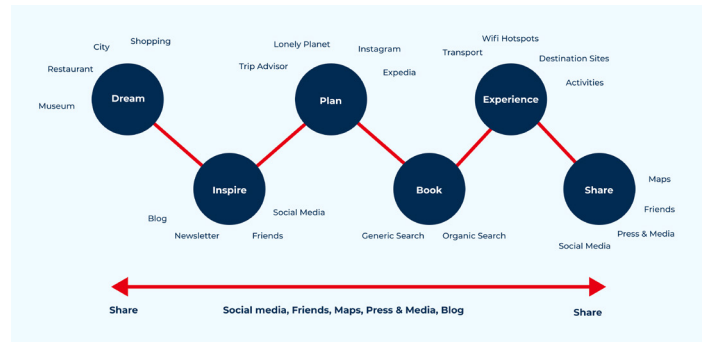
This is a step that is essential as VisitDenmark looks towards playing a new, more relevant role in an omnichannel digitally distributed tourism landscape.

Investing in this key step is central to opening up to the wider community, both destinations and developers - for example creating future app or channel solutions and potentially even establishing design standards for the wider tourism industry.

This is also a key step in adapting the DMO model, to allow different regional brands to co-exist, whilst future destination sites can be built coherently offering consistent digital experiences.

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Source: Brand Estonia

## 07

# Single Digital Brand Experience

The benefits of a single digital presence for VisitDenmark over the multiple entry points that exist today seem compelling, whilst it is important to recognise the challenge in transitioning to a new model with fewer domains and individual sites not least because of SEO concerns.

After careful examination of Denmark's many destination websites, it seems clear that the current approach, whilst good in many respects, fails to offer the rich unique brand experiences that users expect today.

The one-size-fits-all development approach creates confusion and a sub-par user experience when it comes to individuality, design, user journey optimisation and rich interactive features.

The individual destination sites do have SEO authority, where a simple search term such as 'Shelter in Kolding', offers rich snippet inclusion on search engine results pages, leading users to a dedicated page on [visit-kolding.com](http://visit-kolding.com) which is built upon

GuideDenmark.

Clearly, a change in strategy will impact this authority. However, it's authority is built upon its content authority and search relevance - similar authority and content depth/relevance can be rebuilt and arguably perform better in a transformed digital user experience.

There are many more examples like this, so it is important to do a complete SEO audit of all destination sites to comprehensively manage and transition towards a unified digital brand experience.

The current approach isn't sustainable as it either requires a complex design and feature overhaul of many destination sites but also a fragmentation of the digital brand experience with poor orientation and a broken user experience between different sites.

A clickthrough from VisitDenmark to another destination site cannot be seen as

a conversion whilst a stronger experience on a single site can deliver on user needs, such as the discovery of a regional road-trip itinerary plan, whilst 'hand-over' to business websites does, as this is a clearer and more conscious choice from the user - for example to book or discover further.

Instead of a complex mix of brands, destination sites, domains and language versions, a single hierarchy of the brand can be established from a single domain, whilst the Digital Brand Framework can set out the brand proposition and the Digital Design System can establish a scaleable digital brand experience.

From here the brand proposition can evolve, where a coordinated strategy for future brand platforms can be considered

consistent, whilst allowing unique regional and destination identities to establish themselves and a stronger more accented digital presence in a complimentary manner.

[Visit Dublin](#) is a good example of this - it crafts a unique identity which is extremely strong representing the individuality of the destination, with its own design system, yet a number of components are carried through from the [discoverirealnd.ie](#) site.

To achieve this, there will need to be a slimming down not only of sites but also of competing brands. However, with alignment, this can also offer a collective reconstruction of the overall brand proposition with multi-stakeholder participation and buy-in.

## 08

## Digitally Dispersed Agile Team

If we look at the example of British Columbia we can see a redefinition of roles and strategies from the State level, where a strong and powerful brand proposition has been established, with a best-in-class digital experience on [hellobc.com](http://hellobc.com).

The strength and clear leading role Destination BC establishes in driving brand authority, awareness and discovery has also led the regional and local DMOs in Canada to harness their strengths as part of a cooperative model, working closely with industry at a local level to support both content needs and development initiatives.

For Thompson Okanagan, this has led to a stewardship and sustainability development role focused on data.

On the other hand, for Vancouver Island, a simplified version based on Discover BC orientates users at a more granular level with a consistent page and brand design to Discover BC, whilst as a DMO the focus shifts towards content, storytelling and investment in a social enterprise to generate revenue which can be channelled

back to the social needs of communities.

This model works under a new contract established between Tourism BC and regional DMOs, establishing a different relationship, better aligned on strengths, whilst freeing up resources from maintaining individual brands, platforms and campaigns.

For VisitDenmark, there is an opportunity to change the relationship between and amongst DMOs, where the digital editors of GuideDenmark already represent highly committed digital experts, mostly comprising generalists but also with a few specialists. The alignment and common sense of commitment were extraordinary to witness and should be further strengthened making any change a collaborative one.

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Looking forward, the 'Editors' could be co-opted in to form a much more unified

Dispersed Agile Team working as a remote workforce towards common objectives, fully synchronous with each other as colleagues.

The adoption of collaborative conversational tools designed for Agile teams, such as Asana, as well as an effective set of teams existing within a wider digital team will be essential to ensure transparency, coordination and productivity for such an approach to be effective, identifying roles, capabilities and talents that can be opted into a single digital team.



## 09

# Digital Resources Database

During workshops, it became clear that there is an extensive range of different technologies, tools and resources being used across DMOs in Denmark.

VisitDenmark has been organising several activities to make sure everyone knows what platforms are being used and to exchange best practices, like webinars and meetings. This should be reinforced so that more opportunities for better data sharing and integrations are identified.

Commonly used tools such as CRMs and E-Mail Marketing tools are being used extensively and whilst there are opportunities to integrate or synchronise data between platforms this isn't possible at present.

Likewise, there isn't a single source of knowledge on the range of capabilities that exist amongst DMOs in Denmark, where valuable skills and capabilities could be co-opted into a Digitally Dispersed Team if identified.

A resource database could help identify:

- **Digital & content capabilities at regional and local levels.**
- **Business support services and solutions locally.**
- **Directory of content creators, freelancers and experts** (contracted with minimal terms) to support the improvement of minimum standards (e.g. SME digital presence).
- **Digital inventory** - tools, technologies, apps, platforms and solutions.

SaaS-based solutions such as AirTable can offer collaborative and scaleable ways of achieving this easily, inviting DMOs to add entries and pre-determining fields and access. Furthermore, in the example of AirTable, leveraging their API you could also go a step further, such as providing a directory of freelance content creators or designers to industry approved and familiar with the design system or content standards.

## 10

# Industry Digitalisation Programme

An ambitious re-platforming exercise may warrant a wider investment in a large-scale digital transformation of the industry.

Whilst the standard for many businesses may be high, there will inevitably be others who get left behind.

An Industry Digitalisation Programme should aim to raise the standards of digital across the industry, both in terms of brand and marketing, where a new set of toolkits, frameworks, platforms can drive that uptake but also in digital distribution and guest services, where even many leading businesses fall short or can benefit from the opportunity to strengthen their efforts.

Why does this matter? Because any change to the overall digital brand experience is not just limited to destination websites, it's about the wider digital footprint and digital visitor experience, where businesses who fall short will not benefit - whether from links deriving from Google or VisitDenmark. Looking to learn from the likes of [Visit Finland with Ready, Steady & Go](#) and [Fáilte](#)

[Ireland's Digital that Delivers](#), where a more strategic and aligned approach aims to tackle the issue of channel proliferation by addressing the root causes - this could also lead to better alignment of the overall approach, brand and strategy.

Such a programme can be delivered in a coordinated way in partnership with local DMOs - with a new digital strategy and presence it can really feed into the brand work at a national level.

- **Brand & Digital Presence** - Digital basics
- **Digital Growth** - Online sales, advanced strategy, alignment with destination brands and digital distribution
- **Expansion & Distribution** - Experience product distribution, advanced digital guest services etc.

The net benefit to VisitDenmark can lead to better content collaboration, clearer involvement in cooperative marketing activities and better performance and hand-off from official to business websites.

## 11

# Completely Remodelled Database

Having spent considerable time considering the role and relevancy of GuideDanmark, it would appear that VisitDenmark's digital competitive position would undoubtedly be weaker without it.

When comparing VisitDenmark with all other competitors and best practices, it is clear that one of the aspects that makes others highly digitally competitive is the strength and quality of the product databases that sit behind their digital brand experiences.

By the same token, the weaknesses in GuideDanmark need to be addressed, with an unapologetic focus on quality and relevance.

The issues highlighted in the research phase all need to be addressed with a pragmatic solution approach, whilst carrying out an iterative feature improvement roadmap to avoid investing heavily in solutions, without testing assumptions.

There are two options:

1. **Slim-down** - focus on key information which will be used in top-of-funnel marketing environments only, quickly directing visitors out to business sites with minimal on-page information provided.
2. **Scale-up** - focus on building an exceptional product database which can offer rich solutions for a wide range of applications and offer a leading tool for business profile management.

The decision is one for VisitDenmark to take depending on strategy and resources.

Here is a summary of the key issues and how they can be addressed if 'Scale-up' is chosen:

## 11.1

### **Core Data - Improving Database Listings**

The following include suggestions and cannot be considered exhaustive without a more comprehensive examination of the database model.

## 11.2

### **Listing Completeness**

Simplify manual input with tool features such as tooltips, minimum and maximum words, and short, long or structured description forms.

## 11.3

### **Listing Improvements**

AI content authoring tools to improve or even generate content grammar, structure and readability with in-line recommendations.

## 11.4

### **Language Availability**

AI translation APIs to automate or semi-automate listing creation for additional languages with human editor support.

## 11.5

### **Content Accuracy**

Use Google Places API to automatically find points of interest and pre-populate information with user assistance or approval.

## 11.6

### **Quality Assurance**

Establish a review workflow for DMO editors to quickly review, approve and provide 1-click feedback to the author with pre-defined recommendations 'e.g. Images fall below standards - see guidelines' - linking to a business training page.

## 11.7

### Routine Updating

Set routine updates or verify schedules to maintain listing validity according to the type of listing - e.g. places may need less frequent updating compared to businesses.

## 11.8

### Intelligent Tagging

Aim to simplify tagging according to category, with slick, simple and intuitive user experience adapting according to selection. E.g.:

- Offers Parking > Free of charge > EV Charging > 50kW = 2
- Sustainability Measures > Yes > Certification > Green Key

## 11.9

### Extended Schema

Extend schema to include requirements linked with overall strategic priorities, including:

- Maintain parity with Google MyBusiness schema.
- Sustainability data (certifications, processes, features, standards).
- Diversity data - e.g. LGBTQ+ friendly, women-owned business.

## Interest Categories

Taxonomy of relevance by theme e.g. 'Must See', 'Hidden Gem', 'Popular with Locals', 'Amazing View', 'Premium Experience', 'Budget Friendly', 'Free' - reviewed and approved by editors. Following the example of Airbnb.

The example of HighPark Sonderjylland is a perfect example of a mixed experience which could be greatly improved, yet at the same time, it isn't too bad today.

The official site ranks first on Google when searching, whilst [Visit Sonderjylland's](#) feature article about the park comes second and the GuideDanmark listing on the same site shows as a sub-page. Its [Google MyBusiness](#) listing has been claimed, with 244 Google Reviews, yet it has no opening times.

There are currently a large number of UGC Photos on Google and 107 Instagram photos tagged [#HighParkSonderjylland](#) which would dramatically enhance engagement on the destination pages if featured as in-line content.

## User Experience

The following include suggestions and cannot be considered exhaustive without a more comprehensive examination of the user interfaces.

### Dashboard: Editors

Destination editors should have a comprehensive dashboard showing:

- Approval list
- Expiring entries (in need of renewal/ updating)
- 1-Click business reminder e-mails, listing approvals, non-approval feedback
- Translation interface for language editors

### Dashboard: Businesses

Businesses should have an intuitive sign-up and business management experience, with a high degree of usability allowing full profile and business management, as well as routine reminders, reporting and recommendations/suggestions. Assistive services like quality or completeness ratings may help to motivate completed profiles such as 'your listing is 90% complete' and completion checklists.

## Front-End Experience

Heavily improved front-end experience, incorporating database content more natively within the site templates, including partial content snippets or full integration with itinerary planners or maps.

Site content tagging should also be able to automatically aggregate relevant results such as related experiences or places to stay by location, interest or specific meta tags e.g. LGBTQ+ friendly.



Source: Unsplash, Faizur Rehman

## Integrations & Extensions

The following include suggestions and cannot be considered exhaustive without a more comprehensive examination of the user interfaces.

### Single Business Profile Management

It is possible to write to Google MyBusiness once an integration has been made and a connection has been authorised by the user.

This would offer the possibility for GuideDanmark to update listings on behalf of businesses, providing a single platform to manage their online presence.

Solutions such as [Yext](#) offer connections to more than 200 third-party publishers meaning businesses can post to multiple listing channels with dual-sync API integrations. Their publisher network includes all major directories.

### Headless CMS Content APIs

Building connections with a headless CMS is important to fully leverage two-way connections between product data and content distribution.

This can allow relevant content to be linked or displayed in-line according to the format and presentation layer both within a business listing page, whilst also automatically integrating business data

into content with smart look-up features.

This can enable relevant itineraries, videos, user-generated content and articles to be connected in an intelligent way.

### Review Aggregation

A solution for review aggregation should be sought, preferably with multiple review sites and an aggregate review score. Both ratings and review snippets are prerequisites for trust and should be natively integrated with business listings for the strongest possible credibility score amongst users.

### CRM API Integration

If businesses are involved directly in updating business data, there should be clear interoperability of key data with an industry-wide, with in-built permissions allowing update or synchronisation between regional DMOs establishing a single business database, reducing duplicated efforts at local and regional level.

This can also enable synced data with solutions such as Intercom powering more meaningful communication with industry at scale.

### Social Content Integration

Using the new [CrowdRiff API](#) experiences can be built integrating user-generated content directly in line with different



content experiences, including alongside product listings to create a richer look and feel and incorporate social proof natively on every page.

### **Data Partnerships**

Identifying partners where gaps exist or high-quality content cannot be achieved.

The example of VisitOslo integrating TicketMaster shows that a good partnership can achieve significant improvements to listings.

Likewise, the [Austrian National Tourist Office](#) aggregates product data on specialist areas such as Ski from [AlpinTouren.com](#) or Hiking etc.

## 12

## Version Releases - Upgrade Programme

If a more ambitious 'scale-up' vision for GuideDanmark is pursued then it is essential to adopt the mindset to that of a digital service provider, with a business-led approach to delivering end-client services.

GuideDanmark should in this respect be considered as a turnkey digital service solution for the Danish tourism industry. In this respect, the bar needs to be raised significantly in terms of both functionality but especially the overall end-to-end user experience.

To succeed, it must deliver a fast, intuitive and smart user workflow, delivering clear marketing value by enabling visibility through large-scale distribution on destination sites and marketing campaigns, whilst also delivering business value, accelerating and enhancing third-party business listings and profile management.

In doing so, this puts VisitDenmark one foot in front of 'the alternatives', by actively facilitating businesses to maintain a strong multi-channel presence.

It is important to ensure a clear development runway for GuideDanmark, with new features and upgrades released regularly e.g. annually, to accommodate changes in the tech landscape.

A clear release schedule can also serve to encourage businesses to update and upgrade business listings (e.g. adding sustainability credentials in a particular release or higher quality imagery). It might look something like this:

- **June 2025** - Pre-Release V 3.0 - Leading to training, partner activation, new schema standards, tech notes and specifications.
- **December 2025** - Release V 3.0 - Upgrades deployed to all sites etc.
- **March 2026** - Legacy standards no longer accepted

## 13

## Product Distribution Model

Whilst reviewing the entire technology architecture, including the role of regional DMOs in the overall approach, it is worth considering the merits and opportunities of developing solutions which support product and experience distribution.

A number of destinations have chosen to invest in channel management technologies which can support live inventory management and distribution for accommodation, attractions, tours & activities and events & festivals.

The key objective is to provide a single common interface for suppliers and distributors, helping to get products into as many hard-to-reach markets as possible, whilst making the entire industry bookable with low commission fees.

One of the most notable examples is TXGB designed to help all suppliers get connected as part of a destination-wide distribution strategy, combined with product and experience development.

Businesses featured on the platform can then sell products directly through destination sites, direct on their own sites and also through OTAs and other distributors they actively opt-in to.

## 14

## Establish a Digital Partners Programme

A digital partners network can be a simple way to grow the resources, capability and talent surrounding VisitDenmark's digital brand presence.

In a distributed world, it becomes increasingly important to have access to a network of specialised skills and capabilities, from creative and design talent to developer communities.

Partners can include both experts from within the sector, as well as those in the wider digital, creative and technology ecosystem, who may have an interest in collaboration. Uses may range from simple day-to-day content needs to more complex projects or calls for solutions.

As an example, Visit Britain launched a Content Producer Network to establish a database of freelance content creators.

### Digital Partners

- Users or authors passionate about immersive content

- Developers using the GuideDenmark API amongst others
- Start-ups and tech community keen to build solutions
- Technical partners from within the industry (e.g. SAS, Tivoli and DKNT)

### Programmes

A series of programmes with different incentives attached can be built to encourage partners and the wider creative and developer community to build prototype solutions off the back of the database and content APIs.

This will enable VisitDenmark to directly invest alone, or with a commercial partner, which could transform the overall visitor experience at different stages in the visitor journey, where hurdles are identified.

This might enable, for example, a specialised road-trip companion app to be developed for German travellers travelling by ferry, developed together with a leading transport provider.

Elsewhere, a prototype fund might invite start-ups to explore how Denmark might exist in the Metaverse, taking inspiration from the German National Tourism Board's Virtual Reality universe, for example.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

# The Future of the Digital User Journey For Tourists