

MASTER THESIS

GROWING WITH EVERY CLICK: DIGITAL STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN THE MADEIRA WINE ROUTE

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ABSTRACT

Established in 2019, The Madeira Wine Route is a collaborative initiative involving 122 different wineries, restaurants, hotels, wine shops, and wine bars located on the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo. Although relatively new, the Madeira Wine Route represents a significant opportunity to elevate wine tourism in Madeira and bring increased revenue to relevant businesses on the island. This is especially critical as Madeira is in the process of recovery after a devastatingly low tourist year brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Utilizing the Wine Route Life Cycle model as a benchmark, this work explores how digital strategies can be implemented to strengthen the Madeira Wine Route and foster its growth into the next stage of the Life Cycle. This work consists of an analysis of the current tourism state in Madeira, an evaluation of the Madeira Wine Route along six key categories, and a social media audit of the route. A consumer behaviour survey was also conducted to accompany these analyses and explored how respondents find information on wine destinations and which potential Wine Route features users considered the most appealing. A comprehensive literature review on core theories related to wine tourism, wine routes and destination managements and digital communication concepts was also conducted to provide the theoretical background for this work. The results of this study support the theory that digital communications are essential in making emotional and lasting connections with potential visitors and are an important method in which a Wine Route can increase its brand visibility. The work concludes with two digital strategy proposals that can be implemented by the Madeira Wine Route.

KEY WORDS:

Wine Route, Madeira, Destination Management, Digital Promotional Strategies, Content Marketing

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

DRT – **D**ireção **R**egional do **T**urismo (Official Madeira Tourism Board)

DSIPT - the **D**epartment of **I**nformation **S**ervices and **T**ouristic **P**rojects

DREM - **D**ireção **R**egional **E**statística da **M**adeira (Madeira Regional Statistics Department)

DMO – **D**estination **M**anagement **O**rganisation

IGP - **P**rotected **G**eographical **I**ndication

IVBAM – Instituto do **V**inho**, B**ordado e **A**rtesanato da **M**adeira (Institute of Madeira Wine, Embroidery and Handicrafts)

MWR – the **M**adeira **W**ine **R**oute

PDO - **P**rotected **D**esignation of **O**rigin

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1.Introduction

The autonomous region of Madeira is a Portuguese archipelago composed of the islands of Madeira, Porto Santo, and the Desestas. The islands are situated in the North Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of West Africa, and represent one of the most outer reaching regions of the European Union. Despite the islands fairly remote location, the stunning landscapes combined with its year-round mild temperatures have encouraged visitors to the islands for centuries and Madeira is considered one of Europe's oldest tourist destinations (Bloom Consulting, 2017).

Since its discovery by the Portuguese in the 15th century, Madeira has been a bustling port stop for ships carrying goods to and from Portugal, India and Brazil (IVBAM, 2020). It was on these long sea journeys that the iconic style of fortified Madeira wine was developed. Barrels of wine being transported became 'cooked' due to the hot conditions onboard resulting in a wine with a nutty and oxidative character. Nowadays, wine producers recreate these oceanic journeys in their own cellars utilizing one of two main processes, the estufagem or canteiro method (See Annex A1).

There is approximately 2100 Ha of vineyards found on the island which are predominately planted with local Portuguese grape varieties (IVBAM, 2020). Two Protected Designations of Origins (PDO) and one Protected Geographical Indication (IGP) exist for the wine region of Madeira. DOP Madeira is used exclusively for fortified wines while DOP Madeirense and IGP Terras Madeirenses are utilized for still wine production (Wines of Portugal, 2021).

Despite having a long history in both wine and hospitality, wine tourism on the island is still relatively new. In order to increase recognition of Madeira as a wine region and thus encourage more wine tourism on the island, the Madeira Wine Route (MWR) was created in 2019. This initiative represents a collaboration among different wineries, restaurants, hotels and wine bars situation on the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo and is run by the Madeira Regional Tourism Board. It is with this organization that the author enacted their internship, and this thesis work is centered around the development of digital strategies to help strengthen and promote the Madeira Wine Route to a global audience.

This work will begin with an introduction on the Madeira Tourism Board, the main duties of the internship, and the central objectives of the thesis. It will then be followed by a literature review of the theoretical concepts guiding the proposals. An outline of the methodologies used in this work will then be provided and followed by a discussion of the results to gain an understanding of the context for the final proposals. The thesis will conclude with two new proposals for strategies to be undertaken focused on increasing the digital presence of the Madeira Wine Route and its online recognition.

1.1 The Madeira Regional Tourism Board

The Madeira Regional Tourism Board (DRT – *Direção Regional do Turismo da Madeira*) is a government organization which is run by the Regional Secretariat for Tourism and Culture of Madeira. The DRT was created with the ambitious objective to "study, coordinate, promote, carry out and monitor

tourism…with the aim of developing sustainable, balanced, tourism in the Madeira Autonomous Region – Madeira and Porto Santo Islands" (Official Madeira Tourism Board, 2020). At its core, the DRT is responsible for presenting Madeira, and the surrounding Islands, as an attractive tourism destination and is the 'face' of the tourism side of the islands.

To better meet its objectives, the DRT is organized into three different departments, as visualized in Figure 1. These departments all fall under the direction of the regional director and collaborate together to manage the official tourism website of Madeira. Central to this thesis is the Department of Information Services and Touristic Projects (DSIPT) as they, with some assistance from the Department of Tourists Events, manage wine tourism projects and it is with this department that the author conducted her internship.

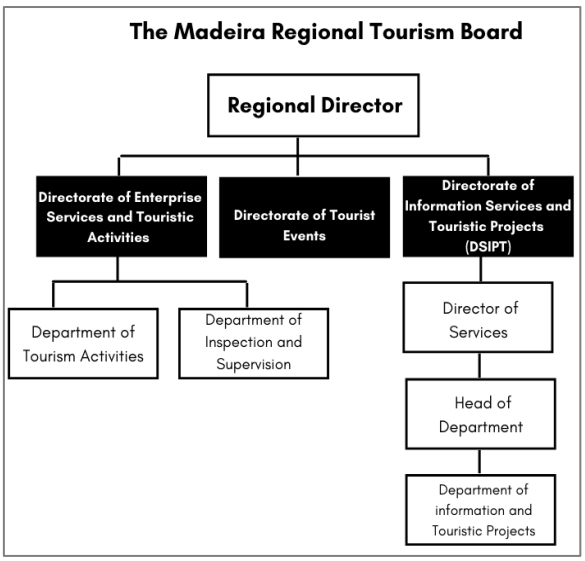

Figure 1: Company structure of the Madeira Regional Tourism Board (DRT)
Source: Own elaboration using data from DRT Webpage, 2021.

The DSIPT is responsible for planning and executing tourism entertainment activities as well as the periodic analysis and monitoring of these activities to ensure that they are properly oriented towards current tourism demands (OMTB, 2020). Cultivating this data is crucial for the DSIPT to be able to constantly be evolving its programing in order to remain competitive and innovative. As illustrated by figure 1, there are several channels of command within the DSIPT. This is of importance as each project decision must go through several approval points within these channels, a significant factor which effects the speed in which a project can be enacted. Within the department, the author worked under the guidance of the director of services, Barbara Spínola, and the superior technician, Juan Gonçalves, to develop a project for their central wine tourism endeavor of the DSIPT, the Madeira Wine Route.

1.2 The Madeira Wine Route

The Madeira Wine Route (MWR) has only recently been introduced, with its official inauguration occurring in September of 2019 (Almeida, 2020). The aim of the route is to showcase and promote Madeira's wine and gastronomic tourism offerings by showcasing participating wineries, restaurants, wine bars, wine shops, hotels and tourism entertainment companies on the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo. The MWR was created and run through a joint collaboration between the DSIPT and the IVBAM, the Madeira, Embroidery and Handicraft Institute.

Currently the MWR encompasses 114 companies on Madeira and 8 on Porto Santo (See Annex A2). Wineries do not form the majority of the stops on the route as wine producers only make up 19 of the 122 total stops. It should be noted that this number represents the total number of wineries on the island meaning that the MWR has a 100% winery participation rate. The smaller number of producers is due to the structure of wine production on the island. Wine production is centralized among several large producers although a few newer producers are beginning to emerge as the popularity of Madeira still wine increases. The MWR augments the relatively small number of wineries by offering a varied range of entities which showcase the many diverse ways in which to experience Madeira wine outside of just the traditional winery experience.

To belong to the route, businesses are not required to pay any fees but have to ensure that they meet all compulsory conditions for participation. A crucial factor is the role Madeira wine plays in the business' tourism and hospitality offerings and how they are showcasing the wines and wine region of the island in their services. To belong to the route, it is mandatory to serve at minimum two still wines and two fortified wines from Madeira and service must be at the recommended temperatures in suitable glassware (Almeida, 2020). Companies wishing to participate in the route were sent a survey (See Annex A3). The survey was followed by an interview and evaluation by renowned wine journalist, José Silva, establishing that all minimum conditioners were met. A second survey and interview process are set to occur in the near future to review that these conditions are still being met and to allow for new participants to be a part of the route.



Figure 2: The Official Madeira Wine Route logo
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.

Participating in the Madeira Wine Route is advantageous as there are many benefits for being a member. Businesses can take advantage of professional training and educational courses for staff

provided by the IVBAM who consistently create new instructional courses related to Madeira wine and hospitality. Figure 2 displays the official Wine Route Logo that all participating members can display on their website and on location. Members are further promoted on the official Tourism Madeira website and are featured on the brochure created by the DSIPT which can be accessed online and at any of the Tourism Information Offices on the island. The DSIPT has furthered promoted the route through the creation of two promotional videos and plans for further promotional events to help promote the Madeira Wine Route and its members.

1.3 Duties during the Internship

The internship with the Madeira Regional Tourism Board (DRT) was conducted remotely and was focused on developing promotional strategies for the route. Tasks carried out during the internship included creating an initial proposal plan based on the needs and desires expressed during an initial meeting with the Director of Services and the Superior Technician of the DSIPT (See Annex A4). Following this proposal plan, it was decided that the internship would be concentrated around the first and second proposals, increasing the digital presence of the Madeira Wine Route. A central assignment undertaken by the author was to create an interactive map of the route. This map displays all relevant information about each stop on the route including opening times and description of services. It also allows for user customization as users can choose which services they would like to see on the map. Information related to points of interest on the route were added and include links to live webcams. This map was created in both English and Portuguese. Additionally, some editing of the English language content used for the map was conducted to better communicate to English speaking guests and potential visitors.

Continuing with the digital focus, further duties included developing supporting ideas for a series of short videos featuring local food and wine pairings presented by members of the Route to be used a promotional campaign for Harvest and the Madeira Wine Festival in October. Additionally, social media strategies were asked to be developed to promote the wine route and that could be integrated through the official social media accounts of the Madeira Tourism Board. Another key task was the entry and organization of data taken from the original completed application forms of the companies of the route. This was important to better visualize the current amenities of the various members of the wine route while highlighting strengths and potential areas of improvements. The data will also be useful for future comparisons when the next survey of the route is undertaken. The intent behind these projects was to help bring increased visibility to the services and experiences offered by the members of the MRW and to reach a greater audience through increased online engagement as a strategy to help rebuild tourism as the island slowly reopens from Covid-19 restrictions.

1.4 Objectives of the Master Thesis

The central purpose of this master thesis work is to identify several digital strategies to help promote the Madeira Wine Route. By increasing the digital presence of the MWR, its members will achieve greater visibility which can help augment wine tourism in Madeira. Central objectives of the Master Thesis are as follows:

- Establish a theoretical framework for why digital engagement is important in wine tourism and how these theories can be utilized in better promoting the MWR and Madeira as a Wine Tourism Destination
- Employ the Wine Route Life Cycle model as a benchmarking tool to guide the MRW development
- Gain an understanding of the structure of the Madeira Wine Route and its members
- Collect data to understand consumer behavior in relation to wine routes
- Utilize insights taken from the research in creating a relevant and useful digital promotional plan for the MWR

2. Literature Review

2.1 Wine Tourism and Wine Routes

Wine tourism is a broad term that encompasses a wide variety of activities related to wine including visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, wine museums and wine shows. Core to the concept of wine tourism is that the experience of wine tasting and/or experiencing a specific wine region is one of the main motivators for deciding to visit a destination (Hall & Mitchell, 2000, as cited by López-Guzman et al., 2010, p. 422). Wine tourism incorporates cultural activities as wine and gastronomy are seen as a way of discovering an authentic side of a destination while the vineyards themselves can augment the beauty and draw of a destination's landscape (Santos et al., 2019). Wine tourism often involves multi-layered experiences which can appeal to a wide demographic of tourists as wine regions can be experienced through a variety of tourism activities outside of tasting room. For example, wine tourism can be linked with nature tourism and relaxation tourism with activities such as hikes in the vineyard and wine spas. Wine tourism is collaborative in nature often having strong linkages with the local community and tourism facilities of the region including restaurants, hotels, tour companies and the local tourism board.

Recognizing the collaborative benefits of wine tourism, wine routes have emerged as a tool to organize and present the different tourism services of a wine region in a centralized way. Wine routes are defined as circuits within a set geographical area which include itineraries that feature a combination of the region's main attractions including natural attractions, wineries, vineyards, wine museums and tourism and hospitality service providers such as rural accommodations, hotels, and tour companies (Dredge et al., 2019; Cruz-Ruiz et al., 2020; López-Guzmán et al., 2010). Wine routes typically include marked roads and will have visible signage in the region.

Successful wine routes are those that are built on a foundation of joint collaboration between its members and those in charge of managing the route. By fostering networking activities, wine route members can benefit through cross-promotion and collaboration in diversifying their product and service offerings (Dredge et al., 2019). Joint marketing is a key benefit for affiliates of the route as many of the members of a wine route are small to medium enterprises that may not have a huge staff or budget to handle advertising. Wine routes are especially beneficial in rural communities, which wine regions typically are located, to help stimulate the economy which can lead to greater social benefits such as increased development and job opportunities (Lopes et al., 2018).

2.2 Wine Route Life Cycle Model

The 'Wine Route Life Cycle' concept was created to help better understand and analyse the growth stages of a wine route. Developed by Dimitrovski et al. (2019), the Wine Route Life Cycle synthesises Levitt's 'product life cycle' model with Butlers' 'tourism destination life cycle'. The model breaks down the life cycle of a wine route into four stages: introduction, growth, maturity and decline (Dimitrovski et al., 2019). The first stage marks the start of a wine route as it begins the process of collecting members and solidifying itself. The growth phase marks a time of development as the wine routes become more established and undertakes various initiatives. The maturity phase is a stage in which a wine route is firmly entrenched in the region with a strong cohesiveness among its members.

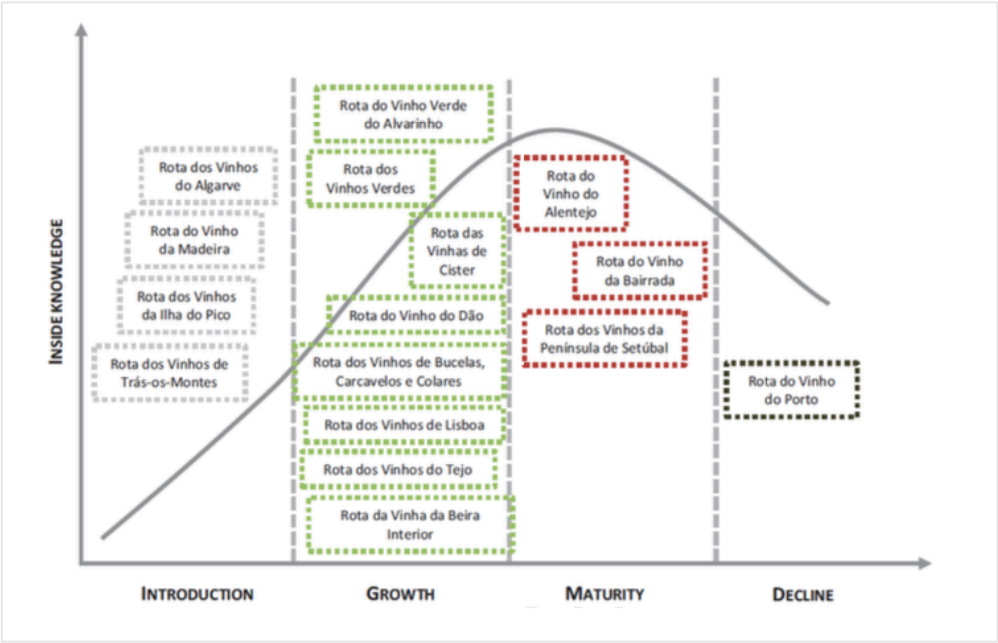

Figure 3: The Wine Route Life Cycle Model
Source: Dimitrovski, Rachão, & Joukes, 2019.

The decline illustrates a phase that can occur if a wine route is not managed correctly. In this period, the wine route has failed and risks termination if the situation cannot be ameliorated.

Dimitrovki et al. (2019) utilised the wine route life cycle model in their analysis of Portuguese wine routes. They mapped the wine routes on the model as demonstrated in Figure 3. The majority of Portugal's wine routes are in the growth phase with a few of the older wine routes having reached the maturity phase. Of note is the Porto Wine Route which is the only Portuguese wine route in the decline phase. Dimitrovki et al. (2019) explored the reason for the route's decline and found that a significant determinant of its failure was due to "due to organisational malfunctioning, poor collaboration and ignoring the need for innovation" (p. 314). The wine route life cycle identifies the importance of collaboration in setting collective goals in maintaining a wine route as well as the need to be constantly innovating to avoid becoming stagnant as key components of success. The Wine Route Life Cycle model is useful as a benchmarking tool in evaluating and analysing the successful growth of the Madeira Wine Route as it continues to develop and transition from the introduction to growth stage.

2.3 The Role of Wine Routes in Destination Marketing

Wine routes are important tools for destination marketing as they can augment a region's appeal by adding to its distinctive characteristics and tourism offerings. This increases the competitiveness of a tourist destination and cultivates more attractions to entice visitors and increase the length of their stay (Karagiannis & Metaxas, 2020). Wine tourism allows visitors to have experiences that are intimately linked to the land and cultural heritage of a destination. In this way, wine routes preserve the authenticity of the region by showcasing the natural, cultural and gastronomic heritage of the region (Braga, 2021a.). This is especially imperative as changing tourist behaviors have led to an increase in demand for tourism destinations that provide authentic experiences grounded in the history and local culture (Karagiannis & Metaxas, 2020). By promoting wine tourism in rural spaces, wine routes are also useful tools in helping to reconfigure tourism flows outside of dense urban spaces.

Wine tourism helps further strengthen a brands image through the creation of enticing imagery of beautiful landscapes and sensorial experiences. It also allows the opportunity for rural communities to promote their tourism offerings and identity and become greater represented in a destination's global image (Lopes et al., 2018). Through this imagery, wine routes and wine tourism improve a destinations total image while also helping the destination reach greater and more diverse markets. This is imperative in increasing the competitiveness of the region as a tourist destination of note.

2.4 E-Marketing, Content Marketing, Social Media and "World of Mouth"

The internet has widened the realms in which marketing can be enacted and destination management organisations (DMOs) have had to embrace the internet and social media in their marketing strategies in order to remain competitive. E-marketing refers to promotional campaigns that are executed in the

digital sphere (Andrlic & Chamaru de Alwis, 2016). They represent an opportunity for DMOs to further promote their brand image as well as provide a resource of information on the destination to potential visitors. E-marketing is an excellent tool for DMOs to reach a greater and more varied audience and allows even small and remote destinations to increase their global image.

Successful e-marketing involves 'content marketing,' a marketing approach that is centered on the creation of interesting and tailored content to be delivered to a defined audience with the objective of creating conversations about the subject matter (Kotler et al., 2017). This approach to marketing deviates from traditional marketing techniques which were based solely around presenting the tangible benefits of a region and represents a more authentic communication style. Core to this approach it to avoid 'one way communication' with consumers and instead foster opportunities to create interactive discourses. The 5As Customer Framework Management Model, as illustrate in Figure 4, exemplifies the consumer journey content marketing hopes to encourage. Through engaging and compatible content, DMOs can improve their brand image as potential visitors become 'aware' of the destination, then learn the 'appeal' of the region through attractive content, begin to 'ask' about the region and engage with the DMO, 'act' by deciding to visit, and finally, and most importantly, share their experiences and recommendations with others becoming an 'advocate' for the region (Kotler et al., 2017).



Figure 4: The 5As Customer Framework Marketing Model
Source: Davies, 2021 adapted from Kotler et al., 2016.

An important component to fostering successful brand image using the 5As framework is to include elements of storytelling, an approach which presents information about the destination in meaningful and memorable ways to create emotional bonds with consumers (Bonarou et al., 2019). Central to storytelling is that both the DMO and visitors are active in creating the stories about the destination as technology has allowed consumers to be part of the resources available about a region through the creation of content such as blogs, social media posts and reviews on review sites (Bonarou

et al., 2019). DMOs need to account for this change in dynamic and ensure that they have a good digital presence especially on social media platforms.

Social media can be an important tool for DMOs as having a strong online presence can increase the discoverability of the destination. Furthermore, social media channels can allow DMOs to have a more interactive relationship with potential visitors and permits them to leverage off of positive posts about their destination made by visitors, reviewers and influencers (Nyorani, 2020). Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have been identified as some of the top social media channels in terms of user engagement and having a presence on these different social media platforms is imperative for DMOs (Nyorani, 2020). Each platform has different benefits, objectives, and dominate target audience. Twitter is an important platform for journalists, Instagram is popular with millennial consumers, Facebook tends to appeal to an older demographic and video content on YouTube remains a key tool to share videos and storytelling related to the destination (Nyorani, 2020).

From a consumer context, social media plays a significant role in influencing a person's decision to visit a region as studies have shown that social media channels are often the first place a person will check when researching a destination (Andrlic & Chamaru de Alwis, 2016). Word of mouth recommendations have traditionally been identified as one of the top motivators to visit a region. For recommendations found online, reviews and posts made by people, rather than the destination or brands themselves, were shown to be highly trusted by potential visitors in their research of a destination (Nyorani, 2020). In this way, word of mouth has evolved into 'World of Mouth' with user created reviews and recommendations being easily accessible online and largely given the same amount of trust as recommendations from personal contacts (Popesku, 2014).

Social media use has been intensified by the advent of lockdowns and stay at home orders brought on by Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021 as increased time at home resulted in an unprecedent rise in digital consumption (Koeze & Popper, 2020). With covid-19 still being an uncertain reality, it is imperative that DMO's continue to utilise social media to remain connected with potential visitors all around the world.

3 Methodology

3.1. Situational Analysis of the Madeira Wine Route

To be able to develop relevant digital proposal strategies for the Madeira Wine Route, it was first necessary to examine the current state of the route and present-day realities of tourism in Madeira. Situational analysis was chosen as the best method to be able to develop a comprehensive picture of the current situation. A situational analysis comprises of an evaluation of both internal and external factors of an organisation with the goal of being able to evaluate areas of strength, and opportunities as well as identify weaknesses and potential threats (Lake, 2020). Central to this method is the creation of a SWOT

analysis which will guide future strategies and plans of actions. For this work, the situational analysis was based around the following objectives:

- To gain an understanding of the tourist sector in Madeira and how it has been impacted by Covid-19
- To identify the main tourist markets for Madeira and if these demographics has been altered in a significant way due to the pandemic
- To evaluate the current offerings of the Madeira Wine Route based on a set scale of criteria identified
- Conduct a digital audit of the Madeira Wine Routes online presence and social media engagement
- Identify potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Madeira Wine Route (SWOT)

To conduct the situational analysis, content was examined from the official website of the Madeira Tourism Board and statistical data was examined from the *Direção Regional Estatística da Madeira* (DREM). These sources were complimented by data gathered from the original application forms filled by the members of route as well past research data on tourism in Madeira which included interviews conducted with winemakers and visitors in Madeira. An important past study utilised was the work of Abreu et al. (2019) in which they conducted a random sample survey of 68 tourists visiting the island. The goal of their study was to obtain tourism and stakeholder perspectives on wine tourism in Madeira in assessing Madeira wine contributions in creating sustainable tourism on the island (Abreu et al., 2019). The results of the study helped gain key insights on tourism needs and behaviours in Madeira which will assist in the development of relevant digital promotional strategies for the route.

3.2. Wine Route Evaluation

It was necessary to establish set criteria to guide the evaluation of the Madeira Wine Route. The criteria chosen was developed based existing literature on wine route evaluation. The work of Cruz-Ruiz et al. (2020), in which they developed criteria for the design of a wine route in Malaga was chosen as a central framework. As part of their research, they determined key elements of a successful wine route, concluding with the five elements seen in Figure 5. Building upon these elements, components of a checklist suggested by Getz were considered as well, particularly the checkpoints of accessibility and associate activities (accommodation, tourism services) (Lopes et al., 2018). The inclusion of associate activities as a relevant criterion was also confirmed by the work on the Wine Route Product Life Cycle which identified innovation and diversity of offerings as a key component of growth (Dimirovki et al., 2019). Following these models, it was therefore concluded that the Madeira Wine Route would be analysis under the following six criteria: wineries/cellars, associate activities (includes accommodation

and tourist animation companies), food and gastronomy, accessibility, traditional festivities and cultural heritage, and landscape.

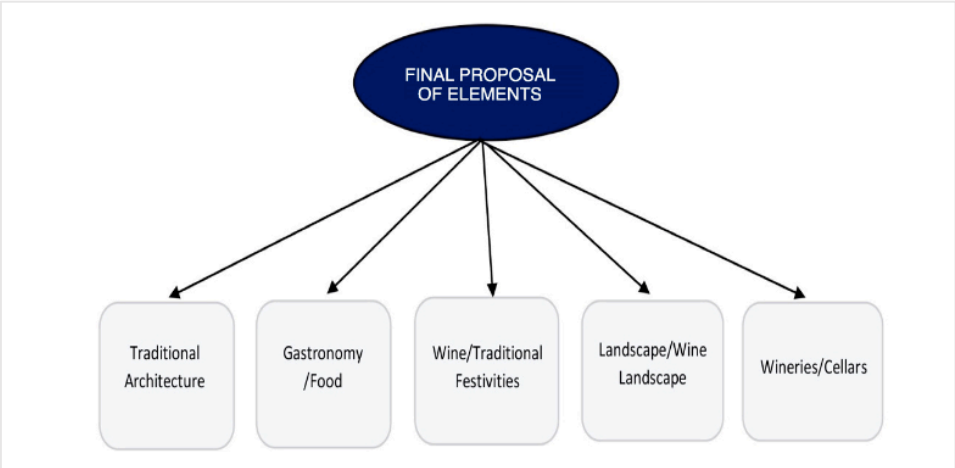

Figure 5: Final proposal of elements for the design of a wine route
Source: Cruz-Ruiz et al., 2020.

3.3. Social Media Audit of the Madeira Wine Route

As explored in the literature review, e-marketing and social media are areas of extreme importance in successfully promoting a wine route and the destination it is located in. Therefore, it was imperative to perform a digital audit of the MWR's current online presence. This audit included an evaluation of the social media channels the MWR is present on, how active they are on these channels, and the level of user engagement they net. Furthermore, the content of these social media channels were analysed to determine any main themes.

3.4. Consumer Behaviour Survey

A short online survey was conducted by the author to gain insight on the role, if any, wine routes play in the decision-making process to visit a wine region and which features were considered important/useful to be included on a wine route. The online survey included 10 closed-answer questions with space to include comments at the end (See Annex A5). The questionnaire was primarily distributed through Facebook groups. This was done to reach a wide audience in a short amount of time and was focused on Facebook groups that had a large user base (200+) centered around wine appreciation, wine tourism, and travel in general. Survey participants were asked to identify their age range, country of origin and rank their level of wine knowledge in one of four categories. These categories were based on the study of Hall and Macionis in 1998 where they identified three clusters of wine tourist – wine lovers, wine interested and curious tourists (López-Guzman et al., 2010).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Situational Analysis of the Madeira Wine Route

Similar to the rest of Europe, Madeira's tourism industry has suffered greatly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact has been harshly felt on the island. Tourism accounts for a quarter of the island's total GDP and a significant portion of the population is employed in this sector (DREM, 2020). Madeira responded to the Covid-19 crisis by investing considerably in initiatives to help local businesses be able to adapt to the new health regulations and incorporate them in their services. Madeira also implemented a strict testing policy for all people entering the island which continues to the present day. All visitors require a negative covid test to enter and must do a second test on the 5th day of their stay (OMTB, 2021). To encourage national tourism, the covid test needed to enter the island was free as part of the ticket price from flights leaving from mainland Portugal. Another key tactic to manage Covid-19's impact on tourism was the development of the 'Madeira: Safe to Discover' program. This is a seal that companies can obtain from the government of Madeira if they adhere to a set list of safety guidelines. The logo communicates to the public that proper health actions are being followed. These actions led to Madeira being named 'Europe's Safest Destination in 2021' and Madeira has fostered a brand image of being a destination for safe tourism that will help attract visitors to the island and begin recovery in the tourism sector.

Pre-Covid-19, Madeira had a strong tourism sector and welcomed around 1,000,000 visitors a year (DREM, 2019). The most popular types of tourism on the island are nature and adventure tourism with the island's climate, beaches, outdoor activities, and sports (especially golf) identified as the main attractions bringing visitors to Madeira (Oliveira & Telhado Pereira, 2008; Abreu et al., 2019). While wine tourism on the island is prevalent it is not the main draw for visitors. A survey of tourists visiting Madeira conducted by Abreu et al. (2019) revealed that while many tourists expressed interest and prior knowledge of Madeira wine, the island was not seen as a 'wine destination' (pg. 345). A study conducted by Oliveira and Telhado Pereira (2008) found similar results in their survey of tourists in Madeira in which respondents did not rank wine high in their reasons for deciding to visit Madeira. Instead, nature and climate were greatly valued with generational differences being noted in how nature was enjoyed on the island with older visitors (50+) preferring more leisurely outdoor activities and younger visitors drawn to more adventurous pursuits (Oliveira & Telhado Pereira, 2008). Despite wine tourism not being marked as top motivator in either survey, Abreu et al. (2019) did find that wine tourism complemented and enhanced the overall experience of tourists with the vineyard landscape being especially noted by respondents as being very attractive and a unique feature of the island. The study found tourists visiting the island favoured experiences that were 'authentic' and highlighted that this was an area of potential for wine tourism in Madeira which could showcase the natural landscape and local culture to create unique tourist experiences (Abreu et al., 2019).

Foreign markets dominate the Madeira tourism sector with a significant portion of visitors coming from the United Kingdom, Germany, and France (DREM, 2020). Despite Covid-19 resulting in a sharp decline in travel, these three countries still make up the majority of foreign visitors to this island. In December 2020, Madeira received 12,800 visitors from just the UK and Germany alone which

equaled more than a thousand than the total number of visitors from Portugal (DREM, 2020). This reveals that even in a time where covid restrictions were becoming stricter, Madeira still received a substantial portion of foreign tourism and that the main visitor markets have not altered significantly.

In addition to tourism decline, Madeira wine sales were also impacted by the pandemic and saw a 17% sales decrease between 2019 and 2020 which represented the lowest ever level of quantities sold in eleven years (DREM, 2020). This can be largely attributed to the sharp decrease in tourism as a substantial part of Madeiran wine sales are through cellar door transactions. As Figure 6 illustrates, the sharpest decline was in the local, Portuguese market. As Portugal is home to many different wine regions throughout the country, this decline could be due to the trend of focusing on drinking more locally which occurred during the pandemic. Figure 6 also reveals that Madeira wine sales have remained relatively stable within the EU market. Interestingly, some increases in sales were noted within the EU with sales to France rising by 2.1% and sales to Switzerland increasing by 21.5% (DREM, 2020).

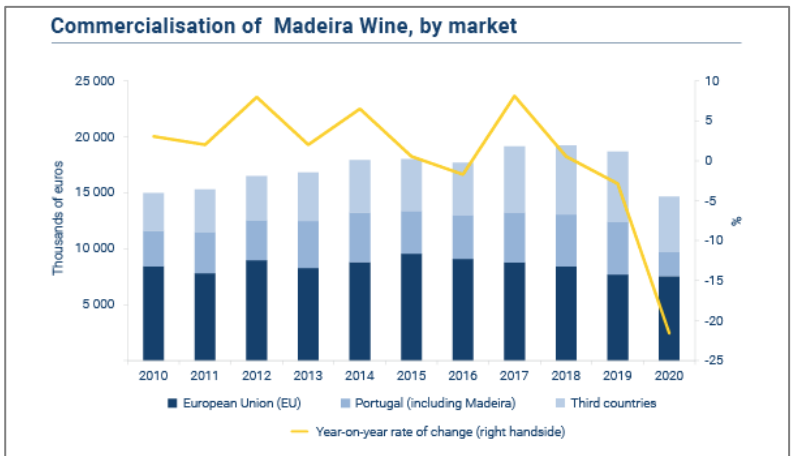

Figure 6: The Commercialisation of Madeira Wine, by Market, for years 2010-2020
Source: *Direção Regional de Estatística da Madeira* (DREM), 2021.

Tourism is slowly rebuilding in Madeira and in the EU. As Figure 7 indicates, since April there has been a positive upswing in travel rates. Many EU countries are seeing lowered Covid-19 rates and, as a result, are lessening their travel related restrictions. This is especially the case for short-haul flights, which could indicate that many Europeans are choosing to travel to destinations close to them within the EU. Another positive trend has been the increase of foreign card spending in Portugal. This increase coincided with Portugal's decision to reopen its land borders and to allow more countries to be able to come to Portugal via airplane for tourism as long as proper Covid-19 tests were conducted.

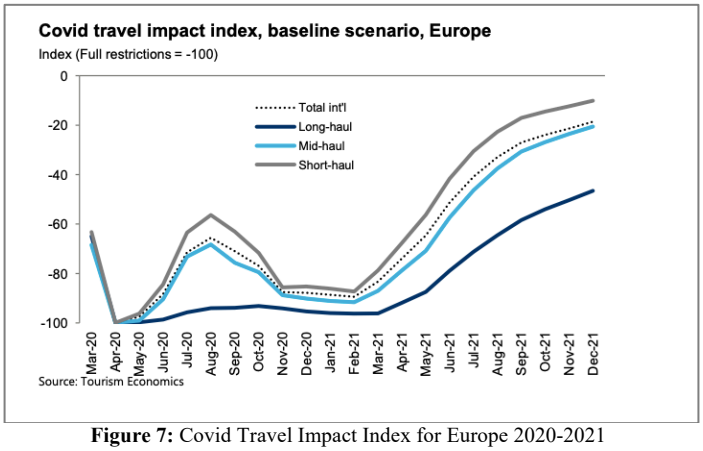

Figure 7: Covid Travel Impact Index for Europe 2020-2021
Source: Tourism Economics TE-ETC 2020 Q3 Report 2021.

Madeira has mirrored these trends in their own recent visitor rates as illustrated in Figure 8. In April, the islands received 126,100 overnight stays with non-residents in Portugal accounting for 60% of that number. These numbers indicate a slow, but steady, increase in visitors that could continue to grow especially with the decision made to allow UK citizens into Portugal for tourism purposes starting May17th.

Table 1: Total Overnight Stays in Touristic Accommodation Establishments in Madeira for April 2021

Overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments, by type of residence

R. A. Madeira — Unit: 10^3

Type of residence	Total tourism accommodation [1]		Tourism accommodation (except for local accommodation with less than 10 beds)		Hotel establishments	
	Apr-2021	Y-o-y change rate (%)	Apr-2021	Y-o-y change rate (%)	Apr-2021	Y-o-y change rate (%)
Total	**126.1**	**3 014.9**	**99.4**	**4 434.7**	**79.0**	**5 448.0**
Residents in Portugal	**49.3**	**2 630.5**	**43.5**	**3 430.9**	**34.6**	**3 060.3**
Non residents in Portugal	**76.8**	**3 323.9**	**55.9**	**5 722.0**	**44.4**	**13 395.1**
Gemany	17.3	2 513.7	11.0	5 299.5	7.7	4 434.3
United Kingdom	6.2	6 842.2	5.1	16 960.0	4.4	//
France	6.1	10 100.0	4.4	14 556.7	2.8	9 300.0

Source: DREM, Survey on Guest Stays in Accommodation Establishments.
Note: Includes three types of accommodation facilities: hotel establishments (hotels, apartment hotels, tourist apartments, tourist villages, pousadas and quintas da Madeira), local accommodation and rural/lodging tourism.

Source: *Direção Regional de Estatística da Madeira* (DREM), 2021.

Several key outcomes can be taken from this analysis. The first is that the main tourist draws of Madeira are its warm climate, beautiful landscapes and outdoor activities. Wine tourism is more of an auxiliary activity for visitors but there exists the potential to further develop wine tourism offerings to match the desire of visitors for 'authentic' experiences. Secondly, the main visitor markets for Madeira have not altered much in demographics with foreign markets still dominating. The UK, Germany and France have remained the top foreign markets, with residents of these three countries accounting for almost a quarter of the total overnight stays on the island in April (DREM, 2020). Thirdly, while Madeira wine consumption has declined in the Portuguese market it has remained stable in the EU markets with

France and Switzerland seeing a growth in consumption. This could present itself as an opportunity for new markets that could be attracted by the offerings of the Madeira Wine Route. Finally, strong initiatives taken by the government have not only ensured that all businesses are operating within Covid-19 safety regulations but that this has been properly communicated to all potential visitors. Madeira was named 'Europe's Safest Destination in 2021' and this fact is clearly displayed in all tourism communications from the DRT. Despite the severe decline in tourism revenues faced during the months of heavy pandemic restrictions, the data revealed in this analysis concludes that Madeira has a strong foundation to restore tourism on the island and that wine tourism could be an area of potential in assisting to rebuild visitor levels.

4.2. Wine Route Evaluation

To gain a clearer picture of the current state of the Madeira Wine Route, data from the route's members were evaluated using six pre-determined criteria which included food & gastronomy, wineries/cellars, associate activities, accessibility, wine/traditional festivals and cultural heritage, and natural landscape. The analysis revealed that the route benefits from a wide variety of tourism offerings which will allow it to reach diverse tourism markets while also identifying several key areas of opportunity and/or improvement.

4.2.1. Food/Gastronomy

The strongest element of the Madeira Wine Route is its Food and Gastronomy offerings. Restaurants make up almost 50% of the total members of the route (Annex A6a). With 60 restaurants on the map, the MWR offers wine tourists the opportunity to try local cuisine in establishments ranging from Michelin star restaurants to fish huts on the beach. Many of the restaurants of the route provide food and wine experiences including wine dinners, food and wine tastings, gastronomic experiences, and the services of a sommelier (Annex A6b). Wine tourists can also enjoy gastronomic experiences at many of the wineries and wine bars on the route which also offer food and wine pairing experiences. Central to many of these experiences is a focus on pairing traditional Madeiran cuisines with local wines in locations that feature the stunning natural landscape of the island as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8: A typical Madeiran gastronomic pairing of mussels and wine.
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.



Figure 9: A traditional storage attic for Madeira wine
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.

4.2.2. Wineries/ Cellars

The MWR includes 19 wine producers on the route with the majority of them being located within and around the main city of Funchal. There is another small cluster of wine producers in the North in the area of Sāo Vincent, with a few satellite wineries located on the Eastern and Western coasts. Wine cellars on the route range in size, from large operations to rural family owned *Quintas*. The larger cellars on the route focus more on fortified Madeira production and many have been established on the island for centuries. Still wine production is increasing and many of the newer cellars on the route specialise solely in still wines from the volcanic terroir of the island.

Over half the cellars on the island boast patrimonial buildings, namely ancestral storage buildings that have housed casks of Madeira wine for centuries as illustrated in Figure 9. A variety of wine tourism experiences are offered by the wineries of the route (See Annex A6c). The majority of the cellars offer all their experiences in English and wine tastings and tours are the dominate experiences offered. An area for improvement could be increasing experiences related to food and wine pairings and developing more wine experiences outside a traditional wine tasting.

4.2.3. Associate Activities

The Madeira Wine Route represented itself well in this category with hotels making up 17% of the route (See Annex A6a). These accommodations are present throughout the island with most boasting beautiful views of the water due to their coastal location. The of the MWR are very diverse, ranging from five-star luxury hotels to family resorts and rural accommodation. This range of accommodation types adds to the dynamization of the MWR and the type of experiences that can be experienced on the route. The route is further complimented by the inclusion of Wine Bars, largely located in the main city of Funchal.

The MWR does not have many tourism companies associated with it, current there are only 5 companies which account for just 4% of the route. This could be an area of improvement as these tourism

entertainment companies can help in diversifying the attractions of the route by offering tours that blend other forms of tourism found on the island, such as hiking or golf, with wine tourism.

4.2.4. Accessibility

Accessibility is a criterion that encompasses a variety of components. For the MWR analysis accessibility was centered around the ease of finding and arriving to a destination on the map, how accessible the wine cellars are for those with disabilities, are services available in other languages (especially English) and are there adequate comfort facilities at the cellars.

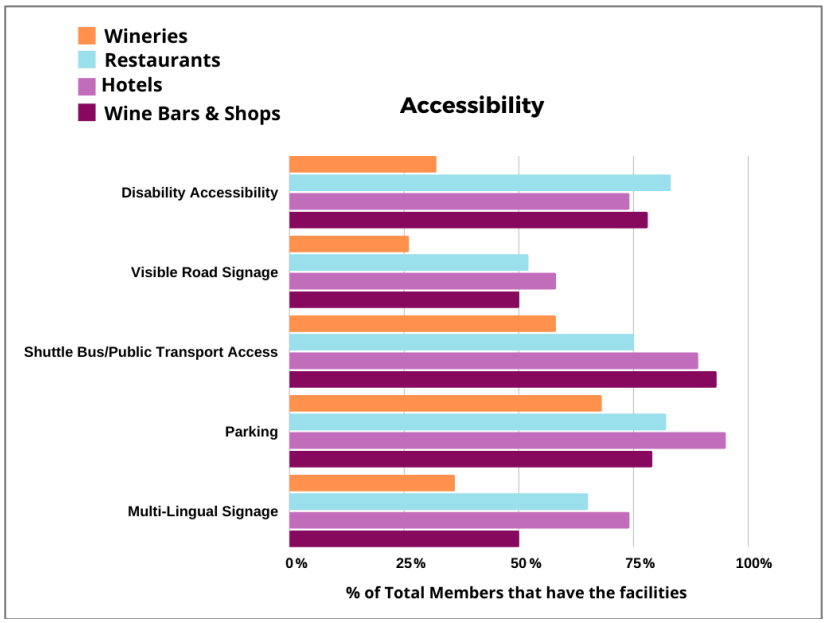

Figure 10 : The percentage of MWR members, by category, who have Accessibility Facilities
Source: Own elaboration adapted from data from original MWR application forms, 2021.

Figure 10 reveals that there are some important areas of improvement for the MWR in increasing the accessibility of the route. While most cellars have parking, only five wineries have visible road signage which makes it very difficult for a visitor new to the island to find them. A significant portion of the wineries do offer a shuttle bus which is a useful feature for the route as it allows visitors the chance to taste wine without having to take into account driving. All wineries are well structured in terms of comfort facilities, with all cellars having washrooms and almost all providing a seating area. Significantly, disability accessibility ranked quite low for the wineries. Only 26% of wineries have establishments and services modified for those with mobility issues and/or blindness.

Additionally, Figure 10 illustrates that the hotels, restaurants, and wine bars on the route also could benefit from increasing visible road signage. These services had more accessibility by shuttle bus and public transport than the wineries and at least 75% of the businesses in each category had amenities to accommodate people with disabilities and mobility issues.

4.2.5. Wine/Traditional Festivals and Cultural Heritage

Madeira has a rich cultural heritage that is celebrated through its many festivities. Central to the wine route is the Madeira Wine Festival as shown in Figure 11. This wine festival involves both big wine producers and familial farms. The festival celebrates harvest and is an occasion of joy with food, local dances, and wine all on displayed. Typically celebrated between August 29 to September 12th, this year's Wine Festival has been moved to October. Outside of the Wine Festival, the MWR conducts various events related to wines and the island's cultural heritage throughout the year. The MWR hosts a wine and film weekend and music nights which combine wine with local folklore. Cultural heritage is further celebrated and preserved on the MWR as many of the businesses operate out of heritage ancestral buildings, such as in Figure 12, and contribute to their ongoing maintenance.



Figure 11: The Madeira Wine Festival
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.



Figure 12: Quinta Bela Vista a hotel located in a historical 1844 building
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.

4.2.6. Natural Landscape/Wine Landscape

Madeira is a natural paradise featuring lush forests, mountains and sandy beaches. The Madeira Wine Route encourages visitors to explore this beautiful landscape by featuring attractions all over the region. As Figures 13 and 14 show, the vineyards on the island add to the beauty of its landscape through their unique structure as vines are planted on tiered terraces on high slopes over-looking the sea or among the lush vegetation of the island. These both represent planting styles traditional to the island and harvest is always done by hand the way it was done in the past.



Figure 13: Tiered Vineyards by the Sea
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.



Figure 14: Volcanic soil vineyards
Source: DRT Webpage, 2021.

4.3. Social Media Audit

The social media audit of the Madeira Wine Route's current online presence revealed several areas of opportunity as although the DRT is quite active on several major social media platforms, very little content has been posted about the wine route. The audit focused on the DRT's official accounts as the MWR currently does not have any social media channels under the wine route name alone. The audit measured which social media channels the DRT was present on, how many followers these accounts have, how active the DRT is on these platforms, the average user engagement with the DRT's posts, and how many posts were dedicated to wine and/or the MWR. Table 2 represents the main findings from this audit.

Table 2: Social Media Audit of the MWR

Social Media Audit of the Tourism Board of Madeira and the Madeira Wine Route

Date Range: 2019 - 2021

Current Social Media Channels	Total Followers [1]		Content Specificially about Wine and/or MWR [2]	Number of Posts In 2019-2021	Content
Facebook - @visitmadeiraofficial	Facebook	216,774	Facebook [3]	13	**No reference to the MWR,** Wine festival focused, Madeira wine info, info from wine producers
Twitter - @madeira_islands	Twitter	1,860	Twitter [4]	1	**No Reference to the MWR,** Mainly reposts, focused more on natural landscape and travel advice
Instagram - @visitmadeira	Instagram	239,000	Instagram [5]	1	**No reference to the MWR** Post about Madeiran wine
Youtube - VisitMadeiraOfficial	Youtube	15,300	Youtube [6]	3	**A video about the MWR** and two videos about the Wine Festival
Flickr - Visit Madeira	Flickr	0	Flickr [7]	-	- -
Issuu - Visit Madeira	Issuu	147	Issuu [8]	2	**The brochures of the MWR** in English and Portuguese
	Total Followers Among All Channels	**472,934**			

Top Themes Among All Channels	Activity Average Posts per Week [10]		Engagement [11]	Average # of Likes Per Post	Average # of Shares/ Views Per Post	Average # of Comments Per Post	Profile Average Engagement rate %
1) Nature/Landscape	Facebook	5-7	Facebook	480	41	20	**0,3%**
2) Covid 19 Safety	Twitter	3-4	Twitter	43	10	1	**3%**
3) Festivals	Instagram	3-4	Instagram	4086	N/A	33	**1.70%**
4) Sports & Outdoor Activities (esp Golf)	Youtube	1-2	Youtube	6	268	1	**1.70%**
	Flickr	-	Flickr	-	-	-	
	Issuu	As needed Last post over 1 year ago	Issuu	1	0	0	

Source: Own elaboration using data taken from the DRT's official Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Issuu accounts, 2021.

The audit revealed that the DRT is most active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Additionally, they have accounts on Flickr, a photo sharing platform, and Issuu, a digital publishing platform, but they do not post regularly. The DRT has the most followers on Instagram and Facebook but receives the most user engagement with their Instagram account. The engagement rate measures how much users interact with a post through measuring the total likes and comments a post receives. To determine the average engagement rate percentage of a social media channel, the average total likes and comments of the most recent 9 posts were added and then divided by the total number of followers of the channel (CFI, 2015). This number is then multiplied by 100 to receive the engagement percentage

rate. An average percentage rate is 2% with results of 4% and higher indicating that users are highly engaged and connecting with the content (CFI, 2015).

As seen in Table 2, an Instagram post by the DRT will receive around an average of 4000 likes and several comments with an average engagement percentage rate of 1.7%. Although The DRT is very consistent and active in postings, averaging 5 to 7 posts per week on Facebook and 3 to 4 posts per week on Instagram, the lower-than-average engagement rates on these channels indicate that content could be better tailored to gain more interaction from users.

The DRT represents itself under the handle *@VisitMadeira* across all platforms except Twitter which use*s @madeira_islands* and presents a consistent and similar branding image throughout all channels. The DRT utilises very similar content for both Instagram and Facebook, often publishing the same exact post on both. This can allow the DRT to reach a more varied audience as Facebook tends to be used by an older demographic while Instagram is a favourite of the millennial age group (Popesku, 2014). On Twitter, the DRT uses this platform largely to retweet other accounts related to Madeira as well as updates on Covid-19 regulations and travel advice for the island. All promotional videos commissioned by the DRT are posted on YouTube as well as occasionally on Facebook and Instagram. Currently, the DRT has no content on Flickr and uses Issuu as a medium to share the digital copies of all yearly event calendars and brochures related to different trails on the island including the MWR, hiking routes, and ocean trails.

A key finding of the audit was that there was little content posted across all social media channels about the MWR and Madeira wine in general. The majority of content was centred around themes related to the natural beauty and attractions of Madeira, Covid-19 safety, festivals, and sports and outdoor activities. Significantly, the MWR was not mentioned in any posts by the DRT except on YouTube and Issuu. This showcases a need to bring greater visibility to the route and one opportunity to do so would be to connect the MWR to these dominate content themes. Posts about the vineyard landscape could compliment the popular nature posts and many of the route members offer experiences that incorporate outdoor activities. The MWR could also add an element of diversity to the postings of DRT with more content related to the gastronomy and the wines of Madeira. The social media audit revealed a huge opportunity for the MWR as even just one post regarding the route a month on these channels will greatly increase the visibility and reach of the route.

4.4. Key insights from Consumer Behaviour Surveys

The consumer behaviour survey was conducted online and was completed by 56 applicants. It was distributed among Facebook groups related to wine appreciation, wine tourism, and travel in general. The aim of this survey was to gain an understand on what sources people rely on when gathering information about a wine region, whether wine routes play a role in the decision to visit a wine region and what features consumers would like to see on a wine route.

The majority of respondents fell within the 25-35 age range with the second largest demographic falling in the 36 to 49 range. Respondents came from all over the world, but the majority were from EU countries and North America. In terms of wine knowledge, 41.1% of respondents described themselves as 'Wine Enthusiasts,' 36.7% identified as Wine Professionals, 20% as 'social sippers', a small percentage chose the 'a little' category with no one identifying in the 'none' category. As highlighted in Figure 15, when asked which sources respondents relied on the most to gain information about a wine region they want to visit, three sources stood out. Respondents relied on third party review websites the most in gaining information, then the websites of the wineries themselves followed by the official tourism website of the region. Social media and 'word of mouth' were fairly even chosen which collaborates with the theory that 'World of Mouth,' recommendations made on online channels, is emerging as being an equally important source of information on a destination as suggestions made from friends and family.

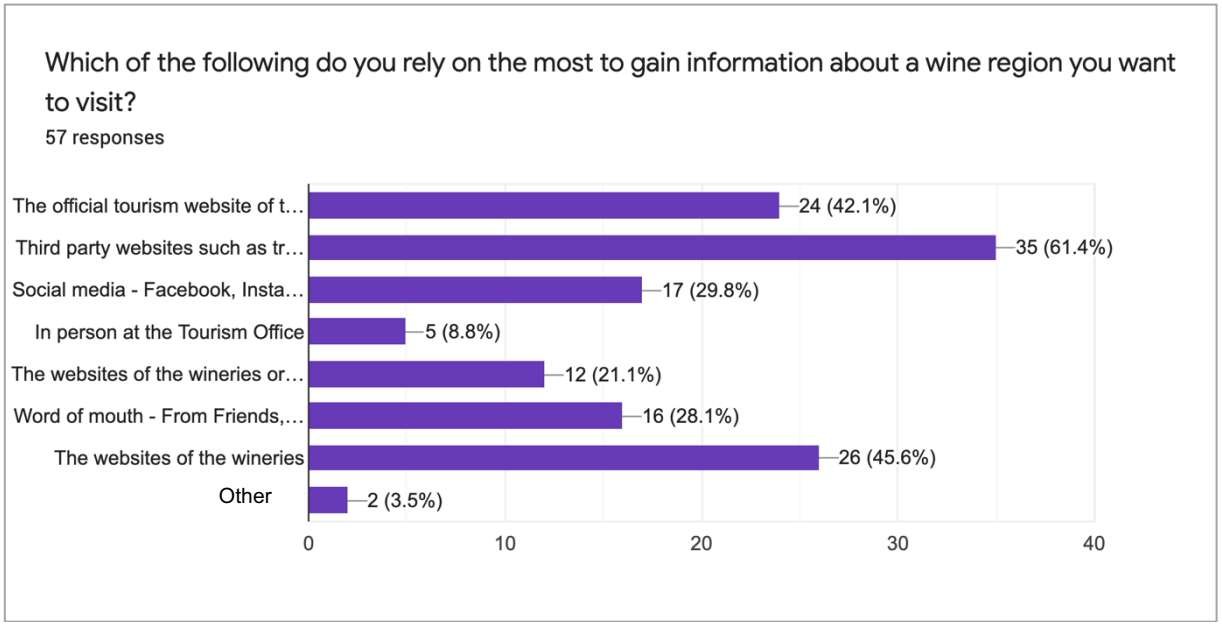

Figure 15: Which Sources are Most Relied on by Respondents to Gain Information about a Wine Region
Source: Own elaboration using data from consumer behaviour survey, 2021

When asked to rank from to 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'not important at all' and 5 representing "very important,' how important wine routes are in influencing their decision to visit a wine region, most respondents chose 3 or 4. This indicates that wine routes can have some influence but are not seen as the dominate influencer in choosing a wine region to visit.

Respondents were asked to rank on another scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'not helpful at all' and 5 representing 'very helpful,' various content that could be included a wine route. Information about the businesses on the route and about the wine region received the highest amount of 5 rankings Having a calendar of events, local stories, and the ability to customise the route was also identified as being useful. When asked which format was preferable for wine route information, digital or physical brochures, the majority (75%) chose digital. Respondents were also asked what type of promotional

content would attract them to a wine route. As Figure 16 demonstrates, food and wine pairing content as well as online videos ranked highly.

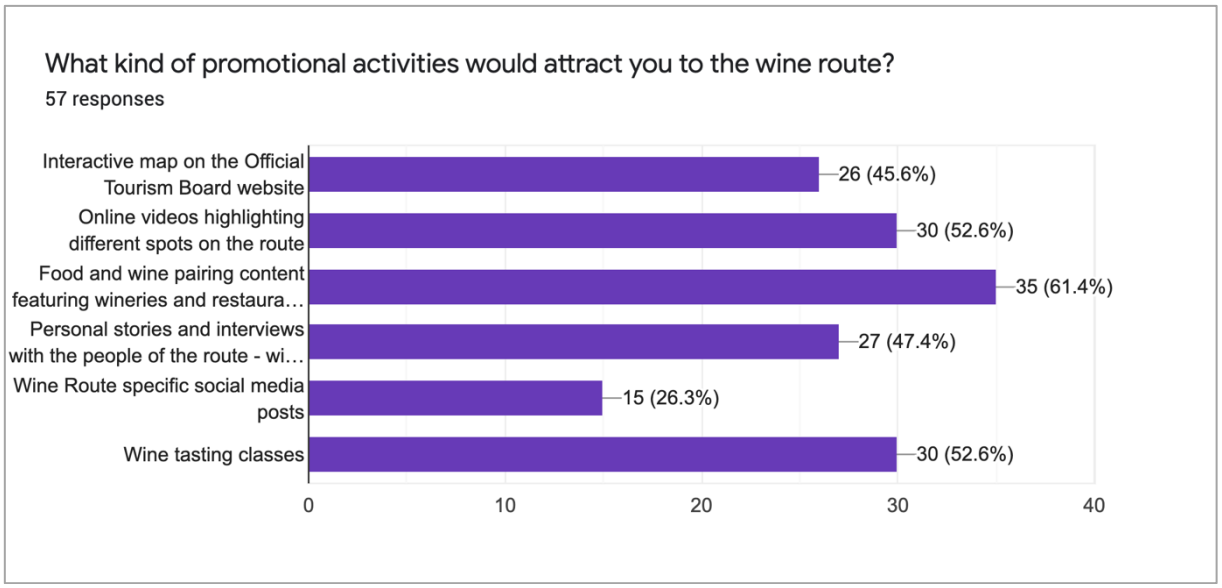

Figure 16: What type of Promotional Activities Most Appeal to Respondents
Source: Own elaboration using data from consumer behaviour survey, 2021

The survey showed that wine routes can play a role in influencing a decision to visit a wine region, but it is not the main determinate. Digital content was prioritised with content related to food and wine and videos featuring spots on the route identified as being the most attractive to respondents. As shown in Figure 16, surprisingly only 15% chose social media posts as being attractive which could be an indicator that other digital mediums should be explored. While the survey revealed some useful insights, a limitation of this study was that the surveyed pool fell primarily in the two categories of 'Wine Enthusiasts' and 'Wine Professionals.' Further consumer surveys should be conducted to a wider audience to allow for greater perspectives to compliment the results in indicated here.

4.5. SWOT Analysis

Utilizing the above information, a SWOT analysis was developed for the Madeira Wine Route which can be seen in Figure 17. The SWOT analysis reveals that the Madeira tourism industry has been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic with visitor numbers falling dramatically in the past two years. Due to its geographical location, Madeira is solely reliant on air and maritime travel which could be a potential obstacle in rebuilding tourism as changing travel restrictions remain a constant uncertainty.

Specific to the wine route, the Madeira Wine Route is still very much in the beginning phase of its life cycle and, as such, there has not been too much publicity regarding the route. With the lack of visitors, wine route members have had less customers and many could risk closure.

Strengths

- Deeply rooted traditions of hospitality, Madeira is one of the oldest tourism destinations in the world
- Existing strong tourism market
- Good infrastructure on the island to accommodate tourists
- Very good climate which remains consistent year-round (16-22°C)
- Strong policies that have helped mitigate the spread of Covid-19 on the island
- Named Europe's Safest Destination in Europe 2021
- All members of the MWR are part of the Madeira: Safe to Discover program
- Stunning wine landscape of sloped vineyards next to the sea
- Long wine history with strong international ties
- Fortified Madeira wine is a product unique to the island
- Diversity in the tourism attractions offered by the route – appeals to wide variety of target markets
- Wine Route is already established
- Public transport networks to spots on the routes
- Events that tie with the wine route – Harvest and the Madeira Wine Festival
- Diverse natural landscape including mountains, waterfalls, beaches
- UNESCO natural heritage site – the Laurel Forest

Weaknesses

- Reliance on air and maritime travel to bring visitors to the island
- Instability due to Covid-19
- Madeira wine not well known outside of niche wine markets
- Wine is not a real motivator for visitors coming to Madeira with Beach, nature, adventure and business tourism dominating
- No real marketing plan specific to the Madeira wine route
- Lack of strong online presence
- No completed physical signage on the roads identifying the route

Opportunities

- The MWR can complement and build upon existing strong tourism attractions such as nature tourism by creating collaborative activities
- Increase in demand for rural tourism as many want to avoid dense clusters of people found in urban cities
- Tourists will be searching which destinations are the safest regarding Covid-19 – Madeira will appear as they were named Europe's safest destination in 2021
- Increasing social media content can help bring the MWR to a wider audience and attract new markets to the island
- Lessening of travel restrictions have allowed for the increased return of visitors from main foreign markets such as the UK and Germany
- Trend of increased travel bookings with the lessening of Covid-19 travel restrictions within the EU and in some key international markets
- Emerging production of interesting still wines from volcanic soil in Madeira

Threats

• Shortage of available employees due to growing trend of young people leaving the island in search of jobs

• Increased competition from destinations offering similar attractions but don't require air or sea travel to visit

• Flying might be deemed a risky or unsafe choice with Covid-19 still being a reality

• Uncertainty of future Covid-19 restrictions

• Some of the wine route members may have to close, or have already closed, due to the lack of tourism on the island over the pandemic leading to less attractions on the route

Figure 17: SWOT Analysis
Source: Own elaboration

Positively, the Madeiran government have helped to prevent the spread of Covid-19 on the island through strict testing policies on all who enter. They have also put into place several programs that have helped tourism businesses adjust their services to new health regulations. These initiatives have been crucial in fostering safe tourism on the island and helped earn Madeira the title of 'Safest Destination in Europe.' The MWR can utilize this title and further promote the safety actions taken by its members by communicating that all members have the 'Madeira: Safe to Discover Seal.' This means all members are following Covid-19 health regulations and are ready and equipped to receive visitors.

The wine route itself has many strengths including a diversity of tourism offerings and services and locations which feature stunning landscapes. The MWR can help promote tourism on Madeira by offering new attractions that can appeal to new markets. To be successful in this the MWR needs to increase its reach as a significant weakness of the route is its lack of visibility on any of the DRT's social media channels. Focusing on digital strategies will help the Madeira wine route to showcase its offerings to a wider audience while also allowing for the route to build and maintain connections in a way that can continue even if another lockdown occurs.

5. Proposals

Although the Madeira Wine Route is still in the first 'introduction stage' of the Wine Route Life Cycle model, the wine route evaluation and SWOT analysis revealed that the members of MWR are well established to provide excellent hospitality to its visitors and the MWR has a strong foundation. What is needed to continue developing the route firmly into the 'growth' stage of the Wine Route Life Cycle model are strategies that will not only bring attention to the route to build interest and connections with customers but also help foster a sense of unity and partnership among its members. To accomplish this, two proposals have been developed that aim to introduce the MWR as a cohesive brand, to increase promotion of the route, foster user engagement and create emotional connections with visitors.

5.1 Proposal 1: Digital Wine Route Map

Information on the Madeira Wine Route currently exists on the DRT's website, but the information is fragmented and there is no map on the website. In order to create a centralised information page, a digital wine route map was proposed as illustrated in Figure 18. This will allow users to see all the members of the wine route in one place and will help visualise the route as a united offering.

The map will be interactive and displays all the stops on the route. Clicking on a spot will bring up photos and information on the business including opening hours, experiences offered and a brief description. Users can also find live webcams of the major towns on the routes and have access to the Madeira wine route promotional video. The user can customise the map to just show the stops they are interested in, allowing them to make their own tailored wine route. The map is computer and mobile compatible meaning that users can use it anywhere on the island (See Annex A8). The map is available in English and Portuguese and is proposed to launch August 2021.

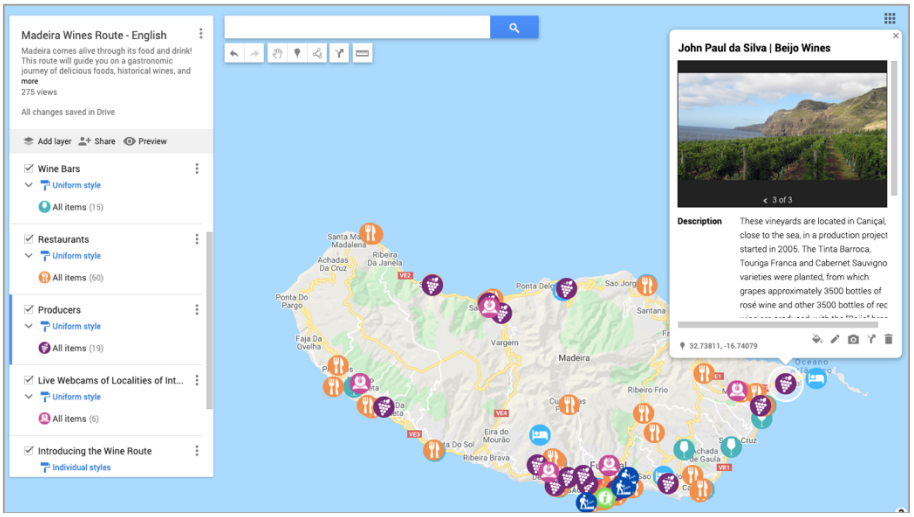

Figure 18: English Version Proposal for the Interactive MWR Map
Source: Own elaboration

5.2 Proposal 2: Digital Promotional Plan

Utilising the information gained through this research, a digital promotion plan was developed that includes communication actions to be taken over the next year. The decision to focus primarily on digital communication strategies was chosen based on several logistical advantages. Firstly, the promotional actions outlined in the calendar can be implemented and distributed by the DRT's existing social media team and therefore no new position or employee is needed. Secondly, digital communications can be operated at little-to-no cost by either the DRT or wine route members. Finally, digital communications can be implemented at a faster rate than more in-depth physical campaigns which means promotion of the route can begin as soon as possible. The plan was developed using a content marketing ideology centred around presenting focused, relevant and engaging content about the MWR.

5.2.1. Objectives

The digital promotional plan will be focused on seeking to increase promotion of the route, foster user engagement with the MWR and to create emotional connections with visitors at all. Several main goals where developed (See Annex A7). Key objectives are:

- Increase the digital presence of the MWR on all major social media channels of the DRT
- Promote the MWR as a new wine tourism product that compliments existing tourism attractions through content that highlights the natural wine landscape and authentic cultural experiences
- Develop networks and collaboration between MRW members through collaborative promotional initiatives under the MWR brand
- Raise user interaction with the MWR through the creation of a new hashtag representing the wine route and engaging with 1000 users by the end of the promotional calendar year

5.2.2. Audience

The promotional plan is centred on engaging potential visitors from both Portugal and abroad. For foreign markets, the main foreign visitor countries to the island will be targeted, notably the UK, Germany, and France. Communication will therefore be presented in both English and Portuguese to reach both domestic and foreign targets. As illustrated in the situational analysis, the main motivators for visitors coming to Madeira is to enjoy the natural landscape, the warm climate, and to participate in outdoor sports and activities. Visitors are also preoccupied with wanting to experience 'authentic' cultural activities. These motivators remained constant for both foreign and local Portuguese markets. Therefore, the targeted audience profile are Europeans, aged 30-65 who want to travel safely and are outdoor focused, looking for adventure, want to experience 'authentic' activities, and have an interest in food and wine. While the themes will remain constant, different content will sometimes be tailored to users in the 30-45 and 45+ age brackets reflecting the trend seen in the situational analysis in which older visitors preferred more relaxed activities while younger visitors wanted more extreme endeavors. Content aimed at the younger demographic will be presented primarily on Instagram and Facebook will be the dominate medium of connecting with the older demographic.

5.2.3. Content ideation and Planning

The digital promotional plan includes content that will be dispersed among various social media platforms with Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube being the core channels to be utilised. The core theme of all communications is to present Madeira as a Wine Destination and to tie the MWR into the existing tourist attractions and events of the island. In order to achieve this, content will be focused around three main storyline campaigns and several auxiliary ones around major Madeiran festivities and holidays. Communications will utilise a mix of formats including images, posts, videos, and blogs and have identified which stage or stages of the 5A customer journey (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, Advocate) they are targeting. These main topic initiatives are summarised in Table 3.

As Table 3 indicates, the first campaign is focused on introducing the hashtag *#Madeirawineroute* and encouraging its use both by the MWR members and visitors. Once the hashtag has been introduced, it will be utilised in all social media communications of the route. Visitors who use the hashtag have the chance of being reposted on the DRT's official social medial channels.

A second main campaign to be enacted is a video series showcasing several wine producers and chefs of the route. Each video will present a food and wine pairing that celebrates the island while also promoting the upcoming Madeira Wine Festival. The food and wine pairing showcased on the video will be available to taste in person at the festival. These videos will be short, 2 minutes or less, and will be featured on all social media channels as outlined in the digital promotional plan. The first video will be launched in September to coincide with the beginning of harvest, another busy time on the island.

Table 3: Table of Main Content Storylines for the MWR proposed to be published in 2021-2022

Main Content Storylines							
The Madeira wine Route							
Topic (may be the same as the headline)*	**Suggested Target Keyword**	**Target Publication Date**	**Content Type***	**Objective of Content**	**Stage Buyers**	**Audience/Persona***	**Description**
Sip Safely! - #MadeiraWineRoute and Covid-19	Covid-19 Europe Travel Safety Wine Tasting	Jul-21	SM post with link to website	Lead gen	Awareness Decision	Potential visitors Soon to arrive visitors	Inform of the MWR 'Safe to Discover' seal and its members comittment to safety. Present the MWR as a safe way to experience the island.
Create your own path with the Madeira Wine Route	Wine Route Tourism Discover Explore Gastronomy	Aug-21	SM post with link to website	Search	Decision	Potential visitors Visitors on the island Locals	Introduce the new digital wine route feature on the DRT's website - available in both English and Portuguese
Tastes of Terroir - Food and Wine Pairings Videos	Gastronomy Local Madeira Wine Experience	Sep-21	Video Series	Lead Gen	Awareness Consideration	Potential visitors Visitors Locals	Video series (4 videos) featuring a chef and wine producer from the MWR presenting a food and wine pairing that can be tasted at the Wine Festival
The Madeira Grape Harvest	Grape Harvest Traditional viticulture Madeira wine	Sep/Oct 21	Video Blog	Social	Awareness	Potential visitors Visitors Locals	Short video of traditional grape harvest and blog post about working a harvest at a MWR winery
Where on the Journy are You? #Roundtripwine #Vinhodoroda	Journey Madeira Wine travel	May-22	Social Media Campaign	Social	Advocacy	Past Visitors Potential Visitors	Introduce the new # campaign based around original Madeira Wine production and encourage user engagement by reposting photos.
Spring is here! Embrace Nature on the Madeira Wine Route	Spring Environment Hiking Outdoor	Mar-22	Social Media Post Blog Video	Lead gen	Awareness Consideration Decision	Potential visitors Visitors Locals	Showcase the outdoor activities available on the MWR, centre focus being activities in the vineyards
Christmas with the Madeira Wine Route	Holiday Family Lights Christmas	Dec-21	Social Media Post Blog	Social	Awareness Advocacy	Potential visitors Visitors Locals	Highlight the holiday activities and events happeing on the route and showcase images of the Christmas decorations of the MWR members
Carnival! How to enjoy on the Madeira Wine Route	Carnival Party Festival Madeira Wine	Feb-22	Social Media Post	Social	Awareness	Vistiors Locals	Tie the MWR with carnival festivities

Source: Own elaboration

The third main campaign will be launched in May 2022 at the beginning of the summer tourist season. This campaign will be centered around *#roundtripwine* and *#vinhodaroda* and will be distributed consecutively on Instagram and Facebook. Madeira wine is referred to as the round trip wine as it was originally produced by being 'cooked' during long around the world voyages. Building on this concept, the *#roundtripwine* campaign will ask past visitors to post photos of themselves enjoying Madeira wine all around the world. This represents one point of the journey with the hope being that one day the visitor will return to the island, completing the journey. This campaign is hoped to bring a greater awareness of the history of Madeira wines while also advocating visitors to produce their own content around Madeira wine and the MWR.

To compliment these main initiatives, strategic social media postings related to the MWR are also planned to coincide with major festivities on the island as well as major holidays. To further utilise 'e-storytelling,' several blog posts will be commissioned that will feature experiences to be had on the route as well as content that will tie the MWR holidays and local festivals. Central holidays and events include the Christmas holiday period, Carnival, and the Madeira Forest and Tree week (the start of Spring.) Figures 19 and 20 illustrate potential visuals for the campaigns (See also Annex A9).



Figure 19: Mock-up of #Roundtripwine post
Source: Own elaboration



Figure 20: Mock-up Wine Festival Post
Source: Own elaboration

5.2.4. Content Distribution Calendar

A 12-month calendar was developed to organise when and how each step to be implemented in the proposed digital promotion plan should be enacted. The calendar begins in July 2021 and outlines what specific content will be released, when it will be published and through which social media channel or channels (See Annex A10). Table 4 provides a summary of the proposed year-long content distribution strategy for each month.

Table 4: MWR Digital Content Frequency Table 2021-2022

Recommended 12-Month Content Frequency/Cadence

Content Type	July	August	Sept	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	Total Year 1
MWR specific social media posts (all channels)	2	2	3	4	2	5	2	2	2	2	3	2	31
Original Content Videos - Youtube	-	1	2	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	7
Reposts or Roundup of MWR members	-	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	14
Blogs	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	6

Source: Own elaboration

In order to best meet the objectives for the plan, a minimum goal of two original MWR related posts per month on any of the DRT's social medial channels has been set. An additional monthly minimum target includes posting one MWR relevant repost or 'roundup,' a post summarizing the activities of several individuals or companies. As Table 4 illustrates, the frequency of content publications increases around the main campaigns outlined in Table 3. Following the schedule outlined in the content distribution calendar will help keep communication on track, consistent and focused which will help meet the overall objectives of the promotional plan.

5.2.5. Evaluation

An important element of the digital promotional plan is to implement evaluation measures to be able to assess whether the campaigns were successful. Measures should evaluate whether the content marketing strategies met the outlined set objectives as well as access any significant changes in market trends. The knowledge gained through these evaluation measures should be utilised to find key areas to adapt and readjust for future campaigns.

The digital presence of the MWR can be evaluated by examining the engagement rate of MWR specific posts and videos to see if they met the target goal. The content of the campaigns should be analysed to see if intended messages were adequately presented as sometimes users interpret content differently than expected and this should be identified. The target audience profiles should also be re-examined to see if they continue to accurately reflect the audience most responding to the campaigns and if any new potential target audiences are appearing.

Discussions with the members of the MWR are also essential in evaluating the success of the promotional plan to ensure that the strategies are remaining in line with member's expectations and

showing a continuous performance. Additionally, MWR members can communicate if they feel that the strategies resulted in positive benefits for them in terms of attracting visitors to their businesses.

6. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study. An online presence is essential to be able to reach potential visitors as many rely on social media and the internet for recommendations and inspiration on where to travel to. This is a crucial weakness of the MWR as while it has a strong foundation, strategies are needed to better communicate its attributes online. Digital strategies were proven to be the best medium to bring the MWR to greater prevalence as they can be easily implemented, have a low financial cost, and can reach audiences all around the world. Therefore, two proposals were developed for MWR. A digital wine route map was proposed to synthesize all the information of the MWR into one area which would make it easier to access and interact with the route while further presenting the MWR as a cohesive brand. A second proposal developed was a digital promotional plan. This plan utilized a content marketing ideology and focused on 'e-storytelling' content to be published on all the DRT's major social media channels.

As a relatively new creation, the Madeira Wine Route is firmly in the introduction stage of the Wine Route Life Cycle Model. Embracing digital communication will provide security against falling into the decline stage. By committing to digital strategies that will increase interactions with visitors as well as foster collaboration among members, the MWR can continue to grow along the Wine Route Life Cycle Model.

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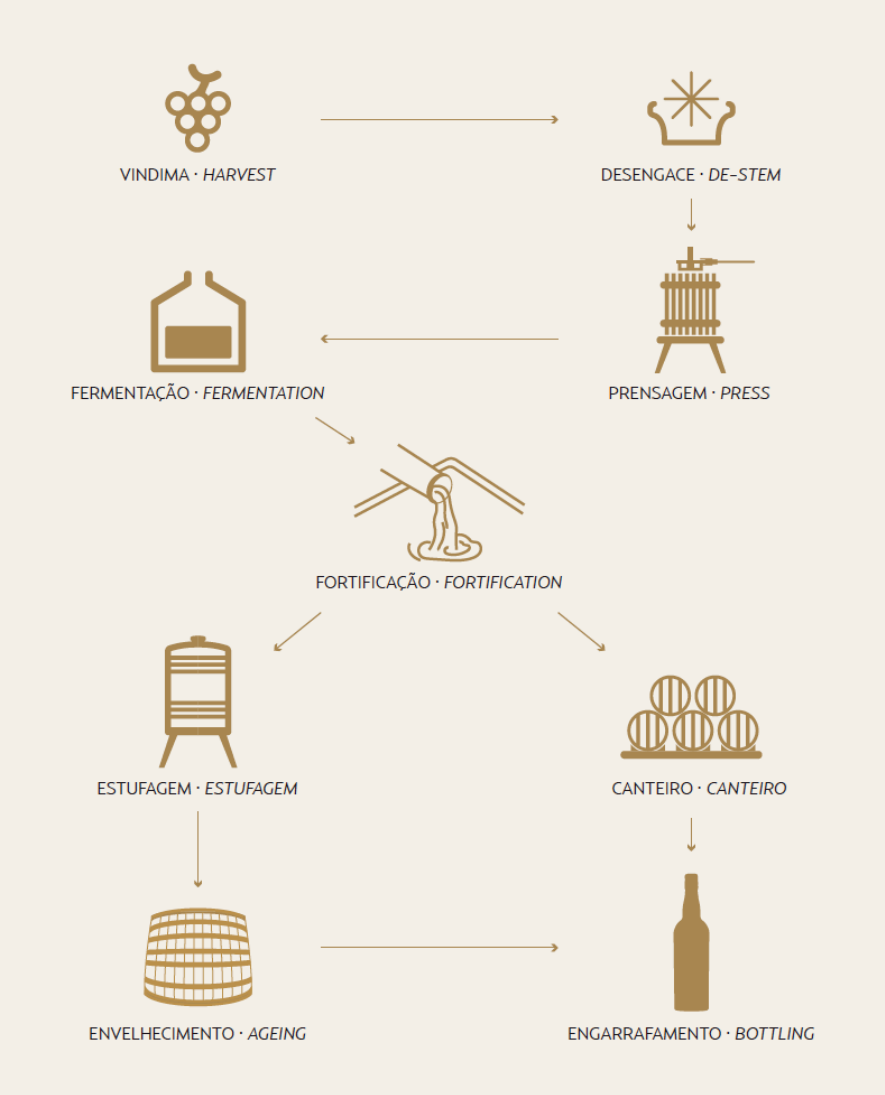
ANNEXES

A1. PDO Madeira Wine Production



Source of Image: Blandy's Madeira
https://www.blandys.com/en/making-the-wine/winemaking/

Estufagem Method: The estufagem method is typically used for larger production and involves heating the wine at around 50°C in artificially heated rooms (*'the estufa'*) recreating the effects of the round the world journey in roughly three months.

Canteiro Method: The canteiro method is a much slower and more natural process in which large barrels of wine are placed on platforms *('canteiros')*, high up in a room which is heated only by the sun. Wines aged in this matter can stay on the canteiros anywhere from 5 years to centuries.

A2. The Madeira Wine Route



A3. The Madeira Wine Route Application Form for Wine Producers

Ficha de Diagnóstico 'Produtores de Vinho'

Designação Comercial / Marca:
Morada:
Telefone:
E-mail:
URL:
Proprietário(s):
Nome do Responsável / Contato:
Horário de Funcionamento:
Área Total:
Cota (altitude):

	SIM	NÃO	OBSV.
ASPETOS GERAIS			
Identificação do local			
Práticas amigas do ambiente			
ACESSIBILIDADES			
Sinalética na via pública (para lá chegar)			
Transportes públicos / Shuttle bus			
Estacionamento (quantos lugares bus, mini bus, ligeiros?)			
Mobilidade reduzida / invisuais			
SERVIÇOS			
Entrada paga / Preço			
Sistema de Pagamento (MB, cash…)			
Suportes informativos (website, app, folhetos)			
Dominio de idiomas estrangeiros pelos colaboradores (quais?)			
Visitas guiadas (pagas/gratuitas? em que idiomas?)			
Provas de vinho (comentadas? pagas/gratuitas? preço? quantos vinhos min./máx.?)			
Degustação gastronómica			
Experiências para os visitantes			
CATEGORIZAÇÃO / TIPOLOGIA DE VINHO			
Vinho Madeira			
Vinho Madeirense			
Vinho Terras Madeirenses			
EQUIPAMENTOS			
Sinalética multilingue na propriedade / Percursos sinalizados			
Cozinha / Bar de apoio			
WC			
Loja de Vinhos (venda direta ao consumidor)			
Bancos de descanso			
Abrigo em caso de chuva			
PONTOS DE INTERESSE			
Casa-mãe / Quinta			
Museu / Nucleo Museológico			
Elementos Patrimoniais			
Miradouro / Vistas panorâmicas			
Elementos de Água (lagos, levadas, cascatas, etc)			
OBSERVAÇÕES GERAIS / NOTAS / SUGESTÕES			

Atenção ao preenchimento da 2ª folha em excel

A3.

A4. Sections taken from Initial Proposal Plan

PROJECT PROPOSAL

- **Digital Wine Route**

Increase digital engagement with the Madeira Wine Route by creating an interactive wine map for the Discover Madeira Website.

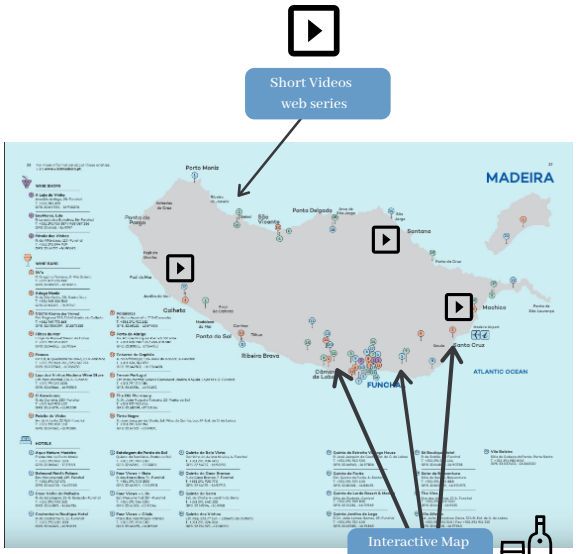
- **Short Videos/ Web series**

Collaborate with local communities and wine route Tourism Actors to create several short videos for the wine route. Some examples include storytelling relating to local culture, regional cuisine, food and wine pairing and how to prepare a madeira cocktail.

- **Educational Service Brochure**

Foster greater education and awareness of the wines of madeira and the wine route through the creation of an information brochure for restaurants and tourism actors of the route

An interactive Wine Route



Digitalising the wine route map will allow potential visitors to interact with the route.
Information regarding the tourism actors and wineries will all be present and **easily accessible in one central spot.**
Several short videos bring in a personal element while connecting with locals. These videos can showcase interesting feature points of the route; such as charming villages, local recipes, nature points.
Development of a QR code that can be scanned to bring up the wine map

A5. Wine Route Survey

Wine Routes

Hello, I am a Wine Tourism Master student writing my final thesis on the development of a wine route in Madeira, Portugal. The aim of this quick questionnaire is to find out the role wine routes play in deciding to visit a wine region. Additionally this survey will help discover which content would be the most interesting and helpful to present on the route. The questionnaire contains 10 questions and will take less than 5 minutes to complete. Thank you for your contribution.

For more information on the research please feel free to contact me at up202000569@fc.up.pt.

* Required

1. Please select your age range *

Mark only one oval.

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 35
- 36 - 49
- 50 - 65
- 65 +

2. Country of Origin *

3. How would you best describe your interest in wine? *

Mark only one oval.

- None - Not much of a wine drinker
- A little - Will have a glass on occasion
- Enjoys wine - A social sipper but no need for detailed tasting notes
- Wine Enthusiast - Love wine and may have taken a wine course or two but not a professional
- Wine Professional - In the industry

4. Which of the following do you rely on the most to gain information about a wine region you want to visit? *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] The official tourism website of the region
- [ ] Third party websites such as travel blogs and review websites (eg. Tripadvisor)
- [ ] Social media - Facebook, Instagram etc.
- [ ] In person at the Tourism Office
- [ ] The websites of the wineries or in person at the estates
- [ ] Word of mouth - From Friends, Family etc
- [ ] Option 7

5. Are you familiar with the term 'Wine Route'?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

6. A wine route can be described as a tourist route in a wine region, with points representing participating wineries, restaurants, hotels, wine bars and other tourist activities of the region. Typically represented by a map (see image) and signposted on the actual route itself (see image). Following this description, how important would the inclusion of a wine route be in influencing your decision to visit a wine region? *



Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

7. Do you use wine routes as a guide for choosing the places you would like to visit in a wine region? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

8. What medium would you prefer to access wine route information while in the wine region? *

Mark only one oval.

- Physical copy of the route in the form of a brochure
- Online / digital copy

9. Which of following content would you find helpful on a Wine Route informational brochure/website? 1 - not helpful at all, 5 - very helpful *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5
Detailed descriptions of the wineries, restaurants, and tourism facilities on the route	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Detailed information about the wine region, wine appellations, and wine styles produced	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Calendar of events and festivals	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Information about the history of the region and historical events of note	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Cultural information including local stories and traditional customs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Different route options based on categories of interest such as adventure, gourmet, relaxation, and nature tourism offerings	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

10. What kind of promotional activities would attract you to the wine route? *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Interactive map on the Official Tourism Board website
- [ ] Online videos highlighting different spots on the route
- [ ] Food and wine pairing content featuring wineries and restaurants of the route
- [ ] Personal stories and interviews with the people of the route - winemakers, chefs, bar owner etc.
- [ ] Wine Route specific social media posts
- [ ] Wine tasting classes

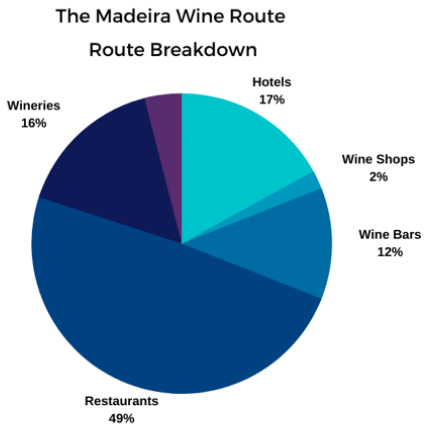
11. If you have any suggestions or comments regarding wine routes please comment below:

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

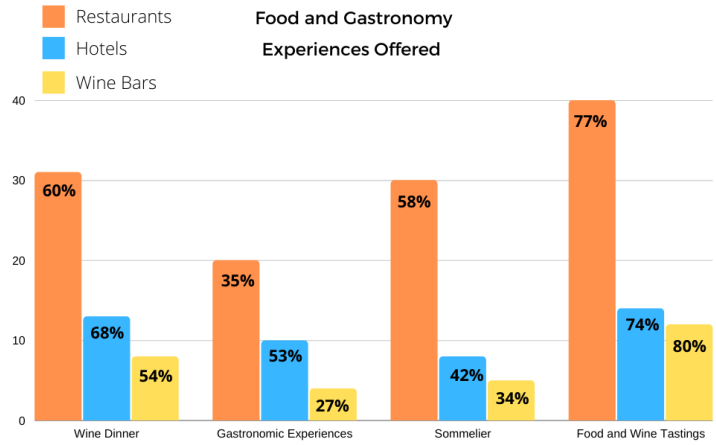
Google Forms

A6. Additional data graphs from Wine Route Evaluation

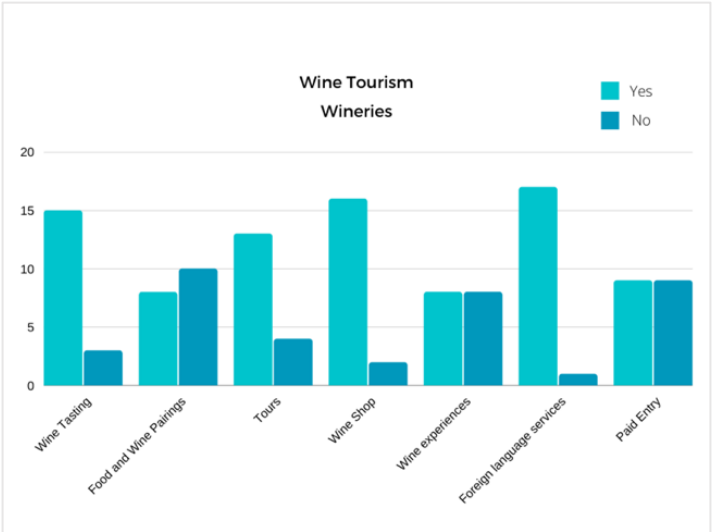
A6a. The Madeira Wine Route Breakdown



A6b. Food and Gastronomy Experiences offered at the restaurants, hotels and wine bars of MWR

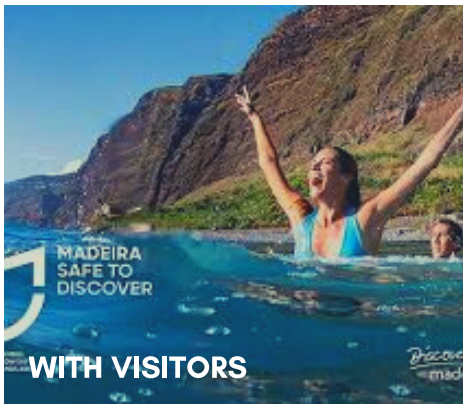


A6c. Wine Tourism Experiences offered by the wineries of the MWR



A7. Digital Promotional Plan Objectives

GOAL(S): CREATING CONNECTIONS



- Greater visibility and promotion of the route through the creation of a more accessible and engaging digital page *MEASURE OF ENGAMENT, VISITS, VISITORS,
- Providing ready information about the tourism actors participating in the route
- Forging relations with the island digitally with short videos featuring locals of the islands
- Build excitement and connection to wines and gastronomy of Madeira



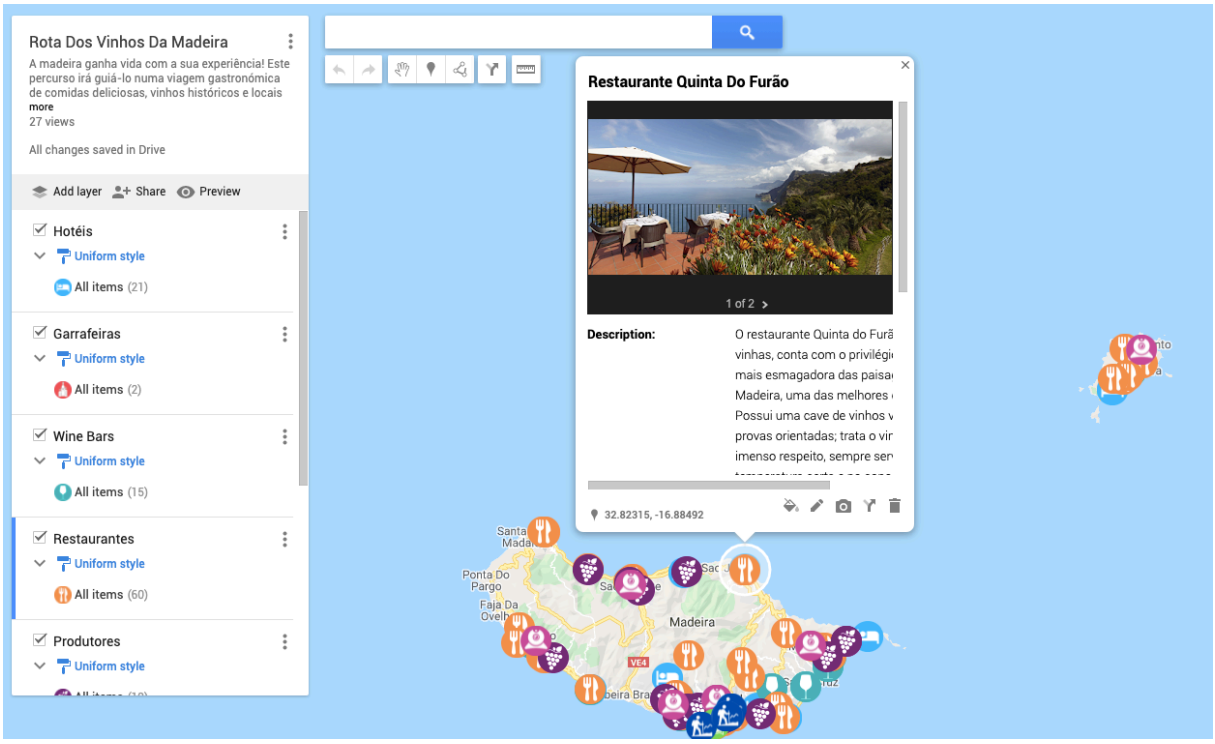
- Helping further promote these entities by making their information much more visible and accessible on the website
- Collaboration in the development of short videos featured on the wine route
- Creation of an information brochure on the wine route which highlights the brief history of madeira, service, and food pairing to be shared with restaurants to build wine knowledge of the staff while also fostering a sense of pride and connection to the wines of their island



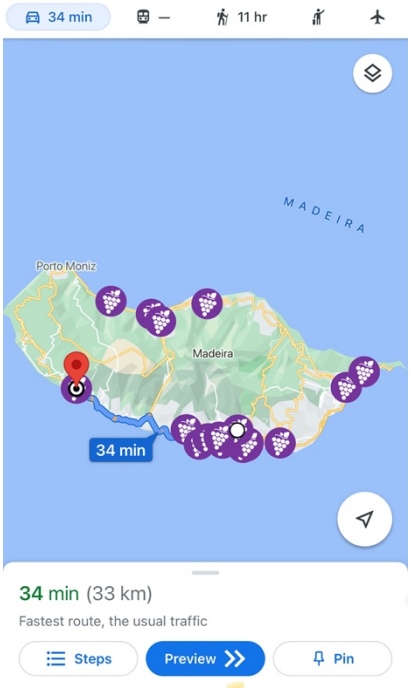
- Addition of personal stories into the short videos to build connections with the local community
- Increased visibility of local recipes paired with the wines of Madeira to foster a sense of connection to the wines of the island
- Open communication with local communities about their desires regarding tourism and their interests

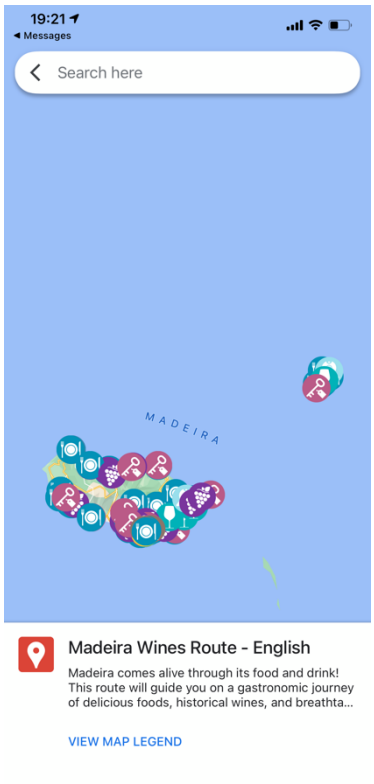
A8. Interactive Map

A8a. Portuguese Version

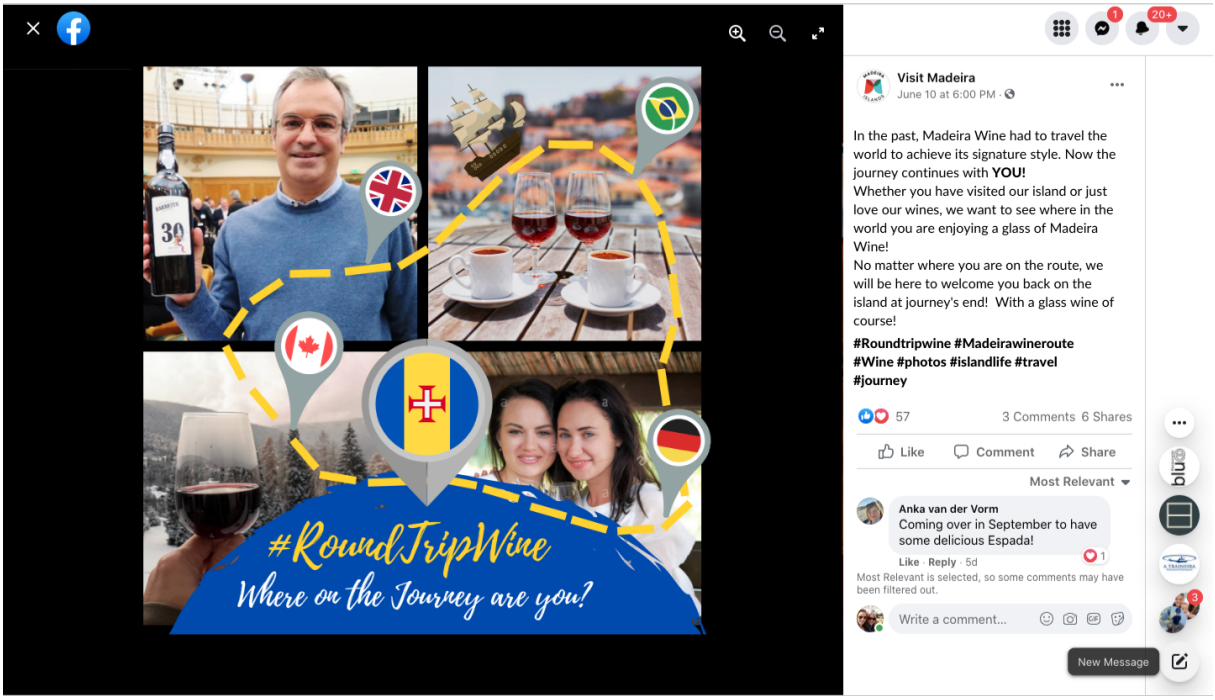


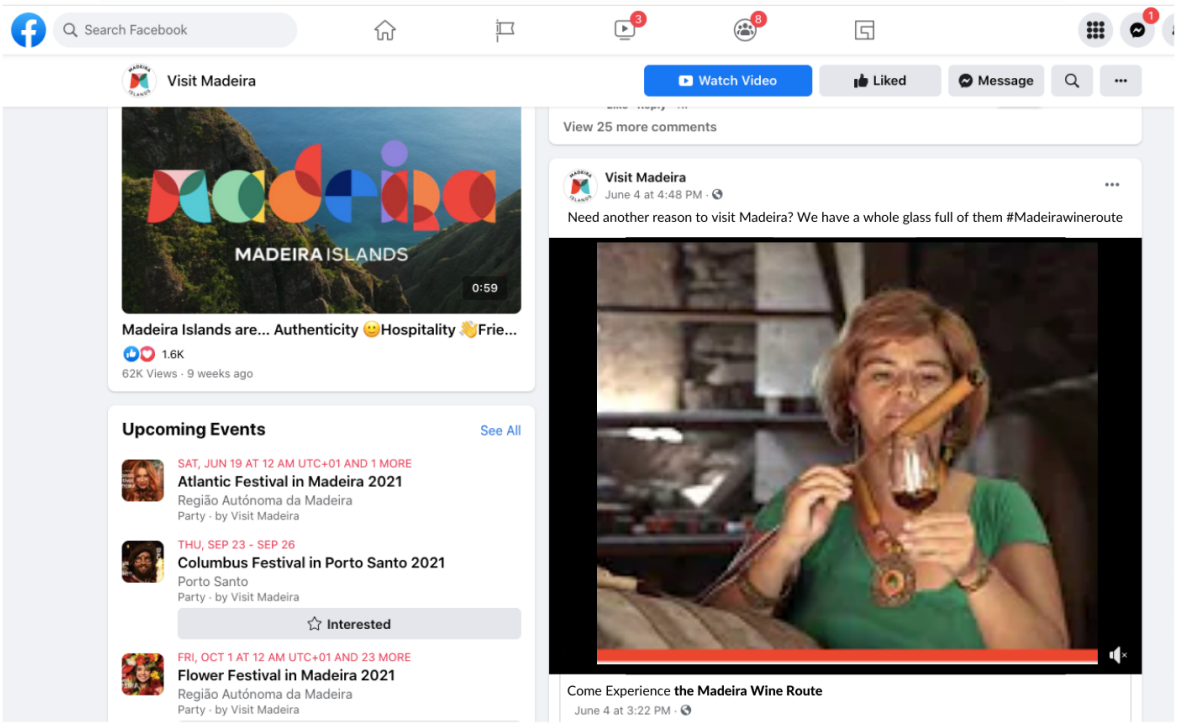
A8b. Images of Mobile Versions of Map





A9. Social Media Storylines Examples





A10. Digital Promotional Plan Calendar

	Q3						Q4						Q1						Q2					
	JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER		OCTOBER		NOVEMBER		DECEMBER		JANUARY		FEBRUARY		MARCH		APRIL		MAY		JUNE	
Major Holidays																								
Holidays							Republic Day	Halloween	All Saints' Day			Christmas Day	NY Day		Valentine's				Good Friday	Easter Sunday	Labour Day		Portugal Day (10)	
Festivals and Events																								
Festivals				Wine Harvest Festival			Madeira Wine Festival				Christmas Celebrations			Panelo' Festival	Carnival Festivities				Festa do Limão				The Atlantic Festival	
Events	Madeira Day		Rali Vinho da Madeira			World Tourism Day					Start of Christmas Lights	Grand Firework Display	NYE Concert				Madeira Forest and Tree Week						Firework Competition	
Social Media																								
Instagram		Sip Safely! #MWR	RP - Madeira Wine Rally	Food & Wine Series	Food & Wine Series		#MWR and the Wine Festival	Festival End post	RP - All Saints Day activities from MWR	Gearing up for the Holidays post	Christmas lights at a winery 2) RP - Chrismas activities on the route	Merry Christmas from the Route Post	Happy New Year Post		Romantic tastings on the MWR		Spring is Here!			Hiking trails on the MWR	#Rountrip wine	RP - #Roundtripwine	RP - #Roundtripwine	
Facebook			Digital WR launc		Food & Wine Series	RP - Wine Harvest Festival	MWR and The Wine Festival	Festival End Post		Activities happening with MWR members + #MWR	Traditional Christmas dish from a MWR member	Merry Christmas from the Route Post 2) RP - NYE activities on the MWR	RP - NY Festivities at a MWR member	MWR members involved with the Penelo Festival	Romantic tastings on the MWR		Spring is here!	RP - Outdoor Activity from one of the MWR members	Easter Post		#Rountrip wine			Summer activities offered by MWR members "
Twitter	'Safe to Discover' and the MWR				RP - Covid-19 safety rules re. Wine Festivals	World Tourism Day		RP - Different MWR member's acivites at the			Merry Christmas from the Route Post	RP - Covid-19 regulations for NYE celebrations			RP - wineries offering's for Valentine's day					RP - Madeira Travel company	#Rountrip wine		RP - Information about the Fireworks and link to MWR	
Youtube				Food and Wine Video Series				Festival Video				Christmas video					Video set In the vineyards							
Online																								
Blog		The Madeira wine Route			Grape Harvest						Traditional Christmas Food and Wines		NYE party ideas with food and wine pairings				Spring in the Vineyards				History of Madeira Wine			