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ROVIRA I VIRGILI



MASTER THESIS

**DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE MADEIRA WINE COMPANY:
DIGITAL TOOLS AND FEEDBACK MANAGEMENT AT BLANDY'S WINE LODGE**

ALEXANDRA KHILOVA

Internship developed at the Madeira Wine Company

Madeira, Portugal

Profesional supervisor

Joana Lomelino de Freitas

Academic supervisor

Nashidil Rouiai

University of Bordeaux

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the result of the professional internship carried out both in Marketing and Enotourism departments of the Madeira Wine Company - a wine producing company, located on Madeira Island, Portugal. The results aim to contribute into developing a comprehensive digital communication strategy for the host company.

Author carries out an in-depth audit of the feedback system, as well as digital communication tools of the company's enotourism center – Blandy's Wine Lodge. Author builds a proposal for the renewal of the website, composes a proposition for changes in editorial management of social media, and suggest a new approach to work with feedback management in the lodge.

KEY WORDS

Communication Strategy, Digital Audit, Feedback Management, Wine Lodge, Madeira Wine.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BWL – Blandy's Wine Lodge

eWOM – Electronic Word-of-Mouth

MWC – Madeira Wine Company

SEO – Search Engine Optimization

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the company

The Madeira Wine Company (MWC) is a wine producing company situated on Madeira Island, Portugal. The company is owned and managed by the members of the Blandy Family, who currently are Michael and Chris Blandy, the 6th and the 7th generations respectively. Originally of British origin, The Blandy Family was involved in producing and trading Madeira wine since 19th century, starting with John Blandy who arrived to the Island in 1808 and founded a wine shipping firm - *Blandy's Madeira*. The company grew fast and soon started exporting wine to places as far as Russia, Northern Europe, and North America. It was also John Blandy who purchased a property, that is known today as Blandy's Wine Lodge (BWL), the enotourism center of the company (Blandy's, n.d.).

In 1925, during the inter-war years, in order to minimize overheads in a world where the export market was experiencing an all-time low, Blandy's Madeira decided to join the Madeira Wine Association: a group of wine companies formed in 1913. The association, which has soon become the biggest exporter of Madeira wine, strived to maintain the unique characteristics and style of each individual firm, no matter its size. Led by the Blandy family, this association managed to survive the difficult years of wars and economic depression, while many individual companies were unable to cope with the crisis (Blandy's, n.d.).

By the end of the 1970s, the Madeira Wine Company, as it became known, had dwindled to just a few firms with a control share held by the Blandy family, forcing them to look for a strong partner to boost their distribution capabilities. Thus, in 1989, Blandys invited the Symington family from Porto to join them in partnership. This partnership continues to this day, allowing the Madeira Wine Company to play a leading role in the development of the Madeira wine trade (Madeira Wine Company, n.d.).

Today, the Madeira Wine Company represents several wine brands apart from *Blandy's Madeira*, including brands of the companies that ones were part of the Madeira Wine Association, such as *Cossart Gordon*, *Miles*, *Leacock's*, as well as a relatively new brand of Madeira still wine – *Atlantis*. Apart from wine producing brands, the Madeira Wine Company as well represents the brand of *Blandy's Wine Lodge*, an enotourism center, located in the center of Madeira's capital - Funchal, featuring guided tours of the company's ageing facilities, Blandy's

Family Museum, several tasting rooms, wine shop, souvenir shop and also 4 holiday apartments located above the lodge.

1.2 Geographical context

As MWC is based on an island it is important to see the company in its geographical context and identify challenges facing wine and tourism industries that are located on that island. Madeira is a strong tourism destination that welcomed 1.4 million tourists in the last pre-COVID year (DREM, 2020), six times the population of the island itself (INE, n.d.) Madeira has been elected “World’s Leading Island Destination” for the past 7 years and has received several World Travel Awards (*Visit Madeira*, n.d.). With wine tourism being the main driver and the biggest source of revenue in the economy, Madeira is highly dependent on tourism market, especially the foreign one, as 77% of tourists arrive from abroad, mainly from Germany, United Kingdom and France (DREM, 2020).

Same as with many other island destinations, the tourism sector in Madeira is heavily based on the 3S model (Sea, Sun, Sand) even though the island has a long and highly respected tradition in winemaking. Several studies show that Madeira tourist do not see the island as a wine destination (Abreu et al., 2019) and therefore do not rank wine high in their reasoning to visit the island (Oliveira & Pereira, 2008). Instead, visitors focus their interest on nature, climate and various outdoor activities of the island, while in food and gastronomy, a complex product of Madeira Wine is outshined by more simple and easy production such as poncha, beer or local sodas (brisa, laranjada, etc.).

Another important challenge for an island like Madeira is its insularity. Being situated hundreds of kilometers away from the continent, it is inevitable that apart from the few things produced on the island, everything else needs to be imported by air or sea, increasing time and costs of any operation, and putting the same challenge on exporting the final product outside of the island. This fact puts an additional pressure on Madeira wine producers, who must compete with other, more famous, fortified wines such as Port or Sherry that are located on the continent and do not have to deal with the same issues.

The insularity problem, however, does not only affect the production of goods. The tourism sector, which accounts for a quarter of Madeira’s GDP and a significant number of local jobs (DREM, 2020b), is fully reliant on tourists’ arrivals by air and sea, while those channels can

be affected by unfavorable weather conditions or authorities' restriction as in the case of Covid-19, which had a devastating impact on the tourism sector of Madeira (DREM, 2021).

And while post-covid Madeira keeps on attracting thousands of tourists, digital nomads and newly retired, the island also stands against the problem of young local people leaving the island to seek education and job elsewhere. This issue particularly threatens the wine industry, as there are less people interested in working the land, and more tempted to sell vineyard properties over to real estate companies, whose pressure over the land in Madeira has been raising, as more and more foreigners with high purchasing power arrives to the island (Ribeiro, 2022).

The abovementioned issues cannot be considered as an exhaustive list of geographical factors affecting Madeiran wine and tourism industries. However, they could be seen as the ones shaping them the most in the current times.

1.3 Internship overview and activities

This internship took place presentially, on the island of Madeira (Portugal) over a four-month period, starting in February 2022 and ending in June of the same year. The work conducted during this internship was divided in between two locations:

- Blandy's Wine Lodge (Funchal, Madeira)
- Marketing Department of the Madeira Wine Company (Caniçal, Madeira)

The first introductory month of the internship was situated in the enotourism center of the company – Blandy's Wine Lodge. The duties on a day-to-day basis in the lodge included:

- Attending customers of the lodge (wine shop, souvenir shop, tasting area, reception etc.)
- Work in the tasting room (welcoming visitors, guiding them through the topic of Madeira wine, presenting the company's products, help customers in choosing a tasting or a bottle, preparing the tastings, work with register, assistance to cleaning stuff with keeping the area welcoming and in accordance with hygienic standards, restocking etc.)
- Daily collection of paper feedback surveys filled by customers who attended a guided tour of the lodge. Digitalization of survey results into an organized excel file.
- When possible, immediate reaction to requests and issues indicated by the customers.

- In other cases, communication of commonly mentioned issues and possible solutions to the manager of the lodge.
- Creation of a detailed monthly report on customer profile and level of satisfaction (~12 pages) based on obtained customer feedback surveys. From March forward the report compared each month of 2022 with the respective month of 2019 (best performing year).
- Assistance in filming of the lodge (journalists, photographers, videographers etc.)
- Work at the Madeira Flower Festival representing the Madeira Wine Company.
- Assistance on “*Noites de Baco*” (Bacchus Nights) wine event.

The abovementioned work has given the author an opportunity to assist in different areas of operations of the Lodge, resulting in better understanding of the company, its brands and the types of customers. That allowed author to start in the Marketing department with better understanding of values, objectives, and challenges of the company.

As a part of Marketing team author developed the following tasks:

- Transformation of the old feedback survey form used in BWL.
- Introduction of the digital format of feedback collection.
- Development of visual proposals for improvements and/or rebuilding of the Madeira Wine Company, Blandy’s Madeira and Blandy’s Wine Lodge websites.
- Writing and reviewing information on the brands’ websites in coherency with brand positioning.
- Review of the company’s websites SEO performance and further creation of a list of proposals for improvements for the IT companies in charge.
- Review of performance of BWL pages on such platforms as TripAdvisor and Google Business and development of proposals for feedback management improvement.

1.4 Context and objectives of the internship

Despite the great variety of brands owned by the company and meticulous work required to manage separate communication plans for all of them, as of today the company does not have any structured overall digital communication strategy developed. That is partially due to the fact that the Marketing Department of the company has been established only one year ago and features only two permanent employees. Due to heavy workload, the department commonly needs to fulfill tasks and solve problems in a more targeted way. Therefore, the objective of this

internship and the thesis is to help the department build a comprehensive communication strategy for the Madeira Wine Company.

Even though that internship involved work with different brands of MWC, in this thesis author mainly focuses on communication of Blandy's Wine Lodge, since this is the one brand dealing with wine tourism services, that is the core of WINTOUR study program, and also since author was directly involved in operations at the Lodge. And as building communication strategy is a lengthy and extensive project, during this time-bound internship it was decided that the author will focus the effort primarily on work with feedback management and digital communication, as those were the main areas of author's involvement.

In accordance with the selected objective, the author has identified the following tasks:

- Gain an understanding of the current state of BWL as one of the brands of MWC, identify its strengths, challenges, limitations, and desired positioning.
- Conduct an audit of currently existing digital tools of communication used by BWL and identify their performance and relevance.
- Conduct an audit of the feedback survey used at BWL and identify its convenience and functionality in terms of feedback management.
- Build propositions for improvement and future use of examined digital communication and feedback tools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite this project being rather practical than theoretical, academic literature and other informational sources have had a crucial importance in its development. The literature researched and used in this thesis can be grouped around 3 main topics: 1) Madeira (it's geographical context and region focused tourism studies), 2) Social media (their trends and management); 3) Feedback management (creation of feedback survey, work with online reviews, their growing importance and trends).

The topic of Madeira has been studied in order to better understand geographical context for the observed company, which have contributed to creation of situational analysis used as one of the methods of this work. The literature consulted includes a few found studies focused on consumer behavior of tourists in Madeira (Abreu et al., 2019; Oliveira & Pereira, 2008),

economical context (Ribeiro, 2022), statistical information on tourism, covid and demography published by Madeira Regional Statistics Department (DREM), as well as official Tourism website of Madeira (Visit Madeira).

The topic of social media has been studied in order to facilitate audit of social media platforms used by Blandy's Wine Lodge and create a relevant list of recommendations regarding BWL's communication in social media. The literature observed for this topic includes recent studies of social media trends and consumer behavior (Dolan & Goodman, 2017; Casalo Ariño et al., 2019; Social Media Trends for 2022 and Beyond, n.d.) as well as a study that performed a general literature review of digitalization of wine tourism experience (Zamarreño Aramendia et al., 2021).

The last and the widest topic has centered around feedback management, major part of which have focused on eWOM phenomenon. Electronic Word-of-Mouth is defined by Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet." Studies dedicated to eWOM (Gil et al., 2017; Gretzel, U., & Yoo, K. H., 2008; Gruen et al., 2006; Jalilvand et al., 2011; Sparks & Bradley, 2017) have shown growing importance of the phenomenon and contributed to defining a proposed strategy for BWL in regards of dealing with online reviews and comments, made public on such platforms as Google Business and TripAdvisor.

3. METHODOLOGY

Situation analyses

In order to develop relevant and realistic proposals for BWL communication strategies it was first necessarily to study where the business stands today. For this purpose, situation analysis was chosen as a method by the author. Situation analysis refers to a process of critical evaluation of internal and external factors affecting a company, carried out with the aim to identify current opportunities and challenges facing the company or its products (Lake, 2020). Central to this method is creation of a SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for internal strengths, internal weaknesses, external opportunities, and external threats. Author conducts a swot analysis of BWL based on open-source information, internal data, and private interviews with

MWC employees. The swot analysis becomes the basis for understanding of the current state at Blandy's Wine Lodge, in particular, identifies some of the weaknesses in communication management, which author will be addressing in this project.

Digital audit

In order to evaluate the current state of BWL online presence it was imperative to perform an audit of digital tools and platforms used by the lodge. This audit included 1) evaluation of BWL website in terms of SEO (Search Engine Optimization), user friendliness, visuals and information provide; 2) Social media in terms of their performance indicators and published content; 3) Google Business and TripAdvisor pages in terms of their account and feedback management.

This digital audit identified weak spots of online communication of the company and laid ground for the ideas and proposals for the improvement.

Feedback survey audit

In addition to the audit of digital feedback tools such as Google Business and TripAdvisor, author conducts an audit of an analog (paper) feedback survey, which currently serves as the main feedback management tool at Blandy's Wine Lodge. This questionnaire was evaluated in accordance with the guide to survey creation, studied by our class during Marketing course, held at Rovira i Virgili University. And considering personal experience of the author in processing these feedback surveys, as well as the results of monthly reports on customer profile and satisfaction, developed by the author during the internship.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Brands of the Madeira Wine Company

At the moment MWC represents 11 Madeira Wine quality brands, 5 Madeira Wine fighter brands, 1 still wine brand (Atlantis) and 1 visitor center brand (Blandy's Wine Lodge). After external audit performed by a marketing consultant in 2019, it was decided that currently MWC does not have enough human and financial resources to focus and manage such a variety of brands. Hence, it was decided to gradually reduce the number and concentrate marketing efforts

on only 4 wine brands (apart from fighter brands): *Blandy's Madeira*, *Cossart Gordon*, *Miles* and *Atlantis*, with the Blandy's Wine Lodge, as an enotourism visitor center, representing all 4 of them.

Among all the wine brands owned by MWC, *Blandy's Madeira* remains to be the core one, however, MWC does not have an intent to unite all the brands under Blandy's name or promote the Madeira Wine Company as the major brand. The Madeira Wine Company here acts as a parent company, hence there is no particular marketing effort directed on promoting MWC itself. Today, each of the 5 brands that are currently in focus of the company (*Blandy's*, *Cossart Gordon*, *Miles*, *Atlantis*, *Blandy's Wine Lodge*) already possess their own website, social media, set of visuals and are expected to address different target markets, which a discussed in the upcoming chapters.

Below follows a brief description of all 5 abovementioned brands, as well as elaboration on desired brand identity and market segmentation for each.

Blandy's Madeira

Blandy's is the core brand of MWC. Being managed by the 7th generation of the same family, Blandy's is valued for its heritage, tradition and more than 200 years of expertise in making Madeira Wine. The brand represents an extended portfolio of madeira wine with wide price range, being accessible to customers of different tastes and budgets. Partially, the brand is represented in supermarkets, however, Blandy's should not be represented as a discount brand and should never be seen as the cheapest Madeira wine in a store.

Positioning:	Globally recognized Madeira wine brand, that embodies quality, authenticity, tradition and heritage, but not afraid of innovations.
Key visual:	Classic, traditional. Colors: black, gold, white
Market segmentation	
Geographic:	Madeira, UK, USA, mainland Portugal, China, Canada, Japan, Belgium, Germany.
Demographic	f/m, 40+, upper-middle class and growing wine-savvy younger market.
Psychographic	Value quality, authenticity, heritage.
Behavioral	Traditionalists, loyal to established well-known brands, with a wide portfolio. Wine enthusiasts, passionate and knowledgeable about wines. Appreciate and understand sophisticated wine information

Table 1: Brand identity and market segmentation of Blandy's Madeira

Cossart Gordon

Originally established in 1745 Cossart Gordon brand represents the oldest company in the Madeira Wine trade. Cossart Gordon is a highly distinguished fortified wine that occupies the upper echelons of the branding segmentation of MWC together with Blandy's Madeira. However, unlike Blandy's that strives towards growth and expansion, Cossart Gordon strives more towards exclusivity.

Positioning:	Small, exclusive, high quality, specialty brand with limited stock.
Key visual:	Reserved, classy. Parchment paper, leather.
Market segmentation	
Geographic:	USA, Madeira, Mainland Portugal, China.
Demographic	f/m, 40+, upper-middle class.
Psychographic	Value exclusivity, quality, rarity.
Behavioral	Wine enthusiasts, image seekers.

Table 2: Brand identity and market segmentation of Cossart Gordon

Miles

Miles is a reference in Tinta Negra grape variety. All the wines of this brand are made exclusively with Tinta Negra no matter the style or age. Using Tinta Negra, which is a cheaper grape than the white varieties, allows the producer to put a lower price on the bottle. This brand is looking to break away from the stereotypical image of Madeira wine, which (as many fortified wines) is perceived as old people's drink (García et al., 2015). Miles, with its new attractive design and message, is focused on on-trade, specifically in mixology. The brand is actively promoted as the base part for Madeira wine cocktails, with more and more recipes being created and promoted specifically for Miles. Besides, the brand is also actively represented off-trade with competitive pricing.

Positioning:	A trendy and approachable brand, that stands out of stereotypical Madeira wine image. Possible to drink it in a new way: Cocktails.
Key visual:	Colorful, vibrant, Instagramable.

Market segmentation	
Geographic:	Madeira, Mainland Portugal, USA, China, Germany, Poland, Japan, UK.
Demographic	f/m, young, millennials.
Psychographic	Hip, trendsetters, hedonist, frequent bar/club visitors
Behavioral	Madeira wine newcomers. Purchase without specific wine knowledge needed, mixology trend, consumed at social events: bars, clubs, parties.

Table 3: Brand identity and market segmentation of Miles

Atlantis

Atlantis is a brand of still wine (table wine) that was introduced by MWC in 1992 and became the first non-fortified wine brand in Madeira Island. Nowadays the brand offers 4 products: Rose, White, White Reserva and Red that could be found both on and off trade.

Positioning:	Best quality table wine produced in Madeira.
Key visual:	Fresh, simple, elegant. Colors: white, grey.
Market segmentation	
Geographic:	Primary: Madeira (Tourists & Locals), Mainland Portugal. Secondary: UK, USA
Demographic	f/m, 25-55, middle and upper-middle class.
Psychographic	Value small local brands, enjoy island lifestyle, curious about volcanic wines.
Behavioral	Mainland: Horeca, Madeira: Universal. Common repeat of purchase.

Table 4: Brand identity and market segmentation of Atlantis

Blandy's Wine Lodge

Blandy's Wine Lodge is an important brand and property for MWC as it acts both as a renown enotourism center of the island and ageing facility for some of the company's finest wines. The Lodge is located in the very center of Madeira's capital and has been the heart of the family's wine business for 7 generations.

Apart from being one of the oldest wine lodges on the island and carrying a remarkable historical heritage, this building boasts special qualities that contributes to the winemaking

process. The lodge is considered perfect for ageing Madeira wine, as the layout, shape and structure of the building create a combination of unique temperature and humidity conditions in each of the rooms, giving differing ageing profiles to the wines based on their location. Today, this historical building is home to an extensive wine collection, a family museum and more than 650 barrels and vats of aging wines.

The lodge features several tasting rooms and shops, that offer a variety of wines produced by the Madeira Wine Company, including *Blandy's*, *Cossart Gordon*, *Miles and Atlantis* brands, but with a clear focus on *Blandy's* brand. The tasting offer is quite developed, and upon payment, allows visitors to taste any wine that is available for purchase, including such rare bottles as Bual 1920, as well as prearranged sets of 4-5 wines of horizontal or vertical comparative tasting.

For the visitors curious to learn more about Madeira Wine and Blandy's family, the lodge offers several tour options: Lodge, Premium, Vintage or Private. The tours differ on their entry price, duration, degree of information provided, and special rooms access. The tours run on timetables defined by the company and are available in several languages: Portuguese, English, German, French and Spanish.

Positioning:	The #1 enotourism actor in Madeira. Ambassador of the Madeira Wine Company brands.
Key visual:	Classic, traditional, natural. Colors: black, gold, white, wood.
Market segmentation	
Geographic:	Tourists from UK, Germany, France, Mainland Portugal.
Demographic	f/m, 50+, couples, families, medium+ to high income.
Psychographic	Value knowledge, comfort, service, traditions, interested in history and wine. No specific wine knowledge needed, but desire to learn.
Behavioral	A "must visit" while in Madeira. Returning in case of visiting the island again.

Table 5: Brand identity and market segmentation of Blandy's Wine Lodge

4.2 Situational analysis

The below presented SWOT analysis has been elaborated by the author mainly using unstructured participant observation method, while being a part of Blandy's Wine Lodge

employee team. However, this outlook was also further enriched by author’s experience of visiting the lodge as a “mystery customer” before the official start of the internship, private interviews with employees of the lodge, internal documents, Madeira-focused literature review, as well as previous SWOT elaborations conducted by the company in the past.

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-recognized brand with history and tradition ▪ Central Location (accessible without car) ▪ Classified building ▪ Recently renovated and aesthetic space ▪ Know-How in Enotourism ▪ Developed tours/tastings offer ▪ Variety of languages spoken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of digital thinking ▪ No online booking and payment ▪ CRM absence ▪ Outdated website ▪ Outdated and analog feedback system ▪ Lack of attention to TripAdvisor, Google Business tools ▪ Abandoned/unmanaged social media ▪ Excess Of Visitors = Overtourism
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong tourism market in Madeira (World's Leading Island Destination) ▪ Stable customer pool = Travel agencies and cruises ▪ No pronounced seasonality ▪ Madeira Wine - product unique to the island ▪ Madeira Wine Festival, other local festivals ▪ Few local competitors offering wine tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Madeira promotion bureau is focused on other beverages (e.g. poncha) ▪ Lack of strategy on promoting Madeira Wine sector ▪ Strong dependence on tourism market (for both the island and wine sector) ▪ Market perception of fortified wines (old people’s drink) ▪ Island only accessible by sea/air (heavily depend on weather and travel restrictions) ▪ Growing competition from other wineries and specialized shops ▪ Public entities competing with private companies

Table 6: SWOT analysis of Blandy's Wine Lodge

Identification of current weaknesses of BWL is imperative to this project, as those are the main areas author will further address with the purpose to find ways for improvements and eventually turn the weaknesses into strengths.

4.3 Digital audit

As Blandy's Wine Lodge is a business that welcomes many visitors, especially the ones coming from far, it is of crucial importance for the business to be present online, and offer easy-to-find, relevant and honest information. As of today, BWL has its own website and is present on such online platforms as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor and Google Business. Following, is the digital audit of the abovementioned digital platforms and tools carried out with the purpose of better understanding how digital communication of the company can be improved.

4.3.1 Website

Website of BWL, located at the following address <https://www.blandyswinelodge.com>, has been developed and currently managed by an external IT company. As part of the internship author analyzed with the SEO software several websites of MWC and communicated the insights to the responsible company. Following, is a short summary of the audit for the current BWL website.

After a checkup of the website with the tool *browseo* (*Annex 1*), it was established that the website is readable by the crawler. However, instead of a standard response code (200) the check returned the 403 (Forbidden) response-code, which normally mean that the visitor is not allowed to access the page. Even though the website seems to be accessible this result calls for a checkup by the responsible company. The word count of the main page appears to be too little (173 words) while many experts recommend at least 300. Besides, the page appeared to lack a H1 headings, that are considered to be the most important headings for a webpage. In addition, several pictures used on the page lacked a proper description, which could improve organic SEO growth results.

Next, the website was checked with the SEO Site Checkup software (*Annex 2*), returning good score of 78%. Among a number of found issues the following appeared to be the most important: 1) absence of H1 headings 2) images loaded in an outdated format 3) Webpage is using render blocking resources.

Lastly, authored carried out a test to check if the website is easily accessible and navigated from a mobile device (*Annex 3*), using Mobile-Friendly test software. The test came out negative, stating that the website is not fully mobile friendly, due to the clickable elements being situated too close and the content presented on the website being wider than the device screen.

Completing the audit with the personal navigation experience, the author concludes that at a first glance the design and visuals of the website look rather outdated and the navigation in search for information does not appear to be intuitive. The information on wine of the month has not been updated for more than a year, therefore bringing confusion to the visitors and putting into question accuracy of other information presented on the website. The information about the tours does not build a clear picture of the experience offered on the tours. The tasting tab does not future all the tasting options offered at the Lodge. The events tab does not future any upcoming events, even though the examination of the website was carried out prior to a big wine event at BWL open for public (Night of Bacchus).

Nevertheless, the website still offers some relevant information to the visitors, such as actual tour and tasting prices and contacts of the Lodge. However, the website does not give an option of booking or paying the mentioned experiences online, forcing customers to call, email, or come in advance by the lodge, to verify information and book a tour. Previously, the company tried to incorporate an option of booking online that was based on filling a request form by website visitors, which later needed to be considered by an employee of the lodge. Taking into account big and growing customer flow at BWL, and a rather limited employee team, which is not always available for answering all the incoming calls and emails, this system was proven to be inefficient in providing quality service for the customers and was terminated, leaving website without any method of booking.

To conclude, with the current number of issues and outdated design and information of the website, as well as absence of booking and paying methods it was decided by the company, to start a completely new website and structure it in a more modern and user-friendly way.

4.3.2 Social media

In order to analyze BWL social media performance, the author elaborated a simple social media audit, using data in public access and two online audit tools – phlanx and socialinsider.

The social media that came to the evaluation are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages of the company. It is important to note that management of social media pages is outsourced to an external company, hence was not included in the author’s responsibilities during the internship.

The audit took in consideration the following metrics 1) total number of followers of the accounts; 2) number of posts published; 3) average engagement rate per post (represents the average engagements of the posts divided by the number of followers and multiplied by 100); 4) average reach per post (representing the estimated average number of the unique users, who saw any of the account’s posts published in the selected period of time); 5) total posts reach, representing the estimated total reach of all the posts published in the selected period of time.

The selected time range chosen for this analysis was the past 12 months (1st May 2021 – 30th Apr 2022), which corresponds to the time when COVID restriction for travel and tourism activities in Portugal started to get eased.

The audit revealed that among the 3 social media platforms used by the company, Instagram represents the most active and engaging tool at the moment, with a good engagement rate for the size of the account – 2.76%, highest audience reach among the 3 accounts, with more than 1300 followers, 94% of which were evaluated by phlanx algorithm as real people. However, the platform with the highest number of followers and total number of posts turned out to be Facebook. Facebook page of the company has started much earlier than Instagram page, and hence attracted more followers since. Nevertheless, the Facebook page represents very low average engagement rate (0.42%) and lower post reach than Instagram, even though the content posted generally repeats the one of the Instagram page.

Unlike, Instagram or Facebook, twitter page did not return any numerous results for the analysis, since the page has not been in use since 2016, has only 25 followers, and therefore does not show any posting or interaction statistic in the past year.

	Total followers	Posts (12 months)	Average engagement rate (12 months)	Average reach per post (12 months)	Total posts reach (12 months)
Instagram	1.3K	85	2.76%	382	20k
Facebook	4.8K	95	0.42%	202	12k
Twitter	25	0	-	-	-

Table 7: Social media audit of Blandy's Wine Lodge

By analyzing the content on the pages in question, we may notice inconsistencies in the communication plan or absence of it. Some posts are only in Portuguese, while others are in both Portuguese and English. Some of them start in Portuguese and then are dubbed in English, and some are vice versa.

The frequency of posting sometimes reaches several posts per week, and sometimes descends in less than once a week. The choice of topics for posts or their content does not follow a certain logic or order, skipping important informational events, such as announcing wine of the month or upcoming events of the lodge. Very little attention is given to videos (Instagram page only features 2 reels and 9 IGTV videos), while short form videos were evaluated to be the most engaging type of feed in social media content in 2022.

In particular case of Instagram, highlights are presented in random order, not in order of importance. The link to the video in profile's bio does not have public access. In addition, the design of highlight symbols is not unified. The same hashtags are duplicated in each post, and do not always correspond to the information of the post. Such hashtag management has a bad effect on Instagram algorithms.

It is worth mentioning that BWL is also represented in YouTube to some extent, featuring professional videos of the lodge and videos from the wine festival, however, the channel is titled Blandy's Madeira Wine, therefore it is not solely focused on BWL, hence was not considered in the audit.

It is argued in a recent literature review article that a wine business should necessarily be represented on main social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. The authors elaborated a table based on the literature review detailing on benefits of these 3 platforms. According to their findings, Instagram considered to be the best platform for attracting tourists and building destination image, while Facebook was labeled as the weakest of the 3 in terms of influence on visit intention. YouTube in its turn was represented as a useful platform for sharing videos that also allows interaction through comments, likes and novelty feature of live chats. However, it was noted by the authors that this platform represents the lowest level of user involvement of the three analyzed and appears to be the least useful platform when it comes to attracting customers. (Zamarreño Aramendia et al., 2021)

Taking into account literature review and findings of the social media audit, author will propose a new social media management plan for BWL, that will be discussed in a corresponding part of the following chapter.

4.3.3 Google Business

Feedback is one of the essential tools of a business, as it ensures a two-way communication between company and the customers. In this way, feedback can be considered as a test that shows how successful the business has been in conveying its message to the customers in the form that it was originally intended. Without a feedback system, communication of a company would be incomplete and ineffective.

Apart from analog feedback system currently employed by the company which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming paragraph, BWL is also represented on such digital platforms as Google Business and TripAdvisor, where the business is subject to evaluation and review feedback by the public.

Overview of Blandy's Wine Lodge page at Google Business shows that the Lodge is placed correctly on the map, features correct opening times, website and the reception phone number. The Lodge is evaluated with a high score of 4.4 stars based on 578 reviews. Keeping up a high score on the platform is of great importance for a company, since studies show that 57% of consumers will only consider a business if it is rated 4 stars or higher, while only 3% would consider using a business with an average rating of two or fewer stars (Pitman, 2022).

Nowadays more consumers use Google to evaluate local businesses than ever before. In 2021, 81% did, in comparison to only 63% in the year before. This growing popularity of the resource calls for business attention to manage this marketing and communication tool. However, in case of BWL the page is not being managed by any employee of the company. Therefore, MWC is currently unable to answer in timely manner to the question of visitors asked through the platform, reply to customers' reviews, or receive important monthly statistics, such as Google Business Insights.

4.3.4 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is a leading user-generated content platform in the tourism sector, that is visited by 463 million travelers each month (TripAdvisor, n.d.). A 2019 study revealed that four out of five people say TripAdvisor makes them feel more confident in their booking decisions

(TripAdvisor, 2019). And according to customer survey monthly reports at BWL, at least 7-10% of visitors mention TripAdvisor as one of the sources through which they learn about the lodge.

As of today, the Blandy's Wine Lodge page on TripAdvisor is labeled as a "Historic site" and "Wineries and Vineyards", has a ranking of 4.5 stars based on 3,457 reviews. The place is ranked as the 24th place out of 200 things to do in Funchal and also features correct information about the business.

Same as with Google Business the tool of TripAdvisor has not been managed actively or stable. Feedback left at both platforms is not studied and evaluated as a part of the feedback system of the company. It was also found that a few of negative comments have been replied by the business representative in a rather unprofessional way. While other comments rather positive, negative or neutral were left without any attention. This type of inconsistency could damage company's reputation, offend customers or discourage potential customers from visiting the lodge, as it is estimated that 89% of consumers read companies' responses to online reviews (Manis et al., 2020).

Several studies have explored the topic of online reviews, as an element of electronic word of mouth. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company that is available to a variety of people and institutions over the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Such digital word of mouth platforms as TripAdvisor and Google Business enable simple information sharing not only Customer to Business but also Customer to Customer, providing alternative source of information for consumers and reducing company's ability to influence these consumers with traditional marketing channels (Jalilvand et al., 2011). It is estimated that in 2021 77% of consumers always or regularly read online reviews when browsing for local businesses, while 67% would consider leaving a review of positive experience, and 40% for a negative one (Pitman, 2022).

According to 2008 study travel reviews are often perceived as more relevant, enjoyable, and reliable information than content published by the suppliers of the tourism services themselves (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). While a study by Gruen et al. (2006) determined that online word of mouth not only impacted customer perceptions of value of a company's product but also customer loyalty intentions.

To sum up, it is hard to overestimate the power of such eWOM platforms as TripAdvisor and Google Business for a tourism establishment, as communication on them actively impacts

decision-making process of customers and influences company's image. In this way, it is of crucial importance to include continuous management of these platforms in communication strategy of the company, that will be discussed in further in this thesis.

4.4 Feedback survey audit

A big part of this internship work has been related to collection and evaluation of customers' feedback. Currently, in BWL feedback is collected by offering all the visitors that completed a guided visit to fill in a paper questionnaire at the end of their tour. After that, the collected data is manually exported into an excel file, which later is used to build a monthly report representing customer profile and satisfaction which is available internally to all the employees. Having experienced this process of studying, exporting and evaluating data of a couple of thousands of questionnaires throughout the internship, and consulting advice laid out by a survey composing guide, studied throughout the Marketing course (*How to Write Good Survey & Poll Questions*, n.d.), author identified several issues and points for improvement for this feedback survey, a template of which is attached as Annex 4.

- 1) Having the feedback system relying heavily on physical paper forms brings up several issues such as unsustainable single use of paper, difficulty to obtain information due to hard-to-read handwriting, increased workload for the employee to digitalize each form manually (30-50 forms a day)
- 2) The current form starts by asking personal and contact question to the respondent such as "Name" and "Email" that are not necessarily for completion of the form (but optional in case client wants to receive further information from MWC), however, that might discourage customers that do not want to share these details from filling in the form at all.
- 3) The set of answer choices appear to be unbalanced, since out of 4 possible answers (excellent, very good, good, poor), the first 3 have a positive connotation, rather than a balanced set of positive and negative options or a neutral option. Such a set of answer choices might become a source of bias.
- 4) The form is only available to the individual visitors which took part in guided tours, thereby excluding other categories of visitors from giving their feedback, for example, groups who visited the lodge with the external guide or visitors who had tasting without a tour.

- 5) A major part of questions of the form is focused on the experience of the guided tour, leaving uncovered customer experience in different spaces of the lodge (several tasting areas, souvenir shop, wine shop etc.)
- 6) The form is originally structured to be filled by one customer only. However, many respondents choose to fill the form for their whole group (e.g., family or friends) resulting in choosing multiple options in questions which were intended for one answer only (such as gender, age category etc.)
- 7) Numerous respondents seem not to notice “please turn the page” sign on the bottom of the page, resulting in them filling the form from one side only, leaving unanswered several questions from the other side.
- 8) In questions 6 to 9 many respondents struggled with choosing an answer in between “Yes” or “No” options, putting their tick in the middle of the two or skipping the question.
- 9) In terms of question #11 (how did you hear about us?), according to monthly reports for the past 3 months, the answer “Others” was steadily the third most chosen option after “Guide books” and “Word of mouth”. Such results call to assume that the answer options offered in the questionnaire to the respondents are not relevant or not clear enough for understanding. For example, numerous respondents chose the option “Other” and detailed that they heard about BWL from friends or family, even though it was assumed by the company that people who came from the Friends and Family source should choose “Word of Mouth” option.
- 10) This survey is one of the few information sources coming directly from the consumers of MWC wines. However, the questions asked in the form only evaluate the visitors as enotourism customers rather than Madeira wine consumers, which is a loss of relevant information for MWC Marketing department.

5. RESULTS AND PROPOSALS

5.1 Website

As it was concluded in the previous chapter, a decision was made in the company to build a brand new website for Blandy’s Wine Lodge. With this request MWC approached one of the local IT companies in Madeira. This company has proposed and presented to us a template for a new website, which was yet empty of content.

It was decided that author as a marketing intern could draw and propose to the IT company desired visuals of the given website template together with directions for its updated contents. Such format of work allows us to communicate more clearly our needs and expectation about the new website, represent our ideas in visual format and hence, speed the process of the creation of the new website. The screenshot of the current BWL website as well as the outline of the new website elaborated by the author, are attached to this work as Annex 5 and 6 correspondingly.

The design of the new website proposes are more elegant, classy atmosphere and follows established earlier key visuals of the BWL brand: black, white, golden, and wooden colors set. In the new version of the website, it was decided to remove the left menu bar and leave only the top bar with most important and relevant tabs, which is planned to move together with scrolled page. The tab menu was restructured to present information to the visitors in the most intuitive way.

The “Wine Lodge” tab will offer introduction of the lodge itself and the history of the place. The tab “Visit us” will offer a menu with all the experiences offered at the lodge 1) Guided tours, 2) Tastings, 3) Wine Shop, 4) Accommodation, 5) Bistro and Wine Bar, with detailed information on each. The tab of “Events” will offer a menu of 3 pages 1) Booking private event at BWL 2) Upcoming events 3) Past events. For those who entered a website in search of a wine bottle they tried on their visit to the lodge, the tab “Wines” will give a brief information on all the wine brands of MWC represented in BWL (Blandy’s, Cossart Gordon, Miles, Atlantis) with the link to the website of each brand illustrating their wine portfolio. And finally, the tab of “Contacts” will accommodate Frequently Asked Questions info and contacts of the lodge.

Another novelty of the new website is the tab “Tickets”. It was communicated to the outsourced company that incorporation of online booking and online payment system into the website is of crucial importance for the company. Clearly, such an innovation will demand certain financial investment and rise several new challenges, such as adaptation of a CRM software in the company. Currently there is no CRM system used for BWL, and information about customers requests and purchases is not systematically centralized anywhere.

Author believes that although costly and time-consuming at first, introduction of modern booking system with online payment method that is automatically connected to a centralized CRM of the company will be a big step forward for the company in offering a better customer service and relieving a great part of tedious work from the employees.

5.2 Social Media

After carrying out social media audit it was established that Instagram represents the most promising tool of communication in social media for the company, as it represents highest engagement rate and posts reach.

Considering limited resources directed to social media in the company, it would be suggested to focus main efforts on developing and growing Instagram page. However, considering that Facebook page represents a wider audience, especially the older age group (that is an important target segment for BWL) it is still advised to cross-post same or similar content to Facebook from Instagram.

As to the twitter page, relevance of preserving this account is doubtful. According to Social Media Trends study, twitter is not one of the platforms consumers and brands intend to be using in 2022. Therefore, as the page does not possess any important content and haven't been in use for several years, it is suggested that the account will be deleted (same as any public links to that page), as not to add on extra marketing effort to the team and not to create bad image of an abandoned brand page.

As identified by Dolan & Goodman (2017) most wine brands' social media communication tended to focus on either 1) promotion of specific experiences offered by the brand, such as events, tastings, and facilities (experience orientation); 2) sale and promote available brand products (sales orientation); 3) creation of a sense of community, relationships, and trust among members (customer orientation). As BWL is first of all an enotourism brand, where wine sales happen mainly on site, it seems more relevant for the business to adopt a combination of experience orientation and customer orientation in its online communication approach and perceive BWL's social channels first of all as a platform for brand communication and building a loyal fan base community.

Following are a few notes for the improvement of BWL social media channels:

- 1) Update restricted video link in BIO (Instagram)
- 2) Update highlights to 1) put them in descending order of importance 2) unify design of highlight symbols (Instagram)
- 3) Ensure availability of all information and posts in English. English version before Portuguese one, as foreign visitors, especially British ones, constitute the vast majority of BWL's customers (internal data)

- 4) Diversify post content (proposed topics: wine of the month, special offers on holidays, events, live broadcasting, etc.)
- 5) Follow a Cross-media and cross-posting strategy. Even though Instagram is considered as a focus channel, other channels such as Facebook and YouTube could become support channels for conveying the message.

Below is an example of cross-media editorial calendar elaborated by the author for the month of May 2022. Different colors signal to 3 main themes of communication during that month: 1) General content related to the lodge (Grey), 2) Content related to the Flower Festival, happening during the month (Green) 3) Content related to the wine event hosted by the lodge - Bacchus nights, happening in the beginning of June (Blue).

Post date	Type of content	Post type	Media Type
1 May	Mother's Day Celebration. Introduction of a special offer for the holiday.	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook), repost to stories
2 May	Introduction of the new wine of the month	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
3 May	Announcement of participation in the Flower festival 2022	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
4 May	Time laps video of preparing and decorating Flower festival stand	IGTV video, repost in story	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
4 May	Teaser video from the past Flower festival	Video	YouTube
4 May	Description of one of the tours	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
5 May	Start of the festival. Short shots of decoration of the lodge, Festival stand, people tasting wine	Reels video	Instagram
6 May	Tasting menu from the festival, happy our info	Story	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
8 May	Post about an aspect of madeira wine aging	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
10 May	Announcement of the Bacchus night event. Teaser video from the last event	Reels Video	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
13 May	Private experiences in the lodge	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
14 May	Live broadcast from the flower festival	Live	Instagram
16 May	Start of ticket Sale for Bacchus Night event	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook), repost to stories
18 May	Description of one of the tastings sets offered at the Lodge.	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
20 May	Reminder of the opportunity to host private events in BWL spaces	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
23 May	Live broadcast from the Lodge	Live	Instagram
25 May	Wine pairing suggestions for the 10 year old	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)

	range		
26 May	Last Weekend of the flower festival	Post	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
27 May	New souvenirs arrival	Story	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)
30 May	Wrap up of the Flower Festival	Video	YouTube (cross-post to Facebook and Instagram)
31 May	Reminder of the Bacchus Night event. Announcement how many tickets left	Story	Instagram (cross-post to Facebook)

Table 8: Editorial calendar for social media of Blandy's Wine Lodge

Apart from keeping a balanced communication among several topics, it is also expected that posted content will have different functions, such as 1) educational (e.g. Post about an aspect of madeira wine aging), 2) Informative (e.g. Introduction of the new wine of the month) 3) Entertaining (e.g. Live broadcast from the Lodge), since it was studied by (Casaló Ariño et al., 2019) that both perceived usefulness and enjoyment of Instagram posted content have positive effect on customer's intention to follow and recommend a brand's official Instagram account.

5.3 Feedback management

Considering the issues and challenges of the feedback system of BWL identified by the author in the previous chapter, several ideas and proposals to improve the feedback survey were discussed inside the Marketing department of MWC, coming up with changes for the new form:

- 1) First and foremost, it is of great importance to try and make the survey available online in digital form. The decision was made to make an exact copy of the paper form available online through a QR code, which will be placed on the paper form itself, giving the customers an option of leaving their feedback in digital or in paper.

It is important to notice, that at this initial step of introducing digital surveys, the paper version of it should still remain available. It is taken into account that the majority of the customers of the BWL nowadays are people of the old age, who do not always feel comfortable with new technologies, but at the same time enjoy leaving feedback.

It is planned that after the introduction of online booking of BWL experiences and introduction of CRM software in the company, the online survey would be sent automatically to the customer via email after completion of their booked experience.

- 2) Such personal questions as “Name” or “Email”, which used to open the survey, should be moved towards the end of the survey and be visually linked to the question about personal data authorization. In this way, even if respondents would not like to give this personal information, he or she can complete the survey until the end.
- 3) In order to balance the set of answer choices in the main part of the questionnaire, the Likert Scale of options has been transformed. With intent to minimize the bias and influence of evaluative words (Excellent, Very good, Good, Poor), the new set of answer choices is built on 1 to 5 scale, asking the respondent to just choose a number to evaluate their experience, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest. The “Yes or No” questions as well have been transformed to the same 5 number scale. It is expected that the new scale will make a shift in the way customers evaluate their experience, and will provide us with a better understanding of their needs. Also, the new scale will be able to generate a specific average score for each question monthly (e.g., 4.6/5), instead of a pie chart used now, making it easier to track any changes.
- 4) To make the form available for all the customers of BWL (and not only those who completed a guided tour by an internal guide) the form was restructured in a way that any customer of the lodge could evaluate their experience or evaluate a particular room/service of the Lodge. The new form starts by asking to evaluate different areas of the lodge, giving an opportunity to choose “n/a” (no answer) in case the customer didn’t visit some of the areas. In the second part and the third part respectively, the customer gets to choose and evaluate what kind of tour and tasting he/she did, if any. In such a way, the form is available to any client of the lodge, even if they came there just to make a purchase of a wine bottle or visit a souvenir shop.
- 5) Availability of the survey for any customer rise a question how to distribute the form to anyone interested in leaving feedback. Appearance of the digital survey accessible through a QR code that could be placed on any surface clearly makes this issue easier. But nonetheless, it is only fair that any customer would have opportunity to leave feedback rather digital or paperless. For this, author proposes to design and establish a “feedback station” in several rooms, where customers could take a blank survey, leave already filled form or scan a QR code to leave the feedback online.
- 6) A new question named “Group type” was added to the questionnaire, taking into consideration previously discussed fact, that many respondents answer as a group rather than as individual. The party with which customers visits BWL is a marketing sensitive question, which will help us better understand the customer of BWL and better address

their needs. Asking such a question can, for example, help us see if there's any correlation in between group type of a customer (solo, couple, friends and family, travel agency group) in his/her level of satisfaction with experiences offered at BWL.

- 7) To address the issue that many respondents forget to turn the page, and leave their feedback incomplete, it was proposed to enlarge and color in red the arrow that signals for turning the page.
- 8) In order to use the survey also as a source of marketing relevant question a new question asking to evaluate likeliness of buying Madeira wine back at home was introduced. Such a question will help as evaluate for the first time how likely the visitors of BWL are to become consumers, and hopefully promoter of Madeira wines after they visit.

It is also thought that those respondents who reply to this question positively and agreed to receive further information from MWC, could receive newsletters from the company, notifying of availability of new wines in their country.

- 9) To address the issues of the question #11 (How did you hear about us?) it was decided to add or change a few answer options and visually reshape the question to make it more intuitive to answer. Such options, as "Family and Friends", "Previous visit", and "Internet search", "Blogs" have been added due to their common mention in the category of "Others" in previous months. "Social media" category replaced the "Facebook" category, since as it was discussed in previous chapter BWL is present on several social media platforms, apart from Facebook. However, it was taken into account that people can also find out about the BWL from the third-party social media accounts (e.g visit madeira, travel bloggers etc.). For this reason, social media question is detailed in 3 options 1) our social media 2) influencers 3) others.

- 10) As in Blandy's Wine Lodge monthly feedback reports are one of the most important sources of customer opinion and satisfaction, it was proposed to use survey to try and solve a commonly discussed dispute – maximum number of people in a tour group. Due to the fact that BWL is a well-recognized place, commonly listed as a "must visit" in Madeira, it is common that number of people wishing to visit the lodge and have a tour is higher than the spots BWL can ensure. As of today, the maximum number of people in the group is established at 20 people. However, it has been an established topic of customers complaints that their experience was too crowded or noisy.

In this way, it was proposed to use one of the questions dedicated to the tours to ask customers how they would evaluate the size of their tour group. As a part of the same

question, it is asked to mention how many people there were in their group (this part can be pre-filled by the staff of BWL before handing out the forms). By evaluating two parts of this question MWC will be able to get an average customer satisfaction score for the groups of each size and will be able to make an informed decision if maximum number of people in the group should be reviewed.

After discussing all of the ideas and proposals inside the marketing department several trial templates have been developed, each followed by a new more updated one until a consensus was reached and the new questionnaire got approved by the heads of concerned departments of MWC. Next the form has been translated in languages used in BWL by an external agency and put in print in small trial quantity. This new survey (*Annex 7*) is coming into use starting from July 2022.

Even though the updated feedback survey is expected to bring better results in terms of communication with BWL customers and understanding of their needs and satisfaction, it is undoubtful that management of secondary feedback tools, such as Google Business and TripAdvisor cannot be neglected and put out of consideration when studying customer feedback.

Relevance of management of online reputation on eWOM platforms, such as TripAdvisor was discussed in 2017 study by Gil et al. The authors concluded that good reputational management online 1) generates adequate feedback and a constant dialogue with the consumer, which forces companies to be more willing to listen to consumers and to favor the accessibility of users to the information they demand; 2) promotes the unity of the brand and internal marketing, 3) provides company with a better knowledge of the tastes of the clients, as well as their behavior. (Gil et al., 2017)

For this reason, author proposes that at least basic indicators such as number of reviews and average score per month from these platforms would be added as a section in monthly reports of customer behavior and satisfaction. Along with that it is proposed to collect and integrate the reviews with comments from these platforms into report's section of open comments collected through feedback survey.

It is of great importance for the company to make sure that all of the reviews left at these public pages are processed by a representative and given appropriate reply when needed. It was studied, that 89% of consumers are "highly" or "fairly" likely to use a business that responds to all its online reviews, while 57% were 'not very' or 'not at all' likely to use a business that doesn't respond to reviews at all (Pitman, 2022).

However, taking into consideration, that currently there is no permanent employee in MWC in charge of digital communication and that BWL pages on both platforms receive numerous reviews, it would be irrational to suggest that the company should reply to each review received on these platforms.

Instead, author proposes that the company adopts a strategy where a reply is provided to the reviews falling into one of the following categories:

- 1) Negative reviews
- 2) Reviews with fake, false or misleading information
- 3) Reviews in which a specific issue or question was addressed to the company

It is of crucial importance to address all the negative reviews in order to reduce their damaging effect. Negative online reviews influence customers' purchasing behavior and can lead some of them to avoid negatively reviewed businesses entirely (Manis et al., 2020). Response to a negative review should be organized and follow a complaint management strategy.

According to "triple A" typology proposed by Sparks and Bradley (2017), effective response to a negative review online should be based on 1) acknowledgement of the dissatisfying event 2) account or explanation for its occurrence 3) reference to an action taken to improve the situation. It is also important that the reaction to negative reviews happens fast so that a manager's response is visible to future reviewers, illustrating that the company is dedicated to solving customer complaints.

In case of a fake or fraudulent review, author proposes to adopt a "triple D" typology following steps proposed in a professional guide (How To Effectively Respond To Negative And Fake Reviews, 2020): 1) Draw attention to the false accusations or incorrect information, 2) Discuss the matter with specific facts and details 3) If appropriate, delete the fraudulent review by reporting it to the platform or by asking customer to remove it.

In case of the review falling into the third category, it is expected that employee in charge would provide in due time information or answer to a question requested by the customer. In case if the request cannot be fulfilled or should be addressed to another entity – inform customer about the situation or refer to a competent entity.

6. CONCLUSION

Communication is a fundamental element of a business strategy as it has an invaluable impact on business performance. Effective communication helps companies develop understanding and trust with their clients, set clear expectations and clearly articulate their ideas, offer and vision.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a dramatic change in how people communicate in between each other and with businesses. These new circumstances made digital communication a new inevitable reality and a necessity, to which businesses should react and adapt with an up-to-date communication strategy.

The Madeira Wine Company, even though is an established business, does not have yet a comprehensive digital communication strategy. A great variety of brands with separate communication trajectories and limited human resources, add on to the difficulty of developing one. This project has served as a contribution to this issue, by developing a set of propositions for communication strategy of Blandy's Wine Lodge – enotourism center of MWC.

The author carried out a situational analysis and identified several weaknesses of Blandy's Wine Lodge in terms of communication, which have centered around 2 main topics – digital tools and platforms (website, social media, electronic Word-of-Mouth platforms) and feedback management (feedback survey and electronic Word-of-Mouth platforms).

After audit of the above-mentioned tools and platforms author identifies a list of issues and potential areas of improvements. Audit of the current website, revealed several limitations to its productive performance, resulting in a decision of replacing it with a brand-new website. Examination of social media showed that among three currently used platforms, Instagram shows highest potential, however, could be improved in terms of its management, activity, and variety of content. Audit of performance on TripAdvisor and Google Business established that the contact information provided on these public platforms is correct and that the business pages enjoy stable attention from the customers in form of reviews. However, since these platforms are not being managed by the business on an ongoing basis, communication with customers through these channels is being neglected, that according to several studies can badly affect company's online reputation. Analysis of the feedback survey have resulted in a list of propositions for improvements of survey content, structure and digitalization of the form.

Upon completion of the audit, author develops several proposals for improvements of identified issues. Author builds an outline for a new website, that will serve as a guidance in terms of content and visuals for the IT company in charge. Further, the changes to social media management are proposed, including an example of an editorial calendar. For eWOM platforms, author suggests including these feedback channels into feedback management system of the company and proposes a framework for working with online reviews. Finally, a new feedback form was developed in order to replace the current survey, including its digital version. The new questionnaire focused on asking more essential questions, got an improved and more precise scale of answer choices, optimized the part of personal data collection, as well as introduced a few marketing valuable questions for MWC rather than only wine tourism centered questions.

As several of the built propositions already coming in use (new feedback survey) or being in the process of development (new website), author hopes that the conducted work will serve its purpose and contribute into creation of comprehensive digital communication strategy in the Madeira Wine Company.

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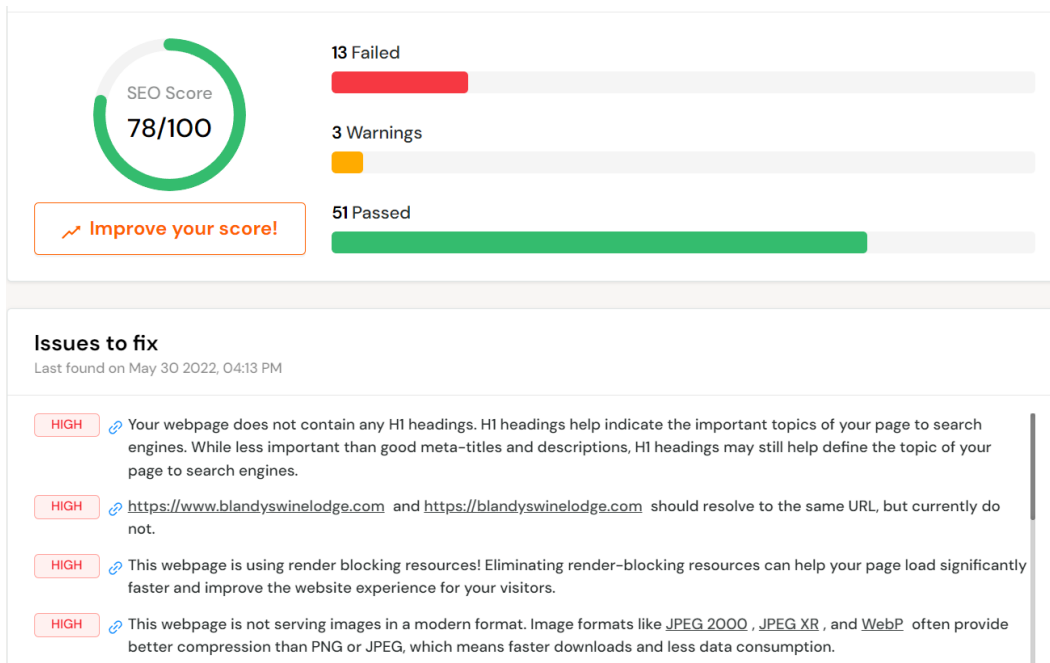
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ANNEXES

A1. BWL's website check-up with *Browseo* software

Response		
Response-Code	403 (Forbidden)	
Text Information		
Words	173	
Internal Links	27	
External Links	19	
Nofollow Links	0	
Head		
Microdata : RDFa	✓	
title	Blandy's Wine Lodge - Madeira Island - Welcome (46 Characters)	
viewport	width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0, maximum-scale=1.0, user-scalable=0	
description	Located in the centre of Funchal, Blandy's Wine Lodge gives visitors to Madeira Island an opportunity to experience Madeira Wine in the making (142 Characters)	
generator	Navega Bem - Web Design - Portugal	
robots	max-snippet:-1, max-image-preview:large, max-video-preview:-1	

A2. BWL's website check-up with *SEO check-up* software



A3. BWL's website check-up with *Mobile-Friendly Test* software

! Page is not mobile friendly
This page can be difficult to use on a mobile device. [Learn more](#)

VIEW TESTED PAGE

Details

Crawl


✓ Crawled successfully on 30 May 2022, 15:28:33

Issues

! Clickable elements too close together

! Content wider than screen

A4. Feedback survey currently used at BWL



BLANDLY'S
EST. 1811
MADEIRA
WINE LODGE

**YOUR FEEDBACK
IS VERY
IMPORTANT TO US!**

Name: _____

Age: 18-29 30-40 41-50 51-60 +61

Gender : Female Male **Nationality:** _____

Email Address: _____

Is this your first visit to Blandly's Wine Lodge?
Yes No

When did you last visit?

1. The welcome you received from our staff today:
Poor Good Very Good Excellent

2. Spaces at Blandly's Wine Lodge:
Poor Good Very Good Excellent


3. Wine tastings:
Poor Good Very Good Excellent

4. Presentation of our wines and products:
Poor Good Very Good Excellent


5. If you carried out a tour today, what did you think of the information given by our guide?
Poor Good Very Good Excellent

6. Is the information provided/shown enough?
Yes No

7. In your opinion is the tour worth the price ?
Yes No

Please, turn the page 

(Front)



8. Does the duration of tour meet your expectations?
 Yes No

9. Would you recommend our tours to friends and family?
 Yes No


10. Any further comments:

11. How did you hear about us?
 Facebook Tripadvisor Our website Word of mouth Passed by our door
 Advertising Where? _____
 Guide books Which? _____
 Hotel Which? _____
 Others _____

I hereby authorise my details to be processed electronically and to receive further information from Madeira Wine Company

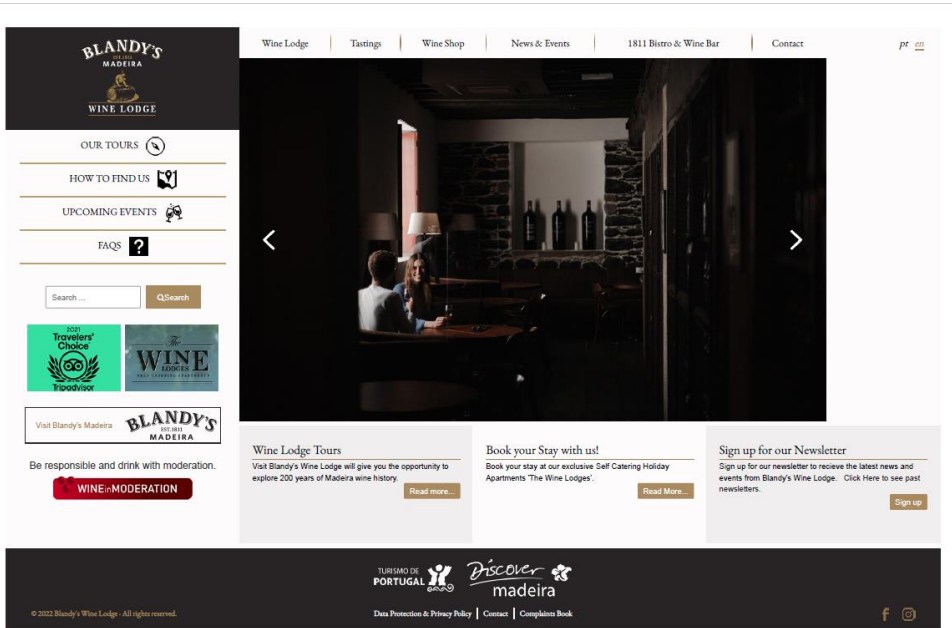
Date: ___/___/___ **Signature:** _____

Thank you for your visit and we hope to see you again!
 Blandys Wine Lodge – Avenida Arriaga 28, 9000-064 Funchal
 Tel.: 291 228 978 Email: pubrel@madeirawinecompany.com | www.blandyswinelodge.com | facebook.comBlandysWineLodge

PLEASE WRITE
YOUR REVIEW @

 THANK YOU!

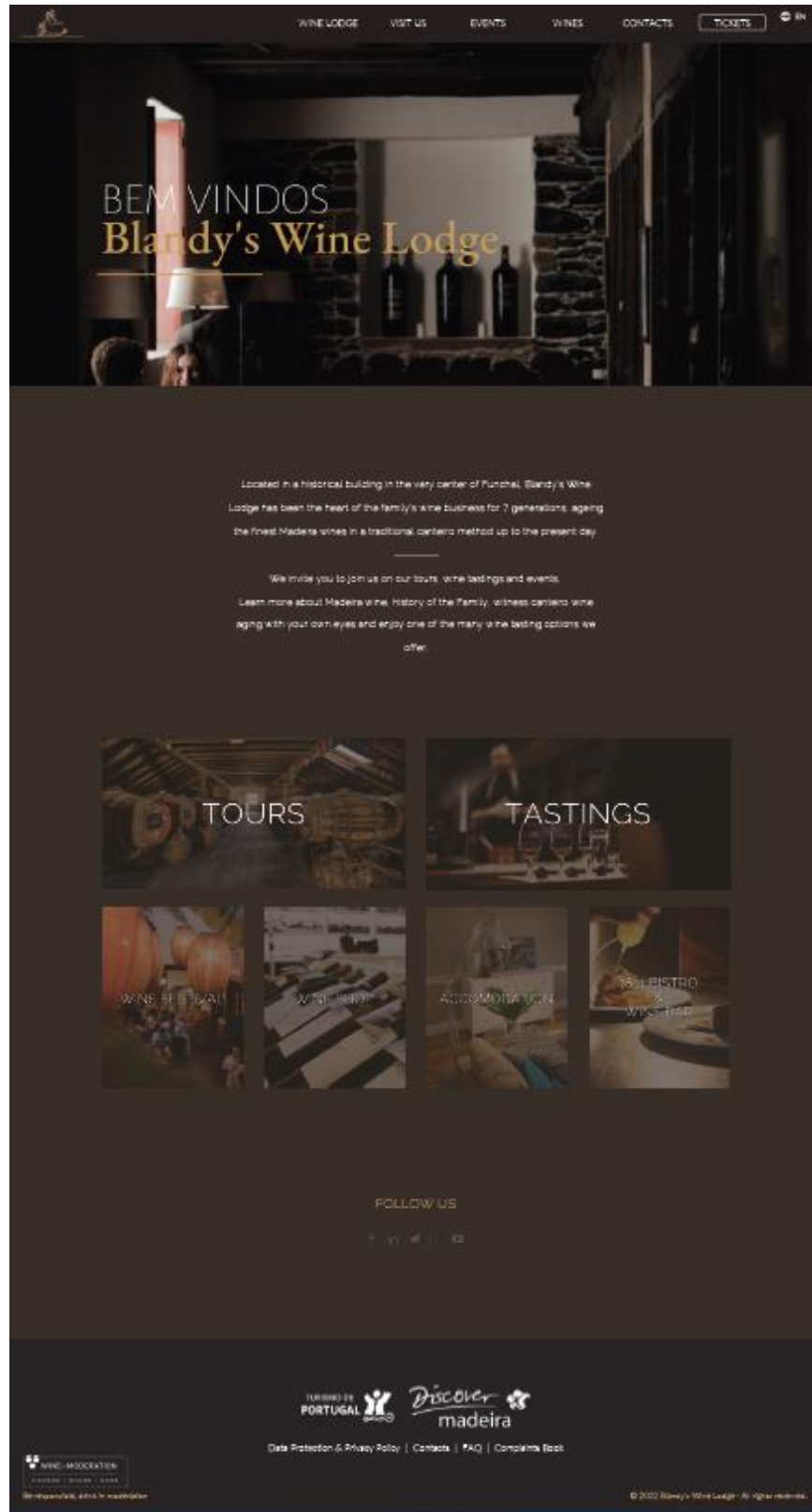
(Back)

A5. Current website of BWL




The screenshot shows the Blandys Wine Lodge website. The header includes navigation links: Wine Lodge, Tastings, Wine Shop, News & Events, 1811 Bistro & Wine Bar, and Contact. The main content area features a large image of a couple in a wine cellar, with navigation arrows. Below the image are three promotional boxes: 'Wine Lodge Tours', 'Book your Stay with us!', and 'Sign up for our Newsletter'. The footer contains the 'Discover Madeira' logo, copyright information, and social media icons.

A6. Outline of a new website for BWL, elaborated by the author



A7. Updated feedback survey for BWL



**YOUR FEEDBACK
IS VERY
IMPORTANT TO US!**

Country: _____ **Group type:** Solo Couple Family & Friends Travel agency

Age: 18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+ **Gender:** Female Male

PLEASE EVALUATE YOUR EXPERIENCE ON THE SCALE FROM 1 (VERY BAD) TO 5 (VERY GOOD)

Please evaluate your experience on the following spaces:

	n/a	1	2	3	4	5
Reception	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Main tasting room - Max Römer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vintage tasting room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Souvenir shop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Loja do Vinho (Wine shop)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have you done a guided tour today? Which one? Lodge Premium Vintage n/a

	1	2	3	4	5
Guide name: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information provided by the guide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Duration of the tour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Size of the tour group <10 <input type="checkbox"/> 10-15 <input type="checkbox"/> 15-20 <input type="checkbox"/> >20 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Price of the tour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The tour in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have you done a tasting today? Which one? On the tour From the counter Tutored tasting n/a

	1	2	3	4	5
Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about the wines provided by the staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about the wines available in the room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The tasting experience in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please, turn the page →

(Front)

PLEASE EVALUATE THE POSSIBILITY OF: 1 (EXTREMELY UNLIKELY) TO 5 (EXTREMELY LIKELY)

	1	2	3	4	5
Buying Madeira wine in your home country?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommending a visit of Blandy's Wine Lodge to friends and family?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please, help us to improve

How did you hear about us?

Previous visit Internet search Where? _____

Word of mouth Advertising Where? _____

TripAdvisor Guidebook/Blogs Which one? _____

Our website Hotel Which one? _____

Passed by our door Social Media - Our Influencers Other _____

Family and friends Other Which one? _____

Would you like to stay in touch and receive further information from Madeira Wine Company?

Yes No

↓




I hereby authorize my details to be processed electronically and agree to receive further information from Madeira Wine Company

Name: _____ **Email:** _____

Date: ____/____/____ **Signature:** _____

THANK YOU!

FOLLOW US

@BLANDYSWINELODGE

(Back)