

# Increasing Market Share in the Luxury Travel Market – Group Project

by

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## Introduction

The purpose of this group assessment is to demonstrate our skills in planning, organization and time management, to improve the research skills and data analysis and to simulate realistic working conditions in the field of online marketing in a practical project. To do so, the team opted for the travel industry in a brainstorming session with the project management tool Slack.com (slack, 2018). Our company, Luxury Treats, is an imaginary organization that sells luxury vacations to guests from all over the world. Villa owners list their homes on the company's website, and the company uses search and social media marketing to promote those villas so that guests find them and book them through the website. Luxury Treats makes its profit from commissions given when renting the listed homes. The company has a big inventory of luxury villas in more than 100 locations across the globe.

Our direct competitors are Tripadvisor, Airbnb, LuxuryRetreats, Vrbo, Flipkey etc. This work shows how a marketing campaign is planned and developed based on thorough research on the online landscape.

Since the individual team members are distributed around the world, the preparation of this campaign project has been planned very thoroughly because face to face meetings are not possible. It also takes a lot of effort, initiative, ownership from all team members to make the project a success. Furthermore, the team members did not know each other before this group work. The first time before the project started, the team was introducing themselves and appointing a team leader. The team chose Chinyere Muonemeh as Group Leader, having

already completed three modules and Adam Guerguis as Coordinator, having broad knowledge of global online marketing campaigns.

Another aggravating factor is the time: the team has three weeks to finalize and submit the assessment. This is why streamlined but simple project management is very important (Ellering, 2018).

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## Why we are doing this project?

Our historical Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data shows that more than 80 % of our revenue comes from only 20 % of our destinations. Some members of the management team believe that in order to increase our year over year growth we should increase our sales force in the successful regions. Mark Lindwall of Forrester explains that only to add resources in sales, usually leads to higher costs, but at the same time rarely have the desired positive impact on a company's sales figures (Lindwall, 2013). This is why the Marketing department decided to do a marketing research to be able to decide whether we should focus on what is working and increase its growth, assuming there is room for growth, or understand why we are not growing in the other areas, analyse the reasons, and come up with a strategy that can help us grow.

## 1. Analysis

### 1.1 Market Research

In an article on Scientific American website entitled 'How the survivor bias distorts reality' the author, Michael Shermer, argued that expecting a component to be successful in the future just because it was in the past is a cognitive bias. It also costs any analyst a lot to predict which players will perform well just by looking at why they performed well before, in his words: "Those are not predictions, just history." (Shermer, 2014)

The same concept can be easily applied to marketing analytics. The fact that some website components and/or pages perform better than others does not mean at all that we should be only focusing on those components without understanding why the other components are not performing well.

By analyzing our website analytics data, we saw that only 20 % of our pages receive the biggest amount of traffic. And since our conversion rate is almost the same amongst all our web pages. We can deduct that our revenue is generated mainly from high traffic pages.

So, in order for us to grow our revenue, we decided to analyze our website on the page level, to see which touristic regions generate the most traffic (and revenue), given that we have one region per page.

### 1.2 Understanding our revenue channels

Based on our Google Analytics and CRM data for the last two years, we found that there is a correlation between website traffic and the number of bookings (as well as revenue):

Example of findings:

Root URL	Regions	Full-URL	Average users per month	Avg. Monthly Bookings
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Tuscany	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Tuscany.html	2100	21
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Rome	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Rome.html	3213	32
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Maui	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Maui.html	4894	49
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Dubai	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Dubai.html	4987	50
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Casablanca	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Casablanca.html	5016	50
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Chiang Mai	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Chiang-Mai.html	5490	55
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Bangkok	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Bangkok.html	5679	57
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Phi Phi islands	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Phi-Phi-islands.html	5899	59
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Pattaya	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Pattaya.html	6001	60
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Tagaytay City	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Tagaytay-City.html	6300	63
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Bali	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Bali.html	15460	155
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Palm Springs	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Palm-Springs.html	26784	268
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	musha cay	https://www.luxurytreats.com/musha-cay.html	45088	451
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	belize	https://www.luxurytreats.com/belize.html	78099	781
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	merv griffin	https://www.luxurytreats.com/merv-griffin.html	84566	846
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	turks and caicos	https://www.luxurytreats.com/turks-and-caicos.html	91555	916
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	puerta vallarta	https://www.luxurytreats.com/puerta-vallarta.html	112000	1120
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	saint lucia	https://www.luxurytreats.com/saint-lucia.html	115222	1152
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	kohsamui	https://www.luxurytreats.com/kohsamui.html	136789	1368
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Sonoma	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Sonoma.html	145222	1452
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	ibiza	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Ibiza.html	167443	1674
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	Tulum	https://www.luxurytreats.com/Tulum.html	170987	1710
https://www.luxurytreats.com/	riviera maya	https://www.luxurytreats.com/riviera-maya.html	189054	1891

Table 1: Google Analytics and CRM data for the last two years (numbers are imagined), 2018.

That initial finding led us to question why we have been receiving traffic to only 20% of our website pages. And instead of growing the performing pages and ignore the low performing ones (DeMers, 2017) we decided to see first why some pages are not receiving traffic; is it because there is no demand for these regions? Or it is because we have high competition?

### 1.3 Pairing website content with keyword ranking on SERPs

In order to understand why we are not receiving traffic from search engines on most of our pages, we decided to see how those pages perform compared to competition, and if the targeted keywords for those pages have enough volume/demand.

To do this type of advanced analysis we had to use enterprise Search Engine Optimization (SEO) platforms, because they can crawl sites and scrape Search Engine Result Pages (SERP) and index keyword ranking on the URL level and provide a ranking trend. They can also show a share of voice for any group of keywords that are tightly themed or targeted by a specific page (Anon., 2018).

So, we contacted some platforms, and requested a trial account to do our analysis. Three of them gave us access (but with limited keywords); Bright Edge, Web CEO, and SEO Clarity.

### 1.4 Methodology

Our research methodology consisted of 3 steps:

1. We created keyword groups for each page (vacation region) we want to target. For example, for Hawaii keyword group, we had Hawaii vacations, Hawaii Villas, Hawaii luxury cabin, Hawaii beachfront, Hawaii luxury rental, etc.

2. We used WebCEO, Bright Edge, SEO Clarity, Ahrefs, and Google Ads Keyword Planner to know which keywords have search volume and low competition for each group.
3. We used BrightEdge and SEOClarity to scan each keyword group to see where our targeted pages are ranked compared to competitors, and what is our share of voice in the SERP landscape.

### Example of results

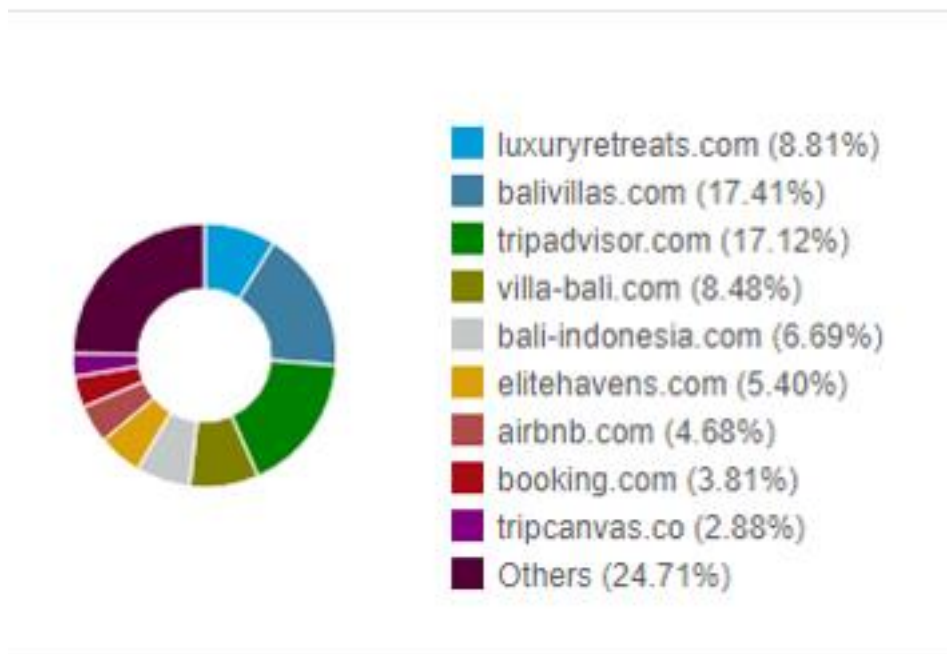


Figure 1: Share of voice chart retrieved from BrightEdge for the 'Bali' keyword group on August 14, 2016.

### 1.5 Key findings

Our research showed that in about 90 % of the time if the vacation region keyword is used in the root domain of a site, it gets ranked amongst in the top 10 results on the SERPs. We also found that for each vacation region there is always a competitor microsite that only promotes vacations in that region and most of the time that competitor microsite has the biggest share of voice on the SERP for the targeted keywords for that region.

### 1.6 Exact-Match Domain Name

An Exact Match Domain (EMD) is “a domain name that precisely matches a search query” (Ratcliff, 2016). Michael Gargiulo, CEO of VPN.com, argues in a Forbes article that Google rewards websites that uses Exact-Match Domains like hotels.com, bus.com, and insurance.com by showing them higher in the SERPs because they are the most relevant to the keywords (Gargiulo, 2018). Bill Slawski, on the other hand, wrote in a blog post in 2011 quoting Matt Cutts, Head

of Google's Web Spam team, that "it wouldn't necessarily help you as much to have a domain with a bunch of keywords in it." (Slawski, 2011).

A Google patent invented by Amit Singhal, Matt Cutts, and Jun Wu enables Google to process users queries to identify if they are commercial or non-commercial and if it is commercial, it makes sure that sites using stop words, punctuation, digits, or words like 'buy, where, who, etc. as keyword domains are not credited for those keywords (Singhal, 2011).

So, we concluded that Google rewards websites that uses keywords in their domains as long as they are not with poor quality (Schwartz, 2012), abusing ranking algorithm, nor spamming it with long hyphenated keywords as explained in the Microsoft paper, 'Spam, Damn Spam, and Statistics' (Fetterly, et al., 2004)

## 2 Organisation

### 2.1 Strategy to Increase our Revenue

Based on our research we found that the ideal way to increase revenue is to use microsites that are tightly themed with the vacation regions we want to rent villas in. This strategy will leverage Google's latent semantic analysis and TF-IDF indexing and crawling method (Anon., n.d.).

### 2.2 Marketing Resources

The objective of executing a digital platform is for the business to be available online. Marketing campaigns generate traffic to the websites and generate new leads hence increasing sales and Return on Investments (ROI). Webinars, podcasts, google tools, e-books, analytics, mobile search, web development among others are key sites that are very useful in marketing insights.

Used keywords (queries), conversion rates, and user experience all relate to engagement of target audience. The more we know our audiences, the more powerful our marketing campaign becomes.





Figure 2: Digital Marketing Strategy Process of Luxury Treats Microsite Campaign, (privat data), 2018.

For successful internet marketing, it is important to have clear objectives as part of channel performance measurement (Dave, 2000). Online surveys generate insights on what motivates our audience. The success can be linked into:

1. Channel promotion effectiveness-efficiency and cost of acquisition by different techniques
2. Channel buyer behavior- search engine results
3. Channel satisfaction- leads and sales
4. Channel profitability- financial measures

### 2.3 Risk Assessment

This involves identification, analysis and evaluation of possible risks that can affect our project.

In our case, potential risks include:

1. Lack of evidence to support the strategy being a new business (Boyd, 2018).
2. Competitors can do the same thing like us if and apply the same strategy. We have seen a lot of key players are doing the same business (Costello, 2018).
3. We will be focusing less on the main site as we will be spending more marketing hours on building and optimizing the new microsites.
4. A lot of maintenance required to update the microsite and keep up with the new trends.
5. Creating microsites that are not branded with a well-known brand name might cause confusion, lack of trust, and less credibility (Fogg, 2002).
6. Brand confusion: With the microsites being their own brand, while the transactional site is a different brand, people can get confused and not have our brand on top of their mind if they want to come back.

## 2.4 Risk Mitigation

1. Use of high-quality content in our marketing campaign sites
2. Use https protocols and SSL certificates on the microsites to build trust among users and search engines (Patel, n.d.)
3. Monitoring the main site and the microsites performance to see if there is any change in user behaviour or traffic.
4. Using the same brand guidelines and authorship across all the sites.
5. Testing first before repeating to ensures quality and quantity

## 2.5 SMART Goals

- Our goal is to increase our revenue by 30% YoY.
- To achieve this, we will focus on increasing our traffic by 30%, and assuming that our Conversion Rate does not change, we will be able to achieve the same growth rate in revenue.
- We will be using our Google Analytics account to measure our website traffic increase. as well as our conversion rate to make sure that we are steadily moving towards achieving our goal. We will also be using our CRM system to measure revenue → measurable
- We believe from our keyword and competitive research that there is a room for our business to increase its traffic → attainable
- Our project goal is more built on the “why” → relevant (Anon., n.d.)
- We should achieve this goal in a year time, but will start tracking it on weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis to ensure that we are on track, and adjust the tactics if needed down the road.

## 2.6 Search & Social Media Marketing Communications Strategy

To show the responsibilities and enhance our communication of the tasks among the team, we created a GANTT-Chart for a year period. It shows the dependence, parallel activities of our launched microsite campaigns, and the milestones and responsibilities of each group member. Each launch of a microsite is highlighted as a milestone in red. Furthermore, it let us track the results of the pilot project and the upcoming campaigns (Nishadha, 2017) and helps decide if the project is viable.

## 2.7 SWOT Analysis

Compared to classic communication, social media is an area that moves fast. This can affect the reputation of a company as well as a brand or a person (Ristuccia & Rossen, 2015).

For a company: In order to keep the potential risk as small as possible, "Reputation Risk Management" must be actively pursued. It is also up to management to develop a strategy that deals with critical issues and queries through social media. It is important to recognize which topics can lead to a risk: the behaviour of a company, the behaviour of employees, the behaviour of customers or outsiders, intellectual property etc. (Caskey, et al., 2016).

### **Strengths**

- Established brand
- Content
- Affinity to luxury travels
- Affinity to SSMM
- Widely read blog posts
- Google Analytics data

### **Weakness**

- High amount of competitors
- Lack of time and resources
- KPI's must be measurable
- Low conversion rate

### **Opportunities**

- Creating a travel community (specific to target audience)
- Learnings and do better after every campaign / launch of microsite
- Competence positioning
- New ways to communicate with customers
- Creating a well-known lifestyle brand

### **Threats**

- Customer complains
- Bad reputation in Social Media
- Not getting noticed by potential customers
- Employees
- Account hacking
- Competitors are having the same audience and can potentially do the same thing.

## **2.8 Microsites for Targeted Regions**

Based on our research we found that the ideal way to increase revenue is to create microsites that are tightly themed (Tyler, 2013) with the vacation regions we want to rent villas in.

## **2.9 Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI)**

Many years ago, keyword stuffing, which is simply adding the targeted keywords over and over everywhere in the site just for ranking on SERPs (Seow, 2015) was how webmasters get a site ranked on SERPs, Nowadays, Google looks, not for the primary keyword, and how many times it is repeated on the site to show that the content is relevant, but for keywords that are semantically related to the primary keywords (DiSilvestro, 2017) and (Fishkin, 2005). Those words are “not just synonyms or keywords that are similar in meaning” (Shaw, 2017), nor just correlations in usage, but keywords that serve the same intent of the user searching for the primary keyword using very “powerful mathematical analysis that is capable of correctly inferring much deeper relations” (Landauer, 1998). So, for our microsite, we will be using the keywords, and keyword variations that a user will use if they are looking to book a vacation in target

region. For example, our pilot microsite will target Tuscany in Italy. Since we want to attract tourists looking to rent a luxury home in Tuscany, we will be providing content, and using keywords that our target audience would use, like 'wineries in Tuscany, things to do in Tuscany, etc.

We can use LSI keywords research tools like Ultimate Keyword Hunter (Anon., unknown) or LSI Graph (Anon., unknown) to find topic ideas that are semantically related to the target keywords.

We will also use SEOPressor (Anon., unknown) or a similar tool, to audit our content SEO Health, and gain insights on our LSI and "contextual linguistics" (Seow, 2015). We will make sure to include our target keywords and its semantically related words on the following locations:

- URL address
- Title tag
- H1 and H2 tags
- Images Alt tags
- First paragraph of text
- Anchor text links
- Body of content
- Anchor text on off-site backlinks to the site

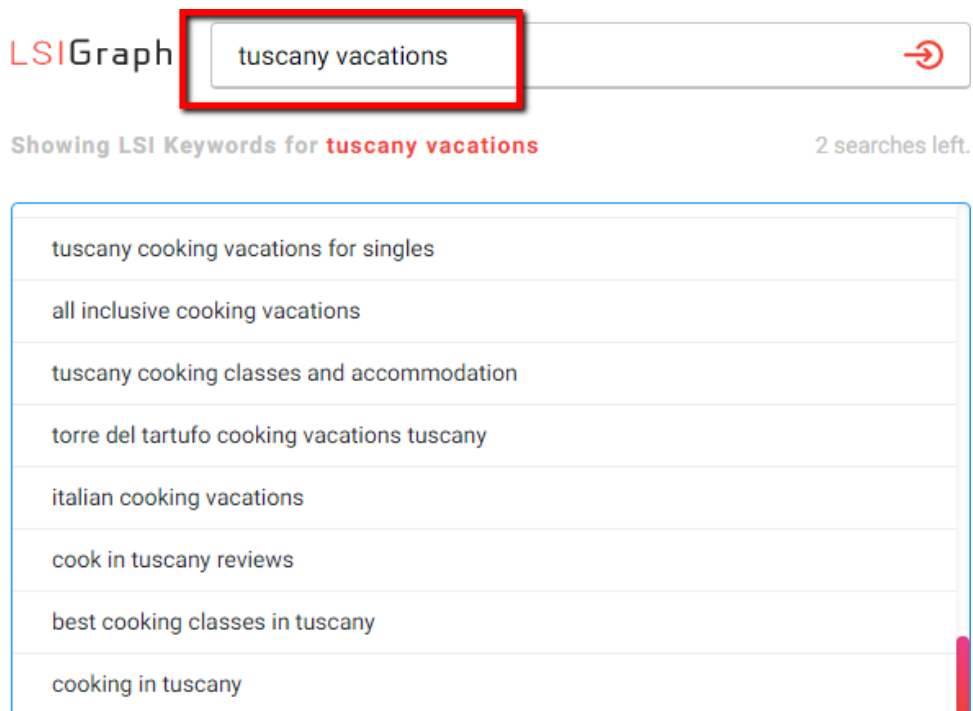


Figure 3: LSI Graph showing Keywords, 2018)

## 2.10 RankBrain Algorithm

In October 2015, Bloomberg reported that Google had rolled out a new algorithm that uses algorithm and machine learning called RankBrain. Neil Patel also wrote

in an article that Google will be increasing its usage of the RankBrain algorithm (Patel, 2017). This new algorithm helps Google understand new search queries that are ambiguous or have multiple meaning and show the most relevant results on the SERP (Finn, 2015). To optimize for the RankBrain algorithm we will ensure that our microsites and blog posts provide high quality topical content (Shaw, unknown) using two tactics:

1. Create related keyword groups that are logically related and can be used within the same context, for example for a blog post about best time to visit Tuscany, we can add keywords on things to wear in Tuscany, weather in Tuscany, activities calendar, etc.
2. Build content with answers to questions that people will be asking search engines. We will use a keyword suggestion tool to like : <https://answerthepublic.com/> to find what questions people could be asking in any topic we are writing about.

### 2.11 Exact Match Domains

We will be building 12 microsites, one for each region. Each microsite will target one keyword only with 2-3 words max. (Malicoat, 2012), the ones that have the least competition and with the highest search volume (provided that the search volume is high enough to generate revenue). All the microsites will have a dedicated blog where we will be publishing weekly articles on the targeted destinations using all the relevant keywords.

### 2.12 Measurement and KPIs

We will install Google Analytics on all our microsites to analyze the following dimensions and metrics:

- Traffic by page, to see how many users visit each page, and which ones perform better
- Bounce rate
- Time on site
- Traffic source/medium
- devices

We will also use, a keyword rank tracker tool like WebCeo, SEMRush, MOZ, etc. to monitor and track our ranking for our targeted keywords.

## 3. Artefacts

### Tightly-themed Microsites with embedded blogs for our target regions

We built a prototype microsite for the purpose of this project and planning to produce one each month to target all the regions we need to increase our organic presence on the SERPs. We also built social media profiles on Facebook,

Twitter, Google Plus, and Instagram, to share all the new content we will be producing on the microsities.

### 3.1 Objective

As a luxury vacation rentals company with properties in several touristic regions across the globe, but are only able to market a few of them, we will be creating microsities for each destination we found that we can generate more traffic to through SERPs.

### 3.2 Components

The first prototype microsite we built for this project consists of 6 main pages and is still a beta version and not yet online (<https://nmeyer-neufeld.wixsite.com/tuscany-vacations>). Once the microsite is online, the URLs are as follows:

- Homepage <https://www.tuscany-vacations.com>
- About us <https://www.tuscany-vacations.com/aboutus>
- Rooms: <https://www.tuscany-vacations.com/rooms>
- Gallery: <https://www.tuscany-vacations.com/gallery>
- Blog: <https://www.tuscany-vacations.com/blog>
- Contact us <https://www.tuscany-vacations.com/contact>

The title tags reflect our target keywords. In our pilot campaign 'Tuscany Vacations' is our primary keyword and 'Tuscany Villas' is a secondary keyword, our URL incorporates Tuscany-Vacations.com and the title tags have 'Tuscany Villas' within different topics. To ensure freshness, relevancy, engagement, and constant indexation on SERPs, we are aiming to have more content down the road in our blog (beta version): <https://nmeyer-neufeld.wixsite.com/tuscany-vacations/blog/tuscany-villas-your-escape-to-paradis>



Figure 4: Blog Post "Tuscany Vacations – Your Escape to Paradis" on the pilot microsite, (2018).

### 3.3 Optimization

We made sure to incorporate our target keywords in the main meta data areas in the site:

- Title Tag
- Description Tag
- Body
- H1 and H2 tags
- Images ALT text

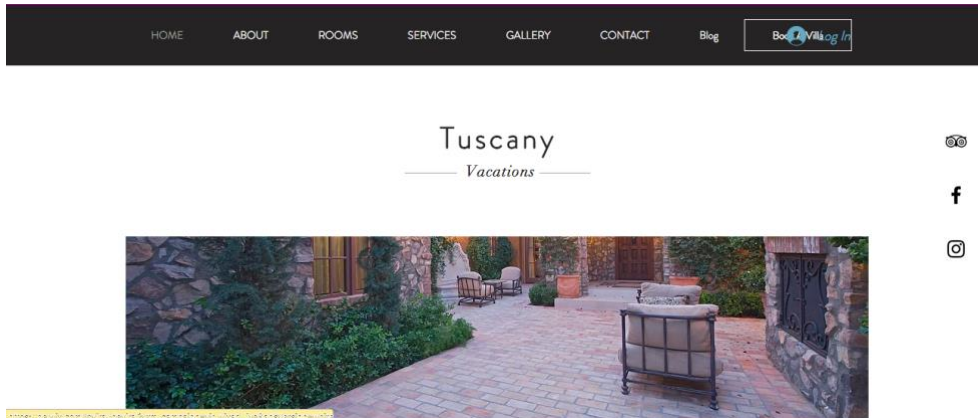


Figure 5: Home page including title Tag "Tuscany Vacations" of pilot microsite for our pilot campaign "Tuscany", 2018.

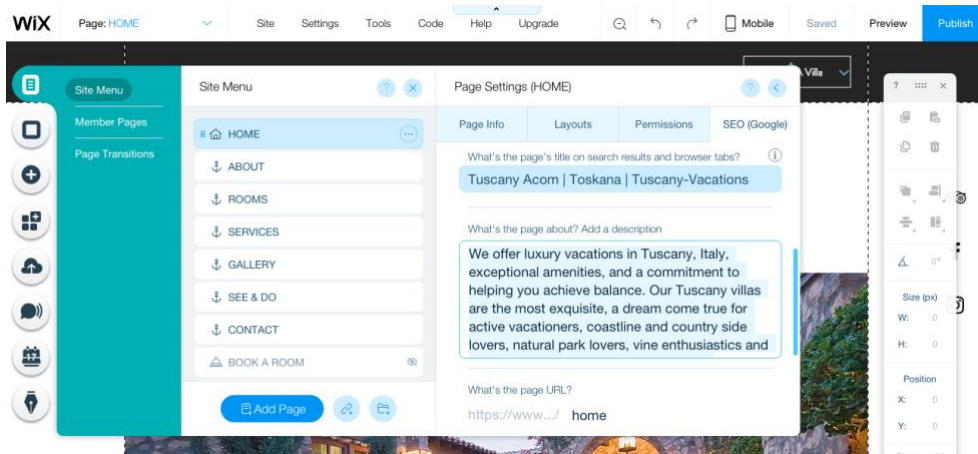


Figure 6: Description tag of pilot microsite, 2018.

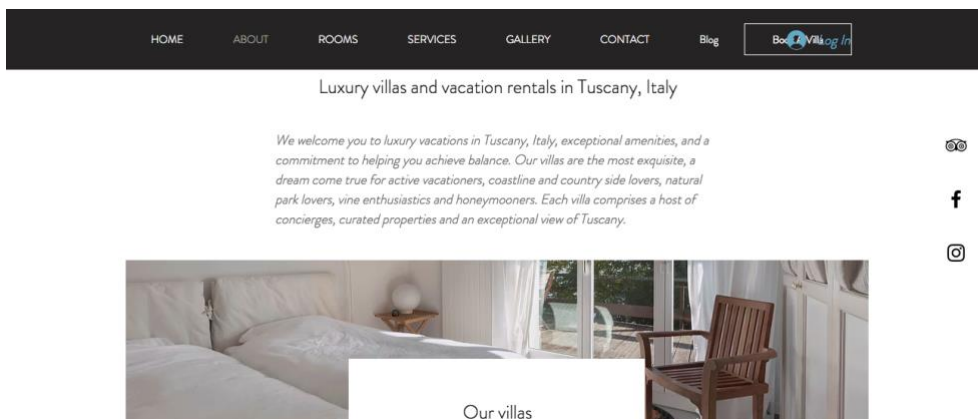




Figure 7: Body Tags of our pilot microstie "Tuscany Vacations", 2018.

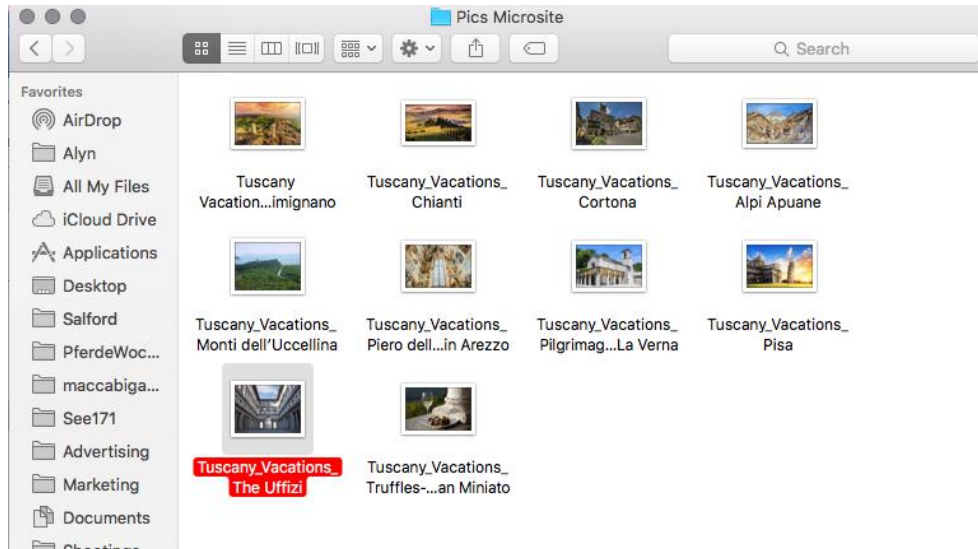


Figure 8: Images ALT text for all pictures implemented on our microsite and blog, 2018.

### 3.4 Influence of social media in promotion of Luxury treats

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus have a major role to play when it comes to online marketing. The social media marketing is very useful in reaching a wide variety of audience (Lipsman, et al., 2012). The content shared directly by brands and through reposts such as the use of Facebook advertisement helps in marketing. We will be using our new social media pages to promote our blog posts as well as using them to act as a centralised repository for all the microsities fresh content. That way social media will help us solve the brand identity issue since all the microsities will be linking to the same social media networks.



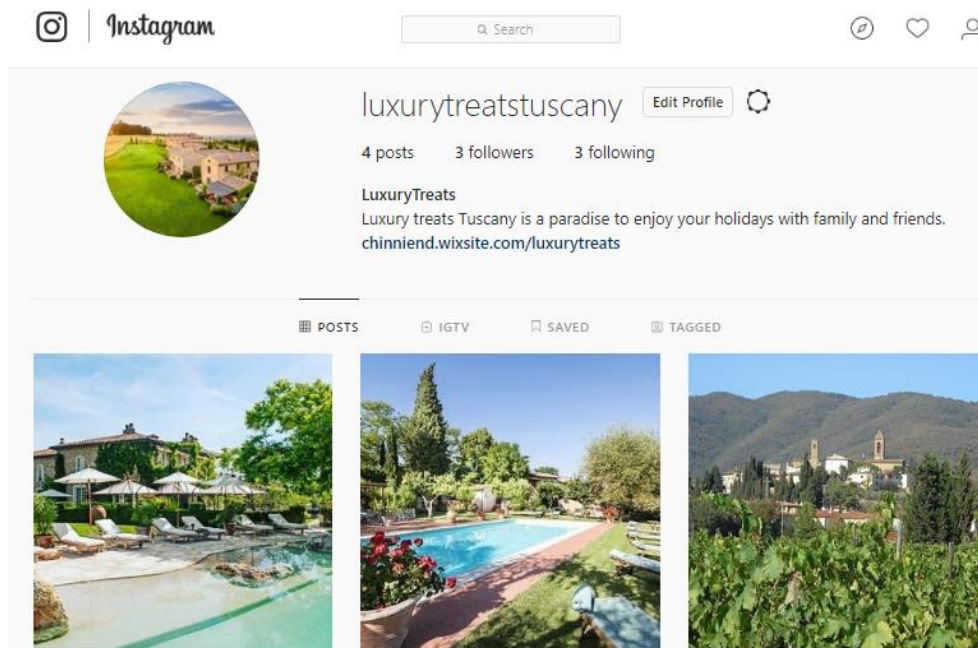


Figure 9: Instagram Account of Luxury Treats Tuscany, <https://www.instagram.com/luxurytreats1/>, 2018.

It has been analysed that social media marketing also helps in attracting new customers which leads to online marketing (Michaelidou, et al., 2011). The use of social media will help promote Luxury Treats and the microsites by providing a platform to promote our content online without any additional cost. The News feed and story option on Instagram helps in grabbing the attention of the audience because of the latest posts and hashtags.

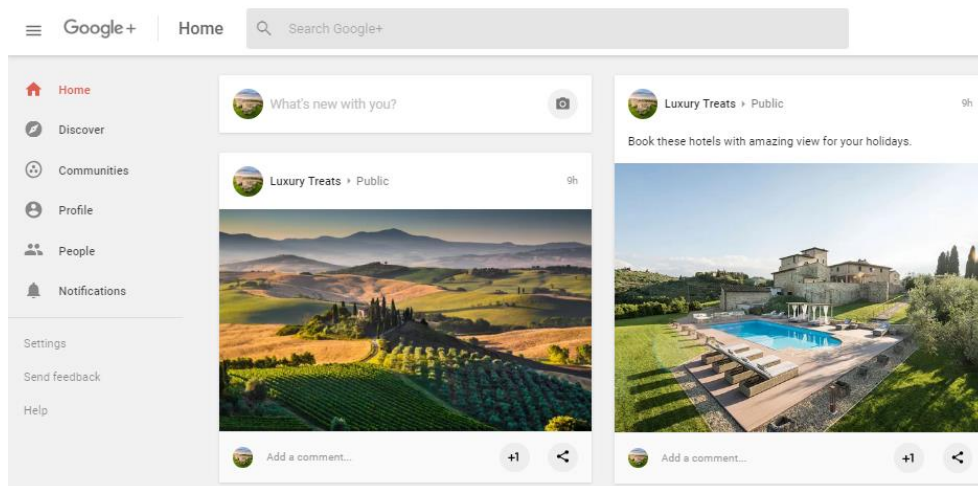


Figure 10: Google+ Account of Luxury Treats Tuscany: <https://plus.google.com/u/0/105766870743763572735>, 2018.

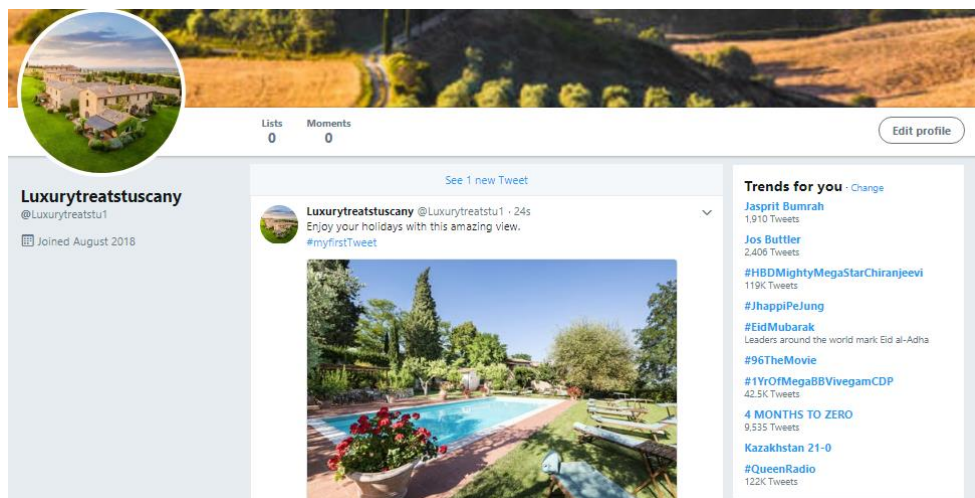


Figure 11: Twitter Account of Luxury Treats Tuscany, <https://twitter.com/LuxuryTreats1>, 2018.

Twitter is another social marketing tool which is helpful for promotion. The use of social media also helps in better customer satisfaction as the customer already has an idea about the product or services which are offered by the organisation or business firm (Kim & Ko, 2012). Organisations these days have recognised the need to be updated with the latest marketing strategies in order to reach more people.

It has been analysed that marketing on social media is not an easy task and the organisation should be aware of the latest trends and promotion strategies on social media. There are many companies which face challenges when it comes to being active on social media and keeps on marketing (Hanna, et al., 2011).

There are many options on social media for marketing such as paid promotions. This procedure includes paying to popular brands for marketing about the services and product of the organisations. Luxury Treats can utilise these paid promotions marketing strategies in order to reach more people. This would save time for Luxury Treats and would more benefits. It has been analysed that social media interactions are useful and organisations can upload videos regarding their product and services to give a better idea to the people and enhance their marketing strategies (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

### 3.5 Plan

We plan on writing periodic blog posts with content and context that keep readers long enough on our site (Larsson & Hrastinski, 2011). Every blog post will have layouts with features that enable readers like, comment, share and view activities on the blog. We will also hashtag posts to enable people search through content on our blog.

## 4. Resume

With this Salford Business School assessment, which was also a group work, we learned the benefits of working in a team but also dealing with the disadvantages of globality. This group work reflected real working conditions in which international projects are being worked on. It is these, the time difference, the language barriers and the different ways of working.

Nonetheless, the group work was a great enrichment and also learned important aspects in the area of Search and Social Media Marketing. It showed us why it is not always necessary to increase the sales force when sales growth is desired. A comprehensive research in marketing can cost less and increase sales more, as our case study pointed out. Building 12 microsites and creating blog posts scattered across social media channels and microsites, we chose an effective and focused strategy to increase our business revenue.

In our group work we developed a digital marketing strategy that focused on content and message leading to media channel and tracking and measurement of implementation.

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