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The challenges that face travel agencies in the new era of tourism and how to carry out a Marketing recovery strategy
The case of JoinMyTrip

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« L'ISTHIA de l'Université de Toulouse - Jean Jaurès n'entend donner aucune approbation, ni improbation dans les projets tutorés et mémoires de recherche. Les opinions qui y sont développées doivent être considérées comme propres à leur auteur(e). »

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Summary

General Introduction

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

- Marcel Proust

The above citation, taken from 'La Prisonnière', 5th volume of 'Remembrance of things past' by Marcel Proust can be understood or analyzed in different ways. In this thesis, I will use this as a travel reference. The reason I chose this citation is simple: it is largely in line with JoinMyTrip's culture (I will present this company further in this introduction). That is to say, if you wish to discover a new place, the best way to do so is to have 'new eyes' and in this case, it means travelling with locals, destination experts or strangers who are willing to learn about the destination with you during your trip.

It is no question that the current global pandemic has impacted the travel sector in the biggest way since its beginnings. For decades, travel agencies have been selling paradise and dream-like experiences. This industry has grown exponentially, from being a luxury to a business necessity to a normal way of life - where anyone can fly anywhere for an affordable price. Today and for two years now, travel, tourism and hospitality businesses have suffered the consequences of Covid-19 and struggled to stay afloat. Many companies had to take action by laying off employees, cutting off certain departments and even closing down. Statistics from Statista (October 2020)[1] showed that the global revenue for travel and tourism decreased 42.1% from the previous year.

Other studies show that Europe had the highest number of outbound travellers in the world in 2019, with "over 702 million international tourist arrivals worldwide who originated from Europe",

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[1] Statista. *Forecasted change in revenue from the travel and tourism industry due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic worldwide from 2019 to 2020*, May 2020 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3DCJA8D. (Consulted 19.06.2021)

according to the Statista Research Department (13 July 2021)[2]. And within Europe, it was Germany who ranked as the biggest market for international travel, counting 99,5 million trips abroad (spending 99,5 million euros on outbound trips) in 2019. In second place that year was France, spending approximately 30 million euros as a comparison to German travellers.

With Germany being the main market in Europe, the founder of the company *Travelsation UG* (later on changed to *JoinMyTrip*) created this startup in Hamburg in hopes to connect like-minded travellers together, through an intuitive, easy-to-use and free to sign up platform, starting with the German avid travellers. A short survey posted in a Facebook group for solo female travellers (113 150 members) asked if the community would travel internationally at the moment (August 2021) and 70.82% of the total survey-takers (398 votes) answered that they would fly abroad all the while taking precautions and being careful at the destination. The 164 others who answered "no" were primarily concerned with safety and said it was best to wait rather than to take risks.

Each business was forced to find new strategies to be able to stay afloat until the end of the pandemic, which was very unpredictable. *JoinMyTrip* was one of them. As a B2C platform, it was easier to maintain constant (but much less) revenue thanks to its business model: the community posts their own trips, puts their own prices and chooses the people who will travel with them. Since there's no travel agent interfering in the process (unless there's a problem or if they reach out, of course), travellers are more inclined to use the platform than to visit an actual travel agency. Especially with the new trend of organising and paying your own vacation online.

The beginning of the pandemic proved to be a challenging time for the German startup, but it managed to maintain revenue flowing in thanks to the type of service provided. People still wanted to leave their homes, especially after the lockdowns. They would publish a short trip to a nearby city or post a trip with a very distant date, and they would still receive requests to join their trip. Individuals relocated their shopping online as a result of Covid-19 lockdowns and social distancing, and the amount of money spent on online purchases grew by 40% (Hootsuite, 2021) in the last year. As online

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[2] Statista. *Outbound tourism in European countries - statistics & facts*, 13 July 2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3DMiw7g. (Consulted on 19.06.2021)

shopping becomes more prevalent in 2021, we may expect these practices to have an enduring impact on everyone long after the pandemic has passed. We can use this to our advantage.

I joined this firm during a critical time: a desire to grow significantly while having a solid enough plan to avoid going bankrupt. Travel agencies entered a new era of tourism and faced a global pandemic all at the same time. To survive and grow their brand online, they had no choice but to develop a solid marketing plan and that is what this paper will be about: a case study about the company that hosted me for my internship and how I grew the company's social media presence during a period of low activity.

That meant first learning why digital marketing is so essential today and how a customer-centric marketing strategy is the way to go for an online travel platform to achieve this goal successfully. Then, in order to establish the appropriate social media presence and boost product development, it is necessary to analyse the present social media content strategy. JoinMyTrip's social media reach, audience, impressions and conversions have increased in particular on Facebook and Pinterest. Lastly, we'll analyse the major results of our experiments to come up with the best possible strategy.

Chapter 1: The new era of tourism and its particularities

« Les espèces qui survivent ne sont pas les espèces les plus fortes ou les plus intelligentes, mais celles qui s'adaptent le mieux aux changements. »

\- Charles Darwin

We cannot deny that tourism was one of the industries hardest hit by the global pandemic, with disastrous consequences for many businesses. With the virus spreading faster than anyone expected, countries began closing their borders, imposing an early curfew for their citizens, and closing tourist attractions and other potential activities such as museums, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs. As a result, international tourist arrivals declined by 84 % between March and December 2020 compared to the previous year (UNWTO, July 2021)[3]. Consequently, global tourism revenue fell by $935 billion in the first ten months of 2020, and employment loss in the travel and tourism sector was predicted to be 100 million (Statista, June 2021)[4]. Although there was some improvement in travel in May, the rise COVID-19 variants and ongoing limitations are hampering foreign travel recovery. But many regions of the world continue to see a resurgence in domestic tourism. With the accelerating vaccination numbers, we will be able to anticipate a revival in international travel at the end of the year or next year in 2022. We already noticed this revival in the summer of 2021, where airports were packed and aeroplanes were crowded compared to the summer of 2020 when airports became ghost towns and aeroplanes were empty. In some countries, however, they kept their borders closed and foresaw rigorous health measures for their citizens.

This would consequently result in a mental health decline in many countries. Since the outbreak of the epidemic in the beginning of 2020, mental well-being has plummeted across all age categories. The younger generation and individuals who have lost their jobs are most affected by this, according to a report by Eurofound[5].

To fully understand this change, let's dive into this industry's beginnings and then predict the future of tourism in general after reviewing the consequences of the global pandemic. As the quote indicated above by Charles Darwin says, the species that survive are not the strongest or the most

[3] UNWTO. International travel largely on hold despite uptick in May. *UNWTO*, 21 July 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.unwto.org/taxonomy/term/347. (Consulted 28.07.2021)

[4] Statista. *Coronavirus: impact on the tourism industry worldwide - statistics & facts*, 2 June 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.statista.com/topics/6224/covid-19-impact-on-the-tourism-industry/. (Consulted on 28.07.2021)

[5] Ahrendt, D., Mascherini, M., et al. Living, working and Covid-19: Mental health and trust decline across EU as pandemic enters another year. *European foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*, April 2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3ytRygM. (Consulted 01.09.2021)

intelligent, but those that best adapt to change. And the companies in the tourism industry, despite being hit by the pandemic, will come back stronger than ever.

1.1 The evolution of the tourism industry

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach!"

-Ebenezer Scrooge

Tourism has seen many changes throughout the years, and just like Ebenezer Scrooge, we must learn from the past and the present in order to strive for the future. Now let's learn about tourism.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as "the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". The term "activities" is to be understood here in the general sense of individual occupations. All travellers of interest in tourism are called visitors and there are two categories of visitors[6]: tourists, who spend at least one night (and less than one year) away from their usual environment, and excursionists, who do not spend any night away from their usual environment.

The focus of this subchapter is to revisit the history of tourism and analyse the tourism industry today in order to choose the best business plan for the future.

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[6] Boumeggouti, Driss. *Géographie et Géopolitique du tourisme*. Masters 2 MIT course, ISTHIA, Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, 2021.

"Every traveller has a home of his own, and he learns to appreciate it the more from his wandering."

- Charles Dickens

Since the early days of industrialisation, tourism has been affirmed and structured through random peregrinations motivated by a quest for nature, for health and well-being, and the recomposition of privileged micro-societies far from the social and environmental nuisances of industrial centres. As a result, there was the discovery of the coastlines, the benefits of climates, and the quest for the exoticism of a distant world: the Near East, Asia, and the Far East, following in the footsteps of the explorers. Tourists included nobles, the first economic elites (bankers, industrialists, and so forth), and vacationers.

From the 1950s onwards, full economic expansion supported the enrichment of Western culture and the evolution of types of consumption toward the need for recognition and self-esteem (cf. Maslow's pyramid); this was the beginning of the "civilisation of leisure". Individual and collective transportation advancements have followed the globalisation of tourism. Aviation, which was formerly reserved for the elite, has become the major means of international tourism travel, aided by the introduction of big aircrafts (Boeing 747, 1969) and the deployment of charter flights. Far away destinations are now within reach: a weekend in Marrakech or Iceland, a week in Bali or the Maldives.

All of these factors lead to the rise of mass tourism. This phenomenon results in a large number of tourists concentrating in small areas of a country. The evolution of cruise tourism is particularly noteworthy in this regard: the most recent ships placed into service can accommodate more than 6,000 cruise passengers. The democratisation and massification of the tourism sector require a new development of the reception areas.

The last decade of the twentieth century was marked by a phenomenal increase in tourist spaces. The walls came down, the borders opened up and Western teenagers were eager to visit nations in Central and Eastern Europe that had long been hidden behind the Iron Curtain, such as East

Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and others. The number of regions available to tourists was continuously growing, and the geopolitical environment appeared to be quite favourable.

The arrival of the twenty-first century announces the maturation of tourism. However, the events of September 11, 2001 and the October 12, 2002 Bali bombing will have a significant influence. The attack on the Sari Club in Kuta (Bali) underlined the fragility of tourist destinations and the geopolitical stakes that they highlight: more than 200 people were killed in the span of an evening on the island.

After the euphoria of a borderless tourist world in the late twentieth century, these tragic occurrences remind us that tourism is not apolitical: it cannot be divorced from the social, economic, and political reality of the host nations, nor can it disregard the international geopolitical backdrop. In addition, significant attacks have an impact on the social structure and, as a result, travelling options. Because of this transitory position in tourism, the tourist could have positioned themselves as "neutral," but they now understand that they are a possible target, particularly susceptible. Tourists evolve in a secure, peaceful bubble and develop rational behaviour amongst these times of economic (since the 2008 financial crisis), political (the state of emergency declared in the United States on September 14, 2001 is still in effect), and environmental (especially following the Fukushima disaster on March 11, 2011) uncertainty.

1.1.2 The ghosts of Tourism Present

According to a 2011 publication by the UNWTO, the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide between 2010 and 2030 was forecast to increase by 3.3% a year on average, compared to an average of 3.9% a year between 1995 and 2010. The publication also states that international tourist arrivals will reach close to 1.4 billion in 2010 and 1.5 billion in 2023. The reality was lower: 940 million

in 2010 and only 37% of experts from the UNWTO article[7] believe international tourism will return to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, compared to the large majority (60%) who believe it will rebound in 2022.

In 2019, the travel and tourism industry contributed 8.9 trillion dollars to the world's GDP as claimed by Forbes (2021)[8]; a staggering number that seems to indicate that 2019 was the peak of international tourism. But subsequently, global tourism suffered its worst year on record in 2020, with international arrivals dropping by 74% according to the UNWTO (2021)[9] and it reportedly "represents an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues - more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis". Despite this significant drop, domestic tourism helped soften the blow and each country implemented Covid-19 measures to promote intraregional travel and tourism.

Based on the UNWTO Tourism dashboard about policy measures[10], I will enumerate the best policies undergone with a social media or digital strategy in this next table, categorised by continent.

Table 1: Measures to support domestic travel and tourism[11]

EUROPE		
Azerbaijan	The Azerbaijan Tourist Board has launched a new initiative to assist domestic tourism businesses in the post-pandemic period, as well as to create an innovative and digital approach to the industry.	Updated March 10 2021
Denmark	Danish Coastal and Rural Tourism, Dansk Storbyturisme and Visit Denmark are encouraging Danes to use the hashtag #baredenmark to share the exciting activities they are doing by being on a vacation in Denmark. They also have a campaign where people can win 200.000 DKK (27 000 EUR) if they post it on Instagram.	Updated March 11 2021

[7] UNWTO. International travel largely on hold despite uptick in May. *UNWTO*, 21 July 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.unwto.org/taxonomy/term/347. (Consulted 28.07.2021)

[8] Madden Duncan. The Covid-19 Pandemic Has Cost The Global Tourism Industry $935 Billion. *Forbes*, 14 January 2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3kGPehr. (Consulted on 01.09.2021)

[9] UNWTO. 2020: Worst year in tourism history with 1 billion fewer international arrivals. *UNWTO*, 28 January 2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3kJBFOn. (Consulted on 01.9.2021)

[10] UNWTO. *COVID-19: Measures to Support Travel and Tourism*, 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.unwto.org/covid-19-measures-to-support-travel-tourism. (Consulted on 01.09.2021)

[11] *Source: UNWTO, 2021.*

France	France encouraged its residents to travel throughout the country in order to increase local tourism. The country's tourism board has urged holidaymakers to share their summer holidays on social media with the hashtag #CetÉtéJeVisiteLaFrance. Following its success, Atout France expanded its operations to the domestic market, launching the hashtag #JeRedécouvrelaFrance. Campaign actions include: - Social network: heavy participation of the influencers and a video series from famous people to tell their story about France; - Interactive map: it allows the French to locate all tourist providers open and committed to respecting health protocols; - TV campaign to promote winter destinations.	Updated March 11 2021
Iceland	Iceland as a destination was the subject of a promotional effort. The campaign has two goals: one is to encourage Icelanders to travel inside the country, and the other is to attract international visitors to visit Iceland. The video campaign is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyC9_K_KCJA	Updated March 11 2021
Portugal	Turismo de Portugal unveiled a domestic tourism campaign #TuPodes (#YouCan) in June, urging Portuguese travellers to visit the locations that have made Portugal the world's best destination three years in a row. The campaign will be implemented in three stages. The first step included the release of the new video #TuPodes, while the second phase will assist not only the national campaign, but also regional campaigns by gathering innumerable visitor experiences from throughout the country. The increased visibility of these firms will also help to strengthen the regional businesses and support these companies' marketing efforts through offers geared particularly at the national visitor, who is not their typical client.	Updated April 4 2021
Spain	Spain has started a domestic tourism campaign for the first time, with the hashtag #DescubreLoIncreible (#DiscoverTheUnbelievable) being promoted on social media.	Updated March 12 2021
ASIA		
China	While effectively dealing with the pandemic, China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism launched a large number of free online training programs, completed many digitisation projects for cultural and tourism enterprises, vigorously promoted smart tourism construction, strengthened tourism market management and industry rectification, and improved the industry's development capacity.	Updated March 15 2021

India	To resurrect domestic tourism, the Ministry of Tourism and the Government of India have been organising a series of webinars through its campaign, Dekho Apna Desh, which includes pictures of unknown places and unusual features of popular tourist attractions. This program aims to promote domestic tourism while also assisting in the growth of local businesses.	Updated October 9 2020

These countries' measures offer a digital side to their strategy, but I will also enumerate those who had different ideas that work well for the promotion of local travel.

First and foremost, there are voucher-type deals and discounts. In Croatia, the government established the "Cro Card," in which companies provide their employees with a 2 500 HRK (about 330 EUR) voucher that is free from payroll taxes. Poland provided free vouchers of 500 zlotych (about 111 EUR) to families with children under the age of 18 or with a disabled child. The Slovenian government did the same, giving adults 200 EUR and minors under 18 years old 50 EUR to spend on any sort of accommodation. Lithuania had a similar concept, but with a coupon devoted to medical personnel to thank them for their service during the quarantine period and to encourage the revival of the local tourism sector; the voucher is estimated to be worth no more than 200 EUR. Cyprus established the "Extraordinary Plan for the Support of Domestic Tourism" program, which provides permanent residents with hotel discounts. The major goal is to assist local businesses, lengthen the tourist season, and educate residents about their country's natural beauty. Similar offers were made throughout Asia, such as a 35% discount and a reimbursement for half of the traveller's expenses in Japan through the "Go To Travel" campaign; and the Korean government gave one million 30 000 KRW discount vouchers for accommodation. Finally, the Singaporean government put aside 320 million USD in the form of "SingapoRediscovers" vouchers for hotel stays, attraction tickets, or tours.

Then there were projects and campaigns to support domestic travel and tourism as part of the recovery measures related to the Covid-19 crisis. Bosnia and Herzegovina's "Holidays in BiH" (in which the city of Bihac allocated 100 000 BAM (roughly 51 000 EUR) to the project), Finland's ongoing "100 Reasons to Travel in Finland" campaign (in which the country allocated 500 000 EUR

to implement and connect a national domestic tourism campaign with the existing 100 reasons to travel in Finland campaign), Georgia's "Travel to Georgia" and "Explore what is yours" campaigns (where they host different master classes in different regions of the country to encourage people to travel within the country), Greece's "Tourism for All" program addressed to low-income groups (in which the government allocated 30 million EUR to 100 million EUR) and Australia's "Holiday Here This Year" campaign (in which the government allocated 20 million USD). In Asia, we observed the "Som Rak Siem Reap" event in Cambodia, which featured sports tourism, general tourism, culture, tradition, and more, and was attended by thousands of local tourists. Finally, in July 2020, Korea organized the "2020 Special Travel Week" event with the theme "travel safe, value life" to encourage safe domestic travel.

The report suggests that Hungary is the only region in the world that launched a campaign to discourage all types of travel, both international and domestic. Among all their different travel campaigns, one was about staying at home and preparing to come back to their favourite places after the crisis (#visszajovok). The Hungarian Tourism Agency uploaded a campaign video titled "Take care of each other and we will succeed!" in Hungarian.

The regions of the world most affected by Covid-19 are Asia and the Pacific (-95% compared to 2019), Europe (-85%) and the Middle East (-83%). The most affected subregions are South-East Asia, Oceania, North-East Asia and Northern Europe. With the two most visited countries in the world located in Europe (France and Spain), it is no surprise that this continent would have been the most impacted by a global epidemic.

As we can see, governments have made commendable steps to repair and reactivate the industry within their respective countries, all while protecting employment and local businesses. According to the OECD[12], other projects for post-Covid-19 travel are developing a "sustainable recovery of tourism,

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[12] OECD. *Rebuilding tourism for the future: COVID-19 policy responses and recovery*, 14 December 2020 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3yBY0m2. (Consulted on 01.09.2021)

promoting the digital transition and move to a greener tourism system, and rethinking tourism for the future".

1.1.3 The ghosts of Tourism Future

1.1.3.1 Sustainability

Sustainability in tourism has become a big subject in the industry in recent years, and it will continue to be a rising trend in the future, therefore the appropriate thing to do for a travel firm is to jump on the trend and modify the products to fit our consumers' needs and preferences. The objective of sustainable tourism is to minimize the negative consequences and maximize the good benefits of tourism as an activity while preserving resources to ensure long-term viability, it is also aimed to consider community, education, health, well-being, and equity as social factors and to produce economic gains for the local destination. The following figure depicts the three circles (or pillars) of sustainable tourism: social, economic and environmental. These pillars are becoming increasingly crucial as the Covid-19 virus spreads and economies falter and social life deteriorates. We did see environmental improvements in destinations where mass tourism was a problem: streets were deserted, there was less pollution, and trash was less prevalent; some countries took advantage of this time to clean up their cities.

Figure 1: Sustainable tourism development scheme[13]

The first pillar - the social pillar - represents the valuation of employees in the private and public tourism organisations, of local cultural heritage and the involvement of the local population and stakeholders in the tourism strategy of the territory. We have seen this being done by countries as measures to support the recovery of tourism. The economic pillar represents the country's attractiveness and its economic vitality through the creation of direct and indirect tourism job creations. For this pillar, it is also necessary to have efficient tourist governance and to evaluate, audit and provide critical feedback on experiences in order to give quality service to customers, and as a result, gain their loyalty. The last but not least environmental pillar represents the cleanliness and overall quality of tourist sites, the reduction of the impact on the environment and the dependency on fossil fuels, while also enhancing the biodiversity and natural areas of the country. Adaptation to climate change is also a critical component of this.[14]

In order to take part in sustainability when travelling, applying these actions[15] can make a big change in the future. Using public transport whenever possible, buy local, opt for camping, go on sustainable tours (and try to avoid elephant tours in Thailand) and picking lesser-known destinations.

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[13] *Source: Integotravel, 2020*

[14] Ballester Patrice. *Panorama du tourisme*. Masters 1 course, Tourism Management and Digital Strategy, Grand Sud Formation, 2020.

[15] Vanska Mariellen. *How to: sustainable travel*, 23 April 2021. Available on https://travel-news.joinmytrip.com/how-to-sustainable-travel. (Consulted 02.09.2021)

1.1.3.2 Future Traveller Tribes

In order to guide the tourism industry in its mutations, Amadeus has commissioned a study in 2015 on the profile of tourists in 2030. From "social capital seekers" to "ethical travellers", six profiles stand out. What will tourists look like in the future? The Future Foundation's "Future Traveller Tribes 2030" research, developed on behalf of GDS Amadeus, answers this topic by jumping 15 years into the future. In the end, it distinguishes six traveller profiles based on their wants and aspirations rather than demographic criteria: "social capital seekers", "cultural purists", "ethical travellers", "simplicity searchers", "obligation meeters", and "reward hunters".

Amadeus released a similar poll in 2007, identifying four types of travellers anticipated to emerge by 2020: active seniors, globalized families, city nomads and international executives. In terms of future developments, they were correct in certain areas, such as the generalisation of GPS navigation, the success of travel forums, and the digitalisation of travel documents such as airline tickets. Since then, the profiles defined by Amadeus have been improved, most notably by including the rise of social networks and the emergence of new markets (China, Asia-Pacific countries, Latin American countries, etc.). This study seeks to assist tourism professionals in anticipating and developing their services in the appropriate direction by recognizing these major trends.

"Social Capital Seekers" are extremely connected to their social networks, they strive to expand their online audience by sharing their trip experiences, and they may even go so far as to monetise their presence on a location as an influencer. They also like customized experiences and are more likely to depend on traveller reviews to confirm their decisions.

Obsessed with the concept of authentic experiences, **"Cultural Purists"** want to immerse themselves in a foreign culture. They can get information via specialized exchange platforms and are drawn to "last chance tourism", such as visiting places affected by climate change. This group may be the most challenging for the tourist sector to break into since they desire to travel off the beaten path although they are open to the collaborative economy. However, it also provides a fantastic opportunity

because its members are prepared to pay to get a unique experience. The new and so-called "*dark tourist*" is put into this category. These are the travellers "visiting places where some of the darkest events of human history have unfolded. That can include genocide, assassination, incarceration, ethnic cleansing, war or disaster — either natural or accidental" (Washington Post, 2019).

Moral concerns guide the decisions of the **"Ethical Traveller"**. They may pick a destination with the sole purpose of contributing to the growth of tourism in the country, and they may choose their public transportation to reduce their carbon footprint. In the same spirit, this profile is particularly open to virtual excursions that do not necessitate travel. Naturally, they favour companies who share their values and are committed to ecological and ethical practices.

The **"Simplicity Searchers"** have little time and want to make the most of their vacation, without having to worry about practicalities (e.g. Chinese tourists). This category, which will be filled by the middle classes of emerging markets, prefers packaged offers where everything is organized from A to Z by a travel agent or a tour operator. We can include the Baby boomer generation in this profile since they are accustomed to hiring travel agents to plan their vacations.

"Obligation meeters" are those who travel because they have an obligation, such as a business meeting, a conference, or a wedding. They will be more inclined to blend business and leisure travel, such as taking a vacation after a business trip.

The **"Reward Hunters"** perceive the trip as a fair reward for the work they do on a daily basis as part of their professional activity. They don't deny themselves anything when they take time off and instead seek out unique experiences that focus on their personal growth. This is a boon for luxury and wellness players.

1.1.3.3 Digitisation

The tourism sector is also steadily getting more digital, and this trend increased exponentially during the Coronavirus outbreak. Traditional travel agencies opted for a digital approach and those

who were early adopters will benefit from a quicker recovery as the world gets used to the "new normal" (Giacomo Lee, 2021)[16].

As the traveller of the world entered the pandemic, they quickly realised how important travelling is for them; especially those who travel for work. The Coronavirus epidemic has changed people's behaviours in terms of purchasing, travelling and social skills. "Nowadays, the lightness and light-heartedness with which one thought of merely leaving home have been replaced by the feeling of fear and uncertainty" (Goldmann, 2021)[17]. People will still want to travel, but in a different way, that is to say that companies involved in tourism will have to adjust their policies and offers to meet the new customer requirements. Goldmann gives a few concrete examples:

- Flexible cancellation or re-booking policies. People are increasingly accustomed to last-minute changes in their travel arrangements, and they will seek insurance to ensure that their trip plans do not fail;

- Public transportation could rethink the passenger numbers to avoid overcrowding. Even amid a Covid-19 surge, airlines crammed their passenger seats to the brim and failed to meet health standards;

- Reorganize the common rooms and cabins aboard cruise ships to accommodate more passengers in a smaller space, and divert cruise stops to places where the local population will not be overburdened by cruisers on a stopover;

- More communication about keeping destinations clean;

- Encouraging business travel;

- Encouraging sustainable travel.

Obviously, the travel industry is digitising quicker than predicted, but consumers will also want to return to the human element of travel. Many hotels and youth hostels have started using robots and artificial intelligence to check in their visitors. This was popular at the time, but it will

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[16] Lee Giacomo. *Smart contactless cities will keep tourism safe and pleasant in the Covid era*. Verdict UK, 1st September 2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/2YmbVQF. (Consulted on 02.09.2021)

[17] The future of tourism after Covid-19. *Goldmann*. Available on https://bit.ly/3jDjF9a (Consulted on 02.09.2021)

rapidly become outmoded as tourists gravitate toward more human, environmental, and natural tourism. The best approach to deal with this for travel businesses to tailor their offer to their target audience. It is critical to segment the market in order to understand what the client wants. Nevertheless, keeping a digital side to your business will always be useful in the modern world.

1.2 The importance of digital marketing for organisations involved in tourism

In the context of a worldwide pandemic, it is essential to define a marketing strategy best suited for the business. JoinMyTrip's foremost digital strategy was inbound marketing, and I believe it is well suited with the business model, as we create content to attract our customers and seek data on our clients to ameliorate what we send them and what we post on our social media. With 4.48 billion active social media users in the world (56.8% of the global population, according to Hootsuite[18]), we have a fantastic opportunity to acquire new customers through posts and hashtags; we simply need to know how to reach our target audience. Since our main users are German, we will focus on them and also on our growing audiences from the US, Austria and the UK. The study found that Germany was tenth worldwide in internet adoption, with 95% of its population using the internet; the United States is in the seventeenth place with 92%, Austria in nineteenth place with 91% and the UK is far ahead, being fourth with 98%.
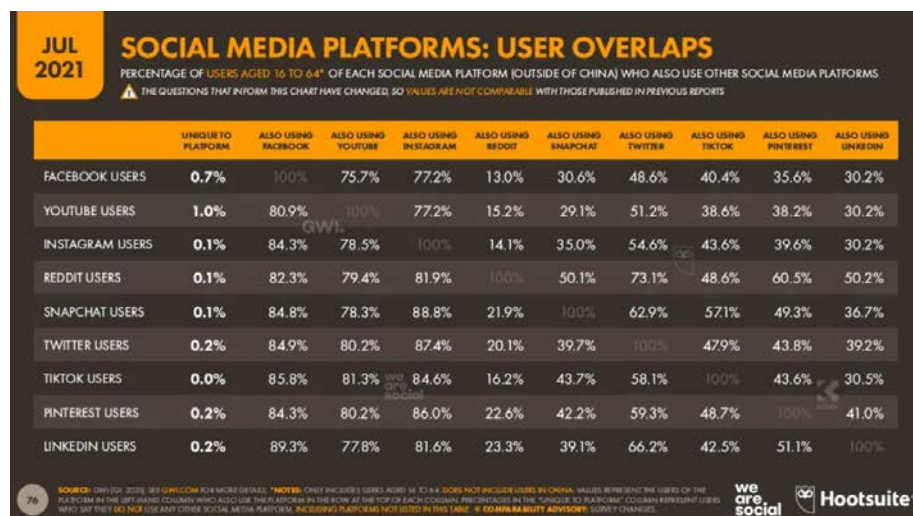
According to the same study, internet users' top five priorities to do online are to look for information online, stay in touch with friends and family, read news, research how to do things and watch videos, tv shows and movies. Vacation and travel research comes in eleventh place. People seldom go online to get inspiration and actively use search engines for travel and holidays, therefore travel

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[18] Hootsuite. *Digital trends 2021*, July 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.hootsuite.com/pages/digital-trends-2021#c-257216. (Consulted on 26.08.2021)

agencies use social media to send them advertisements about their product to entice them into purchasing their vacations; it is the simplest and most successful approach to attract customers.

The most used social media channels are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram to name a few. Below is Hootsuite's study from July of 2021, showing what other social media platforms users are connected to. As the chart displays, most of the social media platform users also have a Facebook account and YouTube, Instagram and Facebook usually are the three channels people sign up to. The number of people who only have one social media account is quite low: the average is 0.3%, and the social channels with above-average marks are Facebook and YouTube, indicating that they are unique to the two platforms. Twitter users are the ones who have the most social media channel overlap, with over 80% in overlap for Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.

Picture 1: Social media user overlaps[19]

	UNIQUE TO PLATFORM	ALSO USING FACEBOOK	ALSO USING YOUTUBE	ALSO USING INSTAGRAM	ALSO USING REDDIT	ALSO USING SNAPCHAT	ALSO USING TWITTER	ALSO USING TIKTOK	ALSO USING PINTEREST	ALSO USING LINKEDIN
FACEBOOK USERS	0.7%	100%	75.7%	77.2%	13.0%	30.6%	48.6%	40.4%	35.6%	30.2%
YOUTUBE USERS	1.0%	80.9%	100%	77.2%	15.2%	29.1%	51.2%	38.6%	38.2%	30.2%
INSTAGRAM USERS	0.1%	84.3%	78.5%	100%	14.1%	35.0%	54.6%	43.6%	39.6%	30.2%
REDDIT USERS	0.1%	82.3%	79.4%	81.9%	100%	50.1%	73.1%	48.6%	60.5%	50.2%
SNAPCHAT USERS	0.1%	84.8%	78.3%	88.8%	21.9%	100%	62.9%	57.1%	49.3%	36.7%
TWITTER USERS	0.2%	84.9%	80.2%	87.4%	20.1%	39.7%	100%	47.9%	43.8%	39.2%
TIKTOK USERS	0.0%	85.8%	81.3%	84.6%	16.2%	43.7%	58.1%	100%	43.6%	30.5%
PINTEREST USERS	0.2%	84.3%	80.2%	86.0%	22.6%	42.2%	59.3%	48.7%	100%	41.0%
LINKEDIN USERS	0.2%	89.3%	77.8%	81.6%	23.3%	39.1%	66.2%	42.5%	51.1%	100%

There are six characteristics for a successful digital marketing campaign (Gurneet Kaur, 2017[20]):

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[19] *Source: Hootsuite, July 2021*

[20] Gurneet Kaur. *The importance of digital marketing in the tourism industry*, June 2017, 74 p. [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/2WquiTE. (Consulted on 26.08.2021)

- **A quality website**: this is the most important aspect in order to entice customers to purchase from our website. If they like what they see, they are much more likely to buy something;

- **A strong social media presence**: this is our goal for this thesis, to optimise our social media content for our existing clients and for future clients. It will be on these platforms that our customers will use to inform themselves about our products, credibility and news;

- **A good SEO score**: with billions of websites that exist online today (1.88 billion to be exact, as reported by M. Armstrong[21]), we need to send our message in the most effective way possible;

- **A customized email marketing strategy**: it is best to send out less emails but with a lot of information. Sending out too many can discourage our customers but too little can make them think we do not care;

- **An engaging type of content**: this is crucial after having a good social media presence. Being on social media doesn't always mean that the content is interesting. As a business, our content needs to cater to our target audience;

- **A mobile-friendly website**: in this day and age where 66.9% of the global population uses a smartphone (Hootsuite, 2021), and if your primary goal is to bring traffic to your website, this element is necessary.

As search engines are the most common tool to research about brands or products, nearly 45% of internet users research products on social media rather than search engines. Based on Hootsuite's study (2021), "this figure is even higher among Gen Z users", who are born between 1997 and 2012. This shows that social media became a very important part of buyer consideration and the newer generations are becoming more and more demanding with what they're buying. Showing pictures and videos of products online is a necessity these days if you want to gain the trust of your potential clients; and they trust reviews and testimonials more than the company's own words. It is no longer enough to tell people your product is good, you have to show them through different kinds of digital tools. This distrust with businesses arose at the same time as low-priced and cheaply-made merchandise.

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[21] Armstrong Martin. *How many websites are there?*, 6 August 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.statista.com/chart/19058/number-of-websites-online/. (Consulted on 26.08.2021)

1.2.1 Defining a customer-focused marketing strategy

As research showed previously, defining the right marketing strategy is a necessity for any small business, and this is all the more important in a post-Covid-19 world. Tourism facilities have to rethink their marketing strategy while accelerating their digital transformation; this applies mostly to accommodation establishments and travel agencies with physical offices. Luckily for JoinMyTrip and OTAs, we are already an online business and have that part sorted.

For the purpose of building the right plan of action, we need to lay all the elements on the table. The table below displays an overview of certain business goals and the means to reach them, taken from *Le Plan Marketing-Communication Digital* by D. Pommeray[22]. The table being written in French, I've translated everything in English. Therefore we are left with this table:

Table 2: Reports in strategy, objectives and action levers[23]

Elements of strategy	Objectives	Key indicators	Actions
Increase notoriety	- Increase website visibility on search engines - Audience	- Number of impressions - Google positioning	- SEO - SEA - Display - Social Media - RTB - Emailing
Increase turnover	- Increased sales - Orders - Website performance	- Volume of orders - Conversion rate - Average shopping cart	- Retargeting - E-merchandising - Usability - CRM
Attract new customers	- Increase the share of new customers in the generated business	- New customer rate - New visitor rate	- Retargeting - Big data - Co-registration - Game contests
Reduce costs	- Make the digital interface profitable	- Conversion rate - Bounce rate - Cost per order	- E-merchandising - Website look - SEO

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[22] Pommeray Denis. *Le plan marketing-communication digital*. Malakoff: Dunod, 2016, p. 67-68.

[23] *Source: D. Pommeray, 2016*

		- Cost per customer - Cost per click (CPC)	- SEA - SMO
Improve brand image	- Develop positive brand awareness - Work on the e-reputation - Create brand engagement - Promote word-of-mouth, positive virality	- Engagement rate on social networks - Proportion of positive reviews and comments	- Social Media

Highlighted in green are tasks we have already finished and highlighted in orange are ongoing tasks that are part of our objectives of Q2 and Q3.

Each quarter, we choose a few OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) to reach. Our direct manager decided that each head of department is to choose their OKRs instead of the general managers in consideration of the fact that we (the heads of departments) know our tasks better than anyone else and we know what the department requires to move forward. In doing so, the objectives are reached at a realistic pace and we don't force ourselves in doing these tasks because we chose them. This allows a practical and easily achievable goal for each employee.

The main goal for the whole company is to "Introduce people to a new way (of travelling, working, learning, and sharing experiences...)". Then each department was given its own target numbers for the current quarter. For social media, we needed to achieve 90 trip bookings (30 trips booked per month) and 79 trips published (26 trips published per month).

I was in charge of social media, so I chose the OKRs for the next quarter, which was then Q2. In the picture below is an overview of the company's Objectives and Key Results of that quarter. Under each target, we would add our *work packages*[24]. For instance, one of my work packages would be "creating and implementing new posting schedules based on engagement data" and this means, on top of the *BAU tasks* (Business As Usual tasks), I would need to reach 90 trip bookings or 79 trips published through social media. Research was necessary as well as an audit and an analysis, which I will present later on in this chapter. The entire OKRs of Q2 for Social Media and Community Engagement are added on **Appendix 3** of this thesis.

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[24] *Work packages* = the tasks given in order to achieve the target number.

Taking into account D. Pommeray's table and the highlighted segments, the objectives chosen in Q2 were to increase notoriety and turnover, attract new customers and reduce costs.

The Content team took over improving the SEO (Search Engine Optimisation), usability and overall look of the website; they created landing pages for specific partnerships, or informational pages that can be used for social media and emailing. At the end of the quarter, the JoinMyTrip website was easier to use and to click through and we had more visitors on the page and on our blogs as well.

The Performance Marketing team undertook SEA (Search Engine Advertising), retargeting, and social media advertising. This allowed us to gain more visitors through our promoted content and thus, increased our sales.

The CRM team took command of emailing, of course, and continued with promoting our best content on the newsletters sent to our community.

Finally, Social Media assumed the tasks of e-merchandising, game contests, engagement (proportion of positive reviews and comments and engagement rate on social networks), and SMO (Social Media Optimisation). This required creating new ideas to attract new customers and keep our existing customers interested in our brand. The constant improvement of our brand image and our brand awareness on social media was vital, we could easily send our message through these platforms, connecting with our clients from all angles of the web and it showed them our commitment and dedication to them and to their travel needs.
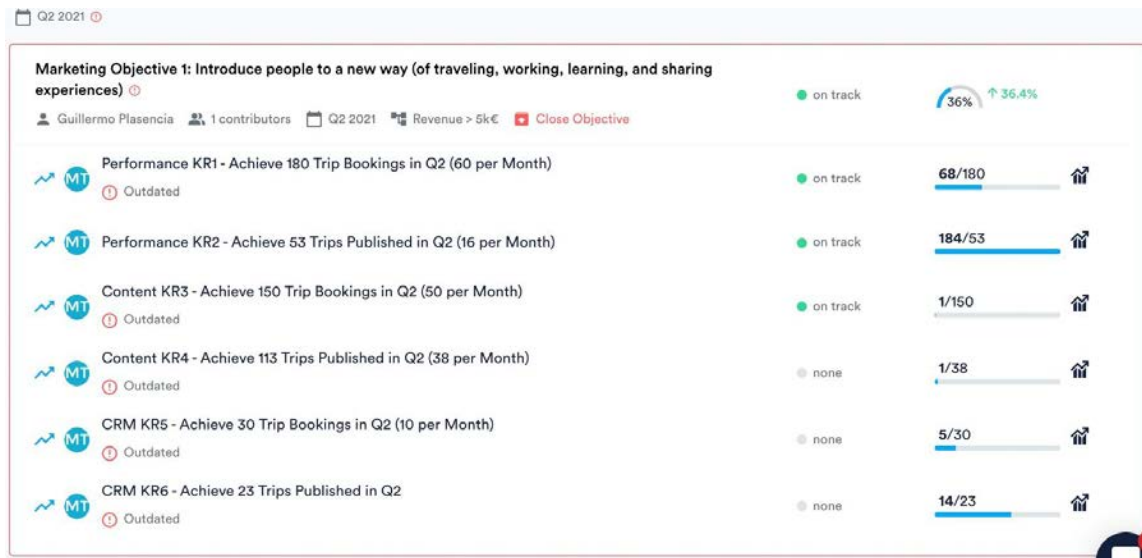
Between Q2 and Q3, we created a new department: 'Community Engagement'. This was directly linked to social media, of course, therefore this new department and I were working very closely together and decided on OKRs collectively.

For Q3, we had a blocker: the Delta virus variant was coming to Europe and nobody was travelling. The company was losing money and the Customer Support team devised a new project that would be considered more urgent than the OKRs, which were then put off track in order to focus on the new project. The latter was a so-called 'Co-TripLeader project' where each of the Marketing team members would be assigned a couple of TripLeaders to help them polish up their trip description, stops and photos with the aim of attracting as many TripMates as possible to go on their trip. This was our main priority then because by doing so, each TripLeader would receive the amount of TripMates he needed for his trip and we would gain commission from each of them. This would increase our sales and give us a good reputation in the customer experience.

The core objective, other than growing our sales, is the customer experience. To be able to give our users the best client journey, we need to build a strategy that adapts to the new buying behaviour. To rephrase, the global pandemic has led everyone to change their buying habits as well as their social conduct. We need to place the human being at the core of our marketing strategy in order to regain

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[25] *Source: Perdoo, 2021*

their trust in our business. But before all of this, we first need to first understand who our target audience is.

1.2.1.1 Market segmentation

« No matter how good the product or service on offer, if there are not enough customers to buy it, there is no business. »
-Malcolm McDonald & Martin Christopher

A company cannot be profitable without customers, even with good products. This is why segmentation is important: first, we must study the target customer; only then will the market's potential become clear, and we will be able to give our brand value within this target community. A good market segmentation "forces organisations to reflect on what they are particularly good at [...], and make an effort to gain insights into what consumers want." (Dolnicar, S., Grün, B., Leisch, F., 2018). And as Philip Kotler (1967) and Alain Smadja (1988) say, "we may be able to detect unmet needs and desires, which may provide a good opportunity for new product development. Marketing is a state of mind regarding customer satisfaction rather than a set of techniques to simply "sell" products or services (McDonald, M., Christopher, M., 2003).

There are many different ways to conduct a market segmentation; for instance, H. Hahn, a German scientist, has identified six major categories of tourists, with each group named after the first letter of its corresponding word in German; and these are S, F, W-1, W-2, A and B types. 'S' type (from the German words *Sonne, Sand, See*[26]) tourists enjoy a standard holiday, preferring a passive beach-type vacation, 'F' type (*Ferne und Flirtorientierter Erlebnisurlauber*[27]) tourists prefer long-distance holidays with great experiences and are mostly single. 'W-1' types (*Wald- und Wanderorientiert*[28]) enjoy active vacations with outdoor activities such as hikes and walks but are not professionals in sports, and 'W-2' types are more athletes who want to keep in shape during their travels. Then there are the 'A' type

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[26] *Sonne, Sand, See* translated to English is sun, sand and sea.

[27] *Ferne und Flirtorientierter Erlebnisurlauber* translated to English is faraway destinations and, flirt-oriented adventure vacationers.

[28] *Wald- und Wanderorientiert* translated to English is tourists who love forest walks and trips.

(*Abenteure*[29]) tourists who love adventure, risk and new and unexpected experiences and finally, the 'B' type (*Bildung- und Besichtigung*[30]) tourists enjoy learning about the culture and art at the destination[31]. Our customers are more likely to be added to the S, F, W-1 and B types but we can also find -rarely- the W-2 type but they cannot easily find suitable TripMates for their athletic trips because most of our community isn't part of that segment.

As an illustration, I had a TripLeader with an adventurous trip to Kilimanjaro that included a rather strenuous climb up the mountain. I have added a screenshot of the trip page on **Appendix 4**. She did not specify the difficulty level on her trip description, and received many requests to join; however she always responded that she needed people with at least some experience and she turned down most of them. These types of trips and tourists have a tough time finding TripMates on our platform; the solution would be to attract more of all types of tourists, particularly those who we hardly or never have.

As interesting as this type of segmentation is, in this thesis we will mostly rely on geographic, socio-demographic, and behavioral segmentation with the help of data from Google Analytics. For visual and rudimental purposes, I will be presenting this analysis through tables.

Figure 2: User demographic by age and gender[32]

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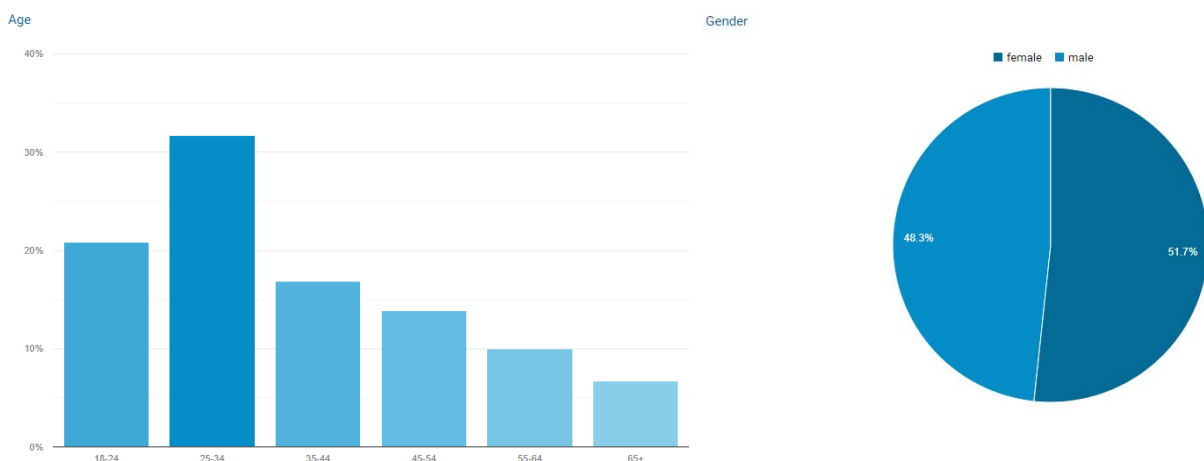
[29] *Abenteure* translated to English is adventure.

[30] *Bildung- und Besichtigung* translated to English is education and sightseeing.

[31] More information is found on https://bit.ly/3D553Hi.

[32] *Source: Google Analytics, 2021*

Our users are mainly female (51.7%) aged 25 to 34, followed by the younger 18 to 24 demographic. The latter demographic is tourist groups who travel without their parents and have limited funds, predominantly students; and our main demographic represents young people who want to experience new things and meet new people before starting a family and settling down. Middle-aged adults (45 to 60 years old) who are economically active and travel without their children who have already begun their employment and families are the next age group to be targeted in the future. These travellers are seeking new places to discover together but are hesitant to travel with strangers, especially if the strangers are younger and have different holiday expectations (parties, bars, etc.).

The table below shows the socio-demographic, economic and behavioural statistics that our users are part of. Our main demographic (25 to 34 years old, representing the Social Capital Seekers of the Future Travellers Tribe report) are the most flexible and therefore are the perfect age group to have on our platform. They are careful with money but are not limited to it as they are working professionals in the junior stage, and they try to travel as much as possible before settling down. The younger age group (18 to 24 years old), our second biggest demographic, have limited funds so they are always seeking out discounts, deals and offers to save money during their school and university years. In their free time, they would mostly like to travel with their friends but are open to travel with strangers. This generation is part of the "digital natives" who grew up with the internet and are constantly switching between many screens (Nicolas Riou, 2017). It is the generation that generates jealousy through a polished Instagram feed and it is crucial for them to have a beautiful destination for a good photo to post on their social media, which they call "instagrammable" spots.

Table 3: Socio-economic, demographic and behavioural segmentation[33]

Age Range	Income	Profession	Social media	Lifestyle	Purchasing behaviour	Needs & goals
18-24 (20.85%)	800-1500	Students Trainees	Instagram Facebook	They have free time. They usually hang out with their	Always looking for deals,	Low prices Flexibility trip

[33] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

Age	Income	Occupation	Social media	Description	Travel frequency	Preferences
		Starting the job life Mini-jobbers (waitress, working students)	Pinterest Tiktok YouTube	friends in not so expensive places	discounts & offers. Weekend trips Low budget trips One or two long backpacking vacations in a year	itineraries Adventure & 'instagrammable' destinations
25-34 (31.71%)	1500-4500	Working professionals	Twitter Instagram Facebook LinkedIn/Xing Pinterest YouTube	They prefer to travel in their free time in different styles: sport, relax, adventure. Money is not a big limitation for them. They are not as flexible with the holiday dates but love to travel as much as they can. They are single or have a partner	2 bigger trips a year, small weekend trips Backpacking trips Budget to mid-range trips	Unique offbeat adventures Like-minded & similar age co-travellers Flexible trip itineraries
35-45 (16.89%)	3000-8000	Working professionals in senior roles	Facebook LinkedIn/Xing YouTube Twitter	They are more settled, they usually have a partner They take their jobs more seriously. Not too flexible with planning trips. Their friends might have kids already, therefore they have no time to travel together	1 bigger trip during the year Long weekend trips	Like-minded travellers Trips that match their schedules

Then we have the geographical segmentation that shows us where in the world our users are from, and we can tailor our content to that specific destination and its holidays or cultural festivities. For instance, as the United States has become our biggest geographical demographic, we created posts for the fourth of July, a massively treasured holiday in the US, in all of our social media channels. An example of the creative is found in **Appendix 5**. Germany, of course, is our second largest audience followed by Austria and the UK. Knowing the cities where our users are from also helps with content creation by following the bigger cities' events such as the *Wimbledon tennis* championships in London (held in June), the *Oktoberfest* in Munich (held in October) and the similar *Wiener Wiesen Fest* in Vienna (held in October to November).

Finally, the languages used by our users are German and English. For social channels where we can customize the audience like on Facebook, we publish two posts: the original one in English sent to our US and UK followers and the translated one in German sent to our German and Austrian followers.

Table 4: Geographical segmentation[34]

USA (52.09% of all users)	GERMANY (29.74%)	AUSTRIA (2.80%)	UK (2.76%)
Ashburn, Virginia	Berlin	Vienna	London
Los Angeles, California	Hamburg	Innsbruck	Birmingham
Boardman, Oregon	Munich	Graz	Manchester
New York	Frankfurt	Salzburg	Glasgow

1.2.1.2 Consumer Behaviour

The methods of getting information about a product or a brand have changed. We check the opinions of our peers or influencers on social media before making a purchase, we visit a comparison site to get the best price, and we look at rival offers. All of a firm's information is just a few clicks away, putting a lot of pressure on the organisation and raising the possibility of a reputation crisis. Accordingly, we have to understand our consumer, or buyer, to avoid this.

Buyers are individuals who buy products or services for themselves or other people. There are important questions to ask ourselves before collecting data on our buyers, such as "Who is important in the buying decision?", "How do they buy?" (on mobile, in stores, etc.), "What are their choices for buying?" (the design, the prices, etc.), "Where do they buy?" and "When do they buy?"[35]. This has five benefits:
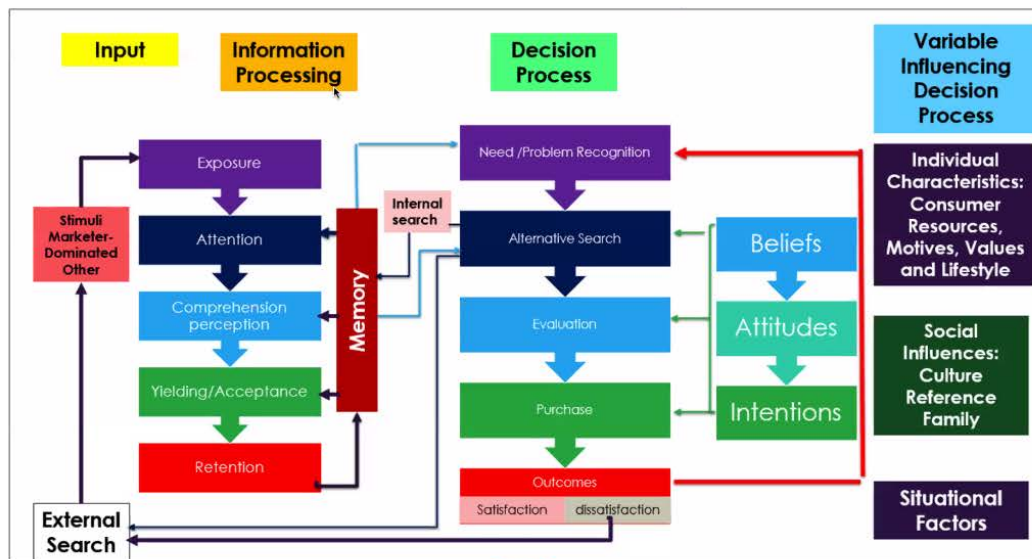
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[34] *Source: Google Analytics, 2021*

[35] El Kansouri, Rachid. *Inbound marketing and the digital customer journey in the Hospitality and Tourism industries.* Masters 2 MIT course, ISTHIA, Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, 2021.

- **Customer differentiation**: this will benefit social media through the knowledge of each persona to create the best possible content for them.

- **Customer retention**: this is customarily our goal; to have customers come back for our product among all other products offered in the industry.

- **Make a relevant marketing program**: knowing what our buyer likes or dislikes helps us form and continuously adjust our content.

- **Understand our competitors**: through surveys we send our customers or when we are in contact with them.

- **Improve our products**: all the data that we obtain will be used to innovate new products and improve our existing products to have the best commodity in the market.

The picture below taken from Mr. El Kansouri's course shows the general customer behaviour journey. As complicated and messy as this journey may seem, it is exactly what happens. The client needs to hear about the product or the brand ten times to be able to remember it; thus, an advertisement that passes through their social media channels once will never be remembered; however, if this same brand appears a few times afterwards, it piques the customer's interest and they decide to, at the very least, research about the product. Millennials have more purchasing power than baby boomers and it is increasing rapidly. They are more connected since they grew up with it, and this is why they are the target market.

Now, we have to know who is buying trips. As Millennials are our target audience, we need to focus more on them, but also try to understand the other potential generations we can attract. In the pre-purchase phase, search engines and social networks are the top modes of brand research and discovery among Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996). Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and Baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) choose to do their research on search engines primarily and with consumer reviews; social networks come third, or even fifth in the case of Baby boomers. All these generations, though, prefer to see advertisements across TV channels rather than email, social media, and the web. This doesn't quite sit right for online businesses such as JoinMyTrip because we choose to send out our advertisements through social media first of all, and then through our emails. This shows us that we have to be careful with what we put on our content for promotion as our target user demographic may scroll through very quickly or get impatient with the amount of advertisements that we send them. Even though Baby boomers don't use social media as a discovery channel (only 32% compared to 43% for Generation X, 49% for Millenials and 51% for Generation Z), it still acts as a digital mall.

In order to cater the shopping experience to different age groups, we would need to have different and specific content to each group, and it would become expensive and time-consuming to

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[36] *Source: R. El Kansouri Masters 2 course, 2021*

create multiple different ads for different audiences. Research[37] shows that Generation Z says a lot of 'likes' and nice comments on social media and exclusive content are the elements that would induce them into buying a product online. As for Millennials, the option to use the 'buy' button on a social network and a live-chat box are the key elements, whereas Generation X and Baby boomers prefer having a free delivery option, loyalty points and easy return policies. What to remember here is the social media popularity, an e-commerce shop on social media and a live-chat box.

Post-purchase, for a consumer to become an advocate, there needs to be a personal relationship between them and the brand and access to exclusive content or services offered by the company. As a young, international team at JoinMyTrip, we can easily keep a good relationship with our customers, even after their trips are over. The new project that we started in Q3 demands for very personal care of our TripLeaders, and I will be presenting this project further in the paper. Great customer service is another important element to keep customers happy and coming for more; and this holds true especially for Generation X and Baby boomers, who we might want to target next.

The majority of our website traffic (90.47%) comes from new visitors rather than returning visitors and they mostly visit our website on a desktop computer (63.62%), followed by a mobile phone (35%) and a tablet (1.39%). The most time visitors stay on a session[38] is up to 10 seconds, which shows that there is a blocker on the website or that the content is not as interesting as they thought. It could also be the fact that they have to sign up to be able to view a user profile or to join a trip.

As for user behaviour on our social media channels, we are on average higher than the benchmark sessions from other websites of the same or a similar industry. Here, '*Pages / Session*' reveals the "percent difference between the session received by the benchmark and the session received by our website" (Google Analytics, 2021). We have a positive number, which indicates that our social media platforms outperforms the average in the industry. Likewise, our average session duration exceeds the

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[37] GWI. *The online purchase journey across generations*, 2020 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3Dmc32t. (Consulted on 27.08.2021)

[38] A session is the period of time a user is actively engaged with our website or app.

benchmark by 38 seconds. Lastly, our visitors tend to stay on the website longer and explore other pages; as shown below, our bounce rate outperforms the benchmark by 40,17%.

Picture 4: JoinMyTrip's customer behaviour in social media[32]

Behavior		
Pages / Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Bounce Rate ?
83.47% ▲ 3.85 vs 2.10	54.62% ▲ 00:01:47 vs 00:01:09	-65.14% ▼ 21.50% vs 61.67%

1.2.1.3 Competitive Analysis

The market research on our competitors is based on a list of competence levels: direct and indirect, share economy companies, businesses in the travel industry in general and social travel networking.

Direct competitors:

- companies with the same idea and target market;

- companies offering pre-planned trips with a similar model as JoinMyTrip, offering an advisor for helping complete trips, or offering customized itineraries;

- companies offering 'travel experiences' or excursions, some in groups and usually just one day.

Indirect competitors: A different version of our product. They sell something similar to the same or another audience.

Share economy competitors: Companies with a similar 'sharing' model but in different industries.

Travel industry: Companies involved in transportation, planning trips, or travel in general.

Social network (travel-focused): Social platforms with the intent on travelling (chats, groups, posts).

Taking the first few companies from each level brings us to a graph (see below) that clearly shows that our direct competitors account for 15.7% of our total competition. Indirect competitors,

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[39] *Source: Google Analytics, 2021*

on the other hand, are estimated at a lower 14.2%. The largest percentage on the graph represents companies in the travel industry; to name a few types: accommodation, blog, city guide, event, Hop-On Hop-Off, road trip planner, transportation, travel agency, travel with locals, etc. These companies offer normal touristic plans to different destinations, most offering trips in small groups with already planned itineraries. The 'travel planner' types are platforms or mobile applications that help you plan and organize your itinerary; some provide trip suggestions, while others allow you to plan everything on your own.

The large majority of our total competitors on this list (68.9%) have a web distribution channel, which means they sell their product on their official website. The rest have both a website and a mobile application, or just the app.

Figure 3: Competitive analysis[40]
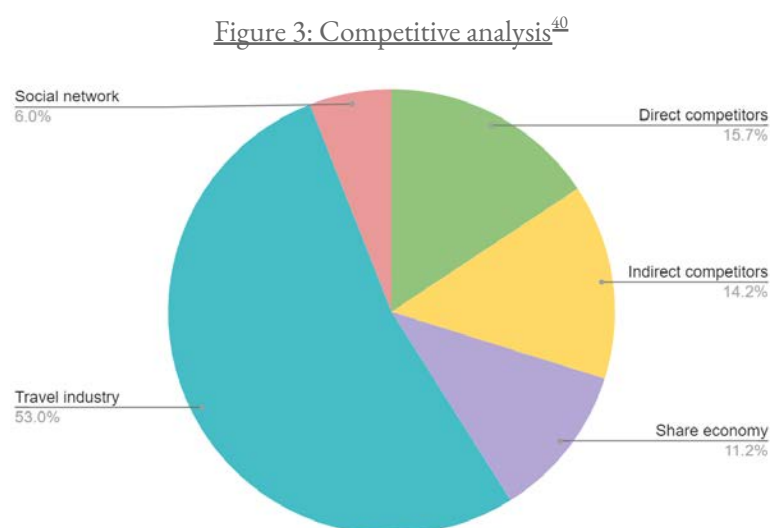
To be more specific, our direct competitors are the ones we should be wary about. The graph below exposes the number of competitors found. We thus have four types of direct competition:

- **travel plans with travel mates**: Similarly to JoinMyTrip, these companies offer pre-planned trips by the community and look for people to travel with. Some can join big groups for trips created by 'Ambassadors' or locals;

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[40] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

- **travel planners**: Where you can build a complete travel itinerary based on what you're looking for (destination, dates, travel style, etc.). Some are already planned by locals or experts, and some offer a customisable trip;

- **travel advisors**: Based on the user's preferences or personality, they suggest a destination;

- **experience trips**: Usually 'one day' experiences like excursion types, or private tours.

Figure 4: Direct competitors[41]
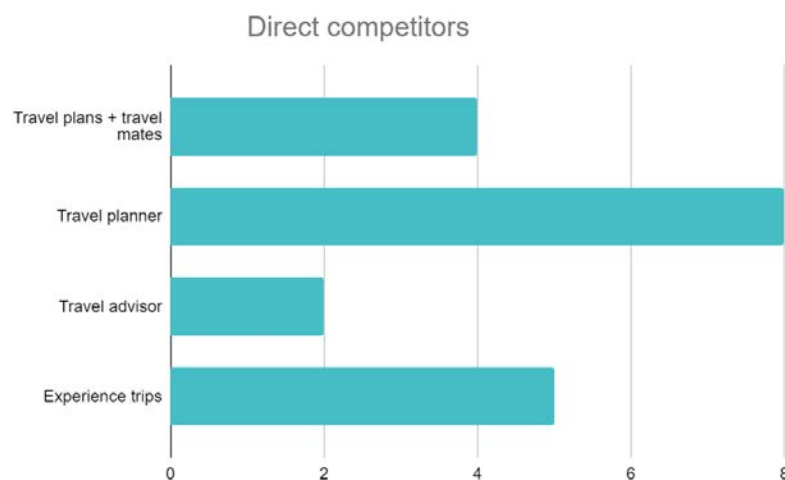
Along with my team, we've created this table to have an even better understanding of our competitors. We've chosen just a few companies, mainly the ones that we should keep an eye on. The table indicates their website traffic, revenue model, market, funding (if found) and their investors. As we can see, all of them already have a big client base and social media followers but most have a more expensive revenue model than we do (TripMates on JoinMyTrip pay a 12% commission to the platform and TripLeaders don't pay a thing to post a trip online) and that gives us an advantage.

Moreover, they receive more funding than we do, specifically from seed capital. The information was found by the finance / management team of JoinMyTrip.

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[41] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

Table 5: Direct competitors analysis[42]

Company	Idea	Website traffic (March2021)	Revenue model	Market	Funding	Investors
Mapify.travel (HQ- Berlin, founded- 2017)	Community based platform to visualise, find & plan travel experiences	7.2K (app)	None yet	UK, Germany, Rwanda, Poland	$1.3M (Seed, OCt 2018)	LayJax Ventures, MairDumont Ventures
3PlayGrounds (2016, Singapore)	Exactly JoinMyTrip	2.4K	1.2% service fee from professional TripLeaders, free for individuals	Singapore, Germany, Columbia	$600K (Seed) (Assumption)	NA
WeTravel (US, 2016)	Platform for trip organisers to post trips & collect payment	90K	Online bank payments- 1% Credit card payments- 3.9%	US, Canada	$2M (Seed)	The House Fund, 500 Startups, Amino Capital
Airbnb adventures (2019)	Adventure group trips by local destination experts	700K	20% service fee from organiser	Worldwide	NA	NA
Flashpack (London, 2013)	Group trips for solo travellers in their 30's & 40's	90K	25-35% margins (Assumption)	US, UK, Canada, Australia	No info available	NA
GoGaffl (HQ- Ohio, US founded- March, 2017)	Exactly JoinMyTrip	11.5K	Subscription Model No fee to post a trip. To connect with a TripLeader- 30 days 6$, 6 months 20$, 1 year 30$	US, UK, Singapore	No info available	NA

Our next move on this market research is a type of a SWOT analysis of these chosen companies. Finding out their strengths, weaknesses and the possible threats they face is an important part of this analysis. This will give us our biggest competitor in the whole list.

Airbnb Adventures is our biggest rival yet, on the basis of their notoriety. However, their product is slightly distinctive from ours, by the fact that the adventure trips they offer are organised by local destination experts. The next one in line is GoGaffl, which has the exact same business model as JoinMyTrip and is based in the United States, which is one of our biggest target audiences. And they might also start targeting Europe soon, which could be a threat to us. Nevertheless we do have a good

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[42] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

reputation in Germany, and that could increase our popularity further around Europe. Finally, Mapify.travel would also be a rising rival due to their very good product and strong online presence.

Table 6: Direct competitors SWOT analysis[43]

Company	Strength	Weakness	Threat	Marketing Channels
Mapify.travel (HQ- Berlin, founded- 2017)	Strong product, strong online community strong team Mobile app Strong PR	Low Reach	Might raise more funding quickly	Instagram - 10.1K LinkedIn - 1.5K Trust Pilot - 73 reviews Pinterest - 17.4K YouTube - 12 videos Facebook - 1.4K
3PlayGrounds (2016, Singapore)	Active in Singapore	Low Reach Bad product	Direct competitor. Might start targeting German market more	Instagram - 9.5K Meetup - 15K Facebook - 1.6K
WeTravel (US, 2016)	Strong Reach	NA	As of now, product is slightly different but they might reopen trips	Facebook - 4K Instagram -10.7K Twitter - 3K followers YouTube - 35K views, 23 videos LinkedIn - 1.9K followers
Airbnb adventures (June 2019)	(Different product, same target audience) Largest reach	NA	None	Instagram - 21K
Flashpack (London, 2013)	Strong in Branding & Marketing, we can learn from them Strong PR	NA	None	Facebook - 200K, 233 reviews, Trustpilot - 110 reviews Instagram - 153K Twitter - 6.2K followers LinkedIn - 4.5K followers YouTube - 1.3k subscribers, 65 videos Pinterest - 1.2M
GoGaffl (HQ- Ohio, US founded- March, 2017)	Good product	Low Reach	No idea of their funding & might start targeting Europe	Instagram -4.8K Facebook - 14.9K LinkedIn - 86

1.3 JoinMyTrip, a startup

Now that we have an overview of JoinMyTrip's competition, let's dive into this company and what it offers, through an explanation of how it works, our USPs (Unique Selling Proposition) and the tasks I was given throughout my internship.

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[43] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

1.3.1 Presentation of the company

Created in 2015 by Dr. Niels Mueller-Wickop after his trip around the world, JoinMyTrip is an online travel platform that offers travellers a website tool which enables them to create or join a trip from others in the community. And this makes it easier for travellers to book trips on the website because they themselves choose the excursions they want to schedule and they can also design their own trip with the stops and places they choose, which they may change at any moment, depending on the people that join them.

"JoinMyTrip is here to empower and connect both sides to share their travel interests, costs and unforgettable memories. We inspire travellers to live the experience of their lives and they inspire others to do the same."[44] This is the motto of the company. JoinMyTrip's mission is to build the go-to sharing economy platform for people to discover, offer and join unique group trips with like-minded travellers. The company's vision for the future is to change the lives of travellers by empowering everyone to experience the world with other people in a trusted group.

There are five departments in the company: Management, Operations, Marketing, Business Development and Product and Tech. Each of these departments has a head or a manager. As a startup, the team members and even the managers may change their titles depending on what has changed in the company as well as their own interests. That is, for example, if a Customer Service intern wants to try Performance Marketing, they may do so as long as they find someone to complete their tasks and if the other department agrees. This flexibility may seem to be for some as an unnecessary challenge, but at JoinMyTrip, it is crucial. The reason is simple: startups have a high potential for exponential growth, but they are also extremely vulnerable to the current industry environment and can fail at any time. Having team members with flexible skills can help with any type of issue, whether it's assisting in tasks when an employee is out of office, or when the worldwide situation puts the company at risk of closing down and they need to lay off a few people. We all work together and help each other as much as we can, and that is the work culture at JoinMyTrip.

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[44] JoinMyTrip. *About Us*. [online]. Available on https://www.joinmytrip.com/en/t/about-us. (Consulted on 10.08.2021)

Nevertheless, it is important to identify all team members' specific titles in order to minimise time wasted dictating who to pass on information to. Which is why the Management team created an organisational chart (**Appendix 1**) that they show during the first week of each new employee. This facilitates all future communication and is a great introduction to the company. Most big businesses do not share this information and that creates misunderstandings and lengthy message circulations.

1.3.1.1 How it works

There are two ways to use this platform: as a 'TripLeader' or as a 'TripMate'. The latter is for people who want to travel but don't know where to go or don't know who to go with. They simply check the available trips on the platform and join them, pay and have an experience of a lifetime. All trip prices include the accommodation and the transportation at the destination. Once they choose a trip, they send a message to the TripLeader, and if they're accepted they can pay directly on the website. On the other hand, TripLeaders are the ones who plan the trips, calculate the costs and reserve the necessary activities, accommodations and transportations. The flights, though, are never included because TripMates can come from all over the world and the TripLeader cannot calculate the cost of each flight on the total cost of the trip. They also are the ones who choose the people they go on their trip with; when the TripMate sends a request to join, they chat a little and can have a video call to meet, and then the TripLeader has the last word. They can also add on a little extra on the total trip cost for the planning and booking of everything. Some TripLeaders add 50€ to the total, some can add even more depending on the type of trip it is. The company gives an overview of how it works on their website[45] and on their YouTube channel[46], and I've added a visual representation in **Appendix 2**.

Then there are the **types** of trips available on the website. Guided trips, Team trips and Coworking trips. Guided means the TripLeader becomes a guide and organizes everything on the trip. A Team trip is one where the TripLeader and the TripMates both choose on which activities to do

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[45] JoinMyTrip. *How it works*. [online]. Available on https://www.joinmytrip.com/en/how-it-works (Consulted on 24.07.2021)

[46] JoinMyTrip YouTube channel. *How To's playlist*. [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3yBJfQS (Consulted on 24.07.2021)

together. And lastly, Coworking trips are trips where the members of the group work their usual jobs during the day and explore the vicinity after work and on weekends. This is a great option for those who can work remotely and still want to travel throughout the year. I will be writing more about Coworking trips in Chapter 3.

1.3.1.2 Our USP

"What do you offer more than other platforms or even Facebook groups that can do the same thing without the extra cost of commission?" That is the question most asked when people are unsure about travelling with us.

Research found that 52% of solo travellers would prefer to travel in a group mainly for safety and cost reasons (Travel Weekly, 2018[47]). Many current solutions are not able to supply safety and a low price at the same time. Group travel offers two essential human needs: belonging and safety. It is known that most people are too afraid to travel to certain countries or cities due to safety reasons. Of course, one or two people are more prone to theft than a group of six people. Even when booking with a tour operator, despite good professional advice and discounted prices from local businesses, it's still expensive and it lacks individuality. Social media is another way of finding fellow travellers for trips but it's still non-binding and could be very unsafe.

Hence, the creation of JoinMyTrip. A platform where everyone can discover, offer or join unique trips with like-minded travellers. We connect people to experience the world in an authentic way.

Our Unique Selling Proposition is tenfold:

1. **Safe payments** directly through the platform and full refunds in case of cancellations.

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[47] Travel Weekly. *Solo travel market growing but industry must do more, says new Mintel study*. [online]. Available on https://travelweekly.co.uk/articles/316621/solo-travel-market-growing-but-industry-must-do-more-says-new-mintel-study (Consulted on 10.08.2021)

2. A free **travel insurance** included provided by Allianz[48].

3. **Shared** travel costs.

4. **Passionate** TripLeaders who love what they do.

5. **Perfectly planned** trips and offering flexibility for most.

6. A **growing community** of trustworthy travellers.

7. **Unique travel experiences** that you wouldn't find on tour operator websites.

8. A **support team** that is always available (before, during and after your trip).

9. **Freedom** in planning the trips.

10. A platform run by **real travellers** who love travelling as much as you do.

Picture 5: JoinMyTrip's offer[49]

Travel safely with verified travellers

Save money, earn money

Like-minded travellers

Detailed tour itinerary

Share experiences

We have a value proposition for our TripLeaders and for our TripMates.

TripLeaders can benefit from an easy-to-use trip planning tool that includes multiple different services such as the cost calculator that helps you set the right price and add your commission on top if needed, a map that shows potential TripMates exactly where the trip will take place, detailed trip and stop descriptions, and a blog with many tips on how to plan the perfect trip or where to promote your trip to get as many TripMates as you want. The TripLeader also adds the dates, allowing you to be as flexible as you want, with the added value of modifying anything on your trip page as many times as you like. By posting a trip on JoinMyTrip, you also have access to our community's vast network of

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[48] For more information: *JoinMyTrip Travel Insurance*. [online]. Available on https://www.joinmytrip.com/en/t/travel-insurance (Consulted on 10.08.2021)

[49] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

travellers via our website traffic, emails, and social media, allowing you to effortlessly find like-minded and trustworthy TripMates (we scan IDs and we have a review process for all new members to ensure their identity). Each profile has a management dashboard where you can control your messages, trip page, payments and TripMates that are joining or that are considering joining.

The payment is safe and done directly on our platform; the TripMates are then committed to going to your trip. Once they've paid, they have to go on the trip and if they cancel, we will do our best to reimburse their portion of the journey and make your trip as trouble-free as possible. TripLeaders can earn money by being compensated by TripMates and they can save money by sharing costs for accommodation and transportation. And last but not least, the shared experience of travelling with strangers is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

TripMates also have many advantages. They can enjoy a hassle-free holiday since the TripLeader handles all of the accommodation and transportation arrangements. They have a very large selection of highly individual and unique trips to pick from on our platform, and all TripLeaders are vetted through an intensive evaluation process. They are all experienced and committed. The trips are curated itineraries created by destination experts or researched explorers who are passionate about discovering new places and cultures. Every new trip is scrutinised individually, therefore any discrepancies, vulgarity or incomplete description will be under review until the TripLeader decides to fix it. In addition, TripMates get to take advantage of low trip costs, and small groups with a maximum of ten people. The payments are safe and are made through the third top payment provider in the world (Stripe). Finally, TripMates save money by splitting expenses and sharing an amazing experience with like-minded travellers.

This next picture will show our USP in a shorter manner. Most people don't find good travel mates due to budget, time, style of travel and destination choices, as well as not choosing who you travel with, non-customisable itineraries and expensive trips with large group sizes.
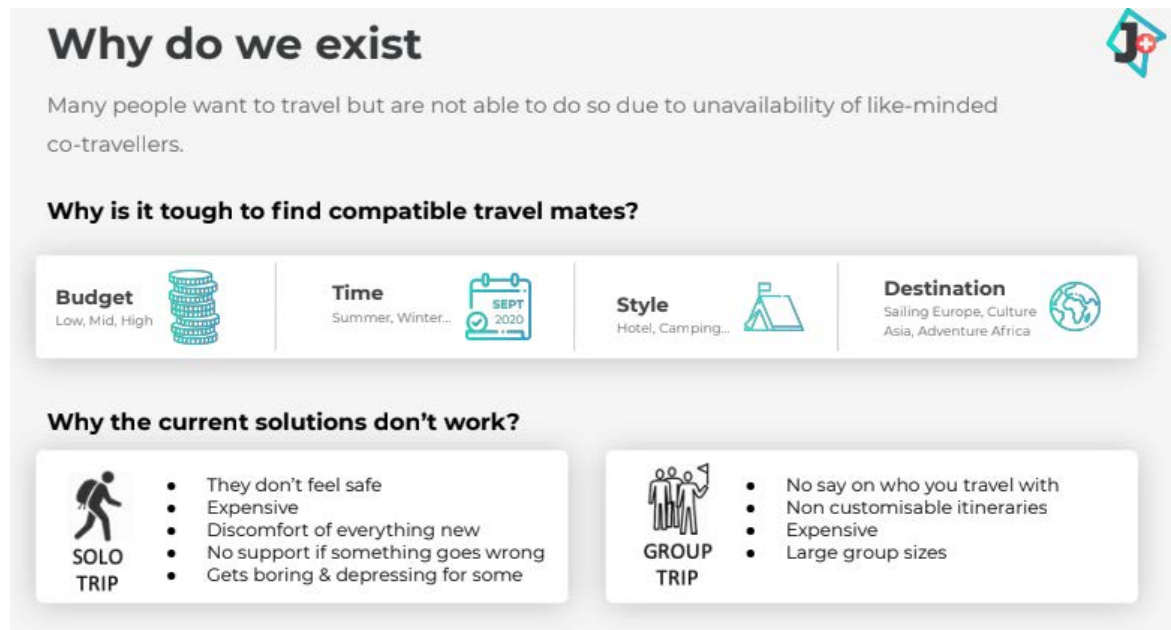
1.3.2 Missions entrusted

I entered this company as an intern in the Marketing department. I was in charge of social media and very quickly took over all the tasks and became the sole representative of this division under the Marketing department. They had previously never had a Social Media Manager, everyone would take on a task for their social media and that made it a little messy. My responsibilities included strategising the best solutions for each social platform. It was to develop a lean content strategy that matched the team's creative skills and made the most out of every piece of content generated that was targeted to each platform. LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook all require unique material, and we would need to benefit from more interaction on our posts.

This would then result in more brand awareness or build trust among our existing clients and future clients as well who would visit our pages. This consideration would then become conversions and hopefully loyalty, which is what we are looking for. We need to define the right message, the right audience and the right channels to diffuse this.

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[50] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

For a more accurate description, I create innovative and compelling social media strategies, handle all social networks on a daily basis, modify content to fit various channels, manage, schedule and distribute content across many platforms in one organised online tool and create content for a few channels. While fostering cross-departmental collaboration with the Community Engagement team, I monitor and support social media communities by reacting to comments and posts and facilitating conversations. On a weekly basis, I monitor, measure, analyse and report on social media platform performance using tools such as Google Analytics and Facebook Insights. At the same time, I investigate and analyse the most recent trends in order to use them to our advantage. By analysing competitors' activities I could propose improvements to our performance and create goals to increase brand awareness and community engagement. In addition, as the sole representative of the social media department, I must educate other employees (new interns or employees wanting to learn about social media) on the usage of social media and advocate its use within our organisation. Before the end of my internship, I created a guide for any newcomers to take over my responsibilities more easily and I've added it in **Appendix 16**.

1.3.3 Plan of action

So what can we do? Indeed, to make a brand or a product known, there is nothing better than giving it visibility in the most qualified audience hubs, i.e. the biggest social platforms. As an online business, we also need to activate customer retargeting, further support our CRM program with eye-catching emails and incentives such as contests or referral systems.

Of course, there is the question of cost. How much would all of this cost to be able to reach our goals? The answer is zero. My job was to reach the target numbers (bigger audience, more engagement and higher number of traffic to the website to increase conversions) organically.

1.3.3.1 Social media channel features and their advantages

It's been mentioned again and over that the two major social networks, Facebook and Instagram, reduce our organic reach due to the algorithm, and it's now more 'pay to play'. Reach, engagement, and website traffic are the three components we need to develop to grow our business. To accomplish this organically, I thought, we'd need to make use of all of the features available on the major social media platforms. There is so much we can accomplish in these channels that we aren't, and if we are pillars of this new feature, we can earn notoriety and additional followers from those looking for inspiration from our account. For Instagram, I'm referring to Reels and IGTV; these features are not new in and of themselves, albeit IGTV is much older than Reels, but we need to generate this sort of content today before it becomes outdated, which might happen very quickly, as it did with Clubhouse.

The latter platform was very sought-after in the beginning because of its exclusivity (only those invited to download the platform could actually download it, no one else) but it has already declined in popularity a year later. It is a very new social media platform based on audio, where people come together in "rooms" to talk about a subject. You can either be a moderator (main speaker), a speaker (co-host), or a listener (you join the conversation without being able to speak, just listen). We tried this mobile application earlier this year, but the downloads were only possible for IOS users, and most of our Marketing team used Android phones. Once the platform was available on Android, we quickly created our accounts and started our rooms. We would host conversations about travel and tips, but never got the audience we desired.

Social channels copy from each other constantly. "Stories" compete with Snapchat, IGTV competes with YouTube, and Reels compete with TikTok. Soon, Instagram will launch a new feature to compete with Clubhouse as well. Reels are fun and entertaining 30-second videos (now up to a minute) that have the option to stay on the feed so people can see it right when they land on your page. Reels are ideal for dynamic creativity and brand personality, as well as for encouraging discovery and

engagement. Companies can show their true selves and their employees, making the business more human. IGTVs are pre-edited, high-quality videos in long format (up to 10 minutes when uploaded on a mobile phone or up to 15 minutes when uploaded on a computer) that are great for story-based content, such as travellers' trips with JoinMyTrip - our community's experiences. Right now, we are using IGTVs as a backup for our YouTube channel, publishing our same YouTube videos onto IGTV. Lives can also be a great way to reach out to a larger audience, where we broadcast our CEO or some employees answering questions from the audience or simply chatting about the company. Our followers will be notified once we start the live video, and it will appear as the first bubble in the Instagram story line up. Live videos can also be saved and added to the feed later on and they can last as long as 60 minutes. This type of content would be used for connecting more with our followers, addressing their burning questions about our company and how it works, and just chatting with them and getting to know them. According to a report by Sprout Social[51], when customers feel connected to a brand, more than half of consumers (57%) will increase their spending with that brand and 76% will buy from them over a competitor.

1.3.3.2 Current traffic and conversions

The first step was research. I gathered all the information I needed about social media and its trends, as well as understand our product and client base to create a content strategy that fits our business model.

I started out my research with our target audience: Millennials and Gen Z. They are extremely connected; they grew up with the internet and are well-versed in its use. With all of the data online that they have in the click of a mouse, they are overwhelmed with information. These audiences are also highly influenceable by social media and the shiny aspect of the internet, and they are strongly affected by online reviews and testimonials; according to a study by Podium[52], 88% of consumers are influenced

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[51] SproutSocial. *#BrandsGetReal: What consumers want from brands in a divided society* [online]. Available on https://sproutsocial.com/insights/data/social-media-connection/#key-findings. (Consulted on 01.09.2021)

[52] Podium. *2020 State of Reviews* [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3kCRqqi. (Consulted on 01.09.2021)

by reviews when discovering a local business. If your product has negative reviews or a rating of less than 3.4 stars, they will most likely click away and choose a similar product from a competitor. The issue is that those who are pleased with a product or have no opinion about it will not leave a review. However, if a customer is unhappy, the likelihood of them submitting a negative review is quite high, especially if it is about a negative experience with an employee. Furthermore, Millennials and Generation Z have a significantly shorter attention span than that of older generations, therefore we must tailor our content to them as well. We must post appealing deals, beautiful imagery, authenticity and short entertaining videos.

This following graph that I created shows uses for each social platform. This will provide us with an overview of all uses and all platforms in order to develop a successful content strategy. As we can see below, Facebook and Twitter are the best channels to employ for website traffic as well as for news and entertainment. An emphasis on video content works best on Facebook, although we also found it performs better for LinkedIn. Instagram, like Pinterest, is a channel that is highly visual and requires curated content for its audience, which seeks beautiful authentic pictures and inspiration. Pinterest is also a good channel for inspiration in travel, DIYs (Do-It-Yourself) and so on, as well as a good place to post infographics in addition to LinkedIn, the highly professional social platform.

Figure 5: Uses for each social platform[53]

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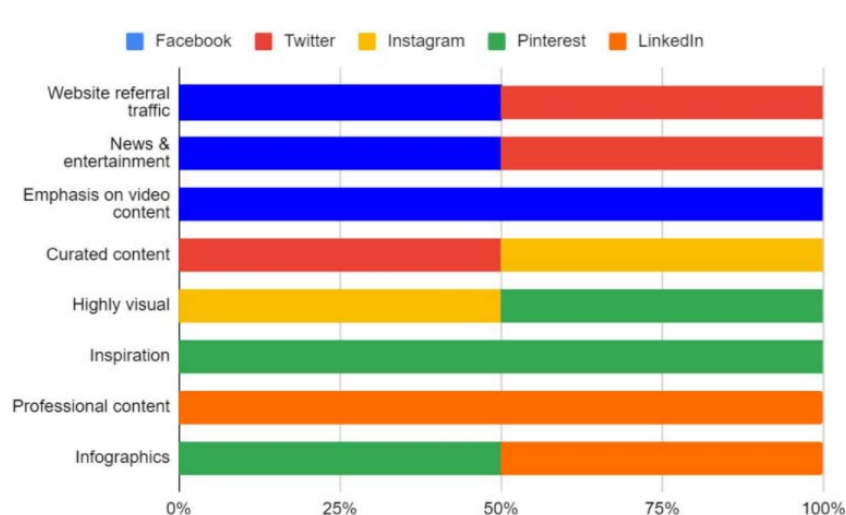
[53] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

We'll continue this research with Google Analytics. Most of our website traffic comes from organic searches (55.4%) and direct traffic (20.3%), shown in the graph added in **Appendix 15**. Traffic coming from social media only comes in fourth. Reaching the goal of "Complete Registrations" (goal 1), a.k.a completed sign ups come from paid search (2.77%) from our Google advertisements, followed by organic search and email as shown in the picture below left. For booking payments (goal 15), our best performing channel has been the referral system, followed by email. For both goals, social media is fifth in the order of most conversions.

<u>Picture 7: Conversion goals by origin</u>[54]
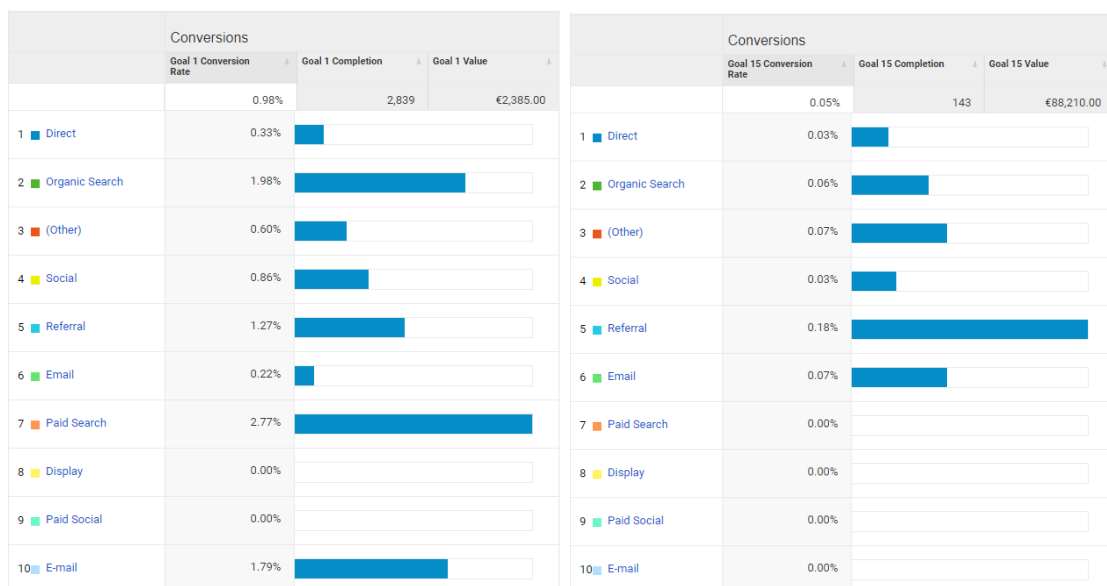
In general, our top channel giving us the most valuable results is **organic search**. The primary channel for complete registrations is **paid search**, while the **referral** system is the primary channel for bookings. Taking into account the importance of organic search archiving our objectives, we need to improve the performance of JoinMyTrip in the Search Engine, which means we have to focus on enhancing the SEO by improving our content with the best keywords for our industry and following

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[54] *Source: Google Analytics, 2021*

the travel keyword trends, creating new relevant content (information that people are searching for in our field), and employing a general SEO strategy for our blogs (with backlinks, with the page structure, and so on). Email marketing has a higher conversion rate than social media and could be a potentially great channel for bringing us more bookings too, therefore we need to improve our email strategy as well and focus on our TripMates and find ways to drive traffic to our website. For this, we can create informational emails with travel tips, ideas and inspiration, and trip suggestions from our website with CTAs (Call-To-Action) using their personal information we gathered throughout the years.

Although social media is an excellent method to bring traffic, get new registrations and inform our followers about our latest news, it was not the top performing channel for generating sales. It is the channel to gain customers' trust and keep a good relationship with them by connecting with each and every one of them through conversation.

Conclusion of chapter 1

During the Covid-19 pandemic, all travel businesses struggled to expend just enough effort to maintain a stable position in an industry that is sinking. We've devised a 'Corona strategy' using our existing funnel and changing up a few details. The biggest change was, of course, to remove all paid advertisements with the purpose of keeping a reasonable budget while still achieving good results organically.

Although the global health situation wasn't promising, and the hope for travel was dwindling, JoinMyTrip still had big opportunities. As pointed out in the first part of this chapter, Tour Operators and other travel businesses went bankrupt or had to lay off a massive amount of staff. As a result, their offers (trips, excursions, tours, etc.) would take more time to organise or even wouldn't be able to operate at this time whereas we had the flexibility that people desired. Under those circumstances, trust in those businesses was low during the crisis. Despite the fact that we offer adaptable trips, the widespread epidemic made people more sceptical about others outside of their social circle or even travelling in general. Our sole business model resting on travelling with strangers, it was very difficult to find a way to regain that trust and send a positive message about that.

Nevertheless, our target audience understands travel as a lifestyle and plans to travel again as soon as the situation improves, unlike other demographics. And our platform easily adapts to the trend of local travel or travelling to closer destinations.

Social media is the key. This is mainly where our clients get their information and where we can easily keep in contact with our customers. This notion of inbound marketing aids in the acquisition of new customers through the publication of interesting content on social media channels.

Chapter 2: Implementing a social media impact during slow activity periods

"A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is — it is what consumers tell each other it is."

-Scott Cook

In order to sell more product and grow a business online, we need to find ways to systematically grow our brand awareness, generate more demand so we can convert on that increased demand. Social media is a very powerful way to do this. The problem is there are too many opportunities to waste time and money. That could be content that falls flat or doesn't move the needle, or wasted money on boosting posts, bad advertising, etc. And that is my main goal.

The first and most important thing to retain here is keeping a good relationship with existing and potential customers and stakeholders of the company, especially during slow activity periods. This instills trust in our existing customer base and it generates brand awareness among potential new clients through providing constant content. A study by Hootsuite showed that 1.3 million users joined social media every day during 2020, that's 15 new users every second. There's a lot of potential there.

The hands-on method is then applied, which entails auditing the current social media environment and using the data to create a strategy that is appropriate for the company's goals.

2.1 Maintaining a good relationship

The growth of a startup compared to a big company is much more exponential. The early stages are slow (pre-seed and seed) but once the pace picks up, the company grows 300 to 500% more than a traditional company, who would grow 10% to 20% or 3% to 5% for a smaller company. Despite this positive growth, startups are also faced with thousands more like them trying to grow as much as possible. Competition is fierce. Since the beginning of JoinMyTrip, the CEO has talked to 150 investors to try to get funds for the business and 40.67% were interested in learning more. When promoting your business, the goal is to be compelling and, most importantly, confident in yourself. Money and results are what investors care about most.

JoinMyTrip is the first sharing economy platform for group travel and by 2025, we will have changed the lives of 15 million people by empowering them to experience the world with like-minded

travellers in a trusted group. Our mission is to build this go-to sharing economy platform for millennials to discover, offer and join unique group trips with travellers who have the same desires.

Our clients are extremely important to us, and we must maintain a great relationship with them as well as with everyone in the team in order to generate positive feelings and a closeness that will impact our relationship with the consumers.

2.1.1 With existing customers

This is the number one priority for all startups: making your customer happy once you've acquired them. As a small business, it can be daunting to constantly be perfect, but that's what it takes to stand out from all the other competitors in the market.

The first step is to find the right message to send. Customers will want to see a human aspect of a company in order to connect with it more easily, which means we need to use storytelling to entertain them and show them that we are not simply a machine attempting to persuade them to buy our products. As a result, we become more memorable, more thoughtful and more personalised as a brand, which will show in our customers' experiences with our product.

Then, once we have them on our side, we need to keep them interested with our trustworthy community, our quality TripLeaders and our outstanding customer service. JoinMyTrip's aim is to connect like-minded travelers together who share common interests, desires and demographics: age, travel style, budget, destinations and gender.

Keeping everyone happy is, of course, a difficult task and there may be a few disgruntled consumers here and there; our objective in this instance is to attempt to win them back with freebies. For instance, we had a small altercation during a webinar.

For convenience purposes, I will be explaining how webinars are held. The Business Development team creates the topic and presentation and sends it to the Social Media and Content team to create the captions and post it online. Then, at the scheduled time, we start the Zoom meeting and wait for people to join in. Usually, we have two hosts and one chat manager, who takes care of recording the session, going live on YouTube, sending the links on the group chat and replying to questions asked in the chat. At the end of the presentation, we have a question and answer portion where the audience can ask anything about the presentation, about JoinMyTrip, or about travelling in general.

On a webinar once, we had a problem with a lady who was constantly complaining about us. She had come from a Meetup group and expected the Zoom meeting to be a conversational meeting with other individuals interested in travelling together. She complained about the fact that we were too "business-like" and were pushing too hard to market our firm. She even convinced some others in the Zoom conference to leave and meet up somewhere else by sending her instagram account name on the group chat. The hosts were forced to try to explain why we were having this free webinar about travel, and how we were not there to sell our product per se, but to educate people about our product, and encourage them to travel with us. This does not happen often but when it does, it is best to be prepared and calm.

In order to maintain a structured way of keeping contact with our customers, we need to define the communication methods for each point in the consumer journey. In this next table I will present the different ways we need to communicate with our TripMates and our TripLeaders.

Table 7: Touch points for TripMates and TripLeaders[55]

Before booking	During the booking process	After booking	During the trip	After the trip
- Social Media posts - Newsletter	- Messages with the TripLeader *(for TripMates)*	- Direct Messaging - Email	- Direct Messaging - WhatsApp	- Direct Messaging - Email

[55] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2020*

- Sponsored ads - Email - Facebook Messenger - Instagram direct message - WhatsApp - Facebook groups	- Facebook Messenger - Instagram direct message - Email - WhatsApp	- WhatsApp	*For TripMates:* - Social Media tag on posts *For TripLeaders:* - Emails - WhatsApp	- Facebook review - TrustPilot review *For TripMates:* - Facebook groups testimonials - TripLeader review - TripMates reviews *For TripLeaders:* - TripMates reviews

Having several communication channels facilitates engagement with our consumers. Some of them may not have access to the primary communication route we utilize, while others may not wish to be reached in a specific way. We must accommodate their contact choices.

2.1.2 With stakeholders

A stakeholder is a party that has an interest in a company and can either affect or be affected by the business. Here we will talk about the employees and the investors.

One of the first approaches in organisational sociology was developed by Taylor. He was born in the context of the industrial revolution where lifestyles evolved very rapidly. He was a worker and when he moved from "worker" to "engineer", he found that in the HR department, it worked in terms of initiative and stimulation, i.e. if workers are paid more, they will be more motivated and they will produce more. He then discovered that this was not true. He also discovered that there is no learning of tasks, no concrete definition of tasks, and that there is a lot of idle time (loitering). He also observed a lack of coordination and explanation of methods and a total lack of knowledge of the time needed to

complete a task. It was then that he created the *Principles of Scientific Management* (1919) where he explains the observation methods as an objective of reducing loitering and increasing production.

He enforces five principles of work method: a scientific analysis of each gesture ("the one best way"), an economic motivation for work, a scientific selection of workers, a division of work, and a partitioning of tasks.

JoinMyTrip uses a few of these principles, namely the partitioning of tasks and the economic motivation for work. The first principle is done by fragmenting the workload and onboarding each new employee to all of the aspects of the Marketing department. The economic motivation is done by promising each new intern of a possible employment contract at the end of the internship. This motivates the interns to work hard even with a small salary.

2.1.2.1 Within the team

JoinMyTrip is a startup that cares about their employees' well-being, and this radidates trust between the managers and the other employees. Especially as interns, sometimes we do not feel completely part of the company as most managers use interns for cheap labor. This is regrettably a common practise with big companies. Startups are smaller, and so the communication and the relationship between colleagues is more prevalent. JoinMyTrip is a "liberated company"[56], which means it's a company with a 'flattened', or horizontal hierarchy. As a result, everyone is regarded on the same level, even if the managers have the final say. They do, however, take our critiques and opinions seriously and try to include everyone's feedback into the final decision.

At the beginning of my internship in this German startup, I already felt the closeness with my colleagues and my superiors as well. They are very dedicated to receiving and giving regular feedback as to continuously improve ourselves and our work. French sociologist Émile Durkheim had

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[56] Oliveira Diana. *Sociologie des organisations*. Masters 2 MIT course, ISTHIA, Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, 2021.

distinguished two forms of solidarity to achieve the same goal[57]: *mechanical* (no separation between work and personal time) and *organic* (where the collective goal is the maintenance of society). JoinMyTrip definitely is the latter.

The first and most important element is the team effort. This is when someone in the company needs support in a particular task or needs someone to take over all their tasks when they're away. We take this very seriously and everyone tries to help each other whenever possible. Having closed all offices in Germany and not being able to work in the same bureau as your colleagues can make this more difficult, but we made it work through constant communication. We have emails for formal communication, a direct chat messaging system for non-urgent discussions, and video calls for important discussions and meetings. The rule is to make sure to clarify your expectations beforehand about work priorities and success metrics. A crucial part is also to resolve issues with a quick video call, because emails, chats and other written methods are prone to misunderstandings; and this is especially true in home office situations, where you are not constantly surrounded by your colleagues and cannot directly ask them questions.

As I mentioned previously, feedback is essential in this company. We have weekly **"feedback talks"** where each employee is assigned a colleague to have a meeting with and give two positive feedback points and two "points of improvement" which could be professional or personal. These allow us to get to know the other person, and if needed, solve any type of problem between them. Then, Anna gives a **Monday Motivation speech** every week at the end of the first meeting with the Marketing team. There are also bi-weekly **feedback surveys** sent by email through *Officevibe*, a team development platform, the responses stay anonymous and it allows the managers to understand their employees in a different sense. Staying with the anonymity characteristic, the CEO holds a "**Townhall Meeting**" where everyone in the company can ask questions anonymously through a Google Forms document and the CEO and managers try their best to answer them. Another meeting, the "**Retro meeting**", held monthly is used for talking about three fundamental questions:

[57] More information on Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2010). *Mechanical and organic solidarity. Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/mechanical-and-organic-solidarity. Consulted on 22.08.2021

- What did we do well that if we don't discuss we might forget?

- What did we learn? What helps you to be successful as a team?

- What should we do differently next time? Where and when did it go wrong in this sprint[58]?

This aids in recognising and resolving any misunderstandings that may have occurred during the past month, as well as in attempting not to repeat them.

Lastly, our direct manager Wil would organise a monthly **"BILA"**[59] to talk about anything that the employee feels uncomfortable about, it could be professional or personal. Wil genuinely wants every single person in his team to feel comfortable telling him anything about anyone or about the work, so that the subsequent exchanges run more smoothly. It could also be the meeting where we discuss our future in the company and a possible contract to negotiate.

Obviously, team communication is everything in this firm, and that is exactly how it should be. A misreading of a situation could lead to further aggravation and, eventually, poor productivity.

We also strive to make daily tasks as simple as possible. That is, they established the regulations and provided tips on how to be more productive from the start of the internship. They suggested that for meetings, always have an objective, an agenda and define next steps for each meeting as well as prepare any documents that need to be provided ahead of time so that everyone may prepare for the meeting in advance. They recommended us to build up HPPs (Hyper Productivity Pockets), which are blocked slots with no distractions, to help us navigate our day through all of the meetings we had, which became quite frequent during the lockdowns. This helps achieve five hours of work into just one.

The next tip is to create a productive and comfortable workspace. With everyone working from home, there needs to be a clear separation of work and leisure. Like me, many colleagues did not have an office at home and/or lived with family or their partner. At times, it was frustrating and complicated

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[58] *Sprint* is a set period of time during which specific work has to be completed.

[59] A *BILA* is a bilateral discussion between two parties.

to work beside people who constantly pass by, cook, play and talk around you while you're working. And during meetings, it was not ideal and was at times unprofessional.

As for paid holidays, each employee (depending on their contract) had paid vacation days to take whenever they pleased. But there were rules with taking time off: as a small team, it is important to be extra considerate because there are certain times when everyone would like to travel, however the business needs to run smoothly and there cannot be any overlaps in vacation time. Furthermore, a two-week notice for a short trip and a two-month notice for a lengthy vacation is preferable so that the team can plan for the colleague's absence.

Time management was also an important tip. We need to set priorities with the tasks we have and there are different methods with managing your time. The "eat that frog" technique involves doing the most difficult and time-consuming activity first thing in the morning so that you can move on with the rest of your day knowing that the worst is over. The "Eisenhower matrix" is a way for creating a funnel for important or unimportant activities, as well as urgent or non-urgent tasks. People are different and require different time management techniques. You must first test them all out to see which one works best for you.

With a team that is well-communicated and well-organised, the work flow becomes so much more efficient. With everyone working from home, this was the priority for making the work easier for everyone. Communication is key.

2.1.2.2 With investors

As previously described in this Chapter, a startup has two stages: a low-growth stage and a high-growth stage where we seek investors and gain followers. Our goal is to become a startup valued at more than a billion euros, or as they call it "unicorns". For example, in just one year, the Gorilla mobile

application in Hamburg got millions of downloads and praise. JoinMyTrip is now in the growth stage; we are fast expanding, but we still need to figure out certain things first, and with the pandemic resurging on a regular basis, this is difficult work. After the expansion period, we concentrate on what makes us profitable.

There are several sorts of investors, and we must identify the product market fit. Super angel investors spend between 200 000 to 3 million euros in businesses, although this does not happen very often. Venture capitalists (VCs) are seed to series C stage investors who receive venture capital from limited partners such as family offices, insurance companies, and banks. CVCs (Corporate VCs) are large corporations that want to get on board early on, and the majority of them are strategic in their investments, which means they do not want to invest in two large corporations at the same time. PE (Private Equity) investors are ones who invest up to 50 million euros, sometimes billions. They are high net worth individuals who even have a team of people who take care of their wealth.

What we tell investors when presenting the company's goals is very important, the business' future depends on them. So what do we show them? A roadmap of our goals for the next five years, and show them why investing in our business will benefit them too. The following picture depicts the goals that the Management team has established to show investors. It is categorised by B2B, B2C and C2C-driven objectives. We want to be partnered with local tour operators and LDEs (Local Destination Experts) in two regions by next year, and worldwide by 2023. As for our community, our goal is to reach a worldwide target and have all segments possible for our community on our website. Between 2022 and 2023, we want to create an automated trip creator available on the website and a "match-making" operation that will show you the travelers who have the most common interests as you. Then by 2025, we want to create a B2B business for corporate clients and reach a total of five companies to work with.

Picture 8: Roadmap to 2025[60]
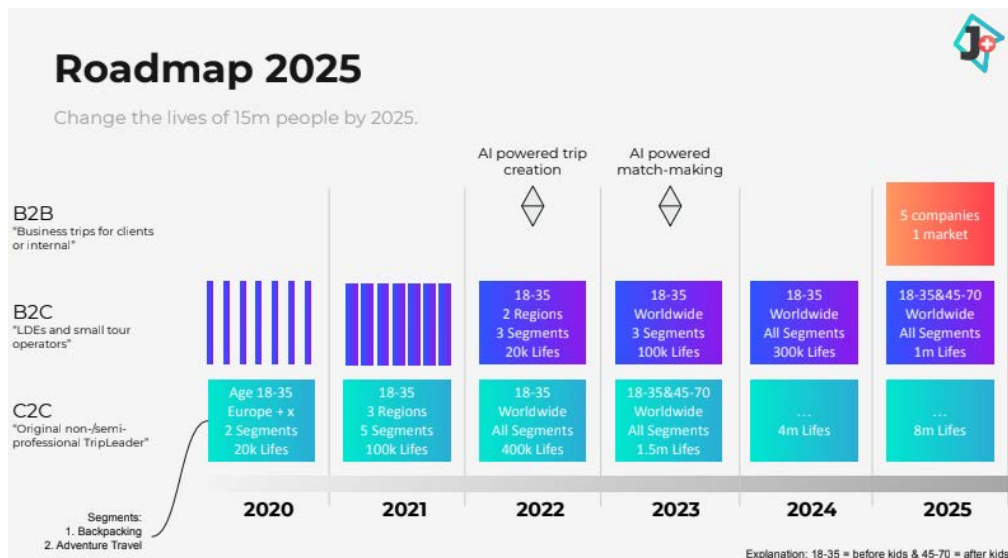
2.2 Experimenting with different strategies

Our social media material has a record low organic reach, according to various sources. One in twenty of your followers, according to a recent report by Hootsuite, will view the content you post on Facebook and Instagram, that's 5% of your follower base. Because the whole idea of being on social media is to grow our business, this proportion is quite concerning, and that is why a well-thought-out plan is essential.

Based on Katie Wight (June 2021[61]), all brands have a different approach, some post twice per day or more, some use partnership marketing to get in front of new audiences, some use paid social (i.e. social advertising), and some brands do all of the above. We do all of this and still don't get the organic reach that we targeted. We can eventually achieve our goal by analyzing our present social media content and engagement, developing a few new sorts of material, and experimenting with the outcomes.

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[60] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*
[61] Wight Katie. What to do about[bad] social media reach. *KW Content*, 24 May 2021. [online]. Available on https://kwcontent.com/what-to-do-about-%f0%9f%92%a9-social-media-reach/. (Consulted on 28.08.21)

2.2.1.1 Owned, paid and earned content

To achieve and sustain accelerated growth rates, an audit of what we already have is the first step. There are three types of social content[62]:

- **Owned**: content we have on our owned channels, such as our website (blog), social media, and email. This is the content we produce without putting any money in it, and we publish it on our own channels;

- **Paid**: this is anything that we put money against. This could be social advertising, boosted posts, retargeting and paid influencers;

- **Earned**: this is when people engage with or share our content (mentions, comments, reviews, etc.). It boosts our reach and it's how we get the most out of the time we invest in our owned content and the money we invest in our paid content.

As a rule of thumb, it is important to prioritize our assets. The first priority is the **owned content**; there's no use of amplifying our brand reach with earned and paid to bring traffic to our website if it's not the best possible representation of our brand, our message and our product. We need to polish our owned content and then we can confidently bring more people onto our website and blogs.

For owned content, JoinMyTrip is fairly exhaustive. The website is easy to use, eye-catching and simple yet informative. We also have a blog we call 'Travel News'[63] that is available in English and in German to accustom our two biggest audiences. As for social media, the company has accounts in almost every channel; our Facebook and Instagram pages being the ones with the largest follower base. Every day, we publish in-feed content as well as stories on both accounts and we make sure to have information on our 'About' section that explains clearly what we're about.

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[62] Wight Katie. *Strong Brand Social Express* [private online course]. 2021, Teachable.

[63] More information can be found on https://travel-news.joinmytrip.com/

Then we have the **earned content**, which are reviews and UGC (User-Generated Content). We can get reviews on our website but we could also have some for our social media, which we don't have yet.

Regarding earned content, we are working on getting as much as possible during the pandemic in order to gain trust from our visitors. We do have reviews on our website but they would be more seen on our social channels; and this is part of our strategy. On Facebook, we get a few likes on our posts but mostly never any comments, mentions or shares so we would need a new strategy to organically boost our posts on Facebook. For Instagram, we have a relatively good engagement rate. Our community tags us on their photos and their stories, and we repost them on our account.

Then lastly comes **paid content**. It is a great way to gain new followers but we are trying to reach our goal with an organic reach first.

2.2.1.2 Social media analysis

The analysis we made was in March, so I will be presenting the data we collected from January to March 2021. The key takeaway of JoinMyTrip's social media is that we may not need to have a presence on every platform, but for our posts to resonate, we need to have a strategy that is specific to the platform we're using. A strategy to provide unique experiences on each platform. The following social media platforms have been analysed to make it an integral part of JoinMyTrip's social media strategy. Currently, our Facebook followers are our biggest audience, followed by Instagram, Twitter, the German Pinterest (Pinterest DE), LinkedIn, YouTube and then the English Pinterest (Pinterest EN).

Number of Followers on Social Media
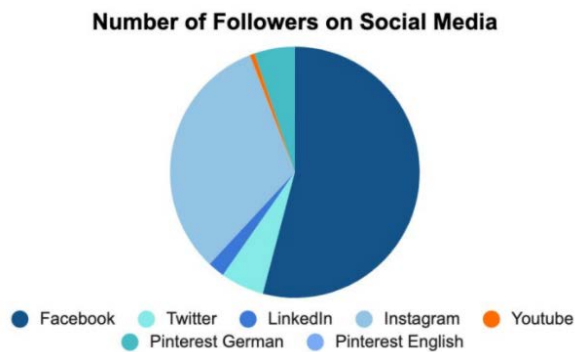
Before anything else, we need to establish our social media goals. The first is to **build awareness and audience** by consistently engaging our audience, lasting impressions on our audience and measuring brand exposure by facilitating how much our users talk about us. The result would be an increase in followers, impressions and website traffic. The second goal is to **generate leads and sales** by converting social media content into dollars, funneling content to relevant landing pages and creating relevant call-to-actions (CTA). The results here would be an increase in revenue, conversion rate and email signups. The third and last goal is **community engagement**, which we will do through building a relationship with our users, defining our brand voice and creating a memorable image of our brand. The end outcome would be an increase in click-through rate (CTR) to our website and engagement (likes, shares, comments and mentions).

Two critical things to consider when it comes to JoinMyTrip's social media channels are: *What is our customer demographic?* And *Which channels are they likely to use?*. We already examined these two aspects in Chapter 1, therefore our analysis will now move on to use cases of each platform. Through messaging, moderating groups, and engaging with our audience, Facebook will be used to raise awareness about becoming TripLeaders or TripMates and foster relationships with our customers. Twitter will aid in the facilitation of dialogues and the development of website traffic. LinkedIn exists to expand the company's impact, to network for new opportunities (partner relationships and recruitment) and to showcase our travel industry knowledge, employee experiences and work ethics. Instagram will be utilised to increase community involvement and to introduce new customers to our

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[64] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

product and trips. YouTube will be mostly used to provide expert-level solutions to our users (webinars, travel news, travel essentials and tips). Finally, Pinterest will be used for research-based content on our products and blogs.

Comparing platforms by impressions and engagement also gives us quite a good overview of our channels' performance. The highest audience rate we have is on Facebook and Instagram but the highest impressions or reach rate is by far on Instagram, with 186 111 impressions between January and March of 2021. That number is the total number of unique accounts that have viewed our posts. When looking at our frequency of posting, Facebook comes out on top, with 281 published posts between January and March of 2021, compared to 231 for Twitter, 171 for LinkedIn and 76 for Instagram. As for engagement, Instagram is by far the platform with the highest level of interactions (9 206 for the same dates compared to 197 for Twitter, 419 for LinkedIn and 98 for Facebook). As we can see, Facebook has the highest number of followers and published posts but has the lowest number of interactions, which suggests we need to change our content strategy and publish fewer posts but with higher-quality content to entice our followers to engage. Instagram, on the other hand, has quite high numbers and we could benefit from using this platform to tell more stories, engage and connect with our audience.

Now we may proceed by social channel, starting with Pinterest. All of the data verified in this analysis will be added in **Appendix 12**. The engagement rate on Pinterest DE (2.67%) is much higher than that of Pinterest EN (0.58%), as well as for the pin click rate which is 2.29% for Pinterest DE compared to 0.54% for Pinterest EN. "Claiming"[65] our Pinterest accounts can display the JoinMyTrip profile picture next to any pin saved from our account. This will help increase brand recognition and in turn, grow our community. There is also an account under the name *JoinMyTrip.World* which does not belong to us and can be confusing for many people, who may mistake the two accounts for the same organisation. The top boards are travel inspiration boards such as "Travel Destinations" which ranks the highest in regard to impressions, engagement, pin clicks, link clicks and saves. We may deduce

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[65] Pinterest. *Claim your website*. [online]. Available on https://help.pinterest.com/en/business/article/claim-your-website. (Consulted on 28.08.2021)

from impressions that a large number of users are searching for keywords relating to travel destinations and are intrigued with the content shared. The most effective approach to leverage this is to create relevant material that can be linked to experiences and trips on our website. Currently, destination pins redirect users to the homepage of JoinMyTrip, thus this will assist to boost conversion rates. In terms of our audience's specific interests, Home Decor ranks first at 75%, followed by Travel at 57.6%. As for travel, 40% of our audience is interested in destination-related topics. However, there is a strong affinity rate for topics related to nightlife travel, travel tips, road trips, adventure travel, mountain trips, solo travel and travelling within Germany. Our Pinterest EN audience is predominantly North American (20.9%), Indian (7.8%) and English (5.5%), whereas our Pinterest DE audience is mostly German (17.4%), North American (10.8%) and Indian (5.4%). Using the location can aid in the creation of content that resonates with our visitors. We can widen our targeting and reach more individuals if we expand our market into the United States, the United Kingdom and India. We can achieve this by publishing campaigns or pins targeting popular holidays and destinations in those countries, such as Martin Luther King day, or the Fourth of July for the United States.

In addition, our Pinterest content strategy must provide educational material as 84% of "Pinners" use the medium to learn about new things. With aesthetically appealing infographics that link to a specific blog on our website, we can give recommendations to help followers learn about travel at a glance. As seen in **Appendix 12.A**, our pins that generate the most impressions are Travel quotes and 'Others' (i.e. earning money while travelling, travel the world together, unique trips with JoinMyTrip, wanderlust and adventure), followed by Travel destination pins and bucket list pins.

Our Twitter activity between January and March of 2021 has received 240 new followers and a maximum number of impressions of 14 200. The engagement rate ranged from 1.00% to 1.60%, which is amazing considering that 0.02% is a good rate for Twitter. January was the best month between the three thanks to a few advertisements sent out by the Performance Marketing team. We have 1 827 followers on Twitter, out of which more than 1% engage with our content. However, we could adopt a strategy to increase our follower base. This can be done by the type of content we tweet about on our page. In all three months, the most sought after topic was "Travel News" where Alex presented the latest news articles about the tourism industry, which were also the tweets with the highest impressions

in February and March, receiving 407 and 531 impressions respectively[66]. Out of the top twenty tweets, Travel News appeared eleven times. The tweets with the highest engagement rate were a video about the most beautiful places to visit in Switzerland and a partnership with a special giveaway. It is evident that our users prefer instructional content as Travel News is the most popular topic. Twitter should be used to share more of our blog articles and resources because people use this platform to read news and consume helpful information. We need to choose topics that are debatable and which cause a stir. When we compare these three months to the previous year (as shown in **Appendix 12.C**), we can plainly see that July had the largest number of impressions, which is attributable to promoted content, and that the number of impressions kept decreasing month after month. Over the course of half a year, there has been a steady increase in profile visits and new followers. However, in February and March there has been a drastic drop in profile visits, new followers and mentions. This can be due to the lack of promoted content, of course, but we would also need to modify what we post and retweet on our profile, given that all these new followers or unique viewers aren't interested in our content and don't choose to engage on our page. Furthermore, a point to ponder upon would be that while the number of tweets is low between September and December, the number of followers we have obtained is larger than in February and March. This also demonstrates that more tweets doesn't necessarily imply more visitors.

Our Twitter content must contain a variety of posts that are not always directed to our website, otherwise our followers may become irritated. To increase mentions, we can make use of images, GIFs (Graphic Interchange Format, a.k.a moving images) and embedded videos which make posts stand out. We can also ask questions to our followers and create polls to promote conversation with our Twitter page visitors. Polls are also a wonderful method to collect user preference data while keeping our following engaged and entertained. A smart approach to connect more with our users is to adopt their vocabulary, like slang and phrases; this sets a tone that is less whimsical and more witty. The advantage we have for this is that JoinMyTrip employees are our target audience, so they are already familiar with the lingo and can use it for our social media posts. If our Instagram handle reads like a travel diary, then our Twitter should be read with the use of everyday slang.

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[66] More information is found in Appendix 12.B of this paper.

Our Instagram account is mainly followed by women (61.3%), and by people aged 25 to 34 (57.1%). In March, our number of followers increased by 2.1% and the main location our followers are from is Germany (47.9%), the United States (6.2%), Austria (5.6%), the United Kingdom (4.3%) and India (2.4%). Our goal, for this channel, is to build community engagement. To do this, we must raise awareness and prompt our audience to click through to our website, provide UGC content and facilitate an authentic feel in order to gain their trust. Lastly, we need to employ the appropriate tone and language to fit our primary locations. This will help increase product awareness. As shown in **Appendix 12.D**, out of 10 425 followers, JoinMyTrip gets around 5 602 interactions that includes likes, comments and saves for all posts. Engagement ranges between 140 to 240 interactions per post, which brings our engagement rate to 1.9%, a very good rate considering that below 1% is poor and above 3% is extremely good. Unsurprisingly, our top performing post on Instagram is a promoted post which reached 51 930 people and got 227 interactions. The second best performing post, unpromoted, reached 3 076 people and received 191 interactions. What works best as an organic Instagram post is a beautiful and authentic image, which means it must be expert-or-almost-level photography but not a stock image; these photographs need to be real and preferably from our community's travels. To provide a captivating story (the image or the caption), we need to create more posts that tell a story; we also shouldn't pass up the opportunity to share stories that celebrates our travellers (our TripLeaders and our TripMates): sharing, connecting and helping each other make memories and enjoyable experiences. An example for this might be "How a trip changed my life" with photos of the traveller on a JoinMyTrip holiday and the caption with his or her description of how great of an experience this trip was. This type of content will encourage interaction, which will include not only likes but also shares and comments, and spark more conversation. As for stories, we can engage with our audience through the use of polls and questions, and games using emoji slide stickers and other types of stickers to create a fun and interactive story. We'll also have them swipe up to our website to know more. The best performing IGTV (Instagram TV - videos of up to 15 minutes) was about the best places to see in Mexico in 2021 which received 322 views, 2 interactions and reached 1 271 people. This content was informative, interesting and current.

Our strategy should consist of introducing descriptive copy in the captions, meaning that we will start mentioning the various badges that we give to our expert TripLeaders. This will provide added credibility and motivation to keep travelling with JoinMyTrip and eventually becoming an advocate of the brand. For example, we can create a post about our colleague Anna who is an "Expert Leader" and who will reveal details of all her wonderful travel experiences and tips for different destinations she's been to. Our use of IGTV is just uploading our YouTube content onto Instagram under the format of an IGTV, and our Reels were going to be uploads of our Tiktok content. In my opinion, using these features could be very fruitful if used correctly. The current strategy was to reuse our created content and put it everywhere, but this isn't the best approach. IGTV videos can be about our community, TripLeaders' travel diaries, or Covid travel news; something that will catch our Instagram followers' attention.

As shown in **Appendix 12.E**, the most popular LinkedIn posts with an increased level of interactions are about partnerships, business-related content and informative content (travel tips, travel essentials, coworking tips and blog posts). These are the most compelling topics and we can offer more of the same. The top three posts with the most impressions are travel tips ("cheap last-minute travel tips"), a partnership (with Gymglish) and travel essentials ("outdoor experience") with 649, 615 and 410 impressions respectively. When compared to other platforms, the impressions on LinkedIn are low. Therefore, we must aim to increase the number of times our posts appear and increase our number of followers.

Content that can increase our engagement and impressions can be of many types. A good read would be a good start; we can mix up our content by sharing other people's posts (travellers and partners). Sharing infographics, blog posts, videos, links to events (that we are attending), eBooks (that JoinMyTrip employees are reading), and webinars that relate to our brand story.

With Facebook being the platform with the biggest audience, it has a lot of potential for brand awareness. A trip announcement, a virtual meetup registration post and a partnership were the posts that had the most impressions with 1 190, 1 178 and 1 122 impressions respectively. We had more

impressions on new posts in the next months but this analysis was done before this time, and I will be presenting the best performing posts of March until July in Chapter 3. With our Facebook page, we need to encourage users to become TripLeaders or TripMates with content that will entice them to use our service such as UGC, blog posts and travel tips. Highlighting our actual TripLeaders and TripMates should be a key part of the JoinMyTrip experience as well. This will require some work, though, and we would need all or most of our customers to accept to be posted on our account and for them to send us their travel photos. This is done already on Instagram, with our customers tagging us in their stories and in their feed posts.

Because we should not have the same content on various platforms, the Facebook posts should have a seperate disposition. In terms of impressions, the top posts all have a very small amount of interactions, approximately four engagements per post. This very low engagement rate is not a good sign and it indicates that we need to revise the content to make it more appealing to our followers. An important part of growing our brand is also to continue connecting with our customers through all of our social media channels and keep the conversation going post-purchase. To utilise UGC, which will lead to a very authentic feel, featuring real people with real experiences in locations that offer stunning landscapes. Direct links to all trips in similar locations can be listed on our website as well; this will help trigger a sense of adventure and increase conversions. The idea for generating this type of content could be an Instagram competition where TripLeaders and TripMates share photos or videos of their experiences and the entries would be collected using a campaign hashtag. This was part of my OKRs for Q3, and we chose the hashtag "*#JoinMyTripAdventure*". I haven't had the chance to see this task through, since my internship ended, but I am confident it will bring our community closer together and closer to us.

As an added bonus, I've verified the conversions we've received in May and July of 2021 from Facebook, when we first started implementing the Facebook shop onto our account. As we can see, we've received more conversions in July thanks to the shop as well as website traffic.

Picture 9: Facebook conversions in May and July 2021[67]
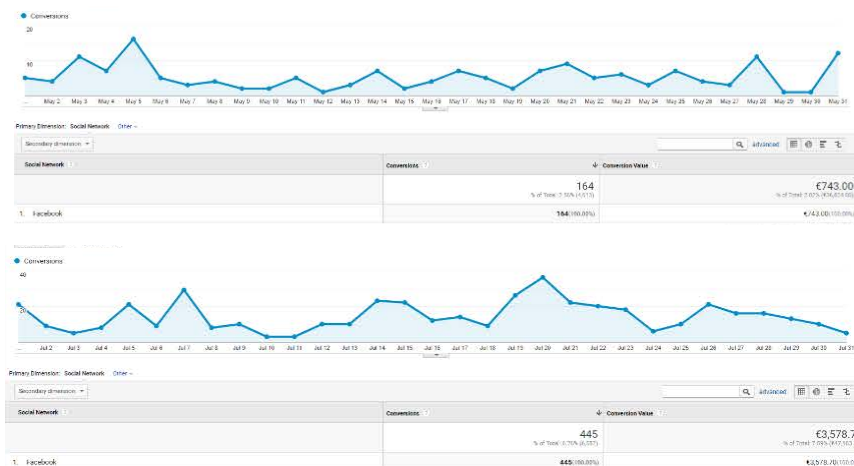
Ultimately, the major conclusions from this analysis are summarised in the table below. Our targets are added in, for each social platform. For Pinterest, an engagement rate close to 100% is our goal and an average of 200 new followers per month will help grow our community and broaden our brand to new audiences. For Instagram, it is preferable to maintain an engagement rate of 2.5% to 3%, although this may be challenging given that the platform's algorithm penalises accounts with already low engagement rates.

Table 8: Social media audit key takeaways[68]

Key Takeaways

Social Media	Previous results	Strategy	Target
Pinterest (Engagement Rate)	2.67%	• Travel Tips • Travel essentials • Travel Quotes Also, including: • Finance and Vehicles relating topic	Closer to 100% is a good engagement rate
Twitter (New followers)	Average 20 new followers	• Topics: Business related (Travel news is the highest rated topic), Debatable and cause a stir • Infographics: Poll based and interactive	Average 200 new followers
Instagram (Engagement Rate)	1.9%	• To provide a captivating stories of TripLeaders/TripMates • Visual Imagery - Create FOMO feeling and evoke emotions (happiness and memories)	2.5% - 3%
LinkedIn (Impressions)	Average 370 organic reach	• Sharing published posts by others • Increase employee success stories	Increase organic reach to 1000+
Facebook (Engagement Rate)	0.96%	• Image content preferable than video. • UGC and community management	2%

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[67] *Source: Google Analytics, 2021*
[68] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

2.2.2 Useful tools for the optimal social media presence

For a long time, social media marketing has become one of the most cost-effective internet marketing methods. With social media, we can increase our brand's exposure and recognition without spending any money. To scale up our campaigns, we will need a little more help; there's no way we will be able to conquer social media without a few key marketing tools. These make it easier to locate new material to publish on social channels, schedule blogs at the ideal moment and track the performance of our campaigns using these tools. We may also utilise them to boost our social media presence. I will henceforth list the tools we use and how we use them to our advantage.

The first tool we use as a team is **Trello**, an online project management portal. This is where we organise our posts and requests in one place. Each department has their own "board" and everyone has access to it for easy research and request additions. I created my own for social media (available to see in **Appendix 13**) and I also used the Content and the Design boards to request creatives from our lead designer Lisa for our posts. The Content board was where I kept track of the daily blog and video creations for social media posting. I would wait for the content team to complete the blogs before scheduling them across different platforms that day. Of course, I also had to stick to the posting schedule that I devised after conducting research on the optimum times to publish content on each social channel. This tool is extremely useful for big groups such as our Marketing team for fluidity and easy communication.

Hubspot is our biggest and most used platform. It was originally intended for social media, CRM and performance marketing, but it has now evolved into our primary channel for writing and publishing blogs on the website (which used to be Wordpress). Having all of our content in one place made it easier for us to operate more efficiently. We also used this tool for tracking links and getting insights from our social posts by creating a UTM[69] link with the existing link from a blog post or a web page. This was very useful for tracking our campaigns and verifying their efficiency.

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[69] "UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) is a simple code that can be attached to any URL to generate Google Analytics data for digital campaigns. [...] This helps track the progress of the campaign on all online platforms." (The Economic Times, August 2021)

Scheduling and posting social media publishings needs a tool as well for coherence and thoroughness. There are so many posts to make for social media that it can be quite confusing if we don't have the right tool. We used Hubspot mainly for most social channels but Instagram needed an extra tool for our posts with links to blogs: **Later**. This tool gave us the option to add a link through the "link in bio" module, which redirects people to our website. We used the free version, so we didn't have any extra cost to schedule pots from there, but it would be much easier to find a tool where we can post everything in one place. For this, though, we would need a small budget. I also sometimes used **Creator Studio** for scheduling posts on Facebook and Instagram. It was the only free tool that gave me the option of scheduling carousels (multiple photos in one post) with a "link in bio".

Calendly is a website we used for scheduling webinars and meetings. It is free and we can track the number of participants and their emails. The tool was mostly used by the BizDev team, but once we started the "Co-TripLeader" initiative, it was convenient for drafting and sending out invites to meetings with our TripLeaders. We also used it for one-on-one meetings with anyone in our community who needed assistance publishing a trip, finding TripMates or answering any questions they had about our company. We have a main account for the webinars and events that we host, and everyone in the Marketing team has their own account to be able to video-chat with our customers.

The Customer Support team, who took care of all the travellers we have online, needed a tool that's easy to use and has various features for storing customer data. They used a website called **Airtable**, which I seldom explored to find emails, or information about TripMates or TripLeaders.

I used **Canva** almost every day for creating different types of content for social media, such as infographics, "trip pins" (examples added in **Appendix 6**), Instagram stories (examples added in **Appendix 7**), Pinterest pins (examples added in **Appendix 8**) and podcast promotions with audio (examples added in **Appendix 10**). The latter is for promoting our older podcasts, so I would add the

audio in the image and post that on LinkedIna nd on Facebook. The trip pins were created by Lisa, our lead designer, and I modified them for each trip and post.

We had the paid version of Canva, called "premium" and with this version, we had access to all the images in the stock, and all the features proposed by the website that aren't available for the free version users. Another very important tool is a license-free image and/or video provider, such as **Pixabay** or **Unsplash** for images and **Pexels** for videos.

We used **Perdoo**, a free "platform to bring together strategy with the goals required to deliver that strategy, and the people required to deliver those goals" (Perdoo.com). This was where we added and presented our OKRs to our managers and to the other team members. An example of a Perdoo page with all of our initiatives is added in **Appendix 3.B**.

Google Analytics was mostly used by the Performance Marketing team but it also helped for analysis in social media conversions and website traffic as well as campaign goals. It was also very convenient to finish up the social media audit.

We wanted a single location to store all of the photos, documents, and files. Because everyone was given a Gmail account for work, **Google Drive** was the most user-friendly tool. It was the place where we kept everything so that anyone could quickly search for files and photographs. Due to the number of presentations and documents we created since the company's beginnings, it has gotten a little confusing. I had a difficult time finding a certain file at the start of my internship since everything was highly disorganized. But all we have to do now is get the hang of it.

In terms of my content plan, I was looking for a program that would allow me to simply add and check on the daily items to publish and their times, but I ultimately opted to utilize **Excel** and created weekly sheets to keep myself organized. It was the main document I used throughout my internship, and it was completely fine and worked well. This page was also accessible for anyone who wanted to keep track of the social posts for the following few weeks.

2.2.3 The five phases of the consumer journey and their KPIs

We have previously analysed our customer's behaviour in this thesis under Chapter 1. We know that there are five phases[70] in the consumer journey in general. In each of these phases there are key performance indicators to keep in mind and to examine every week. By doing this weekly, we can find out what has worked, what hasn't and try to adjust the content to what our followers liked the most.

Awareness: this is the first phase, where our potential customer is aware that they have a need or a problem, and they're seeking out a solution. This is where the paid advertisements and the boosted posts work the best. The KPIs are:

- *Impressions*: the total number of times our content was seen; a single user can be counted more than once;

- *Reach*: the total number of unique users that see our content;

- *Channel growth*: the net number of new followers that we're gaining on our social media accounts.

Consideration: during this phase, the potential customer has conducted his/her preliminary research and is aware of some of the possibilities available to him/her. This is where blogs and informative landing pages on our website work the best. The KPIs are:

- *Engagement rate*: the percentage of social involvement our users have with our content (it could be likes, comments, video views, clicks, shares, etc.). It is calculated by dividing the number of engagements on a post and the number of impressions;

- *Traffic to site*: the number of users visiting our website from our social media;

- *Click-through rate (CTR)*: the percentage of users clicking on our posts divided by the total number of impressions.

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[70] Wight Katie. *Strong Brand Social Express* [private online course]. 2021, Teachable.

Conversion: this is the phase at which the potential customer is ready to make a decision with the options available and make a purchase. This is where having a strong website and an easy purchasing process will pay off. The KPI is:

- *Conversion focused actions on the website that can be attributed to social*: the conversion actions from users that were driven to the website from our social media channels. To be able to get these numbers, we had to create UTM links from a tool we use (Hubspot) for every post linking to a page or a blog on our website;

Loyalty: in this phase, our customers enjoyed our product so much that they want to continue buying from us. This is where having good customer service and an overall good product comes in handy. The KPIs are not analyzed but are still important for future reference:

- *Return purchasers that can be attributed to social*: the number of times users have purchased from us more than once;

- *Lifetime value of customers attributed to social*: the average euro value of sales.

Advocacy: this is the phase where our customers become active advocates for our brand. This is where referrals and reviews are made and where content is shared. The KPIs are:

- *Referrals*: the number of current customers that are directly referring our product to their personal network;

- *Reviews or testimonials*: users that share their positive experience on social media to help us convert new customers;

- *Shares*: the number of times our content was shared through social media.

2.2.4 Creating and implementing new OKRs

With all of this data, we can find the best new OKRs for the next quarter ahead and grow our brand organically. For Q2, the Social Media and Community Engagement department worked

together to find new ways of increasing sales. The goals were noted down before adding them to Perdoo, and this document is added in **Appendix 3.A**.

Our first idea was to develop and deploy a system to spread the number of UTM links for bookings in a regular and meaningful way. UTM parameters are a great way of keeping track of a digital campaign (in this case, bookings through social media) from different sources that can be created on Hubspot. With the object of understanding where exactly consumers are arriving from social media, we've created two different sources: Social and Community Engagement. This way, we can distinguish the axact content that drove sales; a social post or a reply on a comment.

The next KR (Key Result) is to increase brand awareness using trends on social networks such as Clubhouse or games on Twitter. The value here is growing our brand reach on social media while always staying on trend, knowing the latest features on different platforms and participating in viral challenges. Our main idea was a Twitter hashtag trend that a couple of users are contributing to called '#Top4Theme' where the creator starts a weekly challenge with a different theme each time. For instance, this week would be '#Top4Poolside' and participants have to upload four photos of poolsides they like the most. Our hashtag was 'JoinMyTopic' and each week we would choose a destination or a travel activity. This would increase brand awareness and gain trust from our followers. This initiative would also be part of another one for Instagram, in which we would create a hashtag trend and encourage people to use the hashtag for their next travel photo posts. We chose "*#JoinMyTripAdventure*" and our plan was to include it in our emails and instruct giveaway winners to use the hashtag and tag us on their Instagram feed posts and stories.

A loyalty program was also in the works and part of our Q2 goals to retain existing customers and turn them into active advocates for our brand. The specifics were not yet finalised, but our concept was a program in which a TripMate can join X number of trips in X amount of time to earn a free coupon or a free spot on a trip of his or her choosing (up to 300€). People enjoy getting freebies, and a free vacation is an excellent gift. They will be overjoyed with our service and will share it on their social

media, tagging us. This way, we get somewhat free publicity as well as UGC content. We will attract more people and they will want to win this coupon as well as bring their friends.

JoinMyTrip was hosting a couple of meetups in a few German cities before the pandemic in order to grow the brand through word of mouth, and it succeeded. However, it was hard to conduct these events when Covid-19 first began, so during Q2, the Community Engagement team and I planned to recreate these events but with our community. Small offline gatherings for anyone interested in meeting other travellers from JoinMyTrip and developing a sense of family. The global epidemic made everyone a little lonely and this was our opportunity to show our community that we were still here and that we still cared.

In my opinion, our largest and most crucial KR was the Facebook shop. This would result in a significant increase in product views and sales. I will be presenting the results of this initiative in Chapter 3. We ran into some technical issues while putting it in place: I had never created a Facebook shop before and there were a number of technical terms and tools that I didn't understand. This is when the Tech team came in handy. They singl-ehandedly automated the data feed, which automatically uploads all new trips from our website to the Facebook shop. Before this, I was manually adding trips in the shop and inserting the photos and all the information one by one; a tedious task. This automation made my job so much easier and I owe it to Sebastian from the Tech team. Following that, there were a few errors, because Facebook has a set of rules for a product to be visible to anyone, but since these products were intangible (holidays), it was often complicated to fix.

Then, we encountered issues while attempting to integrate the Facebook shop onto Instagram. Because both social networks are owned by the same organisation, I assumed this would be a piece of cake. However, that was the longest I'd ever spent on a KR to complete. The problem was that our Instagram account was already linked to a Facebook Business Manager account, but it was an old one that we no longer used. So we contacted Facebook support to remove it so that we can add the current Facebook account to the Instagram account, but they had difficulties doing so as well. This went on for

a couple of weeks, and I didn't have the opportunity to complete this task because of the end of my internship.

Our final quarterly KR was to research and collect user behaviour with the intent of creating the best content for them. This could be accomplished by a variety of methods, including polls, questionnaires in emails, Instagram stories, surveys on Facebook groups, the forum, and so on. Our community has several from which to connect and follow us. It was a great initiative idea, but it never saw the light of day since the "Co-TripLeader" project took precedence over all other tasks.

2.2.4.1 How to grow a brand on social media

While no two brands have the same strategy to social media growth, we should all still follow the same order of operations[71]:

- **Phase one is strategic**: We need to define who we are talking to (and how this person behaves on social media), what we're saying, and how it looks, feels and sounds.
- **Phase two is tactical:** What tactical performance levers can we pull to get the right message in the right place, at the right time, for ultimate resource efficiency?
- **Phase three is optimisation:** We must push the plan to market, observe, and optimize.

Phase one was our first Chapter, where we analysed our consumers' demographic and behaviour and gave the right message at the right time, i.e. making sure that we are in line with what our clients are feeling during this difficult time in terms of global health and sending a positive message. The focus of the message must be divided between potential members and current members.

For our existing customers, the message must stay positive and informative. We need to give them the reasons why they should stay connected with us, and what we can offer during and after the Coronavirus pandemic. Our Travel News show can give them information about international and

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[71] Wight Katie. *Strong Brand Social Express* [private online course]. 2021, Teachable.

local travel, border controls, tips and inspiration (from our blogs) and unique travel experiences available and possible by our TripLeaders. This way, they stay interested in our platform, follow us on our social media channels to get the latest facts and findings and will continue using our service even after Covid-19.

Potential customers are a more difficult nut to crack. We need to show them why we are the fastest growing travel community in the world and how we offer a variety of trips for all tastes. Our team offers support for all travellers and for all destinations. We are focusing more on intracontinental travel in Europe because entering other continents is impossible at the moment. We need to show them that we are a travel platform that allows you to save money by sharing costs while travelling, and where you can share your passion for travel with like-minded individuals. Another essential aspect to emphasize to prospective customers is the financial security they will gain by using our service: well informed TripLeaders, identity verification for each member and travel insurance that will accompany them during their trip.

Phase two is about the methods we use to send this message out. There are three main message focuses which are for the general travel community, for travelling right now and for booking now to travel later on. And these messages are sent out from five main channels: social media, website and SEO, email marketing, paid social and paid search. Now, we saw in the plan of action of Chapter 1 that organic search, paid search, and referrals were the channels that gave us the most valuable results, which shows us that we should work more on social media because that's where we can tell our story in a way that will reach more people.

For the travel community, what we need to publish during the Covid-19 pandemic is educational posts as we've already seen previously. Posts and blogs and articles about who we are, how to plan a trip, why join a JoinMyTrip group and finding travel buddies. There are currently more people who want to travel abroad than those who want to wait to travel until the pandemic is over, so we should take advantage of this information and publish posts promoting seasonal trips (summer and autumn time), blogs about autumnal holidays, photos and videos of destinations during this particular season; and not forgetting the holidays celebrating our largest audiences that take place during this time: Autumn Equinox, Oktoberfest, Columbus Day, Diwali, Halloween, Día de los Muertos and

Thanksgiving. Then we can have posts about booking now to save a spot for future trips. We would need to promote the trips we have online that will take place next year (which we have a lot of) and post about the advantages of booking early, even during a global pandemic. These advantages would be about saving money by booking earlier than most and about the #FOMO feeling (Fear Of Missing Out). An overview of our message is added in **Appendix 14**.

Phase three is about optimisation. When we're in the observation mode, we're searching for audience growth, customer interaction, and high-quality website traffic. For this, we use Google Analytics to analyse how much traffic originates from social media and how customers behave once they get on the website. Then we identify the content that drove all that traffic to the website and repeat the process.

Conclusion of chapter 2

Building a community on social media is not as easy as people might think. There is a long process and strategies to implement in order to have the perfect one. But before social media marketing, we need to build relationships with our current customers, our team and our investors; we need to keep the latter happy and have them keep a certain power in the company's decision-making. JoinMyTrip also focuses on the well-being of their employees by giving them advice on how to organise their workspace and time management at home. A tight-knit team that is well-communicated and well-organised can impact positively on the consumers and it makes it easier to build a great community around our brand.

With social media marketing, we don't just acquire one time customers, we want customers that fit so well with our brand and personality that they come back again and again, which increases our profitability. Every time a customer buys from us for the first time, there's always a marketing activity associated, an investment associated with that purchase which is the customer acquisition. But when they start buying from us more than once, we no longer pay for that and it becomes organic sales. That is the strategic phase of growing our brand on social media.

By analysing and auditing JoinMyTrip's social media, I was able to develop and optimise a solid content strategy for the brand and its many channels, as well as anticipate new objectives and initiatives for the company. The results validated the work done: social media channels' audience, reach and engagement grew as well as conversions. Now the next step is to examine the best performing strategies to provide recommendations for the future.

Chapter 3: Key takeaways and analysis

"Social media's like a bakery. You can lose credibility, goodwill and fans by serving up

stale and boring content."

-Mike Houdeshell

My top priority is social media optimization (SMO). I want to connect with brand advocates and potential consumers on a daily basis, watch feeds, trends, hashtags, and competitors, and publish on each social site. As a weekly goal, I want to create material, do analysis by evaluating key indicators of each social platform, and interact with employee advocates. As a monthly goal, I build and update the content schedule, as well as conduct monthly reports on the best and worst performing pieces. Then, as a quarterly goal, I'd like to revise my objectives and meet with the senior management team.

3.1 Identification of the best approach employed

First and foremost we need to know what each channel is about, so we can deploy the right content and gain the follower base we're looking for. Since JoinMyTrip is on most of the available social channels, we'll have to analyse every single platform one by one. We'll start with the basic and most used platforms.

Instagram is a highly visual social platform, it's an attainable aspiration and the highest quality visual standards that we can achieve. This channel is conversational and community-driven and the best posting frequency for this channel is once a day; which means posting one photo per day on Instagram is optimal. The goal is to entice users with pictures of everyday life and employees (or the community). We have to show them that we're not just another brand. The user type is mainly a younger crowd (18-24 and 25-30), the majority are women and more than half of Instagram users check their feed multiple times a day. A successful Instagram page is a massive follower base and a high engagement rate.

For stories, the content will be different. Stories are used for behind-the-scenes shots of the company, UGC content that is shareable and social. It is real, raw, and transparent. Posting quizzes and polls could also be used for collecting customer data and preferences, all the while making it fun and inconspicuous.

facebook is for highly clickable and shareable content to drive traffic to websites or blogs. It is also used for informational and news-worthy posts, and funny memes. The goal is to build a community for our customers by encouraging page visits and comments. The ideal posting cadence depends on the business and on the content that is shared. The followers shouldn't be flooded with low-quality posts; the best is to post more infrequently but using high-quality material. The user type here is a demographic of 18-29 and 30-49 year olds, although the older generation is more likely to engage in this channel. A successful Facebook will be shared posts, engagements on each post published and a great deal of traffic to the website.

There is also the live feature available and the possibility to create groups. The latter is a great opportunity for community-building, to bring them even closer together and share ideas and travel inspiration; it facilitates communication between them as well as the JoinMyTrip team. Our Facebook page has six associated groups: *Urlaubspartner gesucht* (for our German customers), *TripMates*, *TripLeader*, *Travel Buddies* (for searching a travel partner in general), *Global Travel Women* (a group for women travelling), and *Coworking* (for anyone searching for remote working tips and travel buddies). These groups are a space for us to engage with and give more value for our warm audience[72] and fostering loyalty. A successful Facebook group is a large follower group and daily community engagement.

twitter is a newsworthy social channel. It has a high volume of posts, or 'tweets', it is quick-witted, smart, very responsive and engaging. Tweeting multiple times a day is ideal, mostly news publications about company announcements, information, events, etc. The user type is in equal measure male and female ages 18-24 and 25-30. It is on this social media channel where people get their daily dose of news. A successful Twitter page is one with retweets and engaged influencers.

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[72] *Warm audiences* are those who have interacted with our content or visited our website.

Linkedin is an authoritative social platform; it is scholarly, educational with B2B content such as white papers and industry articles. This channel is not very visual, although it is getting there little by little; and the posting frequency shouldn't be overwhelming. This means posting once a week is good but everyday would be excessive. It is a platform to share industry wins or announcements, and company information. The user type is in equal measure male and female ages 25-30 and 30-49. A successful LinkedIn page is one with many shares, likes, and traffic to the website or blog.

Pinterest is an aspirational social platform where people share photos, infographics, and videos. It is the number one channel used for DIY (Do-It-Yourself) and travel inspiration. It is informative, accessible, shareable and helpful. The user type is mostly female aged 18-24 and 30-49 years old. A successful Pinterest page is one which brings a lot of traffic to the website.

TikTok is a short-video-based social platform. It is interactive, entertaining, creative, funny and community-driven. This is where our content has the best opportunity to go viral these days. The platform became very popular during the beginning of the pandemic and is still the biggest social media channel. It is where businesses can show their human side and creativity easily. A successful Tiktok page has many followers and has a lot of engagement on the videos.

YouTube has longer form video content that can serve as brand marketing, product education and promotion, or value-driven content that reaches a broad audience and appeals to our target demographic. This channel needs high-quality images and videos and the posting frequency can be once a week. A successful YouTube page is one with continuous channel growth, many views and engagements (comments, likes, etc.).

3.1.1 The current content strategy

When I arrived at this company for my internship, the social media strategy was simple: post everything we do everywhere. We've analysed the problem with this strategy previously in this thesis, but I haven't explained exactly what we were posting and what type of content we were doing. And this is what this sub chapter will be about.

In a general sense, we post two videos every day on YouTube, one blog, and everything would be published on our social media with captions. The Social Media team publishes what the Content team creates, and the Community Engagement team replies to possible comments posted on that content. So the first part of the posting funnel is the Content team's creations, which are **blogs** and the captions to those blogs. They write a blog everyday, so I'd have to post the link and the caption to all of our social media channels.

A few of our colleagues have what we call a "**YouTube show**", which is a playlist we create on our YouTube channel about a certain tourism topic and they make weekly videos about a different subject each time. We used to have ten playlists about different topics, which I will enumerate later on, but we had to cut down on a few social media channels in the past month due to low financing and fewer employees to do the job. Instead, we would use the 'free time' from not making videos to work on other more important things, like the Co-TripLeader project. So here's a list of the shows we had:

- *Travel News*: latest news about the travel industry, and lately it has been a lot about Covid travelling, hosted by Alex (of German/English nationalities), then Akshaya (from India) who took over in March.
- *Remote CoWorking*: episodes with tips and tricks about working remotely from anywhere in the world from our Coworking expert Anna (from Germany).
- *Travel Tips*: a show about general tips and tricks on different aspects of travelling, or going to a specific destination, hosted by Jasmine (from Finnish/Thai nationalities).

- *Travel Essentials*: a few episodes about our colleague Flori's (from Germany) favorite travel essentials, which she explains in each video.
- *Weekly Recap*: a show about summarising the YouTube and blog content of the week at JoinMyTrip, hosted by Stella (from Germany).
- *Travel Food*: episodes about food from around the world, hosted by Mariellen (from Canadian/Finnish nationalities).
- *Travel Astrology*: a show about astrology signs travelling and a few tips, hosted by Alex who left Travel News to start this show instead.
- *Trip of the Week*: each episode is about a specific trip available on our platform, explaining the itinerary and a few other bits of information, hosted by yours truly.
- *Travel Activities*: a show about types of activities to do at a certain destination, hosted by Stella who left the Weekly Recap show to do this one instead.
- *Travel Buddy Adventures*: this is the show about joining someone on their trip with JoinMyTrip, through all the steps you go through, from choosing and booking the trip, to arriving at the destination and meeting the other TripMates.

Our YouTube shows would be posted at specific times of the day, and spread out throughout the day. Which means, the first video we post is Travel News to give our audience an overview of the latest news reports in tourism on that day. Our colleague Akshaya would record her video that morning, send it to us in the shared Google Drive, Jasmine writes the blog and the captions for social media, Wil edits the video and sends it to me. I then upload it on our YouTube channel, preferably before noon (the perfect scheduled time would be 11:45am). I add the description, title, tags, and other necessary information for that video. The second video on that day would be an episode of one of our YouTube shows, which would be recorded at least 3 or 4 days before the published date and edited by Sheny to be ready on the date scheduled. I do the same process as for the Travel News video and schedule it for 5pm, which is analysed as the perfect time to publish our content because YouTube Analytics shows the times our audience is mostly online.

We also create weekly **podcasts**, hosted by our colleague Jasmine who prepares the main topic as well as the script with questions to ask the co-hosts. These podcasts are recorded on a Zoom meeting and then produced in a video editor so that they can be seen online, on YouTube and on Buzzsprout.

We use Buzzsprout as an audio-based platform, mostly to upload our podcasts, but also to upload our various YouTube shows, and convert them into audio-only files. The Travel News must be converted into podcast-style files since people like listening to the latest news on their commute to work in the morning. We also took advantage of our existing shows and transformed those into audio files as well: Travel Tips, Remote CoWorking, Travel Food Show, and Travel Essentials. We don't have a specific schedule for posting our podcasts on Buzzsprout, we get downloads at whichever time we submit them.

And so, for our social media, the content would be the same on all channels. A typical day of posts would look like this:

- Morning until 12:30 → Travel News video

- Afternoon → Blog

- Evening → YouTube show episode

Then other posts that depend on the day, they could be webinar reminders, partnerships, product promotions or company announcements. And this strategy would be the same for Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Instagram would have a different strategy, since it is photo-based and we cannot upload the same type of content. And we kept this same strategy for the whole duration of my internship.

Our Instagram page is composed of branded posts (partnerships, blogs, etc.) and organic posts (UGC content, community travel photos, employee travel photos, etc.). These two types of content were posted one at a time, which means we would post a branded photo every other day, and in between, an organic photo. This helps to retain a human side to our company, with all the photos that our community sends us and from our colleagues' trips. We use Anna's (the head of the Business Development team) travel photos very often because she travels quite frequently with JoinMyTrip and her content is an excellent way of gaining new customers' trust in us, by displaying a testimonial in the

form of a photo and a tagged traveller. Our organic photos are scheduled on Hubspot, and the branded posts have to be scheduled on Later, because a 'link in bio' is required for anyone who wants to read that blog or see the specificities of that partnership on a special landing page created for it. The disadvantage of scheduling Instagram posts on Hubspot is the fact that we cannot add a destination feature to the post, which is important for a travel company posting travel photos. If people are inspired by the photo of a certain location, then they will want to visit there one day, thus they would need to know exactly where that place is.

Since the blogs are posted every other day, they are not aligned with the day-to-day published content. What do I mean? For instance, if a blog about Coworking is posted today, then I will schedule it for the next available slot on Later, which could be weeks from now.

On Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn however, they host the same Travel News video, blog and YouTube show that day. The only difference is that on Facebook, we publish two of the same post: one in German and one in English; and on LinkedIn, we publish the embedded video on the feed and not just a clickable link driving to our website or YouTube account.

To be more content specific, I will also present what we would publish and when for the purposes of knowing exactly what our content was.

Let's start with the **webinar** reminders. These posts are about presenting and then reminding our community about our upcoming webinars. For one webinar, the Business Development team asked to publish it three times before the date. The first one for presenting it, the second one to remind people about the date and time, and the third one to try to get last-minute sign ups. Since we had two webinars a week, these posts were getting a little too frequent and I removed these posts in the new social media strategy. In my opinion, one post about a webinar each week is plenty. Otherwise, we would be flooding our followers with posts about the same webinar three or four times in a row, and they would lose interest as a result of our insistence. The Business Development team (which I will call the BizDev team from now on) also promoted these webinars on Meetup, another social platform

where the objective is to meet people from your area. We would get a lot of sign ups from Meetup, and most of them would be from the USA.

The webinars were hosted by the BizDev team; there would be two per week, and the most sign ups we've had on a webinar was 150. Some other colleagues would seldom co-host a webinar, depending on the subject. For instance, I hosted a webinar about travel inspiration to Thailand and the Community Engagement team hosted a weekly "Travel Fails" webinar where people would share stories about their travel mishaps such as missing a flight or losing a cellphone in a busy city.

On Pinterest, we post one "fresh pin" (we create our Pinterest pins on Canva) per day. A few examples of my creations are added on **Appendix 7**. We have two Pinterest accounts (a German one and an English one), where we post the same photo but translating the caption and the text on the image. The strategy was: a Destination pin, a Quote pin, a No text image pin, and then back to Destination to continue to cycle. Destination pins would be for travel inspiration, a quote pin is for the usual Pinterest content which works well, and the "no text image" pin is for a break in text and simply giving our followers a beautiful landscape photo. Our pins would receive thousands of impressions and a few saves. Our German Pinterest was created from the beginning of JoinMyTrip, thus it is our biggest audience with over 1 800 followers, whereas our English Pinterest has only 4 followers despite still receiving thousands of impressions. Even though our pins get a great number of impressions, and the channel is growing everyday, they still would never get us real conversions. The only time we got bookings through Pinterest was from paid advertisement, and it still only gave us just a few bookings.

As for Tiktok, our strategy was to post anything slightly entertaining, with a fun caption, showing our office and employees. We had an average of a couple hundred views and around 20 likes for each TikTok video. Then, when our lead designer Lisa flew back to her hometown in Australia from Germany, she created a Tiktok travel series. She had to quarantine in Australia for two weeks and showed her day-to-day. This worked marvelously and we gained hundreds of new followers and gained tens of thousands of views. Her videos were a crowd pleaser, because she explained what you needed

for a flight to Australia from Europe during Covid times, and what quarantine life was like at a hotel. It was informative, it was funny and relatable, and it was topical. She also took videos of her daily menu and food she received, where she made a sort of food expert analysis and gave star ratings for each meal. She was very creative in these videos, and it showed through the likes and comments she received in the Tiktoks. We wanted to continue in this style but nobody in our company was travelling at that time, and our numbers flopped again.

Of course, this strategy of posting everything everywhere isn't optimal. Each channel has its particularities and we should use those to adjust the type of content we post. LinkedIn, for instance, is a professional social media platform where businesses post about company news and announcements, internal (through LinkedIn Pulse) or external blogs about the industry, and posts about company life (in the office) or the employees. This is why I started my research about everything social media from a business standpoint, and conducted a social media audit with the help of my colleague Akshaya who is part of the Management team. With these analyses, I could create the perfect social media content strategy specific to JoinMyTrip and its business model and culture.

3.1.2 The new social media strategy

Now that we know what each social media platform is used for, we can devise a strategy fit for our business, starting with the nine critical elements to keep in mind.

3.1.2.1 The nine critical elements

"There are nine critical elements in social media to grow faster, engage better, and ultimately sell more product" (Katie Wight, 2021).

First is **strategic alignment**, which Katie defines as "when your social media content strategy, tactics, and every day programming are aligned with your business goals." JoinMyTrip's business goal is to connect like-minded travellers together, so our content must align with this aim.

Then there's **content pillars**, which also goes into alignment. This is to build a relationship with our customers with a storytelling framework. We can use this element with our UGC content (which we already use on Instagram) and this is definitely a crowd-pleaser. People love to see what users experienced with a brand, especially with a travel company.

The next element is **personification**. Businesses are on social media to connect with their customers, and send information about the company, but what they lack most of the time is personification. It means they come off as too corporate and that is not the point of social media; *social* is in the name and that's what we're aiming for.

Sticky content is what Katie refers to as posts that get more people to engage with our content, and not to sell more product immediately. With "sticky content", we have more people talking about our brand and we have more communication going on our posts.

The fifth element is **the look and feel** of the feed, also known as brand identity or visual identity. This is mostly for an Instagram page, where photos are used to get the attention of customers. This is inarguably a perk for a travel company, because travel photos are very popular with getting more likes, comments and it induces the FMO (Fear of Missing Out) feeling onto everyone.

We've already seen what **earned media** we have on chapter 2 in the social media audit section, so I won't be adding anything to this part.

Then, for the **paid social framework** and **email integration** elements of this list, I cannot specify our goals due to the fact that these elements are taken over by other departments in the company.

Finally, there's the **measurement model** and this is the most important one of all in my opinion, considering that my team and I would meet once a week to analyze our progress on all social media channels and determine what went wrong or right in preparation for the next week ahead. What this 'measurement model' is used for is to "align and assign Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to [our] content and social program. Knowing [our] benchmarks so that [we] can monitor performance and understand if [our] efforts are successful." (Katie Wight, 2021). Some of these KPIs include the number of impressions, the reach, the engagement rate and the click-through rate.

Here I will show how we collected the data each week leading up to the KPIs analysis meeting and which indicators were paramount.

We would have this meeting every Thursday to examine the results of the previous week's posts and identify which post was the best performing in order to retain these factors of success and continue in the same wavelength. The day before the meeting, I would search and add the numbers on the excel file, which contains all of our social media, a few KPIs (shown in **Appendix 11**), the best and the worst performing post of that week, and the percentage changes between each week. Most of the numbers were found in Hubspot, and made this task easier because the majority of these numbers were in one place. In the beginning of July, however, when we started to change a few things in our plan, we wanted more specific numbers. The Hubspot figures weren't exactly correct because they were taken from the posts scheduled on Hubspot, but we would sometimes schedule content directly on the social channel (LinkedIn Pulse articles, reposts, retweets, etc.); and these numbers were disregarded because they weren't directly linked to Hubspot. To avoid having these incomplete numbers on our analysis, we started to use the KPIs found in each 'analysis' or 'insights' feature in each social media platform.

During the meeting, I would present each KPI to my team that was composed of Wil (our manager), Alex (the head of Community Engagement), Tasneem (who is part of the CRM team but would help us in Social Media), Zeyna (Community Engagement), and Tijo (Marketing intern). When I present the statistics, I also give an insight to why the numbers were red or green; implying that there was sometimes a valid explanation for the rise or fall of some KPIs. For example, we had mostly red numbers one week in three channels since it was a big holiday usually spent with friends and family, and people wouldn't have time to scroll down their news feed and check their social media. As a result, we would have less impressions, likes, and comments.

This led us to have a more realistic view of our social KPIs. Our analysis became more precise and our final decisions were more accurate. The excel file sheet we used to add on all of these numbers is added in **Appendix 10**. As you can see in the picture, after Sunday the 27th of June is when we started the new KPI numbers.

Now I will show the progress we've made on our social media growth between March and July (Facebook and Instagram). There will be three different tables presented: the monthly channel growth, the weekly organic engagement rate and the traffic to site measured monthly.

Table 9: JoinMyTrip's monthly channel growth[73]

Monthly Channel Growth	Metric Source: FB & IG Account	March	April	Percent Change Month 2 vs Month 1	May	Percent Change Month 3 vs Month 2	June	Percent Change Month 4 vs Month 3	July	Percent Change Month 5 vs Month 4
	# of Facebook Followers	17082	17070	-0.1%	17068	-0.01%	17727	4%	18112	2%
	# of Instagram Followers	10411	10363	-0.5%	10402	0.4%	10919	5%	11357	4%

At the beginning of my internship, we can see that our Facebook and Instagram follower count was decreasing. The main reason was the current social media strategy, which was to post everything everywhere. The lack of curated content for each social channel was an oversight of the potential social media can give to a travel business. Their main problem was not having one person in charge of this

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[73] *Source: Google Analytics, 2021*

department; three or four people were taking care of different points in the social media and this was compromising them.

After creating a strategy that fits every platform perfectly, the numbers changed as well. As shown in the table, Instagram followers started increasing in May and Facebook followers increased later, in June. Nevertheless, this clearly demonstrated why a quality social media approach was more significant than one where quantity is the priority.

What also helped enormously was the launch of our Facebook shop with all of our trips online on our website, which we implemented around June. And the statistics straightforwardly explain this.

Table 10: JoinMyTrip's weekly organic engagement rate

Weekly Organic Engagement Rate	Metric Source: Back end of FB & IG	Week 23	Week 1 Engagement Rate	Week 25	Week 3 Engagement Rate	Week 26	Week 4 Engagement Rate	Week 27	Week 5 Engagement Rate	Week 28	Week 6 Engagement Rate
	# of Engagements on Facebook	939	6.11%	2903	2.60%	5884	2.67%	2943	3.73%	1945	6.03%
	Weekly Reach on Facebook	15369		111523		220295		78830		32279	
	# of Engagements on Instagram	571	4.90%	582	4.67%	713	4.94%	482	4.01%	562	3.95%
	Weekly Reach on Instagram	11646		12465		14436		12013		14231	

This table is the engagement rate we had between week 23 and 28, which were the weeks where we were working on the Community Engagement department. On Facebook, the best weeks by far were 23 and 28, both because we engaged more with our audience on all platforms and this increased the rate by 4%.

Table 11: JoinMyTrip's monthly traffic to site

Traffic to Site	Metric Source: Google Analytics.	March	April	% Change Month 2 vs Month 1	May	% Change Month 3 vs Month 2	June	% Change Month 4 vs Month 3	July
	Traffic to Site from Facebook	783	886	12%	1132	22%	2405	53%	4096
	Traffic to Site from Instagram	109	162	33%	247	34%	439	44%	347

Now, the traffic to our website from our social channels has also increased considerably since March: a total of 80.88%! This was a very big achievement and it was mainly through the medium of

the Facebook shop. We received so many more new visitors and new followers, and I think this was the biggest accomplishment we've had so far.

3.1.2.2 Content and schedule

While we need to think about which platforms to be on, we also need to adjust the content to be best suited for these channels. There are many different types of posts for good social media content, such as videos (short duration, nice images, understandable without sound), photos (carousels[74] with links) and stories (trending content that's visible for only 24 hours and customisable with adding location, stickers and hashtags).

When I started my internship, they stopped using Instagram stories by fear of it being the reason why they were losing followers every day. However, stories are a great way to reach a larger audience (it has over 500 million daily users), the content just needs to be prepared and curated. I researched about what other brands are doing and what works best for which social platform and made a list of new social content ideas that the company had not previously used. I added the presentation in **Appendix 17**. In this presentation, I also built a content calendar with all the main social channels to post on and the content to post on the days of the week. This was the first calendar I made up and continually adjusted it during my whole internship.

Using the social media audit analysis, we can determine the goal of each channel and make a list of the appropriate content to post. For **LinkedIn**, we needed to use more photos, graphics and videos on the feed, post much less frequently and turn customers into advocates. The content needed to be 80% information and 20% promotion. LinkedIn is a professional site for connecting with others in the industry, not for selling products, though we did receive conversions from this platform. To reach more people, we need to search for popular hashtags on a regular basis and include them in our

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[74] *Carousels* are posts where you can display up to ten images in one post, with links

captions. This is the ideal venue for us to promote our events as well, mostly webinars for the time being, but real-life events to interact with our community after the epidemic is over. On this site, we can also join travel groups, find new people to connect with, and learn about new trends in the field.

Facebook's main objective is brand awareness by increasing the number of followers and engagement. The best performing posts are Travel News, blogs and events posts while the worst ones are YouTube videos (they are too long) and our webinars playbacks. Longer form videos perform better on YouTube, even if videos work very well on Facebook but only short versions that last up to 5 minutes. We need to have guest influencers write a blog about us and this is the platform to share that blog on so that they can re-share it and we get a bigger audience reach. Prior to this analysis, JoinMyTrip was posting up to seven times a day on Facebook, which was excessive. The ideal number of daily posts is two or three; we shouldn't overwhelm our followers with so much information, knowing that they are already receiving an enormous amount a day.

Twitter shares the same objective as Facebook and on this platform, posting more is okay. We need to post consistently but not too frequently either. A total of 25 to 40 tweets a week (which amounts to four to six tweets a day) is optimal. We need to share photos of beautiful destinations, links to blog posts and Youtube shows, promote our trips, and create polls to get our followers to engage. Memes are a good option for Facebook as well, and we've seen this type of content perform well in the past.

Driving leads and sales is **Instagram**'s main objective, with increasing conversions, website clicks, email signups and so on. We need to introduce descriptive captions on our feed posts that will catch our follower's eye, and increase community engagement. We found a positive response to posts that were centred on a specific TripMate or TripLeader where they write their own caption and introduce themselves and we post it on our account.

In addition to curating the content to each channel, we needed to develop a posting schedule that fits our customer's behaviour. A good social media feed is one that is consistent, interesting and spread out. The posting schedule research is also added in **Appendix 17** as part of the New Social Media Strategy presentation. And the excel sheet that I used every day to keep track of my daily posts is added in **Appendix 18**. It was the place where I would add all of the content to post and the times I decided to post them in. With everything in one place, it was much easier to keep track or find a post published weeks ago.

3.1.2.3 Ensuring a great customer experience

We can identify two camps in the scientific approach to content: businesses that generate content without considering data, and businesses that consider data but ignore the humans behind the numbers. The ideal thing to do is to combine the emotional impact with the data acquired; this way we can make informed decisions and we can optimize our content to shorten our buying cycle and attract as many customers as possible to retain. The first thing we must remember is to build trust among our existing customers as well as new customers that visit our social media pages and subsequently our website. If they don't trust us, they won't buy from us. People have to trust that you are the right business to solve their problem; they're making an investment with us, so there would be consequences if they make the wrong decision. They will assess us based on our marketing content in general, and social media is the front view window. We must convey our message in the most effective manner feasible.

We need to start with our customers' experience, which we briefly saw in Chapter 2 under the market segmentation and consumer behaviour. Client interviews or surveys would be the best possible way to understand their experience. We have a few testimonials from our customers about their trips, but not much about their buying cycle and website usability. Our marketing strategy is customer-focused so this is our main priority, and it was our objective for Q2 and Q3.

There are a few questions we need to ask ourselves: How did the client realize they had a problem? How did they feel about the problem? How did they go about finding a solution? What was this experience like (easy or hard)?

We have to listen to certain things when a customer contacts us with a problem to solve. We need to check for repetition and through-lines, i.e. has this been a problem previously with another customer? If so, it needs to be solved as soon as possible. We would also need to identify the language and tone that they use to describe their problem, as well as the gap between what they think they need and what they really need. Lastly, knowing from which channel their recourse has led them to will aid in understanding how our users prefer to contact us or be contacted. If our users prefer contacting us through direct messaging, we will prioritise improving our social media and WhatsApp messaging to give them the best and fastest way of getting an answer.

All of this can be taken from the Customer Support team, who deal with all of our customers daily and can give us a detailed analysis, which we haven't done yet and this will be our next move.

This will help in creating the right content, with identifying the questions they struggled to answer while they were searching for a solution. For example, we found out that many people did not fully understand how our platform works and all of the perks they can take advantage of when using our service; and that is why we added this task to our OKRs of Q3, which is to <u>educate</u> our users and potential customers of our USPs.

A tool that can help formulate questions more specifically is **answerthepublic.com**. According to their website, it is a "free visual keyword research & content ideas tool. [We can] find out what questions and queries [our] consumers have by getting a free report of what they're searching for in Google."[75]

To analyse the content we sent out and find out if our audience likes it, we can use Google Analytics. To analyse blog content, we need to check two metrics: the time our users spend on a page and the bounce rate to know if people are exploring the rest of our website. As for video content, like

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[75] More information can be found on https://answerthepublic.com/

on Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube, we need to see the average watch time which will help us determine how long our videos should be. Of course, it is also important to keep the video topics relevant and interesting to our customers.

Attracting new customers is definitely a challenge. This is why many small businesses use micro testing in order to assess demand for a certain product. Facebook ads are the fastest and cheapest way to collect a large amount of data that activates audiences because the imagery catches their eye. The advantage is also that our Facebook audience is the biggest in all of our social media channels.

In micro testing, there are four stages: "catchwords", leading angles, headlines and the offer itself.

"Catchwords" (taken from "catchphrase" that has the same meaning) are words to use in an advertisement that will catch the eye of our potential users while they're scrolling on their social media feed. It is the word that brings them to click on the video or the photo and watch or read about our business. We need to know how they identify themselves, what their role is in society (are they a homeowner, a home inspector, a coach?), and we need to know what they love. For instance, actors would generally like to see content about auditions, books, or agents and trainers would be more interested in content about gyms, clients or certifications. Good "catchwords" for JoinMyTrip would be *travel, strangers, like-minded* and *hassle-free*.

Leading angles are the first one or two sentences of our advertisement. It's good to lead with something that will generate an emotional reaction to our content, such as asking a question about their past travel experiences with friends, hoping that the answer would be "not so great" or "didn't go as expected" so that they will check us out and understand that we can solve their travel problems.

Then, the *headlines* are the bold texts of the link that appears under the thumbnail. It is the easiest place to test catchwords because that's where the main content description is going to be and that's what will arouse curiosity in the customer. What we can also do is create identical advertisements that only change the headline and this way we can test as many catchwords as we would like, and use the best performing one for future social media advertisements. The next important tip to remember is to use "Dynamic Creative"; a programmatic advertising tool uses "multiple ad components (such as images, videos, text and calls-to-action) and then combines them in new ways to improve [our] ad

performance", according to Facebook[76]. Common parameters used in this tool are location, weather, time, etc. and these personalised creative variations will have scalable results.

And finally, the *offer* would be the lead magnet, the webinar, the blog, the product in itself, etc. After having correctly identified our audience's problem and their most immediate desire, we need to show them our offer most easily and attractively possible to make them buy our product. However, this stage has already been done and almost perfected by our Product and Tech teams.

3.1.3 Coworking trips

These trips can have different names: Coworking, Remote working, digital nomad life, etc. Merriam-webster defines Coworking as "working in a building where multiple tenants (such as entrepreneurs, start-ups, or nonprofits) rent working space [...] and have the use of communal facilities"[77]. That used to be the case at the beginning of this concept's creation, but it is now more than that, and the trend of working far from home is increasing exponentially since the pandemic and it is a business for the future. That is the main reason the managers decided to focus more on Coworking content and to push our Coworking trips available on our platform. Coworking is exactly what the word suggests: Co (together) and Working. We share living and working spaces with other professionals and explore the area in our spare time. It was exactly what people needed after being forced to stay home for months. According to the European Commission, just 5.4% of employees in the European Union worked remotely, and now that figure can become as high as 88%[78].

Coworking trips were our priority type of trips for Q2 during the pandemic and specifically during lockdowns, when people were not allowed to leave their homes unless for necessities, like food and work if home office was absolutely not possible (like the police, doctors, supermarket employees, etc.; what we call "essential workers").

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[76] More information can be found on https://www.facebook.com/business/help/170372403538781?id=244556379685063
[77] Found on https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/coworking. (Consulted on 24.08.2021)
[78] Davies Pascale. COVID-19: Can remote working make a happy and productive employee?. *Euronews*, 20 April 2021. [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/2Wp1vP0. (Consulted 25.08.2021)

3.1.3.1 An accelerating global trend

According to a study, there will be one billion digital nomads on the planet by 2035[79] and 11.6% of the German labour market reported to sometimes or usually work from home in 2018. This is a very common practice among German employees as I've noticed living here for the past couple of months. In France, working from home is associated with being lazy and not working at all; and the same is true in the Philippines, my second home country. In this regard, Germany is ahead of the curve when compared to the other countries I've lived in previously in my life. Legally, German workers are allowed to work from home two times a week, and it is regarded as a normal, healthy lifestyle; and it also helps with overcrowding at offices.

The Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated this global trend quite rapidly. A global survey[80] made this year showed that 73% of employees want flexible remote work options to stay post-pandemic, and employers also appreciate the positive aspects and would like to retain this hybrid work situation in the future. Forbes has also conducted a survey[81] with over two thousand people who worked remotely and they found that 55% said their "productivity increased while working remotely", 84% listed not having to commute as a top benefit after cost savings (75%).

Although remote working is becoming more popular among the workforce, a study from Time[82] found that a divide between white collar workers and those with hourly on-site jobs like grocery clerks, bus drivers, and delivery people became very visible during the pandemic and that there was a real risk that on-site employees would be favored over remote workers despite the positive results of studies conducted during the lockdowns about working from home. Contrastingly, other studies

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[79] Statista. *Percentage of employed people that can work from home in European countries 2008-2020*, 28.05.2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/38bj5Je. (Consulted 24.08.2021)

[80] Statista. *Global employer and employee hybrid work trends post COVID-19 2021*, 09.04.2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3sQqFSX. (Consulted on 24.08.2021)

[81] Robinson Bryan. Future of work: What the post-pandemic workplace holds for remote workers' careers. *Forbes*, 02.05. 2021. [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3jajcuG. (Consulted on 24.08.2021)

[82] Lipman Joanne. The pandemic revealed how much we hate our jobs. Now we have a chance to reinvent work. *Time*, 1 June 2021. [online]. Available on https://time.com/6051955/work-after-covid-19/. (Consulted on 25.08.2021)

showed that businesses haven't seen great results from their employees' productivity during home office times, and that many companies needed to adjust and increase mental healthcare for their employees entering depression. All these studies are objective to the country, however, so we would need to conduct our own study for our own employees and community in order to find the best results for our business. JoinMyTrip has a fitting feedback strategy and can detect any inadequacies in the work.

3.1.3.2 The benefits of Coworking trips

What we sell is safe travel with strangers. We will begin offering this same travel style here, but all the while working on your main job during the day, sharing ideas with like-minded professionals, and discovering the surrounding areas together after work hours. Remote work became the "new normal", with more than 70% of companies voting that at least 5% of their workforce will remain remote after COVID. Research shows that by 2035, 50% of workers will be freelancers and will want to be more flexible in the location of their job[83]. The benefits of this type of trip are fivefold:

- Networking: being part of a growing community and meeting people from around the world who share the same mindset as you;

- Skill sharing: an exchange of ideas, tips, digital tools and more;

- Team building: sharing a living and working space in a new environment builds a strong connection between team members;

- Boost in motivation: a change of scenery is always a good idea. Being able to combine travel and work is something most people cannot do;

- Boost in creativity and productivity: being surrounded by new "Coworkers" gives a new perspective, boosts creativity, productivity and innovative thinking.

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[83] YouTube. *There will be 1 billion remote workers by 2035 with Pieter Levels*, 25 October 2015 [online]. Available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IYOZ6H0UNk. (Consulted 25.08.2021)

During an internship in Slovenia in 2018, I worked at a Coworking space and witnessed all these benefits being utilized by all of the people that used the facility. This was a more unique though, considering that it was a big space with offices and desks for anyone who wanted to work there for a few hours, days or even as a full-time renter. It was mainly for locals, so it wasn't a trip, but working there for a couple of months, I understood the appeal. Working from home is too isolating and challenging in the sense that there are too many distractions and working where you leisure gets a little depressing. Some people adore this, and can work from home for a long time but most people cannot; they need new environments, new people and a disconnect from work and personal time.

Coworking trips with JoinMyTrip makes it easier for digital nomads to book and plan. First is for the **accommodation**. We make sure to find the right hotel, house, or even better - villas - for our Coworkers. We ensure that there is enough space, amazing value for money and a great location. We've already had a few Coworking trips and two of our TripLeaders offer Coworking trips year-round. Our second guarantee is the **work environment**. We assure the employers that their workers will have a perfect work environment, fast internet and great motivation for their work. The **transportation** is also important in organising trips like these, and we support everyone (colleagues, employees, TripMates) by organising the transportation at the destination. We have a colleague at JoinMyTrip that is an expert at these types of trips and has many tips for all digital nomads trying to do the same thing. She hosted a whole series of YouTube episodes about Coworking on our channel[84]. **Activities** are an important part of Coworking trips, and we provide information about different types of activities to do at a destination, restaurants to not miss as well as connections to other remote workers in their destination. The minimum stay for Remote working trips, at least on our website, is two to four weeks. And many of those Remote workers decided to stay a couple more weeks because they enjoyed it so much. Popular destinations this year for our community of digital nomads were Portugal (Madeira and the Algarve) and Spain (Gran Canaria and Tenerife), both countries having attractive weather.

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[84] YouTube. *How CoWorking improves your life quality*, 17 August 2021 [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/38c1gcO. (Consulted on 28.08.2021)

As for legal aspects, I will be stating the most important things to think about from the German law because we are a German company and Germans are our biggest audience. If the employee is temporarily working remotely from within the European Union, there are no legal challenges if their stay does not exceed three months.

There is also a possibility of getting social insurance at the destination, but only if the stay is prolonged more than three months. German health insurance covers medical expenses within the European Union, and JoinMyTrip offers travel insurance powered by Allianz[85]. Lastly, taxes need to be paid at the destination if the trip exceeds six months.

3.1.3.3 The competition

In the same market, there are already a few companies that exist for remote workers. I will present them briefly in the table below.

Table 12: Similar companies in the remote working market[86]

Coworker	Search, find and reserve shared work space rentals near you in many different countries all around the world	Instagram - 25.2k subscribers Facebook - 70 772 followers
Coliving	Booking platform for Coliving homes and you can rent out your own space as well	Instagram - 4 115 subscribers Facebook - 2 955 followers
Roam	Starting at $500 per week, you gain access to coliving spaces and local communities around the world	Instagram - 908k subscribers Facebook - 630 336 followers
Repeople	Booking platform for Coliving homes and Coworking - specially focused on remote work	Instagram - 2 069 subscribers Facebook - 2 766 followers
Outsite	Platform for Coliving spaces, community, and services designed for remote professionals,	Instagram - 43.7k subscribers Facebook - 20 398 followers

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[85] More information can be found on https://www.joinmytrip.com/en/t/travel-insurance

[86] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

	freelancers and creatives	
Nomad X	Similar to Airbnb but more focused on digital nomads. You can rent or offer your room	Instagram - 2 357 subscribers Facebook - NA
Selina	You can book Coworking spaces, accommodation, and they also offer tours	Instagram - 490k subscribers Facebook - 147 069 followers

There are many companies in this industry and the competition is fierce but their product is targeted to a niche market and ours offers more different services.

To find a Coworking space, fellow travellers and more, people can also join Facebook groups or online forums and find what they're looking for, and those groups are numerous. The difference there is that it lacks security (both financial and general); you are not sure to travel with these people, because they may change their minds and cancel at the last minute and you end up going alone or having to pay the cancellation fee. With JoinMyTrip and some other companies that offer similar products, we offer full refunds in case of cancellations and we offer insurance for all trips. The biggest Coworking groups on Facebook are "Digital Nomads around the world", "Female Digital Nomad group" and "Digital Nomad Entrepreneurs" with 145.9k, 71.5k and 58k members respectively. The first Facebook group is the biggest with around 500 posts per month and it is used for sharing "advice and tips related to living the digital nomad lifestyle"[87]. The second group was "started with the goal to unite, inspire and inform us digital [nomads] that are wandering the globe"[88] and has an active community that posts around 550 times a month. The third biggest group doesn't really post much in the group, with only 17 posts in the last month (July 2021).

There are also paid forums available online, and these are not used as much as the free versions. Nevertheless, we've found four forums from websites listed in the table below.

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[87] More information can be found on https://www.facebook.com/groups/DigitalNomadsAroundTheWorld
[88] More information is found on https://www.facebook.com/groups/1607248466232418/

Location Indie	$49/month $489/year	Instagram - 923 subscribers Facebook - 5 061 followers and 6 affiliated groups
Digital Nomad Community	$57 (one time payment)	No social media
Nomad List	$29.99/month $79/year $99 (one time payment)	Instagram - 12.9k subscribers Facebook - 17 458 followers and 3 affiliated pages
Unsettled	$69/month $149/3 months	Instagram - 48.3k subscribers Facebook - 140 584 followers

3.1.3.4 Digital Nomad Influencers

Now that we've seen the competition in the Coworking business, let's dive into the digital nomad influencer world and find the most popular ones. Influencers are a global movement that inspires good people to develop good business to enable their environment to evolve positively. As the title suggests, influencers train you in the strategy and the language of influence in order to guide you towards professional and personal success. They have the authority, expertise, and relationship with their audience that allow them to influence the purchasing decisions of others, and with 45% of the world's population using social media (3.484 billion people)[90], a lot of these users look up to influencers for advice or tips, or just inspiration.

There are many types of influencers and we can differentiate them by different aspects. *Influencer Marketing Hub* separates them by follower numbers, types of content and level of influence.

Let's start with the follower numbers differentiation. The biggest are the **Mega-influencers** that have a huge follower base on their social media with more than 1 million followers. Some of these influencers are celebrities and others gained their fame through their social media creativity or activities

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[89] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

[90] Geyser Werner. What is an Influencer? - Social Media Influencers defined. *Influencer Marketing Hub*. 17 August 2021 [online]. Available on https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/. (Consulted on 25.08.2021)

(video gaming, fashion, blogging, etc.). **Macro-influencers** have between 40 000 and 1 million followers and are a little more accessible for businesses to partner with. **Micro-influencers** have gained their follower base (consisting of 1 000 to 40 000 followers) through their expertise in a specialist niche. Startups usually choose these types of influencers for the big number of followers without the hassle of a difficult or fussy personality. Then there are **nano-influencers**; these are the newest influencer type, according to the *Influencer Marketing Hub* website. They have a small number of followers (usually less than 1 000) but their advantage is being experts at a very specialised field. These influencers also tend to engage more with their community and respond to any requests or queries their followers have.

The next differentiation of influencers we can make is by types of content. **Bloggers** are the first type and they "have the most authentic and active relationships with their fans". Blogging has been somewhat connected to marketing for a while now, and works very well for businesses. **YouTubers** also have a very big influence; videos are very popular these days. They say images say a thousand words but videos speak more. Especially in this industry of travelling constantly and for a very cheap price, people love to watch videos of others travelling for inspiration, and to see the destination and activities to do before going so that they can organise their stay in the best way possible. Then there are **podcasters**. This type of content is growing very rapidly and these influencers are growing with it; podcast listeners usually inform themselves of this content when they are on their way to work, when they're doing house chores or instead of listening to music.

Then we have different influencers by level of influence. **Celebrities** are the original influencer, and they still hold an important role today. For business, however, celebrities are the last option for influencer marketing because of their price and their unlikeliness of participating. If they aren't experts in a specific field and they're talking about a topic of which they know nothing about, their followers will likely not buy that product.

According to a study by Hootsuite (July 2021)[91], the Philippines has the highest percentage of social media users that follow influencers, with 51.3% of internet users aged 16 to 64 following influencers. Germany is far behind with only 16.3% following influencers, while France is slightly ahead, with 18.8%, compared to the global figure of 21.6%.

The BizDev team at JoinMyTrip is currently on the lookout for an influencer to work with. They've already had a partnered video made with a travel vlogger called MomImFine, but they haven't done much else with him after the first video created. The past month, they've contacted many influencers but haven't had a signed contract yet. This can be an easy way of growing brand awareness on social media, primarily on Instagram and YouTube, where travel photos and videos are the most watched.

We've listed a few digital nomad bloggers that have quite an impact on travel lovers with their content. I will be presenting their social media presence as well as their overall blog traffic. I will be using a free online tool to verify each blog's website traffic called *Ubersuggest*[92]. The indicators I will research are the organic monthly traffic and the Domain Authority score. The latter is a Moz-created search engine ranking score that estimates the likelihood of a website being ranked in the search results pages. In a single DA (Domain Authority) score, many variables are considered, including root domains and the overall number of connections. This number may then be used to compare websites or to monitor a website's "ranking strength" over time.

Wandering Earl is a young traveller who fell in love with discovering all of the world's wonders since his trip to Cambodia in 1999. Since then, he's been going around the world and writing his blog to inspire people to do the same. Wandering Earl receives 2 731 monthly organic visitors and has a DA score of 55 out of 100. The blog is present on Facebook (40 922 followers), Twitter (20 218 followers), YouTube (1.72k subscribers) and Instagram (4 747 subscribers). On each social channel he

[91] Hootsuite. *Digital trends 2021*, July 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.hootsuite.com/pages/digital-trends-2021#c-257216. (Consulted on 26.08.2021)

[92] More information is available on https://neilpatel.com/fr/ubersuggest/

creates different types of content, with YouTube being the biggest audience because of his useful and interesting travel vlogs and videos. He is a macro-influencer and getting him to sign a contract with us would be tough; just getting him to rave about our company for a few minutes would be costly.

Adventure in you is a blog run by two travellers Tom and Anna who create content about holidays, blogging training, guides, tips, inspiration and recommendations. This blog is very successful, with 293 382 organic monthly traffic and a DA score of 51 out of 100. On their blog, they claim that over half a million people visit their blog every month. "100 Best Travel Quotes", "Tropicfeel Review" and "Best Mountain Quotes" are the best blog pages in terms of SEO, suggesting his readers are more interested in travel quotes on his site. They are not on social media, and don't need to be seeing their website traffic, but convincing them to have us as a sponsor for one of their blogs would be very pricey.

Chris the Freelancer is a front-end web developer and content creator living the digital nomad life. According to his website, he assists others in learning to code and achieving location independence. Chris' blog has a DA score of 35 out of 100 and has 2 808 organic monthly visitors. His readers are most interested in his Shopify content, in which he provides tips and tricks about building the app, as well as coworking blogs about best destinations. He is on Instagram (7 647 subscribers), Facebook (3.6k followers), YouTube (82.2k subscribers) and Twitter (1 536 followers). To get him, we would need to request a 'shout out' (where he mentions us on his blog) on his smaller-audience social media channels, where he's classified as a micro-influencer, but his YouTube viewership qualifies him a macro-influencer.

The Blog Abroad is about Glo, an awkward and sassy travel blogger who built a six-figure blog to support her travel lifestyle. She gets 3 085 organic monthly visitors and has a DA score of 46, which is very good. Her content is relatable, instructive, fun and current. The blog with the highest SEO score, for example, is titled "10 Countries with the Hottest Men in the World". With profiles on Twitter (7 890 followers), LinkedIn (over 500 contacts), YouTube (20.3k subscribers), Instagram

(269k subscribers) and Pinterest (2.1k followers), she is the most present on social media in general. Glo is unquestionably a macro-influencer who will be difficult to sign.

Goats on the Road is a blog created by Nick and Dariece, who help people prepare and save up for travel and teach people how to work remotely. 84 905 people organically visit their blog monthly and they have a DA score of 54. They are on Facebook (66k followers), Twitter (61 186 followers), Instagram (26.3k subscribers), YouTube (18.8k subscribers) and Pinterest (22 723 followers). These macro-influencers use their different social media channels very well and diversify the travel content everywhere.

Explorista is the largest female digital nomad movement in the world, according to Milou's website. She receives 1 111 organic monthly traffic and 34 as a DA score. Her best performing blogs in terms of SEO are tips and travel inspiration blogs. She's present on Facebook (1 476 followers), Instagram (8 949 subscribers), Pinterest (8 641 followers), Twitter (3 620 followers) and YouTube (437 subscribers). She's a micro-influencer but can maybe be a good fit for JoinMyTrip.

Never Ending Voyage is a blog about travel tips from a digital nomad couple, Simon and Erin. Their blog has 212 053 organic monthly traffic and 55 as a DA score. They have very inspirational content and great tips for travellers. They are on Facebook (13 022 followers), Twitter (19 008 followers), Instagram (4 610 subscribers), Pinterest (11 606 followers) and Flipboard (240 followers. They keep the same profile picture for all of their social media, which makes it easier for people to recognise them on different platforms. They are micro-influencers who we can most probably get along with.

Jessie on a journey is basically a travel guide for all who want to explore the world in a different way. HEr website has 67 959 organic monthly traffic and 54 for a DA score. Her best performing blogs in terms of SEO are travel stories, which her readers enjoy the most. She's present on Facebook (6 256 followers), Instagram (30.3k subscribers), Pinterest (8 872 followers), YouTube (988

subscribers) and Twitter (13 057 followers). Her content is also deeply rooted in photography for distinct landscapes. She can be categorised as a macro or a micro-influencer, and it's difficult to calculate her blog's cost.

Alajode is a responsible travel blog and Jodie, the author and creator, is a photographer as well. The organic monthly traffic is 12 059 and the DA score is 38. She's available on Facebook (1.7k followers), Twitter (5 909 followers), Pinterest (2 801 followers), Instagram (11.8k subscribers) and YouTube (28.6k subscribers). She has a very big follower base and will be expensive to work with, but would have been very interesting and useful because of her eco-friendly travel style which matches JoinMyTrip.

The last one is *Hobo with a laptop*, a resource for people who want to learn how to start blogging and travelling, according to the website. They receive 20 365 organic monthly traffic and 42 as a DA score. Their best performing blogs are ones for digital nomads and tips on how to make money online and travel full-time. They seemingly are not on social media, but would be very effective for our promotion on their blog.

To end this sub chapter, I will enumerate the ten best destinations for Coworking with date from our community and from some research: Lisbon, Berlin, Chiang Mai, Bali, Las Palmas (Spain), Budapest, Prague, Playa Del Carmen (Mexico), Medellin, Sofia (Bulgaria).

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 SWOT

This SWOT analysis for JoinMyTrip will help us identify the possible threats to look out for and the weaknesses we currently have and improve on these. Our strengths are plentiful: we have lower

trip prices than those of travel agencies and OTAs and we have a large selection of very unique experiences with the possibility of flexibility in dates. A positive point for our company is also that the itineraries are created by real travellers who are open-minded, who love travelling and who enjoy discovering new places and meeting new people.

Although this is a strong point, our service does rely quite heavily on the quality of our TripLeaders. We do have a rigorous verification process in place, but not everything can be predicted and some TripLeaders may have the wrong motivations, which we will only discover once the trip has already begun by messages from unhappy TripMates. This has not occurred often, though. All of our TripLeaders have received positive feedback and our TripMates are always satisfied. Because we are such a new company, we do not have the reach that we are aiming for and this "weak" community can be a turnoff for some people. As we analysed in the previous Chapters, our target audience places a high value on big companies that have many positive reviews and testimonials from people who have used their product or received their service. The internet has a huge impact on Millennials and Generation Z, which is why we should start actively targeting Baby Boomers next, they could be a very promising clientele. In addition to all of this, JoinMyTrip has limited resources, being a startup, and we cannot thrive as much without the manpower and the funds in particular.

Our startup has a lot of potential as well. There are no major companies in our exact field but the competition is increasing, and we must be cautious of this threat and keep an eye on it. Following the pandemic, the world will travel again, perhaps more so, to make up for lost time. We can leverage the fact that solo travellers are becoming more common in our message by convincing them that travelling in a group is even better. Furthermore, digitalisation has been booming in recent years as well as the growing demand for unique experiences. Our efforts in improving our website and blogs will only benefit us in the long run. The only thing we should aim to improve on is the quantity of TripLeaders we have so that the rising demand matches the rising supply.

Throughout my internship, we've received a few litigation threats, and they were primarily regarding image licensing that our TripLeaders use on their trip description page. We always advise them to use license-free images from Unsplash.com or Pixabay.com, but some may forget. In order to respond to this rising threat that cost us a lot of money in the past, we have included a section in our contracts about the use of images on our website. In the same way, cyber-attacks are a genuine menace and can cause us a lot of loss, particularly data theft. Thus we must ensure that our passwords are safe and secure; and that we change them every few months. Especially when JoinMyTrip recruits so many new students every several months. Finally, some unexpected incidents can happen involving members' security during, before or after trips. We had one case where a TripMate contacted us during her holiday with other members of our community and she stated that another TripMate in the group was being overly grabby and aggressive with her in the villa, and tried to force her down. Of course, we reported his profile, deleted and blocked him across all of our platforms.

Picture 10: SWOT analysis of JoinMyTrip[93]
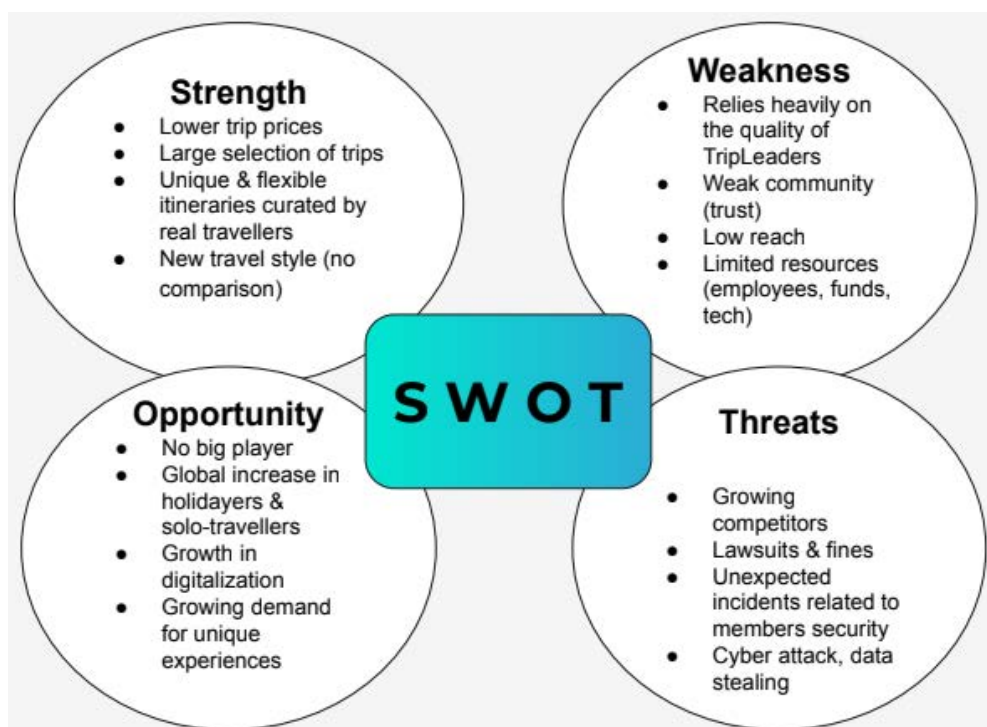
3.2.2 Social channels best practices

Facebook is our biggest social media channel which means it is the channel with the biggest impact and the most opportunity. Therefore, I will enumerate the best performing posts of our best month yet: June. The post that received the largest reach (2.1k users instead of our usual hundreds) was a Covid-19 news post from June 24th. We published these posts daily but this one performed particularly well with the German audience (on Facebook we publish two of the same post, one in English and one in German) and it was about quarantine in Iceland. During that time, Germans as well as the JoinMyTrip team were obsessed with Iceland as a travel destination and everyone wanted to go there, blogs were being written about anything and everything Iceland and we hosted webinars about the destination. Posts related to Covid-19 have been well-received, as they appear multiple times in our best performing list.

The second best performing post is a 'Destination of the Day' Facebook post that we would publish weekly. It is about a specific destination, like a monument or a lake, with a short description about the area and a sentence about the travel restrictions to get there at the time. This particular post was about the Aescher Guesthouse in the Swiss Alps, perched at around 1 500 meters high up the mountain and to get there, you need to hike up a bit but it is worth it because it has an unbelievable view. The photo I used (which I took from Unsplash) was probably what attracted people to the post in the first place, and we got a couple of clicks from it too, which linked to a blog about Switzerland and a trip to the beautiful country. Once again, this was the German post, and it reached 2 065 people. Hashtags were also probably helpful in reaching new people. I used the hashtag #DestinationOfTheDay which I noticed a few weeks before and thought that this would be a good series to publish on our account, and I was right. It increased our organic reach. These posts appear the most times in our list.

Other types of content that appeared just once on this short list are:

- *A trip pin*: an image promoting a specific trip on our website, some examples are added in **Appendix 6** and the post can be found on https://bit.ly/3kLU6SB;
- *A Top Destinations video*: a YouTube video[94] created from blogs, meaning that we take a blog containing a list, create a video showcasing that list and sharing it on social media;
- *A Travel News video* about borders reopening and vaccines in Cuba[95];
- *A Travel Forum promotion*[96]: a post where we remind our followers about our travel forum and encourage them to sign up and use it.

A study by Hootsuite (July 2021) depicts which platforms users go to most for consuming news content and the results were 44% on Facebook and 29% on YouTube. We publish a Travel News video everyday of the working week and we post it on Facebook as well as a Covid-19 post, so we are on the right track. Surprisingly, Twitter is only in fifth place behind WhatsApp and Instagram with 13% of people saying they go on this platform to discover news content.

We use WhatsApp to contact our TripLeaders through our Customer Support department, and with 2 billion monthly active users around the world, it is a great source of communication. Furthermore, 50 million of those active users are users of WhatsApp Business. Another potentially advantageous social media channel that we are not using is Reddit. With 52 million active daily users per day, with a majority of male users (61.8%), Reddit can be a gold mine if used correctly. This platform is mostly used for storytelling and connecting with different communities. It is a text-based-only platform and we can use this to our advantage and bring a new audience to our website.

The Hootsuite study also mentions the percentage of global internet users aged 16 to 64 who chose the features that would increase their likelihood of buying a product. The first feature is free

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[94] The video can be found on https://bit.ly/3DIreDl
[95] The post can be found on https://bit.ly/38DLfN0
[96] The post can be found on https://bit.ly/3gXVUqy

delivery (51.1%), then coupons and discounts (39.6%), reviews from other customers (33.1%), easy online checkout process (28.6%) and loyalty points (25.9%). Likes and good comments on social media comes after, with 21.4% of people saying this will incentivise them to buy a product.

According to the same study, 26.9% of internet users discover a brand through social media advertisements. This is of course a potential way of reaching more people, but this paper is about organic reach.

3.2.2.1 Community Engagement strategy

Another critical task is community engagement. It does not seem like it, but this also needs a strategy focus. According to Hubspot[97],

> "Community management is the process of building an authentic community among a business's customers, employees, and partners through various types of interaction. It's how a brand uses opportunities (in person and online) to interact with their audience to create a network in which they can connect, share, and grow."

To better organise our engagements, we need to make a list of everyone with whom we are interacting. We need to engage with existing users (TripLeaders and TripMates), potential users (TripLeaders and TripMates), followers, people who don't know who we are yet and employees as well as investors and team members to strengthen the bond with our stakeholders. There are different avenues in Community Engagement which are Product, Support, Marketing and Sales. Because our community is made up of our best customers, our approach to product development must be customer-centric. Sometimes users ask questions on our social media regarding an issue they are having, and this should be the responsibility of our department rather than Customer Support, who is already overburdened. "Community and marketing should work in tandem to ensure a cohesive message is being shared across all channels where you speak to existing community members"

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[97] Hubspot. *The Ultimate Guide to Community Engagement* [online]. Available on https://bit.ly/3BJaCtz. (Consulted on 03.09.2021)

(Hubspot, 2021). Marketing generates the material that our audience consumes firsthand, therefore our content must speak to our ideal customer. Thus, our community is more trusting and continues to use our product.

We need to create a social movement. The lesson is that the more opportunities members have for an active dialogue or exchange, the more likely they are to continue to participate. We need to show people that JoinMyTrip is a safe place where they can communicate openly with us and give them a chance to communicate amongst each other. Letting them know that we are here for them gives us the image that we are more than just another company. We must become a democratic brand whereby users, employees and everyone in between can have a say, and we are moving in the right direction. We are not here to force people to buy from us, but to encourage them by educating them about us.

There are several ways to monitor this, including UTM links that track how many people click on our links, conversions that show if our engagement leads to sales or registrations, retention that shows how long they stay on the platform, and overall general statistics from social media channels. Then we can also measure it on the reply rate on WhatsApp as well as the reviews we receive on TrustPilot, social media and our website.

In order to trick the algorithm on Instagram, we need to establish a guide for the team to follow. If our team shares the content, likes and comments on our posts and stories, the platform will share it with more people and prospective followers. We can also start Instagram live sessions to connect even more with our customers and answer their queries. Reacting to stories we are tagged in and repost them is not even a question, we need to support them and they will support us back. We need to change the way that we currently comment on others' posts by asking questions and starting a conversation in the comment section and driving them to our website. Our Instagram feed post captions must also initiate a conversation with a question or a game such as the hashtag #WouldYouRather, which people enjoy. Our users need a reason to answer or comment on our posts.

According to a study by Hootsuite (2021), the average engagement rate for an Instagram account is 0.82% (it is 0.81% for photo posts, 0.61% for video posts and 1.01% for carousel posts). We are on the right track because our Instagram engagement rate is at 1.9% and our next goal is to reach 2.5% or 3%.

We need to use our own pictures on Twitter; when we retweet other pictures, our brand gets lost when the next person retweets it. If the content matches, we need to reply with links to our blogs or other pages on our website. On Twitter, creating polls, quizzes and contests also performs well and we should use that.

Pinterest does not leave much for conversations on the platform, but we can directly message accounts, share their pins, like, save and be active by commenting on their pins.

On Facebook, we have six groups where we should post relevant content on each one and invite them to like, comment and share it. What we can also do is to post about JoinMyTrip on other Facebook groups. In addition, we have noticed in the past that 'memes' (an amusing and entertaining picture or video) also perform well on Facebook, which is where people search for entertainment and news.

Previously we have seen that our Facebook page receives 0.96% of engagements, which we found to be very low; our target was 2%. However, according to a study by Hootsuite (July 2021), the average engagement rate of a Facebook account is 0.11% (with 0.05% for link posts, 0.16% for photo posts and 0.13% for video posts). We are higher than the benchmark, and this will help us reach a larger audience. The study also stated the average rate by page size: a page with less than 10 000 followers receives 0.39% of engagements, still lower than our rate.

Engagement on Youtube is also a necessity. We need to search for travel-related videos and comment under them, share videos on private channels and share video links with our friends and family. We do need to be cautious with comments on others' videos as the YouTube algorithm depreciates any account that shows any sign of "spamming".

We need more professional content on LinkedIn and engage with other professionals of the industry. An idea we had thought of was to put Niels on the live story function and chat to our followers there. Growing our connections on our LinkedIn page can be very advantageous as well, since new connections with other travel businesses can be made.

3.2.3 Marketing Mix

The principle of the marketing mix is used as a tool to adjust certain variables to find the optimum combination of the 4Ps (product, price, place et promotion) in order to meet demand and remain competitive, or even to discern an irrefutable comparative advantage (Porter, 1985). Although the 4Ps (E. Jerome McCarthy, 1960) are interesting to study, it is a marketing mix concept that is too "product" oriented, therefore we will rely on the 4Ps' variant for this thesis: the more "customer" oriented 4Cs (Robert Lauterborn, 1990).

The first component is the **Consumer wants and needs** *(corresponding to 'Product' in the 4Ps)*. This is part of the 'Awareness' phase in the consumer journey that we have previously seen in Chapter 2. The challenge here is to know what the customers' expectations are, and the market segmentation and consumer behaviour helps us identify that. Our target client wants a good service at a good price. This is exactly what we offer: the flexibility of choosing the stops you want to go to at a destination, and the people you want to go with. Travelling in groups with a Tour Operator has a different effect because you do not choose your travel companions and you do not choose where you are all going. It is a pre-planned, non-modifiable trip. Millennials (our main target market) are a very critical and demanding customer, they are very hard to please. The main reason is their taste for semi-luxury at low prices. They are looking for personalized products that are tailor-made according to their desires of the moment. Loyalty is rare among this target group and they may turn away from a brand that is too persistent, which is why we are very careful with our content, and why we are growing our brand through organic posts.

The second component is the **Cost to satisfy** *(corresponding to 'Price' in the 4Ps)*. The expert in Product and Digital Marketing Frederic Canevet wrote in an article published in 2016 "We no longer calculate a fair price on its costs, margins, competition... but on what the customer is willing to pay." This is a difficult factor to satisfy on account of the fact that our prices are completely reliant on our TripLeaders. If they price a trip too high, we would have to ask them to change it with another proposition and arguments in favor of the cheaper price. Assuming they don't wish to modify the price, we have no power.

The third component of the 4Cs is the **Convenience to buy** *(corresponding to 'Place' in the 4Ps)*. The customer journey is a very important element for all companies, as we observed in Chapter 2. The place or the way the customer buys the product is not the only factor to take into account. It is also important to master the elements of the customer journey before the purchase, i.e. the search for information and the inquiry requests. Our technical and product teams have worked very hard in the past few months to make the website's usability the smoothest and clearest. Our only technical difficulties were the payment system failure messages we've received from TripMates who wanted to pay for their trip on the platform but it didn't operate as expected. The current payment system we use is Stripe, but we are working on getting PayPal on the website to ease our customers' minds, as it is more well-known than Stripe.

The last component is **Communication** *(corresponding to 'Promotion' in the 4Ps)*. This is the approach taken to attract potential customers and can include messages (or story telling) shared on networks with the help of promotional tools. The goal of this component is to touch the consumer by creating an emotion in order to arouse his interest in the brand. What better way to create emotion than with a story? We need to use the story as a vehicle for information. Today, with the multitude of tourism providers on the internet, the customer has a lot of choice and can choose to spend his money in a company for several reasons (price, quality, service, etc.). In the words of Frederic Canevet, *"Internet a créé un hyper choix, une hyper concurrence (les concurrents ne sont qu'à 1 clic), et une hyper*

rapidité" (2016), which, translated in English means that the internet has given consumers an abundance of choice and businesses an abundance of competition, as well as a fast-track behaviour. A reality that continues to increase. The challenge for an online trip booking platform is to be present and active on the main social networks but not to overload customers with emails, promotional ads or unnecessary posts on its news feed. Too much communication is not good communication. Our target customer is present mostly on Facebook and Instagram, so a strong focus on these two networks would be a good start for communication, which we are already doing.

3.2.4 Customer satisfaction

La satisfaction est « un état psychologique, postérieur à l'achat et relatif »

(Evrard, 1993)

We know our target customer pretty well at this point, but that is not the end of the tunnel. The next step is how to best satisfy that customer. This is a constant challenge, knowing that you always have to diversify the experiences of customers who usually don't want to make the same visits twice. In this case, having various travel destination offers is a very strong asset. This is something we need to work on for the development of the company; but we would have to gain new users on our platform and we would need our TripLeaders to constantly post new trips. Kotler and Keller (2008, p.80) state that satisfaction is "determined by the degree to which a person is happy or disappointed after observing the performance of a product compared to his or her expectations."[98] Our goal is to satisfy the customer by offering a service that meets their expectations. This will either make them loyal to our platform or benefit from positive word-of-mouth communication and thus attract more travellers. The more satisfied the customer is, the more they will talk about it. However, the customer will not especially share his experience if it was just "satisfactory" or "normal". If the perceived quality of the tour is higher than the expected quality, then we will get high satisfaction. Similarly, if the

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[98] Translated from the French version by Kotler P., and Keller K. *Marketing Management*. 12th ed. Pearson Education Ltd, 2008.

customer is dissatisfied, they will share their dissatisfaction and write a negative review on social media. Millennials are the most difficult customers to satisfy; the main reason is their taste for semi-luxury at low prices.

In order to best measure customer satisfaction, we can use complementary models. Indeed, we must use several models because one will not be sufficient. According to Thomassen's model (2003) the factors "word of mouth", "personal needs", "previous experiences" and "marketing and public relations" determine the needs and expectations of customers. This comparison between experiences and expectations assesses the level of customer satisfaction. This model "reveals how satisfied customers of Company X are and what improvements are needed" (Bas Swaen, 2016).

On the other hand, Richard Oliver (1980) studies satisfaction with a dominant model that he calls The Expectation Nonconfirmation Model. It is a comparison between pre-purchase customer expectations and post-purchase outcome. Three levels of performance can be derived from this model: fair, ideal or expected. The fundamental concepts of this Oliver model are comparison (S), pre-transaction expectations (A) and perceived product performance (P). Non-confirmation corresponds to the comparison between P and A and satisfaction is obtained by a positive non-confirmation (P-A > 0).

Westbrook (1980) studies customer satisfaction through emotions and opinions. He created a "D-T" or "Delighted-Terrible" scale to measure the degree of contentment or dissatisfaction. In this list: Delighted - Pleased - Mostly pleased - Mixed - Mostly dissatisfied - Not pleased - Angry (Regany, 2013).

A satisfaction questionnaire should be created that includes these three models and measures customer satisfaction under cognitive (Oliver, Thomassen) and affective (Westbrook) factors and sent to our users who are back from their trip with JoinMyTrip. After many answers, a simple NPS (Net Promoter Score) will be enough to measure the satisfaction of future customers. This will work great for our returning customers, and the ones who gave us great reviews in the past.

We can further analyse the company's future with the help of the Ansoff Matrix. In 1957, the Ansoff Matrix was originally published in the prestigious Harvard Business Review. In his essay "Diversification Strategies," American-Russian professor Igor Ansoff, a pioneer in strategic management, offers a technique to be utilised by decision-makers who want to analyse the prospects of growing their firm. We will use the Ansoff Matrix because it is a simple tool to build and execute, the approach incorporates the concept of risk into the decision-making process, and the table provides visual assistance, making it accessible to a maximum number of individuals. The Ansoff Matrix is built around two components: the products and the market, as well as the novelty factor. We can observe in the table that four development routes arise.

The first is Market Penetration. This strategy emerges when a company proposes a traditional offer in an existing market. The amount of risk that can be taken is fairly limited. The approach entails improving the company's present market position by boosting sales and/or the market share of existing products. To do this, the firm can employ several levers, such as adjusting its prices, lowering its manufacturing costs, using new marketing tactics to reach a greater number of consumers, and so on. We will use more social media advertisements to reach a larger number of people, but we will make certain that the message reaches the targeted age group. Discounts and freebies are always popular with the younger generations (Generation Z and Millennials), and we will continue to provide them with the help of our partners. Lately, we had a new partnership with IcelandAir who agreed to give out four 500€ vouchers to use on IcelandAir.com. Our community was overjoyed and excited, and the four winners were very grateful. These types of freebies give us a very positive light. In order to reach even more people, we can also make our loyalty program a reality. Not only will this keep our existing customers coming back, but will also attract new customers.

A Product Development plan is used when a firm decides to introduce a new product in an existing market. The goal is to reach out to both existing and new consumers by introducing a new

service. The new product might be a version of an existing model that has been modified or enhanced (new choices, new forms, new colours), or it could be an entirely new product. We were considering using our existing partnerships to add a new feature to our website, which would allow users to book flights and/or rent a car. This would increase our revenues and allow us to make better use of our collaborations. Another suggestion is a travel planner on the website. The user can select a destination, type of trip (guided, team trip, coworking trip) and style (beach, nature, culture, wellness, party, sport, food, etc.), dates, pricing, and the planner will recommend an itinerary. This requires work, though, because we will first need to create all these different itineraries for various destinations. Finally, events could be a good new product to propose, starting as a free meetup and then, as it grows, make it a paid admission event.

The Market Development strategy entails increasing the firm's market, i.e. selling existing items in markets where the company is not yet present. It might be launching a current product in a new geographical location, choosing a new distribution channel, or addressing a new target. We will focus on expanding our services to the rest of Europe, start targeting Asian markets, as well as baby boomers. Mostly ignored by digital marketers, baby boomers are actually a very promising market. According to a report by Hootsuite (2021)[99], 70% of internet users aged 55 to 64 say they've purchased something online in the past month, and 37% are planning to do so more regularly when the pandemic is over. Because they are very active on Facebook and we have just launched our Facebook shop, this is an excellent moment to target them. Because our webinar attendees are primarily Generation X and baby boomers, we can begin marketing our business there and urge them to visit our page and show their friends, or even better, post it on their social media.

Diversification is the fourth approach in the Ansoff matrix. This is the riskiest method since it entails introducing a new product into a new market. If implemented correctly, this strategy should allow the company to reach more customers and boost revenues. An online shop with travel products was in the works before the third wave of the pandemic hit Europe. We created the landing page and

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[99] Hootsuite. *Social trends 2021*, July 2021 [online]. Available on https://www.hootsuite.com/pages/social-trends-2021. (Consulted on 31.08.2021)

added a few products such as backpacks, socks, goggles, flashlights, and so on and called it "Travel Essentials" after a YouTube show that a former colleague hosted in our account. We sadly had to put our effort on hold due to a lack of funds and a lack of employees. Similarly, our Marketing Manager had the idea to make an Amazon e-commerce business as well but this fell through.

Table 14: Ansoff matrix analysis of JoinMyTrip[100]

Markets	Existing	**Market Penetration** - Social media advertisements - Discounts - Giveaways with partnership - Loyalty program	**Product Development** - Flight bookings (partnership) - Trip planner - Car rentals (partnership) - Events / meetups for travellers
	New	**Market Development** - Europe (untapped markets) - Asia - Baby boomers	**Diversification** - Online shop with travel products - Amazon e-commerce business
		Existing	New
		Products	

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[100] *Source: Emilie Ausseil, 2021*

Conclusion of chapter 3

To ensure that the right digital infrastructure is being used, we must first understand what each channel is used for based on our audience's behaviour. For instance, Instagram is for User-Generated Content (UGC), Facebook is for community relationships, Twitter is for engagement, LinkedIn is for business-related information, and so on. JoinMyTrip's prior strategy was to share whatever we created everywhere, which was not ideal. Following extensive research and analysis from social media, the new strategy aligns the content with the business model and creates quality posts curated for each social channel. The personification of the brand is also a component of the new content strategy, in which the Community Engagement department is established, increases in significance, and develops a real engagement strategy to maintain a relationship with our followers. With the market benchmark of a monthly growing audience on Facebook of 1.6%, and us having increased that rate from 0.1% in April to 4% in June, I believe we met and exceeded our goal.

More than just having a large follower base on social media, it is important to keep our customers happy and satisfied with our service. If a brand listens to its customers and makes them feel valuable, such customers are more likely to become advocates for that brand. According to the 4Cs of the Marketing Mix (Robert Lauterborn, 1990), which is more customer-oriented, we must understand the customer's expectations, satisfy the cost to those expectations, simplify the purchase process as much as possible, and communicate our product as effectively as possible.

The Coworking trend grew more popular during the Covid-19 crisis; we took advantage of this by focusing on generating content specifically related to it and urging our TripLeaders to try it out as well. We believed that by doing so, and analysing the company's SWOT, we would be able to overcome our weaknesses and the threats that had arisen in recent years. Using the Ansoff matrix, we discovered that improving our product and diversifying our offer may yield the same, if not better, outcomes.

General conclusion

For a long time, leisure travel was an activity reserved for the wealthy, but with the advent of globalisation, it has gradually evolved into something that everybody can enjoy. However, mass tourism has become a concern and sustainability is now a growing trend. And we noticed this even more during the Coronavirus pandemic when lockdowns occurred all over the world and cities that were usually bustling with tourists became ghost towns. As a result, the industry lost billions of dollars, and each country decided on its own measures to support domestic tourism as part of the recovery measures related to the Covid-19 crisis. Countries launched digital campaigns and projects to encourage their citizens to travel within the nation, such as France encouraging French people to discover their own country with the hashtag #JeDécouvrelaFrance, which has now more than a thousand posts on Instagram. Other countries opted to provide a voucher or coupon given to their citizens to spend on accommodation.

As we can see, tourism is in **transition**. The pandemic led to changes in the tourism industry, including decreased visits as individuals avoided being in crowds. This has demonstrated that there is a concern in the management of flows and that the vulnerability of tourism demonstrates that movement is difficult in an epidemic as we are now living. Excessive reliance on tourism is a major issue; the territories that suffered the most were those that relied entirely on tourism and foreigners' spending on their territory. The regions that have "survived" the pandemic are those that had tourism as a *complementary* activity. Tourism used to be based on the idea that the more you sell, the more you prosper, and that mass tourism demonstrates your popularity. However, for the tourism of tomorrow, it will be necessary to control the flow of tourists since it is now consumers' as well as countries' expectations. Tourism must abandon the "tourist industry" concept in which we generate the most production for the maximum of clients. That said, this will compel us to limit and, as a result, determine who may and may not come into the country. JoinMyTrip has an advantage to this issue,

and it is the fact that we offer trips for small groups and free travel insurance that covers you along the whole vacation.

The future of tourism will be comprised of sustainable travel and digitisation. These two concepts are currently in place, but they will become much more important especially once the pandemic is over. People will want to travel again, maybe more, but their travelling requirements will change, such as cancellation policies and sustainable options. In order to prepare for this, travel companies need to develop a customer-focused marketing strategy (similar to what we did during my internship) with a segmentation of our target audiences, an analysis of our consumer's behaviour, and an analysis of our competition. With this information, we can devise a solid plan of action centreed on social media growth.

Why is social media so important? These days, over 60% of the global population is active on social media and it's the only place where we can reach a larger audience organically. That's the first step: a strategic plan. The second step, which is tactical, will be about experimenting with the different approaches we adopted and the third step is to analyse the results and optimise a final strategy. According to my analysis, our current social media has sub-par engagement since there are too many posts. Conversions were not being generated via social media, and this needed to change. Therefore the new Community Engagement team alongside the Social Media team decided to collaborate and found that personification was the key: a brand that speaks to its customers in a way that shows people that we are not just a business. Maintaining a good relationship with our customers, as well as our stakeholders was of the utmost importance. JoinMyTrip is more than just a brand, it's its employees and its community, which is why the recruiting process is very long and arduous because they are searching for the perfect candidate that will represent the company's identity to the world. I had five interviews with three different employees and the CEO, as well as homework.

We need to show that we are great leaders so that our community believes they can be too. How do we do that? We tell them how to become one. We are all great leaders when:

- We innovate: creative and experimental, we regularly challenge the status quo, lead with questions and navigate through ambiguity;

- We facilitate trust: we build meaningful relationships and treat others respectfully by listening attentively and communicating openly and transparently;

- We put people first: a great leader cares about everyone, builds confidence within the team and embraces diversity;

- We drive to succeed: we are proactive, never done learning and always looking for new ideas. We are results-driven;

- We are high performers: we receive and give feedback, we reinforce positive behaviour and are open to change.

This is true for our customers but is even more true for our employees. JoinMyTrip's business model also stands on giving employees the freedom to do what they do best. They will take on their responsibilities in the manner that they see fit. This way, they can grow in a personal (developing soft skills) and professional manner. Professionally, they will gain practical experience in many areas and move up the ladder quickly and confidently. The company's culture is driven by passion; every colleague knows why they are here and are eager to push the company forward as hard as possible. This passion will then be transferred to our customers, who will feel the same support.

Now, back to social media. The audit revealed that our owned content influences our earned content. Our community engages with our posts, and we receive a lot of impressions and reach as a result of the new strategy we adopted after the analysis. We recognised and exploited the best practices to optimise JoinMyTrip's online distribution channels. The results demonstrated it: more impressions, more conversions, more engagement, which are the three most important metrics to increase in order to grow our business online. By identifying our threats and weaknesses, as well as adopting a methodology that includes the notion of risk into the decision-making process, the SWOT and Ansoff matrix analyses also assisted us in defining the ideal content strategy.

Although I improved JoinMyTrip's social media presence and quality, it did not correspond to my primary aim, which was community engagement. We did acquire a lot more followers, website traffic, and sales (we had our best and worst month ever in regards to sales within two months), but there is no JoinMyTrip without community. The brand is all about connecting people, not just our customers but also our employees. The happier the employee, the happier the client, and online reviews will tell you that. My internship ended a month sooner than planned (due to a lack of funding), at a key moment when the results were improving and we might develop an even stronger Community Engagement approach, and I was frustrated to not be able to continue my work. They were too ambitious during the pandemic and recruited too many interns at a time of financial instability. As optimistic as they were, the global health situation was not on their side. Nevertheless, I had a great experience working for this company, I learned a lot about social media and how working as a team can be very rewarding. What they must keep in mind is that they should stay active on social media to show their community that despite the difficult circumstances, they still exist, they still care and they are here to fight.

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Table of Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisational chart

Management	Strategy Culture FI / CO	Investor Relations HR	Niels	Akshaya Chloe
Operations	Manage Trips Personal Com. Customer Service	Transactional Com. Policies	Guillermo (Will)	Alexandra Stella Niels Akshaya
Marketing	Performance SEO Email-Marketing	CRM Social Media Community Mngt	Guillermo (Will)	Mariellen Stella Sheny Alexandra Tasneem Emilie Zeyna Jasmine Valeska Kira
Biz Dev	Partnerships CoLearning	LDEs CoWorking	Anna	Robin Akshaya Juliana Bechara
Product and Tech	Frontend Backend UX	Q&A UI	Lisa	Lisa Sebastian Bair Dzmitry Vishnu Sergey Eduardo Kristina Khodor

Appendix 3.A: Community Engagement & Social Media OKRs

KR1 - Achieve 90 Trip Bookings in Q2 (30 per Month)

- Develop and deploy a system to insert/spread the number of shared UTM links for bookings in a regular and meaningful way
    - To specific trips/search a trip page
    - Communication templates of responses to embed links
    - Create document with different steps

- Increase reach and brand awareness on our social media to increase number of bookings by developing:
    - Clubhouse rooms
    - Twitter Games

- Create Loyalty Programs for TripMates
  - If you book X trips within X years you get a prize
  - Points, discounts etc.

- Implementing and launching Facebook Shop
  - With trips available on the website
  - Automate data feed
  - Create placement
  - Promote FB shop
  - Transfer Facebook Shop into Instagram Shop
  - Create & implement new posting schedule (blogs, organic, trips)

KR2 - Achieve 79 Trips Published in Q2 (26 per Month)

- Community Events → offline

- Create Loyalty Programs for TripLeaders
  - If you plan X trips in X Years you get a prize

- Research and collect user behaviour on what type of current and reactionary posts will spark a debate and increase reach
  - Research on our own users
  - Using our users to get info on what they engage

- Create Instagram hashtag trend
  - Co-TripLeader

Appendix 3.B: Perdoo page
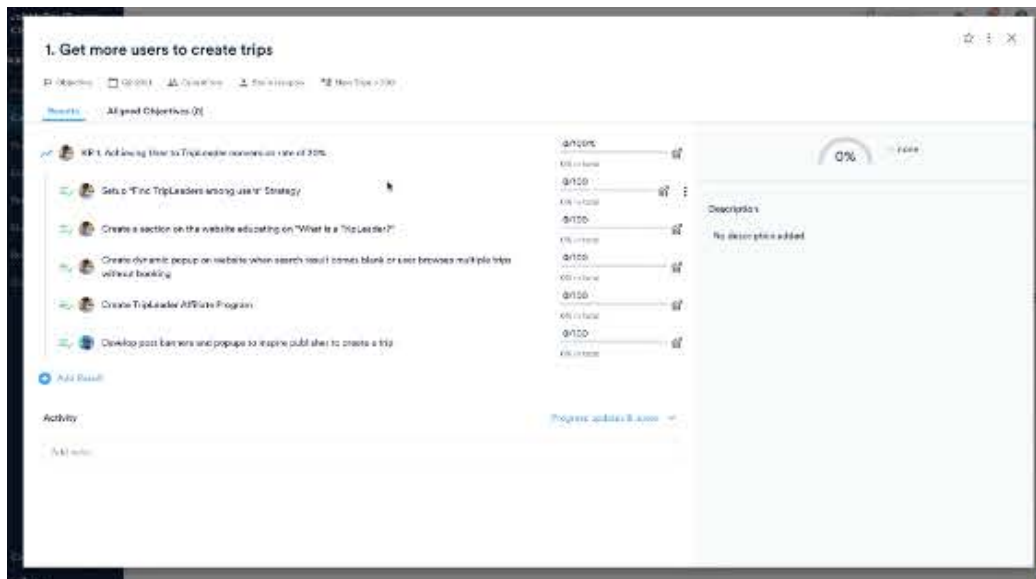
Laura ✓   10 ♥

Trip Offline You have taken this trip offline and will not receive any further inquiries.

SHOW ORIGINAL translated by Google

This description was automatically translated from German using Google Translate and may not be completely accurate.

TANZANIA 2 WEEKS

Kilimanjaro Lemosho Route + Safari

01 SEP 21 ~ 15 SEP 21 ⤭ FLEXIBLE

💬 **Team Trip**
Laura has a game plan, but will incorporate ideas from the TripMates that join.

🕐 15 days   👥 2 - 6 Mates   🌐 1 country   📍 1 stops

6 TripMates are interested   MANAGE

Cost per TripMate   €2,484 ⓘ

Hello,

I am planning a Kilimanjaro ascent via the Lemosho Route (8 days) with subsequent safari (tbd 3 or 4 days) for September 2021. Since the ascent on 9.9. should take place (my birthday), I will book an individual appointment through a trustworthy, local provider who is also a member of the Kilimanjaro Porters Association. I am happy to open the appointment for other mountain enthusiasts. The cost of climbing Kilimanjaro is reduced depending on the number of passengers. The costs for the safari are also reduced for a group trip, but rather slightly. That is why it is not a must to also register for this.

Write to me if you are fundamentally interested and want to get more information. The choice of the local provider and the duration of the safari has not yet been definitely made.

The travel dates would be:
Departure DE 01.09.
Start of the ascent 03.09.
Summit day 09.09.
End of Kilimanjaro tour 10.09.
Then safari (length tbd) & stay in Arusha
Return flight to DE 15.09. (or earlier / later, if you have other plans after the ascent)

Flights with KLM from Munich (very good flight times, only 1 stopover in Amsterdam), currently costing € 680.

What happens if the trip has to be canceled at short notice?
In this case, KLM offers a voucher for the entire ticket price. Redeemable also with some other major airlines.
Most local Kilimanjaro providers have very generous cancellation policies, either with a very low cancellation fee (<20%) or none at all.

best regards
Laura

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[101] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

Appendix 5: Fourth of July social post example

Appendix 6: Trip Pins
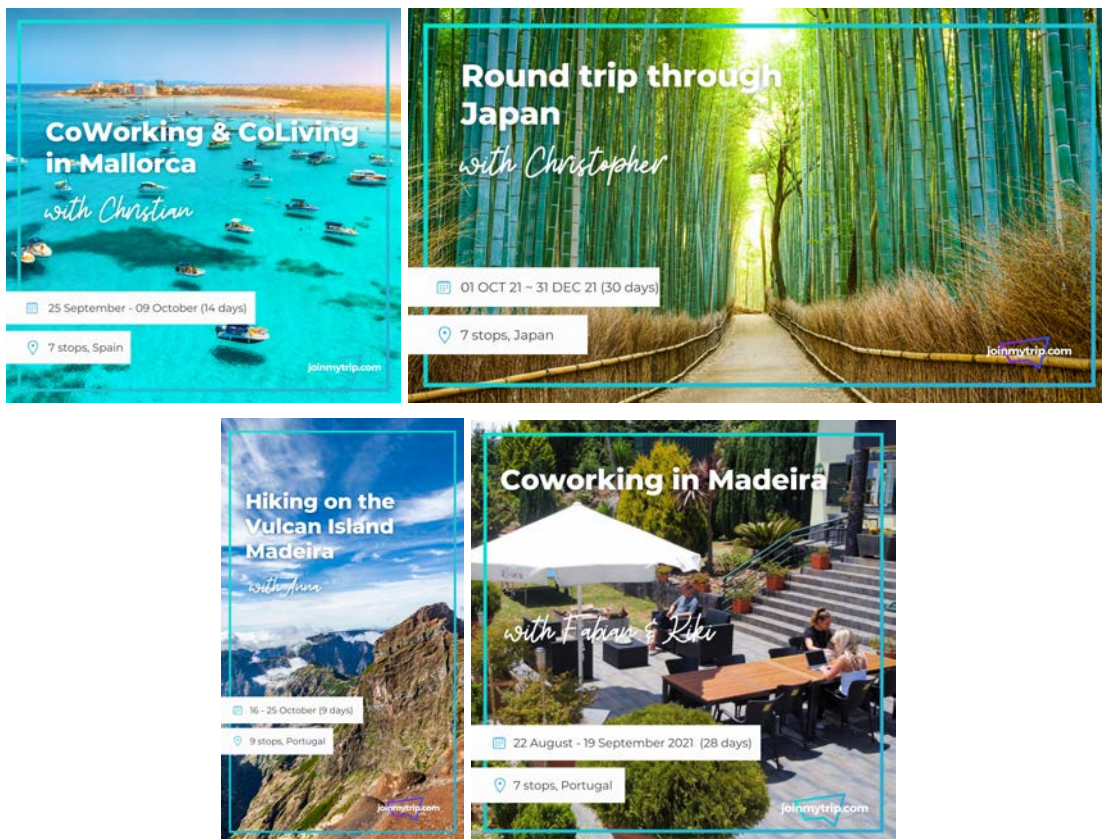
Appendix 7: Instagram stories creatives

Appendix 8: Pinterest Pins

Appendix 9: Infographics from blogs

Appendix 10: Podcast promotion creatives (with audio)
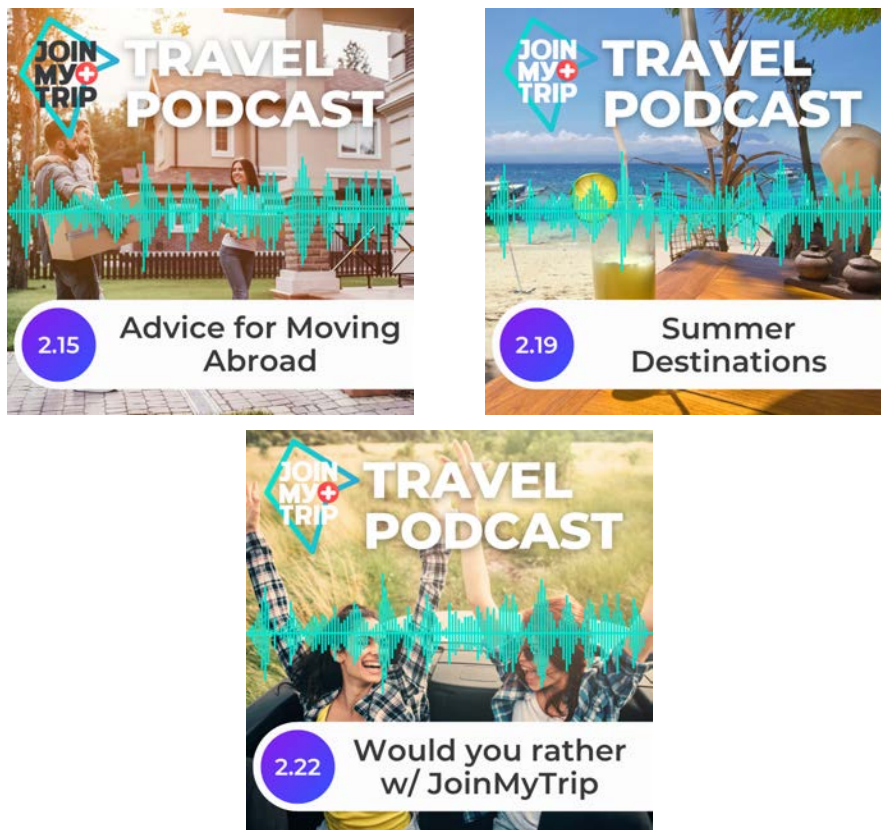
Appendix 11: Social Media KPIs excel sheet[102]

Facebook	Followers	%	Interactions	%	Clicks	%	Clicks to site	%	Shares	%	Impressions	%	Published posts	%	Best performing post	Worse perf...
31/01/21	17 123		12		54				3		7 467		22		Most beautiful places in Switzerland: 11 clicks, 0 likes, 659 Impressions, 1 shares (Posted: 19:19)	26.1.21 Travel News: 2 clicks, 2 likes, 290 i...
07/02/21	17 119	-0.02%	4	-66.67%	63	16.67%	119		0	-100.00%	8 058	7.91%	26	18.18%	1.2.2021 Travel News: 8 clicks, 0 likes, 416 impressions; (Posted: 16:48)	Travel essentials- hand luggage: 3 clicks, 0 ...
14/02/21	17 106	-0.06%	6	50.00%	77	22.22%	69	-42.02%	1		7 235	-10.21%	23	-11.54%	Lessons learnt from traveling: 16 clicks, 2 likes, 1 comments, 947 impressions, (Posted: 14:08)	Must-see places in Barcelona: 2 clicks, 0 lik...
21/02/21	17 087	-0.11%	2	-66.67%	43	-44.16%	38	-44.93%	0	-100.00%	7 425	2.63%	21	-8.70%	18.2.21 Travel News: 6 clicks, 0 likes, 466 impressions; (Posted: 16:48)	Cuba insider tips: 2 clicks, 0 likes, 716 impre...
28/02/21	17 080	-0.04%	7	250.00%	60	39.53%	82	115.79%	2		8 553	15.19%	28	33.33%	26.2.21 Travel News: 14 clicks, 439 impressions; (Posted 17:00)	CoWorking show: 2 clicks, 2 likes, 187 impr...
07/03/21	17 076	-0.02%	9	28.57%	65	8.33%	113	37.80%	0	-100.00%	8 523	-0.35%	25	-10.71%	04.3.21 Travel News: 8 clicks, 0 likes, 429 impressions; (Posted 17:29)	Travel tips - travelling solo: 0 clicks, 0 likes,...
14/03/21	17 079	0.02%	13	44.44%	97	49.23%	91	-19.47%	5		12 592	47.74%	33	32.00%	12.03.21 Travel News: 14 clicks, 0 likes, 475 impressions; (Posted 19:48)	Travel Food Show: 3 clicks, 0 likes, 362 imp...
21/03/21	17 080	0.01%	9	-30.77%	154	58.76%	173	90.11%	0	-100.00%	14 196	12.74%	45	36.36%	19.03.21 Travel News: 32 clicks, 0 likes, 440 impressions; (Posted 19:11)	Travel Safely Webinar: 0 clicks, 0 likes, 274...
28/03/21	17 076	-0.02%	10	11.11%	86	-44.16%	95	-45.09%	1		13 648	-3.86%	42	-6.67%	23.03.21 Clubhouse event: 12 clicks, 0 likes, 812 impressions; (Posted 15:26)	Iceland webinar: 2 clicks, 0 likes, 142 impre...
04/04/21	17 078	0.01%	7	-30.00%	61	-29.07%	48	-49.47%	5	400.00%	10 482	-23.20%	27	-35.71%	30.03.21 Travel News: 19 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments, 440 impressions (Posted 12:08)	TripLeader webinar: 1 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comm...
11/04/21	17 075	-0.02%	5	-28.57%	44	-27.87%	49	2.08%	6	20.00%	10 759	2.64%	31	14.81%	07.04.21 Travel News: 7 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments, 442 impressions (Posted 16:47)	Cuba Wrbinar: 0 Clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments...
18/04/21	17 070	-0.03%	15	200.00%	72	63.64%	101	106.12%	12	100.00%	11 911	10.71%	35	12.90%	14.04.21 Night markets blog: 12 clicks, 0 likes, 1 comment, 448 impressions (Posted 16:28)	Iceland waterfalls blog: 3 clicks, 0 likes, 0 co...
25/04/21	17 072	0.01%	42	180.00%	81	12.50%	119	17.82%	7	-41.67%	9 923	-16.69%	33	-5.71%	22.04.21 Greece Webinar: 15 clicks, 2 likes, 0 comments, 312 impressions (Posted 11:07)	Earth day blog: 2 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments...
02/05/21	17 072	0.00%	25	-40.48%	101	24.69%	132	10.92%	0	-100.00%	10 730	8.13%	36	9.09%	26.04.21 Greece Webinar calendly link, 15 click, 1 like, 0 comments, 326 Impressions (Posted 10:	26.04.21 Greece Webinar (German link), 0 c...
09/05/21	17 076	0.01%	53	112.00%	134	32.67%	127	-3.79%	0		13 612	26.86%	48	33.33%	05.05.21 Travel Food Show: 17 clicks, 1 like, 0 comments, 278 impressions (Posted 20:27)	Portugal webinar (German link), 0 clicks, 1 li...
16/05/21	17 078	0.01%	27	-49.06%	95	-29.10%	175	37.80%	1		7 997	-41.25%	25	-47.92%	12/05/21 Travel News: 18 clicks, 1 like, 0 comments, 321 impressions (Posted 12:37)	Trip Pin, 2 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments, 387 li...
23/05/21	17 071	-0.04%	33	22.22%	182	91.58%	151	-13.71%	0	-100.00%	13 578	69.79%	41	64.00%	23.05.21 Monique's Testimonial: 15 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments, 334 impressions (Posted 14:04)	18.05.21 How to travel safely (German link)...
30/05/21	17 069	-0.01%	52	57.58%	76	-58.24%	124	-17.88%	3		14 522	6.95%	40	-2.44%	24.05.21 Prettiest Villages in England Blog: 14 clicks, 0 likes, 0 comments, 332 impressions (Post	26.05.2021 Travel Inspiration Thailand (Eng...
06/06/21	17 069	0.00%	90	73.08%	91	19.74%	203	63.71%	6	100.00%	17 712	21.97%	48	20.00%	06.06.21 50 places to visit blog: 14 clicks, 3 likes, 0 comments, 1 share, 489 impressions (Posted	31.05.21 Morocco webinar- 4 clicks, 2 likes,...
13/06/21	17 084	0.09%	57	-36.67%	97	6.59%	121	-40.39%	6	0.00%	21 369	20.65%	51	6.25%	10.06.21 Covid alert: 12 clicks, 2 likes, 0 comments, 0 shares, 386 impressions (Posted 18:07)	08.06.21 Travel Buddy webinar- 5 clicks, 0 l...
20/06/21	17 078	-0.04%	43	-24.56%	160	64.95%	167	38.02%	1	-83.33%	25 214	17.99%	51	0.00%	16.06.21 Destination of the day: 17 clicks, 8 likes, 0 comments, 0 shares, 1 563 impressions	17.06.21 Covid alert- 6 clicks, 2 likes, 0 com...
27/06/21	17 099	0.12%	68	58.14%	127	-20.63%	300	79.64%	1	0.00%	20 144	-20.11%	43	-15.69%	21.06.21 Covid News: 16 clicks, 2 likes, 0 comments, 0 shares, 1 188 impressions (Posted 16:36)	26.06.21 Podcast promotion- 5 clicks, 3 like...

	Followers	%	Post Engagement	%	Page views	%	Post clicks	%	Story Reach	%	Post Reach	%	Published posts	%	Best performing post	Worse perfo...
04/07/21	17 125	0.15%	3 099	4457.36%	302	137.80%	217	-27.67%	468	46700.00%	86 867	334.23%	48	11.63%	04.07.21 Budget blog DE: 42 clicks, 3 likes, 0 comments, 1 476 impressions (Posted 14:49)	04.07.21 Budget blog EN: 6 clicks, 0 likes, 0...
11/07/21	17 803	3.96%	1 389	-55.18%	637	110.93%	446	105.53%	433	-7.48%	28 337	-67.38%	52	8.33%	07.07.21 Icelandair giveaway EN: 119 clicks, 39 likes, 5 comments, 6 shares, 4 340 impressions	07.07.21 Travel Food DE: 0 clicks, 0 likes, 0...
18/07/21	17 887	0.47%	2 340	68.47%	755	18.52%	240	-46.19%	631	45.73%	32 938	16.24%	44	-15.38%	14.07.21 Delta variant blog DE: 40 clicks, 1 like, 0 comments, 0 shares, 931 impressions (Posted	13.07.21 Trip of the week DE: 0 clicks, 0 like...
25/07/21	18 045	0.88%	2 115	-9.62%	300	-60.26%	759	216.25%	553	-12.36%	36 928	12.11%	50	13.64%	22.07.21 Job of a lifetime DE: 141 clicks, 11 likes, 2 comments, 1 share, 5 259 impressions (Poste	22.07.21 Travel Buddies EN: 0 clicks, 0 liker...

Appendix 12: Social media analysis[103]

Appendix 12.A: Top Pinterest pins based on impressions

Top Pins based on Impressions

- Others 33.3%
- Travel Quote 33.3%
- Travel Destinat... 26.7%
- Bucket List 6.7%

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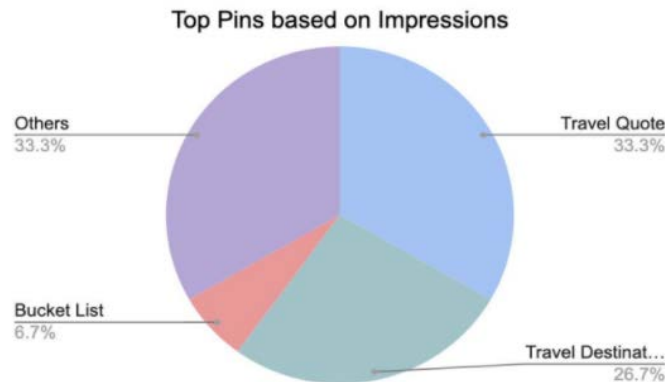
[102] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

[103] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

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Appendix 12.B: Top tweets in January, February and March 2021

Tweet Analysis (20 Top Tweets)

January				
Tweet with the highest Impressions	Podcast Episode with special guest Katherine Parker-Magyar. New York based travel writer.	2002 Impressions	15 Engagement	0.75% Engagement Rate
Tweet with the highest engagement	7 Most beautiful places to Visit in Switzerland	222 Impressions	14 Engagement	6.3% Engagement Rate
Most sought after topic	**Travel News**	**Out of the 20 Top Tweets, Travel News appeared 11 Times**		
February				
Tweet with the highest Impressions	Travel News - February 9th 2021	407 Impressions	5 Engagement	1.2% Engagement Rate
Tweet with the highest engagement	Camper Van retweet - By Journey Hero Travel - February 18th 2021	328 impressions	10 Engagements	3.0% Engagement Rate
Most sought after topic	**Travel News**	**Out of the 20 Top Tweets, Travel News appeared 11 Times**		
March				
Tweet with the highest Impressions	Travel News - March 9th 2021	531 Impressions	2 Engagements	0.4% Engagement Rate
Tweet with the highest engagement	My FlyRightDe partnership - Claim for compensation within few minutes	174 Impressions	10 Engagements	5.7% Engagement Rate
Most sought after topic	**Travel News**	**Out of the 20 Top Tweets, Travel News appeared 8 Times**		

Appendix 12.C: Month on month tweet analysis

Month on Month Analysis

	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Tweets	5	30	89	43	46	48	44	85	147	70
Profile Visits	48	143	605	872	761	1389	2291	1718	678	449
New Followers	1	2	264	314	280	199	281	187	29	24
Tweet Impressions	38100	1.08 Million	955000	7127	4917	6127	6187	14200	14200	7750
Mentions	1	3	98	126	56	47	22	20	17	20

Appendix 12.D: Instagram content insights

Content Insight

Content Interactions	February 16 2021 - March 16 2021
Total Interactions	5,602
Post Interactions	5,492
Total Posts	30
Likes	5,052
Comments	220
Saves	198
Story Interactions	0
Total Stories	16
IGTV Interactions	110
Total IGTV	18
Likes	101
Comments	3
Saves	6

Appendix 12.E: Instagram content interactions

Content Insight

Top Posts with most Interactions 1.1.2021 - 18.3.2021				
Posts	Impressions	Interactions	Clicks	Shares
Partnership - Gymglish	615	20	6	1
Travel Tips - Cheap last minute travel tips	649	15	2	0
Travel Essentials - Outdoor experience	410	11	0	0
Partnership - billiger-mietwagen	261	10	7	1
1st Annual JoinMyTrip Virtual show	279	9	4	0
Partnership - Sleeperoo	264	9	2	0
Iceland Webinar Announcement	176	9	1	0
Most beautiful places in the world	354	8	8	0
Co-working show essentials	281	8	3	0
Supernatural places in the world	290	7	20	0

Appendix 13: Content and Social Media Trello boards[104]
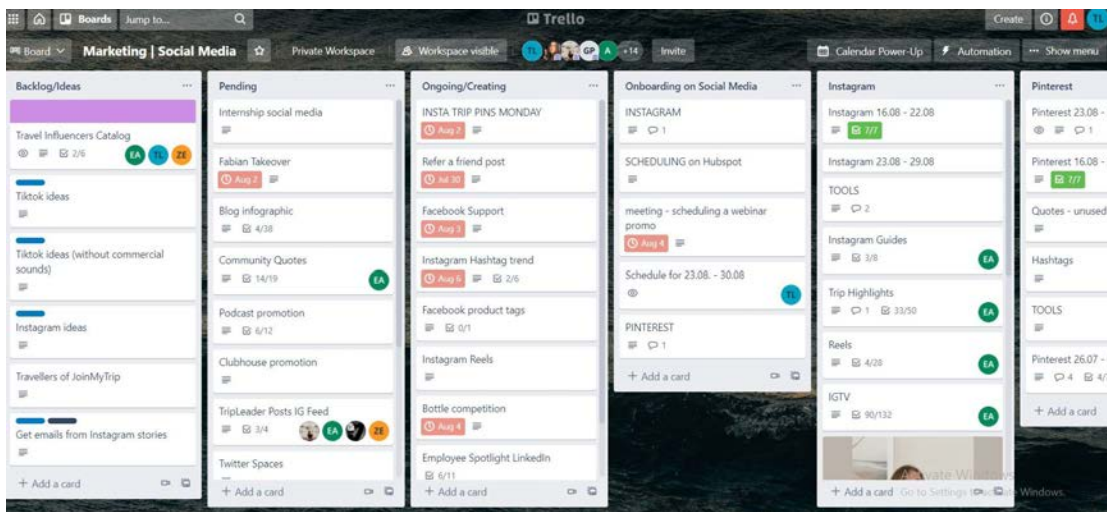
Appendix 14: JoinMyTrip's message[105]

	TRAVEL COMMUNITY	TRAVEL NOW - AUTUMN	BOOK NOW-TRAVEL LATER
Social Media	-Education posts: What is joinmytrip -Educational posts: Why to plan a trip and how? -Educational posts: Why to join a JMT trip? -Find travel buddies for your trip (promo)	-Posts promoting seasonal (summer/spring) Trips -Share blog posts Autumn inspiration -Share Autumn pictures diff destinations in Europe -Share Autumn videos / experiences in Autumn	-Promotion of Trips next year -Post "save your spot now" -Save money booking your trip for next year -Advantages of early birds booking trips -Dont miss another summer, save your spot now
SEO+ Website	-Educational Blog Posts: why to travel in a group, how to find travel buddies, how joinmytrip works + step by step content	-Spring destinations in Germany -Spring destinations in Europe -Unique activities to do in Spring -Spring around the world - celebrations / festivities?	-Why to book early (trips, accommodation, flights) -How to save money booking flights, accommodations and activities
Email Mkt		-Newsletter Spring destinations -Newsletter why to travel in Spring / TL + TM	-Newsletter unique trips 2021 (January - February) Book now and save you spot
Paid Social	-Ads message promoting the travel community/the new way of traveling that is changing the world -Brand awareness / Traffic Ads - seasonal content	-Tripmates Ads: Find and book your Spring trip -Unique activities to do in Spring -Groups Pictures ads / activities + destinations in Spring (Text: Travel now to..Share the trip and costs)	-Save your spot in unique trips planned by real travelers like you -Save up to 25% booking your trip today -Don't miss another vacation, save your spot now
Paid Search	-Message: find travel buddies / reisepartner / urlaubspartner -Discover the new travelers community	-Focus of the message "Spring Vacations -Wohin in Spring? -Die besten Reiseziele für September / Oktober	-Message book now - save your spot -Save money booking your next trip today + campaigns keywords

Temporarily paused (Paid Social)
Temporarily paused (Paid Search)

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[105] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

Appendix 15: Website traffic by origin[106]
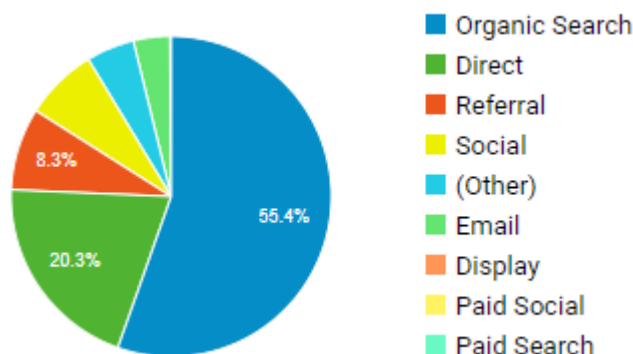
Appendix 16: Social Media Guide

Scheduling posts

Rules:
- wait for videos / blogs / podcasts to be <u>published</u> to schedule the post (because need URL)
- *link in bio* posts scheduled on **Later**
- Rule on Later : blog - photo - blog - photo etc… and between branded posts, at least 3 normal images
- no publishing TRAVEL NEWS/TIPS SHOWS, TOP DESTINATION VIDEOS or PODCASTS on **Instagram** + no branded photos

1. Check *Ready for sprint* on **Trello** : https://trello.com/b/SoGvGR1i/marketing-content
2. Check if content is published
3. Go to respective site
   - ***Travel News Blog*** :   EN:https://travel-news.joinmytrip.com/
                                  DE:https://reisemagazin.joinmytrip.com/
4. Copy / paste the link of the content to **Hubspot** :

   https://app.hubspot.com/social/8511594/publishing

   → **Facebook EN**
   - Add the link from site → *if partnership, change to photo*

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[106] *Source: JoinMyTrip, 2021*

- Copy / paste the caption from Trello → *if it's for a partnership, tag the company*
- Ø hashtags on FB, Ø promote podcasts except **wednesday podcast**
- Change to **link preview**, but change to **photo post** *if there's a <u>design</u> for it (partnerships etc)*
- Change audience to ENGLISH
- Choose campaign : "Travel News Bites" for *Daily news*, "Travel News Blog" for *Normal blog,...*
- Schedule post continuously throughout the day

→ **Facebook DE**
- Same except audience to DEUTSCH

→ **Twitter**
- Same and add hashtags on the important words in the caption (if not already done)

→ **LinkedIn**
- Same and remove unnecessary emojis + embed the **actual video**

5. Click on *schedule*

6. Go on **Later** : https://app.later.com/1V051/schedule/calendar

7. Save the image of the content on PC

8. Drag & drop the saved image to Later

9. Drag & drop same image to the next available slot on the calendar *(every other day)*

10. Edit image to "*Instagram Portrait*"

11. Add caption found on Trello (ENGLISH --- DEUTSCH)
    - Add hashtags from **Google Drive** : https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1yOzhK_TE_PDnS3NBiTyjvDK69LUNWp7AVWeufPaMJs0/edit#gid=0
        → Ctrl + F the country and copy / paste the hashtags of the country onto Later
    - Add the link of the ENGLISH blog to *link in bio* + add location
    - *If partnership*, **square** post + "millions reach" hashtags

12. Change the date and time of scheduling *(between **6 and 9pm**)*

13. Always check the post when published to see if it's alright

Instagram

Pricing analysis **influencers** : https://inzpire.me/instagram-pricing-calculator

Content spreadsheet : https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ciWhN2h9VK0sl7h_bT9DIflkF0JDng8Ur8o3goI1ZuY/edit#gid=435172063

Content calendar photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jfJhpbw9EXw4ssz3x-nQO1M7-up72T7E

Image resizer tool: https://promo.com/tools/image-resizer/

To schedule stories/IGTV : https://business.facebook.com/creatorstudio?tab=instagram_calendar_view

Create Hubspot link :
(example for a trip pin on insta story)

- Select campaign: *Instagram Organic*
- UTM source: *Instagram Stories*
- UTM Medium: *Social*
- UTM Term: *Trip Pins*
- UTM Content: *Austria in Summer 2021*

Stories :
- **Trip Pins** : use Arpit's pins and create a story + swipe up link
  Spreadsheet :
  https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14ik1wi6QntkgKShtm4ydug0SC3fAxdurjPRUPLmq5BM/edit#gid=0
  Arpit designs :
  https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19JtwoeFtRXxFjOqwWKA3D3Bu4SkYDjNa
- **This or That** : https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16ZINF-uIuZhxWarL5bqRi7rDY6pnvz-f
  OR https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1t2kV1iShzHLMrTMePuqvAO9H4Dy0BJwy
- **On This Day in History** : https://www.onthisday.com/events/march/22
- **National Day Calendar** : https://nationaldaycalendar.com/
- **Community Quotes**:
  https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XHEhfu0AUAtXZs0Hq-3c1u1fgkEutERc

TripMates photos : https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/157r29Jl6eI6av5h4psYI6bcFMxElzJeW
Pap's photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lK8GsF02PuCgp2L8X5v626qSx9Yp1ffz

Posting on IGTV
→ post Youtube shows except Travel News

1. Using **Instagram App** on phone (some features can't be done on PC)
2. Upload actual video from **Drive**
3. Screenshot a clip from the video, edit it to be full screen
4. Copy/paste
   - title from Youtube + remove "| Travel Food Show" / "| Travel Astrology",...etc.
   - description from Youtube
5. IGTV only (not facebook)
6. Check auto-generated caption
7. Select series → playlist
8. TOP DESTINATIONS to be posted on **instagram feed** as well
----
1. Using **Creator Studio** > Content Library > Posts > IGTV
2. Upload video from **Drive**
3. Screenshot a clip from the video for thumbnail and create on **Canva** :
   https://www.canva.com/design/DAEa_jZafTo/rjk44ISD7-RcgwmCcFaMsw/edit
4. Copy/paste
   - title from Youtube + remove "| Travel Food Show" / "| Travel Astrology",...etc.
   - description from Youtube
5. IGTV only (not feed or facebook)
6. Select series on **Instagram App** on phone when posted

Youtube

1. Check all needed data on **Trello card** except **Travel News** :

- Wil sends YT description + final video
  https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fyKRaKd8-5MrUbc-XJdqGsuBGznAqjPW →
  video name : "DDMMYYYY Daily Travel News"
2. On **Youtube**, click "*upload video*"
3. Copy/paste *title* from **Wordpress Blog**
4. Copy/paste *description* from Will's message
5. Add title on first part of description + add hashtags on important words
6. For **thumbnail** :
   - Go on **Canva** :
     https://www.canva.com/design/DAEZ1xwOfOo/tCHPzc86uTnqNnqab5_ITw/edit
   - Add a nice photo from Canva library, preferably bright
   - "Adjust" → *blur* to 6-7, *vignette* ?
   - Change date
   - Download as **JPEG**
7. Select *playlist*
8. Select *category* : **Travel & Events** except for Travel News = **News & Politics**
9. For **hashtags** : copy/paste from previous video on same playlist + add/remove accordingly
10. Click "*next*" → add end screen (first option)
11. Click "*next*" → schedule or publish immediately
12. Copy/paste link and send to <u>Content team</u>

Podcasts

Tool : Buzzsprout

1. Go to https://www.buzzsprout.com/1353403/episodes
2. Choose the right podcast show :
   - "*Upload new episode*" & upload the <u>actual</u> video on **Drive**
     For Travel News:
     https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fyKRaKd8-5MrUbc-XJdqGsuBGznAqjPW
   - Copy/paste :
     - **Youtube** description
     - Title from the **Wordpress blog** + add "*| Join My Trip*"
     - *For Travel News* : substitute beginning of the description with first paragraph of the blog
     - Add season + episode
3. Click "*More*"
   - Copy/paste summary from blog : "In today's episode,..."
   - Tags : add "s1e3" but for *Travel News* "DDMMYYYY" + copy/paste from Youtube Studio
4. Create custom URL
   - Go on **Wordpress blog** : copy/paste URL under "permalink"
   - Go on **Hubspot** > Reports > Analytics tools > tracking URL Builder
     - "Create tracking URL" + paste copied URL
     - Select campaign
     - Source : *other campaigns*
     - UTM source : *Travel News PodCast / Travel PodCast / Travel Food PodCast / Travel Tips PodCast / CoWorking PodCast / Travel Essentials PodCast*
     - UTM medium : *Social*

- UTM term : Ø
- UTM content : "*s1e3*" or for *Travel News* "*DDMMYYYY*"
- Copy the short URL onto **Buzzsprout** under *Custom EP Webpage*
5. Save and publish

KPI's

1. Go on **Hubspot** > Marketing > Social > <u>Analyze</u>

2. Choose network & change date range

3. Add all info on spreadsheet :
   https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1K3BZszxRV8Y4WNU7GsOrTNUQB8IQ3um0kTzyDnJcd8g/edit#gid=687474007

4. "Top posts" filter on *Most clicks*

5. *Top posts* for **Facebook** : Hubspot > Marketing > Social > <u>Manage</u>
   - change date range & filter on *Clicks*

6. For **Twitter** :
   - for *profile visits* : go to **Twitter Analytics** page
   - for *best post* : back to Hubspot, filter on *Clicks*

7. For **Instagram** :
   - for *best post* : go to **Instagram** "view insights" on each post of that week
   - ⚠️ Don't check normal photos w/o a **link in bio** (but take into account partnerships & giveaways)
   - for *clicks to site* : "Sessions"
   - for *stories*: go on **Creator Studio**

8. For **Youtube** :
   - go to **Youtube Studio**
   - for *best post* : it's the video with the most **views**
   - for *published videos* : count the videos posted that week
   - for *total likes* : go to "Content" and count the **likes** from each post of that week

9. For **Pinterest** (DE + EN) :
   - go to **Pinterest > Analytics > Overview**
   - change date range
   - for *clicks to site* : filter Performance Over Time on outbound clicks
   - for *top boards* : filter on engagement
   - for *top pins* : filter on outbound clicks

10. For **TikTok** : go to TikTok app > Me > Settings > Business Suite

11. For **Facebook groups** : go to **Facebook > Croissance & Engagement**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
FACEBOOK : Story - Trip Highlights Feed - Travel News, Blog infographic (listicle)	**FACEBOOK :** Feed - Travel News, Lumen5 Blogpost video	**FACEBOOK :** Story - Destination of the Week Feed - Travel News, Covid Alert	**FACEBOOK :** Story - vote/poll Feed - Travel News, Trip announcement	**FACEBOOK :** Story - Company announcement Feed - Travel News, Meme/viral photo
INSTAGRAM : Story - Trip Highlights Feed - Blog or Organic photo	**INSTAGRAM :** Story - Engagement - boosting Feed - Blog or Organic photo	**INSTAGRAM :** Story - Podcast promotion Feed - Blog or Organic photo	**INSTAGRAM :** Story - Engagement - boosting Feed - Blog or Organic photo	**INSTAGRAM :** Story - On this day in history Feed - Blog or Organic photo
LINKEDIN : Story - Webinar promotion Feed - Blog, infographic	**LINKEDIN :** Feed - Community Quote, Trip of the Week	**LINKEDIN :** Story - JMT update Feed - Blog, Article repost	**LINKEDIN :** Feed - Trip Pins, Blog	**LINKEDIN :** Story - Feed: About JMT, Blog
TWITTER : Story - Covid news Feed - Travel Tips, Travel News, #MondayMotivation GIF, Blog	**TWITTER :** Story - Covid news Feed - Travel News, Trip of the Week, Poll, Blog	**TWITTER :** Story - Covid news Feed - Travel News, Travel Food Show, #WednesdayWisdom	**TWITTER :** Story - Covid news Feed - Travel News, Travel Astrology, GIF, Blog	**TWITTER :** Story - Covid news Feed - Travel News, Travel Activities, Blog

Saturday	Sunday
FACEBOOK : Feed - Blog with list as infographic, Podcast	**FACEBOOK :** Feed - Blog with list as infographic, webinar video
INSTAGRAM : Feed - Blog or Organic photo	**INSTAGRAM :** Feed - Blog or Organic photo
LINKEDIN : Feed - Blog, Podcast promo	**LINKEDIN :** Feed - Lumen5 Blog,
TWITTER : Feed - Podcast, Trip Pin	**TWITTER :** Feed - Coworking show

LinkedIn

Feed Content

- Carousel PDFs of Trip Pins / Trip of the Week show
- Company wins (1 000 followers, new feature on website, etc)
- Events
- Some blogs company-related (how to become a TL, for ex)
- SlideShare presentation on "how to get extra cash while traveling = become a TL"
- Celebrate: work anniversaries, partnerships, customers
- Video content: *Lumen5, Wavve (paid membership needed), Promo*
- Polls
- Top 10 list (from blog listicles), add link as a comment
- About JMT:
    - A day in the life of the JMT team
    - Company quotes (employees saying a few words)

To share on Travel Groups

Travel News & Travel Blogs

Important Hashtags:
#WomenOfLinkedIn
#ProfessionalWomen
#WhatInspiresMe
#WhatsNewWednesday

→ If not enough content that week, share content from other travel brands (news, articles, etc)

LinkedIn JMT page > Content > Popular articles

Facebook

Feed Content

- JoinMyTrip Behind-The-Scenes
- Facebook Contests (monthly)
- How-to Guides and Tips
- Share lists (Top 10s) in the form of infographics or a PDF
- Fill-in-the-blanks posts
- Video content
    - "How to create a trip?" (and actually create one)
    - Videos from blogposts *(like for LinkedIn)*

How many times to post?

2 - 3 times daily (not more unless really necessary)

Story
- Announcements / events / sneak peeks / covid news / reminders
- Weekly "Destination of the Week"
- Votes / polls

→ If not enough content for a certain week, share viral photos or memes (take from Drive or use already posted memes from FB groups)

Twitter

Feed Content

- Youtube shows
- Short videos (6-15 seconds is the sweet spot)
- Retweeting other content
- Polls (add relevant hashtags / trending on that day)
- Blogs
- Guess the country game
- Top 10 list as a thread (from blog listicles)

How many times to post?

4 - 6 tweets / day is optimal

Fleets (stories)
- Covid News (from the Covid Alerts page on joinmytrip.com) + AK's Travel News show
- Content promotion (YT shows)
- Hype up events (webinars, national days, live JMT event)

Spaces

Posting schedules
Based on engagement data

Instagram Feed

Data from the last 30 days (April 2021):

Every day between 6pm and 10pm

Optimal: **Sundays at 7pm**
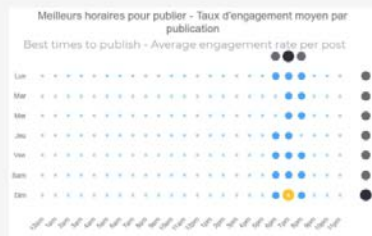
Instagram Reels

Based on Research

Objective: Get more views from USA

MON: 12pm, 4pm
TUE: 3pm
WED: 1pm, 2pm
THU: 3pm, 6pm
FRI: 11am, 7pm
SAT: 5pm, 1am
SUN: 1-2pm, 10pm

Best Times to Post on Instagram Reels (EST time)

Monday: 6 AM, 10 AM, 10 PM
Tuesday: 2 AM, 4 AM, *9 AM
Wednesday: 7 AM, 8 AM, 11 PM
Thursday: 9 AM, *12 AM, 7 PM
Friday: *5 AM, 1 PM, 3 PM
Saturday: 11 AM, 7 PM, 8 PM
Sunday: 7 AM, 8 AM, 4 PM
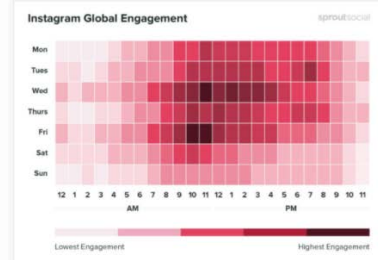
Instagram Stories

Based on Research

Objective: Get more views from USA

Best times:
8am-noon OR 4-5pm
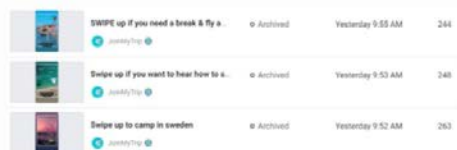
Facebook

Data from the last 30 days (April 2021):

- Wednesdays at 7pm
- Thursdays at 2pm

Fans connectés
Fans online

Engagements moyen par type de publication
Average engagement by type of post

Meilleurs horaires pour publier - Engagement
Best times to publish - engagement
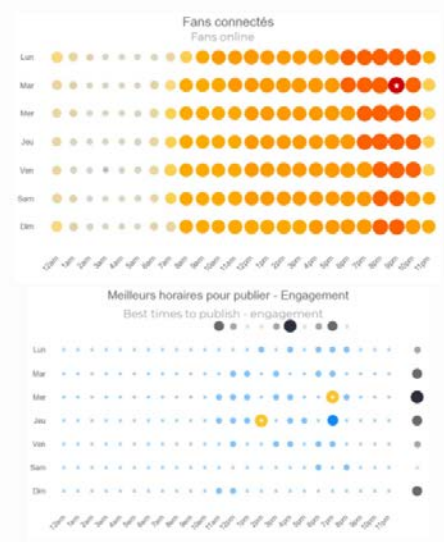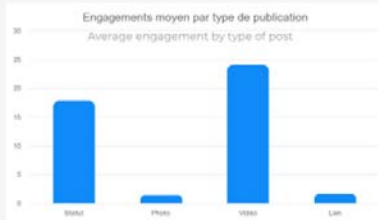
Facebook Groups

Data from the last 3 months

When day with no data, post anytime
and then analyse in 1 month.

Global Travel Women I JoinMyTrip 🌐
🌐 Public group

MON noon
TUE ?
WED noon, 3pm
THU 2pm
FRI ?

TripLeader | JoinMyTrip 🌐
🔒 Private group

MON 6pm
TUE ?
WED 2pm
THU ?
FRI 1pm

Travel Buddies | JoinMyTrip 🌐
🌐 Public group

MON 6pm
TUE 3pm
WED ?
THU 7pm
FRI ?

TripMates | JoinMyTrip
🔒 Private group

MON 4-5pm
TUE ?
WED ?
THU 2pm
FRI 2-3pm

Workation ☀️🏖 - Homeoffice / CoWorking in the Sun! 💻 | JoinMyTrip 🌐
🌐 Public group

MON 1-3pm
TUE 2-4pm
WED ?
THU ?
FRI 2pm

Urlaubspartner*in 🌞 Reisepartner*in Gesucht | JoinMyTrip 🌐
🔒 Private group

MON 11am / 1pm
TUE 6pm
WED 3pm
THU 9am / 4pm
FRI 11am / 3pm

Twitter

Best times:

- Wednesday 9am-3pm
- Tuesday / Thursday 9-11am

Twitter Global Engagement   sproutsocial

Lowest Engagement   Highest Engagement

LinkedIn

Best time:
- Tuesday - Thursday 9am - 12pm
- Monday & Friday 8am - 3pm

Blogs: 10am - 12pm
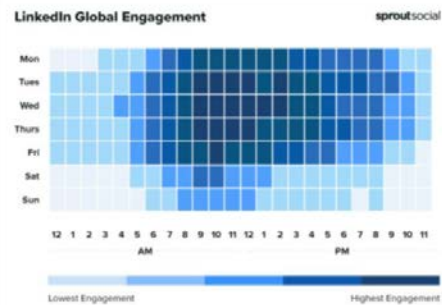
Pinterest

Best time:
- For US audience:
  3 - 6 am
- For EU audience:
  8 - 11 pm

Youtube

Best times:
- Weekdays 5pm
- WED-THU 8-9pm
- SUN 8-11am or after 5pm

Make sure to publish 15min before **Prime Time** to be among the first videos shown on Youtube

Don't publish on: 14:45, 18:45
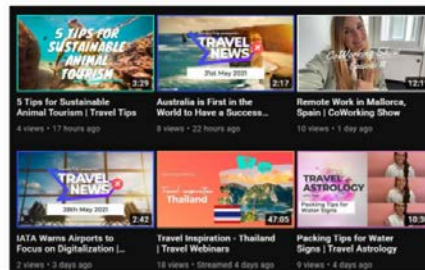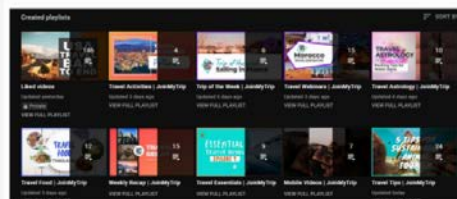
Appendix 18: Content schedule

	MONDAY 05.07	TUESDAY 06.07	WEDNESDAY 07.07	THURSDAY 08.07	FRIDAY 09.07
National Day		International Kissing Day	Global Forgiveness Day		
Webinar/Event				Travel Fails Event	
Facebook	16:41 **Story** Trip Highlights 15:16 **Blog** Most Beautiful bars in the world to visit with friends 20:21 **Travel Tips** E28 5 Tips to Travel With Your Pet 12:53 **Daily Travel News** No Countries Listed in Germany's High-Risk List 17:49 **Covid Alert** 28 june	16:19 **Blog** Switzerland group travel guide 12:37 **Trip of the Week** E12 Bosnia and Herzegovina With A Certified Guide 20:38 **Daily Travel News** Canada Eased Restrictions for International Passengers 18:41 **Covid Alert** 29 june 14:07 **Internship promo** Travel the world as a tour guide	14:32 **Blog** Top destinations for chocolate lovers **Travel Food Show** E17 13:02 **Daily Travel News** Germany Will Begin to Ease Travel Restrictions 18:02 **Covid Alert** 30 june 16:08 **Destination of the Day** Rubjerg Knude Lighthouse 19:09 **Giveaway** Iceland Air 17:17	16:00 **Story** Icelandair giveaway reposts 14:53 **Blog** The most underrated destinations for group travel 14:30 **Daily Travel News** Saudi Arabia to Invest Over $133 Billion in Infrastructure 12:22 **Covid Alert** 1 july 16:51	15:09 **Blog** Top travel tips for introverts looking to make friends 13:15 **Travel Activities** E10 What to do in New York City 20:18 **Daily Travel News** Vaccinated U.S Citizens can Visit Hawaii Without a Test 17:06 **Covid Alert** 2 july
Instagram	16:41 **Story** Trip Highlight 20:07 **Organic post** JMT backpack mountain 16:10 **IGTV** Tips for traveling with air signs	19:07 **Blog** The best Netherlands travel guide 15:06 **IGTV** 5 Tips for Group Travel	14:11 **Story** Fabian videos 17:01 **Branded post** Icelandair giveaway 16:36 **IGTV** 5 Must-Try Thai Street Foods	16:00 **Story** Icelandair giveaway reposts 20:13 **Blog** Ultimate Thailand travel itinerary 17:12 **IGTV** Packing Tips for Fire Signs	18:26 **Organic post** Niels airport JMT laptop 16:31 **IGTV** Hiking trip in Crete island
Twitter	11:16 **Fleets** Covid news 15:16 **Blog** Most Beautiful bars in the world to visit with friends 17:47 **Travel Tips** E28 5 Tips to Travel With Your Pet 12:53 **Daily Travel News** No Countries Listed in Germany's High-Risk List 09:18 **Covid Alert** 5 july	10:26 **Fleets** Covid news 15:54 **Blog** Switzerland group travel guide 12:38 **Trip of the Week** E12 Bosnia and Herzegovina With A Certified Guide 18:53 **Daily Travel News** Canada Eased Restrictions for International Passengers 09:14 **Covid Alert** 6 july 14:09 **Internship promo** Travel the world as a tour guide	09:43 **Fleets** Covid news 10:38 **Trip Pin** Adventure in Greece 14:09 **Blog** Top destinations for chocolate lovers **Travel Food Show** E17 13:02 **Blog** What Foods to Bring on a Hiking Trip **Daily Travel News** Germany Will Begin to Ease Travel 19:07 **Covid Alert** 7 july 09:23 **Giveaway** Iceland Air 17:17	09:42 **Fleets** Covid news 15:07 **Blog** The most underrated destinations for group travel 14:30 **Travel Buddy Adventures** E3 Traveling to Lebanon 12:22 **Daily Travel News** Saudi Arabia to Invest Over $133 Billion in Infrastructure 09:02 **Covid Alert** 8 july 10:26 **Clubhouse promo** Travel Community club	09:52 **Fleets** Covid news 15:31 **Blog** Top travel tips for introverts looking to make friends 13:15 **Travel Activities** E10 What to do in New York City 16:54 **Daily Travel News** Vaccinated U.S Citizens can Visit Hawaii Without a Test 09:40 **Covid Alert** 9 july
LinkedIn	00 **Story** webinar promotion 09:14 **Blog** Brussels Travel Guide 15:46 **Travel Tips** E28 5 Tips to Travel With Your Pet **Blog infographic** create 11:46 **Internship promo** Travel the world as a tour guide	10:09 **Blog** Most Beautiful bars in the world to visit with friends 13:49 **Trip of the Week** E12 Bosnia and Herzegovina With A Certified Guide 12:09 **Trip Pin** Camping in the Baltic sea	00 **Story** JMT update 09:31 **Podcast promotion** Summer destinations (peace out to Greece) 11:08 **Blog** Switzerland group travel guide 14:48 **LinkedIn Article** How to: perfect group travel experience	15:17 **Trip Pins** Coworking in Madeira 13:03 **Employee Spotlight** Mariellen 10:43 **Blog** Top destinations for chocolate lovers 14:30 **Travel Buddy Adventures** E3 Traveling to Lebanon	15:46 **Story** Home office setup 10:45 **Blog** The most underrated destinations for group travel 13:15 **Travel Activities** E10 What to do in New York City

Week 12　Week 13　Week 14　Week 15　Week 16　Week 17　Week 18　Week 19　Week 20　Week 21　Week 22　Week 23　Week 24　Week 25　Week 26　**Week 27**　Week 28　Week 29

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Résumé

Les défis auxquels sont confrontées les agences de voyage dans la nouvelle ère du tourisme et comment mener à bien une stratégie de relance du marketing : Le cas de JoinMyTrip

Le tourisme a connu une longue histoire et de nombreux changements. Nous sommes maintenant entrés dans une nouvelle ère du tourisme au 21ème siècle, ainsi que dans une pandémie qui a un impact significatif dans l'industrie. Dans ce mémoire, les problèmes d'une plateforme de voyage en ligne ont été étudiés afin de développer une stratégie marketing appropriée dans une période d'instabilité financière et de crise sanitaire mondiale. En tant qu'entreprise innovante, il était essentiel d'élaborer une stratégie basée sur le marketing des réseaux sociaux tout en mettant l'accent sur la création d'un sentiment de communauté pour nos clients et nos parties prenantes afin d'améliorer la qualité du produit et de l'expérience offerte. Trois indicateurs clés sont mis en avant pour atteindre nos objectifs: la portée, les conversions et l'engagement. Une analyse des médias sociaux a été utilisée pour cibler et mener cette étude de cas ainsi que la proposition d'une nouvelle stratégie de contenu qui a été élaborée et testée.

Mots clés: Réseaux sociaux - stratégie marketing - étude de cas - Social Media Optimization - stratégie de contenu

Abstract

The challenges that face travel agencies in the new era of tourism and how to carry out a Marketing recovery strategy: The case of JoinMyTrip

Tourism has had many ups and downs throughout its history, and we are now entering the new era of tourism in the twenty-first century, as well as a pandemic that has had a significant impact in this industry. In this thesis, the issues of an online travel platform were investigated in order to develop an appropriate marketing strategy for it amid a period of financial instability and a global health crisis. As an innovative firm, it was critical to build a strategy based on social media marketing, with an emphasis on creating a sense of community for our customers and our stakeholders, in order to improve the quality of the product offered and the experiences provided. The goal was to increase three key metrics: reach, conversions and engagement. A social media analysis was used to concentrate and conduct a case study, and a proposal for a new content strategy was presented and tested.

Keywords: Social media - marketing strategy - case study - Social Media Optimization- content strategy