



Shaping Tourism Futures®

CONTEST OF FRESH IDEAS:

TOURISM SYSTEMS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

GREENADVISOR – THE GREEN ALTERNATIVE



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1. Design Thinking

"Climate researchers have found a significant drop in CO₂ emissions worldwide for the first half of 2020. According to a study with the participation of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), more than one billion tons less CO₂ were blown into the atmosphere worldwide compared to the same period last year." The Corona crisis clearly shows the positive effects that restrictions on air traffic, as well as traffic on the roads, have on our atmosphere. However, at the same time, this means a big drop in the tourism industry. It shows the parallels between very high CO₂ emissions, which contribute to pollution and tourism. Thus, the urgency of rethinking the tourism sector is becoming increasingly clear.

In our search for ideas for a sustainable tourism product, many thoughts and trains of thought ran through our heads. To sort them out, we used the design thinking method. Among other things, the term Design Thinking is related to agile working. Agile working, or New Work, describes new methods of developing products or coming up with more solutions than simply by working in the traditional way. Design Thinking is a special approach to work on complex problems. It primarily depends on many different creative thinking approaches, which release the innovation project in parallel. With this method, it is important not to define a fixed procedure for problem solving, but to be open to several solutions and different approaches.

We first started with fundamental problems that bother us in the tourism sector and which are not sustainable. Thus, we were in the phase of understanding the problem. This was followed by the observation phase, in which we looked more closely at what impact our initial thought-provoking ideas had on the environment. In the following step, we looked at our ideas from different perspectives and decided on a product. After that we developed our prototype for the product and in the last step, we tested it.

AIEST has shared numerous questions in its overview to provide ideas for brainstorming as well as guidance for competitors. We mainly focused on questions like, "How will humanity travel in the future and what needs to be done to make travel more and more sustainable?" or "How can we make tourists behave responsibly in the destination?" and "How can we promote tourism that is beneficial for locals?". These questions were part of the origin of our idea for the GreenAdvisor website.

2. Emergence „GreenAdvisor“

Tourism is a steadily growing industry that is gaining importance. Before the SARS-CoV2 pandemic, numbers were rising steadily from year to year. At the same time, the awareness of travel alternatives and the environmental compatibility of one's own undertakings also grew. During the development of the topic, the thought processes oscillated between various areas of how tourism can be made more sustainable. Among other things, the thoughts went in the direction of winter tourism and how sustainable snow cannons could be used. After that, the collection of ideas included the consideration of whether reusable shower gel and shampoo containers already exist in hotel businesses. In the end, the decision was made to design a website based on a combination of already existing companies. The goal is to build a website that includes components of the providers Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Airbnb and BlaBlaCar. The listed webpages are to be combined into one website, but with the focus exclusively on sustainable alternatives. The alternatives are also given stars according to a point rating system. Products with only a few stars are only partially equipped with environmentally conscious or ecological components, while five stars distinguish particularly sustainable products. The more ecological the guest's trip, the more points are collected, and customers receive a discount at selected partners of the website in return.

After these considerations, the decision was made to launch the product under the name "GreenAdvisor - the green alternative". GreenAdvisor aims at environmentally conscious travel and should be designed as simple as possible. The tool is divided into plausible upper categories. These include accommodations, restaurants/hospitality, transportation, and activities in the immediate proximity.

Only sustainably designed accommodations should be offered. For restaurants, the respective ones that use regional products and are close to the guest are displayed. Transportation should include public transportation options, but also have the option to implement car sharing in destinations. People who travel from one point to another can sign up and take guests with them, so that they do not have to travel separately with their own cars. Furthermore, options such as bicycle or inline skate rental should be integrated, which can be used by the guests. Excursion destinations should be able to be visited by the guest within a certain radius, the distance should be pointed out and the sights and activities in the immediate vicinity should be set as a priority.

The logo is designed in clearly recognizable tones of sustainability and should be quickly recognizable. One possibility of the logo is shown below:



In summary, the product - the GreenAdvisor webpage - can be defined in its basic principle as a sustainably designed alternative to find a trip. The goal is to minimize negative impacts caused by travel behavior and to strive for environmental sustainability at the highest possible level. It should not be developed exclusively on a national level rather on an international base. It should be possible to attractively combine sustainability and travel through the diverse range of offers on the site or in an app developed over time. If you look at the basic principles of the principle, you will notice some challenges that will be explained in more detail later in this paper.

3. The product

After the detailed description of the creation of the product, this chapter describes our prototype more detailed. To differentiate ourselves from other competitors, such as bookdifferent.com, our main product has a plug-in next to the website. This way, as soon as our customers are looking for an accommodation, transfers or restaurants, they are automatically reminded of the sustainable alternative with a pop-up notification. Users visiting the website can create an account for free and download the pop-up reminders plug-in on demand. The points system already described is used for accommodations, restaurants as well as transfers. For example, the more sustainable the transfer to the accommodation is, the more points the customers can gain. The points are handled similarly to Booking.com with their Genius customers. You get certain benefits, such as discounts in regional organic supermarkets, but also discounted entrance fees to local attractions. The points system is intended to act as an incentive motivation for customers to use the sustainable alternative and thus receive savings on their stay. On the other hand, accommodations as well as restaurants only have to pay seven percent commission on a referral instead of 15 percent, as is the case with Booking.com. The hotels as well as the establishments

have to meet certain criteria in order to be registered on the website. Accommodations that are certified with Ecolabels and meet GSTC criteria as a minimum, customers can earn a higher number on their points account than booking hotels without eco-friendly certifications. The ecological aspect of protecting the environment also includes the social aspect. For example, barrier-free accommodations and restaurants are supported with additional points. Likewise, only accommodations that coexist in accordance with human rights are promoted.

3.1 Marketing

For the marketing of the website, we mainly rely on SEO - Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Marketing. The SEO marketing is mainly used to be found as easily as possible on sites like Google or Bing. To keep up with the big competitors like Booking.com or TripAdvisor and to increase our visibility and standing, among other things we also rely a lot on keyword advertising. To do this, we focus on keywords such as "sustainable travel", "CO²-free transfer" or "vegetarian/vegan restaurants" on our webpage. With these options we try to differentiate ourselves purposefully from the well-known competitors. The social media marketing, including banner marketing will largely focus on Facebook and Instagram. To adapt the advertising specifically to our target groups, we work with selected accounts that pay attention to economic, ecological, and social sustainability. For example, influencer marketing on Instagram will be done with well-known influencers who exemplify a sustainable lifestyle. Furthermore, we can communicate with our customers in real time on our social media accounts and quickly record feedback. Likewise, advertising banners have to be placed in hiking magazines or blogs. These should be interaction-oriented and draw the customers' attention with discounts on the homepage or the plug-ins.

To give the website a USP - Unique Selling Proposition, we advertise the locations and accommodations with short image videos of the premises. This is more likely to arouse emotions in the customer and gives a more realistic impression than photos.

3.2 Cost plan

The expected initial project costs are incurred in the creation of the website with the integrated plug-in. The fixed costs have to be covered with an initial loan. The biggest cost for the GreenAdvisor website is within the marketing. A lot of money has to be invested in marketing, especially at the beginning of the creation. The SEO is inevitable to get a high place in search engines and thus be recognized early by customers.

However, the amount is paid back when bookings are made through our platform and the commissions of our service providers flow in parallel.

4. Product assessment and evaluation

While taking a closer look at the product, there are numerous positive as well as negative aspects. Problems as well as advantages can be found in the creation of the website. First, the intended benefits of GreenAdvisor are explained, after which the possible risks and challenges are listed.

4.1 Effect and benefit for the society

By incorporating the diverse categories into the website, guests have the opportunity to make almost every aspect of a trip sustainable. The accommodation section includes both private rentals, commercial recreation, and accommodation options such as hotels. The catering category lists stores with regional products, inns, restaurants and, for example, specials such as alpine dairies where regional products can be purchased. The transportation as a category does not mean exclusively the arrival and departure, but rather the locomotion during the stay in the destination. The fourth selection option is to show tips for good excursions and activities. The suggestions should be limited to a certain radius in order to avoid long journeys to the excursions.

GreenAdvisor is supposed to have the big plus point of simple environmental sustainability. It should show that it is easy to make travel sustainable and that there is a wide choice of accommodations. In addition, it is intended to make people think, so that they can see the difference between how environmentally damaging they have made trips so far and the advantages that this type of travel brings. Through GreenAdvisor, one should be able to explore destinations without a guilty conscience. Often this industry is considered an exception, where you do not have to think sustainably, but this webpage is meant to show that it brings numerous advantages and is no more costly than booking a trip in a conventional way.

Through the points rating system, guests can see whether their selection is really sustainable or just some sort of greenwashing. Through the incentives to collect stars, discounts can be achieved and thus one supports local suppliers at the same time.

Destinations that are heavily affected by mass tourism could be convinced otherwise by showing that quality can be preferred to quantity. For the companies themselves, it is advantageous if they can identify themselves as sustainable and show an eco-label.

4.2 Risks and challenges

GreenAdvisor definitely shows potential in the market and is an alternative to the traditional products such as Booking.com, but there are some obstacles and challenges that make it difficult to implement the prototype.

E-processes such as those of OTAs (Online Travel Agents) must be clarified before publication. If one wants to enable direct booking on the website, contracts and commissions should be discussed with the individual local providers and contracts concluded beforehand. A simpler alternative would be a direct link to the website of the respective hotel or the telephone numbers/email address of private providers. If the first option is chosen, booking engines should also be used, through which bookings can be made either in real time or upon confirmation of the respective provider. It gets problematic when events such as the Oktoberfest or New Year's Eve are coming up. Here, multiple reservations and errors could occur more easily than it would be the case with a real-time booking. Another aspect here, however, is data protection guidelines, which have become increasingly important and more stringent in the past years. Questions such as "when would confidential data of the providers be able to be pulled?" and "how would one be liable in the event of misappropriation?" come up in this topic.

Another challenge would be recognition. Marketing strategies involve high costs, referrals must first be achieved, and a certain degree of acceptance must first be established within society. Strategically beneficial measures should be taken to expand the reach of the website as much as possible. This could be achieved through Google Ads, social media, advertising within a destination and in various brochures and magazines. The product should anchor itself within society to the extent that people automatically use it like Booking.com and choose the more environmentally friendly alternative. For this, support and acceptance should come from travelers and suppliers, in order to be able to expand the portfolio and provide a choice within many destinations.

One more problem within the range of possible complications is the measurement of sustainability criteria. Here, it should be clearly defined in advance how, for example, accommodations can be evaluated in order to be classified into categories. Lists or tables with classifications according to quality standards could be helpful here.

5. Conclusion

The GreenAdvisor site with the integrated plug-in is unique in the world. It lets customers not forget the sustainable alternative when planning their vacation through the pop-up notifications that appear again and again. Likewise, sustainable eateries and accommodations are promoted and supported and, in parallel, customers can use their earned points to take advantage of discounts on their next purchase at the organic market. In summary, the product has great potential, which definitely needs financial support, but could gain enormous importance over time and thus contribute to the creation of a sustainable future of travel.

List of references

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Sonderangebote



Mittelalterliche Burg

Mitglieder-Chat

Unterkünfte - Restaurants - Transport

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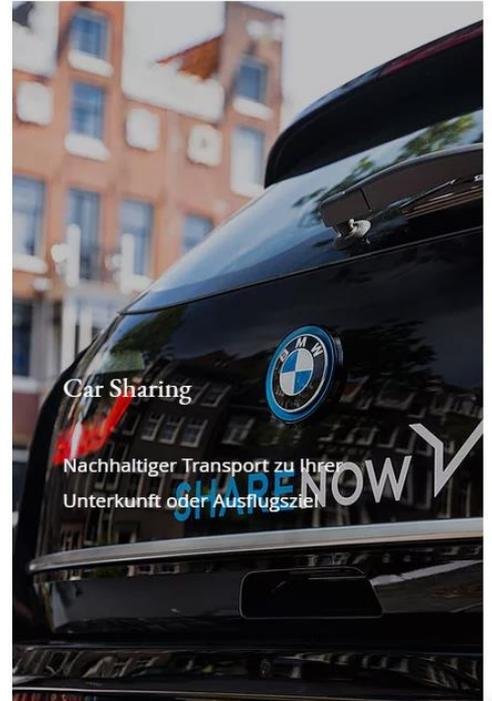
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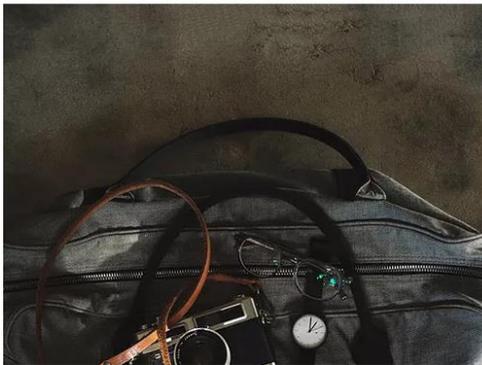


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