Global Best Practices
in Community Engagement

Section 5 of 6

miles PARTNERSHIP

GROUP NAO

Acknowledgement and Thanks

Thank you to our Knowledge and Destination Partners for their invaluable involvement in the Time for DMOcracy, North America Edition.

Destination Partners in Time for DMOcracy (North America)

Thank you to our North America Destination Partners who supported, contributed to and collaborated in this important global research study:

Knowledge Partners on Media & Communications

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Introduction

A successful visitor industry relies upon support and understanding from the community on the role of tourism in their destination. Not only supporting, but understanding tourism is vital to a thoughtful and considered discussion on the future of tourism in a community. It is also essential to ensure there is a warm welcome to visitors and sustainable resources (e.g. funding) for DMOs and the tourism sector to effectively market and manage tourism.

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collaboration with Miles Partnership and other partners in the Time for DMOcracy study.

At a Glance

WHAT TO KNOW

- While a majority of DMOs report engaging in media and communication efforts with local residents they are typically engaging with locals in limited ways

- The Time for DMOcracy global study has reinforced the importance communication strategies with local residents. DMOs should have a media and communication plan for engaging with their local market including residents, businesses, government and other key stakeholders.

- Some obvious areas of communication are to extend responsible travel and stewardship messages to the local community and connecting with residents to encourage better quality VFR travel.

- Monitoring trends in both traditional and social media helps identify opportunities and challenges, including emerging 'hot button' issues around tourism.

- Online and specialist community participation platforms are largely underutilized to engage with locals. Only two in five (40%) North American DMOs report using online platforms within the past 1-2 years to engage with locals.

WHAT TO DO

We identified 8 steps for an effective media and communications strategy that engages effectively with your local community:

1. Expand your Media & Communications Programs to include your Local Community

2. Have an Up-To-Date Communications Plan

3. Continually Monitor Traditional & social media

4. Build Strong Relationships with Key Opinion Leaders & Advocates for Tourism

5. Simple, Consistent Messaging - Practice the 3-5-7 Rule

6. Embrace the Power of Positive Messaging

7. Compliment Facts with Relatable Stories from Locals

8. Add Online Solutions to your Communication Strategies

RESOURCES

We highlight and share a range of critical research, case study examples and other resources to inform your action. See Page 17.

What To Know

CRITICAL LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS

a. DMOs are typically engaging with locals in limited ways in their media and communications programs

The Time for DMOcracy global study has reinforced the importance for DMOs of investing in their local market (i). However, their media and communications efforts have traditionally been an extension of promoting the destination to visitors; focused primarily on reaching visitors, generating incremental spending and room tax (i.e., non-residents).

The DMO survey which was conducted as part of the Time for DMOcracy study highlighted that while most DMOs report engaging with their local residents via media and communications (69%) it is often in limited ways; press releases that included local media or sharing event or visitor related content for locals to use themselves or when hosting Visiting Friends and Relatives.

69% of DMOs report communication and media efforts with local residents but typically in limited areas

As part of the Time for DMOcracy study we worked with the College of Information & Communications at the University of South Carolina to analyze the nature of traditional and social media coverage and conversations on tourism on the destinations of the Time for DMOcracy DMO Partners. This highlighted a range of positive and constructive messaging on tourism that we outline below.

b. Working with the Community to Develop Creative, Campaigns and Content

An increasing number of DMOs are including the community in the creative development of marketing programs. This helps ensure the messaging is authentic to the destination and its community. **Discover Puerto Rico's Live Boricua** campaign (ii) is a prime example of how locals can be included from the onset.
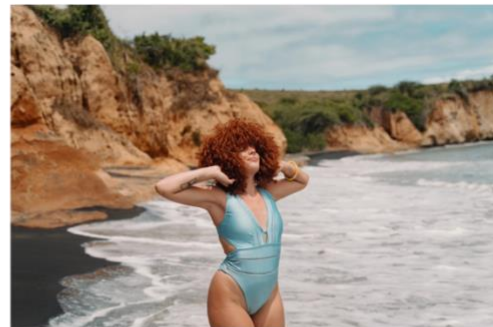
This started with a local focus group that rated their favorite Live Boricua moments so that Discover Puerto Rico could share them through the lens of the locals. In total, 300 Puerto Ricans shared their input and ultimately defined Live Boricua for the DMO. This emphasis on including locals carried through every element of the campaign, including the soundtrack, still photography, production crew, costumes, etc. The media kick-off included crafted stories and shared recommended itineraries by Boricuas to show travelers why and how to Live Boricua, and specialized mailers with locally sourced products were sent to Diaspora influencers and media. While the Live Boricua campaign has been successful based on traditional metrics such as impressions and influencing visitation, it is important to highlight another relevant metric - reactions to the campaign among residents and Diaspora audiences has been overwhelmingly positive, with 85% indicating that they are proud to share the Puerto Rican culture and lifestyle with visitors.

c. Reaching the Community with Stewardship & Responsible User Messaging

An increasing number of destinations are investing in messaging around responsible travel, and this now includes destinations that are including locals in this communication.

Given the importance of locals to VFR travel and those who have recently moved to a destination, this outreach is important to maximize the influence of such communications.

Care for Colorado – an educational program undertaken with the environmental group, Leave No Trace, has added content specifically aimed at local Coloradans and those who those hosting out of State visitors. The program has invested in developing content including songs and video that are fun and engaging to consumer or share – for both locals and visitors.
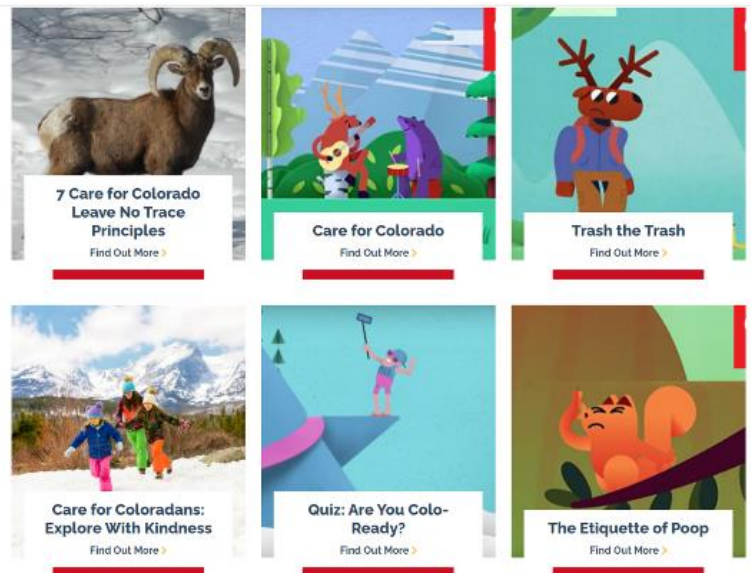
Mammoth Lakes involved the local community throughout the development of their responsible visitor messaging (iii). While developing the stewardship messaging campaign, the DMO sought feedback from the local community which identified some questions and concerns – specifically over the selection of a particular song. The song was changed, a potential PR issue avoided, and the communication program was launched with the confidence and support of the community. This lesson emphasizes that importance of community feedback as an important check in informing all destination messaging and campaigns.

d. Communications around the Development & Management of Tourism

Time for DMOcracy has highlighted that most American and Canadian Residents feel they are not consulted or involved in important decisions on the development or management of tourism in their community. What impact of tourism need to be better studied, managed or mitigated? what improvements in infrastructure are needed? While many Destinations seek some input from their local residents on the future of tourism when developing or updating their Destination Master Plan or Sustainable Tourism Strategy, this is not enough. Communications on the options and alternatives around the development of tourism should be ongoing – and integrated with other parts of community engagement including a Community Participation Model (eg: a Residents Advisory Panel) and Resident Sentiment Research.

B Like Breckenridge – is a communications program developed with an understanding that managing tourism responsibility in a destination needs to involve both the locals and visitors in partnership. Its messaging – along with other areas of community engagement such as resident sentiment research are an integral part of the Destination Management plan for Breckenridge.

An increasing number of destinations have this type of ongoing communication program related to destination management including Park City, Utah, Montreal, Quebec and Anaheim, California (the later part of a wider city led initiative to seek local neighborhood feedback on a range of issues and budget decisions including tourism).

e. Opportunities with Visiting Friends & Relatives

Over 40% of leisure travel in the U.S involves at least a component of visiting friends and relatives (iv). Hence local residents are influential in the motivation to travel and in their friends and family's length of stay and in the nature of the experiences they undertake. Despite this very few DMOs have any type of dedicated VFR marketing and content program designed to inform and motivate higher quality VFR travel. Feedback from DMOs point to the perception that VFR travel is lower quality because it may not include a hotel stay. However, research has shown that over one third of VFR visitors (v) are not staying with friends and family – but instead at hotels or short-term rentals.

Figure 1 Some destination visitor guides invite locals to order them for their visiting friends and family but very few DMOs have invested in content or communications to stimulate the VFR market

This suggests a significant benefit of including local residents in marketing and communications to influence on VFR travel – as well as boosting local resident's own knowledge and pride in their destination.
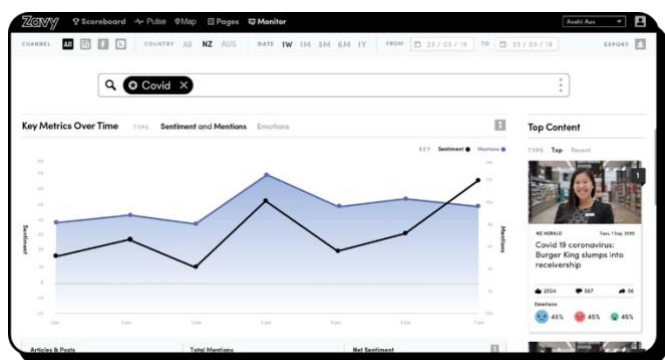
f. Monitoring Trends in Media and Social Media

Monitoring trends in media and social media helps identify opportunities and challenges, including emerging 'hot button' issues. DMOs should be aware of what is being said about tourism in their destination across both traditional and social media.

This should be a process of both informal engagement with media and more formalized monitoring and management. Develop a routine for you and/or selected staff to review important local media but also invest time in meeting regularly with local journalists and 'influencers' – to brief them on your work and to better understand their focus.

More formalized monitoring of media is also important through both traditional and social media sentiment analysis tools. Use tools that aggregate a good cross section of important sources and identify opportunities and challenges by focusing on the trend line and outliers across tourism related topics.

Comparing trends associated with your destination with your peer destinations can also help you understand how you stack up to your competition from the lens of the media and social media (e.g., Is online sentiment towards your destination more positive or negative than your peers? Does the media mention your destination more frequently?).

Monitoring conversations about your destination in the media and social media can help you understand if a community challenge, such as homelessness, is a tourism challenge from the lens of the media and social media (vi). Monitoring stories and fluctuations in sentiment analysis helps the DMO to quickly identify an emerging issue and develop a communication response early.

Figure 2 – Social Media Listening Platform Zavy monitors conversations, competitor analysis and platform performance

Our review of sentiment analysis of media identified a range of challenges for DMOs (vii) The available tools have limitations in analyzing the context, meaning and importance of content and conversations around tourism. The sentiment analysis tools are only as good as the algorithm. For example, algorithms cannot detect sarcasm and often do not analyze emojis, social media posts. This means media content can be miscategorized in terms of the sentiment it is expressing. Another challenge is that even when the sentiment is analyzed correctly, the data may not be relevant or result in actionable insights for your organization (viii). Although it is unlikely that *all* noise can be reduced, substantial consideration should be given to the search parameters used to monitor media and social media conversations about your destination to reduce the noise.

This includes search terms, excluded words (this is especially important if there are multiple destinations with the same name), finding words that are near each other (e.g., tourism and your destination name must be within X words of each other), and so on.

Online and specialist community participation platforms are largely underutilized to engage with locals. Only two in five (40%) North American DMOs report using online platforms within the past 1-2 years to engage with locals.

Differences were found based on the type of DMO, with rural/county DMOs (49%) and small-medium CVBs (48%) being more likely than large CVBs (32%) and state and provincial tourism organizations (18%) to use these platforms to engage with locals. Even fewer DMOs report using specialist community participation platforms such as Granicus or CityLab. These results reveal an opportunity for DMOs to leverage online platforms to engage with locals, which could help them overcome a major challenge to resident and community engagement – participation is dominated by a few 'loud' voices – it is difficult to get wide representation (79.8%) (ix).

What To Do

8 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

1. Expand your Media & Communications Programs to include your Local Community

2. Have an Up-To-Date Communications Plan

3. Continually Monitor Traditional & social media

4. Build Strong Relationships with Key Opinion Leaders & Advocates for Tourism

5. Simple, Consistent Messaging - Practice the 3-5-7 Rule

6. Embrace the Power of Positive Messaging

7. Compliment Facts with Relatable Stories from Locals

8. Add Online Solutions to your Communication Strategies

1. Expand your Media & Communications Programs to Include Local Community

The bulk of DMO's current media and communications efforts are focused only on visitors. This needs to change. Ensure your communications plan, strategy, and resources includes reaching your key local stakeholders as well as the wider community (x). Some simple steps include involving locals in a content creation program, like Discover Puerto Rico did with their Live Boricua Campaign (xi) or engaging with the community on stewardship messages and to encourage more positive VFR travel. Equally important is updating, educating and seeking feedback from local residents on important decisions on the development and management of tourism in your destination – as illustrated by Breckenridge's Destination Management Plan and their ongoing engagement with local via their B Like Breckenridge program.

Skift

Puerto Rico Empowers Locals for First Post-Pandemic Tourism Campaign

Humanizing local communities in popular global tourism destinations is still frighteningly not happening as it should, but Puerto Rico's new campaign shares local stories told about, and by, real individuals to portray a genuine picture of who they are.

— *Mary Ann Ha*

2. Have an Up-to-Date Communications Plan

 Communications plans need to be kept up to date. At a minimum, you should update them on an annual basis. Refine and update the plan whenever critical information (e.g., contact details) changes. Lessons learned and best practices should be integrated into this plan along with clear objectives and how to measure results. Your communication strategy should include a crisis communication plan – how to manage a challenging event or story. Time is of the essence during crises. You will be better prepared to respond to a crisis efficiently and effectively if you have an up-to-date communications plan. (xii)

3. Continually Monitor Traditional & Social Media

You should monitor trends in the topics being explored by and the sentiment of media, as well as trends in the sentiment, issues, and opportunities surfacing on social media on an ongoing basis (xiii). There are many ways to do so, ranging from signing up for Google Alerts to having a dedicated staff member whose responsibilities include monitoring media and social media. Search parameters are key to reducing "noise." The relevant information gathered from monitoring these platforms should help inform additional research needs and be integrated into your community engagement programs or media and communications efforts.

Recommended Actions
Based on Results for 22 North American Destination

1. Build a system of monitoring what is being said about your destination in the prestige media and social media
2. Build stronger relationships with key stakeholders - such as media, politicians, and non-paid influencers – to build awareness and support for tourism in your destination
3. Develop a "program" for content creation in both media and social media that revolves around destination awareness and support
   a) Consider influencers as a way of building awareness and support, particularly in smaller destinations

4. Build Strong Relationships with Key Opinion Leaders & Advocate for Tourism

Develop a diverse coalition of partners; informed, ready and available to engage on the importance of travel and tourism to your community. These allies and advocates should include a diverse range of stakeholders including politicians, media, online influencers, key industry leaders and community leaders, to build awareness and support for tourism (xiv).Work consistently to expand the breadth of your network of tourism advocates – in order to expand the reach of your message.

This includes engaging with allies in diverse communities who traditionally have not been part of the conversation around tourism in many communities. Especially in difficult times of a tourism related issue or crisis, it is about ensuring that the right person is telling the right story to the right audience. You may not always be the right person for an audience. Instead, you should have advocates who are ready to be engaged to reach their unique audiences (xv).

5. Simple, Consistent Messaging – Practice the 3-5-7 Rule

Although most DMOs and their communities have a complicated truth, you must get to the simple truths. In our Learning Lab, Anne Madison of the Cruise Line Industry Association (CLIA) emphasized a 3-5-7 Rule to plan your communications. The starting point is that 3 is the "magic number." Base your message in 3 strong, powerful, positive messages, that is easier for you to remember, for others to remember, and for others to share. Work hard to distil the issues around tourism into a few simple messages. It is a reality in public relations that:

The 3-5-7 Rule focuses on the way people receive messaging until it becomes credible, and they do something about it. It takes: 3 times, 3 different ways before someone hears you; 5 times, 5 different ways before they believe you; and, 7 times, 7 different ways before they do something about it (xvi). Integrate these concepts into your media and communication with simple, consistent messaging.

6. Embrace the Power of Positive Messaging

Negative messages tend to be more memorable than positive ones. Oftentimes, if you repeat the negative, you are reinforcing it. Embrace the power of positive messaging by emphasizing the benefits, value and potential of tourism when discussing it in your community (xvii). Each year, Destinations International releases the Tourism Lexicon (xviii) for the US, Canada and a few other nations, to help DMOs communicate their work and value in simple, effective language that resonates with tourism stakeholders. We have summarized the latest Lexicon in the research summary here or see the 2020 edition here. This resource can be used to integrate more positive messaging into your story of tourism that resonates with your audiences.

## 7. Compliment Facts with Relatable Stories from Locals

Many programs that DMOs invest money in not only help tourism, but also enhance the overall quality of life for the local community. For example, if your destination is developing a mountain bike trail look for local stories that illustrate the potential, positive impact of the project.

"Tell me a fact, I'll learn.

Tell me the truth, and I'll believe

But tell me a story, and it will live in my heart forever."

Steve Sabol, Filmmaker and Co-founder of NFL Films
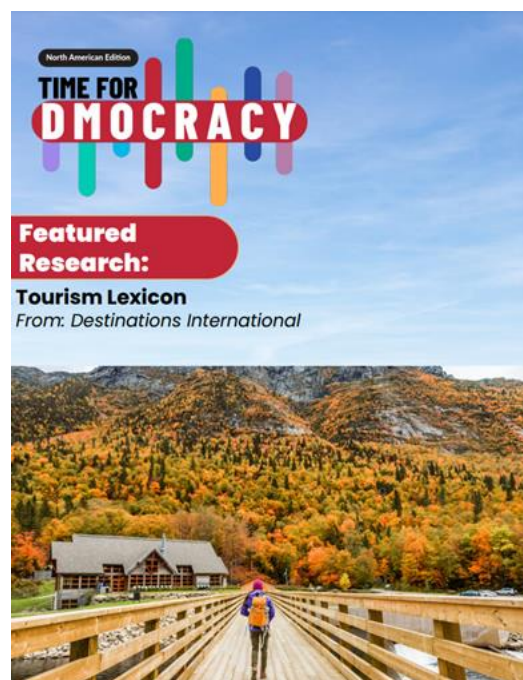
Present the facts of the tourism, recreational and economic benefits of the investment but support these facts with positive, real-world stories of how both visitors and locals will benefit. Look for stories that illustrate how a project will make a personal and positive difference to their experience of your destination or their lives in the community (xix).

8. Add online Solutions to you Communication Strategies

Add online solutions into your communications program. Start by simple enhancements to your destination website to include information focused for residents including What to Do (events focused on locals, places that welcome friends and family groups) and What to Know – for example, information on tourism and hospitality jobs and how tourism is being planned and managed in your destination.

Compliment this with a local residents focused email newsletter and social media content strategy. Include online surveys and other opportunities for feedback. Finally consider specialist community participation platforms – either alone or conjunction with government agencies. These include solutions such as Granicus or CityLab that offer a more sophisticated platform for engaging, communicating and consulting with your local community.
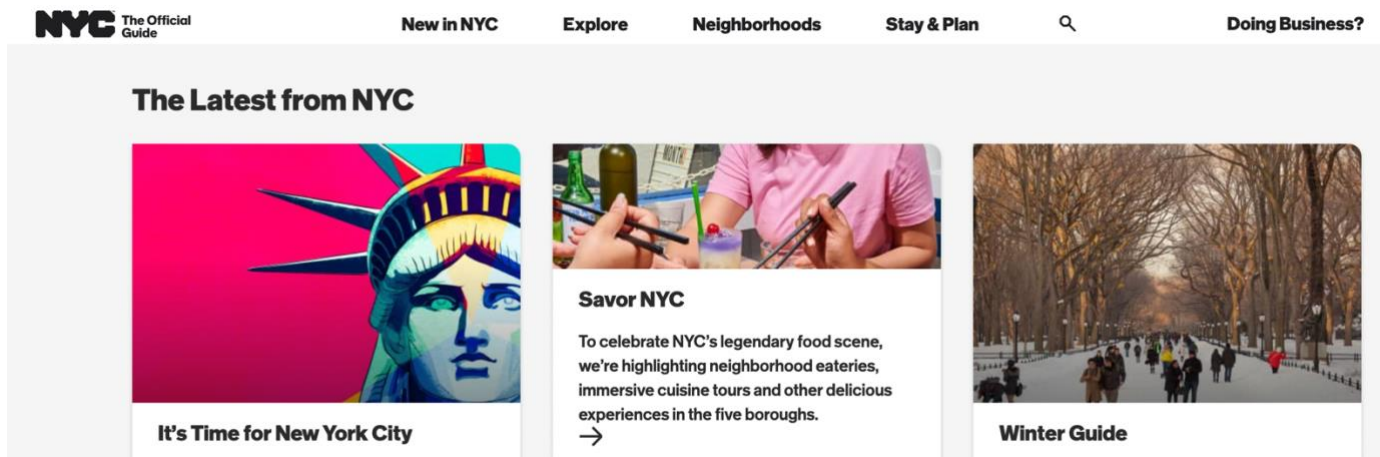
See the Community Participation section of Time for DMOcracy reports for more information.

Resources to Use

IMPORTANT RESEARCH, ANALYSIS & OTHER RESOURCES

Highlighted Resources:

1. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022

2. Case Study: Mammoth Lakes | Stewardship Messaging, November 1st, 2022

3. Case Study: International Examples | Stewardship Comms, November 21st, 2022

4. Featured Research: Media Analysis on Overtourism, December 1st, 2022

5. Featured Research: Tourism Lexicon, December 1st, 2022

6. Case Study: Live Boricua | Media Engagement, December 6th, 2022

References & Sources:

i. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

ii. Case Study: Live Boricua | Media Engagement, December 6th, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

iii. Case Study: Mammoth Lakes | Stewardship Messaging, November 1st, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

iv. State of the American Traveler – Destination Analysts, Traveler Segments Edition, VFR summary - September 2022

v. State of the American Traveler, 2016 Report, Destination Analysts

vi. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

vii. The State and Provincial Research Network LISTSERV®, November 18th, 2022: https://peach.ease.lsoft.com/scripts/wa-PEACH.exe?A0=STATE_PROVINCIAL_RESEARCHNETWORK&A0=STATE_PROVINCIAL_RESEARCHNETWORK

viii. For example, a series of posts from airline passengers having to land in your destination because of weather conditions would be analyzed incorrectly by most media sentiment tools. Such posts would be categorized as negative sentiment for weather in your destination, even though it focuses on bad weather in a different location.

ix. DMO Survey Summary: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

x. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xi. Case Study: Live Boricua | Media Engagement, December 6th, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xii. Toolbox for Crisis Communications in Tourism: Checklist and Best Practices, UNWTO, 2011: https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284413652

xiii. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xiv. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xv. Involving a Broad and Diverse Range of Stakeholders in Advocacy, University of South Carolina and North Carolina State University, December 2022, https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/hrsm/research/centers/richardson_family_smartstate/insights/actionable_advocacy/

xvi. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xvii. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xviii. Featured Research: Tourism Lexicon, December 1st, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

xix. Learning Lab 5: Media & Communications Best Practices, September 22nd, 2022: https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/

Other Resources:

Media Analysis and Sentiment Reports for the Destination Partners in the Time for DMOcracy study from the Social Media Insights Lab, College of Information and Communications at the University of South Carolina

Overtourism: An Analysis of Its Coverage in the Media by Using Framing Theory, Tourism Review International- Clark & Nyaupane, 2020,

Social Media and Crisis Communication in Tourism and Hospitality, Barbe & Pennington-Gray, Handbook for e-Tourism,2020

Destination Image Through Social Media Analytics and Survey Method, Lin, Liang, Xue, Pan, & Schroeder, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 2021

About the Lexicon, Destinations International

Tourism Lexicon: United States (2021 Release), Destinations International

Tourism Lexicon: Canada (Newest Release), Destinations International

Tourism Lexicon: Australia Edition (2021 Release), Destinations International

The Pandemic Lexicon, Destinations International

The New Tourism Lexicon: Rewriting Our Industry's Narrative, Destinations International, July 2018

Advocacy in the Face of Ideology, December 2017

Toolbox for Crisis Communication in Tourism, UN World Tourism Organization, 2011