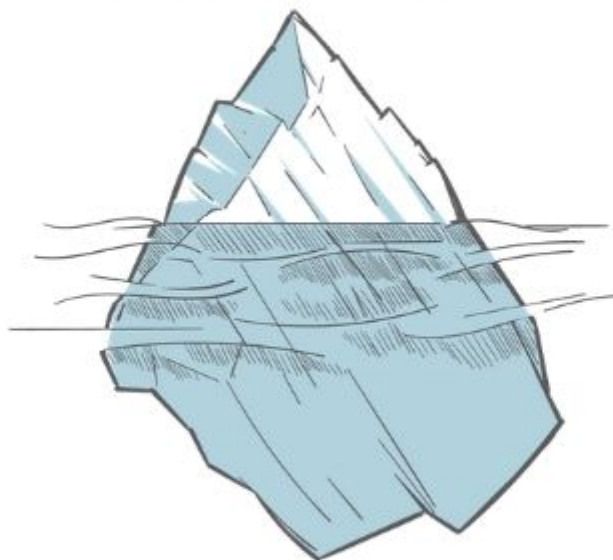


TOURNET



Cross-sectoral networks for
sustainable tourism

IO2- Manual for sustainable tourist destinations and EcoBrand

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List of contents

1. INTRODUCTION:	4
2. EXISTING EUROPEAN LABELS IN TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY: GREEN LABELS	6
3. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR THE CSTN	14
3.1 WATER QUALITY AND CSTN	14
3.2 BIODIVERSITY AND CSTN	17
3.3 MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED NATURAL SPACES.	20
3.4 INTANGIBLE HERITGE AND CSTN	30
3.5 DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY	36
4. TOURNET ECOBRAND	41
5. MARKETING TOOLS	46



1. INTRODUCTION:

The CSTN Green Manual is a framework to develop a holistic sustainable approach within the destination. It should include as many ideas as possible. In that sense the CSTN Green Manual is a summary of guidelines to be used as supporting material for developing a sustainable tourist destination. The CSTN stakeholders should take it as a guide to develop joint green actions.

On the other hand, the EcoBrand is the tool that makes some elements compulsory. Therefore, the Manual helps to develop green strategies in an open sense while the EcoBrand label includes the elements that are compulsory to achieve. So, when visiting an EcoBrand labelled destination developed by a CSTN we know that we are going to find all those elements.

For instance, a guideline for the CSTN Manual is that all hotels and restaurants should include posters and pictures with the local biodiversity. If it is included in the Green Manual it means that it is a recommendation while if it is in the EcoBrand means that it becomes compulsory.

Regarding both the Green Manual and the EcoBrand, we can differentiate two management views within a CSTN: internal and external.

The **internal management** view is related to each stakeholder. It includes elements like water management in hotels, reducing food waste in restaurants, green energies in taxis, Km 0 products in restaurants, etc

Usually, the existing European labels in tourism sustainability are mainly focused on internal management. It is in that sense that external management is the key element for a CSTN.

Generally speaking, a CSTN should develop an extended vision. This extended vision relies mainly on external management.

The **external management** view is a holistic approach due to the fact that CSTN stakeholders are cross-sectorial. The external management is mainly related to elements like biodiversity, heritage protection, education and training, management of protected natural spaces, intangible elements to promote, etc.

For instance, some restaurants can develop a strategy to limit food waste but a CSTN, due to the fact that the charity shelter is a stakeholder, can develop a formal strategy to provide them with spare food.

For instance, the CSTN can limit crowded areas and develop others due to the fact that local authorities are stakeholders.



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For instance, due to the fact that the VET school is a CSTN stakeholder they can match their offer according to their needs. And vice-versa.

To sum it up, the extended vision is the key element of the CSTN. The Green Manual is the main tool.

The EcoBrand is a second step. Once a CSTN has some experience developing the Green Manual, an EcoBrand is a suitable approach to obtain visibility. Accordingly, it is a strategy to obtain more tourists but also more green inspired tourists. It acts as a quality mark.

While most tourist green labels are focused on the internal element, the extended vision should be the key element also for the CSTN EcoBrand in order to ensure an authentic experience.

Authentic and sustainable tourist experiences are the CSTN future!



2. EXISTING EUROPEAN LABELS IN TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY: GREEN LABELS

Tourism is an activity with huge impact. Accordingly, tourism green labels tend to promote sustainability.

A cross-sectoral approach is a suitable framework to manage sustainability in a small and fragmented tourism destination. Sustainability is the key element. Therefore, a cross-sectoral tourism network (CSTN) should develop their own tourism green label.

A cross-sectoral tourism network (CSTN) is a management approach to promote a win-win relationship within a small and fragmented tourist destination. It helps to develop a holistic approach. For instance, it allows to reduce the negative side effects of tourism, like pollution, but also to promote handicrafts, local food or traditions. It faces sustainability with a wide approach.

In this course we propose the development of a management model for sustainable tourism in small destinations in order to promote development in small communities: the cross-sectoral tourism network (CSTN). The CSTN is a key tool to develop a tourist destination in a sustainable way. Keeping the tourist destination fragmented allows to have more tourist and to protect both natural and cultural environment. The tourist dispersion becomes natural. The CSTN also fosters the heterogeneity within the tourist destination.

This CSTN approach is directly linked with the Sustainable Development Goals. This CSTN strategy addresses the challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

CSTN's can include many types of stakeholders, not only tourist ones, fostering the sustainability possibilities in a holistic way.

A suitable tool for a CSTN's network is to develop a green label. Accordingly, it is important to learn from existent green labels in the tourism sector. Now, we introduce four main study cases.

STUDY CASES:

1. The Green Globe Program
2. The Slovenia Green Scheme
3. GREEN DESTINATIONS TOP 100
4. EUROPARC



1. THE GREEN GLOBE PROGRAM

The Green Globe program traces its roots back to the United Nations Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992, where 182 heads of state from around the world endorsed the Agenda 21 principles of sustainable development. The Earth Summit was unprecedented for a U.N. conference, as it was the first time world leaders acknowledged, as a group, that consumption of non-renewable resources was leading to environmental degradation.

In the early 1990's the term sustainable tourism was in its infancy. Pioneering tourism operators concerned about the effect their operations had on the environment and how best to measure that impact, were often categorized into special interest tourism. Green Globe was developed to provide a way forward for tourism organizations who were interested in measuring their environmental impact and then developing and implementing strategies to reduce those impacts.

Following the Summit and after 2 years of additional development, a Green Globe membership program was established. By the end of 1994, 19 travel industry associations had endorsed the program and through joint marketing strategies, promoted Green Globe to their members.

By 1995, Green Globe membership had risen to 350 in 74 countries. Green Globe's environmental program played an important role at World Travel Market and helped World Travel Market organize the exhibition's first Environmental Awareness Day.

The Green Globe destination program was designed in 1997 to extend corporate improvement and Agenda 21 principles to communities. Pilot programs were initiated in Vilamoura (Portugal), Jersey, Crete and Corfu. The first regional partnership was established with Caribbean Hotel Association under the banner of the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism CAST (<http://www.cha-cast.com>). By 1998, membership in the Green Globe program had risen to 500 entities in 100 countries. Also in 1998, a strategic alliance was formed with the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) in Australia, in which STCRC would act as a global research facility on sustainable tourism, actively promoting the Green Globe program.

In March 1999, Green Globe presented its annual Green Globe achievement awards to 20 companies at ITB Berlin, one of the world's leading trade shows for the travel industry. Under the WTTC umbrella and together with the International Hotel & Restaurant Association, Green Globe's certification and destination management program was highlighted at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which took place in New York in April 1999. Green Globe also became a



separate and autonomous organization from the World Travel & Tourism Council in 1999.

In 2000, Green Globe Asia Pacific (GGAP), a joint venture involving Green Globe, Ltd. (UK), was launched at the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Conference in Hong Kong.

The 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg provided the structure for Green Globe to assist businesses in achieving the desired outcomes for sustainable tourism. The program was also developed to comply with the Mohonk Agreement, which summarized the guidelines for an international sustainable tourism certification program.

Green Globe Accreditation was established in 2002 to maintain quality of assessment services offered through accredited certification bodies, including SGS (worldwide), AJA (worldwide) Groupa Mendez (Mexico) and GT Certification (South America). Assessors were trained on four continents to deliver local assessment services.

Green Globe Certification

The Green Globe certification is a structured assessment of the sustainability performance of travel and tourism businesses and their supply chain partners. Businesses can monitor improvements and document achievements leading to certification of their enterprises' sustainable operation and management.

The Green Globe Standard includes 44 core criteria supported by over 380 compliance indicators. The applicable indicators vary by type of certification, geographical area as well as local factors. The entire Green Globe Standard is reviewed and updated twice per calendar year.

Green Globe is active in harmonizing with other established sustainability certification programs around the world. The process of harmonization contributes to maintaining core criteria and at the same time addresses regional issues through the adoption of locally developed standards

The Green Globe Standard is based on the following international standards and agreements:

- Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
- Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (STC Partnership)
- Baseline Criteria of the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas
- Agenda 21 and principles for Sustainable Development endorsed by 182 Governments at the United Nations Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992
- ISO 9001 / 14001 / 19011 (International Standard Organization)



2. The Slovenia Green Scheme

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism was implemented since 2015 under the leadership of the Slovenian Tourist Board.

Supported by GoodPlace and Green Destinations, the program aimed to feature Slovenia as the world's most sustainable tourism destination.

Some of the achievements since the implementation of the program:

- 54 SLOVENIA GREEN DESTINATIONS
- 36% OF MUNICIPALITIES AWARDED
- 78% OF TOURISTS VISIT SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS

The Slovenia Green Scheme expanded its scope and developed standards to award accommodations, parks, travel agencies, attractions, cuisine and beaches.

3. GREEN DESTINATIONS TOP 100

The Green Destinations Top 100 destinations are selected based on the annual Top 100 list, featuring the 100 destinations with the best Good Practice Stories.

These destinations are working hard and making progress towards a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry while creating a more attractive experience for local communities and travellers. Their innovative and effective stories are shared with others to be used as inspiring examples. Since 2014, every year (with the exception of 2015), Green Destinations is proud to reward 100 destinations for their efforts and put them in the spotlight on a global scale.

Applications to the Top 100 competition can be submitted by any person, organisation or company on behalf of the destination.

The procedure and evaluation of the Top 100 competition are supervised and supported by a partnership of organisations, led by Green Destinations.

For 2021 Top 100 destinations will be asked to submit a Good Practice Story, focusing on one of the following categories:

1. Localizing the destination supply chain
2. Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
3. Tourism Reset & Recovery
4. Environment & Climate
5. Culture & Communities



6. Nature & Ecotourism

The evaluation of Good Practice Story is based on the following criteria:

- Completeness of documentation
- Level of innovation
- Effectiveness
- Transferability of innovation
- Presence of the Sustainability pillars (Economic, Social and Environmental).
- First year applicant must address 15 of the 30 core criteria.
- Second year applicant must address all 30 core criteria.

FIRST YEAR CRITERIA

1. Sustainable destination coordinator
2. Inventory of destination assets
3. Destination management policy or strategy
4. Responding to tourism impacts on nature
5. Landscape & Scenery
6. Solid waste reduction
7. Reducing transport emissions from travel
8. Reducing energy consumption
9. Tangible cultural heritage
10. Intangible heritage
11. Community involvement in planning
12. Supporting local entrepreneurs
13. Promoting local products and services
14. Health & safety
15. Promoting sustainability among enterprises



SECOND YEAR CRITERIA

1. All 1st year criteria +
2. Managing visitor pressure
3. Visitor behaviour at sensitive sites
4. Nature conservation & tourism monitoring
5. Animal welfare
6. Noise
7. Light pollution
8. Waste water treatment
9. Waste separation & recycling
10. Renewable Energy
11. Responding to climate risks
12. Managing tourism impacts on culture
13. Human rights
14. Inhabitant satisfaction
15. Property exploitation
16. Sustainability standards

4. EUROPARC

The EUROPARC Federation is both the voice of Europe's protected areas and their umbrella organization. It brings together a wide range of organizations and individuals involved in the policy and practice of managing national parks and other protected landscapes. Its members represent more than 400 nationally protected areas in 36 European countries. EUROPARC aims to raise awareness of and support for protected areas and to promote good management practices among them.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) in Protected Areas is a practical management tool that enables Protected Areas to develop tourism sustainably. The ECST is a process divided into 3 parts:



1. Sustainable Destinations

Embedded in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas are these important concepts:

- protection of the natural and cultural heritage,
- participation by all stakeholders,
- effective partnership working,
- planning to prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy,
- to realise the environmental, social and economic benefits of everyone working more sustainably.

2. Sustainable Partners in ECST Areas

Businesses recognised and assessed for their sustainability practices receive the following benefits:

- Closer engagement with protected area authorities;
- Right to use the ECST logo;
- Visibility on ECST websites; Introduce your data here.
- Engagement with training and marketing opportunities as may be developed;
- Networking with other businesses recognised by the ECST;
- Possible engagement with projects and funding.

3. Sustainable Tour Operators in ECST Areas

For sustainable tour operators bringing visitors to Protected Areas.

SUSTAINABILITY & COOPERATION

Enables a closer engagement with Protected Area authorities;

Strengthens the sustainability of products and services;

Increases visitor satisfaction;

Allows you to gain measurable environmental, economic and social benefits;

Directly contributes to the protection and sustainable management of your natural and cultural heritage.



VISIBILITY & PROMOTION

Right to use the ECST logos for Partners and Tour Operators;

Visibility on the EUROPARC website and network of Sustainable Destinations;

Eligibility to apply for the STAR Awards, a special EUROPARC award for Business Partners and Tour Operators, awarded at the European Parliament;

Recognition and promotion at national and European level.

NETWORKING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Access to the European Network of Sustainable Destinations for the development of new business opportunities;

Networking with other businesses in sustainable tourism;

Possibility of engaging with projects and funding;

Learning new ideas through participation in the ECST Network Meetings;

Engagement with training and marketing opportunities;

Access to EUROPARC “library” of online tools and trainings in sustainable tourism.

3. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR THE CSTN

This chapter includes several important topics for the sustainability strategy for the CSTN. The first topic is the importance of water quality, how to manage water in wetlands regarding agriculture activities, which we should take into account since the amount of water present in a wetland can vary greatly. Finally, it is highlighted the tourism in wetlands since they are ideal sites for tourism thanks to their natural beauty and biodiversity.

The second topic is biodiversity and CSTN. Here it is mentioned that wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet and which are the main benefits of these areas. Furthermore, environmental education is explained, as well as possible activities such as visits and routes, workshops etc. And finally, the example of birdwatching is explained.

The third topic is the management of protected natural spaces, highlighting the basics concepts of protected areas, which is essential to understand how these spaces work and finally the management planning, because if there is no planning, there is a much greater chance that actions will be dispersed and synergies will be missed.

The fourth topic is intangible heritage and CSTN in which we propose 28 actions that a CSTN could develop in order to foster intangible heritage tourism.

The final topic is digital tools to support sustainability, here a number of digital tools that can be used in order to continue working on stimulating and re-starting tourism based on sustainability and innovation are explained, such as Smart City and Smart Tourism, Big data, Drones etc.

To summarise this chapter includes all the relevant topics to create a sustainability strategy for the CSTN and we believe following these steps it is possible to reach the goal.

3.1 WATER QUALITY AND CSTN

As a society, we – you and I – use landscapes to live in, to go to school or work in and to relax in. We also use landscapes to produce food and to make other products. The way in which we use landscapes can be divided into three main functions: for people, for profit and for the planet (the three 'P's). We therefore need to decide how to use landscapes for our benefit (societally and economically, therefore for both people and profit) without harming nature (the planet). We are using a landscape sustainably if the three main functions are in balance. It is important that we use landscapes sustainably so that we, but also future generations, have a good environment to live in.

Water management in wetlands with high impact of agricultural activities

The distribution of water from rivers, coastal ravines or water bodies such as lakes and lagoons to meet the demands of crops, has been a constant since medieval times in Mediterranean areas. The hydraulic technology of the Andalusians, not without a significant dose of inventiveness, made it possible to direct the scarce water resources of these Mediterranean environments to the primitive lands of the orchards. The development of these techniques has in many cases allowed deep transformations of the territory in which, despite becoming anthropized landscapes and governed by man, result in valuable agricultural ecosystems. In fact, certain organisms have adapted over the years to landscapes created by humans.

In Spain, especially in coastal areas, there are many wetlands. Practically all of these areas have at some time been intervened by man to develop agricultural (normally flooded crops, such as rice fields), livestock or extractive activities (hunting, fishing, salt, etc.).

In the case of agricultural activities developed in wetlands, these have implied important transformations of the territory in terms of water management. Water inputs and outputs, channels as well as water levels and flooding periods are artificially controlled to meet the needs of the crops grown there and even other activities such as fishing or hunting. Although it is a natural area highly modified by man, it conserves a rich biodiversity.

Wetlands are mainly defined by the presence of saturated or waterlogged soils. A wetland is an ecosystem inundated by water, either permanently or seasonally, where oxygen-free processes prevail. The primary factor that distinguishes wetlands from other landforms or water bodies is the characteristic vegetation of aquatic plants, adapted to the unique hydric soil. This concept has diffused boundaries and different interpretations when is used to catalogue wetlands types. The Ramsar Convention coined a definition globally accepted to individualize these areas, although some regional or national definitions are also frequently used. See for instance the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service definition (1979):

“Wetlands are lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water. Wetlands must have one or more of the following three attributes:

- 1) at least periodically, the land supports predominantly hydrophytes.
- 2) the substrate is predominantly undrained hydric soil.
- 3) the substrate is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.”

Summarizing, wetlands are defined by the presence of water. They are areas where the presence of water determines most, if not all, the biological, physical, and chemical characteristics of an area. Many wetlands are transitional zones between upland and aquatic ecosystems, although others are scattered across the landscape in upland depressions that collect water or in zones where groundwater comes to the surface. The amount of water present in a wetland can vary greatly. Some wetlands are permanently flooded, while others are only seasonally flooded but retain saturated soils throughout much of the unflooded period. Still other wetlands may rarely flood, but saturated soil conditions still are present long enough to support wetland-adapted plants and for hydric soil characteristics to develop.

<http://www.wetlands-initiative.org/what-is-a-wetland/>

<https://www.ramsar.org/>

<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/what-wetland>

Tourism in wetlands

Wetlands are ideal sites for tourism thanks to their natural beauty and biodiversity. Income from this concept can be significant and support local and national livelihoods. Wetlands also provide other services, e.g. water, food, water purification, erosion control, etc., which benefit tourists and encourage them to stay in these areas.

The income generated from tourism in and around wetlands can be substantial for national and local economies: the Broads in the UK support the equivalent of 3,000 full-time jobs; more than 1.6 million people visit the Great Barrier Reef every year, generating revenues in excess of US\$1 billion. But unsustainable tourism can bring short-term benefits, but also long-term losses to the wetland health, jeopardizing ecosystem services and sometimes local livelihoods.

Wetland tourism brings both local and national benefits to people and wildlife, benefits that range from strengthening economies to sustainable livelihoods, healthy populations and thriving ecosystems. At least 35% of Ramsar Sites worldwide experience some degree of tourism activity, and that percentage remains consistent across regions. Of course, it is important to consider tourism in all wetlands, not just those that have been designated Ramsar Sites, since the Contracting Parties to the Convention have committed to managing all wetlands.

Wetlands and their wildlife are a fundamental part of the tourist experience and cultural travel worldwide: with possibilities as varied as visiting the beautiful fjords of Norway, or experiencing stunning sunsets at the Port Launay Ramsar Site in In the Seychelles, tourists, when visiting such special places, can appreciate the different



cultures through the prism of magnificent wetland landscapes. Another example where wetlands, tourism and culture are fully connected is the unique cultural experience that awaits the visitor to Australia's Kakadu National Park, home to some of the world's finest Aboriginal art. Ramsar Sites and other wetlands around the world have much to offer the adventurous tourist.

Incorporating wetland-related cultural landscapes in tourism promotion activities is an important essence of communicating the value of wetlands and Ramsar Sites around the world. Cultural aspects of tourism activities in wetlands can bring benefits to local populations and demonstrate the importance of wetlands. Educational and interpretive activities in wetlands are part of a rich tourism experience that should support local cultural values.

3.2 BIODIVERSITY AND CSTN

Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet. They are critical for the maintenance of biodiversity and play an important role in the biosphere. As defined by the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR): “Wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”. The Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Wetlands benefits can be summarised as follows:

- purification, pollutants dilution and carbon sequestration;
- flood control;
- maintenance of water quality;
- maintenance of surface and underground water supply;
- support for fishing and agriculture;
- outdoor recreation and education for human society;
- provision of habitat for wildlife, especially waterfowl;
- contribution to climatic stability.

The importance of these ecosystem services is enormous as they are essential benefits



that nature brings to society. For this reason, it is necessary to ensure the functions of ecosystems and to protect biodiversity.

The cumulative effects of human actions on wetlands ecosystems make the environment undergo major pressures that can affect biological communities present. One of the most important problems of the Mediterranean wetlands is their contamination by discharges of different origin.

Benthic macroinvertebrates are one of the most widely used biological groups as indicators of water quality. This is because they integrate many qualities expected from an indicator: relatively large size, long development cycles, high taxonomic diversity and low costs of samples. The following biotic indices were applied to characterize them: Shannon and Simpson diversity indices.

Several activities related to sustainable tourism can be proposed in the field of biodiversity. Two examples are environmental education and birdwatching:

1. Environmental education

Environmental education programs aim to bring us closer to the life, landscape and culture. The more people, the better. So that we discover them and learn to enjoy them. And so that we can value them as they deserve and commit ourselves to their protection.

If you discover it you will like it.

And, since you can only love what you know, environmental programs promote this commitment through discovery. They are responsible exploration, dissemination and education, always attentive to the reality of an environment that, despite its proximity, its uniqueness and its enormous importance, remains practically unknown today, a true hidden and ignored treasure. Always through its people —its protagonists—, discovering these cultural landscapes, the territory can be a real discovery, an exciting adventure.

And if you like it you will want to take care of it.

They aim to spread the values of the territory and for you to help us improve their knowledge and conservation: landscapes associated with water —with its resources and traditional uses— included in a coastal plain where the old and permanent connection between nature and man has given rise to very characteristic, unique cultural realities.



Possible activities:

Visits and routes

Routes and visits of all kinds, mainly attending to the different thematic lines that this polyhedral reality proposes: water, biodiversity, nature, the different environments and ecosystems, the landscape, customs and traditions, human uses, history, architecture...

The contents of the activities, always of an informative nature and adapted to the different groups and ages, can be generic or more or less specific, and the duration of the visits ranges from a few hours to several days.

Workshops, campuses

Through collaborations with different social agents, these programs have several spaces where visits, activities, workshops and work camps can be carried out. Both facilitate direct contact with reality of the environment and knowledge of its natural and cultural values.

2. Birdwatching

Birdwatching, or birding, is the observing of birds, either as a recreational activity or as a form of citizen science. A birdwatcher may observe by using their naked eye, by using a visual enhancement device like binoculars or a telescope, by listening for bird sounds or by watching public webcams.

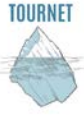
An example Birding Albufera, birds in sight

L'Albufera, with its 21,120 hectares, is one of the most important wetlands on the Iberian Peninsula, both for the natural habitats it conserves and for the community of aquatic birds that gather there.

The great variety of environments and landscapes in L'Albufera allows for many alternatives for bird watching in this enclave. However, the difficulty of accessing the most interesting sites, the scant information available and the distances that sometimes have to be traveled, seem to limit the possibilities for observing birds.

Through Birding Albufera, we make continuous outings (from Valencia and other towns) to observe and monitor the birds in the natural park, to which ornithologists and nature lovers in general can join.

Birding Albufera is an Internet portal created in February 2008 by Bosco Dies and Nacho Dies, two ornithology enthusiasts who practice bird watching, an activity that is



known internationally as birdwatching. After 35 years going out to see birds in L'Albufera de Valencia, they have witnessed many of the changes that have taken place around the bird life of this natural area. The beauty of the birds and the landscape of L'Albufera and the evocation of the moments lived during all this time were the impulse that motivated the creation of this portal.

If, initially, the main objective of this website was to inform about the birds of this wetland, now it wants to especially promote nature tourism and bird watching as a way to discover this unique landscape, and thus contribute to its dissemination and conservation.

There are many people interested in going out to see birds in L'Albufera and many more who want to discover the nature and culture of this wetland from a broader perspective. In both cases, it is not easy to find information on how, when and where to enjoy all the attractions of this natural park.

With Birding Albufera, you can find useful information for your field trips and also plan an entire exploration trip to one of the most important wetlands in Mediterranean Europe.

In addition, if you are interested, you can participate in the creation of this portal by registering and sending, if you wish, observations, queries and contributions.

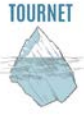
3.3 MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED NATURAL SPACES.

Protected areas are a modern idea. But that is not to say that they have no history. Their best-known form, the national parks, is celebrating its first centenary in Europe. Sweden was the first European country to create national parks, a hundred years ago now, on the 24th of May 1909.

(UN SIGLO DE PARQUES NACIONALES, Fundación Fernando González Bernáldez / EUROPARC para el Organismo Autónomo Parques Nacionales. Madrid 2009)

The consolidation of ecology as a science in the mid-20th century and its direct application in the management of spaces and species has led to the implementation of numerous conservation actions, both of ecological elements and processes, aimed at their promotion and preservation.

One of the priority scenarios in which a large part of these conservation actions has been developed are the protected natural areas, where the establishment of planning tools facilitates the development of these actions. At present, a large number of protected natural areas have their own lines of action in conservation or are co-financed with other entities, acting as authentic living observatories for the monitoring of ecological elements and processes.



This chapter aims to show the main aspects to be considered in the management of protected natural areas, the points that compose it and the capacities that are necessary for a correct, dynamic and adaptive management.

The aim is to describe the most important basic concepts in the planning of protected natural areas in order to develop a management terminology. It also aims to present the basic aspects that a management plan should have and to present a methodology that allows the design of this type of plan.

According to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), there are more than 100,000 protected areas in the world, representing almost 20 million square kilometres - 13% of the world's land area.

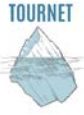
Although protected areas are obviously not the only way to conserve nature (there are other general and sectoral instruments in the policies of nations), they are currently the main direct management instrument applied to conservation.

Basic concepts of protected areas

The importance of the effort dedicated to protected areas, in terms of material, human and economic resources, as well as the difficulty of managing complex and dynamic systems in a rapidly changing world, make it increasingly necessary to adopt rigorous criteria for their management, in order to optimise the use of resources and make it possible to evaluate their effectiveness. In this context, management planning takes on special relevance.

The origin of protected natural spaces, as we understand them today, is to be found in the social desire to prevent the disappearance of exceptional places that stand out for the grandeur of their landscapes, the richness or uniqueness of their fauna and flora, or for their primitive state. The first national parks were understood as isolated enclosures, segregated from a surrounding territory in a process of vertiginous transformation. The terms picturesque, grandiose, sublime, wild, natural beauty, form part of the terminology used to argue the values of conservation at the dawn of the protected areas and have been recorded in the moving legal documents of the creation of the first national parks.

More recently, scientific evidence has shown that it is not possible to conserve species by maintaining isolated populations, that the fragmentation of ecosystems is one of the main causes of species extinction, and that the protected area is not sufficient to ensure the functioning of ecosystems. As a consequence, proposals for conservation networks and systems are beginning to be developed, incorporating the concept of ecological connectivity and the integration of protected areas in the territory as key elements of ecological functioning at a regional scale (Jongman, 1995; IUCN, 1998; Bennet, 2003). Protected areas are understood as pieces of a territorial mosaic,



differentiated by requiring a management model and a protection regime whose objective is to guarantee the provision to society of the benefits derived from the functioning of natural ecosystems.

Classical conservation theories were in tune with the belief in the unchanging balance of nature. Consequently, the aim of the first parks was to maintain undisturbed places, where the functioning of wildlife was respected outside of the human presence, which was considered hostile.

However, from the 1980s onwards, the concept of nature conservation began to evolve, influenced by the development of scientific knowledge, and the traditional concepts of ecological balance and climax as immutable references for the best state of conservation were questioned. Ideas based on dynamic equilibrium, elastic stability or resilience, concepts related to the permanent change to which ecosystems are subjected, are now receiving more attention. Thus, the response to change is of greater interest than the maintenance of ecosystems in an unchanging state. Current approaches to management and conservation are based on the concepts of integrity and ecological health. Ecosystems with higher integrity or ecological health have a greater capacity to resist disturbance (resilience).

We now know that in order to benefit from ecosystem services it is essential to conserve (or restore where necessary) the essential ecological functions or processes that support them, including energy flow and trophic organisation of the ecosystem, biogeochemical cycles and nutrient transfer, population dynamics and species interactions, ecological succession and self-organisation of ecosystems, natural fluctuations and disturbance regimes, propagule dispersal processes and species migration.

Although they are not always given economic value in market systems, natural and semi-natural ecosystems produce indispensable benefits for the economy, public health and general human well-being. An ecosystem with a good level of ecological integrity or health is therefore understood to constitute natural capital, as some of its ecological functions generate services to society, whether or not they have economic value in the market.

Some of these services are locally identifiable and their benefits are also immediate, even quantifiable in economic terms. For example, the increasing tourist activity observed in the surroundings of protected areas is a consequence of the efforts made to maintain wild ecosystems attractive to visitors. Several recent studies provide assessments along these lines. However, in general, the services provided by protected areas are not yet sufficiently identified and valued; payment for environmental services is still an isolated practice, although it is beginning to be recognised in some



countries (e.g. payment for hydrological services, payment for water supply, or purchases of CO₂ absorption in international markets).

The essential issue is how to manage ecosystems to ensure social and economic development in the context of a changing world: depending on the management model adopted, the flow of services and thus their social value will decrease or increase.

Protected areas are management structures designed with a stable world in mind and are therefore highly vulnerable to global change. The main challenge for the immediate future is to adapt these management models to the changing world of the 21st century, building capacities to adapt to change. To this end, as opposed to reactive management (aimed at maintaining natural systems in an ideal, reference state), the main tool will be adaptive management, which is based on the capacity to learn from successes and mistakes, which requires planning and management systems that can adapt to change through continuous monitoring and evaluation.

In any case, the most frequently used and accepted definition of conservation is that given in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, UNEP and WWF, 1991) "the management of human use of organisms and ecosystems to ensure that such use is sustainable".

In the case of management planning for protected natural areas, the concept of conservation can be narrowed down and defined as the set of actions and techniques aimed at achieving the objectives of protected areas. But what are these objectives? More than 140 different designations of protected natural areas have been identified around the world, which gives an idea of the diversity of objectives and perceptions that these areas may have.

In order to organise and group the different designations, to provide a common language for managers, planners, researchers, politicians and citizens, the IUCN proposes a grouping into seven broad "management categories" for the world's protected natural areas, based on the objectives of these areas (IUCN, 1994).

Strict Nature Reserve: protected area managed primarily for scientific purposes. A terrestrial and/or marine area possessing an outstanding or representative ecosystem, geological or physiological feature and/or species, intended primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring activities.

Wilderness Area: protected area managed primarily for nature protection purposes. A large area of unmodified or slightly modified land and/or sea, which retains its natural



character and influence, is not permanently or significantly inhabited, and is protected and managed to preserve its natural condition.

National Park: protected area managed primarily for ecosystem conservation and recreational purposes. Natural terrestrial and/or marine area, designated for:

- a) Protecting the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations.
- b) Excluding types of exploitation or occupation which are hostile to the purpose for which the area was designated.
- c) Providing a framework for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and tourism activities, which must be ecologically and culturally compatible.

Natural Monument or Feature: protected area managed primarily for the conservation of specific natural features. An area containing one or more natural or specific natural/cultural features of outstanding or exceptional value because of their implied rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

Habitat or Species Management Area: protected area managed primarily for conservation, with intervention at the management level. Terrestrial and/or marine area subject to active intervention for management purposes, to ensure the maintenance of habitats and/or to meet the needs of specific species.

Protected Landscape or Seascape: protected area managed primarily for the conservation of landscapes and seascapes and for recreational purposes. An area of land, with coasts and seas, as the case may be, in which the interactions of humans and nature over the years have produced an area of defined character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural values, and which often harbours rich biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is essential for the protection, maintenance and evolution of the area.

Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: protected area managed primarily for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems. An area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, which is subject to management activities to ensure the long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while providing a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs.

Management planning

Planning is an essential part of management. If there is no planning, there is a much greater chance that actions will be dispersed and synergies will be missed. The use of resources in this situation is inefficient.

To increase and optimise management effectiveness, it is necessary to have both planning instruments where the long-term vision and priorities are set out, and short-term operational plans where the goals to be achieved are directly dependent on available funding. The former are strategic plans that define the guiding principles for conservation and resource use. They aim to implement a vision of the future by providing information, objectives, desires and purposes. Operational plans set the tone for the effective implementation of the actions identified in accordance with the operational objectives set and the means available. This type of plan, if properly developed, can be decisive in making the management of the protected area efficient and effective.

Dynamic and adaptive management planning would be that in which the choice of specific lines of action and actions to be implemented is made on the basis of the results of previous actions, so that, if necessary, interventions can be redesigned or rethought to ensure the achievement of the ultimate management objectives. Management adapts and evolves dynamically on the basis of its own results.

Adaptive and dynamic management requires that planning goes beyond the conception of protected areas as fixed images in time, which do not change. Reality is changeable. Thus, both the problems and the management objectives to be addressed in a given period may change in a relatively short period of time. A threat to a site, the resolution of which may be considered as the main management objective, may disappear at a given moment, which would require, consequently, a new approach to the programming of actions. Adequate management planning from a dynamic and adaptive perspective should provide sufficient margin to reorient the development of actions to a reality that is, by definition, changing.

There are several types of management:

- a) **Preventive management.** The declaration of the protected area does not imply any proactive action, beyond the necessary surveillance, monitoring, control and administrative intervention, including the planning of procedures. It requires the formalisation of conservation objectives and targets. The regulation of uses is a preventive mechanism of a legal or normative nature that can be developed if necessary. The most common administrative instrument is the issuing of mandatory reports or notifications by the relevant managing body. It is a less intensive type of management than active management, but it must also be planned.

- b) **Active management.** In addition to the management plan approved by the corresponding authority, the protected site has human (personnel) and material (vehicles, offices) and financial resources specifically dedicated for its implementation. This is usually the easiest indicator to collect about the state of development of management. It acquires different levels of complexity and sophistication through the incorporation of more or less objectives, measures, participatory bodies. Active management thus implies: management plan + explicit budget + staff.
- c) **Active operational management.** It is the prior and essential step in order to be able to measure whether management is effective. It implies: active management + the management plan contains operational objectives, activities, means and deadlines + verification instruments.
- d) **Effective management.** Achievement of objectives can be demonstrated.

Planning must be participative. If we accept that the conservation of protected areas must be compatible with safeguarding and improving the quality of life of the people who live in and relate to these areas, and that their declaration requires broad social support that implies assuming commitments, limitations on uses and obligations on the part of the entire community, we will quickly understand the importance of public participation processes in the planning and management of these areas.

There are notable differences in the understanding of what "participation" means in different regions and countries of the world. Such differences are sometimes not evident in theory, but are very tangible in practice. In most cases, public participation processes are limited to merely opening a period of information and consultation with stakeholders in the process of approving the regulations for the protected area. A more ambitious approach is to involve social groups in the objectives of the protected area, seeking their support and even active participation in the achievement of these objectives. It should be borne in mind that participation is not just about informing, it is not just about asking for opinions, participation is not just about consulting. The ultimate aim of participation is to share decision-making in the planning and management of these areas. A basic rule of participation, in order to avoid confusing situations and misunderstandings, is to inform stakeholders about the type of participation proposed and its scope, i.e. what are the limits of their participation. The legitimate authority of the protected area must be explicit about the terms and scope of the proposed participation.

Following the arguments presented in the approved guidelines on participation in the framework of the Ramsar Convention (Resolution VII.8), it is particularly advisable to open participatory processes and involve the local population in the management of the protected area when:

- Active engagement and collaboration of stakeholders is essential for management (e.g. when the space is inhabited or privately owned).
- Access to natural resources is essential for the well-being of the population.
- The population expresses a strong interest in getting involved in management.

The reasons for involving the local population are even stronger when:

- The population has historically enjoyed rights over the area.
- Local interests are significantly affected by the way in which the planning and management of the area is developed.
- The decisions to be taken are complex or controversial.
- The existing management regime has failed to achieve rational use of resources.
- Stakeholders are ready and willing to collaborate and are demanding to do so.

There are several aspects to consider in the course of a participatory management plan elaboration process in protected natural areas.

- In general, planning occurs at important levels of abstraction, but participatory planning must be practical, visual and very clear in relation to its objectives in time and space.
- Each step of the process should be systematised and put in writing, and shared with the participants before moving on to the next phase. In this way, each actor involved will have the opportunity to validate or reject the proposals, always under the vision of group decisions and not individual ones.
- These processes require the participation of the authorities and their commitment to formalise and support with financial resources the development of the actions agreed in the plan.
- The definition of actions and priorities is part of the planning process, however, the approval of the plan is an administrative process normally reserved for the administrative authority, therefore, participants should not be confused by allowing expectations to be raised regarding the authority for the approval of the plan or budget.
- Participation does not presuppose that all options are open. It must be in the context of the objectives of the protected area.

At least three dimensions should be considered in planning:

- a) Administrative/territorial, from national to regional and local public administrations.
- b) Temporal, from annual to multiannual planning, even indefinite (conservation law).
- c) Ecological / hierarchical, from eco-regional planning to intervention on specific habitats.

Planning may include four steps:

1. System Plan/Master Plan. National or regional. Indefinite and revisable duration. It designs or develops the system of protected areas.
2. County, Island and Natural Resource Management Plans. Of indefinite duration, although revisable. Normative. They set strategic objectives. They organise and structure the territory. Complex procedure.
3. Management plan for each site. They usually have a duration between 4 and 8 years. They refer to a legally designated protected area, with a determined surface area and limits. They set out management objectives. Normative. Programmatic and executive nature. Simplified procedure. Some administrations prepare an annual management programme (non-regulatory).
4. Specific, thematic or sectoral plans and programmes. They are responsible for developing sectoral planning (public use, sustainable development, conservation, restoration or other). They do not normally have a normative character. They have a temporary nature, with a short-term application.

The management plan is the basic instrument for intervention in protected areas; it is the document that sets out the management needs of the area in relation to its purpose. The elaboration of the management plan is a fundamental step, as this document specifies the objectives, actions, regulations, budget, personnel, etc.

The drafting of management plans is a complex process, in which a multitude of aspects of a very different nature must be taken into account. On the one hand, the different ecological processes responsible for the functioning of natural systems, and

on the other, the confluence of multiple social, political, economic and cultural interests. It is therefore essential in the drafting of this type of plan to have a clear, easily accessible methodology that allows the agents involved to understand the process, as well as a structured and logical organisation of the information that ensures the internal coherence of the plan and prevents the essential aspects from being underestimated.

A different planning structure can be conceived for each reality. However, it is recommended that the structure of a management plan should contain the following sections:

- 1) Informative part
 - a) Introduction, background and justification
 - b) General goals or objectives
- 2) Diagnostic part
 - a) Collection and synthesis of information
 - b) Diagnosis, prognosis and potentialities
 - c) Cartography
- 3) Strategy part
 - a) Operational objectives
 - b) Management guidelines
- 4) Operative part
 - a) Regulations
 - b) Zoning, if not previously established in a management plan
 - c) Regime of uses
- 5) Programme of actions
- 6) Participatory and communication strategies for the development and implementation of the plan
- 7) Economic and financial programme
- 8) Monitoring and evaluation system
- 9) Synthesis document
- 10) Documentary and cartographic annexes

Management plans are the instruments used by those responsible for protected areas to achieve the objectives for which they were created. There are management plans with very different contents and structures, depending on the conditions under which they have been drawn up, the procedure for their approval and implementation, and the time horizon considered. Even so, a management plan, like any institutional plan, must respond to a logical structure and must contain sufficient information to make it possible to evaluate the achievement of its objectives. Deficient management planning in protected areas is one of the main causes that condition their effectiveness. The most common shortcomings that can be identified in the management plans of protected areas include the following:

- Lack of a precise diagnosis, with explicit identification of the objects of conservation and the management needs of the area. There is even frequent confusion between the description of the area (sometimes too detailed) and the diagnosis of the factors affecting it.
- Lack of explicit objectives, or objectives that are too generic or vague.
- The relationship between management objectives and planned measures is often not explicit. Sometimes the measures are not clearly related to the objectives.
- Very rarely does it include funding or a forecast of the means necessary for the implementation of the plan, nor a timetable or prioritisation of actions.
- Mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and monitoring indicators are generally not included.
- Lack of participation in the planning process can lead to unrealistic plans, or plans that are difficult to implement due to a lack of knowledge of conditioning factors external to the plan itself.

3.4 INTANGIBLE HERITGE AND CSTN

The CSTN offers an alternative understanding about intangible heritage sustainability. It breaks the interrelationship protection/barrier for quantity development by turning the vision to protection/asset for a quality development. So, it is not about balancing internal conflicts but about fostering a quality tourism that provides a future for the whole community.



To sum it up, nowadays the intangible heritage is an opportunity. However, some actions are required-

Accordingly, the need for an integral approach about tourism sustainability within a CSTN must include the intangible heritage.

The resulting holistic model relies in the fact that intangible heritage is a key element for the sustainability framework.

An authentic intangible heritage is a key element for the “new tourist” in their search for authentic experiences. So, it becomes an element for competitiveness.

In a global world with growing similarities the differences rooted in the tradition are becoming an important asset. In short, becoming a “similar” destination in a global world is the easy way for the short term but promoting local heritage to have a differentiated destination is a strategy for the long term.

According to OMT sustainability tourism should respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities in order to ensure long term benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed. The CSTN is a suitable tool to foster that vision.

Due to the fact that intangible heritage protection and development is a long term approach each CSTN should develop a three steps plan.

A. First of all a diagnosis plan guaranteeing stakeholder participation. It should include an intangible heritage capacity calculation in order to protect it.

B. Secondly, they should develop a strategic plan with few strategic axis and a clear division of roles and responsibilities.

C. Thirdly, an implementation plan synchronizing all stakeholders with priority objectives and priority actions.

We propose 28 actions that a CSTN could develop in order to foster intangible heritage tourism.

1. Encourage the use of languages in risk of disappearing.

It should be possible to encourage the use of languages in risk of disappearing by tourists. From restaurant menus also in local language to hotel rooms with local names, a lot of little actions could be developed. Tourist guides should use local names for places and traditions.

2. Encourage to use words that are disappearing.



Language richness is a valuable heritage that should be protected. Some words are disappearing, like old jobs, materials, traditions, etc and its use should be protected.

3. Encourage the understanding of the connection between intangible heritage protection and future positive incomes.

More and more, new tourism is appreciating authentic experiences. Accordingly, the CSTN should encourage the understanding of the connection between intangible heritage protection and future positive incomes. Sometimes the intangible heritage is neglected by an economic impact in the short time that is ridiculous comparing with the economic revenue in the long term.

4. Intra-education: Local populations should be aware about the importance of protecting their intangible heritage. Prior to this, in many cases they need to know, understand and estimate their intangible heritage.

In many cases, the local population is not aware of their intangible heritage importance. Therefore, the CSTN should remark this prior to ask for protection. It is easier to protect something that is recognized as valuable.

5. Develop inspiring actions to raise awareness: festivals, concerts, heritage days, etc

It is easier to involve both local people and tourist in the intangible heritage protection by developing inspiring actions. Those actions are also a way of tourism promotion and economic revenue for locals. The CSTN should lead those actions.

6. Foster cognitive proximity to foster coopetition. Globalization will help to develop this vision.

Local competition should become coopetition. In order to foster coopetition is important to understand that nowadays other destinations and other kinds of tourism are the new real competitors.

7. Intangible heritage is a key element to foster cooperation between CSTN internal stakeholders and destination stakeholders that did not join the CSTN.



Intangible heritage is usually something understood as “common”. So, intangible heritage is a key element to foster cooperation between CSTN internal stakeholders and destination stakeholders that did not join the CSTN.

8. Study intangible heritage deterioration.

Studying the intangible situation is a key element prior to develop protection and promotion actions. It is compulsory to do some research about the intangible heritage deterioration within the destination.

9. Study intangible heritage neglection.

Sometimes, intangible heritage is neglected by local people, tourists or both. Accordingly, it is compulsory to do some research about the intangible heritage neglection within the destination.

10. Reinforcing local artists and artisans.

Local artists and artisans should be promoting by using many little actions. They are the soul of a tourism destination and their art is an added value for the CSTN.

11. Promoting local artists and artisan’s participation through festivals and meetings abroad.

The CSTN has the capability to promote local artists and artisan’s participation through festivals and meetings abroad. This is one of the best tourism destinations promotion.

12. Local gastronomy cuisine is a trending topic nowadays to foster tourism.

Gastronomy is a trending topic, Therefore, promoting local gastronomy within the CSTN and also externally is the best destination ambassador.

13. Fostering the incorporation of the local intangible heritage into tourism products.

Local intangible heritage should be incorporated as much as possible into all CSTN tourism products.



14. Teaching the tourist guides about the local intangible heritage.

CSTN tourist guides should have a suitable know-how about the local intangible heritage in order to explain and present it to tourists.

15. Offering information about local intangible heritage in websites, brochures, etc.

Promoting the local intangible heritage at all levels should be an absolute CSTN priority.

16. Promoting books, films, pictures and researches about the local intangible heritage.

The CSTN has the capability to promote books, films, pictures and researches about the local intangible heritage. This is one of the best tourism destinations promotions.

17. Promoting together the most known ones with the less known ones in the same guided activities.

The 80/20 law is well known. Usually 80% of tourist visit only 20% of the available tourist attractions. In order to promote a sustainable tourism, the CSTN should promote together the most known ones with the less known ones in the same guided activities.

18. Promote local participation in the intangible heritage activities. It is a key element to protect “authenticity”.

New tourism is looking for authentic experiences. However, tourist “destroy” in some way the intangible heritage authenticity. So, the CSTN should promote local participation in the intangible heritage activities in order to keep the alive.

19. Provide formation at all levels.

Formation at all levels is a CSTN priority. Formation is the path.

20. Promote both international and local volunteering.



International and local volunteering is a formidable tool to protect intangible heritage. It should be promoted by the CSTN with specific plans.

21. Integrate local modest infrastructures in the circuits rather than building tourist ones.

The key to sustainability is to remain small and fragmented. The CSTN is a network of small existing modest infrastructures rather than building huge new ones.

22. Promote local cultural quarters if they exist.

Many places have cultural quarters. This is a real treasure for a sustainable tourism destination and should be promoted and protected.

23. Create and promote a calendar with activities.

In order to facilitate tourists' participation a calendar with activities should be updated and promoted.

24. Sensitizing tourists.

The CSTN should sensitize tourists about the importance of protecting the heritage.

25. Promote the ICT as in order to protect and promote the intangible heritage.

ICT tools are a suitable tool to promote and present the intangible heritage to tourists. CSTNs have the capacity to build them within a holistic approach.

26. Cooperate with national and international organizations with similar aims.

Thinking global and acting local is a key strategy. Therefore, the CSTN should cooperate with national and international organizations with similar aims. Notoriety is also important.

27. Foster the CSTN to integrate the intangible heritage in complex tourism products.



The CSTN is the suitable tool to integrate the intangible heritage in complex tourism products.

28. Foster cooperation with local universities and VET schools to include intangible heritage as part of the curricula.

CSTN philosophy is about integrating local stakeholders within the destination. In that sense, the whole educational sector should be a very active partner in the CSTN.

3.5 DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

A number of digital tools can be used in order to continue working on stimulating and re-starting tourism based on sustainability and innovation.

These tools, which are beginning to be related to the industry 4.0, can be extended to many sectors. They can be used to create opportunities to add technology and innovation in tourism, making progress on concepts like Smart Cities and Smart Tourism all while helping to manage and optimize tourism resources as well as caring for and conserving the environment.

Smart City and Smart Tourism

The first concept that appears is the idea of a Smart City, which is aimed at creating economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cities. This is achieved by applying information and communication technologies (ICT) and creating infrastructures that guarantee sustainable development, a higher quality of life for people, enhanced resource management and active citizen participation.

Focusing a bit more on tourism, we're talking about smart tourist destinations which are those that offer innovative solutions and services based on a modern and solid tech infrastructure. This figure is relatively new and is part of the idea of Smart Tourism.

Therefore, Smart Tourism is that which seeks to add modern approaches to forward-looking strategies aimed at competitiveness and development.

What makes a place a smart tourism destination?

These are some of the main premises:

- The place must be innovative and offer participatory methodologies.

- The business plan must be developed in a manner that prioritizes or places value on a company's sustainable development, environmental conservation and respect for the local culture.
- The tech infrastructure in the place must make it possible to offer services or products that can be customized for different tourist resources with the best possible quality.
- Stimulating visitor interaction and integration with the environment.
- The facilities must be accessible to all publics; in other words, this includes access for the handicapped, pregnant women, people with restricted mobility and the elderly.
- Seeking customer satisfaction through quality and their response and participation through various social networks.
- The tourism project and all elements must take into account the residents' quality of life and conserving the local cultural values.

BIG Data

There are many definitions but we can say that "Big Data refers to datasets whose size is beyond the ability of typical database software tools to capture, store, manage and analyse". Data are often divided into structured (traditional) and non-structured (Big Data) although the new tools available have led to new categories of non-structured data such as semi-structured.

With Big Data, the tourism sector has the opportunity to transform the way in which services are offered. Its use makes it possible to highlight certain data and convert them into useful information for sector companies. Information may be obtained in real time on users, their movements and preferences. Thus, companies can define and optimize their strategies to increase sales.

Furthermore, all the data collected may be subjected to artificial intelligence algorithms to enhance the tourist experience.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

AI algorithms and, in particular, Machine Learning are becoming a greater part of our daily activities all the time and this includes the tourism sector.

But what is it "artificial intelligence"?



Marvin Minsky, one of the pioneers of artificial intelligence defined it as “the science of making machines do things that would require intelligence if done by men”.

Some areas where artificial intelligence is present are:

- Natural language processing: this field includes applications that translate between languages or give orders
- Expert systems: this field covers systems where the experience of qualified personnel is added to these systems to achieve deductions that are closer to reality;
- Robotics: the navigation of mobile robots, etc.;
- Learning: behaviour for later implementation in computers.

Machine learning is often considered a branch of artificial intelligence that seeks to build an algorithm that allows computers to “learn” based on datasets and, as a result, get a model to make predictions based on the data and not on static instructions.

How can this be applied to tourism?

AI makes it possible to create algorithms to identify consumption patterns.

Nowadays, thanks to all the big data sources, we can find out about people’s habits, tastes, and preferences for places, meals and activities.

Combined with machine learning, artificial intelligence algorithms learn from people in order to make future personalized recommendations or suggestions on upcoming trips and activities.

Another important example application is bots.

A bot is an artificial intelligence software designed to do a series of tasks on its own without any human assistance such as booking a table at a restaurant, ticking a date on a calendar or collecting and displaying user information.

The most common bot model is a chat bot, a robot that is capable of simulating a conversation with a person.

Such an assistant has the ability to understand and learn from the conversation to offer advice and help the user.

IoT Devices

IoT (Internet of Things) consists of interconnecting devices or objects through the Internet so they’re more and more intelligent all the time.



You can get a lot of contextual information during a tourism visit (location-related, environmental, weather-related, etc.) and that's where IoT devices come into play such as sensors or beacons that provide tourists with information.

One example of the use of these devices is geolocating the tourist through a signal to other devices with a screen such as a tablet or smartphone so they can view the corresponding information. This leads to the rise of new smart tourism offices that provide content adapted to the users' needs because of their ability to interact with them. In order to do so, the information must be connected to other networked services such as APPs or websites.

Other devices applied to tourism include sensors that can be used not only to control occupancy but also to measure environmental factors such as temperature and light in order to optimize energy resources and consumption.

Drones

These are unmanned aerial vehicles capable of autonomously maintaining a controlled and sustained flight level.

When combined with a camera, these devices are mainly used for filming and later for promoting tourism in marketing campaigns as they offer new perspectives.

Another important use is social responsibility and interactive tourism (virtual tours) which help protect environments all while showing tourists inaccessible places.

Plus, in combination with big data, data capture can be used to conserve heritage, map cities and tourist destinations and manage tourism flows.

3D Modelling and 360° Filming

3D modelling is the process of creating any three-dimensional object or scenario (whether inanimate or alive) using software through a mathematical representation.

360° content (photographed and filmed virtual reality) is the immersive or interactive audio-visual material that began with fixed photography and moving photography (video) for a panoramic vision of the reality.

These concepts are resources that are used in virtual and augmented reality creations.

Virtual Reality (VR)



This is an interactive experience generated through a computer that produces a complete simulated environment. Virtual reality is a sensorial immersion in a new world, based on real or non-real environments, generated artificially. So, the objective of this technology is to create a fictional world to be part of

The way of perceiving or sensing this reality is usually visual through special glasses, although it may incorporate other senses, such as auditive, touch, etc.

And this is where we get virtual tourism, which provides a new way to travel through which visitors can interact with a virtual guide as well as with tourist and historical information about the place.

Nowadays, you can find historic recreations in virtual reality that take you to past centuries and allow you to view architectural remains in all their glory and submerge yourself in another era.

Moreover, they make it possible to see places all while conserving them which is particularly important when it comes to overcrowded or non-adapted areas. On the other hand, virtual tours make it possible to visit many museums and monuments with 360° itineraries.

Augmented Reality (AR)

AR is an interactive experience of a real-world environment, where objects are “augmented” by a computer, by adding some kind of information. Information is overlaid and it can be added or be a mask to the natural environment.

Information must be perfectly synchronised for it to be perceived as an immersive aspect of the real environment.

Through augmented reality, the user is capable of visualising the real world via a technological device (tablet, mobile phone, computer, etc.) with graphic information added by this device.

With this concept applied to tourism, augmented reality makes it possible to add information in real time to the materiality around us, see recreations of objects or places from life in the past, etc.

Another use for creating interactive tourism is the combination of augmented reality and gamification. In other words, using game dynamics as an incentive for tourists as they gain knowledge.

4. TOURNET ECOBRAND

In this section of the manual, the TOURNET project proposes the items that can compose the quality label for the members of the CSTN. This quality label is a set of recommendations for the members of the TOURNET network and does not constitute an official recognition of the institutions as sustainable tourism operators.

What is Eco Branding? ¹

The term “Eco Branding” is one that’s fairly new to the eco space and to the marketing world as well. The term is still developing as the awareness of the planet’s sustainability continues to grow. In its most basic essence, eco branding is a way to communicate and market environmental issues and goals between companies and consumers.

Eco branding is a marketing approach that allows companies to inform and promote their pledge to the environment’s protection. An eco brand can be identified through their products/services, their messaging in campaigns, their company efforts, and their other contributions to the betterment of the environment.

Visually, eco branding can be seen on packaging, advertisement, and the brand’s identity. This is the easiest way to see which companies are eco brands. Companies that have taken the initiative to improve the planet have the opportunity to display and market all of their initiatives to attract eco market niches. You’ll often see these companies label their products, packaging, advertisements while also using phrases, certifications, and other ways of identifying their brand as eco friendly and eco conscious.

Eco branding can also be seen through the efforts and stances of companies. While sometimes the product or service can’t be eco friendly, companies can still choose to support causes that aid the movement. This is where eco branding allows companies to share those efforts with their audiences to educate and encourage their supporters to follow. In addition to that, brands influence culture and how society adapts. Eco branding can also consist of a company’s strong stance on a certain eco issue, effort, or initiative. This can be done through events, fundraisers, profit contributions, partnerships, and other ways of connecting their business to an eco issue or movement. Consumers look for companies that are involved and contribute!

How to build and eco brand in tourism. Recommendations for the members of the TOURNET network:

¹ Pacheco. C. (15th April 2021). *What is Eco Branding?* Lucca AM. Available on: <https://www.luccaam.com/perspective/what-is-eco-branding/#:~:text=Eco%20branding%20is%20a%20marketing,the%20betterment%20of%20the%20environment>

Mass tourism has devastating consequences for the urban and natural spaces, thus the change to a more sustainable kind of tourism is really necessary. To achieve this, it is important to start creating an eco brand following these steps:²

- **Restricting mass tourism and offering sustainable options:** as an example, we can talk about the cruise tourism. It is a kind of tourism really harmful for the environment, for examples in Venice they have limited the entrance of big cruises, in Barcelona they want to do something similar since the city is really suffering the consequences of the pollution from cruises. In the Svalbard Islands, in Norway they have banned the big ships that use diesel motors to keep the ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean.

Climate change is a big issue and the countries and their governments are responsible to act in consequence, also regarding tourism. However, only restricting this kind of tourism is not enough, it is necessary to present new alternatives, promoting a more sustainable kind of tourism that compensates the loss of visitants as well as the economic losses.

These new alternatives should bring higher quality and much more beneficial tourism flows for the country or city. New packages should be created with leisure alternatives from an environmental, sustainable and social perspective.

- **Offering new destinations:** How can we offer new destination as an alternative to high tourist density areas? a summer campaign, for example, for an ecotourism proposal has to involve (and benefit) all the actors involved and able to offer an extra vital experience to the visitor.

The eco formula promotes a type of tourism that encourages interaction with the destination society and avoids large urban developments for visitors, those that "put" tourists in a bubble and a fictitious or forced reality to increase their sense of wellbeing.

For this reason, one of the great challenges tends to be a network of accommodation that is capable of being fully integrated into the natural and urban environment, sustained by local investors and supported by the competent administrations, and which fosters a deep knowledge of the environment and its people.

- **Creating an online site where the tourism operators offer their services together:** this not only means the costs are reduced and the forces are joined, but also to provide a coherent and joint offer, sharing values, missions and a common identity, which includes different types of accommodation and leisure, gastronomic and sporting activities, all aimed at attracting a very specific type of tourism and tourist, based on a shared strategy. For example, the TOURNET app

² Ideolab. (19th May 2021). Ecoturismo y branding: cómo gestionar correctamente una estrategia sostenible. Ideolab. Available on: <https://ideolab.com/ecoturismo-y-branding>

aims to have micro operators of each destination together to offer their unique services to the users, our app is based on an eco-perspective, underpinned by respect between communities (of origin and destination) and focused on protecting ecosystems. One of the most important things when we are building our eco brand in tourism is to offer unrepeatably and respectful experiences, and for this, the uniqueness of the territory and its people are really important.

- **Promoting disadvantaged areas and reducing tourism pressure:** One example is the so-called Starlight Reserves, sparsely populated places (and often with great deficiencies in their economic development and infrastructures) that have been certified for the quality of their night sky.

These destinations are often located in natural areas of great beauty and little known. Quiet places that offer a host of advantages to visitors who are unfamiliar with this leisure formula and this particular rural tourism enclave.

There is an enormous potential in making known the existence of a friendlier tourism offer, far from overcrowding and which reconciles us with nature. Attracting visitors to it is a great opportunity for depopulated areas that have been deprived of their traditional livelihood.

- **Marketing: offering tailor-made and unique experiences to tourists:** it is not easy to achieve this, but the effort will be rewarded by a flow of respectful tourists, capable of immersing themselves in the culture and lifestyle of the area, loyal and prescriptive of that country, city or municipality. A destination that the traveller will associate with the word sustainability, that is worth discovering and that is capable of offering a unique experience.

It is not only a matter of working on a specific online strategy, but also of ensuring that this is reflected and supported by the in-situ experience, that it emanates from an ecotourism strategy in which, as we have said, all agents in the sector are involved, and that both can feed back into each other.

For this, the personalisation of online actions and of services and experiences is basic, something that cannot be achieved with mass tourism, but can be achieved with ecotourism, where the quality of the service and the environmental and social sustainability are placed above all else.

Undoubtedly, ecotourism attracts a type of traveller who searches the web before deciding, who trusts the comments of other tourists, who seeks honesty and transparency in information, speed in their queries, who demands valuable services, who advocates proactivity and who wishes, once at the destination, that the place offers what was promised on the internet.

This type of tourist needs an eco-defined and coherent strategy, highly segmented by hobbies, offering highly personalised services...; in short, a strategy that associates a travel experience with a lifestyle.

- **Acting quickly:** in many parts of the world, tourism is a fundamental pillar of the economy and with the COVID-19 pandemic this sector suffered a lot so it is time to reactivate this sector but it is necessary to do it in a new and more sustainable way. Furthermore, climate change is threatening to change our way of living and of course the way the tourism sector is developing. How can we continue with the current formula of overcrowding on the coast when the sea level is expected to rise by 17 to 25 cm in the short term? The answer lies in sustainability, diversification (of proposals, destinations, seasonal periods) and coherence in a common solution to this great challenge. Due to the different threats that tourism is facing, the moment to act is now, there is no time to delay our actions.

Taking into account the recommendations mentioned above and following the definition of Eco Tourism of the World Tourism Organisation³, we have developed the **list of items that an EcoBrand labelled destination developed by a CSTN has to have:**

- All **nature-based forms of tourism** in which the main motivation of the tourists is the **observation and appreciation of nature** as well as the **traditional cultures**.
- **Products** offered are **locally** made.
- It contains **educational** and **interpretation features**.
- It is usually **organised by specialised tour operators for small groups and the experience is tailor-made**. Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be **small, locally** owned businesses.
- It **minimises negative impacts** upon the **natural and socio-cultural environment**. It is **respectful** with the **locals** and their **traditions**.
- It **supports the maintenance of natural areas** by:
 - Generating **economic benefits** for **host communities, organisations and authorities** managing natural areas with conservation purposes;
 - Providing **alternative employment and income opportunities** for **local communities**;
 - **Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets**, both among locals and tourists.

There are also other small steps that travel agencies, accommodations, tourists etc can take to make travelling eco-friendlier:

- Having an eco-friendly strategy. Researching the current need, identifying challenges and opportunities, setting goals and defining clear actions.
- Offering destinations in the same country. Or avoiding transits, offering destinations that they can fly directly.

³ UNWTO. *ECOTOURISM AND PROTECTED AREAS*. Available on: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/ecotourism-and-protected-areas>



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- Working only with eco-friendly brands.
- Offering local products and working with local guides.
- Reducing the consumption of water.
- Avoiding using on-time plastics and recycling.
- Slowing down: spending more time in just one destination to avoid the use of transport.
- Choosing less crowded destinations.



5. MARKETING TOOLS

Marketing is a strategy or market research system that seeks to offer greater value and satisfy customers. Through marketing, you look for, promote and serve markets.

It's important to create sales opportunities for products or tourism services; therefore, creating a marketing strategy can help.

What follows is a series of guidelines, exercises and tools that will help create a better marketing strategy.

The 8Ps of Marketing

This technique helps easily identify a few elements that are key when working on a marketing strategy.

- **Product:** This is the key to satisfying the market demands. In other words, that which you, as a company, can offer them to meet their expectations. Nowadays, consumers' needs and motivations are prioritized when defining a product or service.
- **Place:** This refers to the place of commercialization, including the physical location, an online shop, etc. The aim of the distribution strategy is to help potential customers easily access the product or service.
- **Price:** The price is a very important decision as various factors depend on it such as the profit margin, the economic goals, trends, etc.
- **Promotion:** All of the communication actions taken to spread awareness for the characteristics and benefits of a product or service.
- **People:** There is no marketing and sales process without people. They are the professionals responsible for giving it value.
- **Physical Evidence:** The ease with which a consumer may look at it, touch it and try it.
- **Process:** This has to do with the user experience behind the brand and values.
- **Partners:** Having allies in your marketing strategy will help you achieve your goals faster.

TAM, SAM and SOM

This technique helps identify and study the market size and customers.

The market is made up of all consumers or buyers (current or potential in the future) of your product.



The customer will be the person or company that buys your product or service. The main types of customers you'll find are loyal or recurrent, impulsive, needs-based, those that are guided by discounts or special offers and errant customers.

TAM, SAM and SOM will help you get an initial estimate of the market opportunity.

- TAM - Total Addressable Market: refers to the total possible market. It's an estimate of the annual volume of revenue representing the business opportunity you have.
- SAM - Served Available Market: a sub-set of the above which represents the available market or the market you can serve in the medium term with the initial business model.
- SOM - Serviceable Obtainable Market: the SOM is another sub-set of the SAM which represents the target market. It's the estimate of who the product buyers will be now.

Positioning

It's not only important to create a good brand image; with positioning, you create a reference image in the consumers' minds.

This positioning is built based on the perception or image consumers have individually and with respect to the competition.

Therefore, a positioning strategy is the process by which a strategy is developed to take the brand or product from the current image to the desired image.

There are many types of positioning strategies:

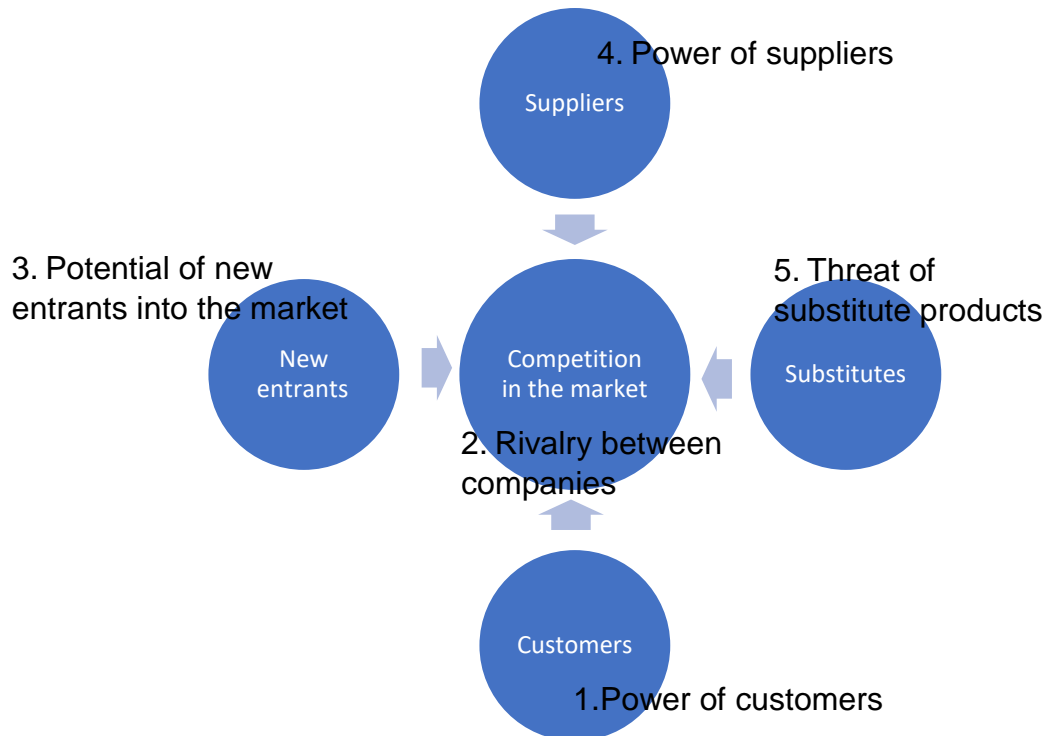
- Based on an attribute that leads to differentiation
- Highlighting the benefits
- Based on other experiences
- Based on users, specific profiles classified by tastes and preferences
- Highlighting the competitive advantages
- Focusing on quality or price

Porter's 5 Forces

Your product or service is not the only one on the market; there will be products with similar characteristics or features, competitive prices, etc. Thus, another important point is doing an analysis of the competition.

This tool will help evaluate the competitiveness and innovation of your company.

What are Porter's 5 forces?



Power of customers

If you have only a few customers or they are well-organized, you run the risk that they will enter into agreements as far as the prices they are willing to pay, the quality or services. This becomes a threat as the price will likely be lower than what the company is willing to accept.

Power of suppliers

The better your suppliers are organized, the more attractive the market will be.

A battle for power between companies and their suppliers arises when suppliers want to charge high prices for their products. The advantage moves to the side with more options and less to lose if the relationship ends.

Potential of new entrants into the industry



The barriers of entry for new products are evaluated here. The easier it is to enter the market where your company is located, the greater the threat is.

The most important barriers are: product differentiation, capital investments. (the more resources you need to begin, the bigger the barrier) or legal barriers

Threat of substitute products

The competition depends on the extent to which the products in an industry may be replaced. When there are very similar products, the profitability will be lower due to price restrictions.

Rivalry between companies

This is the result of the foregoing forces. Rivalry defines the profitability and this is where strategies are established to stand out in the market.

McKinsey's Strategy

The McKinsey Matrix is a tool for evaluating a product or service based on various variables that share positioning considering the long-term market attractiveness and its competitiveness.

The result of such evaluation is verifying exactly where your product or service is and **whether it is a good idea to keep it in the market.**

The following table can be used to evaluate the main variables which comprise the final result of the matrix.

VARIABLES	Weighting (1, -1, 0)	Assessment				TOTAL	Absolute sum	Relative value
		-1	0	1	Value			

ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE SECTOR OF BUSINESS	Market size	Small	Medium	Large	0	0
	Market growth rate	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Sales seasonality	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Price sensitivity	High	Medium	Low	0	
	International competition	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Technological development	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Legal regulations	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Average profitability level	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Degree of environmental turbulence	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Entry barriers	Low	Medium	High	0	
COMPANY'S COMPETITIVENESS	Market share	Low	Medium	High	0	0
	Sales growth	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Customer loyalty	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Internationalization-related attitudes and skills	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Distribution system	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Technological level, R&D capability	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Financial resources and access to them	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Product/service quality and image	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Level of costs versus the competition	High	Medium	Low	0	
	Quality/price ratio	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Profitability	Low	Medium	High	0	
	Production capacity available	Low	Medium	High	0	



Therefore, the McKinsey Matrix has two axes: a horizontal one with the competitiveness; and a vertical one with the market attractiveness. Both are evaluated as: high, medium, low.

The most significant results are:

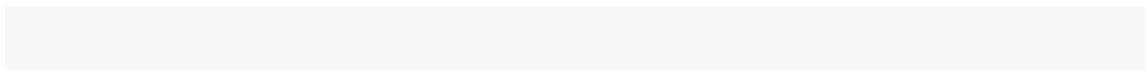
ATTRACTIVENESS

High
Medium
Low

Double or nothing	Develop	Grow
Rethink	Reorganize	Hold
Abandon	Leave in an orderly manner	Harvest

Low	Medium	High	COMPETITIVENESS
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- A combination of low attractiveness and low competitiveness means you should divest or abandon.
- The idea is to keep a low profile in a situation with low market attractiveness yet high competitiveness. Holding the same positioning is recommended without making large investments.
- A combination of high market attractiveness yet low competitiveness implies the best choice is to develop selectively. In other words, invest with caution while seeking profitable opportunities.
- A high market attractiveness and high competitiveness situation is a clear indication you should engage in an offensive strategy.
- The rest are intermediate situations requiring additional analysis which can be done by reviewing the scores.





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