



Strategic Storytelling for a Sustainable Future



*Rob Holmes
Founder & Chief Strategist
GLP Films*

*Annual Seminar on
Sustainable Tourism
24 November, 2022*



**SUSTAINABLE
TRAVEL
FINLAND™**



Rob Holmes

Founder & Chief Strategist, GLP Films



- **Home** — Maine (USA)
- **Education** — Wildlife Management; Int'l Business & Environmental Management (MBA)
- **Work** — Media, tourism, sustainability, digital
- **Media** — Photographer + travel / study / work overseas (90+ countries)
- **Board Member** — Maine Huts & Trails; Kennebunk Land Trust; Adventure Travel Conservation Fund



GLP: Overview

We are an award-winning storytelling and communication agency — **dedicated to helping destinations become tourism leaders** — via strategic storytelling, sustainability, distribution and trade development.



GLP supports the Sustainable Development Goals

A person wearing a red beanie and dark clothing is standing on a rocky outcrop, operating a professional video camera mounted on a tripod. The camera is pointed towards a vast, hazy landscape of rolling hills and valleys. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows. The overall scene is atmospheric and scenic.

Our Mission

Directing mission-driven brands towards their sustainability goals in protecting nature, culture and livelihoods through the lens of storytelling and content marketing.



Agenda

1. Sustainable tourism insights
2. Strategic storytelling
3. Marketing for a sustainable tourism





Sustainable tourism

- **Sustainable tourism “pillars”** = people (community), planet (environment), prosperity (local economy)
- **Today’s travelers** want to travel responsibly (millennials, gen z, etc)
- **There are opportunities** when you market to responsible travelers



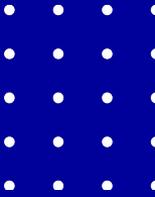


Why highlight sustainability?

- **83% of global travelers** think sustainable travel is vital
- **78% intend to stay** in a sustainable property at least once in the next year
- **71% want to make more effort** to travel more sustainably (up 10% vs '21)
- **66% want to have authentic experiences** that represent the local culture



Consumers are already trying to make **meaningful decisions when traveling**



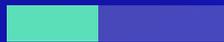
Bought from **local stores and restaurants**, rather than chains



46% Visited **local cultural or historical sites**



43% Used more **environmentally friendly transportation** options



Bought from **local cultures, communities, or minority groups**



41% Traveled to **smaller, lesser-known areas or destinations**



Stayed in lodging that's **actively lessening its environmental impact**



Paid more for **sustainable options** (i.e., carbon offsets)



34% Used providers who declare **commitment to sustainable practices**



Volunteered time to help **local community organizations at the destination**

7 in 10 consumers

feel overwhelmed by

starting the process of

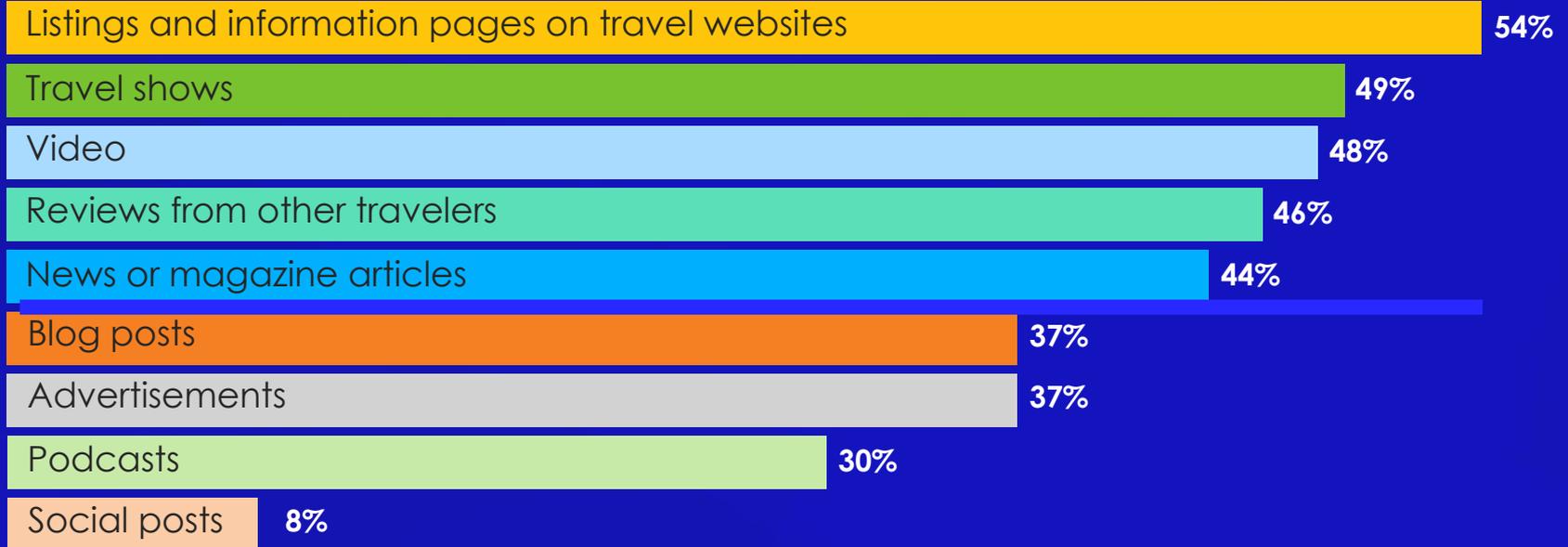
being a more

sustainable traveler





Preferred formats for viewing sustainable travel information





Marketing helps solve problems

- **42% of travelers struggle** to find appealing destinations that are less crowded
- **34% said they don't know how or where** to find activities or tours that ensure they are giving back to the local community
- **32% would like travel companies and destinations to suggest** things to do and places to visit while on vacation to ensure they are giving back to the local community



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“With over 100,000 digital words consumed every day, 92% of consumers want brands to tell stories with those words.”





Power of storytelling

- **Storytelling** = most compelling form of content marketing (ex: telling stories)
- **Social + digital** is overwhelmed with content; storytelling stands out
- **Storytelling** emotionally engages your audience, so they connect, share, and take action (ex: “I want to go there!”)





Case Study #1: Kohunlich, Mexico



Watch the story: (4:40)

<https://vimeo.com/726551502/0fc5f31bb6>

Title: “Kohunlich — Guided by Nature”

Story: Behind-the-scene story of their top guide

Strategy: Celebrate unique and authentic travel experiences via your best ambassador (guides)



Video #1:
“Guided by Nature”
(Mexico)



Story themes



- **Authentic** — story first and non-commercial, non-promotional
- **Character-driven** — let the audience engage with your story
- **Experiential themes** — what themes are unique to your destination?



What makes a great story?

1. PURPOSE

What is the goal of telling your new story?



3. CHARACTERS

Who are the key character voices for the story?



2. STORY ARC

What is compelling?
(conflict, plot, resolution)



4. LOCATION

What location(s) help to best tell the story?





What stories should you be telling?

- **Look to consumer demand** — post-COVID travel is different
- **What travelers want now** — nature, culture, community, sustainability
- **Representation matters** — include diversity in your characters
- **Reflect ways people travel now** — individual, family, small groups, remote



Connecting today's traveler with future opportunities

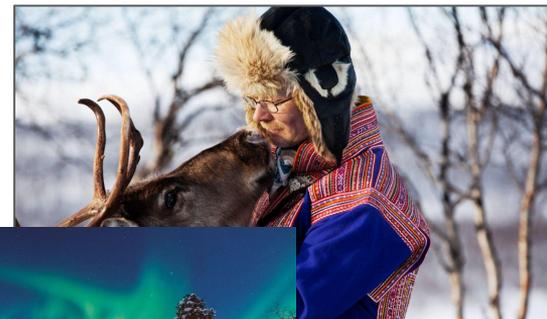
Today's Traveler — Traveler Value Index 2022

<p>Nature & Outdoors: 49% will choose a less crowded destination to reduce effects of #overtourism</p>	<p>Community-based Tourism: 98% are taking into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on local communities</p>
<p>Adventure: 78% are most interested in frequent short trips. Individuals and families want quick doses of adventure</p>	<p>Health & Wellness: 36% are searching for a sense of contentment and mental well-being</p>
<p>Food & Agriculture: 91% have a greater appreciation for spending time with family and 43% will travel locally</p>	<p>Cultural & Indigenous: 38% deliberately spend at locally owned restaurants and businesses</p>



Story sectors from Finland

Nature & Outdoors	Sleep under the Northern Lights in Lapland
Adventure	Ride a fat e-bike through the winter wild
Food & Agriculture	Book an herb foraging class
Community Tourism	Immerse yourself in Pikisaari's active community of artists and craftsmen
Health & Wellness	Enjoy one of the 3 million sauna experiences across Finland
Cultural & Indigenous	Explore the Sámi Cultural Centre Sajos to learn about the Sámi people & heritage





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Marketing for sustainable tourism

Step #1: Ensure infrastructure is in place

- Can the region, operators, communities, and hotels accommodate an increase in visitors?
- **Will visitor increases negatively impact** destination, local communities, and traveler experiences?
- **Have you included local residents** and community in your overall strategic plan? *





Case Study #2: Sedona, Arizona (USA)



Management over
Marketing.

The opportunities
and challenges.

Watch video:

<https://vimeo.com/662433644>

Title: “Soul of Sedona: Outdoors”

Story: Outdoor adventures in Sedona

Strategy: Stewardship of the outdoors and nature must be embraced by locals and visitors



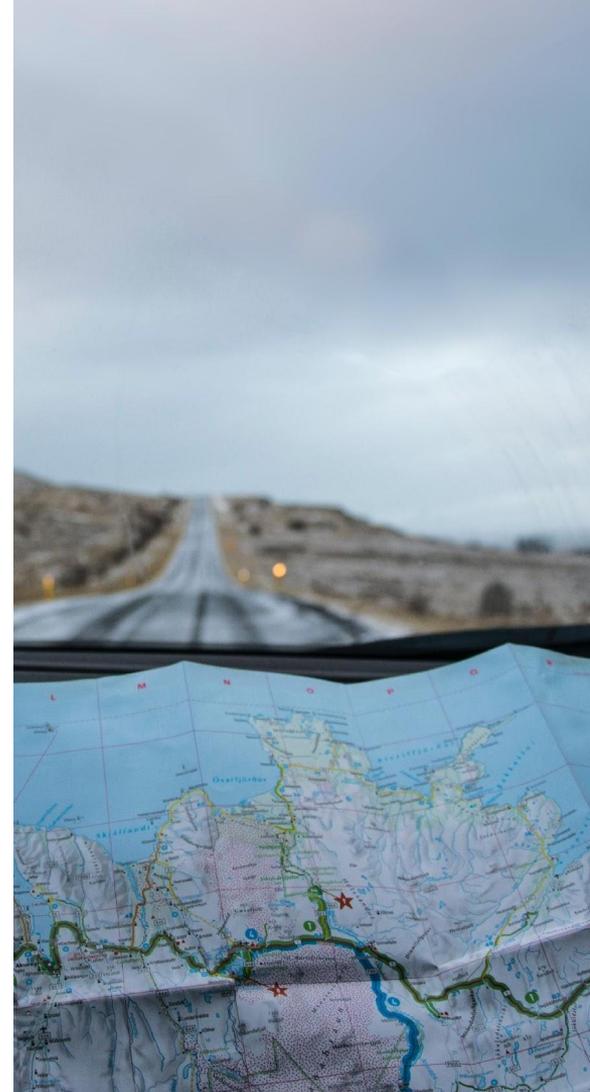
Video #2:
“Soul of Sedona: Outdoors”
(Arizona, USA)



Marketing for sustainable tourism

Step #2: Content Strategy

- **Develop a content strategy** that aligns with your overall sustainability or regenerative plans.
- **Identify stories, content and traveler experiences** that support your sustainable tourism goals.
- **Aim to address key challenges** and/or pain points (dispersal, off-season, traffic, sensitive places, etc)





Marketing for sustainable tourism

Step #3: Targeted marketing

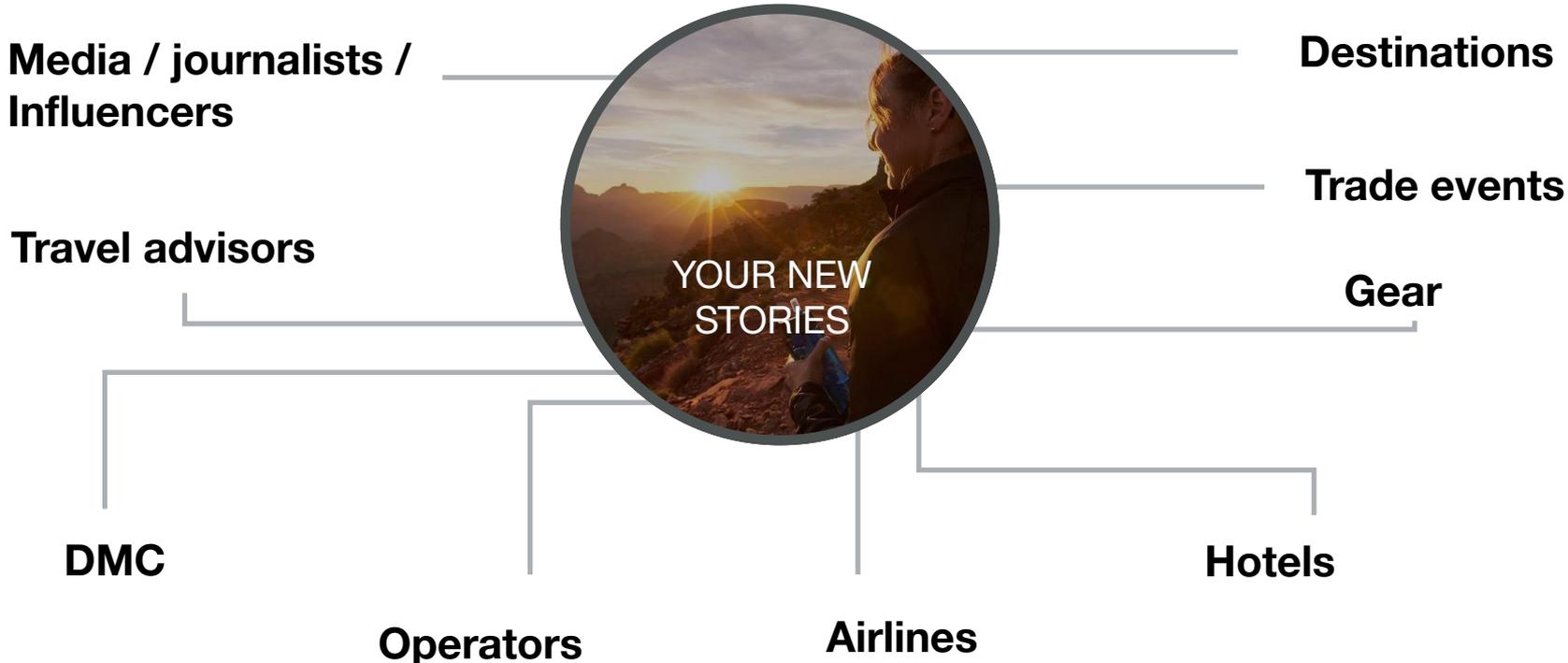
- **Now that your infrastructure**, content strategy, and community are ready, you need to promote
- **Identify target market** — focus on responsible travelers (high-value, low impact); where do they go for inspiration and information?
- **Focus on the channels and tactics that work** for your goals and budget





Stakeholder Chart: Collaboration is key

Who can share your story, product or experience? How will they benefit?





Case Study: Maine, USA



Campaign: Multi-regional collaboration in the State of Maine

Strategy: Storytelling campaign of local characters & authentic stories

Themes: Community, nature, outdoors, food, stewardship



Case Study #3: Maine (USA)

Explore Your Maine



Title: “Explore Your Maine”

Story: The traveler’s journey – coast, city, outdoors

Filming: 6 days across the 3 regions

Watch video: <https://vimeo.com/457881064>

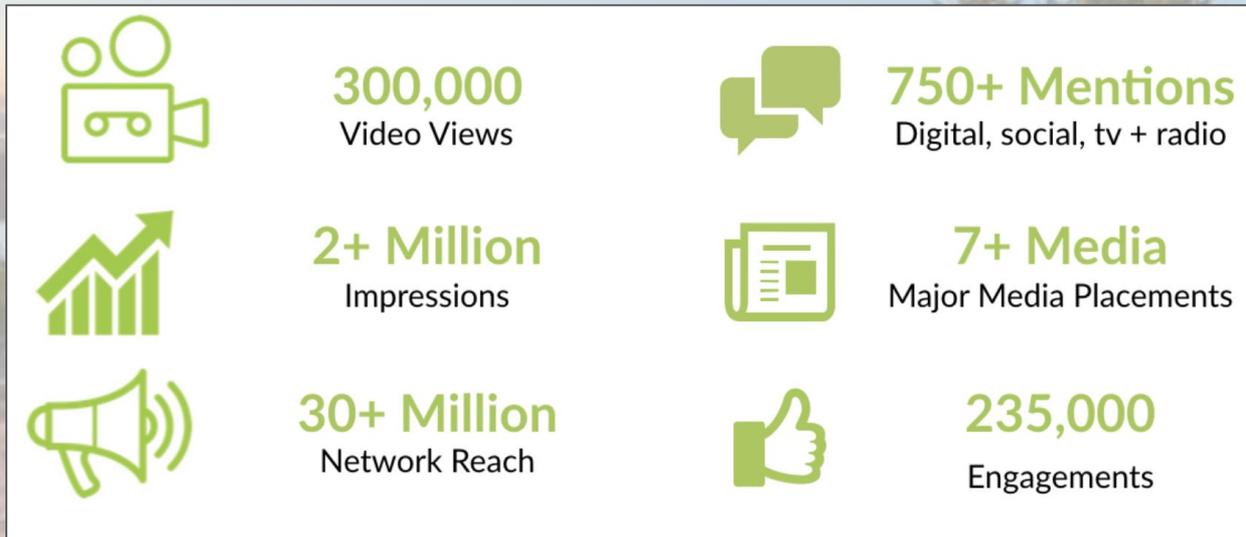


Video #3:
“Explore Your Maine”
(Maine, USA)



Case Study #3: Maine

Consumer distribution results based on a strong multi-stakeholder network.



The New York Times



TRAVELAGE
WEST

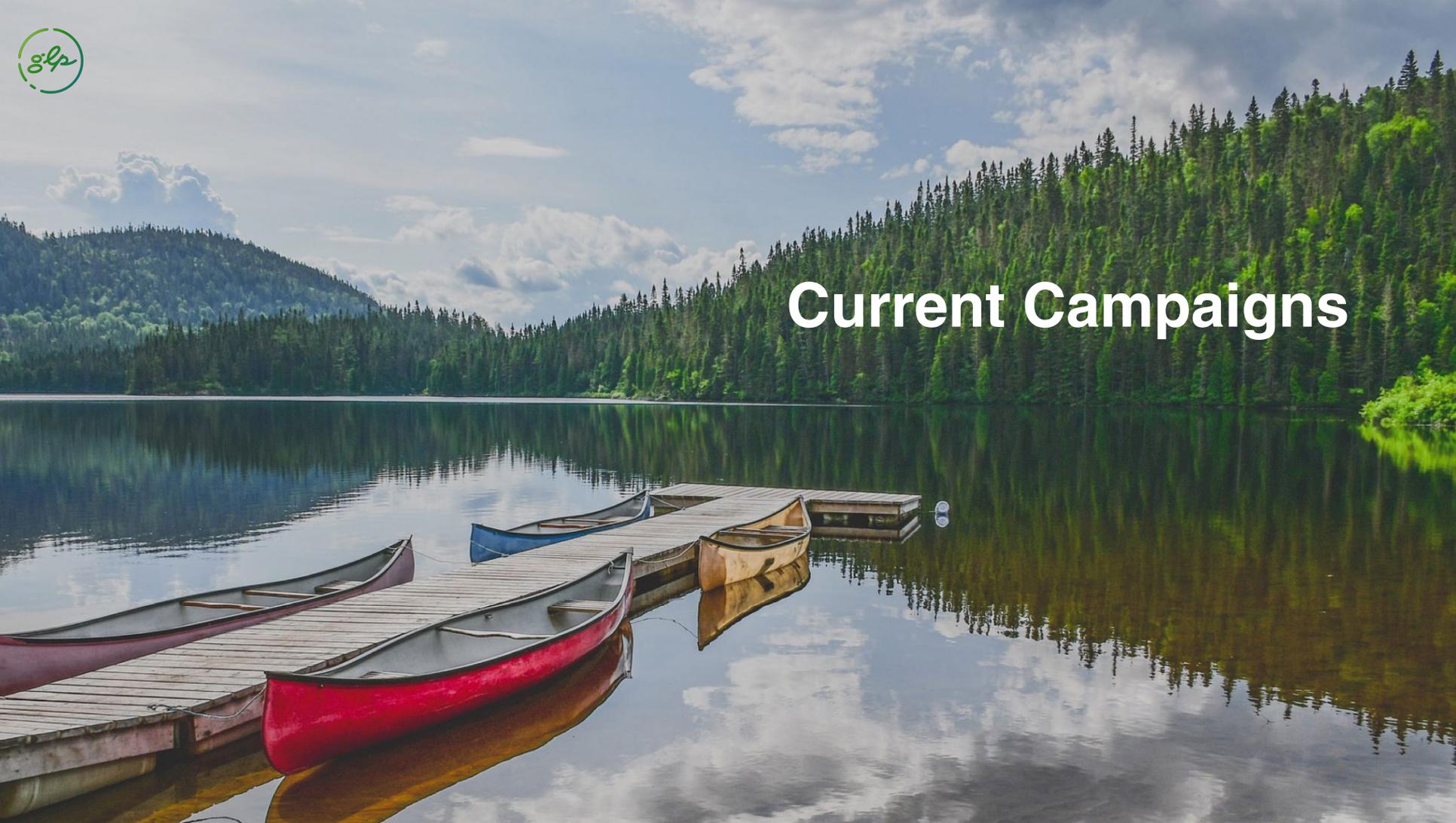


NEWS CENTER
MAINE





Current Campaigns





Content Strategy: Sustainable Tourism

We are developing a comprehensive new content strategy to reposition the destination of Loreto (population: 20,000) as an important new sustainable tourism destination (nature, community, culture, ranches, missions, etc) in the fragile Baja peninsula.



Content & Storytelling: Full Rebrand

We are managing a comprehensive multi-year content & storytelling campaign to reposition Armenia for this new travel era. We will produce all website content (video, photo, articles) and the long-term content and communication strategy.



Content Marketing: Sustainable Destination



Through a multi-year content marketing campaign, we are repositioning the Azores as a premier sustainable tourism destination through an authentic storytelling series (nature, outdoors, culture, wine, cheese, etc) and a targeted marketing, distribution and trade development work (Europe, North America).





Key Takeaways

- 1 We are in a new travel era. Do not go back to 2019.
- 2 Sustainable (experiences). It's what travelers want.
- 3 Sustainability means different things to everyone. And that is okay.
- 4 Tell your authentic stories. And help travelers. Everyone wins.
- 5 Develop and participate in a diverse mix of stakeholder networks.
- 6 Leverage Finland's sustainability experiences, resources, positioning.



Thank You.

Free Resources: Webinars, reports, workshops, articles, newsletter and more: www.glpfilms.com

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