



GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMUNICATION



in the frame of the joint project "Communicating sustainable travel offers successfully" by Futouris and Global Communication Experts.





Imprint

Publishers/Editors



Futouris e.V. Heidenkampsweg 58 D-20097 Hamburg

Mail: info@futouris.org www.futouris.org



Global Communication Experts GmbH Hanauer Landstraße 184 D-60314 Frankfurt

Mail: mail@gce-agency.com www.gce-agency.com

Authors

Prof. Dr. Christian Baumgartner, response & ability Jasmin Hadorn, response & ability

Photo credits

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Preamble

Sustainability is essential for the future of tourism; therefore, it must also be talked about, written about, etc. The need for sustainable tourism therefore necessarily has an influence on tourism marketing. Clear communication of sustainability is particularly important.

Communication of sustainability is multifaceted and can be divided into many different areas. This document offers 10 guiding principles with explanations and concrete examples of how sustainability can be successfully communicated.





Guiding principle 1: Integration of sustainability

We do not (only) present sustainability as a separate tab on the website, as a reference box in the catalogue, etc., but integrate the idea of sustainability into all areas of communication and marketing.

Theory

The consistent integration of sustainability in all aspects of communication sends a clear signal: It is communicated that the focus on sustainable action is not a clearly delineated additional task, but that every area can be improved in terms of sustainability.

This shows consumers that sustainable action is not an end goal, but an ongoing process. Consistently integrating sustainability into communications also provides an opportunity to set a standard and address the issue actively and consistently. This shows the target group that sustainability is an important and broad topic, and that everyone can contribute something to acting more sustainably. Thus, such communication clearly conveys the values that are important to the company.

Furthermore, the active integration of sustainability also emphasizes that the company is committed to the topic and willing to invest.

Examples

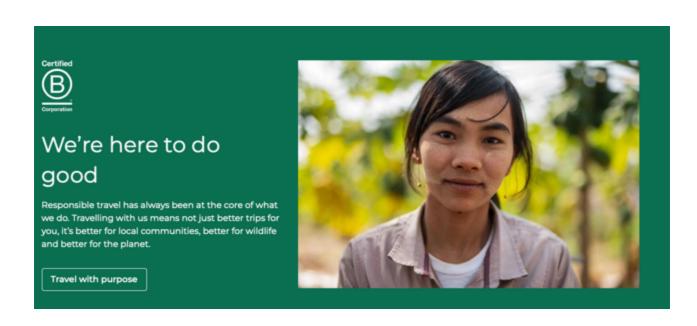
- Not only as tab on website, not hidden anyway.
- Sustainability as a basic idea, communicated clearly and openly.



Sustainability is clearly delineated here. Although the person reading thus knows exactly where more information on the topic can be found, this conveys that sustainability is not directly related to the rest of the company.







This message is located on the main page of the travel provider. For more information you will be directed to a new page.





Guiding principle 2: Clear and understandable communication

Sustainability, sustainable tourism and sustainable development do not represent good wording, they need explanation first. Therefore, we use self-explanatory terms from the value landscape and work with storytelling.

Theory

Sustainability has recently become a much-used term, although it is often not exactly clear what is meant by it. To ensure that consumers know exactly what sustainability stands for, the choice of words should be adapted accordingly.

Misunderstanding and confusion can be avoided with simple and generally understandable terms. Instead of talking about sustainability, concrete words such as responsible, commitment to the environment, environmentally friendly, social commitment and similar can be used. It also helps if specific action items are pointed out so it is clear what is meant. This includes stating specific goals and describing actions and commitment.

Storytelling further helps to communicate these elements while working with values and emotions.

Examples

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability is more than just a word and not just a tourism trend to African Kombi Tours. Sustainable tourism is a principle, a lifestyle as well as a long-term commitment to the countries we love, are proud of and find joy in. That is why African Kombi Tours is one of about 130 international tour operators, who joined the sustainable tourism platform forum anders reisen e.V., who have set themselves the goal of moving tourism in the right direction - responsible, sustainable tourism that improves the world – we are in!

Sustainable tourism describes a kind of tourism, that reduces the negative impact on the economy, culture, and social affairs as well as the environment of a country and at the same time strengthens positive influences. The term "responsible tourism" is also used to describe sustainable tourism. This concept was defined in Cape Town at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and is found in the Cape Town Declaration. Responsible tourism is focused on making the destinations a better place for the people who live there, but also for those who visit these places. The priority in terms of sustainable tourism is clearly to cater to the needs of the inhabitants first and foremost and not the tourists.

As tour operators, we agree with these objectives and therefore implement various measures:

Economical

- We create and maintain local jobs
- We maintain ethical, fair dealings and a fair payment for of all of our local partners.

Social

- We always meet the local people and inhabitants respectfully and convey this to our guests
- We pay attention to prioritise the respecting of human rights
- We pay close attention to social compatibility during our travels
- We support local social projects such as preschool near Cape Town

Ecological

- We take care of nature and protect species while on tours
- We consider the ecological compatibility of the trips offered

In this example the wording "sustainable tourism" is used but the company explains what sustainable tourism means. Furthermore, the company show their goals and measures.







Responsible Travel: For Today and Tomorrow

We believe that responsible tour operators should do more than supporting charities. To us, practicing sustainability or responsible travel means being responsible in the way that we work – it pervades what we do on a day-to-day basis.

When we first founded Enchanting Travels in 2004, we wanted to ensure that we have a positive impact on the society and environment in which we operate. We believe that when done well, tourism can be a force for good, whether it is the ability to boost local economies and support communities, or as a way to promote conservation to a wider audience. This belief has always been entrenched in our company vision. To make your travel dreams come true and facilitate journeys to different parts of our amazing planet, it is important to us that we and our guests make a positive contribution to the people and places visited along the way.

We do not claim perfection – and we would question any others who do. We acknowledge that to be a modern-day traveler being "eco-friendly" is impractical, as every step leaves a footprint, however, we do value being "eco-considerate". Join us on our journey today to make a better world for tomorrow.

OUR RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL POLICY →

Instead of *Sustainable Tourism*, this company deliberately uses an alternative wording. Furthermore, it is clearly communicated what exactly is understood by *Responsible Travel*.





Guiding principle 3: Sustainability is considered and communicated comprehensively

Sustainability is more than environmental and climate protection. We integrate the people and their culture from the target areas into the communication and also let them actively have their say.

Theory

Sustainability is often associated with nature and the environment. Often the other two areas of sustainability are forgotten: social sustainability and economic sustainability. Even though natural diversity is particularly suitable for sustainability in communication, people and the economy must not be forgotten.

Especially when it comes to social sustainability, it is important to communicate the viewpoints of the people involved and give them a voice. This also means that current social topics of communication can be addressed. This honest communication leads to transparency and builds trust. It also shows consumers that sustainability is about an ongoing process and that the company is willing to invest and improve in order to have a positive impact on the destination.

In addition, involving people lends itself to creating a personal connection with consumers. It conveys humanity and offers the opportunity for consumers to learn more about the culture and history of the local population.

Examples

For example, Costa Rica mostly advertises its nature and biodiversity, leaving the people in the background. Social issues or challenges are often not addressed. The "My Costa Rica" campaign is also primarily about the needs of the celebrities, not about the well-being of the local population.







Sustainability is not a practice in Costa Rica; it is a way of life.

With a goal to be the first carbon neutral country in the world by 2021, sustainable practices are observed in every region of the country, across all industries, adopted by all citizens and embraced by visitors. From local Costa Rican cuisine to artisan crafts to traditional customs and celebrations, sustainability is embedded deeply in the culture and traditions of Costa Rica.

Costa Ricans are proud to live among and protect their country's rich environment, as this small nation holds five percent of the world's land-based biodiversity and 3.5 percent of its marine life. Costa Rica produces nearly 93 percent of its electricity from renewable resources and 30 percent of its territory is protected natural land. A pioneer in the area of sustainability, Costa Rica is a model for sustainable practices for many industries within the region and around the world.

To Discover more about Costa Rica's Sustainability efforts visit our Institutional website at www.ict.go.cr

Protected areas

Although Costa Rica is a small territory, it makes up about 5% of the earth's biodiversity, Fortunately, this natural treasure is protected by the National System of Conservation Areas, preserving a total of 25% of the national territory.

Visitors can enjoy the country's majestic volcanoes, Pacific and Caribbean beaches, tropical dry, wet, and rain forests, as well as exhilarating jungle landscapes, all without traveling long distances.

It gives us great pleasure to invite you to visit our natural wonders.

Under the topic of sustainability, only nature is mentioned. The two elements of social and economic sustainability are not mentioned.



CLIMATE ACTION

Our purpose is to inspire, create, share and lead the best travel experiences ever – for both people and the planet. That's why we've been carbon-neutral since 2010, carbon offset all our trips, and have a seven-point commitment plan that supports our Climate Emergency declaration. We are the first global tour operator with verifiable science-based targets through the Science Based Targets initiative, to limit global warming to 1.5C in the next decade. We're here to find solutions.



COMMUNITIES WE VISIT

Our purpose is totally tied to our product (that's our trips). We're all about sustainable, experience-rich travel. That means using our trips as a force for good, as well as good times. We're genuinely connected to and invested in the places we go, the people we meet along the way, and the communities at the heart of every Intrepid experience. We think globally, act locally, and engage personally.

From Community-based tourism to new experiences that support First Nations and Indigenous communities around the world, we've been retooling our itineraries to dial back the carbon and dial up the impact. With our legendary local leaders out front, we're a global collective, local at heart. Get out there and see it.

This provider shows its commitment and mission on its website which not only includes environmental or climate protection but also social aspects of sustainability such as involving and respecting local communities.





Guiding principle 4: Avoid stereotypes

Tourism marketing is usually full of stereotypes and clichés - we tackle the challenge of avoiding them through a conscious, questioning use of words and images.

Theory

Stereotypes are highly simplified and generalizing images of groups of people or things. Using them in marketing can have strong consequences. In the worst case, such stereotypes can reinforce prejudices against certain groups of people. The use of stereotypes thus has a strong influence on consumer expectations and perceptions and can, at most, influence the experience.

With the communication about a destination, the communicating company has the responsibility to present the destination in an unadulterated and diverse way and to avoid stereotypes. Especially because consumers get their first impression of the destination and its people through marketing, the responsibility of the communicating company is particularly high. In short: with versatile communication, you address a diverse target group. This has a lively effect and can surprise.

To avoid stereotypes, it must be ensured that, for example, frequently used terms such as "exotic" or even "authentic" are reflected and used in a way that is true to the content. The same applies to pictures, especially because pictorial representations emphasize a message. With every image used, it should be questioned what is meant to be communicated with it and what could be interpreted with this image. Stereotypes are often not obvious, which makes critical questioning even more important. It is a matter of course that all persons depicted give their consent to the use of the image and is also legally necessary according to the European GDPR.

When choosing images, you should consider the following points:

- Address statistically underrepresented groups.
- Depicting people of different genders, ages, nationalities, physical abilities.
- Way of depicting different people and what their positionings in the picture might mean.





Examples



The text on this picture says "Travel sustainably: Committed to a sustainable future".



The text on this picture says "Travel your dream. Breath-taking. Magical. Unforgettable.".

What exactly does an attractive young woman have to do with sustainability? With these examples, the question arises as to what exactly is to be communicated with these illustrations. Lots of greenery in image 1 emphasizes the importance of nature - which is a cliché when it comes to sustainability. In addition, the chosen image does not correspond to the slogan "engage", since the person depicted is not particularly active, but seems to be relaxing.







Truly Authentic

We promise to give you a truly authentic experience of the country you're visiting. From the local flavours and food you eat, to the restaurants you eat them in. It's the real deal.

What exactly does "authentic" mean? The use of this term suggests that there are also "inauthentic" experiences. This in turn conveys stereotypes and suggests that clichés in particular represent an "authentic" way of life.



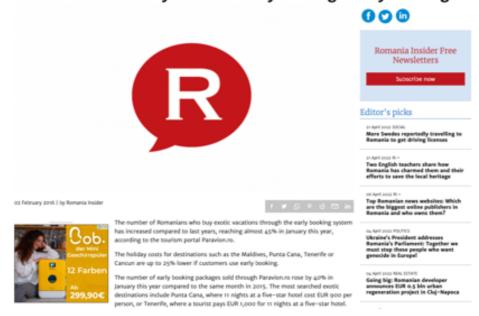
When a guest enters a yurt, he is always welcomed with a smile, and it is common to see Kyrgyz people dressed in their national clothing during festivals and holidays.

The above picture including description from a catalogue about Kyrgyzstan is a good example of a negative and a positive point. On the one hand, it emphasizes that guests are always greeted with a smile, which in itself conveys an unrealistic stereotype. On the positive side of the description, it is clearly emphasized that traditional clothes are often worn during festivals and holidays. This statement is important, otherwise the impression would exist that Kyrgyz people are always dressed this way.





More Romanians buy exotic holidays through early booking



What exactly is meant by exotic?

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Guiding principle 5: Gender-sensitive language

Gender equality is not just one of the SDGs, but a daily challenge. We consistently use gender-sensitive language and are also gender- and generation-sensitive in our image selection (for languages where there are grammatically different forms for different gender).

Theory

The way we write, speak, and depict influences our perception. Language choices can be used to include or exclude groups of people. Respectful communication can ensure that all consumers feel comfortable and included with the language we choose. That's why it's important to use gender-sensitive language and diverse visual communication.

When communicating in writing, you can stick to the following points:

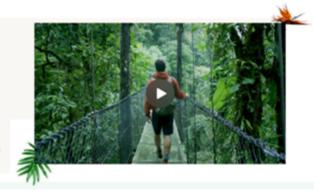
- Use neutral forms such as: Customers, visitors, travellers
- Use passive sentences
- Use full pair forms such as: Visitors
- Use of direct speech such as: *Please note the following* instead of *The visitor has to observe the following*.
- Paraphrase with an adjective like: *medical help* instead of *help from a doctor* **Important:** the short form with brackets is to be avoided.

When selecting visual and audio material, it is important to show diverse role models. Persons with different characteristics should be made visible as independent, equal and having equal rights.

Examples

Willkommen auf der offiziellen Website von Costa Rica

Costa Rica ist eingebettet zwischen dem pazirischen- und karibischen Meer. Die beiden Ozeane sind 320 Killometer voneinander entfernt. Die Vielfalt der Landschaften und Mikroklimata, die der Besucher an einem einzigen Tag genießen kann, macht dieses Land zu einem wahren Urlaubsparadies. Auf einer Fläche von nur 51.000 km2 findet der Reisende Sonne und Strand, Abenteuer, Natur und Kultur, notwendige Voraussetzungen, um dem Geschmack von tausenden Touristen, die in Costa Rica den idealen Urlaubsort gefunden haben, gerech zu werden.



In this text, the German male word for "visitor" is used. This term could be replaced, for example, by *visitors* or the female word for visitor. The same applies to "the traveller", which could be replaced by *the travellers*. The German term for "visitor" does not address both genders – which makes a difference in German.





GEMEINSAM MIT UNSEREN GÄSTEN

Für uns als lebendiges mittelständisches Unternehmen ist der kontinuierliche Austausch mit unseren Kunden von großer Bedeutung. Unsere Gäste sind unsere Partner und wir erfüllen ihre Erwartungen in hohem Maße. Ihre Anregungen und Verbesserungsvorschläge fließen regelmäßig in die Produktentwicklung ein. So werden aus Kunden Fans.

Wikommunity

Gästefragebogen



GEMEINSAM MIT UNSEREN MITARBEITER/INNEN

Das Wikinger-Team ist der Motor für eine überzeugende Umsetzung unserer Ziele. Wir legen Wert auf nachhaltige und partnerschaftliche Beschäftigungsverhältnisse, die jedem Mitarbeiter ein hohes Maß an Verantwortung zukommen lassen. Wir bilden junge Menschen aus, fördern die Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf und bieten Perspektiven inner- und außerhalb des Unternehmens. Die Weiterbildung von Mitarbeitern am Unternehmensstandort in Hagen und von Reiseleitern hat für uns einen hohen Stellenwert.

Unser Team

Unsere Reiseleiter



There is some room for improvement in the choice of words in this example. Here, they speak of "partners," "customers," "employees," and so on. This does not address both genders – which makes a difference in German.





Guiding principle 6: Promoting responsible action and communicating benefits

The raised forefinger is obsolete. Today, we use motivational messages for the tourism of the future. Instead of talking about moral responsibilities, we talk about the added value for the traveller and the destination that sustainability in tourism entails.

Theory

Sustainable action is often seen as a compromise. Many people think that they either have to make additional efforts or forego certain luxuries in order to act more sustainably.

A positive and motivating choice of language has the effect that readers also feel encouraged to contribute to more sustainable action. In this way, it can be shown that it is not a matter of doing without, but that small changes in behaviour can still make a positive contribution to people and the environment.

Often people want something in return when they adjust their behaviour. When benefits and concrete positive influences are emphasized, then this conveys a positive feeling. The customers realize that they are making a contribution to sustainable development. Positive language choices motivate readers to question and adapt their actions. It is important not to make customers feel guilty, but to encourage and empower them to do their part. A guilty conscience often leads to ignoring the issue.

Example

Responsible Travel Creates Positive Change



The example informs about specific points where travellers have a positive impact. The presentation is simple but informative and shows specific points for improvement.





Guiding principle 7: Enable responsible travel

Sustainability is not something that is created by the provider and consumed by the traveller. Sustainability needs the participation of the travellers. That's why we talk about simple ways and provide conscious and unconscious incentives for sustainable behaviour.

Theory

Many people are overwhelmed with the term sustainability and are not sure how they can contribute to a more sustainable journey. If helpful tips and practical possibilities for action are communicated and made available, consumers feel supported and can act accordingly.

In order to promote more conscious travel, tips and tools can be provided on the one hand, which can be used on the traveller's own initiative. But there are also helpful methods to influence the behaviour of customers.

For the former, for example, tips can be provided on what to look for when traveling to have less of an impact on the destination. These can address different areas such as packing list, dealing with privacy and customs in the destination country.

To influence the behaviour of customers, so-called "opt-out" options and nudging¹ are helpful methods.

Especially if the booking process is integrated on the website, "opt-out" options make sense. For example, compensation is included as a standard and customers must actively decide against compensation. Such "opt-out" options increase the likelihood that CO₂ offsets will be paid for.

HINTS

- Use "opt-out" when it comes to flight compensation, for example.
- Suggest a medium amount for donation opportunities.
- Use "nudging" to influence customer behavior.

Further information

Compensation: www.myclimate.org / https://www.atmosfair.de/en/

- Tips for responsible travel: https://www.fairunterwegs.org/ueber-uns/organisation-english/

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¹ Nudging is a strategy for changing behavior. Individuals are to be persuaded to choose a certain behavior without pressure.





Examples

12 responsible travel tips

Here are a few easy, simple tips to help become a responsible traveller.

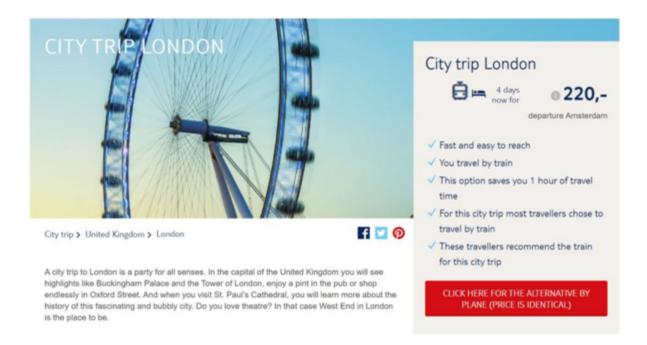


- Book the most direct route possible. Most flight carbon emissions are emitted during take-off and landing.
- Choose an eco-friendly hotel, one of our homestays in South India or an escorted tour using local guides.
- Take a reusable cotton bag with you, which you can take to local markets. This will help tackle plastic waste and you can use it for the beach, too. We also recommend taking a reusable water bottle to reduce plastic waste.
- 4 Dress appropriately in places of worship and remove your sunglasses when talking to people, as this is often considered bad karma around the world.
- Learn about local customs, traditions and a few words of the local language before you travel.
 - Always ask before taking portrait photos of others and avoid having your photo taken with any animals used as photo props, as this encourages captivity.
 - Remove and recycle excess packaging before you pack your suitcase to avoid simply throwing it in the bin while on holiday.
 - Support eco-friendly initiatives during your stay, such as reusing towels and turning off the air-conditioning and lights when you're not in the room.
 - Make sure you're buying locally-made souvenirs rather than mass-produced items that have been imported. Avoid items made from endangered animals or ivory and never take away 'natural' souvenirs you find, such as shells from the beach.
- Eat in local restaurants and choose locally-branded drinks rather than imported big named brands.
- 111 It often feels tough, but try to avoid giving money to beggars. If a beggar earns more than someone who works for a living, this can boost the practice and cause economic problems. We would also discourage giving money to children, as this may encourage parents to stop sending their children to school.
- You can offset your flight emissions at myclimate.

In this example, the audience is provided with some tips on how they can contribute to a more sustainable trip.







In this example, "nudging" is used to motivate the guest to travel by train. For example, it is communicated that most travellers go to London by train and that most recommend it for this destination. This method communicates to the guest that traveling by train is the norm. This increases the likelihood that the trip will be booked by train, as people often want to conform to social norms.





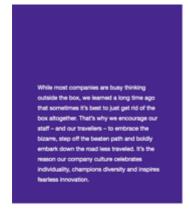
Guiding principle 8: Value-based communication

Sustainability is not just a demand on travellers but is based on the suppliers' own values (destination, tour operator, ...). Therefore, we communicate these values as such.

Theory

The values that are communicated should also be exemplified. Value-based communication includes, on the one hand, uniform and clear communication and, on the other hand, the implementation of these values. The company should clearly show which values are central to the company and how these are implemented in a concrete way. With concrete examples, the readers can imagine something about the company's commitment.

Examples



Bizarre? Maybe, Exciting? You bet. Coincidence? Absolutely not.





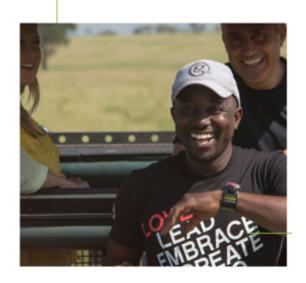








This unique combination of respect and enthusiasm prevents us from losing sight of what matters most – community, people, cultural exchange – and reminds us that creating happiness is a privilege we all share together.



We're proud of our reputation as a world leader in innovative, authentic adventure travel, and we work hard to make sure we stay there. Of course, it doesn't really feel like work when you love what you do as much as we do. Perhaps it's because we're more than a company, we're a family – a family of diverse individuals united by a profound respect for, and enthusiastic belief in, not only our values, but each other.

These illustrations show the clear and transparent communication of this provider's values. Concrete examples of how these values are lived and implemented show readers that this organization is committed and dedicated to its values.





Guiding principle 9: Consistent communication

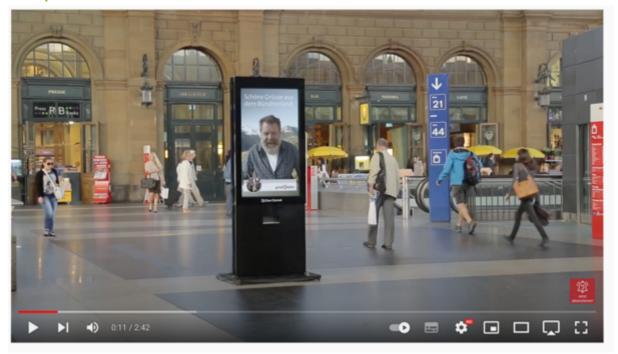
Consumers realize breaks: Therefore, we need to show consistency in image and sound/text across the entire advertising stretch.

Theory

When it comes to communicating sustainability, it is important that it is also credible. This means that the communication itself should be sustainable throughout and not contain any contradictions. Specifically, this means that there should be no footage from a UL coaxial helicopter, for example, or visible off-road tours or airline advertising in a marketing spot. The same applies to the choice of communications media. Such gaffes could have a major impact on customers' trust in the company, which is too high a risk.

Consistent communication creates trust and credibility as an organization. It is also important that only images are used that actually depict the destination or the experiences. Thus, the communication remains truthful and does not convey false images.

Examples

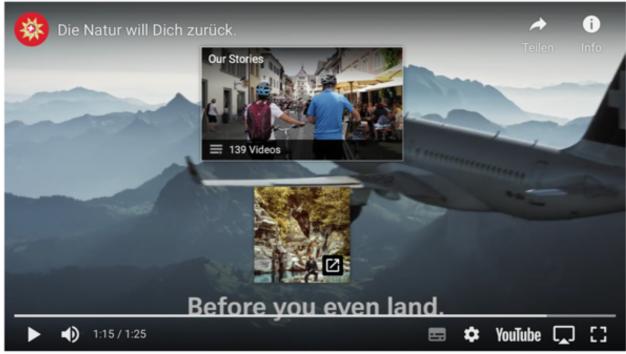


In the marketing campaign at Zurich's main station shown above, a train trip from Zurich to Vrin was advertised. This campaign focuses on the train ride as an experience. In addition, a local person is used to promote the destination.









The illustration below shows how an airline is advertised at the end of a promotional video. The focus of the commercial video is on nature - with the insertion of an airplane conveying a contradictory message.





Guiding principle 10: Pursue sustainability issues credibly and over the long term.

When we run campaigns on sustainability issues, they are designed for the long term and not just briefly flashing events that are already out of date again the next season.

Theory

Sustainability also has to do with the long term, among other things. For a campaign to have an impact, it should also be used over a longer period of time. This means that the company's core values can be taken up several times and integrated into the storytelling.