

**Achieving Sustainable Communication in Digital Tourism Marketing:
A Case Study of Biltmore Estate and Blue Ridge National Heritage Area**

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Abstract

Digital content marketing is a broad term encompassing the use of digital channels to promote a company's products and services. In the field of tourism marketing, digital content marketing plays a significant role in shaping the success of the business as tourism companies rely heavily on their social media and website presence to generate business. For the purposes of this paper, I will discuss digital content marketing through the lens of: 1) search engine optimization (SEO), 2) website content marketing, and 3) social media marketing. The effectiveness of digital content marketing in these aspects will be examined for two local tourism case studies: Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) and Biltmore Estate. Technical and professional writers and editors of digital tourism marketing sites have an ethical responsibility. They must make thoughtful choices when it comes to SEO keyword choice and digital storytelling in an effort to promote sustainable communication that represents and maintains the cultural and environmental integrity of their organization.

Destination Tourism Marketing

Digital content marketing, that is, an organization's website, videos, and social media channels that contribute to its online footprint, plays a pivotal role in shaping destination marketing. Increasing tourism rates are often associated with a well-implemented digital content marketing strategy. Before Hurricane Helene, Western North Carolina's tourism industry brought in \$7.7 billion in visitor dollars each year, about a fifth of the state's total (Kingdollar, 2024). Biltmore Estate and Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) have employed destination marketing strategies specifically focused on maximizing their websites' search engine optimization, building brand awareness, and engaging the public through social media. Both organizations' destination marketing techniques will be examined not just in terms of their effectiveness in generating more tourists, but as strong examples of sustainable communication. Ultimately, destination marketing involves strategic planning and intentional stakeholder involvement to ensure the connection built between tourists and a destination is well received by locals and is sustainable for future generations. Both Biltmore and BRNHA's destination marketing show a proven track record of creating a sustainable communication model.

Biltmore has a very successful digital content marketing campaign built upon years of establishing a trusted national brand. Prior to Helene, an annual 1.4 million tourists visited Biltmore, America's largest home built by George Vanderbilt between 1889 and 1895 (Boyle, 2017). According to Biltmore's website, Cornelia and John Cecil opened their family home to the public in the 1930s to "increase area tourism in the Depression and to generate income to preserve the estate." The Biltmore Wine Company opened to the public in 1985. An increase in tourism spiked in the 21st century, with the opening of the Inn on Biltmore in 2001, Antler Hill Village in 2010, and the Village Hotel in 2015. Today the house, winery, dairy barn, and grounds

are privately owned by the Vanderbilt family. Even before digital marketing gained traction, the Vanderbilts worked hard to ensure certain cornerstone values, such as authenticity, integrity, stewardship, and historical preservation, remained the focus of their rapidly growing, family-owned Estate. Today, these values are heavily woven into the fabric of all their digital marketing efforts, including numerous social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Pinterest, and X. Despite the organization's growth, Biltmore remains true to its humble roots.

Likewise, BRNHA, a nonprofit organization established in 2003, works in tandem with the National Park Service to “preserve, cultivate, and promote the natural and cultural heritage of 25 Western North Carolina counties and the Qualla Boundary to benefit current and future generations” (www.blueridgeheritage.com). Although BRNHA does not nearly have the vast history or legacy as Biltmore, its digital marketing efforts to create a strong destination marketing presence through its website, Facebook, and Instagram channels are commendable. Showcasing the museums, crafts, music, and natural wonders that make this region unique is a daunting task, yet BRNHA's digital destination marketing manages to do so in a way that respectfully honors the heritage of Appalachia and its native people.

Traditionally, destination marketing was accomplished strictly through organization generated content only, and took the form of magazines, newspapers, brochures, and other publications (Gurjar, et al, 2019, p. 290). With the introduction of the Internet, practically overnight, destination marketing became a back-and-forth dialogue between the organization generated content and user-generated content in the form of blogs, videos, social media, and customer review posts that can be reshared on multiple platforms. In 2013, the terms “story marketing” and “social media marketing” arose as digital content marketing evolved

(Kumar, 2021, p. 413). As a result, consumers now play a role in promoting a particular brand by posting their review, picture, or video of the destination online. For example, 228 thousand people have included #biltmoreestate in their Instagram posts, with an additional 12.2 thousand people posting #biltmorechristmas and 20.8 thousand people hash-tagging #biltmorewedding. Compared to a printed brochure mailed to select households, it's unsurprising the level of reach this digital content marketing technique must carry in drawing thousands of tourists to enjoy a similar experience.

One of the key differences between traditional and digital content marketing is that digital marketing does not sell a product or service directly. Instead, this technique establishes brand awareness and loyalty so that tourists seek out an organization that they trust to provide them with reputable services and experiences (Gurjar, 2019, p. 290). In this way, businesses establish themselves as “thought leaders” in their industry and build brand authority (Basu & Naskar, 2023, p.100). Brand building implies creating a clear and distinct image which differentiates a product from its competitors. It ensures a long-term quality commitment to its customers (Baker, 2008, p. 85). Brand building creates a mutually understood set of expectations between the consumer and the company. Once again, Biltmore leads the way with this technique as its brand loyalty extends beyond the confines of the 8,000-acre estate to include its own trusted line of bottled wine, food, home decor, furnishings, plants, and building products, sold at more than 3,000 retailers.

Destination branding happens when tourists form a distinct emotional attachment to a location that satisfies their needs and desires, and pleases all stakeholders (Baker, 2008, p. 88). Destination marketing aims to “make people aware of the location and then link desirable associations to create a favorable image to entice visits and business” (Baker, 2008, p. 86).

BRNHA excels at building this emotional attachment for tourists by embedding video and audio clip footage on their website; clips showcase locals talking about the natural and cultural attractions that make their hometowns unique, such as panning for gold, hiking to waterfalls, or enjoying the sounds of the banjo and fiddle at a local jam session. In theory, this would be a strong example of a destination marketing technique as a form of sustainable communication because locals are presented in a positive light. However, even if destination marketing organizations become more cognizant of respecting the local communities and cultural groups, little is known about how locals perceive their own destinations and the extent to which brands impact them (Baker, 2008, p. 90). Overall, if done thoughtfully, content marketing can create a sense of “emotional connection, psychological empowerment, and perceived value” that leads to customer engagement and loyalty (Basu & Naskar, 2023, p. 104).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Destination Marketing

To evaluate the effectiveness of two different WNC destination tourism organizations’ digital marketing strategies, Moz Keyword Explorer will be utilized to analyze the degree to which SEO plays a role in building brand awareness and promoting sustainable tourism. This highly rated tool helps digital marketing professionals find and prioritize keywords and phrases that people are most likely to type into a search engine. More specifically, I will examine two metrics created by Moz: the website domain metric and the brand authority metric. While the website domain metric gauges how well the domain will rank in Google searches, the brand authority metric determines how strong the company’s brand recognition is through an analysis of how often it appears in Google searches. Both domain and brand authority values run on a scale of 1-100, with 0 being the lowest brand and domain recognition and 100 being the highest. We’ll then consider how these rankings compare to similar sites. Finally, we’ll examine the top-

ranked keyword results on these sites and offer suggestions for how these could be prioritized in keeping with the goal of promoting sustainable tourism and improving brand awareness.

Search Engine Optimization is a well-structured process of augmenting the number of visitors to a particular website by listing it on the first page of the online search (Singh, 2024, p. 61). Increasing a business's website visibility and ranking on a search engine results page (SERP) naturally increases user traffic or visitation to the site (Singh, 2024, p. 61). Some of the biggest benefits of improving search engine visibility include increasing sales, building brand awareness, fostering consumer education, and sparking social activism (Binod, 2023, p. 31). For example, a quick Google search for "Social Activism" and "Biltmore Estates" returns webpages showcasing the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion as well as philanthropic efforts, revealing the power of these search engine optimized keyword terms. High-quality and valuable content on a website increases user engagement, leading to increased customer and brand loyalty (Singh, 2024, p. 64). Skillfully crafted SEO content and keywords improve the website's visibility and attract more qualified potential consumers, significantly reducing advertising costs (Singh, 2024, p. 65). Yet shockingly, SEO Consultant and Educator Kristina Azarenko states that 90 percent of content on websites does not get any traffic from Google because most writers don't use SEO techniques (Azarenko, 2022).

In order to write effective SEO content, a professional writer must first identify the target audience and user intent for the destination website. A target audience is the group of people intended to visit the website who share certain characteristics in common, including their age, gender, level of familiarity with the destination (or related services being offered), and the challenges the audience might face (i.e., difficulty accessing the location, speaking the language)

(Azarenko, 2022). Secondly, the writer must then identify the user's intent when searching the website to write the most appropriate form of content. For example, if the user is simply seeking further information about the destination, such as the history, climate, and geography, then a blog post or guide would be most appropriate (Azarenko, 2022). But if the user is hoping to utilize the website for commercial or transactional purposes, such as finding the best price on a hotel or local attraction discount package, then this content would better be formatted as a service or product page broken down by categories (Azarenko, 2022).

Once the target audience and appropriate content form has been identified, the writer must take great care to craft strong SEO headings to help their webpage get discovered. In an age of information overload, content must be broken down into content blocks or short paragraph chunks separated by SEO headings to help web browsers find the information they are looking for as quickly as possible (Azarenko, 2022). A webpage should only contain one main heading with possibly several secondary or even tertiary subheadings; for example, in HTML, this would appear as [H1/, H2/, H3/]. These headings should include strong SEO keywords that directly answer questions viewers might have related to the content. Text sizes of the headings vary to signal the level of the information's importance; search engine crawlers showcase sites where the heading keywords are replicated in the body of the content (Binod, 2023, p. 24).

When thinking of the best keywords to use to increase site visitation, writers must be sure to consider how the keyword relates to three important factors: relevance, search volume and competitiveness (Booth, 2024). A keyword's relevance is determined by how closely it aligns with the characteristics of the target audience as well as the user's intent. Some of the most obviously relevant terms may also yield high search volume results, which is not going to help drive people to a specific site as directly. Instead, Booth (2024) argues it is a good idea to

identify “longtail keywords,” which he defines as highly relevant and descriptive keywords that are also more competitive; in other words, because the keywords are more specific, there are also fewer search results, increasing the likelihood of the website being discovered quickly.

BRNHA’s website (blueridgeheritage.com) has a domain authority of 53, but a brand authority of only 29. In comparison to the brand authority of two other leading Asheville tourism websites, it is significantly behind exploreasheville.com (DA 61, BA 70) and somewhat behind romanticasheville.com (DA 59, BA 40). The top five domain keyword topics are: “Cherokee pottery traditions,” “Blue Ridge National Heritage,” “Appalachian craftsmanship showcase,” “Historic landmarks tours,” and “Native American culture insights.” These are the top search terms people use in Google to lead them to this site. The Blue Ridge Music Trails and Blue Ridge Craft Trails are two of the most distinctive accomplishments of this organization, yet these terms do not result as top ranked search terms. Perhaps it would be beneficial to craft these as first tier headings on the site. Overall, this site seems to support the mission, branding and values of its organization.

Biltmore’s website far surpassed BRNHA in terms of domain authority (67) and brand authority (74). This could be due in part to the attraction’s long history (Biltmore opened its doors to the public in 1930) or to the narrow scope of the company’s mission (to preserve the estate for future generations) with a dedicated team of marketers to support this. Top domain keyword topics include “Chihuly at Biltmore,” “wine tasting experience,” “historic Vanderbilt house,” “estate tours and tickets,” and “dining and restaurants.” Each of these keyword results are tied directly to the for-profit tourist experience one might expect, with little emphasis on the decades of preservation work or the environmental stewardship initiatives. Likewise, the first, second, and third tier headings (ie. “A fall destination like no other” or “Acclaim for Biltmore”)

speaking more to the grandeur of the experience rather than the history, culture, and natural beauty hidden in the fourth and fifth level headings. As would be expected from a for-profit site, Biltmore's marketing seems less focused on preserving the cultural and natural values of the site, although these values are still woven throughout the narrative, perhaps with just a bit more digging.

Digital Storytelling and Websites

Digital storytelling, much like digital content marketing, could be used as a means of increasing consumer brand loyalty by bringing more authenticity and legitimacy to the mission of the company (Crisan, 2017, p. 280). The term "digital storytelling" was coined through a series of storytelling workshops in Berkley, California in the mid-1990s. Joe Lambert from The Center for Digital Storytelling equated "digital storytelling" as any form of "conversational media" that "breaks down barriers, and increases understanding across generations, ethnicities and other divides" (Crisan, 2017, p. 274). In today's digital landscape, this would include websites and social media channels. I will first examine the organization's websites and then their social media platforms as vehicles for advancing sustainable messaging through digital storytelling.

To evaluate the effectiveness of their websites, I will loosely use criteria identified by a team of researchers who evaluated numerous tourism websites in Indonesia by examining three distinct aspects: aesthetics, informational value, and interactive components (Putra et al., 2018, p. 75). Of these, interactive components (FAQ pages, comment boxes, and other elements that encourage website engagement) contributed to building brand loyalty as more tourists returned to these websites. The aesthetic evaluation considered visualization components (i.e., the use of color, logo branding techniques, and the display of multimedia content) as well as website design (ease of navigation or how frequently the website is updated). The informational value focused

not only on how comprehensively information was provided about the destination, including cost, but also specialized travel tips or information in multiple languages that made the website stand out from others with similar content.

BRNHA's website (blueridgeheritage.com) is inviting, featuring a simple color scheme (white and blue) and logo with a relatively easy to navigate menu on the left-hand side that highlights links to their Blue Ridge Heritage Craft and Music Trails. The "Explore the Map" link is particularly helpful for navigating the local attractions across the state in an interactive way. The blog posts highlight the efforts of the community uniting over music and crafts. Overall, the site could benefit from better organization on the home page as there are several disparate, unconnected news article elements. The events calendar is hidden at the bottom and could be highlighted. The website contains a lot of basic information about attractions and resources, which the community clearly values; however, the site could be improved with the addition of more interactive elements or timely videos and news articles about current happenings in the community.

Biltmore's website (biltmore.com) is beautifully designed and frequently updated with the intention of generating tourism revenue at the expense of focusing on the sustainable practices of the organization. An easy to access navigation bar across the top of the page prominently reveals extensive, yet helpful drop-down menus highlighting lodging, attractions and a tab called "Our Story," which highlights Biltmore's history, mission, and culture. However, one must dig deep to find the articles highlighting the organization's commitment to environmental stewardship, historic preservation, and diversity and inclusion; these references are all rather hidden under a couple layers on the site. Enticing images of Biltmore at Christmas encourage tourists to click to learn more details (such as ticket prices), a savvy interactive design

choice. In light of Hurricane Helene, limited-time special ticket prices are hidden on the bottom of the website, but not posted at all on the Facebook or Instagram pages - a missed opportunity. Toward the bottom of the homepage, a grouping of interactive itineraries, including “Family Fun,” “Food & Wine,” “Our Gardens,” and “Outdoors” thoughtfully beckons to different tourist demographics. Essential visitor information is easily accessible at the bottom, along with a section of customer reviews titled “Acclaim for Biltmore.” Overall, the website is a good example of sustainable communication despite the organization’s for-profit mission.

Digital Storytelling and Social Media

Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, are some of the best tools for digital storytelling. These platforms work hand in hand with websites and other digital marketing tools as social media “allows businesses to create brand awareness, build brand loyalty, and drive website traffic” (Basu & Naskar, 2023, p. 100). Instagram reels, video clips, and images showcasing endearing aspects of the business, such as highlighting staff or featuring other heartwarming human-interest stories, helps current and future tourists build a sense of emotional attachment with the place (Baker, 2008, p. 88). From a business perspective, other tourism partner businesses can be tagged in posts, which builds brand loyalty and a chance for collaboration. This raises awareness of a business’s profile in the community as people who follow one tourist agency might be encouraged to follow the other business’ page.

Ideally, a marketing professional employed for these organizations would be able to examine the analytics of their social media sites and make some informed decisions in the areas of: reach and impressions (who is viewing the content and how they immediately respond), engagement and sentiment (how people interact with the content and how they feel about it), traffic and bounce trends and conversions (the number of people who complete a desired action

like booking a trip or downloading a brochure). Unfortunately, without being an employee of either BRHNA or Biltmore, I do not have access to these analytics, which proves limiting to my analysis. Instead, my analysis will focus on the user's perspective of Biltmore and BRHNA's Facebook and Instagram content in relation to connecting with different audiences effectively.

In light of Hurricane Helene, BRNHA's Facebook page has done a tremendous job promoting local tourism at local businesses, posting events, and offering lists of businesses that are open. Health and safety posts for driving on the Blue Ridge Parkway were also included. One concerning Facebook post listed "Towns that are currently welcoming visitors" and "Towns that are not." Several followers commented on these posts as being out of date and exclusive of those businesses that would appreciate some patronage in the hardest hit regions. This kind of negative and misleading post generated the most reactions (76), comments (16), and shares (142), but for the wrong reasons. Otherwise, interactions and reactions to posts were minimal (less than 10). The page could greatly benefit from special offers and promotions to draw people to the region. In comparison to BRNHA, Biltmore's social media posts are much more frequent, with thousands of reactions, comments, and reshares. Their Facebook posts indicate a community-minded spirit, with the organization pledging \$2 million to Western North Carolina disaster relief and serving as a proud sponsor of the Concert for Carolina relief concert.

Because social media incorporates multiple formats, including audio, video, and text, it can connect with viewers spanning a wide range of interests, demographics, and learning styles. According to a Pew Research Report, which surveyed 5,733 adults between May 19 and September 5, 2023, most Americans use Facebook (about 68 percent surveyed) and this usage is consistently equal across all generations (with the exception of teenagers); however, only about half of all Americans use Instagram, including 78 percent of 18-29 year olds compared to 15

percent of adults 65 and older (Gottfried, 2024). Therefore, from a destination marketing perspective, focusing on Facebook content to reach users of all ages should be top priority as these posts will likely reach the largest demographic at one time. Both BRHNA and Biltmore tended to repost content from their Facebook channels onto their Instagram feed. While this does make sense from an efficiency standpoint as more visitors use Facebook, not creating original content for both channels can be a potential missed opportunity.

For destination marketing especially, digital storytelling professionals must keep their audience demographic in mind to select which storytelling tactic makes the most sense to engage with different generations. As Cahyani states, “Millennials and Gen Z are the largest consumer groups in the tourism industry, and they tend to seek unique and authentic experiences,” (2023, p. 56). Millennials prioritize budget-friendly travel that focuses on eco-friendly opportunities. As active social media followers, millennials also enjoy influencer marketing on Instagram, particularly when the influencers’ lifestyles and interests match their own (Formation, 2023). For instance, Biltmore and BRHNA could utilize their Instagram channels to feature reels of national or local celebrities experiencing the natural and cultural attractions of Western North Carolina. Generation Z users are considered digital natives and gravitate toward a variety of social media platforms, including Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram (Formation, 2023). For many young users, this means short form, user-generated content that features compelling digital stories, which are told more quickly through live Instagram reels. Studies show, younger audiences aren’t as likely to read lengthy posts with text or linger on posts for more than a few seconds (Cahyani, 2023, p. 58). Perhaps Biltmore could post polls on their Instagram for viewers to vote for their favorite room in the house or BRHNA could post funny memes highlighting the

innovative creativity of local attractions that underscore Asheville's unofficial slogan "Keep Asheville Weird."

Baby boomers are largely traveling for leisure and often looking for multi-generational activities to experience with their kids and grandkids. For this generation, prioritizing video content that can be viewed through Facebook or YouTube should be a top priority. Generation X travelers who typically have greater disposable incomes and are seeking high quality experiences for a reasonable price respond well to email marketing discounts as well as long-form marketing content such as blog posts and informative videos that tap into authentic storytelling (Formation, 2023). BRNHA's website excels at including digital storytelling techniques which might reach audiences from a variety of demographics and interests, as it includes both blog posts, as well as embedded video and audio content. When one clicks on "Experience our Living Heritage" on the homepage, this links to video or audio clips showcasing small mountain towns and the music and crafts of each county; posting this multimedia content to Facebook or Instagram would engage more demographics.

One area where older and younger generations overlap in terms of Facebook usage is hedonic usage, that is, seeking pleasure from viewing travel photos and videos of family and friends. Both Biltmore and BRHNA need to make more of an effort to encourage the sharing of user-generated content on their sites. As previously mentioned, thousands of followers tag Biltmore when posting their content to their Facebook or Instagram page. Developing contests for families to post their pictures or videos of Biltmore to be entered for a chance to win a free pair of admission tickets or a membership to the winery would greatly enhance engagement for all demographics. BRHNA had significantly fewer tags connected to their socials.

For some folks, however, virtual tourism can be a viable option to engage with a larger audience who might otherwise be excluded from visiting the site in person. Biltmore Estate has taken steps to offer brief virtual tour videos on their website designed to engage a variety of audiences who may not otherwise visit the site in person including the elderly, people with disabilities, and homeschool groups. Although short, these videos offer a brief overview of the house, grounds, pantry, and conservatory, allowing people to connect with the site who would otherwise be excluded due to transportation or cost barriers. Virtual tourism promotes well-being in older adults by enabling escapism (temporarily transporting them out of their daily routine), while simultaneously stimulating memory, alleviating depression, and encouraging social connections when viewed with others (Fiocco, 2021). Additionally, although an initially costly investment, Biltmore could potentially invest in Virtual Reality (VR) headsets, which would allow homebound guests an immersive, 360-degree experience, that mimics the visual and auditory elements of an in-person visit (Fiocco, 2021). Of course, despite the versatility of these platforms, they still require a level of technical savvy or at least technical assistance to which certain demographics, such as older adults, may not have access. In this case, older demographics may prefer longer-form human-interest pieces, such as a blog post or printed booklet, that give more breadth and depth to the organization. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the destination marketing professional to develop digital storytelling and SEO techniques in a way that reaches multiple demographics while also building sustainable communication.

Sustainable Communication and Destination Marketing

Sustainable communication is “the use of language and visual imagery to convey messages of environmental and social responsibility that enhance the well-being of both individuals and the planet” (Cahyani, 2023). Destination marketing must take into consideration the needs of all stakeholders including the tourists, locals, public and private sectors, tourism enterprises, and tourism operators. At the outset, while satisfying and delighting tourists and maximizing business profits might seem like the ultimate goal, in order to be sustainable, destination marketing must strike a balance between economic growth and socio-cultural and environmental costs (Baker, 2008, p. 82). While tourism is essential for economic development, often this can unintentionally (or intentionally) lead to environmental degradation, or cultural appropriation in an attempt to attract more visitors. For example, increased tourism is threatening natural sites bordering and within Jackson County, such as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Nantahala National Forest, as well as heritage sites such as the Cherokee Qualla Boundary; increased traffic results in heightened air and noise pollution, construction degrades the scenery, and ancient Native American sites battle erosion and decay without proper protection (Deale et al., 2011, p. 12). Destination marketing for this area must focus its storytelling efforts on the cultural and natural beauty that is being threatened by tourists and advocate for visitors and government policy holders to take action to reverse the harm being rendered.

How can destination marketers ensure sustainable communication practices are being implemented in their work? First and foremost, sustainable communication must be strategic, with specific marketing goals aligned with cultural and natural resource preservation goals for a site (Radjabov, 2024). Once these objectives are made clear, destination marketers should then

collaborate with stakeholders and the public to ensure consistent and desired messaging. Digital storytelling should accurately represent the culture and community being featured, and should promote the conservation of natural and cultural resources; this, in turn, builds brand loyalty and leads to increased tourist visitation. Social media, website content, and SEO keyword choices should keep sustainable communication in mind by considering the social justice and ethical implications of keywords being used. In order for a social media platform to be considered a sustainable communication tool, it must consider the environmental, economic, and social aspects of tourism (Kumar, 2021, p. 412). When done correctly, destination marketing is the primary vehicle for raising awareness among local communities and tourists, and fostering mutually beneficial relationships between them (Radjabov, 2024).

Conclusion

Technical and professional writers working in the field of destination tourism have an ethical responsibility to create sustainable communication through the choices they make in their digital storytelling, SEO keyword choice, and brand building strategies. Honesty is a key tenet of The Society for Technical Communication, and as such, destination marketers must represent and portray communities with the highest level of integrity. With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, technical writers, including digital content marketers, may feel threatened by these technical advances making their writing and editing skillsets obsolete. While AI might be capable of drafting content for digital platforms, AI lacks the human ethos and judgement needed to portray tourism sites in a way that appropriately showcases and honors their cultural and natural integrity. For example, while a blog or social media post written by AI about an old-time folk group might showcase the musicians' talent, only a digital content writer could

successfully craft a story advocating for older generations to pass on these skills to younger musicians so that the legacy of old-time music is preserved in Western North Carolina.

Both Biltmore and Blue Ridge National Heritage Area are strong marketing examples of fostering sustainable communication. The cultural and environmental integrity of these Western North Carolina attractions seems well represented through these destination marketing platforms with only minimal areas for improvement, primarily being more intentional in connecting with the digital preferences of each demographic. Further analysis of the demographic statistics of tourists visiting these sites along with the interaction statistics for each sites' social media platforms could greatly enhance a digital content marketer's ability to select the best digital storytelling tools to engage and connect with different user groups. Further, in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, it would be interesting to see the extent to which the marketing teams for these sites lean into crafting social justice focused content that showcases the philanthropic efforts of these organizations to help their communities rebuild at the expense of turning a profit. Overall, technical and professional communicators should strive to achieve these same ethical standards in all destination marketing work.

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