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Discovering Armenia: Utilizing Information Technology for Economic Growth

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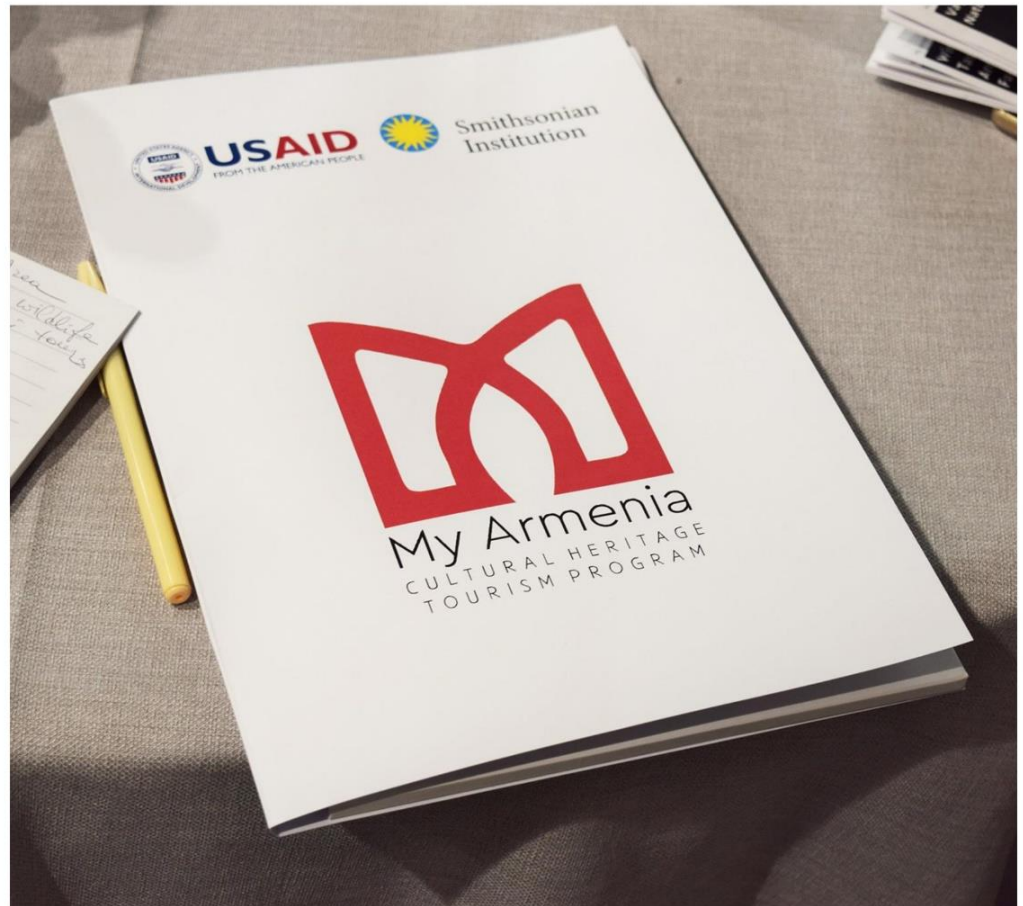*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

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Discovering Armenia

Utilizing Information Technology for Economic Growth

WPI

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Abstract

Armenia is a developing country that relies heavily on tourism for economic stability. Our project, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, was to create recommendations for user friendly and effective websites that would help decentralize economic prosperity by promoting tourism to rural Armenia. By defining the target audience, researching tourism attributes, and assessing competitor websites, this project established guidelines to use Search Engine Optimization and advertising platforms effectively. The outcome of this project will support efforts to increase tourism to Armenia as a whole and specifically to the rural areas.

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Authorship

James Kradjian, Christine Lujuo, Harsh Rana and Alexis Zoffreo all contributed to the research and writing of this report. Different sections of the report were assigned to different group members and were then reviewed by the rest of the team. A further breakdown of authorship can be seen below.

James Kradjian wrote parts of the Background chapter regarding tourist distribution techniques. He extended the Methodology chapter by writing about methods of defining the target audience (objective 1) and recommending a search engine optimization plan (objective 4). Additionally, he wrote parts of the Finding and Recommendation chapters about the previously mentioned objectives (1, 4). James was also responsible for editing the reference list.

Christine Lujuo wrote parts of the Background chapter regarding benefits of distributed tourism and challenges of tourism in rural Armenia. She extended the Methodology chapter by writing parts of the methods behind defining the target audience (objective 1) and recommending a search engine optimization plan (objective 4). Additionally, she wrote parts of the Finding and Recommendation chapters about the previously mentioned objectives (1, 4). Finally, Christine also wrote the first draft of the acknowledgement section.

Harsh Rana wrote parts of the Introduction chapter and the Executive Summary. He also contributed to the Background chapter regarding prior efforts in Armenia. He extended the Methodology chapter by writing the methods behind creating a keyword list (objective 2) and website optimization through content and design (objective 3). He also wrote part of the website advertisements methodology (objective 5) with regard to conversion techniques. He further wrote parts of the Finding and Recommendation chapters about the previously mentioned objectives (2, 3, 5).

Alexis Zoffreo wrote parts of the Introduction chapter and the Executive Summary. She also extended the Background chapter by writing about the case of tourism in Armenia and concentrated vs. distributed tourism. Additionally, she wrote the summary of the Background chapter. Alexis was responsible for explaining the methods behind website advertisements (objective 5) and website analytics (objective 6) in the Methodology chapter. She further wrote parts of the Finding and Recommendation chapters about the previously mentioned objectives (5 and 6).

In addition to the above mentioned breakdown of individual responsibilities, James Kradjian, Christine Lujuo, Harsh Rana and Alexis Zoffreo were all responsible for editing the paper for grammar, flow and content as a group.

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Executive Summary

Tourism is crucial to the economy of many developing countries. It is especially vital to the economy of Armenia, which attributes one in every eight jobs to the tourism industry (WTTC, 2017b). Although tourism generates a significant amount of revenue in Armenia, travelers tend to stay and spend most of their money in the capital city of Yerevan. This has created a wealth disparity between the people of Yerevan and the residents of the rural areas. Artisans in the countryside are unable to provide for themselves and their families by selling their goods to tourists, due to a lack of demand. As a result, many artisans have discontinued trades that have been passed down for generations (World Bank, 2016b). This is hurting the cultural heritage of Armenia.

The Smithsonian Institution, in coordination with USAID, Solimar International, and the Armenian government, started the "My Armenia" project to promote tourism in rural Armenia. The "My Armenia" project is currently creating two new websites: the first to promote the Vayots Dzor Province and the second to market Armenia as a whole. These websites will promote Armenian culture, festivals, historic and religious monuments, and other attributes of Armenia that make it an untapped tourist destination. The Vayots Dzor website will focus specifically on the unique wine and food of the province, amongst other attractions.

Figure 1: Armenia is located in the Caucasus region of Asia. It shares a border with Turkey in the West, Iran in the South, Azerbaijan in the South and East, and Georgia in the North. This figure above also zooms into Armenia to show the province of focus of this project, Vayots Dzor.

The ultimate goal of our project is to increase tourism into rural Armenia using the websites. We will achieve this goal using the following steps:

1. **Identify** Armenia as an attractive destination for tourists
2. **Inform** tourists about its culture and attractions
3. **Inspire** tourists to come visit and explore the rural areas
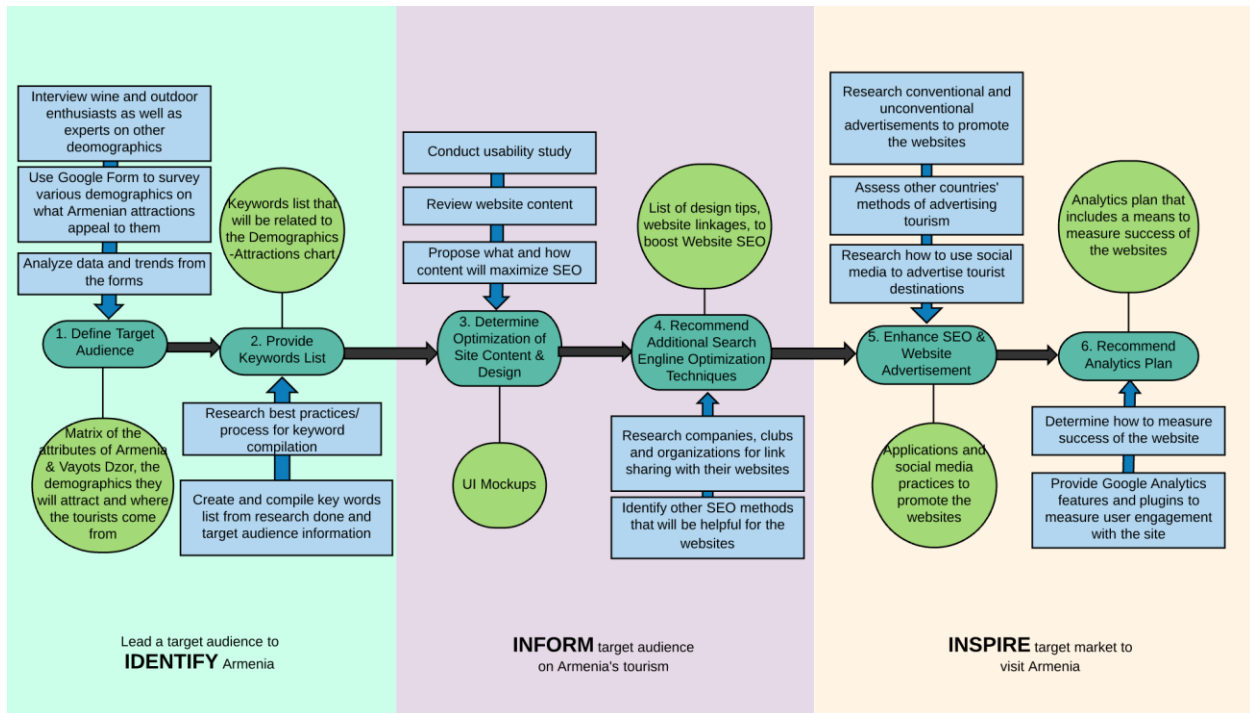
Figure 2: Block Diagram depicting the timeline of our project. This diagram shows the objectives and the steps required to complete each objective. Additionally, it shows the 3 phases of our project where we focus on identifying, informing and inspiring, respectively.

This project is focused on the effectiveness of the above mentioned websites and created recommendations to make them more accessible and user-friendly. To develop these recommendations we created and executed the following six objectives:

1. **Objective 1: Define Target Audience**
   This was done by surveying 338 self-reported tourists. This survey compared the potential tourists with the tourism attractions in Armenia to define the focus demographics of the websites. Additionally, we also interviewed various wine and adventure tourism experts to better model our findings.

   Based on our findings we recommended the Smithsonian Institution to shift focus from

marketing churches and monasteries to other prominent Armenian tourism attributes such as the unique terrains, cost of travel, and Armenian cuisine. We also recommended to pair up wine tourism with other attractions to capture a larger audience.

2. **Objective 2: Provide Keyword List for New Websites**
   After successfully defining the target audience of the two websites, we proceeded to use this information to create potential keywords to best reach this audience. We created two separate list of keywords for the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor websites respectively. These keywords were categorized into "Dream," "Reach," and "Safety" keywords based on the return on investment on each.

   Based on our findings and categorization formula, we recommended focusing on the low risk, easier keywords during the initial phases of the websites and then shifting to the higher return, more difficult keywords.

3. **Objective 3: Determine Site Optimization Strategies through Content and Design**
   Starting week 3, we shifted our focus to the content and design aspects of the websites. We conducted usability studies on the official tourism websites of 6 different countries and used the information obtained from them to find areas of focus. Next, we created wireframes of these websites to compare with the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor wireframes to create recommendations on optimizing the design, content and functionality of the websites.

   We recommended including a section about the unique features of Armenia and another about past tourist experiences. Additionally, we recommended using complementary call to actions to increase engagement and whitespace to create focus on important aspects of the websites. Lastly, we recommended providing additional language options for the websites and linking with social media such as Instagram using creative methods like hashtags and user submissions.

4. **Objective 4: Recommend Additional Search Engine Optimization Techniques**
   This objective focused on the finer details of Search Engine Optimization to further boost website rankings. In order to complement the results of the previous objectives, we created a "Do and Don'ts" list to follow while creating the website. We also created samples to further explain important aspects of the dos and don'ts list and a final list of link sharing avenues.

   Based on these findings, we recommended fine tuning of the page titles, URL, and meta descriptions based on our guidelines and samples. We also recommended creating an extensive net of link sharing around the two websites by linking to other websites and

vice versa.

5. **Objective 5: Enhance SEO through Website Advertisement**

    Once the SEO plan was successfully created, we started work on recommending ways to promote the websites using various forms of advertisement. We extensively researched both advertising and social media platforms, along with conversion techniques to make these strategies more effective.

    Using our findings, we recommended using Instagram as the main social media platform for user engagement. Additionally, we recommended Facebook and Instagram ads, Google AdWords, and guest blogging as the top advertising platforms. Finally, to create more effective advertisements, and increase conversion rate from casual users to potential customers, we developed and recommended using 4 Golden Rules to create great landing pages:

    >   Great Landing Pages…
    >   >   Make their unique value proposition(s) extremely clear
    >   >   Remove distractions and keep it simple
    >   >   Have a very clear Call-To-Action
    >   >   Do not ask for more information than needed

6. **Objective 6: Determine Best Methods to Track Website Analytics**

    The last objective focused on the long term maintenance and tracking of the websites. Initially the Smithsonian planned on measuring success of the website based on the number of contact forms filled out. However, based on our research and findings, we recommended that the My Armenia Project use the number of clicks to external links to measure site success. We also recommended using various features in Google Analytics to measure overall user engagement with the site. We then proposed benchmarks for these metrics based on industry standards.

1. Introduction

Tourism accounts for 10.2% of the total world GDP, which roughly equates to US$7.6 trillion (WTTC, 2017a). Many less developed countries rely even more heavily on tourists than the global average. In a move to recognize the importance and further push towards strengthening this sector, the United Nations has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). In the mountainous terrain of the Caucasus region a country, officially known as the Republic of Armenia, attributes one in every eight jobs to the tourism industry (WTTC, 2017b).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia has seen economic growth, but poverty still exists in many of its regions (World Bank Group, 2007). This disparity is partly because tourists typically stay and patronize establishments in the capital city of Yerevan rather than venturing out into the rural areas. This pattern is negatively impacting local artisans in these remote regions since there is lack of a sufficient market for them to sell their goods. While local markets still exist, they do not provide enough incentive to continue practicing arduous family traditions such as winemaking and carpet weaving. As a result, many artisans have discontinued trades that have been passed down for generations (World Bank, 2016b). Recognizing this as a major problem, the Smithsonian Institution started the My Armenia Project in 2015 to attract tourists to the remote regions of the country (USAID, 2015). The My Armenia Project is planning to launch two websites with the ultimate goal of leading a target audience to identify Armenia as a potential tourist destination, effectively inform them of the attractions that Armenia has to offer, and inspire them enough to travel and spend money there.

Previous websites sponsored by USAID hoped to achieve the same results but were unsuccessful. This was partially due to their poor performance in search engine rankings and their inability to cater to a strongly defined target audience. Our goal for this project was to identify and recommend strategies to make the new My Armenia websites identify, inform, and inspire a global market to visit Armenia. To develop our recommendations, we completed six objectives:

     I.   Defined target audiences
    II.   Provided keywords list for new websites
   III.   Determined website optimization strategies through site content and design
   IV.   Recommended Search Engine Optimization (SEO) plan
    V.   Enhanced SEO plan using website advertisement
   VI.   Determined best methods to track website analytics

Using well documented data on tourists visiting Armenia in addition to interviews with experts, we defined multiple target audiences for the websites. We then made content and design

recommendations to the websites to effectively cater to these primary tourist groups. To make the website accessible to these audiences, we created a comprehensive keyword list and Search Engine Optimization plan. By having the Smithsonian Institution implement these strategies, we hoped to improve user experience and website accessibility. In the long run, we plan to positively affect the traffic going towards the websites to increase tourism to Armenia.

2.   Background

Many tourism dependent countries have distinct regions where tourists are more likely to visit than others. For countries with highly tourism-dependent economies, this often causes an economic disparity between these regions and other locations within the country. Many countries have tried to solve this problem by making other, lesser-known parts of the country more attractive to tourists. These solutions have often included marketing and technological approaches. Some of the solutions have been successful while others have failed. In this project, we evaluated the feasibility of utilizing information technology in the unique tourism situation of Armenia.

2.1 The Case for Tourism in Armenia

Armenia is a developing country whose economy relies heavily on tourism. Tourism was estimated to contribute approximately 14% of the GDP in 2016 and that percentage is projected to grow within the next few years (WTTC, 2017b). Tourists are drawn to Armenia for its rich religious history, culture, and natural attractions.

2.1.1   Armenian History and Culture

Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity in 301 AD and consequently has a rich religious history. It features three UNESCO World Heritage sites: the *Monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin*, the *Cathedral and Churches of Echmiadzin*, and the *Monastery of Geghard and the Upper Azat Valley*. The Khor Virap is another important Armenian monument and was where Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned for fourteen years. Even Mt Ararat, which lies just across the border in Turkey, used to be in Armenia. According to Christian belief, Mt Ararat is the fabled landing place of Noah's Ark. Additionally, there are more than 4,000 other historical monuments located in Armenia (Zarmineh, 2016).

Armenians boast of an extremely rich culture. They have their own unique forms of dance, music, craftsmanship and are especially well known for their high quality carpet weaving. The wine and cuisine of Armenia is not to be overlooked either since it is a little known fact that Armenia has the oldest wineries in the world. The Armenian language is also very unique, and falls inside its own branch of the Indo-European language tree. This is another reason why no other currently used language is even remotely similar to Armenian. There are two main dialects of Armenian; Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian. Since Armenia was a part of the former Soviet Union, it retains a lot of Russian influences. The effects of this Russian influence can be seen in their current-day music, TV shows, and dance. Additionally, nearly 70% of the Armenian

population also speaks Russian. Armenians celebrate their cultural heritage by hosting many unique festivals. These include the Dolma food festival, the Areni Wine festival, and the Annual Golden Apricot film festival. These festivals tend to draw both tourists and Armenians from around the country.

2.1.2 Natural Attractions and Ecological Diversity

Armenia is a small, landlocked country in the Caucasus region approximately the size of the state of Maryland. Despite its small size, Armenia has an extremely diverse terrain and includes six of the seven climate zones. The capital city of Yerevan is located in the Ararat Valley, at the lowest elevations in all of Armenia. The entire northern border of the country is covered by the Lesser Caucasus Mountain range. Though climate varies from one region to another, the summers are hot and dry while the winters are snowy and freezing. This is important to keep in mind, because even though Armenia is a small country, there is an assortment of attractions that interest multiple types of tourists. These include locations from the Tsaghkadzor Ski Resort, to Garni canyon, to the sandy beaches of Lake Sevan. Other significant natural attractions include the Goris rock formations and the Noravank Gorge.

Armenia has 33 protected areas and national parks boasting a wide variety of terrains and wildlife (Zarmineh, 2016). Some of the wildlife that can be found in Armenia include wild boars, porcupines, leopards, mountain goats, and various species of lizards and snakes. Many of these species are rare and are only found in Armenia. Additionally, Armenia is home to approximately 350 different species across the country. As a result, birdwatching in the Armenian countryside is a very popular attraction.

2.1.3 Yerevan

Yerevan is the capital city of Armenia and experiences the highest concentration of tourist inflow. It offers a variety of tourist attractions including the Republic Square, the Matenadaran (museum of ancient manuscripts), and the Armenian Genocide Museum. In addition, it is the largest city of Armenia and is home to a vibrant nightlife scene with clubs and cafés on almost every street. It is also one of the safest cities with a crime rate lower than in the United States (OSAC, 2016). Yerevan is much more westernized than the rural areas of Armenia and there are many European and American stores and paraphernalia. Most people in the city, especially young people, speak English in addition to Russian and Armenian. This widespread use of the English language, along with the various tourist attractions, make Yerevan very attractive to tourists.

Figure 3. Map of Armenia showing its provinces. The capital, Yerevan is in red. (Source: Country Armenia, 2015)

2.1.4 Rural Areas

Rural areas in Armenia are much less frequented by tourists. However, they hold many attractions that have the potential of being popular tourist destinations. For example, Lake Sevan is located in the Gegharkunik Province. It is one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world and has numerous beautiful beaches. The lake is also surrounded by several monasteries including the Sevanavank Monastery which is arguably the most beautiful in the area. Despite the potential of Lake Sevan as a tourist destination, only 13.6% of tourists visit the Gegharkunik province (EDMC, 2013).

Dilijan National Park, located in the Tavush province, is also a significant potential tourist attraction. Out of the four national parks that are located in Armenia, Dilijan National Park is often considered the best maintained and beautiful. The park has several mineral water springs as well as numerous waterfalls. Still, only 7.1% of tourists visit the Tavush province (EDMC, 2013).

Mount Aragats is another such location. It is one of the highest points in the Armenian highlands

and is located in both the Aragatsotn and Shirak provinces. It is a dormant volcano and makes for a great hiking experience with its tallest peak reaching over 4,000 meters. However, only 8% of tourists visited the Shirak province and a mere 4.2% of tourists visited the Aragatsotn Province (EDMC, 2013).

These are just a few examples of the places which are being overlooked by tourists travelling to Armenia. Even though the capital city of Yerevan has beautiful tourist attractions, the other provinces each hold a different piece of the Armenian cultural experience. One such province, and the secondary focus of this project, is Vayots Dzor.

Figure 4. Areni Wine festival in Vayots Dzor region. Vayots Dzor is known for its wine making traditions. (Papyan, 2010)

2.1.5 Vayots Dzor

One of the regions, which will be the main focus of the My Armenia Project is Vayots Dzor, the leading wine province of Armenia. Vayots Dzor is located in southern Armenia and shares a border with Azerbaijan. Its tourist attractions include not only unique wine-related destinations, but also adventure-based, historical and cultural experiences. The oldest winery in the world, dating back almost 6000 years, was recently found in Vayots Dzor's Areni Cave Complex

(Yesayan, 2015).

Figure 5: Excavation site in the Areni Cave

This ancient winery cave is one of the biggest tourist attractions of Vayots Dzor. In addition, the viniculture traditions of Vayots Dzor date back to the ancient era and again, have large potential for tourism. Professors Harutjunjan and Loseby, in their report on rural development in Armenia, suggest a promotion of wine tourism in the Vayots Dzor due to its arable land and the well-known 'Areni' grapes used to make wine (Harutjunjan & Loseby, 2011). Vayots Dzor also has an abundance of monuments, which further increase its value as an attractive destination for tourists. These include the Noravank monastery which is one of Armenia's most popular monasteries. A unique fact about this monastery is that it has a second floor which is only accessible by climbing a narrow staircase made of stones jutting out of the building.

Figure 6: Entrance to the second floor of the Noravank Monastery

In addition, tourist infrastructure in Vayots Dzor is well developed. There are several riverside restaurants that attract tourists both for the food and the unparalleled scenic views. As explored above, Vayots Dzor would make for an extremely attractive tourist destination with its unique wine culture and historical significance.

Figure 7: View of Vorkskan restaurant in Vayots Dzor (TripAdvisor, 2017)

However, a recent study found out that only 4.6% of the tourists travelling to Armenia travel to Vayots Dzor (EDMC, 2013). This disparity is a by-product of the extremely concentrated tourist patterns currently being experienced by Armenia.

2.2   Concentrated vs. Distributed Tourism

Concentrated tourism refers to an uneven distribution of tourist inflow and economic benefits across different regions in a country. The uneven distribution can be particularly harmful if the economy of the country is heavily dependent on tourism, as the result in a severe economic disparity between regions inside the country. In such cases, non-profit organizations and government agency often use marketing and technological strategies to level the imbalance.

Extreme concentration of tourism inflows in Yerevan

Tourists per region visited (%)

Region	%
Yerevan	82,6%
Gegharkunik	13,6%
Armavir	13,4%
Kotayk	12,3%
Shirak	8,0%
Tavush	7,1%
Lori	6,7%
Ararat	5,8%
Syunik	5,3%
Vayots Tzor	4,6%
Aragacotn	4,2%
Karabakh	1,9%

Source: Armenian International Visitor Survey (2013)

- Over 50%
- 35-50%
- 20-35%
- 10-20%
- 0-10%

Q.7: What has been the purpose of your trip?; Q.10:Indicate the places in Armenia that you have visited

Figure 8. Distribution of Tourists (Source: EDMC, 2013)

Currently, 82.6% of tourists in Armenia tend to stay in the capital city of Yerevan, as can be seen in the above study (EDMC, 2013). This extreme imbalance of tourist inflow, combined with the tourism dependent economy of Armenia, has resulted in a big economic disparity between the capital and other regions inside the country (USAID 2015). This disparity makes Yerevan significantly wealthier than the other provinces in Armenia (USAID, 2008).

Monthly Nominal Wages in USD
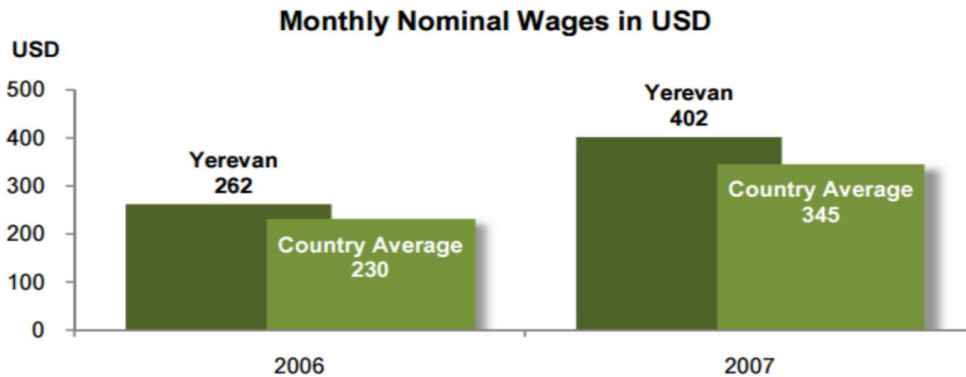
Figure 9. Bar chart representing the nominal monthly wages in US Dollars earned by people in Yerevan versus the country average. (Source: USAID, 2008)

In the above graph, it can be seen that both Yerevan and Armenia as a whole have experienced growth in income over the span of the year. On closer inspection, it is clear that the gap in between the two has nearly doubled during the same time frame. From just 32 USD in 2006 to 57 USD in 2007, these numbers represent the alarmingly big difference in the economic benefits of tourism experienced by Yerevan vs. other parts of the country.

This difference further showcases why Yerevan is better able to market to tourists as compared to other rural locations. Marketing campaigns, websites and other technological initiatives taken to inform tourists about regions, and thus increase tourist inflow, require tremendous investments by either private or government organizations inside the region. With Yerevan's higher economic standing, it is able to invest more capital towards attracting tourists, which in turn increases the difference in the concentration of tourist inflows. This is self-sustaining cycle which is very beneficial for the population inside the capital city, but is harming the rural areas. This is why the My Armenia project aims to inform tourists about the rural areas of Armenia and thus break this cycle and move towards a more balanced distribution of tourism.

2.3 Benefits of Distributed Tourism

Armenia has an extreme case of uneven tourist inflow inside the country. This was captured in the 2013 study by the Enterprise Development and Market Competitiveness program (EDMC), sponsored by USAID. A primary focus of the EDMC program is tourism because of the uneven benefits the regions experience. If these benefits are more evenly distributed, then a better situation will arise for the country and the tourists.

2.3.1 Benefits to the Rural Population

More than half of the internal migrants in Armenia move from the rural areas to Yerevan (National Statistical Service of Armenia, 2008). Additionally, of those who move into Yerevan temporarily, 50% move for work opportunities. This pattern of internal immigration could prove harmful in the long run, resulting in a loss of the culture of rural Armenia. Moreover, the increase in the population of the capital city could result in overcrowding in the future leading to both economical and health issues for the people living there.

Improving the tourism industry in the rural regions of Armenia could play a big role in stopping the internal immigration. Higher tourist activities in rural areas, would increase the spending of tourists in those regions enabling the local artisans to continue with their crafts and make a living, doing the same. Family traditions and practices such as winemaking and carpet weaving would benefit through the new tourism markets and thus remain an active part of Armenian culture.

If the problem of concentrated tourism could be effectively addressed, it would create additional job opportunities for Armenian residents in the rural areas. This increase in jobs would arise due to a need for additional staff to provide for a growing tourism market. Currently, approximately 12.5% of jobs in Armenia can be indirectly attributed to the tourism sector (WTTC, 2017). However, most of these jobs are based in Yerevan. If the same job growth could occur in the rural areas, it would lead to an increase in disposable income for the rural residents and an

overall increase in the economy and quality of life in these areas.

2.3.2 Benefits to Tourists

Tourists are most attracted to experiences they cannot have in the places they come from. According to UNWTO (2010), the tourism industry tends to highlight cultural heritage and natural attractions in developing countries. This gives rural regions an advantage compared to developed regions, due to the westernization of many developed cities. Even in Armenia, these cultural aspects are more profound in the remote regions. Tourists who visit Armenia mostly stay in Yerevan and are missing out on the cultural aspects of immense value.

As any local will tell you, Yerevan is not truly Armenia. It is a westernized city similar to many other big cities in developing countries. By only staying in Yerevan, tourists miss out on experiencing the many monuments and natural attractions that Armenia has to offer. As a result, tourists would be more likely to have a truly unique experience only by venturing into the rural areas. There they will find an unspoiled culture, comparatively free of western influences. They may be able to buy a souvenir from a local artisan whose craft had been passed down in his family for generations. This is a much more authentic experience than buying a trinket in a souvenir shop. Tourists could also visit an ancient monastery or a virtually untouched national park which are features unique to the rural areas of Armenia.

2.4 Challenges of Tourism in Rural Armenia

It was clear from our background research that tourists travelling to Armenia tend to spend most of their time in Yerevan, such as a language barrier, poor infrastructure and underdeveloped tourism industry. To best address the uneven distribution of tourist patterns in Armenia, using information technology, we researched these challenges and took them into account while developing our recommendations.

2.4.1 Language Barrier

Other
17.7%
UK and Italy
1.0%
Greece
1.5%
Germany
2.7%
Lebanon
3.0%
France
3.0%
Argentina
3.0%
USA
8.2%
Iran
18.4%

Other

CIS countries

CIS countries
41.5%

USA

Iran
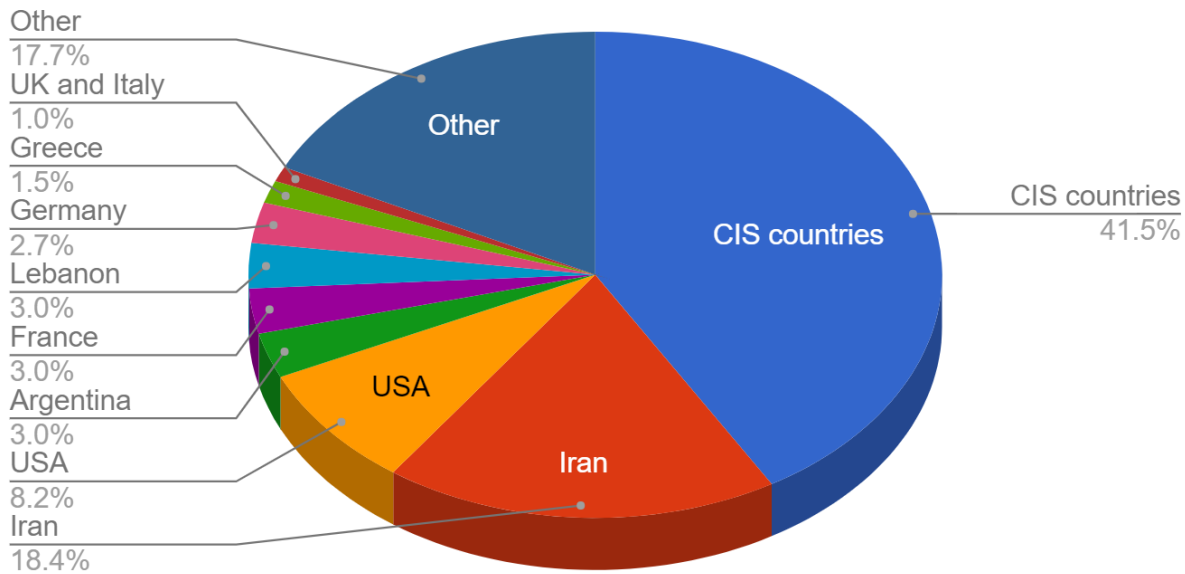
Figure 10. Pie chart representing the countries that tourists traveling to Armenia are often from. (Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) also includes Georgia and Ukraine.)

A factor that affects tourism in Armenia is the language barrier. Armenian is the primary language of communication in schools and even in higher education institutions all over the country (Petrossian, 2005). Apart from some parts of Georgia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region, no other countries in the world speak Armenian. However, bilingualism in Armenia is a norm as schools will often offer languages like Farsi, English, Greek, Turkish or Russian.

Similar to other former Soviet Republics, the most common second language in Armenia is Russian. Moreover, according to a study done by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (2013), 40% of Armenians have some knowledge of English, although a majority reported they only spoke basic English.

However, these studies fail to mention the significant difference in the language knowledge among people living in Yerevan compared to those living in rural Armenia (Holding, 2014). This language barrier, which exists almost entirely in the countryside, deters tourists from venturing outside the capital.

This is relevant to our project because according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the majority of tourists travelling to Armenia are of two types:

1. People from countries with a significant ethnic Armenian population

2. People from countries with high percentage of the population who can speak Russian or English.

The first type of tourists, who are presumably of Armenian descent, might have basic knowledge of Armenian. However, the second type of tourists are the main focus of our projects. This means that our final recommendations need to account for this language challenge.

2.4.2 Rural Infrastructure

According to a report by EDMC (2013), tourists are satisfied with most of the services of Armenia except roads and prices. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very bad' and 5 being 'Excellent', local roads had an average of 2.8 compared to the highest ranking of 4.7 for guide services. However, the average rating across all categories was 4.15, indicating a very positive overall experience for tourists.

While the condition of the local roads is an active deterrent for tourists travelling into local areas, the survey was effective in capturing the negligible effects of roads on tourists experience. Out of the sample group, 98% of the tourists informed of high intention to revisit Armenia.

2.4.3 Capabilities of the Tourism Industry

Another factor limiting tourism to the rural areas in Armenia is the capabilities of the tourism industry. For example, out of the mere six hotels listed on TripAdvisor for the Vayots Dzor province, only four have a website where tourists may book a stay online. The lack of reputable accommodations and the difficulty of booking a stay can easily deter tourists from venturing outside Yerevan. Additionally, many local tour companies do not have adequate resources to measure up to industry standards. When working with a local tourist horse-riding company in the rural regions of Armenia, My Armenia project officials noticed a severe lack of resources put towards the horses. The horses being used for riding purposes for the tourists seemed uncooperative and untamed. On further inspection, the officials found out that due to a lack of resources, the tour operators could not afford barns for the horses. This led to the horses being freed during the winter months and recaught in the spring. Experiences like these make tourists wary of visiting the rural areas due to a fear of subpar or even unsafe experiences. This was an unacceptable practice and thus safeguards were put into place to only select high quality tour companies for affiliation with the My Armenia project.

The My Armenia project is developing high quality, industry standard strategies to distribute tourism throughout the country. A next part of that puzzle is the strategy to expand information about tourism in rural areas to the potential tourists.

2.5 Tourist Distribution Techniques

In the past few years, the internet has proved itself as an effective platform to promote tourism.

With many countries using the internet to grow their tourism sector, it is no surprise that our project aims to use websites and online marketing to distribute tourism evenly in Armenia. There are many techniques that may help address the specific challenges faced by Armenia. The sections below explore the most promising ones.

2.5.1 Marketing and Information Technology

The Internet has surpassed traditional forms of communication such as printed advertisements as the predominant inspiration for travel. Before the digital revolution, travel arrangements were often made through an agent. But now, most tourists are using websites such as Expedia and Kayak to find accommodations and other arrangements. The Internet has allowed information on a location to be much more easily accessible, and many tourists are using search engines like Google to plan trip itineraries by themselves (UNWTO, 2011). For example, a tourist now only needs to open Google maps to find nearby attractions or the best restaurants in town. Resources like Uber and AirBnB have made it much more affordable and feasible to travel. Such resources have also allowed for online reviewing and sharing between users. Users review destinations on websites such as Tripadvisor which further influences the tourist traffic going to that place.

Advances in information technology have allowed the Internet to increase the potential effects of marketing in tourism (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Information technology has also allowed tourism companies to advertise directly to consumers (Jadhav & Mundhe, 2011). Because the global travel market is so broad and diverse, tourism companies often use "market segmentation" to group together customers with similar interests and characteristics. They then apply distinct marketing strategies to attract each group. Segmentation is usually based off of geographic, demographic, or lifestyle characteristics. An example of a successful market segmentation strategy was used by a Taiwanese study on international tourist arrivals. They divided the international tourists based on their demographics and their motivations for traveling. Demographic categories included gender, age, marital status, nationality and income while motivations for traveling included scenery and knowledge, accessibility and expenditure, relaxation and relation, novelty and experience, or sport and service. This segmentation of the market allowed for the creation of specifically tailored tourism packages for each category of tourists (Sung, Chang, & Sung, 2016).

Organizations strive to create larger rural tourism markets. One such way is by specifically marketing to young people to "create a societal trend." In an initiative outlined by USAID to promote tourism in rural Lebanon, one of the key strategic directions is to "develop the culture of rural tourism among the young generation" (Lebanon Ministry of Tourism, 2014). They proposed doing this in part by educating Lebanese students about the importance and diversity of these rural regions in schools and universities. In their promotion and marketing strategies, they also suggested developing technical guidelines for improving social media as it is also a critical

way to market to young people.

2.5.2 Social Media Presence

Social media initiatives can also be effective both in marketing to younger people and promoting an area. For example, Donal Boyd, a WPI alum and photographer, takes photographs of less visited areas in Iceland for use in various advertising platforms as well as on Instagram. His Instagram page has a massive following of approximately 85,000 people, and his photographs get tens of thousands of views (Boyd, 2016). Potential tourists are more likely to trust the experience of a prominent figure on social media, as opposed to promotions on a tourism website. The use of hashtags on Instagram can also be very useful in giving visibility to a trending new location. When users see photographs of a particular place labeled with a specific hashtag, they are more likely to post photographs of their visit to the same place with that hashtag. This act of posting with the same hashtags, puts all the photographs into a single location on Instagram and creates a very effective advertising tool.

Donal Boyd's (Personal communication, April 18, 2017) photography has been widely successful because he has given Iceland exposure and media attention. He works with a variety of Icelandic tourism websites by providing his photographs to use for advertising purposes. Using a prominent social media account to distribute attractive photographs of a certain scene or experience can expose a location as well as inspire potential tourists to consider traveling there. His Instagram approach is especially unique since his account particularly appeals to younger people using popular social media. Though young people are often overlooked, they make up approximately twenty percent of all international tourists (Machado, 2014).

2.5.3 Mobile Applications

There have been previous attempts to solve the issue of concentrated tourism using information technology. Venice, Italy has a similar problem of concentrated tourism and in 2015, a WPI project group attempted to solve this problem using a mobile application during the 2015 Milan Expo (Caracappa, DaCosta, Khuu, & Pellegrini, 2014). The application created was a treasure hunting mobile app aimed towards children. This application would get families to go around the city to discover lesser known areas. According to the project advisor, Michael Aghajanian, there was noticeable success in relieving the congestion during the 2015 Expo (Personal communication, July 3, 2017).

2.5.4 On-site Activities

In addition to technological solutions, organizations can work with the residents of rural areas to promote tourist activities. One initiative outlined by USAID (2014) proposed a solution to increase rural tourism in Lebanon. The recommended strategy asked the government of Lebanon

to implement training programs for farmers so they could put on activities to attract tourists to their farms. Activities on the farm could include an informational session from the farmer as well as a "pick your own" fruits and vegetables activity. The farmers could even charge for some of these programs. Another strategy recommended by USAID to increase tourism to rural regions of Lebanon was to organize annual events such as festivals that would align with the culture and resources in the particular rural area. Such festivals would promote the "importance of preserving natural and cultural heritage as a foundation for rural tourism" (USAID, 2014, p. 42) to the citizens of the countryside. Preservation is significant because the residents of these areas are the ones controlling the types of tourist activities offered, leading to a much more authentic experience.

The rural tourism strategy of Lebanon, sponsored by USAID (2014), is a five-year project that started in 2014. Even though the project is relatively new, it has already seen some early success. Michel Pharaon, the Minister of Tourism in Lebanon, stated that "The emphasis we placed on [rural tourism] created a trend which worked incredibly in the summer, even more than we expected it would, but in fact it's the young people who began to look at it" (Rahal, 2016). Due to the educational initiatives and increased social media visibility, it has become a trend among young people to visit these areas. The rural areas have also become more appealing due to the unique approach USAID took to work with the residents of the countryside to promote appropriate tourist activities. The strategy is especially advantageous since it does little to affect the uniqueness and authenticity of the sites negatively. It enables the residents of the rural areas to advertise their skills and culture, and tends to promote cultural diversification rather than diminish it.

2.6 Prior Efforts in Armenia

Similar approaches have been taken in Armenia to fight the issue of concentrated tourism in the past but most of these efforts have not had the desired level of satisfaction. These initiatives have included the creation of websites to promote Armenia as a desirable tourist destination.

2.6.1 Websites
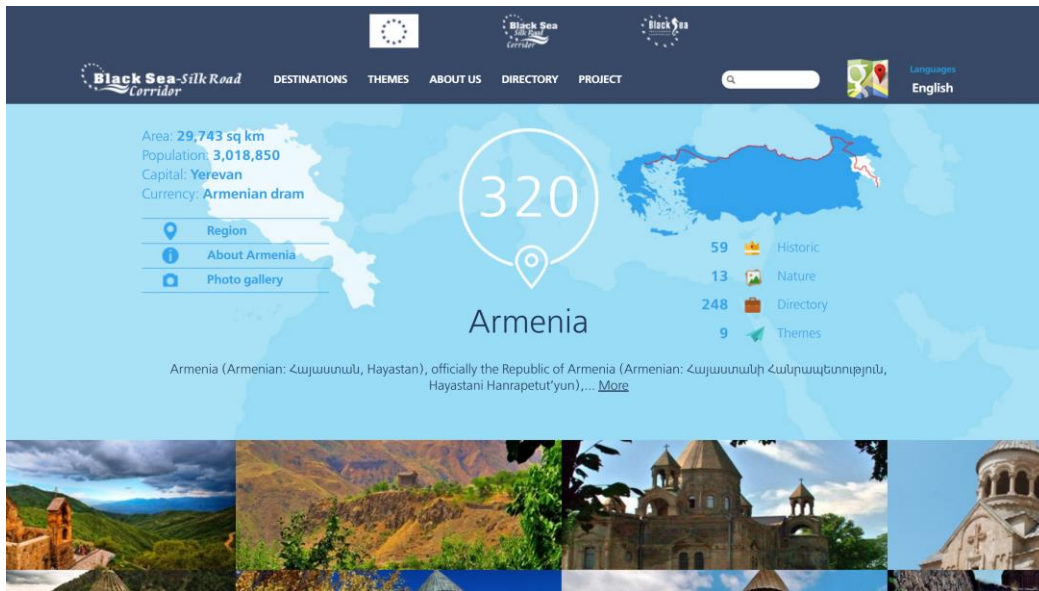
Figure 11. Homepage of Black Sea Silk Road Website: shows the appealing, user friendly layout of one of the websites and how destinations are grouped into themes. (Source: Black Sea Silk Road Corridor, 2013)

A common way to market more overlooked locations is by creating travel websites specific to these places. For example, the USAID contracted multiple organizations to create three websites to increase tourism in Armenia. These websites were:

1. Armenian Heritage
2. Black Sea-Silk Road Corridor
3. My Armenia program overview

The Armenian Heritage (2011) website is extremely informative, but not user-friendly. It separates tourist attractions in Armenia by historical time periods and their distance from the capital city of Yerevan. The second website, The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor (2013), is more user-friendly and separates locations into themes. For example, one of the themes is the wine trail which strings together a series of places important to the history of winemaking in Vayots Dzor (Black Sea Silk Road Corridor, 2013). The themes are appealing because they cater to target audiences and tourists can choose locations based on their interests.

The above mentioned websites were created to increase tourism in Armenia, but fail to do so because of a lack of focus and strategy. Using Ahrefs, a search engine optimization tool, the organic traffic for the Black Sea Silk Road website was found to be only 4 visitors monthly. The Armenian heritage website was doing slightly better with 515 visitors monthly. However, popular travel websites such as georgia.travel were receiving 17,000 in traffic per month.

According to Simková (2013), the main weaknesses of a strong web presence are inaccessibility, poor site content, web-design and missing link-building. For solving the issue of concentrated tourism in Armenia through successful internet marketing, websites must reach out to the target population for rural tourism. Additionally, the websites must address the services that the tourists demand and provide ways to effectively communicate with the service providers. The Armenian heritage website has great information but does not market towards the target demographic of tourists potentially visiting Armenia. It also fails to connect a potential tourist with the desired service providers. The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor website focuses on many different countries inside the Caucasus Region and thus fails to bring much attention to Armenia. In addition, although it is a well-designed website, it fails to provide access to resources such as hotels, flights, and other experiences inside Armenia.

Due to these shortcomings, these websites have not generated enough traffic and have been unsuccessful in having the desired effects. This has resulted in an insufficient marketing of the different attractions that exist in the rural regions of Armenia. As a result, people are not aware of these hidden treasures in the rural areas and do not visit them.

2.7 Summary

Though Armenia boasts of many national treasures and attractions, few potential tourists are aware of them. Of the tourists that do visit Armenia, most do not travel outside Yerevan. This reluctance to step outside the capital city has created a wealth disparity between the residents of the city and those of the remote regions.

This project hopes to address this issue by:

Identifying Armenia as an attractive destination for tourists,

Informing tourists about its culture and attractions, and

Inspiring tourists to come visit and explore the rural areas.

3.   Methodology

The goal of our project was to recommend technical solutions to make the new websites, being developed by the Smithsonian Institution, user-friendly and accessible to current and potential tourists in Armenia. The first website, My Armenia, markets the entire country of Armenia as a tourist destination. The second website, for Vayots Dzor, is for specific promotion of the Vayots Dzor region. The My Armenia project aims to use these websites to increase tourism in the country, especially in rural Armenia.

To achieve this goal, we completed the following objectives:
- I.   Defined the target audience
- II.   Provided keywords lists for the new websites
- III.   Determined website optimization strategies through site content and design
- IV.   Recommend additional search engine optimization (SEO) techniques
- V.   Enhanced SEO through website advertisement recommendations
- VI.   Determined the best methods to track website analytics

Below is a block diagram showing the backbone of our project. The objectives shown will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow. We will explain the importance of these objectives, the methods used to achieve them, and areas of further research.
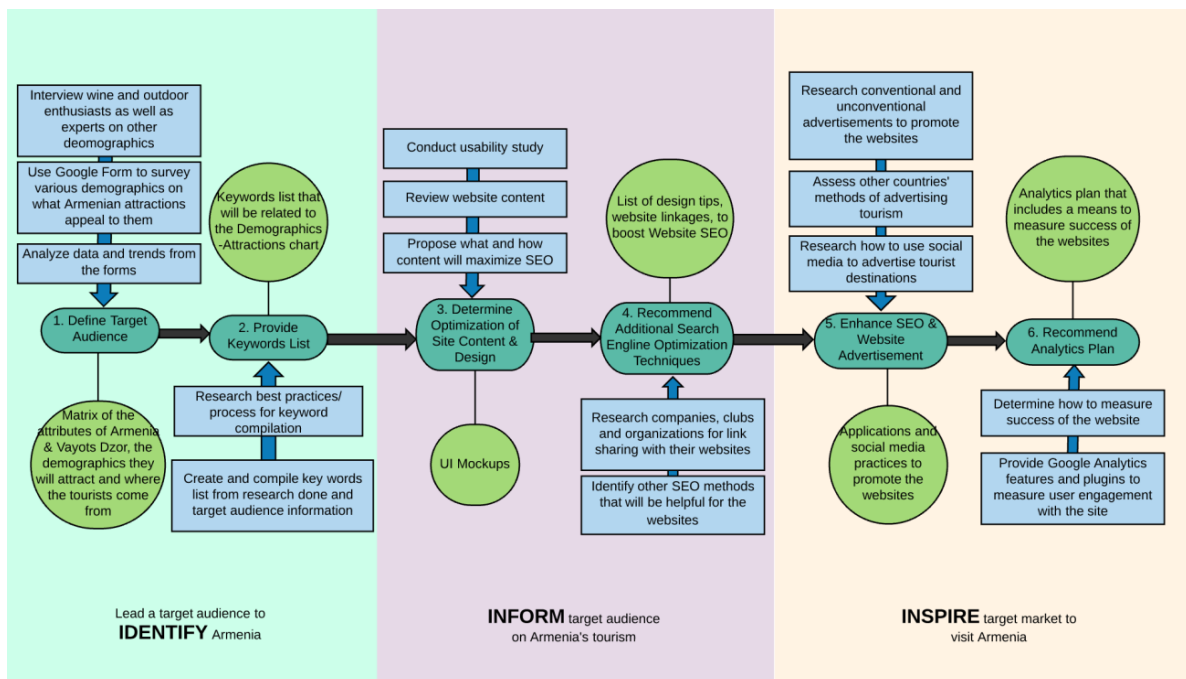

Figure 12: Block Diagram showing the objectives of our project (teal) and how we executed them in the 7 weeks in Armenia. The text in blue text boxes represent the actions and the green text circles represent our deliverables.

3.1 Defined the Target Audience

Before suggesting design and optimization considerations, it was crucial to determine the potential users of these websites. The challenge was to capture both the current tourists visiting Armenia and a broader potential tourism market.

To do this, we used a data matrix. The columns listed the demographics of tourists that will potentially visit Armenia and the rows listed the attributes that Armenia has to offer to tourists. We then created a heat map to measure tourist affinities on a scale from one to five, with one being "not interested" to 5 being "very interested". The more "interested" a tourist demographic is towards an attribute, the more saturated the color of the cell is. A sample heat map can be seen below:

		Demographics					
		Wine Enthusiasts	Adventure Tourists	Religious Enthusiasts	Ethnic Armenians	History Enthusiasts	Totals
Regional Attributes	Monasteries and Churches	2	3	5	3	5	18
	Caves	5	3	3	2	4	17
	Viniculture	5	2	1	2	3	13
	Cuisine	4	3	2	5	2	16
	Mountainous Terrain	1	5	2	2	3	13
	Cost	2	4	3	3	3	15
	Wildlife	2	4	1	3	2	12
	Nightlife	1	3	1	3	1	9
	Ski Resorts	1	5	1	1	1	9
	Ethnotourism	2	3	3	5	4	17
	Museums	1	2	3	2	5	13
	Totals	26	37	25	31	33	

Figure 13: Sample heat map showing a matrix of demographics and the attributes of Armenia.

To fill out the matrix, we surveyed the general population and also conducted interviews with prominent wine enthusiasts and adventure tourists. The wine enthusiasts that we interviewed included Peter Graffman and Marie Keep. Peter Graffman is the former president of the Wine and Food Society of Boston. He was insightful due to his experience with the wine enthusiast community. Marie Keep is the Director of Fine Wines at Skinner auctioneers, and has catered to a large audience of wine enthusiasts. She was extremely helpful in enabling us to further understand the wine enthusiast market. The third interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, was also in the wine business and had experience with using websites to attract wine enthusiasts.

Apart from representatives from the wine enthusiast demographic, we interviewed Mark Aghajanian, who is an avid adventure tourist. He was helpful in understanding the mindset of

adventure tourists. He also revealed how he goes about planning a trip, from his inspiration to travel, to the tools he uses.

All the interviews were semi-formal, as we had pre-written questions that were sent to the interviewees beforehand (Appendix C). We sent follow up questions as well to obtain more information from them. The interviews were a great source of information, however, to capture a larger sample of potential tourists, we created a survey.

We created a survey that was distributed through social media and emails to different demographic groups. The information acquired from the survey was completely anonymous. This form asked for general demographic information like age, sex and income and then required the surveyee to categorize themselves into a tourist group. They then answered questions about different Armenian attributes that they would be interested in. Then, they were asked to rank different attributes of Armenia on a scale of one to five, with one being "not interested" to five being "very interested". This information was recorded using google forms and then further analyzed using statistical tools, specifically standard deviation and confidence intervals.

This information was used to correlate the target audience preferences to the attributes that Armenia has, and enabled us to define the target audience for the websites.

3.2   Developed Keywords Lists

Once we defined the target audience for the two websites, we needed to create a list of keywords that would make the site easily accessible to these audiences. Keywords are the words and phrases that make it possible for people to find a website via search engines.

To create this list, we researched best practices for compiling a keyword list and then came up with our own method for achieving this task as discussed below.

To select the keywords, we took into account three analytical measurements:

1. **Search volume**
   Search volume is the average number of times per month that users search the keyword on search engines. We were able to recognize common search trends of tourists traveling to Armenia. It was helpful to avoid keywords having low search volume, as they are ineffective in driving traffic towards the websites.

2. **Keyword difficulty**
   Using competitive keywords can prevent a new website from ranking highly in search results due to the existence of older and more established sites using the same keywords. This difficulty factor (called keyword difficulty) is calculated based on search results by many online service providers. However, after further research, we found a way to overcome this obstacle. We can combine competitive keywords into more specific phrases that will be less likely to be used by other websites. For example, the phrase "low-cost travel destinations" will be less competitive than just "low cost" due to the elimination of any industry except for tourism.

3. **Click count**
   Click count is the total number of actual clicks on the search results that people performed per month while searching for the particular keyword. The click count was helpful in quantifying the engagement of the keyword. If a particular keyword phrase had a high search volume but a low click count, then it would not be of much use to our sponsors as it would not drive traffic towards the website. An example of poor engagement is the keyword phrase "currency of Armenia." While this keyword has a high search volume, most people who search for it do not have to click on a result to get the answer. Thus making such keywords irrelevant to our project needs.

These metrics helped us establish a guideline for our keyword selection process. This process can be seen below:
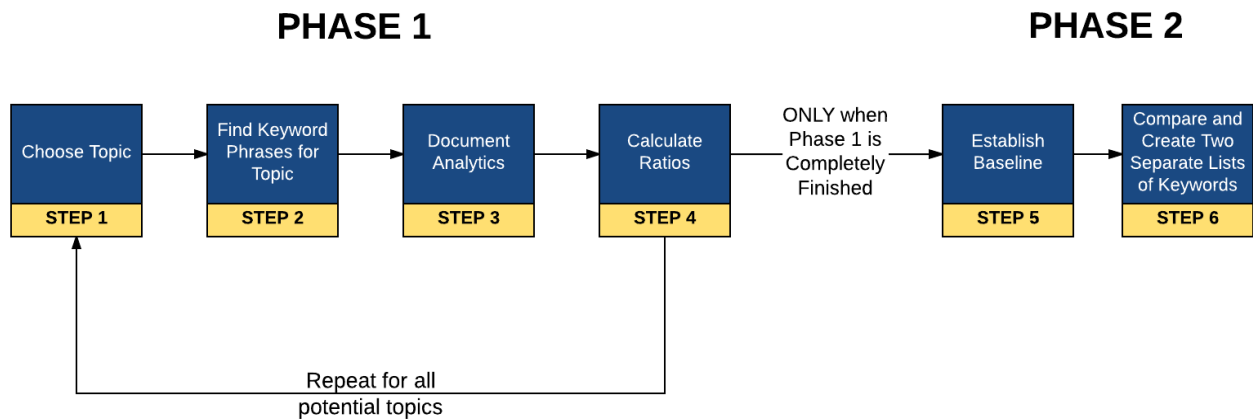
Figure 14: Two-phase process diagram which shows the methodology followed to obtain the final list of keywords for Search Engine Optimization.

We established a two-phase keyword selection process, where Phase 1 focused on creating a preliminary list and Phase 2 further refined the list.

Phase 1 consisted of four major steps:

Step 1: Choose Topic

To start the keyword selection process, we first focused on a general "theme." This theme could be any overall theme that a user might search for on a search engine. For example, Armenian architecture or Armenian food.

Step 2: Find Keyword Phrases for Topic

Next, we brainstormed as a team to come up with keywords that a user might search. After creating this initial list, we used online tools such as Google autocomplete and Ahrefs to find related keywords.

Step 3: Document Analytics

As mentioned before, to quantitatively compare these keywords we used three metrics namely: search volume, clicks, and keyword difficulty. This step involved recording these parameters for each of the keywords into our data table.

Step 4: Calculate Ratios

The ratios that we focused on, to quantify the keywords further, were "search volume to

36

difficulty" and "clicks to difficulty." These were chosen because they quantify the return on investment. That is, for every keyword difficulty level that needs to be surpassed using SEO, how many more website visitors would we receive. The last part of this phase was calculating these respective ratios in our data table.

Phase 2 focused on extensively analyzing the keyword list and arranging the keywords in a meaningful manner. Phase 2 consisted of the following two steps:

Step 5: Establish Baseline

To establish a baseline, we analyzed the keywords from the previous websites created by USAID to market Armenia as a tourist destination. In order to measure the success of keywords, we considered the amount of traffic they bought towards the websites. Using this metric for success, we documented the top three "successful" keywords responsible for bringing traffic towards these websites. We then proceeded to calculate the "search volume to difficulty" and "clicks to difficulty" ratio for each of these keywords. These ratios were then treated as the baseline for our further comparisons.

Step 6: Compare and Create Two Separate Lists of Keywords

In the final step we divided the keywords into two lists; one for the Armenia website and one for the Vayots Dzor website. We compared the ratio of the successful keywords (as discussed in the previous step) against our list of keywords to determine what keywords would be optimal. We did this by creating three ranges based on keyword difficulty, search volume, and number of clicks. The first range of keywords was called the "dream keywords" list. These were the keywords we predicted would be the most effective in optimizing the two websites for search engines. The second range of keywords was called the "reach keywords" list. These were the mid-tier keywords that we estimated would have a moderate effect in terms of boosting the new websites in search engines. The last range of keywords we created was called the "safety keywords list. These were the keywords that we speculated would have a minor effect in optimizing the "searchability" of the two websites.

3.3 Determined Website Optimization Strategies through Site Content and Design

In this objective, we determined how to optimize the site content and design to improve the usability of the websites. The previous objectives focused on defining the target audience and creating a list of keywords for the website. However, the websites would be ineffective if the content and layout did not provide a good user experience. Objective 3 aims to provide recommendations for a better user experience on the websites.

 To create these content and design considerations we used the following steps:

Step 1: Conduct usability studies
We conducted usability studies on the following websites:
1. Armenia.travel
2. Georgia.travel
3. newzealand.com/int
4. Chile.travel
5. Argentina.travel/en
6. Visitmaine.com

The usability study helped us understand good web design and layouts. Additionally, it also helped us recognize areas where good websites place their focus. This information gave us the insight to evaluate and recommend techniques to strengthen the website wireframes for the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor websites.

Step 2: Create wireframes
For further analysis and to shift focus to the User Experience of the websites we decided to compare our website wireframes with that of the leading tourism websites. We created wireframes for the following websites:
1. Armenia.travel
2. Georgia.travel
3. newzealand.com/int
4. Visitmaine.com

These websites were selected based on relevance and the results from the usability studies. Armenia.travel was extremely relevant as it promotes Armenia which is the focus of our websites. Georgia.travel was again relevant because Georgia is one of the main competitor nations for tourism in the Caucasus region for Armenia. Both the New Zealand and Maine

websites were selected because they scored extremely high on the usability study and thus would have the most beneficial inputs for our websites.

Step 3: Compare the wireframes for the websites mentioned above with the wireframes of the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites.
This step aimed to recognize areas of further improvement in the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites. Additionally, comparing the wireframes instead of the websites helped us focus on the User Experience rather than the design and aesthetic aspects of the websites. Basic components of a website design like focus, white space, call to actions and media boxes were compared and analyzed to create wireframe recommendations for both the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites.

Step 4: Create visuals of the functional recommendations
Our wireframe recommendations from the previous step not only focused on design, but also provided additional functional recommendations. These would be a part of the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites and would improve the user experience. We created sample wireframe mockups for these recommendations to better demonstrate the benefits of having these functions. Additionally, these would also help the web developer by providing wireframe visuals.

Our final recommendations for this objective, were broken up into the following categories:

1. **Content Recommendations**
   Content recommendations analyzed the content inside the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor website wireframes and compared it with the wireframe contents of the New Zealand, Maine, Armenia travel and Georgia travel websites. These were specifically focused on additional content that would prove valuable to the websites, as the current wireframe designs included only basic content.

2. **Design Recommendations**
   Design recommendations analyzed the layout of the websites. This analysis was done by comparing different sections of the respective wireframes and documenting user experiences during these sections. These recommendations were strictly based on improving the layout of the current My Armenia and Vayots Dzor website wireframes to ensure a better user experience.

3. Functional Recommendations

Functional recommendations analyzed the different functions and resources provided by each of the websites. This analysis was used to create a list of additional functions for the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor websites which would prove valuable to our sponsors.

3.4 Recommended Additional Search Engine Optimization Techniques

The past three objectives focused on the main parts of Search Engine Optimization:

1. Defining the target audience
2. Develop list of keywords
3. Optimize website content and design

But, SEO consists of many steps that complement each other to successfully increase the ranking of the website on search engines. This objective focused on some of the smaller steps within SEO that could be used to complement the overall Search Engine Optimization plan. These included:

1. **Dos and Don'ts**

   The "Dos and Don'ts" list was created to encompass most of the small key SEO points that were very important, but did not belong in any other objectives. The list is a culmination of HTML, scripting and content tips to keep in mind while creating the websites.

2. **Sample Search Results**

   The sample search engine results were created to show an example how the titles, URLs, and meta descriptions should look using the research provided in the "Do and Don'ts" chart.

3. **Link building**

   Search engines view links between websites as votes, with some votes counting more than others. Search engines give preference to websites based on these "votes". We researched potential websites and platforms to create a link-sharing "net" around the Smithsonian websites. This list of potential avenues was determined by analyzing the website content. Then, we created a list of websites to link to different pages inside the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites.

3.5 Enhanced SEO through Website Advertisement

We aimed this objective at marketing and spreading awareness about the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites. Because website reputation and publicity is an integral part of Search Engine Optimization, this objective hoped to use advertisements to boost SEO further. We found technical methods to supplement the current sites to better capture a more diverse group of potential tourists through advertisements.

First, we looked at different forms of social media and determined if it would be beneficial for the My Armenia Project to have an active account on each one of them. We based this on the number of active monthly users on the social media platform as well as the general demographics of the users of the platform. We then researched the best practices for attracting a large following and generating user engagement on each social media site. We recommended how often the My Armenia Program should post on each network and what type of content the posts should contain. We also proposed strategies such as how to use hashtags on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Second, we researched various advertisement avenues that could be used to promote the My Armenia Program and its two new websites. We explored conventional advertisements such as Facebook and Instagram ads, Banner ads, and Google AdWords. We also explored unconventional advertisements such as guest blogging and native advertisements. Based on cost, the ability to target specific demographics, and the potential number of impressions these advertisements could make, we came up with a list of the best methods to advertise the My Armenia Program.

Third, we researched conversion techniques. Conversion is the second part of advertisements and refers to converting a casual website visitor into a customer or website follower. To do this, we researched landing pages. Landing pages are web pages that either get a user to explore the website further or collect some information from the users. We developed the best practices for creating and using landing pages and also gave examples of good and bad landing pages to further strengthen our final recommendations. This list was finally accompanied by user interface mockups created by us to visualize potential landing pages for the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor websites.

3.6 Determined the Best Methods to Track Website Analytics

In this objective, we researched and established the best methods to measure the success of the websites. Originally, the Smithsonian was planning on measuring site success based on the number of contact forms filled out by users. These contact forms would then be sent to Armenian providers and tour companies. However, based on our research and intuition we thought this may not be the best way to measure the effectiveness of the websites. We believed that users would be more likely to click on an external link and do their own research on planning a trip to Armenia rather than have their personal information be sent to multiple providers. In the form of a presentation, we presented recommendations on a main way to measure success of the website as well as other ways in Google Analytics to measure user engagement. We decided to focus on the following measurements:

Proposal to Change the Way to Measure Success of the Website

> Here we voiced our disagreement with the proposed method of measuring the site goal. We presented a list of statistics on users filling out a contact forms and introduce the idea of measuring site success by the number of clicks to external links.

Number of Clicks to External Links

> This was the main way that we recommended that the My Armenia project measure site success. The number of clicks to external links demonstrates enough interest to suggest that a user is considering, or at least looking into visiting Armenia.

Google Analytics Tools and Plugins to Measure User Engagement

> We also put together a list of tools in Google Analytics that the Smithsonian could utilize to measure user engagement. These included built in features as well as plug ins that would be free to use and could help paint a clearer picture of the performance of the new websites.

4.   Findings and Conclusions

During the seven weeks that we spent in Armenia, we were able to acquire beneficial information for our sponsors. All of our objectives focused on creating tangible deliverables which can be utilized by our sponsors to create useful websites and reach the correct target audience. We created these deliverables and presented them to our sponsors during weekly meetings. In the following sections, we will talk about the data collected and deliverables.

4.1   Objective 1: Defined the Target Audience

Our primary focus during week one was collecting preliminary data for objectives 1 and 2, which were defining the target audience and providing keyword list, respectively. We needed to collect two types of data:

1. Tourist affinities towards Armenian attributes
2. Expert opinions on marketing Armenia

4.1.1 Tourist Affinities towards Armenian Attributes

To represent this data, we created a data collection matrix. Our plan to understand and define a target audience for the websites revolved around understanding influencing factors behind potential tourists. To do this, we created a list of "attributes" of Armenia that would be marketable to a potential tourist. We came up with the following list:

1. Monasteries and Churches
2. Caves
3. Viniculture
4. Cuisine
5. Mountainous Terrain
6. Cost of Trip
7. Wildlife
8. Ethnotourism
9. Museums

In addition to this, we also created a list of the different types of tourists who would be interested in visiting Armenia based on their various interests. We came up with this next list:

1. Wine Enthusiasts
2. Adventure tourist
3. Religious enthusiast
4. Ethnic Armenian
5. History Enthusiasts
6. Leisure tourist

We used these two lists to create our matrix for representing this data below:

		Demographics						Totals
		Wine Enthusiasts	Adventure Tourists	Religious Enthusiasts	Ethnic Armenians	History Enthusiasts	Leisure Tourists	
Regional Attributes	Monasteries and Churches							0
	Caves							0
	Viniculture							0
	Cuisine							0
	Mountainous Terrain							0
	Cost							0
	Wildlife							0
	Nightlife							0
	Ski Resorts							0
	Ethnotourism							0
	Museums							0
	Totals	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Figure 15: Data collection matrix with the rows representing attributes of Armenia and the columns representing the different types of tourists

This matrix was filled up by surveying the general audience using a structured questionnaire. The survey was sent out electronically through Google forms, and we received 338 unique responses.

We first sent it to social media groups and mailing lists that we were a part of, but then we received a lot of under 25-year-olds. We then decided to join various tourism groups on Facebook, to diversify our reach. Joining different groups worked out quite well, as we got a reasonable spread of age groups answering our questionnaire. However, the results were still slightly skewed towards the younger generation.

Once the data was received, it was further broken up based on gender, age and tourist type to analyze and create our final deliverable. To further analyze this data and perform statistical analysis, we utilized Microsoft Excel. We looked for the average for each group's affinity to a certain attribute, and then we calculated the standard deviation. Standard deviation refers to the measure of variation between data. In our case, we wanted to see how diverse the answers of respondents from the same group were. We then calculated a confidence interval for the population average at a 90% level. The confidence interval at a 90% level means that 90 out of 100 times, the average of the population surveyed will fall in the interval range. We also made a table for the confidence interval's margin of error to asses them. The margin of error in all

categories was small enough, that we concluded that the means have a statistical significance. For tourist types with low sample number, for example, the 65+ age category, the margin of error is larger than in tourist types with a higher sample number.

To better represent our findings, we decided to implement a heat map method for our final deliverable. A heat map utilizes color saturation to give a visual feel to data. In the heat map that we created, the more a tourist is likely to find an attribute appealing, the more saturated the cell is.

A portion of the final deliverable, with the data collected through the surveys, can be seen below:

Regional Attributes										
Average	Monasteries/Churches	Museums	Wildlife Tours	Ethnotourism	Caves	Viniculture	Cuisine	Mountainous Terrain		Average
Demographics										
Adventure Tourist	3.1	3.5	4.1	3.6	4.4	3.2	4.2	4.4		3.8
Wine Enthusiast	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.5	4.2		4.0
Armenian	4.1	4.3	3.8	4.5	4.4	4.1	4.6	4.3		4.3
History Buff	3.5	4.1	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.3	4.2	4.1		3.8
Leisure Tourist	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.6	4.0	3.2	4.2	4.0		3.7
Religious Enthusiast	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.7	4.0	3.0	3.7	3.9		3.8
Confidence interval margin of errors	Monasteries/Churches	Museums	Wildlife Tours	Ethnotourism	Caves	Viniculture	Cuisine	Mountainous Terrain		Average
Demographics										
Adventure Tourist	0.15	0.14	0.12	0.13	0.09	0.14	0.11	0.10		0.12
Wine Enthusiast	0.29	0.28	0.25	0.21	0.23	0.19	0.16	0.21		0.23
Armenian	0.34	0.28	0.39	0.23	0.26	0.31	0.19	0.26		0.28
History Buff	0.20	0.14	0.20	0.18	0.17	0.20	0.16	0.17		0.18
Leisure Tourist	0.14	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.10	0.11		0.12
Religious Enthusiast	0.56	0.47	0.54	0.49	0.45	0.56	0.44	0.49		0.50

Figure 16a: Final deliverable measuring affinities of demographic groups towards Armenian attractions and confidence interval margin of error for each pair

In the first section of the table above, the higher the affinity towards an attraction, the greener the cell is. The lower the affinity to an attraction, the more red the cell is. In the second section of this table, representing the margin of error, the higher the number, the more inconsistent the results are and therefore the redder the cell. The greener cells are lower numbers which show that the results are more consistent for that attribute and demographic group.

Regional Attributes										
Average	Monasteries/Ch	Museums	Wildlife Tours	Ethnotourism	Caves	Viniculture	Cuisine	Mountainous terrain		Average
Age										
17-	2.6	3.5	4.3	3.6	4.5	3.0	4.1	4.4		3.8
18-35	3.0	3.5	4.0	3.6	4.2	3.1	4.2	4.1		3.7
36-63	3.6	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.4	4.0	4.0		3.7
64+	3.6	3.8	3.3	3.8	3.4	3.5	3.8	3.5		3.6
Confidence	Monasteries/Ch	Museums	Wildlife Tours	Ethnotourism	Caves	Viniculture	Cuisine	Mountainous terrain		Average
Age										
17-	0.82	0.54	0.41	0.69	0.44	0.54	0.37	0.30		0.5
18-35	0.13	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.11		0.11
36-63	0.26	0.23	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.29	0.22	0.21		0.25
64+	0.78	0.79	0.88	0.72	0.78	0.69	0.69	0.78		0.76

Figure 16b: Final deliverable for measuring affinities of age groups towards Armenian attractions

Using the data collected, we concluded that most respondents were interested in Armenian cuisine and least interested in monasteries and churches. This finding is important because the tourism industry in Armenia is centered around the religious history of the country, specifically its churches and monasteries. Most of Armenia tourism promotion emphasise the presence of old churches and monasteries in the country. It was interesting to see that potential tourists are not that much attracted to these attributes of Armenia. Over fifty-eight percent of the respondents were male, and their highest mean was cuisine followed by mountainous terrains. They ranked monasteries and churches the lowest, with a 2.9 score. For the females, they rated cave exploration and cuisine as most interesting and monasteries and churches as the least interesting.

We further organized the results into three age groups; under 21s, between 21 and 40, 40 to 65 and lastly over 65 year olds.
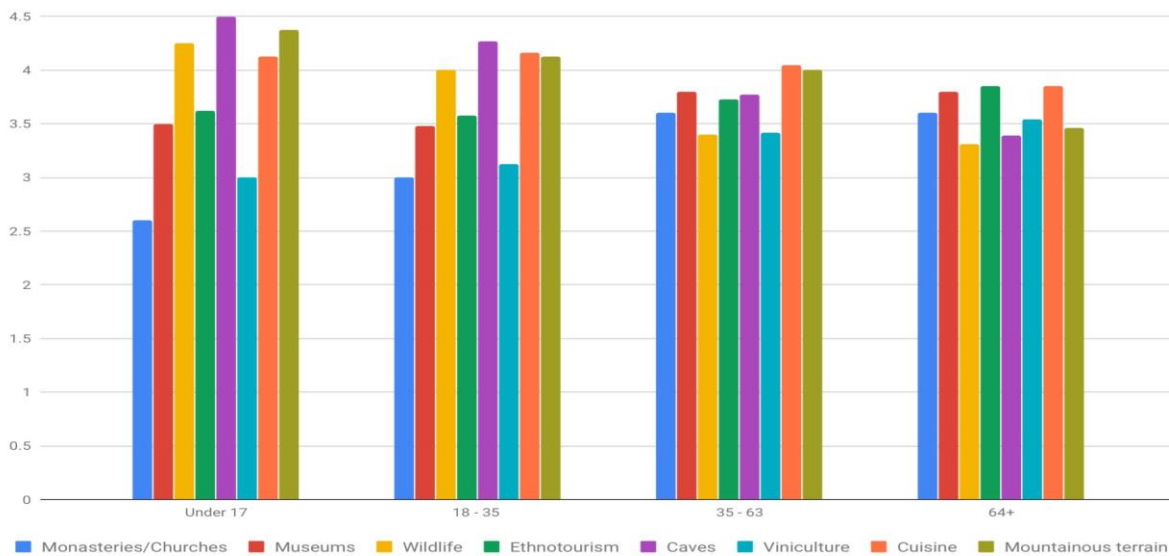

Figure 17. Age Demographic Preferences from Survey

In both age groups under 17 and 18 to 35, the respondents had churches and monasteries as the least interesting attribute. Additionally, the under 17 years category ranked cave exploration the highest while the 18 to 35 age group found cave exploration and Armenian cuisine the most attractive attributes. The over 35-year-old group ranked cuisine their highest and wildlife tours their lowest. The over 65-year-old group had an overall low ranking for most attributes, but they listed museums, ethno tourism, and cuisine as their top interests. This is important because if we want to focus on age group, then it is easy to see what attributes to promote to attract them.

4.1.2 Expert opinions on marketing Armenia

To obtain further information and create recommendations on how to define and market to our target audience, we interviewed experts from some of the demographic groups. We selected these experts based on groups we thought would be most interested in Armenia and Vayots Dzor. We found these groups by using the data collected from the surveys mentioned earlier. These experts included prominent wine enthusiasts such as Marie Keep, Senior Vice President of Fine Wines at Skinner Inc. as well as Peter Graffman, former president of the Wine and Food Society of Boston. We also interviewed Mark Aghajanian, an avid adventure tourist.

Through these interviews, we were able to better understand the makeup of the wine enthusiast and adventure tourist communities. These experts also suggested ways in which websites can cater to these target groups and recommended methods to improve upon our current strategies. For example, Marie Keep suggested that we investigate which countries are already importing Armenian wines. She articulated that it may be easier to market Armenia as a wine destination to a population that already has exposure to Armenian wines. Marie Keep also warned against over-polishing the websites and publishing too much information about the destinations. She explained that part of the allure of exploring Armenia as a wine destination would be discovering something new. If we published the whole experience on the website, there would be little motive for someone to tour Armenia for themselves.

Mark Aghajanian agreed and affirmed that discovering something new was a key motivation for an adventure tourist. He advised that the website conveys the truly unique features of Armenia and refrain from heavily advertising generic attractions.

Peter Graffman shed insight on why and how he travels specifically as a wine tourist. He asserted that his main inspiration for travel include the culture and history of a country. He recommended that the focus of the Vayots Dzor website be on the wine culture rather than less interactive activities such as wine tasting. This would include promoting wine festivals such as the Areni wine festival as well as activities where tourists could observe and become involved in the wine growing and harvesting process. He revealed that one of his favorite activities included visiting vineyards to form a personal connection with a winemaker whose wine he has tried before and is fond of.

4.2   Objective 2: Developed Keyword Lists

To create a comprehensive keywords list, we first started by creating "bucket" topics. These included "wine," "churches," "places or destinations," "adventures," "budget travel," "history," and "Armenia" as general categories. We then came up with different keywords that we thought our target audience would be likely to search in these categories and used an SEO marketing website called Ahrefs to add words to this list. Through Ahrefs we were able to identify the difficulty of a keyword, its global search volume, click count, as well as its return rate (how often a keyword is searched for again) and the number of clicks per search. From these statistics, we were able to calculate the ratio of clicks to keyword difficulty as well as the ratio of search volume to keyword difficulty. If the clicks to difficulty and search volume to difficulty ratios are relatively high, this means that the potential market you are tapping into is also high compared to the money or backlinks that you must supplement your website with to rank high in the search results. Therefore, these are great starter keywords to use before the sites begin gaining momentum.

After obtaining these words, we accumulated even more keywords using four other methods. These included searching keywords we had already established on google search and looking at the "related searches" at the bottom of the search engine results page (SERP). We also looked into other travel websites such as the Georgian travel website and researched what keywords they were using. Another method we used included examining the content of these other travel sites and searching for words that appeared several times throughout the site. Our sponsors also gave us access to reports from ethnographers who worked in Lori, Syunik, and Vayots Dzor. We analyzed these reports and skimmed them for keywords that seemed important and relevant to our websites.

To make this material useful to the Smithsonian, we created two lists of keywords, one for the Vayots Dzor website and one for the Armenia website. We used the clicks and search volume to difficulty ratios to categorize specific keywords into three categories; target, reach, and safety.

1. **Dream**

The keywords in the "dream" category had a search volume ratio over 2000 and a click ratio over 500. These were keywords with a relatively low keyword difficulty relative to the amount of traffic and clicks they received. Taking into account relevance, we predict that incorporating these keywords into the site content would generate the largest return on investment.

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Clicks	Keyword Difficulty	Search Volume to Difficulty	Clicks to Difficulty	Rating
horseback riding	46000	18000	1	46000	18000	DREAM
hiking	204000	18000	10	20400	1800	DREAM
kapan	11000	50	1	11000	50	DREAM
overseas adventure travel	22000	22000	2	11000	11000	DREAM
armenia	535000	55000	54	9907	1019	DREAM
churches	72000	18000	14	5143	1286	DREAM
armenian food	5000	2300	1	5000	2300	DREAM
church	326000	39000	71	4592	549	DREAM
yerevan	59000	3400	13	4538	262	DREAM
gyumri	4000	117	1	4000	117	DREAM
sayat nova	7000	521	2	3500	261	DREAM
usaid	97000	19000	34	2853	559	DREAM
lavash	32000	6200	12	2667	517	DREAM
armenian genocide	161000	68000	71	2268	958	DREAM
smithsonian	170000	78000	77	2208	1013	DREAM
lake sevan	2000	138	1	2000	138	DREAM
goris	6000	976	3	2000	325	DREAM
armenian alphabet	10000	3000	5	2000	600	DREAM

Figure 18: "Dream Keywords" list for the My Armenia website

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Clicks	Keyword Difficulty	Search Volume to Difficulty	Clicks to Difficulty	Rating
wine tasting	27000	6300	3	9000	2100	DREAM
wine	417000	42000	91	4582	462	DREAM
arpi	6000	63	2	3000	32	DREAM
armenia city	4000	202	2	2000	101	DREAM
pomegranate wine	2000	1100	1	2000	1100	DREAM
sweet wines	11000	9200	6	1833	1533	DREAM
sweet red wine	17000	11000	12	1417	917	DREAM
dry red wine	9000	4700	7	1286	671	DREAM
food and wine	24000	16000	19	1263	842	DREAM
wine enthusiast	23000	18000	25	920	720	DREAM

Figure 19: "Dream Keywords" list for the Vayots Dzor website

2. Reach

Next, the keywords in the reach category had a search volume between 500 and 2000 and a click ratio between 500 and 150. These keywords offered a moderate return on investment but were much easier to rank for than the dream keywords. We concluded that using only the relevant keywords from this list would ensure broader reach without needing too much initial investment.

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Clicks	Keyword Difficulty	Search Volume to Difficulty	Clicks to Difficulty	Rating
armenian dances	830	507	1	830	507	REACH
cycling	137000	8400	71	1930	118	REACH
most beautiful places in the world	48000	14000	29	1655	483	REACH
sevan	7000	197	5	1400	39	REACH
armenian	82000	14000	61	1344	230	REACH
capital of armenia	4000	163	3	1333	54	REACH
ararat	50000	1800	38	1316	47	REACH
monastery	61000	6200	49	1245	127	REACH
karas	37000	4500	31	1194	145	REACH
armenian people	24000	3100	21	1143	148	REACH
shirak	2000	126	2	1000	63	REACH
armenia map	16000	1900	19	842	100	REACH
best red wine	10000	5300	12	833	442	REACH
stone carving	12000	1100	15	800	73	REACH
lavash bread	6000	1300	8	750	163	REACH
cheap vacations	41000	21000	56	732	375	REACH
talin	25000	596	35	714	17	REACH
matenadaran	5000	51	8	625	6	REACH
dilijan hotels	4000	47	7	571	7	REACH
noahs ark	39000	8700	70	557	124	REACH
gyumri armenia	500	41	1	500	41	REACH
echmiadzin	1000	116	2	500	58	REACH
tatev monastery	2000	500	4	500	125	REACH
armenian culture	2000	614	4	500	154	REACH
yerevan nights	480	240	1	480	240	REACH
apostolic church	7000	3300	15	467	220	REACH
church buildings	860	497	2	430	249	REACH
armenian symbols	410	153	1	410	153	REACH
armenian dance	410	160	1	410	160	REACH
best travel sites	10000	8500	25	400	340	REACH
european destinations	11000	9700	35	314	277	REACH
european vacation packages	4000	4400	20	200	220	REACH
European vacation packages	4000	4400	20	200	220	REACH
monasteries	7000	682	16	438	43	REACH
mount ararat	15000	3800	37	405	103	REACH

Figure 20: "Reach Keywords" list for the My Armenia website

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Clicks	Keyword Difficulty	Search Volume to Difficulty	Clicks to Difficulty	Rating
monastery	61000	6200	49	1245	127	REACH
winery	43000	6100	48	896	127	REACH
best red wine	10000	5300	12	833	442	REACH
wine red	11000	987	15	733	66	REACH
types of red wine	10000	5600	15	667	373	REACH
merlot wine	13000	3600	23	565	157	REACH
red wine types	8000	4500	15	533	300	REACH
wine expert	5000	2000	10	500	200	REACH
sweet red wines	4000	3500	12	333	292	REACH
monasteries	7000	682	16	438	43	REACH
wine connoisseur	4400	965	11	400	88	REACH

Figure 21: "Reach Keywords" list for the Vayots Dzor website

3. **Safety**

Lastly, the keywords in the "safety" category had a search volume ratio under 500 and a click ratio under 150. These keywords offer the least reward but have the lowest initial investment to rank in the top 10 search results on google. We concluded that using this list to avoid "low return" keywords would prove beneficial to the sponsors.

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Clicks	Keyword Difficulty	Search Volume to Difficulty	Clicks to Difficulty	Rating
yerevan armenia	7000	728	18	389	40	SAFETY
adventure tourism	5000	247	13	385	19	SAFETY
birdwatching	11000	927	31	355	30	SAFETY
armenian cuisine	680	237	2	340	119	SAFETY
dvin	1000	125	3	333	42	SAFETY
armenian religion	4000	629	12	333	52	SAFETY
armenia religion	1000	179	3	333	60	SAFETY
world heritage sites	26000	6700	84	310	80	SAFETY
charmbarak	250	11	1	250	11	SAFETY
armenian music	3000	879	12	250	73	SAFETY
european vacation	10000	4100	41	244	100	SAFETY
where is armenia	8000	1900	33	242	58	SAFETY
armenia tourism	5000	286	22	227	13	SAFETY
mt ararat	7000	2900	36	194	81	SAFETY
armenian language	7000	2200	37	189	59	SAFETY
armenians	14000	3000	77	182	39	SAFETY
caucasus region	4000	1400	22	182	64	SAFETY
smithsonian institution	13000	5400	73	178	74	SAFETY
cities in europe	6000	931	39	154	24	SAFETY
armenia today	3000	325	20	150	16	SAFETY
armenian genocide crucifixion	4000	1800	30	133	60	SAFETY
geghard monastery	1000	543	8	125	68	SAFETY
republic square	480	60	4	120	15	SAFETY
adventure travel	8000	2700	68	118	40	SAFETY
holy lance	2000	740	19	105	39	SAFETY
map armenia	2000	87	20	100	4	SAFETY
oldest church in the world	1000	365	10	100	37	SAFETY
armenian apostolic church	2000	814	21	95	39	SAFETY
khachkar	460	102	5	92	20	SAFETY

us armenia	2000	1200	22	91	55	SAFETY
the smithsonian	7000	3700	80	88	46	SAFETY
old wine	950	188	13	73	14	SAFETY
world heritage site	6000	1100	84	71	13	SAFETY
armenian duduk	1000	225	15	67	15	SAFETY
the armenian genocide	5000	3500	75	67	47	SAFETY
cave exploring	590	128	9	66	14	SAFETY
cheap european vacations	990	852	22	45	39	SAFETY
best european vacations	630	657	14	45	47	SAFETY
armenia wiki	1000	293	27	37	11	SAFETY
gregory the illuminator	220	84	6	37	14	SAFETY
armenian history	740	403	23	32	18	SAFETY
best hiking	370	121	12	31	10	SAFETY
apostolic churches	340	375	13	26	29	SAFETY
armenia travel	670	225	27	25	8	SAFETY
armenian orthodox	420	154	19	22	8	SAFETY
armenian empire	690	349	32	22	11	SAFETY
armenian genocide memorial	590	195	28	21	7	SAFETY
discount travel sites	2000	1700	97	21	18	SAFETY
armenian script	340	101	17	20	6	SAFETY
armenian orthodox church	280	144	15	19	10	SAFETY
budget vacations	580	428	31	19	14	SAFETY
adventure trips	990	588	55	18	11	SAFETY
amenian christianity	240	143	15	16	10	SAFETY
why did the armenian genocide happen	970	694	62	16	11	SAFETY
european destination	580	427	36	16	12	SAFETY
outdoor adventure travel	680	527	45	15	12	SAFETY
armenian genocide facts	600	361	56	11	6	SAFETY
what is the armenian genocide	520	436	69	8	6	SAFETY
religious history	360	99	52	7	2	SAFETY
inexpensive travel destinations	190	194	30	6	6	SAFETY
the smithsonian institution	210	76	71	3	1	SAFETY

Figure 22: "Safety Keywords" list for the My Armenia website

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Clicks	Keyword Difficulty	Search Volume to Difficulty	Clicks to Difficulty	Rating
best wine	7000	3400	20	350	170	SAFETY
wine tastings	690	347	2	345	174	SAFETY
red wines	9000	5200	29	310	179	SAFETY
best sweet red wine	2000	1900	10	200	190	SAFETY
wine tours	3000	750	11	273	68	SAFETY
wineries	10000	3000	38	263	79	SAFETY
vineyards	11000	2100	42	262	50	SAFETY
dry red wines	2000	1300	9	222	144	SAFETY
famous churches	1000	250	5	200	50	SAFETY
wine tour	2000	363	12	167	30	SAFETY
armenian church	4000	1200	25	160	48	SAFETY
best wines	3000	1900	19	158	100	SAFETY
winery tours	1000	275	7	143	39	SAFETY
good wine	4000	1500	28	143	54	SAFETY
oldest wine	2000	1100	15	133	73	SAFETY
good red wines	740	553	14	53	40	SAFETY
wine connoisseurs	500	63	11	45	6	SAFETY
armenian churches	360	89	8	45	11	SAFETY
wine pouring	450	118	10	45	12	SAFETY
oldest wine in the world	670	296	15	45	20	SAFETY
wine regions	790	480	26	30	18	SAFETY
armenian wine	320	142	12	27	12	SAFETY
study of wine	680	91	35	19	3	SAFETY
wine enthusiasts	300	179	17	18	11	SAFETY
wine trail	1000	151	59	17	3	SAFETY
ancient armenia	380	143	22	17	7	SAFETY
wine festivals	430	479	26	17	18	SAFETY
tasting wine	500	275	34	15	8	SAFETY
ancient wine	170	68	22	8	3	SAFETY

Figure 23: "Safety Keywords" list for the Vayots Dzor website

4.3 Objective 3: Determined Site Optimization through Content and Design

We created a usability survey to be conducted on several prominent travel websites. This survey measured things such as accessibility, user engagement, load speed, site aesthetics, ease of use, and how interested we were in visiting the place on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least affinity and 5 being the highest. All group members then filled out this survey, and we calculated averages for each category. We used this study, along with the amount of traffic each site received as a measure to assess site quality.

Site	Easy to find	Content engaging	Loading speed	Aesthetics	Easy to use	Interested to travel	Visuals & text balance	Access to more info	Average
armenia.travel	3.3	4.0	4.3	3.7	3.3	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.7
georgia.travel	4.7	3.7	3.3	3.0	4.3	3.3	4.0	3.0	3.7
newzealand.com/	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.3	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.7
chile.travel	5.0	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.3	5.0	4.0	4.4
argentina.travel/	4.0	3.7	4.3	3.7	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.8
visitmaine.com	4.7	4.5	2.2	5.0	4.5	4.3	5.0	4.0	4.3

Figure 24: Results of Usability Survey

Our further comparisons after the usability studies helped us understand why some websites were rated high and some were not. Additionally, we found certain aspects of the above mentioned websites that made them extremely user friendly.

The Maine website was ranked highly with respect to the content of the website, but the loading speed was so slow that it prevented the user from fully experiencing what the site had to offer. From this we concluded that incorporating an efficient design was just as important as the quality of the content itself.

The national tourism website for New Zealand was the highest ranked of the travel sites with an average of 4.7. The site was extremely aesthetically pleasing with multiple images intended to inspire visitors to travel to New Zealand. From this website we concluded that while it was important to have high quality photos and visuals, website functionality such as flight planners, list of destinations and past tourists experiences, all played a big role in inspiring tourists to visit the location.

The Armenia.travel website acted as a benchmark for the basics that the Smithsonian's websites needed. One of the faults of the website is that it does not have consistent information on each page. For example, a map of areas around Lake Sevan shows you hotels in the area, but the actual page on Lake Sevan does not list any. We concluded that having quality links and resources which actually work was much more important than just having a large amount of "dysfunctional" website content and data.

Both the Chile and Argentina tourism websites helped us understand how to present wine marketing to tourists. We used the information on food and wine as a guide to what other features the websites could offer in addition to those already outlined by the Smithsonian.

We used Georgia.travel as a guideline because of Georgia's proximity to Armenia and its similar attractions. One factor that took away from the site's effectiveness was the poorly incorporated photos. Some were stock photos and had watermarks on them, and others were pixelated. Since visual aids such as pictures and maps are extremely important in designing an attractive and inspirational website, we concluded that having stock photos and other "fake" images decreased the trustability of the website and the experiences portrayed.

All of our above conclusions and findings were used to further compare the website wireframes that we created for the above mentioned websites and the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites to create our final recommendations. These recommendations were of three types:

1. Content Recommendations
2. Design Recommendations
3. Functional Recommendations

Our final recommendations from this objective can be found in Chapter 5.

4.4 Objective 4: Recommended Additional Search Engine Optimization Techniques

For objective 4, our findings were categorized into three types, as discussed below.

4.4.1 List of "Dos and Don'ts"

We created a list of "Dos and Don'ts" as well as "Sample Uses" for some design considerations. The "Dos and Don'ts" provide guidance on how to approach certain dimensions of web design, such as choosing a page URL or page Title. The Sample Uses provide examples of how to incorporate some of the recommendations.

	Do	Example	Don't	Example	Why?	Source
URL	Use a human readable address	myarmenia.org/vayots-dzor	Use a random combination	myarmenia.org/region/f3cd7b	Search Engines use URLs to find content	https://moz.com/blog/15-seo-best-practices-for-structuring-urls
Content	Prioritize HTML	most content should be in HTML	Use Flash	Websites sometimes use flash to provide part of the experience	Search Engines read HTML better than scripting languages, Flash is deprecated. HTML5 should be used in place	https://moz.com/blog/flash-and-seo-compelling-reasons-why-search-engines-flash-still-dont-mix
Scripting	Regulate use of scripting languages	Too much scripting can hurt rankings	Avoid scripting languages	Javascript provides essential features	Search Engines inconsistently handle scripting languages	http://searchengineland.com/tested-googlebot-crawls-javascript-heres-learned-220157
Page Title	Use title tags	<title>Example Title</title>	Stuff keywords into the title	Some sites try to abuse the system	Search Engines use title tags as the discription, and abusing it may hurt ranking and user experience	https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag
Page Meta Description	Have metadescriptions for each page	Descriptions between 135 to 170 characters and use action oriented language	Use too many or too little characters	Google likes to replace metadescriptions that are too short or too long	Search Engines use metadescriptions, especially those with the main keywords of the page content	https://yoast.com/meta-descriptions/
External links	Have external links to other sites	External links give more info	Use content from external sites	Content from different areas hurt ranking	Search Engines give higher scores to those with references, rather than the content itself	https://www.blendb2b.com/blog/12-dos-and-donts-of-seo
Image SEO	Use and optimize images	Use alt tags, relevant image titles	Use irrelevant or stock photos	Images can reflect the effort put into the website	Search Engines can not understand pictures, but they can understand tags. Tags help get the images to the user	https://yoast.com/image-seo/
Mobile	Include mobile view options	Websites often provide interfaces for different screen sizes	Impede the loading of the website	Putting more content can slow down the website	Searches made on mobile are greater than on desktop, but people will leave sites if they have trouble reading or loading it	http://searchengineland.com/seo-2017-mobile-optimisation-competitive-advantage-265760
Internal Linking	Link to intra-site pages	Navigation buttons and site map	Put links in Javascript	Javascript is not always parsable	Search Engins and Users can easily navigate the website if they know where they are and can find new internal links	https://moz.com/learn/seo/internal-link
Fresh Content	Update website content regularly	New content gets priority on Search Engines	Delete old content	Old content may still bring hits	New content gets some priority when Search Engines, but having quality "constant" content will also drive hits to the site	https://www.getcredo.com/fresh-content-seo/
Site Ads	Use ads if necessary	Sites sometimes need ads to run	Use disrupting ads	Users and Search Engines turn away if ads are a hassle	Make sure the ads are not an inconvenience, as users and search engine crawlers will turn away if they do not load in time	http://searchengineland.com/5-ways-ads-killing-site-seo-257517

Figure 25. List of Do and Don'ts and Sample Uses

4.4.2 Page Titles, URLs, and Meta Descriptions

Google returns its search results in a specific format. Web developers have to make the most of it, even though it is not very flexible and there is not much real estate to work with, because it is the very first impression a site will make on its potential viewers. There are several steps to take to make the site result more effective. The following contains examples of Google search results:

Come See Your Armenia | My Armenia
myarmenia.org/visit
Come see what is awaiting you in YOUR Armenia. Get maps, itineraries, and information here at My Armenia

It can be broken up into 3 sections, the title, URL, and meta description.

1. **Title**

    Come See Your Armenia | My Armenia

    This is the title. It is blue, short, and usually the same as the title that gets put in the tab when the link is clicked. It sometimes contains the name of the website, in this case the example site is named "My Armenia." The title is short and captures what the site is about. It has to be easily understandable by a user, as users do not always read meta descriptions.

2. **URL**

    myarmenia.org/visit

    The main site URL is "myarmenia.org." The searched page is located at "/visit." The URL needs to be readable and understandable by a person.

3. **Meta Description**

    Come see what is awaiting you in YOUR Armenia. Get maps, itineraries, and information here at My Armenia

    A meta description is a summary of the page, typically around 135 characters. Google can sometimes create its own meta description based on the webpage if it determines that the precreated meta description is unfit. Google determines what is unfit under various criteria, typically descriptions that are too short or too long. Google allows tests of results to see how the result will appear. Typically the page meta description uses action-oriented verbs to get users to interact with the site.

All of this together is what can make or break a site, since this is the very first impression a site makes on a user. If the user thinks that it is irrelevant, then they will not click on it, and that is one click lost for the site. If many people think this, not only will the user be lost, but the potential for growth as well.

4.4.3 List of Potential Links

We created a list of potential website links for both the Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites. We ranked each possible link based on its domain authority (DA) which is a ranking strategy measuring the power of a domain from 1 to 100 based on the age, popularity, and size of the website. A higher domain authority means the website is stronger based on these characteristics. We also proposed pages in the two websites where these links could be best utilize and additional information on the websites.

For the My Armenia website:

Website Name	What is it About (description)	Domain Authority (Over 100)
hyurservice.com	Travel agency	30
tourismarmenia.org	General info on Armenia	30
travel.am	Armenia travel and tourism portal, gives a lot of information about Armenian attributes, tour prices, tour companies, etc	21
hotels.am	Accomodations in Armenia	27
barevarmenia.com	Tourism company	24
armenian travel bureau (atb.am)	Have multiple resources for tourists coming to Armenia: hotels, tours and attractions	32
areni.info	General info on Areni village, wine, food, monasteries	8
armeniatravel.am	Has tours, transport, and practical information on Armenia's geography and history.	25
lonelyplanet.com/armenia	Big name website	90
araratour.com	Tour agency	33

smithsonian enterprises	A Division of The Smithsonian Institution	93
karaswines.com	One of the largest wine exporters in Armenia	24
onearmenia.org	Wine focused website aimed to improve grape farmers' lives	31
greenway.am	Travel agency in Armenia	16 (main page authority: 28)
Armenian General Benevolent Union (agbu.org)	The organization is devoted to upholding the Armenian heritage.	50

We had the website wireframes for the Vayots Dzor Website which enabled us to add an extra column that has suggestions to the pages on the websites that these sites could link to and from.

For The Vayots Dzor Website

Website name	Domain Authority (Over 100)	Page to link to or from	What is it About (description)
armeniawine.am/	25	On the wineries' pages to advertise Armenian wines	Have wineries all over the country including Vayots Dzor
tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g2707300-Activities-Vayots_Dzor_Province.html	95	Generally having a tripadvisor link in the site will work in many of the pages	Tripadvisor is a very high ranking website which would be advantageous to link to/from
zorahwines.com	20 Homepage authority: 40	An additional winery to look at and perhaps have a page on the site	Have wineries in Vayots Dzor region and sell wines
worldsfirstwines.com	9	Link from the main wineries page for those who are not yet ready to come to Armenia but want to experience Armenian wines.	Advertises and sells Armenian wine to the US wine market
getnatoun.am	15	Could be an additional winery on the website.	Have a winery in the Vayots Dzor region. According to their

			website, they do not offer or advertise tours to their wineries.
hinareniwine.am	16	Hin Areni Winery page on the website	Great website that talks about the winery and their products
Gevorkian Winery gevorkianwinery.com	6	On the wineries' pages to advertise Armenian wines	Sell their wines via their websites
avshar-wine.am	17	Armenia's wine heritage page or if another page is created for wine trails not in Vayots Dzor	Have a winery in Avshar, pretty developed website (contains a 360 tour of their winery)
sarduriwines.com/vineyards	11 (page authority:18)	Armenia's wine heritage page or if another page is created for wine trails not in Vayots Dzor	Winery in the Aragatsotn province, have wine tasting in Yerevan. Do not advertise wine trails on their website
voskevaz.am	18	Link from the main wineries page	Winery in the Aragatsotn region but they do not advertise wine tours. They ship mainly to Russia.
vanardi.com/tours	16	Armenia's wine heritage page or if another page is created for wine trails not in Vayots Dzor	Offers wine tours in their wineries in the Ashtarak region.
areniwines.am	6	Link to the areni wine factory page under wineries	Sells wines from Areni. It is the site for Areni wine factory but does not mention its tours
armas.am	28	Wineries in other regions page.	Offers winery visits and sells wines internationally. It is not in Vayots Dzor. Users can but their wines online as well.
helias.am/vineyards	3	Wine heritage page or if a new page on wineries in other regions is created	Winery in Kotayk region. Seems like an informational website but has contact info
advantour.com/armenia/	42	Link to the tours page	Can also be used for the

vayotsdzor			general website. Talks more about the sights in Vayots Dzor
armeniawine.am	25	Armenia's wine heritage page or if another page is created for wine trails not in Vayots Dzor	Great website on Armenian wine from another marz, not Vayots Dzor
oldworldwinetours.com/en/wine-tours-in-armenia	10	Link to tours page	Offers wine tours in Armenia
armenianwinefestival.am	14	Link to the festivals and events page	Not the best looking website but has information on the wine festivals especially in Vayots Dzor Mars
wineonsix.com	34	Link from the main wineries page	Wine selling company at has wines from Georgia but none from Armenia. Great place to advertise Armenian wines

Many of the websites we found had a low domain authority. However, these sites included transportation services, hotel websites, and web pages providing further information on Armenian attributes such as wine. There were also sites for wineries in other regions that offer wine tours and have information on the site as well as sites for Armenian wine companies that would be beneficial to list on the Vayots Dzor website. Therefore, we believed that they were still relevant links that would benefit potential tourists.

4.5 Objective 5: Enhanced Search Engine Optimization through Website Advertisements

We broke this objective down into three categories:

1. Social Media
2. Advertising
    a. Conventional Advertising
    b. Unconventional Advertising
3. Conversion

These categories compartmentalize the entire concept of "website advertisements." Our findings will be discussed in the following sections.

4.5.1 Social Media

We created a list of the most popular social media platforms. The list includes:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Instagram
4. Pinterest
5. Snapchat

These are the most popular social media platforms used by businesses since the high number of users allows companies to reach a broader audience. For each of these social media platforms, we compared the return on investment in terms of cost, number of users and engagement.

Using these comparisons, we concluded that the best social media platform for promoting the two new websites, as well as the My Armenia Project as a whole, is Instagram. This is partially because the content on Instagram is primarily image based which is perfect for inspiring an audience to travel. Instagram is also a quickly growing social media platform which has almost half as many monthly active users as Facebook. On the other hand, users tend to be more engaged on Instagram than on either Facebook or even Twitter. Another factor which makes Instagram a good fit for our purposes is the hashtags usage. On Instagram, the amount of hashtags used on a post only increases user engagement whereas on Facebook and Twitter, the optimal amount of hashtags is one or two. This makes it easier for the My Armenia project to request Instagrammers to use the #MyArmenia branded hashtag.
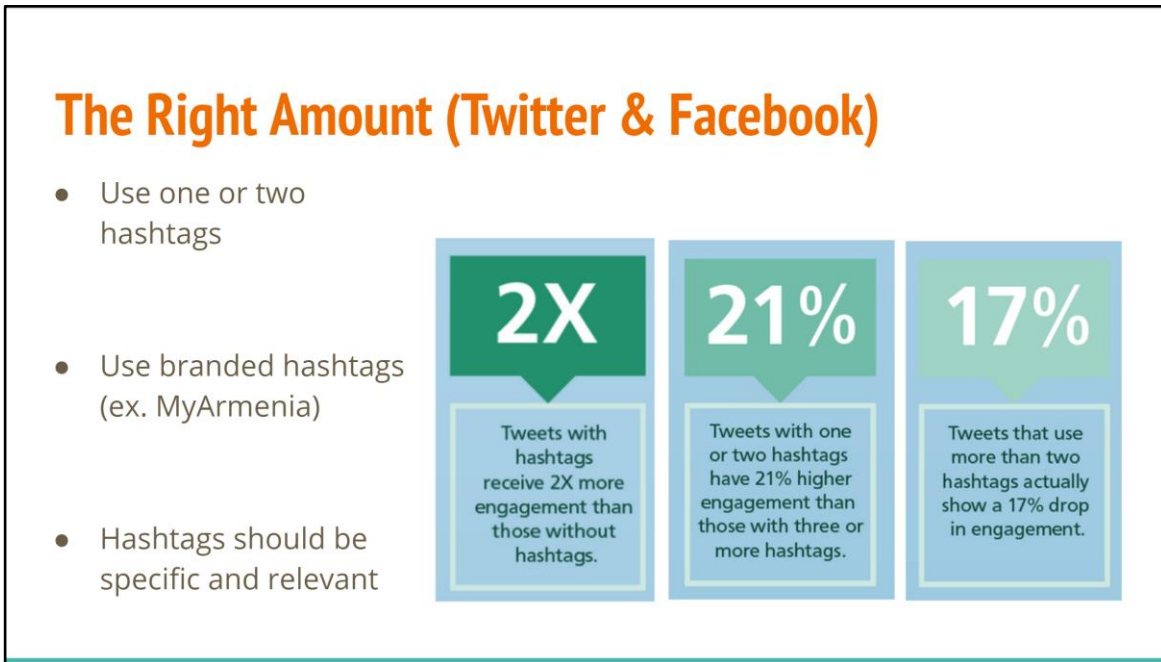
Figure 26: How to use hashtags on Twitter and Facebook

4.5.2 Website Advertisements

Next, we developed a list of different advertising methods we could use to promote the My Armenia project. These methods included the most common conventional advertising strategies such as Facebook advertisements and Banner Ads. In total we analyzed the following six platforms:

1. Google Advertisements
2. Facebook and Instagram Advertisements
3. Native Advertisements
4. Banner Advertisements
5. Twitter Advertisements
6. Bing and Yahoo Advertisements

For each of these advertising methods, we looked at the benefits, market reach, cost, and return on investment. We used these factors to determine the two advertising platforms that would be best for promoting the two websites and the My Armenia Project. These were Facebook and Instagram Ads and Google Advertisements.

Facebook and Instagram ads were determined to be one of the best ways of marketing the My Armenia Project. This is because Facebook is the largest social media platform with almost two billion active users. Instagram is a growing social media platform with almost half as many

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monthly active users. Facebook ads offer very specific demographic targeting tools which would enable the My Armenia Project to target audiences based on income, interests, and even ethnicity. This way, they can ensure that the audience that is seeing the ad is part of a demographic that would potentially be interested in traveling to Armenia. From a convenience standpoint, since Facebook owns Instagram, the My Armenia Project can also advertise on both platforms from one place.

The next form of advertisement that was determined to be extremely effective was Google AdWords. Google is the largest search engine in the world. The way that Google AdWords works is that the promoted website will come up at the top of the page for keywords that you bid on. A way to make sure that the advertisement is targeted to a relevant audience is by bidding on keywords that people who are interested in traveling to Armenia would be likely to search. These would be keywords and phrases from our second objective, such as "travel armenia" or "top things to do in armenia".

In addition to conventional advertising platforms, we also researched unconventional advertising methods. This included Guest Blogging as well as advertising the two websites using Quora. These methods were were created by us by using a combination of brainstorming and thorough analyzing of other big brands and websites.

We concluded that using guest blogging would prove highly valuable for the My Armenia project. There are a myriad of popular travel, wine, and cuisine blogs that the Smithsonian could request to do this from. Since the Smithsonian is a reputable and prestigious organization, most blogs would be willing to let someone affiliated with the Smithsonian write a guest post. Guest blogging is also a very effective backlink building strategy and it increases brand awareness.

Figure 27: Advantages of using guest blogging

4.5.3 Conversions

During our research we concluded that effective advertisements focused on two parts:

1. Getting a potential customer to see and click on an advertisement
2. Converting a casual site visitor into a customer

Our research into social media platforms and conventional and unconventional ads focused on this first part; to get a potential customer to see and click on an advertisement. Understanding this lack of knowledge of the second piece, we made "conversion" a part of this objective as well. Conversion refers to the act of converting a casual visitor into a customer or, in our case, someone interested in traveling to Armenia. Conversions are important because the end goal of the My Armenia project is to increase tourism and that requires that the people visiting the website become inspired to travel to Armenia.

To recommend conversion strategies to our sponsors, we looked at what big brands and companies did. Our research led us to landing pages. Landing pages are any webpages where a user "lands" on a site. A user "lands" when they click links such as an advertisement or social media links.

To increase conversion rates and thus have more effective advertisements, we created *Four Golden Rules of creating great landing pages* which can be seen below.

Figure 28: The 4 Golden Rules of great landing pages.

4.6 Objective 6: Recommended Analytics Plan

The Smithsonian Institution was planning to measure success for both the My Armenia and the Vayots Dzor websites by tracking the number of website visitors who fill out their contact information. Our research established that this method of tracking success should be reconsidered as many potential tourists would be turned away from the websites because of the need to fill out contact forms. To convince the Smithsonian Institution to reconsider their method for measuring website success, we presented the following findings:

1. **Poor Survey Response Rate by Users**
   According to our research, sites with contact forms negatively impact user engagement with the majority of users navigating away from the website after being presented with a contact form on a landing page. We found that contact forms increase the bounce rate from about fifty percent on an average website to about 70-90% on a landing page with a contact form. A contact form would also be an ineffective way to collect potential customer data for Armenian companies since a majority falsify information on contact forms or may provide an email they never use. We believed that more people would be interested in visiting Armenia than those who would fill out the contact form. These users may show interest through navigating to external links on their own.

According to a Social Identity Study done by Blue Research on Contact Forms:

◉ 54% leave websites instead

◉ 26% look for a different site

◉ 88% that fill out falsify information

◉ 70-90% bounce rate on landing pages with a form

◉ Users hesitate to fill out forms because of slack privacy policies
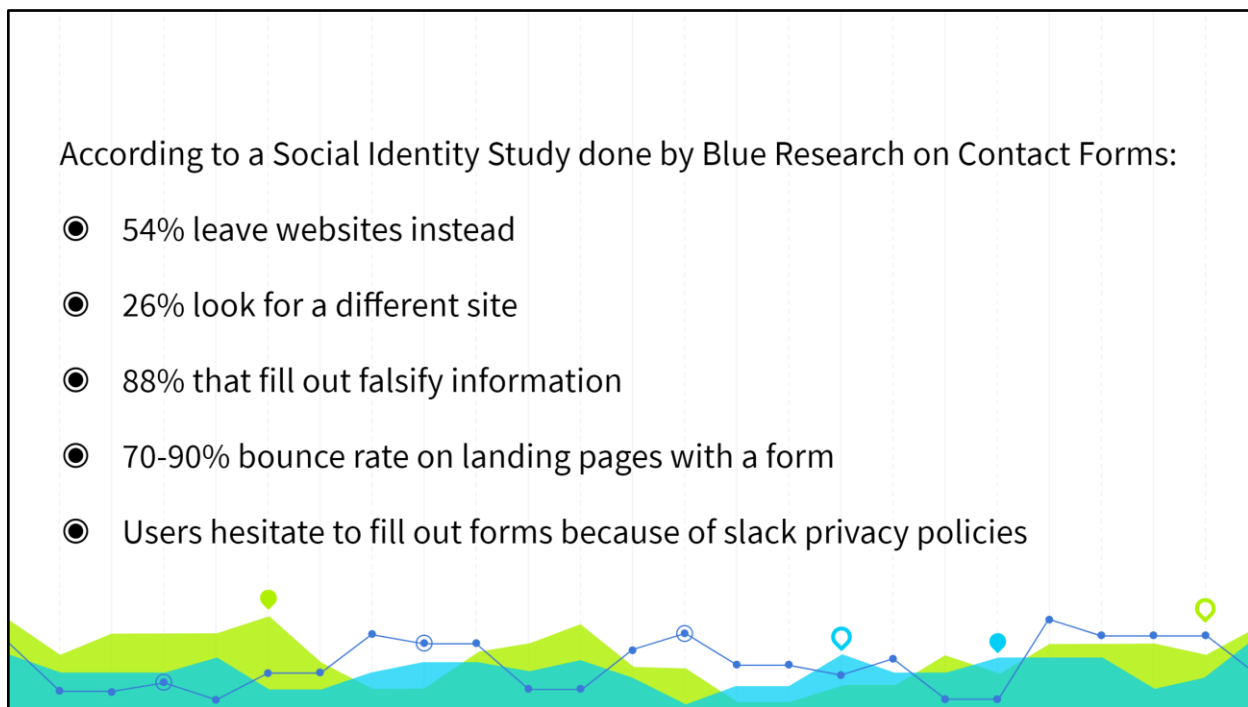
Figure 29: Statistics on contact forms and user engagement

2. Best Ways to Use Contact Forms

Since we assumed that the My Armenia Project would still use contact forms, we researched the best practices for creating effective contact forms. We found that a low number of fields was best for optimal user response. We also found that users are more willing to give email information out than their cell phone numbers. One of the best ways to have users fill out a contact form though is to have the option to log in through Facebook, Twitter, or Google+. Logging in takes only one click for the user but reveals contact information. We also discovered that making only the necessary fields be required also improves user responses as well as changing to call to action buttons to words like "go" rather than "submit."
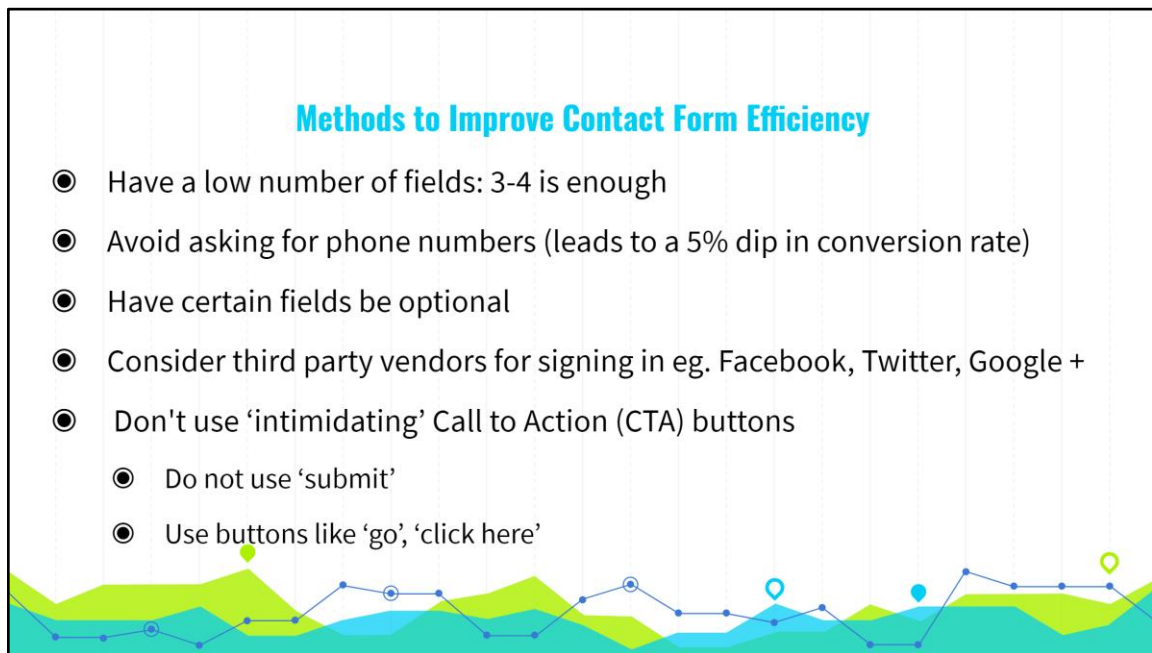
Figure 30. Best practices for Contact Forms

3. Method to Measure the Main Goal of the Website

Since the ultimate goal of the website is to inspire tourists to visit Armenia, the percentage of users that demonstrate interest in Armenian tour companies, hotels, and services can be used to determine the success of the website. Since we predicted that more people would prefer to navigate to a site on their own rather than fill out a contact form, we came up with a way to count visits to external websites in Google Analytics. Google Analytics does not include this as a native feature, however, we can utilize Javascript code to count the number of outbound clicks with Google Analytics.

4. **Other Metrics to Measure User Engagement**

Finally, we created a list of features as well as plugins that can be used together with Google Analytics to be able to measure user engagement with the two new websites. We also determined some target benchmarks for these metrics based on industry standards.

- Bounce Rate
  - percentage of users who navigate away from the site after only viewing one page
- Average Session Duration and Average Active Session Duration
  - The amount of time a user spends on the site is a built in feature of Google Analytics. However, this time does not account for cases where someone leaves their computer open with the site up and is not actively looking at the content. Riveted is a plugin that can be used in conjunction with Google Analytics. It measures session duration only by the amount of time the user is moving the cursor, scrolling, or typing.
- Percentage of Returning Visitors
- Average Number of Pages per Visit
- Tracking of Site Searches
  - This feature can be enabled in Google Analytics. It keeps track of what is being searched in the search bar. This can measure user engagement as well as provide some guidance as to what sections of the websites require more information.
- Scroll Depth
  - gives the percentages of how far down users navigate to on a page
  - available in Google Analytics through a plugin

5.   Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions in chapter four, we developed recommendations for our sponsors to produce a website that receives a lot of traffic, informs tourists on Armenia and inspires them to visit the country, especially the rural regions of Armenia. According to the research that we have done over the course of the previous term and during the seven weeks in Armenia, we believe that these recommendations will achieve the goal of our project.

5.1 Recommendations from Objective 1: Defined the Target Audience

Based on our findings from the tourist surveys and other research about the target audience, we recommend the following steps.

1. **Shift focus from Churches and Monasteries to other prominent Armenian attributes**
   Most demographic groups, except for Ethnic Armenians and Religious Enthusiasts were not very keen on Monasteries and Churches. Currently in Armenia, the tourism industry is focused on these attributes of Armenia and not as much on the other prominent attributes such as the mountainous terrains, Armenian cuisine, cave exploration and wildlife. We recommend to shift focus and make Monasteries and churches a more peripheral part of the Armenian experience.

2. **Focus on the Terrain**
   According to our surveys, mountainous terrain and caves were favored by many demographic groups. While the terrain of Armenia may seem normal to the local residents, the same cannot be said for tourists. Tourists like seeing different unique regions, and "selling" the terrains of Armenia to tourists will attract them. Armenia, although a small country, has multiple climatic regions, from 'Swiss' like terrain of Dilijan to canyons and gorges in the Vayots Dzor region. There is a lot of potential attractions for adventure tourists in the country, for example hiking, zip lining, skiing and other such activities.

3. **Emphasize the Affordability of Armenia**
   More than half of the respondents filled in 'cost' as one of the factors they consider while travelling to a new country or region. Armenia has an advantage here because of its low living costs compared to other countries that offer similar attributes. Highlighting this factor will make for more potential economical tourists favoring Armenia.

4. **Focus on Cuisine**

   Many people rank cuisine as a priority when travelling. Armenia has lots of food indigenous to the country with some influence from European, Asian and Russian cuisines that will attract tourists. Armenia's cuisine should be marketed to tourists, especially since most tourists appreciate the local foods.

5. **Pair up Wine Tours with other Attractions**

   We also recommend that viniculture and wine tours in the Vayots Dzor website be accompanied by cultural experiences and other attractions in the region. This will bring in more tourists to the region, even those that are not necessarily attracted to wine tours.

5.2 Recommendations from Objective 2: Developing the Keywords Lists

Using the list of keywords we developed, we recommended that the My Armenia Project create a plan of risk vs reward and incorporate keywords based on their strategies. Our formula for rating the keywords can be seen below:
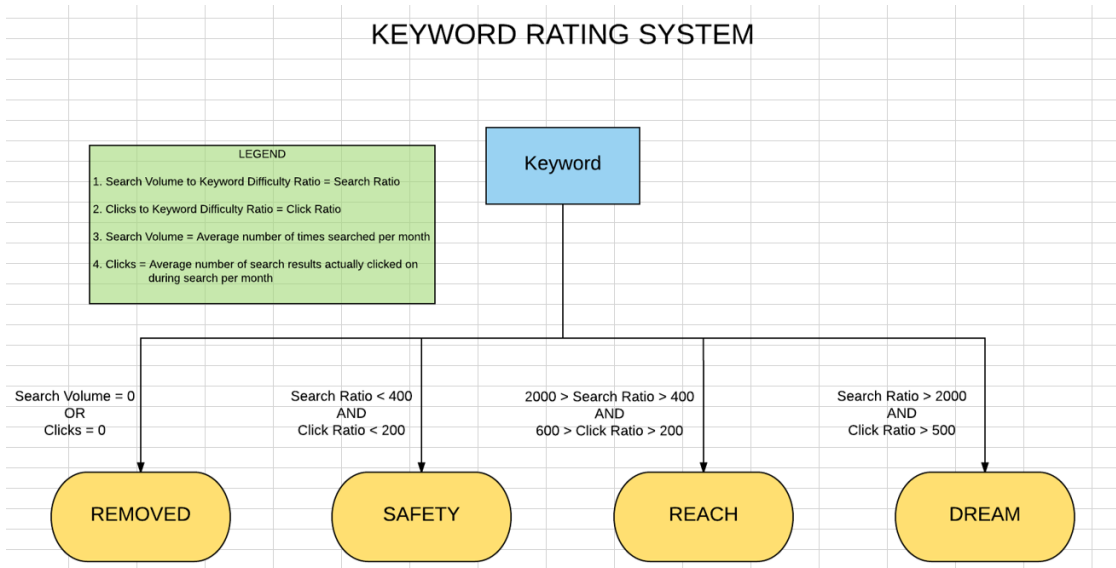
Figure 31: Formula for creating keyword ratings

This formula clearly lays out the return on investment and allows the My Armenia Project team to choose their own set of keywords to focus on, allowing them to increase their rankings in Google searches and therefore maximize the ability of users to find the site. The keywords they choose will depend on relevancy to the final content of the website. However, we recommend that the Smithsonian utilize low difficulty from the three categories during the early stages of the websites. After gaining some reputation and social media popularity, we recommend shifting focus to high reward keywords within the "dream" and "reach" categories.

We also recommend using these keywords in the website content inside the following places for maximum rewards.

- Page titles and headings
- Image file names
- Meta descriptions
- Body text
- URL

5.3 Recommendations from Objective 3: Determined Site Optimization through Content and Design

Our final recommendations for objective 3 were accompanied by wireframe examples from the Official tourism website of New Zealand, Maine, Armenia and Georgia. Our final recommendations along with accompanying wireframe screenshots were broken up into the following categories:

1. **Content Recommendations**
   a. Include unique facts about the locations

Eg:

Figure 32a. Content Recommendations 1

b. Include a section about past tourists experiences

Figure 32b. Content Recommendations 2

2. Design Recommendations
a. Include complimentary call to actions

Figure 33a. Design Recommendations

b. Create focus by either reordering content or by using whitespace

Eg:

Figure 33b. Design Recommendations

3. **Functional Recommendations**
   a. Provide more language options
      i. More than 70% of tourists travelling to Armenia are from Russia or Georgia and the new websites will not be supporting their languages. This will have a significant negative effect on the traffic that goes to the site. The websites that we analyzed offered 5-7 language options on average with the New Zealand website offering 20+ different options.

b. Link with Instagram using hashtags or submissions
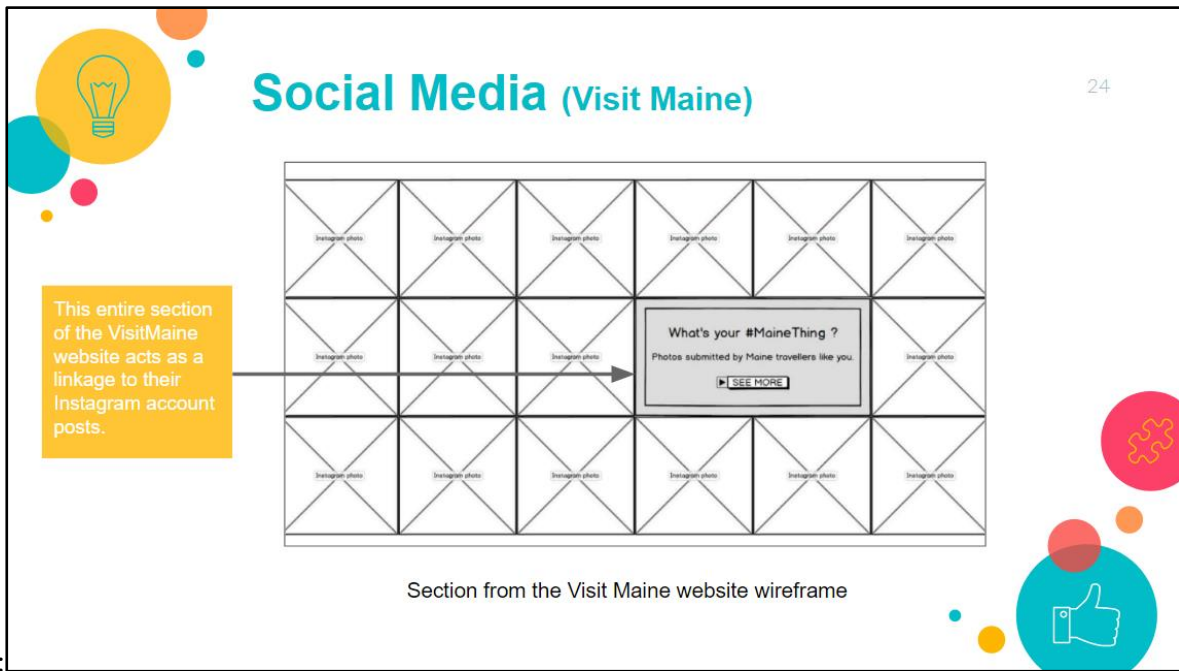
Eg:

Figure 34. Functional Recommendations

5.4 Recommendations from Objective 4: Recommended Additional Search Engine Optimization Techniques

5.4.1 Web Design "Dos and Don'ts" Recommendations

Our first recommendation, the "Dos and Don'ts" list provides a list of concepts to keep in mind while creating the site. The items on the "Dos and Don'ts" list contains what to do and not do for specific topics, as well as small examples and rationale.

	Do	Example	Don't	Example	Why?	Source
URL	Use a human readable address	myarmenia.org/vayots-dzor	Use a random combination	myarmenia.org/region/f3cd7b	Search Engines use URLs to find content	https://moz.com/blog/15-seo-best-practices-for-structuring-urls
Content	Prioritize HTML	most content should be in HTML	Use Flash	Websites sometimes use flash to provide part of the experience	Search Engines read HTML better than scripting languages, Flash is deprecated. HTML5 should be used in place	https://moz.com/blog/flash-and-seo-compelling-reasons-why-search-engines-flash-still-dont-mix
Scripting	Regulate use of scripting languages	Too much scripting can hurt rankings	Avoid scripting languages	Javascript provides essential features	Search Engines inconsistently handle scripting languages	http://searchengineland.com/tested-googlebot-crawls-javascript-heres-learned-220157
Page Title	Use title tags	<title>Example Title</title>	Stuff keywords into the title	Some sites try to abuse the system	Search Engines use title tags as the discription, and abusing it may hurt ranking and user experience	https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag
Page Meta Description	Have metadescriptions for each page	Descriptions between 135 to 170 characters and use action oriented language	Use too many or too little characters	Google likes to replace metadescriptions that are too short or too long	Search Engines use metadescriptions, especially those with the main keywords of the page content	https://yoast.com/meta-descriptions/
External links	Have external links to other sites	External links give more info	Use content from external sites	Content from different areas hurt ranking	Search Engines give higher scores to those with references, rather than the content itself	https://www.blendb2b.com/blog/12-dos-and-donts-of-seo
Image SEO	Use and optimize images	Use alt tags, relevant image titles	Use irrelevant or stock photos	Images can reflect the effort put into the website	Search Engines can not understand pictures, but they can understand tags. Tags help get the images to the user	https://yoast.com/image-seo/
Mobile	Include mobile view options	Websites often provide interfaces for different screen sizes	Impede the loading of the website	Putting more content can slow down the website	Searches made on mobile are greater than on desktop, but people will leave sites if they have trouble reading or loading it	http://searchengineland.com/seo-2017-mobile-optimisation-competitive-advantage-265760
Internal Linking	Link to intra-site pages	Navigation buttons and site map	Put links in Javascript	Javascript is not always parsable	Search Engins and Users can easily navigate the website if they know where they are and can find new internal links	https://moz.com/learn/seo/internal-link
Fresh Content	Update website content regularly	New content gets priority on Search Engines	Delete old content	Old content may still bring hits	New content gets some priority when Search Engines, but having quality "constant" content will also drive hits to the site	https://www.getcredo.com/fresh-content-seo/
Site Ads	Use ads if necessary	Sites sometimes need ads to run	Use disrupting ads	Users and Search Engines turn away if ads are a hassle	Make sure the ads are not an inconvenience, as users and search engine crawlers will turn away if they do not load in time	http://searchengineland.com/5-ways-ads-killing-site-seo-257517

Figure 35: Table of "Do and Don'ts"

One such recommendation is for the URL. We want our sponsor to use a human readable address and stay away from random combinations. We provide rationale as well. For URLs, the rationale is that search engines use URLs to match keywords and find content. Our next recommendation is for site content, and specifically we want our sponsor to prioritize the use of HTML. We want our sponsor to avoid Flash. The rationale is that some sites use Flash to provide content, but search engines cannot search through flash to find keywords.

5.4.2 Search Results Sample Recommendations

For the Search Results Sample Recommendations, we created a sample implementation.

1. **Title**

   Come See Your Armenia | My Armenia

   We recommend that the title be short and use action words. We recommend including the name of the site, but using the pipe character (|) to separate the title of the site from the name of the site.

2. **URL**

   myarmenia.org/visit

   We recommend that the URL be understandable by a person, specifically using full words, and not just shorthand or random letters.

3. **Meta Description**

   Come see what is awaiting you in YOUR Armenia. Get maps, itineraries, and information here at My Armenia

   We recommend using call to action verbs and keeping the description near 135 characters.

5.4.3   Linking Recommendations

1. **Link with Wineries from non-Vayots Dzor Regions**
   There are a lot of wineries in regions other than Vayots Dzor, for example, in the Aragatsotn region and in Ararat. Advertising these wineries in addition to those in Vayots Dzor would be beneficial to the Vayots Dzor Wine Website. This could be implemented by having an additional page under the Winery section about Wineries not in Vayots Dzor. This will expose tourists to even more regions in Armenia.

2. **Link with Armenian Wine Exporters**
   There are multiple companies that export Armenian wines to Russia, USA and Western Europe. Recognizing these companies in the Vayots Dzor website might prove helpful. The list has Armenian wine retailers such as Zorah wines that retail Armenian wines all over the world and has an option that allows the user to locate a distributor near them. This will allow website users to try out Armenian wine in anticipation of their visit. It will also act as a first step for the website visitors who are not yet sure if they want to visit Armenia, and Vayots Dzor specifically but want to experience Armenian wines. As

Peter Graffman stated in his interview, he prefers knowing the wines and having a connection to it before visiting the wineries. This could act as part of that connection between a potential tourist and Armenian wine.

3. **Link up with Georgian Wineries**

    Georgia has recently become an up and coming wine country. They have international recognition and they are located just North of Armenia. Linking to and from some well-known Georgian wineries may be beneficial for the Vayots Dzor website. We could leverage off the visitors to Georgia as it is convenient for the tourists to visit Armenia from Georgia.

5.5 Recommendations from Objective 5: Enhanced Search Engine Optimization through Website Advertisements

Based on our research, we recommended that the Smithsonian utilize a broad social media strategy to promote brand awareness and develop Armenia as a potential tourist destination.

5.5.1 Social Media Strategy

We recommended that the My Armenia project utilize multiple social media platforms. However, we recommended that maintaining an active Instagram account be the focus of its social media strategy.

1. **Instagram**

   We recommended that My Armenia prioritize Instagram in part because of its image based content. We advise the My Armenia Project to post attractive images of Armenia's attributes with the intention of inspiring users to consider Armenia as a potential tourist destination. To maintain an active following, there should be a new post almost every day. The hashtag #MyArmenia should also be used on all posts. The My Armenia project should also contact Armenian photographers and ask them to use the hashtag #MyArmenia. Since adding hashtags to a post in Instagram increases user engagement, it is likely that many photographers would be willing to do this. We recommend that in addition to asking Instagrammers to use the #MyArmenia hashtag, the My Armenia Project should recruit photographers to post pictures of Armenia, especially of the rural areas. A photographer that the My Armenia project could reach out to specifically could be Eduard Kankanyan since the Smithsonian featured him in an article.

Below are some other social media platforms that we recommend the My Armenia Project maintain active accounts.

2. **Facebook**

   We recommended several strategies to increase the number of likes and followers of the My Armenia Facebook page. First, we recommended that the My Armenia page invite followers of the Smithsonian page to follow their page as well. We also recommend that the My Armenia page post daily and that they use hashtags especially the #MyArmenia branded hashtag on their posts. Finally, we suggested that the Facebook page use link sharing strategies to promote the two new websites.

3. **Pinterest**

   We also recommended the creation of a My Armenia Pinterest account. Since the majority of Pinterest users are upper-middle class women, this is a demographic that has

the means to travel. We recommended creating different boards for different attractions and posting attractive pictures in these separate boards.
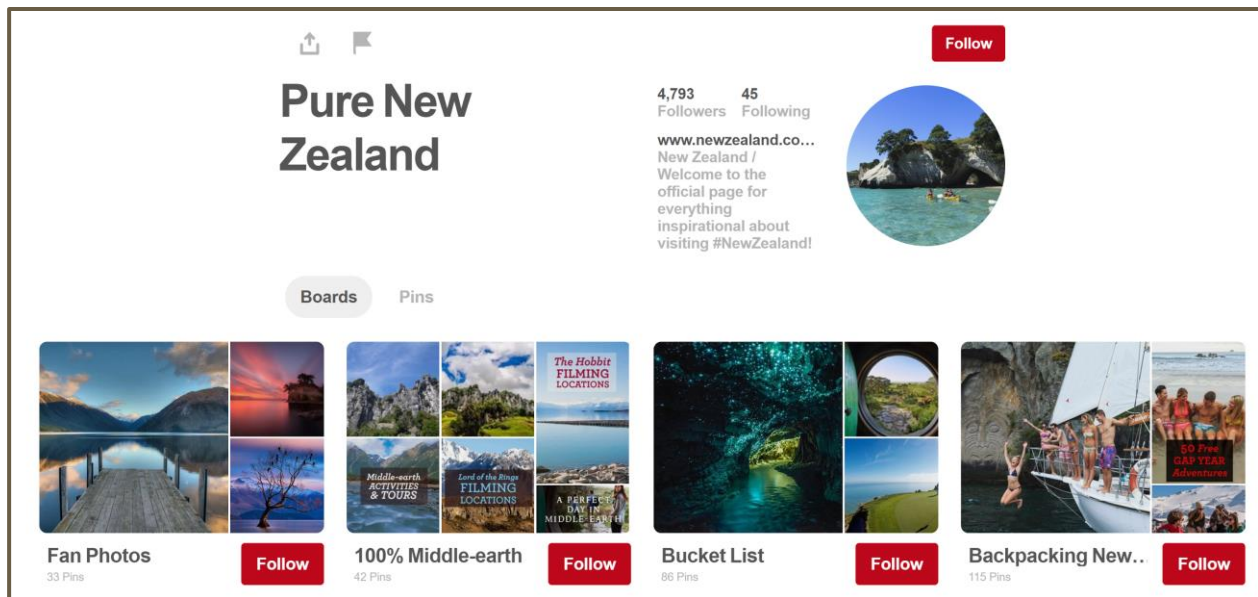
Figure 36: Screenshot of the Pure New Zealand Pinterest Account

4. **Snapchat**

We also recommended the creation of a My Armenia Snapchat account. My Armenia should use the "My Story" feature to update subscribers on program progress as well as to post attractive videos and photos of Armenia.

5. **Twitter**

The final social media platform that we recommended guidelines for was Twitter. One thing we noticed about many of the My Armenia twitter account posts was that some they used 4-5 hashtags. Based on research on the best practices on how to use hashtags, we recommended that the number of hashtags per post be reduced to 1-2 hashtags. Since the retweet rate is 23 times higher than average when posts ask followers to retweet, we also recommended that My Armenia ask followers to retweet in their posts.

5.5.2 Conventional and Unconventional Advertisements

We recommend that the Smithsonian implement the following advertising strategies. The top three advertising methods we recommend are Facebook and Instagram ads, Google Adwords, and guest blogging.

1. **Facebook and Instagram Ads**

   The advertising method we believe the My Armenia Project should prioritize the highest are Facebook and Instagram Ads. We believe this to be one of the most effective forms of advertising. Because Facebook owns Instagram, the My Armenia Project can advertise on two social media platforms from one source. Facebook and Instagram advertisements also do not stand out as obvious advertising. Sponsored content is very similar in appearance to regular content on the site. These advertisements can also be tailored very specifically by demographic. The My Armenia Project can target audiences based on location, financial status, ethnicity, and interests. This way, they can narrow the audience to those that are most likely to be interested in traveling to Armenia. Facebook and Instagram advertisements are pay per engagement which means that the My Armenia Project would not have to pay for the ads that are not explored by users.

Figure 37: Example of a Pure New Zealand Facebook ad

2. **Google AdWords**

   We also strongly recommend that the My Armenia Project use Google AdWords to improve Google search rankings. Like Facebook and Instagram ads, it is also a pay per click service. A particular advertisement on Google AdWords is targeted to the keywords used. The My Armenia Project should bid on keywords that would be most likely used by those interested in traveling to Armenia. Some example keywords that could be

beneficial to bid on could be "travel armenia" or "things to do in armenia". This way, the My Armenia Project can cater to a target audience that is more likely to visit external links or fill out the contact form that will be distributed to Armenian companies.

3. **Guest Blogging**

   Since the Smithsonian is a highly respected organization, we recommend that the My Armenia Project request to guest blog from reputable wine and travel blogs. This form of advertisement is almost always free and can reach a very wide audience depending on the number of followers of the blog. Some potential blogs to post from could include:

   - McDuff's Food and Wine Trail
     - Wine blog
     - as many as 17 comments per post
     - Domain authority of 48/100

   - The Travel Belles
     - Have a food and wine section for different countries
     - 2-3 comments per post on average
     - Domain authority of 40/100

   - Winerist
     - Wine blog
     - Frequently updated but little audience engagement
     - Domain authority of 43/100

Below are some other forms of advertising we recommended the My Armenia Project take advantage of.

1. **Banner Ads**

   We believe that although Banner Ads would not as accurately target potential travelers, they could greatly increase brand awareness. They are very inexpensive and having them be featured on industry specific websites such as travel websites would increase brand awareness. Users may not be interested in traveling to Armenia but the site audience will become familiar with the My Armenia Project. This could translate into more followers on social media and more website visitors.

2. **Bing and Yahoo Ads**

    Although Bing and Yahoo ads are almost exactly the same as Google AdWords, we believe that since Yahoo searches comprise almost the entirety of searches that are not in Google, it would be wise to use Bing and Yahoo ads in conjunction with Google AdWords. These ads are less expensive than Google AdWords because the market is less competitive. They also have a higher click through rate than Google AdWords.

3. **Twitter Ads**

    There are three different types of Twitter ads: promoted accounts, tweets, and trends. We recommend that the My Armenia Project utilizes the promoted accounts and tweets features of Twitter advertisements. These types of ads are similar to Facebook and Instagram ads. However, Twitter ads have a higher conversion rate than both of these advertising platforms. Since the My Armenia Project has a weak following on Twitter, promoting the account would increase brand awareness and create a market that you may then target for free using regular Twitter content. Using promoted tweets could also be extremely effective in drawing a target audience to the new websites. Since Twitter ads target users based on what keywords they interact with, the My Armenia Project could specifically target users searching for terms such as "travel Armenia".

4. **Snapchat Ads**

    We recommend that during a specific festival such as the Areni Wine festival the My Armenia Project utilize a geofilter that users can put on their photographs with the My Armenia logo on it. This will be inexpensive since the pricing of Geofilters depends on how populated an area is. This will promote brand awareness as well as target people who are specifically interested in wine.

Figure 38: Example of a Geofilter the My Armenia Project could use

5. **Quora Ads**

   An unconventional form of advertisement we recommend that the My Armenia project take advantage of is promoting the two new websites in answers to questions on Quora. This is a form of free advertising and the My Armenia Project can target specific audiences that are interested in visiting Armenia. The My Armenia Project can answer a question like "what are the best things to do while in Armenia" with a list of attractions as well as with a link to the two websites where users could get more information.

5.5.3 Conversions

Our final recommendation for creating landing pages for increasing conversion came in the form of the four Golden Rules which can be seen below.

Great landing pages…

1. Make their unique value proposition(s) extremely clear

2. Remove distractions and keep it simple
3. Have a very clear Call To Action
4. Do not ask for more information than needed

Additionally, we created two landing page wireframe mockups for the websites, using the four Golden Rules, which can be seen below:
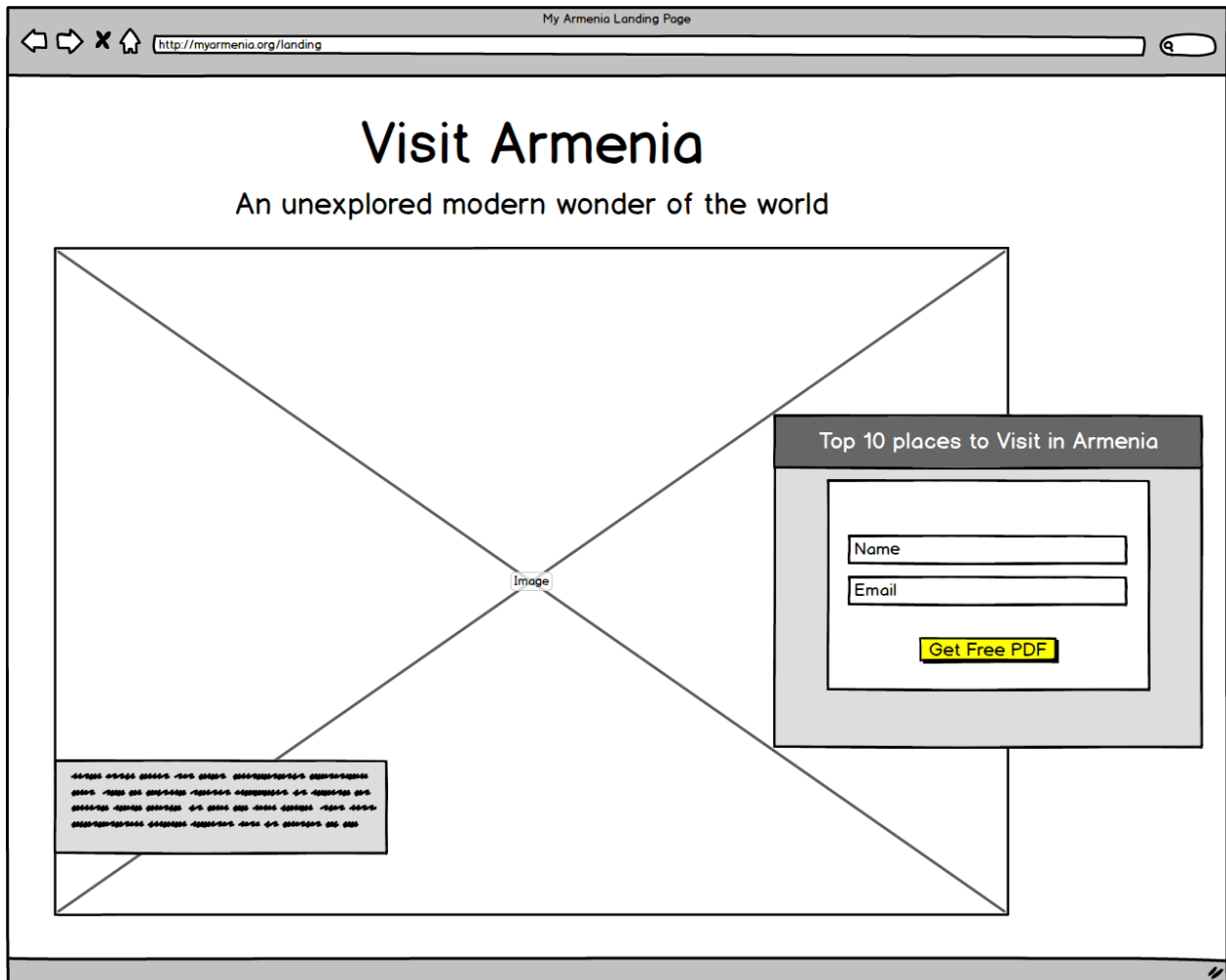
Figure 39: Wireframe mockup of a My Armenia website lead generation landing page
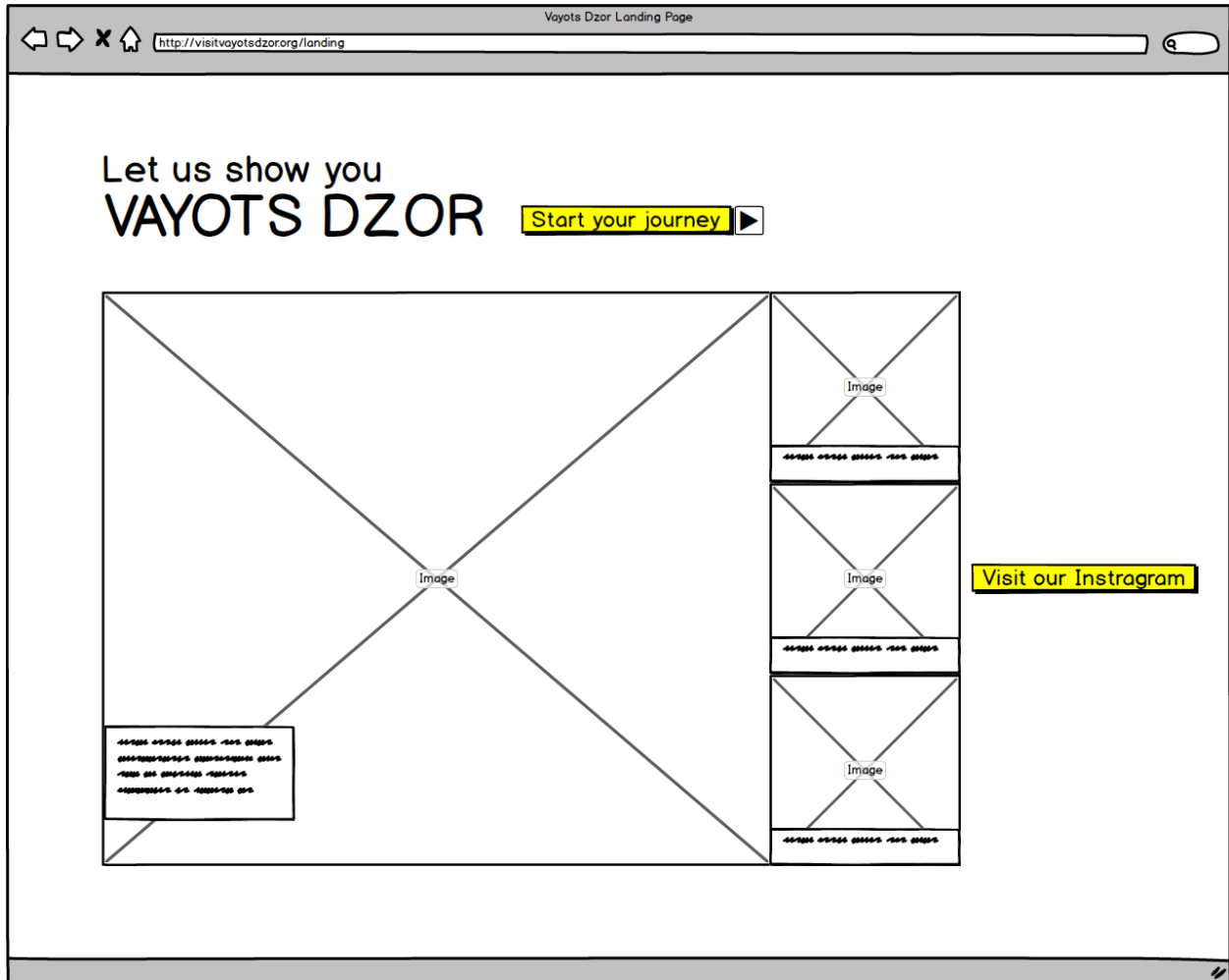
Figure 40: Wireframe mockup of a Vayots Dzor website click through landing page

Moreover, we recommend the use of click through landing pages over lead generation landing pages. Click through landing pages are designed to get a user to further explore a website or resources as can be seen in the Vayots Dzor wireframe mockup above. Lead generation landing pages are used to obtain contact information about potential users as can be seen in the My Armenia wireframe mockup above. We recommend using more click through landing pages as they tend to have higher engagement and would allow potential tourists to further explore Armenia.

Finally, we recommend using tangible value propositions such as "free eBook about tourism" and "list of destinations in Armenia" to obtain user information using the lead generation landing pages. This can again be seen in the My Armenia wireframe mockup. Tangible offers are more likely to result in a user signing up and would thus increase the conversion rate.

5.6 Recommendations from Objective 6: Recommended Analytics Plan

Based on our research on contact forms, and other methods of measuring user engagement, we recommend the Smithsonian alter its site analytics plan in four main ways.

1. **Reconsider Measuring Site Success by the Number of Contact Forms Filled Out**
   Based on our research on the frequency that contact forms are filled out by users, we recommend the Smithsonian reconsider their definition of site success. There are many users that will still be interested in planning a trip to Armenia that will prefer to navigate to third party websites on their own rather than send out their contact information to various Armenian companies.

2. **Update the Contact Form According to Best Practices**
   Assuming the Smithsonian will continue with its plan to have a contact form on the websites, the contact form should be optimized to collect as many accurate responses as possible. These best practices include

   - having only 3-4 required fields
   - not asking for any phone numbers
   - allowing users to log in using their social media accounts
   - using call to action buttons such as "go" or "click here" rather than "submit"

3. **Use Number of Clicks to External Links as the Primary Measure of Site Success**
   Since according to our research, more people click on external links rather than fill out contact forms, we recommend that the My Armenia Project measure site success based on the number of clicks to external links. Since the goal of the site is to get users in contact with Armenian vendors, this is a much more effective measure of whether or not the site is achieving that goal.

4. **Using Several Other Methods to Measure Site Engagement**
   In addition to using the number of clicks on external links to measure the success of the site, we recommend that the My Armenia Project use various other methods to measure user engagement on the site. These metrics and recommended performance benchmarks include:

   - Bounce Rate
     - The overall bounce rate for content websites is known to be between 40% and 60%. We estimate that the bounce rate for the two new websites

should be within these percentages.

- Average Active Session Duration
    - The My Armenia Project can expect an average session duration of 1-3 minutes. If the My Armenia Project decides to measure active session duration, this number should be lower.

- Percentage of Returning Visitors
    - In general, having site traffic that is 30% returning visitors is especially strong. This would be a good volume to aim for since when most people plan a trip, they look at multiple sites and revisit these sites before they actually visit a location.

- Average Number of Pages per Visit
    - The unofficial industry standard for number of pages per visit is two pages. However, because the two websites are set to have multiple pages and because the goal of the site is to inspire people to visit Armenia we estimate that a target number for this metric should be closer to three or four pages.

- Tracking of Site Searches
    - We recommend tracking the searches within the site since the phrases users search can be indicative of how the site could be improved. For example, if multiple users are searching for content that is not included in the websites, the My Armenia Project can add this content to improve user experience.

- Scroll Depth
    - We recommend that the average scroll depth be around 25%. This is because a significant amount of people will leave the page without scrolling and also because the sites are outlined to have heavy content. However, in general the further down users scroll the better.

5.7 Final Remarks

Armenia is country with great tourism potential. Due to its diverse attractions, there is something of value for everyone in the country, especially in the rural regions which are often overlooked by tourists. Both tourists and the residents of the rural regions would benefit from a more decentralized tourism industry in Armenia.

Considering the current influence of the internet on industries such as tourism, the Smithsonian Institution decided to address the problem of concentrated tourism by creating two new websites featuring the rural areas of Armenia. In order for these websites to be successful, it was necessary that the website lead potential tourists to identify Armenia as a potential tourist attraction, inform them on the attractions Armenia has to offer, and finally inspire them to visit. This would increase the economic prosperity due to tourism in Armenia and thus eventually benefit residents of the rural regions.

To help the My Armenia Project cater to the most relevant and broad market possible, we identified a target audience for these websites as well as their affinities towards different Armenian attractions. We then provided a keywords list for both of these websites to ensure that potential tourists could easily find the websites using search engines. Additionally, to optimize the ranking of the websites in search results we recommended best practices for site content and design and proposed a list of link sharing strategies. To market the websites using other platforms, we recommended a strategy to promote the My Armenia Project using social media platforms as well as conventional and unconventional advertisements. Finally, we recommended an analytics plan that would measure the success of the two websites once they go live.

The next step for the My Armenia project will be to develop the websites and implement our recommendations as they see fit. Ways in which they could continue and close gaps in our research could be conducting a more comprehensive survey to learn more about the preferences of the target audience. Since our sample size was relatively small with 338 responders, we believe that having a larger sample size would be beneficial. We also recommend that the My Armenia Project analyze the statistics for the metrics in Google Analytics we proposed to measure user engagement of the sites. By analyzing these numbers and comparing them to benchmark averages, the My Armenia Project can determine methods to improve user experience on the websites.

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Appendix A: Sponsor Description

The Smithsonian Institution (2016) is the world's largest network of researchers, educators, and museums. It was established in 1846 and prides itself on its dedication to public teaching and scholarship in art, design, science and technology. Its mission is to spread and discover new knowledge while preserving diverse cultures. It is a non-profit and public organization that is funded by a combination of federal funding as well as private and corporate donors. It also has contracts and agreements with governments at the local and national level that helps fund their projects.

The Smithsonian has multiple cultural centers. The center that is sponsoring our project is the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (2017) focuses on promoting understanding of cultural heritage and its sustainability both in the US and the world. The Institution has blog posts in their websites called 'Talk Story: Culture in Motion' where the Smithsonian workers visiting different places in the world provide updates about the work they are doing, focusing on the culture and traditions of the locals and revealing what makes these places unique and meaningful. In the Armenian section, for example, there are posts about Armenian cuisine, ancient Karas (clay vessels used to make wine) and the Armenian winery industry.

The Smithsonian Institution (2017) together with USAID and the people of Armenia initiated the 'My Armenia' project in November 2015 with a plan that it would run for four years. The USAID (2015) is funding the project, and it is on this project that our team will be working. The Smithsonian has a long history of working with communities around the world to support efforts in cultural sustainability, whether protecting cultural heritage threatened by human conflict and natural disaster, or supporting the long-term viability of diverse cultural sectors.

The Smithsonian (2016) is structured so that museums, libraries, research centers, and cultural centers fall under the discretion of various secretaries as well as the Board of Regents. The Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage falls under the Secretary for Museums & Research and the Provost, who is under the secretary.
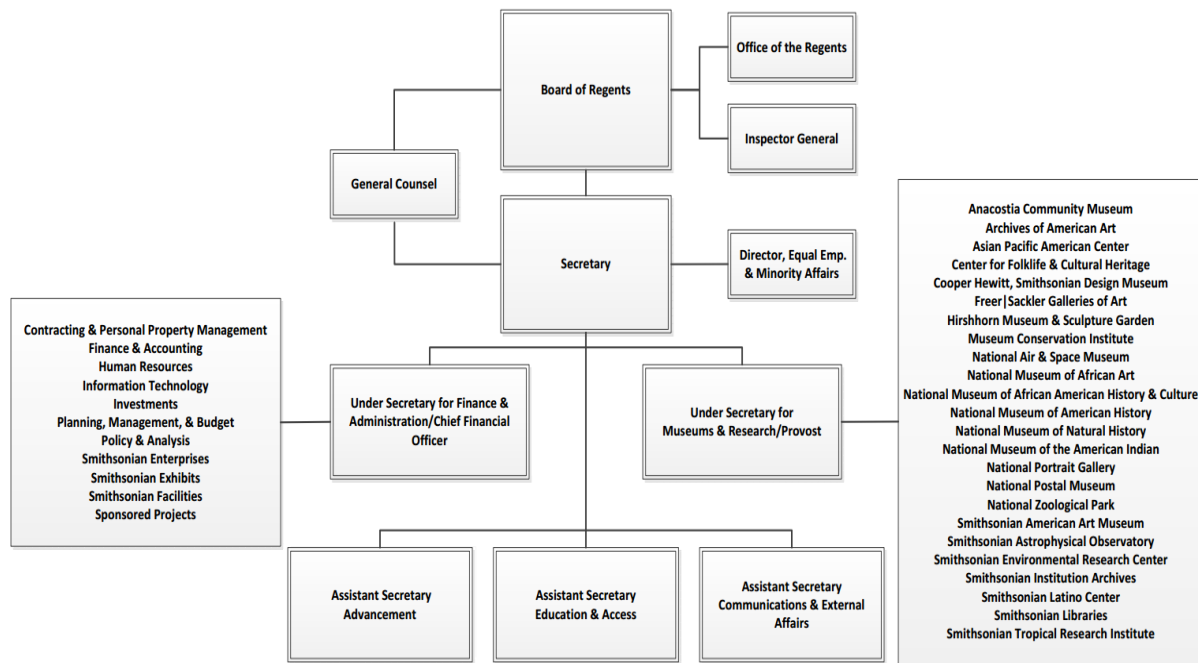
Figure A1: Structure of the Smithsonian Institution (2016).

The USAID (2016), which is working with the Smithsonian in the 'My Armenia' project, started operating in Armenia in 1988 when an Earthquake hit the country that left thousands of Armenian people homeless. USAID has multiple objectives in Armenia divided into 4 major groups:

(1) Economic Growth

(2) Global Health

(3) Social Protection and Democracy

(4) Human Rights and Governance.

This project with the USAID falls under economic growth.

The Smithsonian is also partnered with Solimar International (2014), a multinational sustainable tourism agency. Solimar works in over 80 countries, in both developed and in developing countries to convert tourism assets like local artisans' work and architectural attractions into competitive, marketable products to maximize socio-economic benefits and at the same time be sustainable.

Our contacts with the Smithsonian include Mr. David Bequette, who is the Marketing and Communications Specialist for the My Armenia Project, as well as Mr. Olivier Messmer, who is the Country Director for the My Armenia Project from Solimar International.

We are also in contact with Dr. Yervant Zorian, President of Synopsis, Armenian Virtual College Founder (AVC) and Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Central Board member (Aravot, 2016). The Smithsonian partnered with AVC and AGBU to develop a multimedia eBook on the Vayots Dzor region of Armenia. Dr. Zorian said at a press conference that, "This project comes to add to the mission and continued efforts of the Armenian Virtual College in introducing the Armenian heritage to the world community," (paragraph 4) which is one of the objectives of the My Armenia program.

The Smithsonian has extensive resources which we may use in our project. They have important contacts with local tourism agencies, and they are in a contract with the Armenian government (The Government of The Republic of Armenia, 2015).

Appendix B: What an IQP is and how this project qualifies to be an IQP?

The motto of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) is "Theory and Practice". One of the main degree requirements that WPI has established, to live by its motto, is the Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP). This project is designed to give students the experience of working in an interdisciplinary team to solve a problem that lies at the intersection of science and society.

At WPI, every student is required to complete an IQP project, and almost two-thirds of the student body completes this project off campus at a project center site. The IQP provides an opportunity for students to work with peers from different majors and backgrounds. These students work together to tackle a real world problem using technical solutions. Most of the projects are related to sustainable development, education, cultural preservation, or the environment. This project falls into the category of cultural preservation.

Our project is titled: "Discovering Rural Armenia: Utilizing Information Technology for Economic Growth". Our project assisted in the optimization of two new websites for the My Armenia Program; one for Armenia in general and one for the wine and cuisine of the Vayots Dzor province. We hoped to make the new websites accessible and user friendly to potential tourists in order to attract a more global tourist market to the country, especially to the rural regions. About 80% of tourists traveling to Armenia remain in Yerevan and do not venture into other regions if the country. As a result, there is not a large enough market for skilled craftsmen and artisans to make a living. This was causing the people living in these areas to give up their cultural traditions in search of better livelihood.

To ensure that the websites catered to the largest and most relevant audience possible, our team first identified the target audience as well as their affinities toward different attractions. We then compiled a list of keywords for each website and optimized site content, design, and functionality. We suggested multiple methods to promote these websites through social media and advertisement. Finally, we suggested an analytics plan to measure the success of the website.

This project qualifies as an IQP because though each team member had a different technical background, we were able to work together to solve this real world problem. We conducted this project over the course of fourteen weeks. We spent the first seven weeks preparing a proposal which we then conducted in the seven weeks time we spent in Armenia. Everyone on the team used their particular skillsets to advance the goals of the My Armenia Project which will likely have a lasting impact on Armenia's tourism industry.

Appendix C: Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol for Mr. Mark Aghajanian

<u>Why Mark Aghajanian?</u>

Mark Aghajanian is a product manager at Spruce Finance. He is also an avid traveller inside the United States and out of the country as well. We interviewed him to get the perspective of an adventure tourist on how they go along planning their trips, the tools they use and what attributes attract them to a region/country**.**

Pre-interview

1. Introduce yourself and the project.
2. Ask if they're ok with recording the interview
   a. Audio/Visual
3. Ask if it is ok to use information obtained today in a possibly published report.
   a. Offer Confidentiality
      i. Name, company, other details they don't want published
4. Thank them for their time

For Mark:

1. Ask about background.
   a. "Their story" in their words
      i. Who they are
      ii. Jobs
      iii. What they do
      iv. Areas of expertise

2. What are your thoughts on this project, its feasibility?

3. What was your favorite trip among the ones you have taken? What was particularly exceptional about it?

4. What tools do you prefer and which ones do you typically use to plan your trip? (Country

websites, Tripadvisor, tour companies etc).
   a. Are there any common problems you face when planning a trip?

5. What other platforms do you think would be effective in reaching adventure tourists? Do you think social media would be effective?

6. What kinds of attributes or attractions draw you into a particular location when planning an adventure vacation? What other kinds of activities do you tend to participate in once you are there?

7. What are things that a website can do to inspire you to travel to a new country (such as Armenia)?

8. Do you tend to go on organized group tours or do you create your own itinerary? Do you travel alone or with other people?

9. How influential would you say cost is when planning a trip?

10. Additional items we should explore/investigate/we may have completely missed in an effort to achieve our goals?

Post-interview

Thank them again for their time.

Interview Protocol for Mr. Donal Boyd

Why Donal Boyd?

Donal Boyd is a photographer and an alum of WPI. He works with several companies in Iceland in order to promote their websites by providing his photographs for use in various advertisements. As a result, he has a good understanding of what inspires tourists to visit a specific location and how to use media and advertisements to accomplish this.

Pre-interview

1. Introduce yourself and the project.
2. Ask if they're ok with recording the interview
   a. Audio/Visual
3. Ask if it is ok to use information obtained today in a possibly published report.
   a. Offer Confidentiality
      i. Name, company, other details they don't want published
4. Thank them for their time

For Mr. Donal Boyd:

1. Ask about background.
   a. "Their story" in their words
      i. Who they are
      ii. Jobs
      iii. Education
      iv. Where they work
      v. What they do
      vi. Areas of expertise

2. Are there any features of Iceland that are not exactly tourist attractions but with some work, they have been transformed into touristic sites? How did you achieve this?

3. Do you face problems like depreciation of the touristic locations or loss of the authentic experience due to too many tourists? How do you balance keeping the locations authentic while still having a great number of tourists visiting it?

4. How do the rural people in feel about an increase in the number of tourists in their towns?

Have there been any problems with the locals? Can you talk about an instance from your personal experience?

5. How much does Tourism industry play a role in Iceland Economics? Has this role increased over the years?

6. How has technology played a role in bringing in more tourists to the more rural regions, if it has?

7. While on your personal trips throughout the world, what kind of activities or other products have you encountered which gets tourists excited to visit a certain place?

8. What kind of resources do you think tourists need/use before visiting a place? Where do you suggest your clients to usually find this information and why?

9. What other resources would you strongly suggest we look into before moving forward with this project?

Post-interview

Thank him again for their time and input and assistance.

Interview Protocol for Mr. Peter Graffman
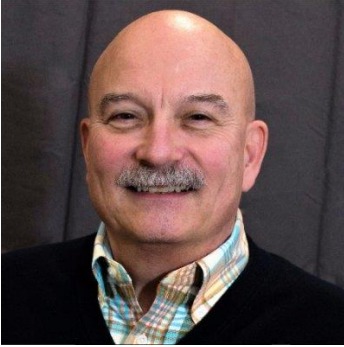
Why Mr. Peter Graffman?

Peter Graffman is the Founder and Executive VP at Ocean Canyon Properties. He is also the previous president of the Wine and Food Society of Boston. We interviewed him because he is a wine enthusiast and has a wide network of people who are also wine enthusiasts.

Pre-interview

1. Introduce yourself and the project.
2. Ask if they're ok with recording the interview
   a. Audio/Visual
3. Ask if it is ok to use information obtained today in a possibly published report.
   a. Offer Confidentiality
      i. Name, company, other details they don't want published
4. Thank them for their time

For Peter:

1. Ask about background.
   a. "Their story" in their words
      i. Who they are
      ii. Jobs
      iii. Education
      iv. Where they work
      v. What they do
      vi. Areas of expertise

2. What are your thoughts on this project, its feasibility?

3. Diran informed us on your trip to Sicily. What were the highlights of that trip or other wine trips you have been on?

4. What are your thoughts on viniculture and tourism for a country that is not a household name for vines and wines (i,e. Italy or France)?

5. Would you be willing to visit a much less famous wine destination (ex Armenia)? What

would push you to do this?

6. What would you look for in a website that may convince you to check out a wine destination? Do you think that using websites is a reasonable method of getting to wine enthusiasts?

7. What other platforms do you think would be effective in reaching wine enthusiasts? Do you think social media would be effective?

8. Right now you are serving as the International Liaison and have even served as the president of the Wine and Food Society of Boston. Can you give us an insider's take on the demographics of the members of the Society?
    a. How big would you say the community of wine enthusiasts is?

9. We are thinking of coupling wine experiences with other attractions in the Vayots Dzor region of Armenia. What other activities would wine enthusiasts, like yourself, be interested in?

10. Additional items we should explore/investigate/ we may have completely missed in an effort to achieve our goals?

Post-interview

Thank them again for their time.

Interview Protocol for Ms. Marie Keep

<u>Why Marie Keep?</u>

We interviewed Marie Keep because she is the Founder and Director of fine wines at Skinners auctioneers. Therefore, she has a good understand of the wine enthusiasts market as she works in marketing wines for this demographic.

She is also involved in the Boston Food and Wine community and is a wine connoisseur which makes her a demographic we would like to target.

Pre-interview

1. Introduce yourself and the project.
2. Ask if they're ok with recording the interview
    a. Audio/Visual
3. Ask if it is ok to use information obtained today in a possibly published report.
    a. Offer Confidentiality
        i. Name, company, other details they don't want published
4. Thank them for their time

For Ms. Marie Keep:
1. Ask about background.
    a. "Their story" in their words
        i. Who they are
        ii. Jobs (director of Fine Wines at Skinner)
        iii. Education
        iv. Where they work (Skinner)
        v. What they do (in charge of auctioning wine)
        vi. Areas of expertise (wine, wine enthusiast market)
2. What are your thoughts on this project, its feasibility?

3. What are your thoughts on viniculture and tourism for a country that is not a household name for vines and wines (i,e. Italy or France)?

4. You are the founder and director of the Fine Wine department at Skinner, auctioning to wine enthusiasts all over the world. Our project aims at making a website that will attract a global audience to Armenian attractions, one of which is it's 'ancient' wineries and wine. We see that you are able to attract such a great audience at Skinner. ;
    a. Who is your target market for the auctions? How did you obtain the current market you have?
    b. How do you use advertisements? What strategies made a clear difference?
    c. What kind of technological methods (eg. social media & website)do you use. If

social media: what platforms?

5. Do you think there is enough market in the 'wine world' that will be willing and able to visit Armenia for it's wine? Do you thinks its low cost is a good selling point? (what good selling points)

6. Apart from wine related attractions, Armenia has old architectural buildings and natural attractions as well. Do you have any ideas about how we can use these in conjunction to capture even more audience?

7. What, in your experience, will people look for when they look into a website for wine trail tours? If you had to go about creating this website, what resources or functionality would you give the highest importance?

8. Additional items we should explore/investigate/we may have completely missed in an effort to achieve our goals?

Post-interview

Thank them again for their time, input and assistance

Interview Protocol for Mr. [redacted]

<u>Why [redacted]?</u>

[redacted] is the co-founder of [redacted] wines, a company that specializes in artisan french wines. He has created a website to market the wines he sells and the website does a great job at connecting wine enthusiasts and the wine maker. We chose him because of his website experience and because of his knowledge to the wine enthusiast market.

Pre-interview

1. Introduce yourself and the project.
2. Ask if they're ok with recording the interview
    a. Audio/Visual
3. Ask if it is ok to use information obtained today in a possibly published report.
    a. Offer Confidentiality
        i. Name, company, other details they don't want published
4. Thank them for their time

For Mr. [redacted]:

1. Ask about background.
    a. "Their story" in their words
        i. Who they are
        ii. Jobs
        iii. Education
        iv. Where they work
        v. What they do (build wine portfolio and sell wine)
        vi. Areas of expertise (web design, wine)

2. What are your thoughts on this project, its feasibility?

3. Thoughts on viniculture and tourism for a country that is not a household name for vines and wines (i,e. Italy or France)

4. Advice on layout for a successful website (regarding content and visuals, videos, etc)?

5. How do you balance the edu part of edu entertainment?

6. Does a successful website follow what famous chefs do, namely, don't give too much but give enough that they want to come again?

7. How do you measure success of your website? In terms of the traffic it gets, or if it is attracting the audience you want.

8. Your website uses a very minimalistic design. Given your experience and success with

capturing audiences, what design considerations would you recommend to us?

9. Your website, [redacted] Wines, does a great job of using photography and videography to sell wines through stories. How would you go about doing something similar for the Ancient Wines of Armenia™?
   a. How do you obtain the pictures used in the website, do you need frequent updating of the website?
   b. What kind of documentation have you seen most success with?

10. What forms of other social media/advertising platforms would you use if you were creating the website that we are, to reach a larger market?
   a. Your company, as far as we're aware, uses Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest correct? Which of these has been most useful to you?
   b. Any additional platforms that you'd suggest?

11. Who is the target audience for [redacted] wines? How do you make sure that you 'impress' them enough for them to buy the wines?
   a. How do you go about properly targeting your demographics in advertisements?

12. Are there additional methods you use apart from technology (social media & website) to promote [redacted] wines?

13. Google rankings are probably one of the key, make or break places for websites. When just a simple search like "Armenian Wine" displays over three quarters of million results (756,000 to be precise) how does a new website go about using Search Engine Optimization to climb up that massive ladder?

14. Do you use your website content to further improve your ranking status in searches? If so how do you go about it?

15. Would you be interested in importing Armenian Wines to USA? Why or why not?

16. Would you be interested in having a section of your website devoted to Armenian wines? Or hyperlink it to the one we are building content for?

17. Does [redacted] Wines get involved in viniculture tourism? Or that is totally separate from selling wine? Do you sell wine or do you sell "the experience"?

18. Additional items we should explore/investigate/ we may have completely missed in an effort to achieve our goal?

Post-interview

Thank him again for their time and input and assistance.

Appendix D: Interview Transcripts

Mark Aghajanian, Interview Transcript

Interviewer: James Kradjian, Christine Lujuo, & Alexis Zoffreo, My Armenia Team
Interviewee: Mark Aghajanian, Adventure Tourist

__Interview__

Christine: Mike told us you will be coming to Yerevan soon.

Mark: Yes, leaving this Friday will be there in a few days.

Christine: That's cool

Mark: How do you guys like it so far?

Alexis: It's really cool, it's a lot of work with the IQP but Yerevan is definitely fun and we got to see a lot of parts of Armenia

Mark: I don't really know what to expect, I am looking forward to seeing it.

Alexis: Did Mike tell you about the project or do you want us to give you an elevator pitch again?

Mark: Yes, a quick overview would be awesome!

Christine: We are working with the Smithsonian to make two websites to advertise Armenia, especially in rural Armenia, where tourists do not tend to venture.
So we created user personas of some sort, so like history buffs, wine enthusiasts, adventure tourists, for the website to see what kind of visitors would be attracted to Armenia. We are interviewing and collecting information via interviews and questionnaires, which is where you come in as you are an adventure tourist.

Mark: I am product manager for a living,so I normally try getting user feedback from customers, so this will be interesting to be on the other side of things

Alexis: so we have a question, we are wondering if you will be okay with us recording the interview and since this is a WPI IQP this is going to be published, is this okay if the information you give us is published? We can also give you confidentiality, we may not use your name if you want.

Mark: Yes that's okay, I will make sure I say things that are worth being published

Christine: You just got an overview of the project, What do you think of the project's feasibility

Mark: I think a website is a good approach to it. How you direct website to the website is as important as the website itself

Christine: Among all the trips you have gone to, which one has been your favorite and what made it your favorite?

Mark: I think I have about two favorite ones, one is definitely my trip to Rome in sixth grade, the first time I went outside the country. It blew my mind, just seeing all the old architecture. I recently came back from a trip. I flew to Vegas, rented a SUV and then flew out of Salt Lake city. I visited Zion national park, Antelope canyon, Monument valley and it was everyday seeing absolutely amazing landscapes and it was absolutely amazing.

Alexis: Was it mostly hiking that you were doing?

Mark: Yes, a lot of hiking, we kayaked one day. Some hikes you do are the best hikes in the world. There is one in Zion that is an absolutely incredible hike. Have you guys ever been to that part of the country? I would definitely recommend.

James: No we haven't. When you go to plan a trip, what tools do you usually use?

Mark: I usually use TripAdvisors, camp sites and google maps. I always talk to friends who have been places and get tips from them. Sometimes I will find good bloggers and see the trips they go on and modify the good trips that I see there

Alexis: Are there any common problems you face while planning the trips?

Mark: Sometimes, especially in the south west road trips, destinations will have really chunky websites with not always the best information in there. For example we were staying at this campsite and the website had a little bit of information. We were particularly wondering if the sites had grills or not. So I go to tripadvisor and look through the comments and see if anyone has commented on it, but that doesn't always work.

Alexis: Would you say having a comment or review section is an important part of a website?

Mark: Yes I think so, I always go through the comments of trip advisor and I think those are the best part of a website.

Christine: What other platforms do you think will be effective in reaching other adventure tourists?

Mark: I think social media is a good one, I follow avid travelers' accounts and see a pretty landscape and will want to go there because of that. I follow some skiers on Instagram and I often see skiing in Japan for example and now I really want to go there now.

Alexis: Have you ever been inspired enough to visit a destination via social media accounts?

Mark: Yes, I think both places on the road trip I just went to, I wasn't interested before but I saw them on instagram then I googled them and made the trip.

Christine: What kind of attributes draw you to a particular location?

Mark: I think when some place is off the beaten path is, something unique about the location is also important. An example is Montana, Montana has this unique, western, cowboy culture along with beautiful mountains, so the combination of that. People go and line dance and then do hikes and then fishing, which is every unique.

Alexis: Once you are in a particular location, do you tend to participate in other activities that aren't exactly 'adventurous'?

Mark: I think it depends on the trip I am on. The road trip I just took, for example, there was not much to do apart from adventure tourist activities. This Portland trip I am going to has a combination of a nightlife, good food and a lot of adventure.

James: Do you tend to go on trips on groups? if so, are they people you already know or are they through a tour company?

Mark: Yes I almost always go on groups but never through a tour company. I go with my girlfriend or with a group of friends. Sometimes we'll do a day guided tour

James: Is that because you haven't found the right tour company or are you not interested in tour companies?

Mark: I never even considered using a guide, I think part of the fun is discovering the places on your own without a tour guide.

Alexis: What are things that a website can do to inspire you to go to a new country, like Armenia

Mark: I think pictures are important and what makes the place unique. If there's something that demonstrates Armenia's culture and what makes Armenia different. Also, accessibility of the country. Armenia, to me, sounds like a very inaccessible place so more information
On that would be helpful.

James: Is it inaccessible because of no direct flights or because it's on the other side of the world?

Mark: Both the fact that it is on the other side of the world and that you have to take so many connecting flights to get there makes it seem so.

James: If you saw a place that you thought was pretty on Instagram, would you consider coming just because of the photo or would you need more information

Mark: I think Instagram is the tripping point that gets me to look more into a location and it's costs. It's a good hook to get me into looking

Christine: How influential is cost when planning your trip?

Mark: It used to matter more when I was in college but not so much recently because of having a steady job.

Christine: Going off that, in your travels, what is the age range of adventure tourists you have met?

Mark: It's a lot more on the younger side but there are definitely 40 year olds, in California for example who go on extreme bike trails. It's general, they tend to be more on the younger side.

Christine: I think that is all we had, Is there anything you think we should explore or look into more?

Mark: I think the content is one factor but how people discover the website is another important factor. So things like SEO, tags that your website appears under, if you could get an influencer, it

would be great as well. Also, in terms of content, you should focus more on the uniqueness of the country. Information on accessibility, safety and issues like that need to be addressed upfront.

Christine: You mentioned SEO, are you an experienced SEO person or have you ever worked in SEO? We are actually looking to SEO methods for the websites.

Mark: No, I don't have any experience in SEO

Alexis: Thank you so much for your time. It was nice talking to you.

Donal Boyd, Interview Transcript

Interviewer: James Kradjian, Christine Lujuo, Harsh Rana, & Alexis Zoffreo, My Armenia Team
Interviewee: Donal Boyd,

Interview

Harsh: So they've intended for this project to get tourist outside of Yerevan. And so they created two websites and an ebook to basically show tourists a different side of Armenia and this would've involved showing them stories, showing them architecture from places outside the capital city. And the problem that they were facing was that these websites were not really getting used by the tourists. Going Armenia too much. And so even though they had good content and they had everything available, it wasn't having the desired effect.

Donal: Ah okay so they- there was just no traffic to the websites

Harsh: Yeah so basically that's why the bring us in and for us I think the biggest thing that we're focusing is on analyzing why like analyzing who the tourists are and where they're from and why they're staying in Armenia, then looking at the website itself to try to see who the- where the current traffic is coming from and how much time we spend it another analytical information. And then putting those together basically to recommend- to create recommendations on how to make the web sites- more how to make- how to have the websites have the sources that tourists want so they use it, and other suggestions that we can give that we find would help get tourists outside of the capital city I guess.

Donal: Okay so basically there's things to do outside of the capital city one no one is aware of.

Harsh: Right

Donal: Okay so that's the classic tourism problem.

Harsh: Right

Donal: Okay so this sounds like a pretty cool projects and you guys have done what so far besides the this research and understanding everything. I guess where are you on your whole timeline.

Christine: So we have not done a lot. So we have been doing a lot of research just understanding the project and understanding Armenia and the culture and things like that. But we are going to be going to Armenia now over the summer so like we are planning to do most of our work while there and we're also going to reach out to tourism agencies in the US before leaving, and just like getting to know what type of people do the tourism agencies gets who are going to Armenia and things like that. So we're pretty we're in like the initial stages of actually doing this.

Donal: You just. Ok. So you just begun you're kind of feeling out where the project is going to go.

Harsh: Yeah I think also right now is when we I think concretely have start understanding what our project is trying to do within the big Smithsonian project if that makes sense.

Donal: Ok

Harsh: Yeah so right now is when we started focusing really on the website and the tourists and their use of the website. I think.

Donal: Ah Okay. Okay. So these websites, what are these websites.

Christine: One is called Black Silk Road

James: Black Sea Silk Road

Harsh: Would you benefit by me sending you links to them to your Facebook

Donal: Yeah yeah, sure, send me the links on my Facebook

Harsh: Okay sounds good yeah we can keep talking. I'll just send it to you.

Donal: Sure awesome. So I saw I only looked briefly at the questions you guys have sent. You said you were going to do revisions. I guess do you want to start with just asking some questions I guess maybe to buff my experiences. I work a lot in tourism nowadays. Currently a lot of my work in photography and videography actually is consulting for tourism boards. So I work with tourism companies in Iceland, Namibia, and Faroe Islands, a ton of people around the world that are trying to market themselves to a larger audience and primarily through social media. So that's kind of maybe where Diran thought that I could come in and offer some advice as well.

Harsh: Right

Donal: So how much do you guys know about social media marketing and have you done any research in that area at all

Harsh: So I think for us the first like point of play that we were looking at for social media marketing was getting in touch with someone who is an expert in that field and I think for us you are someone who has a background in social media marketing, but primarily the tourism expert.

Donal: Sure

Harsh: So I think you were our first point of contact to get into those areas and then from there on were just setting up interviews to understand what the industry experts would suggest as the best practices and ways to go about it. Outside that, we have done some basic research but nothing that is real world applicable to this problem.

Donal: Ok, So I guess I can give you my viewpoint on social media marketing and perhaps a solution to Armenia's tourism problems and some pointers that I might suggest you guys could look at as well.

Harsh: Absolutely, that will be very beneficial.

Donal: Sure, one thing I will do is get you in contact with the tourism board of the Faroe islands. So DO you know where the faroe islands are?

Christine: No, We do not

Donal: Okay, Faroe islands is string of island between Denmark and Iceland. They are owned and ruled by Denmark but they operate as a separate country. They are beautiful islands. I was just there two weeks ago, working with the tourism board on learning the country and their activities through social media. Primarily through Instagram and secondary through other apps like Facebook and their own tourism website. Now, a couple of years ago they had a major of problem of getting any traction of people being aware of faroe islands. Like you guys haven't heard of it yet, millions of people haven't heard of it yet but they have experienced an enormous boom in tourism since they began inviting social media influencers like myself and other photographers who have a large following in Instagram,. They have experienced a large increase of tourism in different parts of the island and the main island just by having people come and share their experiences. So what better way to get someone interested to a place than relaying other people's experiences. You guys may have seen some of my pictures from my Instagram and may have said wow that is very cool and you would like to experience something like that because you feel like you sort of know me from Instagram through my posts. that gives a relatable trust. in some ways through this kinda mindset of trust, you get the ability to persuade

people to look at it more. So it is kind of full on advertising but it is not advertising at the same time because you don't feel like you are being advertised to. So when people see your website, they may not be so interested but if they get the entry through someone they trust or seem to know then they can lead them to the websites where they can learn more about the faroe island or Armenia. This has been a practice that has been going on in multiple places. Iceland has started a few years ago through Instagram. And other locations like Wanaka in New Zealand has also employed similar practices where they invested their money not in pamphlets or website development but in inviting social media influencers, people who have a large following that can spread the awareness and give them the first knowledge of the place. So people may know Armenia's capital only right now but if there were people who had a large following, that people trust, those people are sort of spokesmen for those places. You could increase tourism through social media that way. So that's a little bit of the mindset behind this. Have you guys ever heard of this concept before outside of me?

Harsh: Yeah, I think for me, here and there, We have heard of booming Iceland tourism. I have been watching that for a long period of time. This is probably the first time we have heard about this from the perspective of someone who has been on the inside.

Christine: I think that that's like how the future is going. The use of social media is more than just for entertainment so people use it for Economics and Advertising their business. I think it's very cool as everyone uses social media nowadays and it's a good market to communicate with and get to, it's an easy market.

Donal: Yeah, for sure, the barrier to the market is less than other platforms. I mean people are kind of sick of being advertised to. Think of all the magazines yo read, the websites, you just ignore them. But when you can relate to somebody else's experience and see that experience can have you say that you want to experience that as well. It is more genuine and effective. That's where a lot of companies, agencies, brands and countries are going towards. They realize that no one wants to be advertised to anymore so they go for the genuine experience. They invite people in, they show them the places that they want people to bring to and then through that they can plant the seed.

James: So Donal, so those instagram people who have a large following, how would you go about getting those people. Will it be the government inviting them directly or is there some other way.

Donal: Yeah, for example, for the tourism board in Faroe island, they have a team for social media marketing, it's kind of a marketing strategy for tourism board. The team focuses on selecting the right people with the right following. So for example my followers are interested in

visiting places with landscapes, animals and they know Namibia, they know Africa, they know iceland and the Arctic. So it's easy for them to say to have me because my followers are interested in areas similar to Iceland. So this team will select people based on receiving applications or selecting them and inviting them directly. So Faroe Island, what they do, they have open applications so you can send them an email and propose. For me, they invited me in, they paid for all my expenses and in exchange I provide them with a selection of photos they can use to market on their own. And me posting about their country and tagging them in my posts. They have a country Instagram with over 100, 000 followers right now. Two years ago, they didn't have much of a grand but now there a lot of people visiting just because they see it on Instagram.

Harsh: So you have spoken about how a country can go about selecting the targets, so you think the best thing would be to see if people who are working in similar places and have their followers expand their horizon by visiting Armenia.

Donal: Exactly, If you see 300,000 followers on Instagram and all they post is city landscape then it's the opposite of what you want. That person will only bring people to the capital. If you see someone posting about culture and people and portraits and landscapes they have 3000, 000 followers then that's the type of person you want to look at. Because their followers I wll engage with their photos that they will take when they are in rural locations and say that they want to go there because of this person.

Harsh: So if, for example, you were asked to come to Armenia to help decentralize tourism. Using your Instagram account and the website, how would you go about solving the problem?

Donal: Yeah, so for example if I were to go to Armenia, what would I do is visit some rural locations and experience some activities that are very indicative of Armenia and unique to Armenia and share those experiences with my followers through posting photos and including captions that would describe where I am and what I am doing and also Include photos and moments on my story. SO now Instagram has this other component similar to snapchat but it's integrated into the application that allows people to engage with what is happening within the 24 hour period. So I would include different moments of where i am going, what is happening. Tag the Armenian instagram account so now the armenian instagram account would already have potentially lots of photos of rural places in Armenia and the profile have a link to that website that they want people to visit. So the traffic I would expect from that would increase because they will be linked through people they trust because they have gone to it through me. So through connecting with people they trust, they plant the seed and explore more on their own. So how you get people to discover something without advertising directly is doing it through someone that they trust. So they trust that I am doing something that is interesting and through that they will investigate it more than they would if you advertised directly.

Harsh: Just a quick follow up to that would be; so I think getting social media influencers would be the first step to get the ball rolling. So after that, your followers would take their own photos and experiences. How would you se that to create a snowball effect?

Donal: Precisely, so you want it create this snowball effect, for example encourage people to use the hashtag My Armenia and people will click on it and when they actually visit the country, they do the same thing. It is almost possible to predict how many people it will snowball to. So for example in 6 months you want a certain number of followers in the account and potentially a percentage of that would visit the country.

Christine: So how quickly, for example, did your efforts of using Instagram gain traction. Was there a starting period with not a lot of effect then a boom period?

Donal: When I first moved to Iceland, there is a long period of stagnant steady slow growth. That was before other people discovered me. I think that happens for a lot of social media accounts and campaigns like this where there is a period of long, slow, steady increase. The moment of discovery is when other people with a large following discover you. It wasn't until a certain set of photos where other people actually discovered me. Other people's followers then came over to me and ten I exponentially began to increase. So you may experience a 6 month period where you have tens of people following you and all of sudden there will be a faster and faster increase of followers. For me, it was when people discovered these whale photos of mine and then my followers increased enormously from there.

Harsh: Awesome. Another small thing, You have been to Namibia and have visited rural areas and I think, again, they will be very different from Armenia but are places where tourists didn't know about initially. What kind of activities or experiences you encountered in those places that you shared that got tourists wanting to visit those places.

Donal: I guess it would have to be very unique to Armenia for instance in Namibia, to be able to experience wildlife up close and regularly. Here in this reserve, you can see lions, rhinos, hippos, everything very easily and that's a unique experience that people may not know about until me. So that is the reason to go. What would you experience in rural Armenia?

Christine: So there is a lot of architecture that are mostly religious, pagan temples and other such attractions. There are also very ancient wineries, It is very mountainous and have churches caved in mountains as well.

Donal: I think I loosely looked at these places as Diran invited me to come over. It looks amazing, the mountain scapes, the ruins. When I search Armenia in the internet I do not find

many photos from people I trusts. For me, when I search for Armenia, I do not find a lot from the resources that I trust. That's a reason that could make me hesitant about going there. For me, I would go to those places because I love places where people have not gone. For a lot of people that is a reason to go to another place that they know already. A majority of people think in that mindset.

Christine: So were there any areas that you tried to open up and they just didn't work out. As in, touristic appeal didn't gain traction?

Donal: None that I can think of. All the places I have been invited to or have gone or have worked with have worked out quite well

Christine: That's impressive.

Harsh: You spoke a bit about case studies, and with that in mind, do you have any other resources that you would like us to look into as we move forward with the project?

Donal: I think I would continue to more into social media as a marketing platform. And try to look for case studies. I can suggest Iceland, Faroe island - I will forward you the email of a woman who works there, Namibia and I would also look into Lake Wanaka in New Zealand. I could get you in contact with a friend of mine, a photographer, who initially did the campaign for there. Faroe Island takes a while to get back to anyone but at least you need to contact to them and hopefully they will get back to you.

Donal: And if you guys have any follow up questions and in the future you are interested in how to develop this campaign or where to invite people from or how to suggest the budget, I will try my best to set up another phone call and we could go from there.

Harsh: Thank you, that sounds awesome to us. Thank you so much for your time, Donal.

Donal: If you guys have any other questions, I am still available now if you have any.

Harsh: We are pretty much all set for what we have right now.

Harsh: When we get down to the specifics and have questions we'll make sure to reach out to you and ask for your wisdom**.**

Donal: Have a fantastic day and good luck with it.

Team: Bye Bye.

Peter Graffman, Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Harsh Rana, My Armenia Team
Interviewee: Peter Graffman, Former President of the Food and Wine Society Boston

<u>Interview</u>

Peter: Hello, Hello

Harsh: Hello, Is this Peter?

Peter: Yes it is

Harsh: Peter, my name is Harsh and I am talking for the My Armenia team. How are you doing today?

Peter: Great thank you

Harsh: So I think the rest of the team is in Armenia right now. We were having issues connecting earlier so I think I will be the only one conducting this interview. Are you okay with that?

Peter: Sure

Harsh: Absolutely. Thank you.

Peter: So the rest are in Armenia and you are here in the United States?

Harsh: Yes, I am actually here in the United States. I am working remotely on the project.

Harsh: To start off, I just wanted to ask if you are okay with me recording this interview?

Peter: sure

Harsh: Awesome. And the information that we get from the interview today might possibly be in the published report that we'll finally have. In the report, would you be okay with your name and your background appearing so that we can say this are the answers and this is what we went off of or would you rather have it set confidential?
Peter: Sure, It is fine, I have no problem with that

Harsh: Awesome. Thank you so much again, Thank you so much for taking this. So before we start, have you been given an overview of the project and what exactly it is we are trying to do by Diran or would you like me to start from there

Peter: Well, I saw the slideshow that Diran sent me. I looked it over. Let me see if I can paraphrase what I think it is to make this easy for everyone. So what I understand is you are looking at ways to expand tourism and agricultural tourism, I guess, in Armenia, through certain areas including the wine industry. Is that correct?

Harsh: Yeah, so I think our project is the end goal is we are trying to increase tourism. Something we want to mention quick off the bat, is that the way we are planning to do that is by using two websites that the Smithsonian Institution will be putting up in the next couple of months, So all information that we get from you and other people that we interview will basically be used to see what kind of content will be able to get tourists there and get them to stay and get them the resources they need.

Peter: So Smithsonian obviously is a big organization, they also have a division that focuses on tourism and sponsors tourism in various parts of the world. Is that the group you are working with?

Harsh: Yeah, so I think inside the Smithsonian there is a group called the Folklife part which is focuses on preserving culture throughout the world. And the problem that was arising Armenia was because most tourists travelling there tend to stay inside the capital city, other small rural areas and the people living and working there using their family traditions such as winemaking and carpet making were suffering because they didn't have a market. And that's why the Smithsonian Institution came in with an interest to preserve and help the people out.
Peter: I did some background research and found one winemaker that is kind of being recognized by bloomberg as one of the best winemakers in the world. And the rest, I can say some of them have restaurants or wine bars to promote their promote their products in the capital city. Is that correct?

Harsh: Yes

Peter: Sure, I think I get the idea, so this will get people of the country to experience some of the benefits that Yerevan is having.

Harsh: Absolutely, I think you are right on the mark there. I would like to get a better understanding of your background, your story in your words. May we start with that?

Peter: From an educational perspective, I have an MBA and a doctorate in business administration. I worked in software industries in my career. I co-founded a real estate company and currently work in real estate. Coincidentally, Wine is a passion of mine, both from a hobby perspective and more in a professional level. I have a lot of friends in the wine business, primarily importers. I do have a lot of personal interest in wine and winemaking. I am interested in the global wine and food industry.

Harsh: Considering your wide experience on the topic and after knowing our project scope, what do you think the feasibility of the project

Peter: I think I would take a step back, and look at reasons that people travel. For me, I really think it's the cultural aspect of it, (gastronomic interests: food and wine), These are the two things I look for when I want to travel. Certainly I think that everyone looks at the cultural aspect; whether it's historical or genealogical aspect. From the cultural side, first and foremost, there has to be something that drives you to where you want to go. In Sicily, for example there was so much that was going on culturally and I had personal connection with some people who had vineyards there. It has cultural importance with many years of history that you can participate in. I think you have to think of drawing people in terms of culturally aspects and then focus on the specifics like food and wine or carpet making. Hungary is a good example, it's wine industry was pretty much not known at all, but people discovered that from travelling there, and the wine industry developed from that. Now, they have agro tourism industry developed around wine. People go there because there is much more going on in addition to the wine. You have to focus on the drive to visit Armenia then develop into the wine industry. Wine by itself can't be the driver. I recently went to France and the wineries I visited were ones that I knew. It's hard to get people to go to a remote area just for the wine.

Harsh: That's great to hear because we are trying to use the many facets of Armenian culture, one of which is wine, to get tourists to Armenia. One of the key things you mentioned was that your Sicily trip was inspired by your knowledge of the culture and culture appreciation.

Peter: Yes, I wouldn't just go there to drink wine, but to appreciate the rich cultural experience to the trip there. The thing is you can always drink wine in a restaurant. Italy, for example, focuses on the agrotourism aspect of wine tourism. The ide is you got to have other things apart from the wine to draw people into rural areas.

Harsh: You mentioned that you have a technological background and you probably use the internet on a daily basis when looking for information. If you land on a website that gives you information about a country, what kind of information functionality features will make you hooked to the place?

Peter: I just came back from France experiencing it's different regions. I specifically went to brittany because of D Day. What I looked for is historical places to stay, historical landmarks, places for good dinners. What I did was use trip advisor which has a lot of interesting features and the information is peer reviewed. I use trip advisor in combination with google maps and they help me plan out my trip. I travel to Brazil very often for business. The country is so diverse it makes it so interesting so if websites take advantage of that in the websites then they should be pointed out and amplified. You could highlight the caucasus areas and differentiate it from other regions of the country.

Harsh: Are there any other platforms (online and offline) that you think will be beneficial to pursue to get the website out to a more global audience?

Peter: You need a current event or time based function in your websites so as people can know what is happening at a certain time period in a certain region. For instance, a celebration after a wine harvest (for example: In Italy after every harvest they have a great celebration) This information is normally unavailable in a lot of tourism websites.

One impediment to people travelling to certain areas of the world is the importance of how language interferes with their experience. The language barrier is, a lot of times, a reason for people not to travel to certain areas. Make people aware of the google translate's armenian language function so as to minimize loss of tourists due to language barrier.

Harsh: I know that you currently serve as the international liaison, and you previously served as the Boston Wine and Food Society. Can you give us insight on who these people you are and what kind of things would get them to travel to places as wine enthusiasts?

Peter: There are various wine and food organizations. Our society focuses on both the social aspect of wine and food and also of course, the individual component of wine and food. Our motto is Wine, Food and France. Part of what we do, besides having events on wine and food, we have festivals all around the world, we go to various areas that have interest, cultural food and wine. We had a river cruise France three years ago and sailed down the Rhone River. These festivals take place in different places in the world. So some of the people in the society are more serious about food and wine and some of them are more into the social aspect of it. I am also a member of the "Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin", which is more focused on Burgundy wine, we travel to France for the wine or have wine and food events in the USA. From the wine and food society perspective, the travel, the culture and the food and wine become important. So when if we have a festival, in Tuscany for example, people go to Florence, stay there, have historical trips, have food and wine in the area. Whether a trip to the remote rural Armenia is

interesting, i would say no, but if it included some things like really nice accommodations, cultural components then probably. The key thing is to make it diverse enough to make it interesting for people who have interests in different things.

Harsh: We were thinking of coupling wine tours with other activities. What do you think will be of interest to wine enthusiasts and what would not?

Peter: I know there is a lot of heritage in Armenia, carpet making, wineries, ancient buildings and churches and so on. What are people's tolerances to travel distances during vacations? Travelling on a train for 5hrs may not be of interest but a couple of hours in a bus may be tolerable. Moving people from one place to another is another essential factor to consider.

Harsh: Is there any other thing we haven't asked you that you think may be useful for our team and the project?

Peter: The first thing I would do is look at other countries that are trying to develop tourism at a similar capacity as Armenia. I think Macedonia, Hungary and Albania, for instance are good examples and see their ideas and how you can incorporate them into your project.

Harsh: Thank you so much for your time, we will send you an email with our contact information so that you may send any more information or resources our way if you find anything.

Marie Keep, Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Harsh Rana, My Armenia Team
Interviewee: Marie Keep, Director of Fine Wines at Skinner

<u>Interview</u>

Harsh: Has Diran given you a brief overview of what the project is and what we're trying to do?

Marie: I have a brief overview of... I was reading in a couple different place but I wonder if you could give me a brief overview of it?

Harsh: Awesome, yeah I absolutely can. So basically WPI has an IQP system that stands for the Interactive Qualifying Project and what we try to do is the way they've phrased it is they send student in multidisciplinary teams from different majors who don't really know each other before the project they send them out into the real world to solve a problem.

Marie: Thats fantastic!

Harsh: That's an essential part of everyone's graduation and it's a requirement for graduation. And for us what we're trying to do is the Smithsonian Institution and Diran put in talks to basically… what happened was Armenia was having a good case of concentrated tourism where a lot of people used to go to the capital city of Yerevan but not a lot of people were traveling to the rural areas and in the long run what was happening was that the economy of the country was more or less getting better where the tourists were going and not where they weren't. So there were a few websites started by USAID to showcase the rural parts of Armenia and why tourists should travel outside the capital city but the websites weren't able to do what they were trying to do because they weren't reaching a good amount of tourists and a lot of tourists that were traveling to Armenia were still not using those websites. So this is where the Smithsonian comes in and they are trying to create two more websites. The Smithsonian started the My Armenia project which is basically a project which is documenting rural Armenia and is trying to showcase that through stories to people all over the world and now what they're trying to do is because the new website for My Armenia and a website for Vayots Dzor which is a province in Armenia both of those are coming out. So what they're trying to do is they're asking us for help and were trying to give them the best ways to reach the people who will travel to Armenia.. so potential tourists.

Marie: I see. I see.

Harsh: Yeah.. so where this interview and where we need your help is basically understanding what wine enthusiasts and people who travel the world... people who are going to different places to try wine, buy wine… what do they like... what is it that gets them to those places and how we can somehow use that information to appeal to those people in the long run.

Marie: Yeah okay fine! Sounds great. Sounds great.

Harsh: Awesome. Awesome. So I'm just going to start with a bit about... obviously we've read about you but I'm just gonna ask you to give us a basic description of your background. Like your story in your words.

Marie: Okay sure. Sure. So I'll start first with I came to the field of auction right after graduation from college found it very interesting. Did different jobs though then came back to auction when my husband came to graduate school at Harvard and started working for Skinner as a manager.. I ran the Boston gallery at Skinner for ten years and in that period of time I realized not only did I love auction but we did not have a wine department. And it was one of the areas we were not going into the sellers to take material, we were going into people's homes we were going into businesses we were going into attics. I also had a deep interest in wine so I was able to combine both business interest and a personal interest by founding the wine department. So it lined up very nicely. So I proposed the department and put together a business plan for it which i found was crucial especially in the first five years. So we're now celebrating our tenth anniversary this year of the founding of the department so we'll invite you to the party!

Harsh: Oh! We would be lucky.

Marie: In the business plan I… well I don't want to get off topic. So I developed a love of wine really as a teenager when I spent a summer in France and also kind of interestingly which I think may have something to do with this project here is I grew up in Rochester Minnesota where the Mayo clinic is and it's one of the world's finest clinics. People travel there from all over the world not just to be treated but also to work and so my father was a scientist and ran a lab in biophysics and physiology and he had scientists join him in work from all over the world and he brought me to dinner parties and what people would bring with them as a gift for us was something from their country and often it was a bottle of wine. It represented their place, it represented their culture, and it represented a bond and that really stuck with me. That wine was a portable piece of a country and a person's identity.

Harsh: Interesting.

Marie: It was very interesting. So I'm reminded of that frequently when we host wine dinners and wine really elicits a lot of memory and a lot of emotions on the people who are there. It is the

foundation of discussions that both of the real world and also what people hope and dream in life and it also binds people together. So there's something about wine that is unique. So I'm aware of all of that however in the focus of the business and the founding of the department I was much more interested in how would I get this off the ground because everyone who begins a business is told it takes five years until you really begin to gain a toehold in whatever sector or whatever industry you're in and I found that certainly five years was a critical mark but I'm in it for the long haul and at ten years I'm really seeing the benefits of having put a very specific marketing plan and client outreach plan in place. So I've found that business template very important not just in the research of it and the writing of it but also the adhering to it and hoping to better it and still I started with just myself and now we have a team of three people. We really try to adhere to that plan and always have it foremost in our minds and that we have goals and expectations for ourselves. So kind of is what everyone toils in their everyday workday world is to hit the goals they set for themself. So In reading through the material on the website and reading through some of the things that were sent to me the first question that comes to mind is do you have a business plan for this project?

Harsh: As far as I'm aware, I think the Smithsonian Institution is where the business plan and everything which is not just related just to the website but the actual project... I think that's being handled by them and not so much by us.

Marie: Okay. Okay. I would ask if you can review it so that your goals are aligned and that you realize the larger goals that the Smithsonian has because that will change how you may think about things or how you may direct your energy. I think that could be helpful because you may glean things from them you may not have thought of and also you may be able to contribute things to their plan.

Harsh: Okay yeah that's definitely something that we did not think about. Yeah. Wow. Thank you!

Marie: Sure! Sure!

Harsh: Okay so before I get into questions about the project and everything else that we need to get from you I wanted to ask if you're okay with us recording all these answers you that give us about the questions.

Marie: Yeah so that's fine.

Harsh: And the information we get today could be.. because the IQP is a published report so it's written and published on the WPI website and its possible for the public to find this information online would you want your name and other details to be confidential or are you okay with us

sharing who this wine enthusiast is and why her views are important for us and our project. Would you be okay with that?

Marie: Oh yes I'm fine with that.

Harsh: Awesome. Awesome. Again I would just like to thank you for taking out the time to do this. Thank you so much.

Marie: Oh it's my pleasure. So will any of the recordings be on the website?

Harsh: No the recordings will not. Okay so I'm just going to start off with you obviously heard about Armenia and what we're trying to do here with this project and like you said I'm not... again this is probably our fault but were not aware of the business model that they have right now but the website and what it's trying to do in trying to attract at least for this conversation trying to attract wine enthusiasts into Armenia using online resources. What do you think about the feasibility of this project?

Marie: I think it's rich with potential. I think that it's a large nut to crack but there are many ways of going about it. There are wine lovers all around the world and the something new will always interest people but the fact that it's also an old new that it's so rich in history and partly an origin story as well will get a lot of attention.

Harsh: Okay. You've definitely spoken about how you've been to France which was one of the first places where your interest in wine came about and I'm assuming you've had the opportunity to taste and interact with people who've had wine from all over the world so what are your thoughts on a country that's not a household name. So Armenia is not necessarily related to wines at least enough… hopefully it is in the future but trying to crack that market.

Marie: Right. I think it will take a certain amount of marketing initiative but I think just because you're not known now certainly doesn't mean that you won't be known in the future for it and I think what is exciting is that you have the potential to shape how people first think about Armenia and wine that this is really the beginnings of figuring out what you're doing there and how you're going to present it to the world. So you in thinking about it strategically and having many people offer input and think about it critically especially under the Smithsonian that you're going to get the best advice possible.

Harsh: So we've definitely heard about what you've done for Skinner with the fine wine department which is awesome to hear about because we're trying to do not something similar for a company but that's what we're trying to create like a new way to market something that's already there. So what I was trying to ask was when you do this for Skinner when you try to

market the auctions and the wines at Skinner what is your target market. Who do you aim these at and how do you obtain the market that you currently have?

Marie: Right. Well for identifying our target market it's people who have a deep enough love and appreciation for wine and have a certain amount of discretionary money to spend on it and that's true of all wine. No one needs to go out and buy a bottle of wine so we are looking for the people who are specifically looking for not just fine wine but in the auction market fine aged wine. It's a large market, its a diffuse market and we have to figure out where best to put our resources in terms of marketing and advertising to that market and continually growing the concentric circles of clients. We find the best way to do that is to know who we are and what we offer that's different in the marketplace from our competitors. So I think that's something you want to identify in terms about what's different about Armenia and how you market to a base of wine lovers that are already existent to get their attention and choose to go to Armenia over other countries or as well as other countries. And I think you have many things going for it, one of which you may think is not a strength but is which is it's not known now. So I think that the newness of it and the fact that you can introduce it in a very specific way will be a real positive for you.

Harsh: Awesome. So I think you spoke a bit about using the power of advertisements to make sure that the small circle you have you keep expanding in the form of concentric circles so just expanding the market that you have. What kind of advertisements or marketing strategies do you think are doing the best when it comes to your market at Skinner?

Marie: It's a complicated formula to figure out and sometimes it's easy to measure and sometimes it's not and sometimes it takes a long time to measure.

Harsh: If you had to use advertisements or marketing strategies what advertisements would you use based on your expertise or experience?

Marie: Right. So it all depends on budget but if it's an unlimited budget and I think it's good to start that way sometimes because it makes you think about all the possibilities and then also if you scale it down to a certain degree… what's available. So certainly you want to find people who are interested in travel because Armenia is going to be a destination so all the travel websites, travel television programs, travel radio programs where people are talking about food and wine and not just travel, travel magazines... and if you google travel and leisure magazines you're going to find a large number of places which not only would you consider taking ad space in but also pitching the story. There are so many writers coming at this from so many different angles that I think would be very interested in covering this especially because it hasn't been covered in this way before. So whether you're coming at it from the angle of food, wine, history, culture or archaeology... there's so many avenues that people can really dig into. So think about

all the print and then all the associated digital advertising and articles as well as all the daily publications... newspaper writers are always looking for very interesting stories… certainly one of them. I would think this would be covered and then the radio possibilities there are many food shows and cooking shows both local and nationally distributed here that if you either had a quick slot on or if you had there are many wine people who would want to talk about it… if you got their ear they would want to talk about it. If you're looking at all these ways people are traveling whether it's a hiking or biking tour, you can certainly find lists of all the groups that go to countries to bike and travel through wine districts. I would think that you would look at other regions to see how they are marketing to people to get them to the destination whether it is a food and wine tour whether it's a behind the scenes wine tour because you'll want to satisfy all different goals for travel. Some people want a much more personal behind the scenes look and the fact that this is something that you are going to be marketing to the world in a new way I think its rich for having people form the program by the feedback they are giving. So things that work really really well you can build further programs on. There's actually an article in the New York Times they were talking about Mexico, and they had a writer who was going down to Mexico who was tasting wine and they established their own program for where they were staying, driving to these totally off the beaten track hotels and then finding these totally off the beaten track restaurants and the wines that were paired with food that's made right there and it was such a fascinating exciting article. So i think if you found that article and kind of got swept in how wine writers go about the experience of it, putting it together and the fact that they like to discover things themselves. You don't want to package it too much, you want to let it be revealed and let it be an experience for people. So what you want to think about first is the soul of what Armenia is and Armenian wine making and how can you communicate that soul to someone that you want to visit so is it through food and wine, is it just wine, is it through the beauty of the natural wonders, is it through the architecture and history, and appeal to people in different ways through the different media.

Harsh: So a lot of things you've said here... it's really awesome to hear because a lot of the things you mentioned are things that didn't even cross our minds. Especially with the article about the wine tasting in Mexico, I think those are the kinds of things that make small stories come out for a lot of people which I think what we're trying to do through the website

Marie: I would caution against trying to polish anything right now. I think you really want to reveal. It's not a polished scene right now so you don't want to make it seem that way. You want to open it up for what it is to people as it is now and as the kind of scene shifts in wine becuase understand that you are more focused on the wine production there? I can see that going in two different directions whether or not you're historically recreating from what has been found there from the lab of 6100 years ago or whether you're studying that and understanding certain techniques that you could apply to modern winemaking in those regions.

Harsh: When it comes to reaching out to the people to convey this story, I know that a lot of companies use social media and other forms of technological platforms to reach bigger and broader audience. That's definitely something that you're probably doing right?

Marie: We are. We always mean to do it more because social media… you carry it with you in your pocket. It's very close by but at the same time you want to make sure what you're sending out is appropriate to your brand, is appropriate to your audience, and is what you want to be conveying in the right aesthetic at the right time. It's convenient but I think you also want to also be very aware of what the goals are. It reaches a wide audience if you have people that are following you and are interested and it also reaches a different segment of the marketplace. So people who are on Instagram may be different or similar from the people who are on Facebook and you can put different content there. Instagram is lovely for visuals and for snapshots of the moment which I think goes very well for trying to give someone a very quick glimpse of the possibility of what it would be like to visit Armenia. So I think it's important to know what someone loves about the experience they've had. So I certainly think that's part of your broader scheme.

Harsh: Thats good to hear. Because we again because social media especially with our generation… thats a big way we get information. So I think that's definitely something that we're trying to capture. So you spoke a lot about not polishing the experience and I think this would relate really well to the website because I know a lot of times what websites try to do is give the best of everything which in a way is polishing the experience. When it comes to the content what do you suggest we recommend to the Smithsonian?

Marie: So when I visit a vineyard or a winemaker and also when winemakers come to do pourings or tastings they will bring part of their soil with them to try and put you in the location. When I say don't polish it too much… its elemental. So you have to be aware of what your subject is and you want to bring people into the land very quickly and to show things that they would not see in their everyday world and would have to go somewhere specific for it. So your land is unique, how the sun rises over the mountains or over the the historical artifacts is very unique in relation to the vines in relation to the land and to the grapes and I think the people who are there in the harvest and in the making of wine and their philosophy and how where they live has shaped how they think about wine. Do you want them talking about what the wine means to them? So its very place specific but it's also you're in the envious position of people across the globe who enjoy wine. So you're not just appealing to a small sector. You have a large marketplace but that has its own set of challenges. But in terms of polishing no... you don't want to just show everything that is so polished that it becomes anonymous. You want interesting glimpses, you want it to be aesthetically beautiful and you want it to be compelling but you don't want it to be like any other website because it should be completely different from every other website.

Harsh: Okay. So I think because of the fact that it's definitely not something that is new but again is something that the world has not been exposed to so I think doing it in a very different unique way where people who visit the website realize that it's not an experience they've had before and visiting the place is the only way to get that experience. That is probably what I think I got out of you right now which I think is definitely a really good selling point for the country. So this is just a wine specific question that I had. When it comes to different sorts of wine right now the only selling point that we had when it came to Armenian wine was the ancient wine market. So it's unique in the fact that its ancient as compared to anywhere else. What Im trying to ask is from your perspective what are other selling points that we could use to our advantage when it comes to wine that is being made in Armenia?

Marie: So I'm sure people have been talking to you about the grapes that are grown in one particular locations. So let me ask you a couple questions. Is there a wine being imported from Armenia right now?

Harsh: To the United States or outside?

Marie: To the US so I or anyone would be able to access it?

Harsh: I can look into that. I can get back to you with that information really quick but I'm not too sure about that right now.

Marie: And where is Armenia selling their wine right now?

Harsh: I think as far as we're aware from the background research we did, Armenian wine was mainly being sold to tourists inside of Armenia. And the reason why the websites and reaching a bigger, broader audiences comes into play is because it opens other avenues such as exporting the wine into different locations so that it can be sold. You don't even have to travel… you can buy wines and it becomes its own market.

Marie: Exactly. I think being able to export wine to certain wine markets that you can place and have distributers place a certain shops in states and towns in the country is like a postcard… a picture of Armenia and so that's certainly one way to awaken people to it because I actually don't know if I've had any Armenian wine and I'm curious about the grapes that are grown there and I'm curious about what are the local varieties of grapes and what style of winemaking they use. In Burgundy they grow noir and chardonnay, but where Armenia is located I'm guessing the grape might be more in line with southern Italy and Spain and there are certain taste profiles that go along with the grapes and with the "ter noir" and the climate that can help draw the picture of what the tourist might expect going to Armenia and tasting Armenian wine and that can just add

brushstrokes to the fuller picture of what the experience would be travelling to Armenia. Because wine people really… it's the descriptors of wine and it's the structure and the body and the color and the taste profile and the smell… anything that will draw you in and provoke a further spark would be helpful. So if you can really sit with a bottle of Armenian wine and talk about it and be inspired by it and try to think how you would translate that to someone.

Harsh: For me, listening to someone who's a wine enthusiast it's awesome because there's a lot of things about a bottle of wine that I wouldn't think about and I know for a fact a lot of people on the team who are students would not think about and just listening to this is opening so many small doors in my head about how we can describe a simple bottle of wine which is in itself is pretty amazing. You've described how youve been to Burgundy and I assume you've been to a few different places to try wine and go on wine trail tours maybe?

Marie: When I saw this question I was a little stumped because I don't so much go on the wine trail tours. If I'm going to a region I usually contact people as a private tourist and have a private tour.

Harsh: I was basically going to ask... even if not for wine tours… when you go to places and you're trying out different wines… how much information about the place and about where you should go, who you should get in touch with are you getting from websites and when it comes to our project because that is what we're trying to do for lets say a wine enthusiast trying to go to Armenia for the first time and he or she is looking for resources or information that would help him or her best decide what parts to explore. So I was going to ask what do you use on the websites like what is of importance to you?

Marie: Yes. So If I go to the website, first of all I want to be able to find it. I want to be able to type in a keyword and find it and I want to see pictures that would give me a sense of what it would be like and I also want to see a variety of experiences of both of do it yourself or if there's someone who wants something put together for them. And I want to be able to see pictures of the places that one would be going, I want to see pictures of the land, I want to see pictures of the bottle of wine, I want to see people talking about being there and what it was like and what the morning air smelled like and what the sun felt like. I want more contact information, so if i wanted to go plan a trip off the beaten track and I think okay well I have one day from the capital and I just want to dial in a little bit closer, is there a number I can call to arrange directly with someone. So I think you want the website to provide a hub of further communication and inspiration for people. So if they want to get more in depth they can call people, if they want to click on different wineries they can see exactly what it would be, and that there is a variety of experiences that they can choose from from very much putting it together as you travel throughout the country, where you might stay, a variety of lodgings and hotels, where you might eat, reviews of those restaurants, what they serve, wines that they feature from the local wineries,

because that might affect… okay well if you're going to that restaurant and they serve that wine then I really wanted to go to this winery as well. So people are going to do their whole itinerary based on that site, you also want it kept updated and fresh.

Harsh: That gives us a lot to work with and I think one of the most interesting points that I heard right now was you said that it needs to be a hub that connects to further deeper roads if the tourist decides to take those. So the website doesn't necessarily need to provide every single detail on where to stay and where not to stay it can just lead people to where they can find information for themselves. I think what you said about experiences is really good because I think if we can capture what it feels like to be somewhere, that would be more valuable than capturing what a place looks like.

Marie: Yes. Exactly. And I think that's one of the reasons you're going to find the article on Mexico so exciting is because it's a region that people are not familiar with and don't realize first of all that the wine is wonderful and second of all that visiting is so compelling. So I think understanding a bit of the psychology of someone who loves wine and why they love wine and that when you pull the cork on a bottle of wine that something happens. It changes the pace of life, it changes the focus of things, it allows things to kind of happen slowly because there is the framework of you have much time to spend together as you have wine left in the bottle and if that's not enough time, people order another bottle of wine. So it's that experience that people are looking for when they're opening a really fine bottle of wine or enjoying a simple wine together and who they're enjoying it with, and where they are and why they're opening it. Those are all parts of the story and that's part of what drives people that love wine is having those moments together. So to be able to weave that into the tapestry of the place and the history and the culture would be perfect.

Harsh: And you definitely think that using… Armenia has its old architecture buildings, and natural attractions and weaving all of them together into experiences where we show that wine has a big part, not just because of the bottle or the taste but because of the entire experience… that would help us capture even more people.

Marie: Absolutely. The website I think should be a lens on Armenia through wine. So while I think it's important to showcase the ancient architecture and the national treasures, it shouldn't be a road map for visiting all those places, it should be the visual cue of what is essential and what is Armenian and certainly using all those images because that's what it feels like to be in the country. That's certainly all part of it.

Harsh: So I think you've given us a very good demographic of the customers and the people that you market to which will be great for us. Last thing that I have, at least from my side and then feel free to add anything and everything that you think that we missed.. is there anything else…

and now I think you have a better picture of what exactly it is that we're trying to do and we're the wine comes into play and the people that were hoping to reach. Is there any other information, platforms, or people that we should explore or look into the best achieve our goals?

Marie: I think you should look into the websites of all the major wine regions.

Harsh: Could you off the top of your head that you would want us to look at?

Marie: Sure. I think you should look at Bordeaux, I think you should look at Burgundy, I think you should look at Napa, Sonoma, I also think you should look at some of the more developing regions… they've been growing wine but now they're really trying to market differently and I think you should look more at Oregon and Washington state, they both produce really wonderful Pinot Noir and so they are shaping their platforms for that. Australia, there is a whole story on how they began marketing Australian wine and how they started exporting it more and how they got the world's attention. It would be an interesting read for you. I think Piedmont and many different regions in Italy would be interesting for you just to look at just from a wine travelers perspective and then I think looking at the groups that do travel together because there are tours that do travel together… I live in Boston so I hear WGBH and BUR radio and television and there are tour groups that travel either specifically for historic reasons or cultural reasons. You might want to contact them to get a sense of what compels people to sign up for a tour based on the price point and what's offered. You might… this is way down the road but if you're thinking about exportation, thinking about the palate… I think it's interesting because I'm trying to think about what a bottle of Armenian wine looks like, what the language looks like on the label, what it tastes like, what the grapes are. So I think being able to bring that to the fore a little bit more for the wine aficionados. I think that's all for now. Ill certainly keep thinking about it.

Harsh: Absolutely. Even after this interview I will send you an email so if there's anything else that you forgot.. if there's anything I forgot to ask you... you just can just sent it our way and we'll be sure to look at it. I think just throughout the interview it's become very clear that a lot of things that youve said we haven't even looked at so we really need to start looking at all those things.

Marie: Yeah, and I really think that when you get together as a group if any of you have a bottle of Armenian wine, you should open it and really think about everything that that wine is presenting to you. Because that's the whole spark for a wine lover right there. You want to put yourselves in their shoes and also feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions and for your colleagues who couldn't be on the line if there's something that strikes in them a particular interest, I'm certainly available to talk with them or email with them.
Harsh: Thank you so much. It has been awesome to talk with you today and it has been so, so, helpful. I know right now I probably wouldn't be able to describe in words how beneficial this

interview is going to be for us, our project, and even just Armenia in general hopefully over the long run.

Marie: I'm happy to put my enthusiasm to good work for you and your project. I wish you all the best.

Harsh: Thank you again for all your time.

Marie: Of course.

Anonymous Expert, Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Harsh Rana, My Armenia Team
Interviewee: Anonymous Expert, Founder at [redacted].com

<u>Pre-Interview formalities</u>

Harsh: Are you okay with this interview being recorded?

Expert: Yes, I am.

Harsh: This report, so the IQP that we're working on would possibly be published online. Would you prefer your name and other details of where you work, your areas of expertise be revealed in the report or kept confidential?

Expert: Probably confidential, but I can review the transcript before making the final decision.

Harsh: Absolutely, we will be creating a transcript and we can send that your way so you can review it before we publish anything at all.

Expert: Yes, that would be great.

Harsh: Awesome, thank you again for taking out the time to do this.

<u>Interview</u>

Harsh: Ok to start off, have you been given a brief overview of the project previously, or would it help to give you a quick elevator pitch?

Expert: I think it would be great to get a basic overview from you.

Harsh: Alright. So basically at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, we have an Interactive Qualifying Project which is a degree requirement for all students. The way WPI puts it, it's an opportunity for its students to work in cross-disciplinary teams on a real world problem or project. For us, it turns out to be working with the Smithsonian Institution to help develop websites that target potential tourists traveling to Armenia. The problem that Armenia is currently facing, is that most of the tourists currently travelling to Armenia tend to stay only in the capital city of Yerevan. So what's been happening is that the economy of the nation gets better but the benefits are reaped only around the capital city and thus the people in rural areas

are suffering. In order to tackle this problem, USAID published three websites, I think a few years ago, to inform tourists about the rural areas in hopes of getting them outside the capital. The websites did not have the desired effects as they could not reach their target audience effectively and they weren't optimized for use by a tourist. This is where the My Armenia project comes into play. The Smithsonian Institution is now planning to publish at least two websites, one for the whole My Armenia project which gives information about rural Armenia through a broad overview and resources about Armenia. The other website is for the Vayots Dzor province which aims to give specific and in-depth information about that province. Now where our team and this interview come into play is; we are trying to provide the Smithsonian with a good target audience, to capture the potential tourists. We're also trying to define their needs in terms of website design, content and functionality to best reach the audience and thus experience the desired effects over the coming years.

Expert: Okay

Harsh: During our research it became very clear to us, looking at your website and everything that you do through [redacted] Wines, that the wine industry was something that we wanted to use to attract tourists. So we are basically trying to recreate what you do for exquisite wines, but for the Armenian wines.

Expert: Sure. Okay, that's helpful background.

Harsh: To start off I wanted to get a better understanding of your background. So your story in your words.

Expert: [redacted]

Harsh: Awesome!

Expert: Additionally, our business idea is to find [redacted] wine producers that aren't well distributed in the US, that are making high quality wine that reflects the place where it comes from and not just the grape. So we bring them and distribute to collectors and enthusiasts around the country.

Harsh: Alright. Now that you know about the project based on the previous material given to you and the overview that I just gave, what are your thoughts on the project and its feasibility in terms of using a website to get people to notice a country and its viniculture and get them there?

Expert: I think it's a smart idea. I don't know who did the visuals in the PDF that Diran sent around to give an overview of the project, but I think strong visuals are going to be crucial for

you to get people to notice what you're trying to convey. If you want people to travel to a place, you definitely want it to look good. So I would say a website that was primarily featuring photos and images of the countryside would be importance. In terms of feasibility, I think it is a smart idea to have this kind of a support system. The question will be how you share the website, or how you draw people to the websites.

Harsh: Yeah, I think a big part of this interview today is for us to understand how exactly you do that. So breaking into top Google rankings using search engine optimization and other strategies. Just by looking at your website and other information out there, we know that the information we get from this interview will be a key part in doing that (reaching audience).

Expert: Alright.

Harsh: So I think it's fair to say that you've been around the country and the world tasting and talking about wine. I know that you recently started a [redacted] as well where you have started putting out wine reviews, is that correct?

Expert: Yup!

Harsh: Alright, so based on that what are your thoughts on promoting wine like that for a country which is not a household name associated with wine, so Armenia?

Expert: So we use the [redacted], not as a way to attract new customers but as a way to provide more content for existing customers or readers. You can use [redacted] as a discovery method, but we don't do that at this point. So yes, we use it as a way to share information with people who're already on our website or mailing list. So, I think that viniculture is a nice hook to get people interested in a new country, but it's a little bit tricky because for someone to take a trip with wine as the primary reason, they need to be fairly serious about wine. A lot of people when they go to a country and are interested in doing something, take Spain for instance, they're probably go wine tasting on the side but it won't be the primary focus of the trip. People who go on dedicated wine tours are usually high end wine consumers that are buying from Burgundy, Bordeaux so that kind of thing. So, I would imagine that the people who're interested in visiting a lesser known wine region wouldn't be the higher end consumers of wine. I would imagine that they would be people who're interested in the country and the culture and it would be that, which would draw them there and not necessarily the wine. Does that make sense?

Harsh: Yes, absolutely it does. Just to be sure that I understand you correctly, you mean to say that wine should be one of the facets of trying to "sell" Armenia to the world, but not necessarily the main reason to go there. Is that correct?

Expert: Yes, that's right. I don't know this for sure, but I imagine that it's unlikely to find people who are looking for a new wine themed place to visit. I think it's more likely that you'd find people who if we're travelling or planning to travel in the area saw that wine tasting was an option, they would be interested in getting out of the city and going out to do wine tasting. I think that's entirely reasonable to assume that people would be interested in that.

Harsh: Ok, that gives us good direction to work on in the future, so I appreciate your inputs. Let's shift gears and talk about the website design, layout and content for a while because as you said before, the visual appeal will be very important for us. Additionally, it is a big part of our project to understand what kind of visual design appeals to tourists and once they're on the website, what kind of content and functionalities keep them there. So based on your valuable experience and expertise, how would you answer the question, "what makes a successful website"?

Expert: Sure, it's a little funny because we're actually in the process and in about three weeks, we'll have a completely new website redesigned for us.

Harsh: Oh wow, congratulations!

Expert: Thank you. So our current website revolves almost exclusively around content. We have a very active blog that post on almost 4-5 times a week about a different one of our wines, and that's really the engine that drives our website. So in our case, a blog which updates really every 48 hours, is the centre of our website. That's where we try to drive interested visitors towards and that is the dynamic part of the website that's always changing. The content is updated and gets people back to the website. That might not be the perfect way to set up a website design to attract people from a tourism perspective. But I think that a tourism website needs to be focused around the photos. They need to be the most prominent part of the website. In terms of tactics on the site, I think having a blog is important. Because if you go to a website and it doesn't have a blog or it doesn't have content with date attached, it's not immediately clear how relevant or current the content is. The whole point of our website is to host this feed of content, but that isn't the case for your project. So you wouldn't have to write a blog post everyday, but to make sure the website looks dynamic and up-to-date, would be helpful. And now with something like an instagram account, it's easy to have daily posts on instagram and update and highlight them on the website too. In terms of other tactics, one thing that I would strongly, strongly recommend for a website like this is collecting people's email address. Having a list of email addresses so getting them on a list, is extremely powerful. Even if you don't email them for the first 6 months or a year, when you have the project going, as soon as you have a website up, when people come to the website if they put in their email, they're much more engaged with the site. And additionally, if they forget about it, they'll get an email and thus will visit your website again. So I would highly recommend an email address list. And there are a whole bunch of tactics on how

to best capture email addresses from site visitors. The most effective one is "the give something away as an incentive" method and it doesn't have to be something that is incredibly valuable. For instance if you had a free promotional tourism book about Armenia that you could send in PDF form. A small exchange so they can download a tourism book for free in exchange for giving their email address. That's a good way to capture email addresses and I would highly recommend pouring energy into capturing email addresses, because regardless of what you end up doing with the website, you would have the email address list to send events and updates.

Harsh: Just going off of that, the way that your website provides this incentive is through sending an email with a new type of wine that they might not have heard of and its details right?

Expert: Yes, additionally what we have done is that if you sign up for the email list, there is a one-time introductory 6 pack of wine that we sell for about 25% off. So even though we don't give anything away for free, we have a heavily discounted introductory 6 pack that we use to draw people, and that's what we use. People join our email list to get that but also to then follow the feed of new wines through emails.

Harsh: Okay, so you mentioned briefly about a PDF or other free tourism guides. Do you have any other ideas about what might be good incentive for potential tourists?

Expert: If it were me, I'd keep it electronic and not make it a physical product. Because if it's a physical product then there's more costs involved in shipping and handling. Additionally, if it's a physical product then you also have to capture someone's physical address in addition to their email address and people are way more reluctant about providing that. I would say if you had a PDF or eBook which was a collection such as "10 best things/places/experiences" then that would be of interest to people on your site. Because if they're on your site, they're interested in the country and potentially travelling to the country. So giving them something that would then be helpful in their planning or makes them want to visit more, in exchange for the email address would be a good incentive.

Harsh: Something that you spoke about before was social media and instagram. You made a very good point by talking about the value of an instagram account for a tourism website. Daily posts which captured new places and the insides of places would be interesting. Given your experience, what social media platforms would you use to promote this website?

Expert: First off, Instagram would be perfect because it's a visual medium and your viewers would get most value through photos and visuals. In terms of advertising, the only advertising that we do now, is facebook ads. We have tried dozens of other advertising platforms such as print, LinkedIn and other things but as far as I'm concerned, there's nothing that even comes close to being as effective as Facebook ads for the price. What's interesting is that you don't

need a large facebook presence to run those ads. I would highly advise having a facebook page and again making it very image-centered. But again, that's not what you need to drive people to. You can create ads that directly take them to your websites through ads on their facebook feeds. If there's one thing that I would recommend for this website, more than anything else, is to buy facebook ads. They're incredibly underpriced for the power you have and the amount of targeting that you can do is extraordinary. For instance for us, we say show this ad about [redacted] wines to only people "who live in these states", "who're between this age and this age" and "who're also interested in the wine enthusiasts or wine spectators or such publications". You can target based on income by specifying "target only people who make over this $ per year". It's just insane how much targeting you can do. An really it's not very expensive because you only pay for the actual impressions or the clicks. So for your project, you guys could do something like, target only people interested in travel, or travel to other countries. Or if you had a wine themed ad, you could run that to target people who're interested in both travel and wine. The other great thing about facebook, which I make use of, is I create like 6 different images that are slightly different in design and I upload them all and let them go out and facebook starts running them. Then you can see which ones are effective and then after a week, you can see which ones are effective and then keep that one going and stop all the others. It's an extremely powerful tool and I would highly recommend it. To the point where that's all the advertising that I would do. We don't really do search engine optimization or rankings or adwords or any of that stuff, it's just facebook ads for us now.

Harsh: Wow, interesting. Okay so that clears up the social media game for us specially because that's a big part for our project. Specially when it comes to our generation, most of the information that we get and most of the decisions that we take, get influenced a lot by social media. So yes, Instagram visuals and Facebook ads for reaching new audiences are both really good ideas for us, thank you. You spoke a bit about targeting the right audiences, and that is something that we're trying to do as well, we're trying to create a good target audience for our websites. Can you talk a bit about how you went about doing that for [redacted] wines. I know it's a different because you had the wine industry to focus on and all laid out, but what did that process look like for you?

Expert: For us targeting isn't really sophisticated, we look at who our customers are and usually our new customers look like our old ones. We've been trying to age down a little bit, but not too much because our customers are retired or almost retired. Our wine tends to be on the higher end of the price scale, it's not necessarily younger people that are finding us. For you guys, I think what would be interesting is if you focus on adventure tourism. It is really big right now. I have a lot of friends, who are going to italy, they'll do wine tasting but then they'll spend two days hiking or biking. I would imagine active travel would be another attribute in addition to wine. That's another thing you could target on facebook; targeting people who are interested in both active travel and wine.

Harsh: That was helpful, we will definitely look into that. I am big fun of your current website, you mentioned that you were making a new website for [redacted] wines. I liked how your website was minimalistic. What exactly are you going to change in your website in terms of design and why?

Expert: I am changing the website for tactical reasons. The new website is going to look almost the same as my old one. The main thing we are changing is the kind of content layout. You will be able to see the list of our winemakers, see where they are and read more about them easier than you currently can. It is currently all there but it is not well organized;. The main drive for the redesign is we are adding a shopping cart function. We will have all of our inventory listed like a regular retail website. Right now, it is a brochure site and to order, they email or call me, so we are letting go of that.

Harsh: How do you go about measuring success of your website, whether it has achieved what it is supposed to or not.

Expert: To this point, the website acted as a support system for our email service, the email replies are where 90% of our sales happen. Our website is just only a support system but will change in a couple of weeks when we have the new website. For us, success will be how many people will checkout and how many have a smooth customer experience. We are going to simplify the navigation of the site, we don't really have a metric we shoot for. The website only functions currently as a place for people to read the titles we send in the email. One thing I should say is that your website should be mobile friendly. Mobile traffic is almost 40% of our current website from 20% from a year and a half a go. Mobile friendly websites are the way to go.

Harsh: Most of the websites you have are taken by you, Correct? You did a really good job of creating stories from what was originally just wine. How do you create stories from simple things like wine, architecture….

Expert: The easiest thing for us to do is including the wine makers, that may translate well onto your website. Telling stories about people is definitely more interesting than objects like a river or a town. You should Identify people who are interesting from Armenia and use their stories. We don't make anything up on our sites, there's a lot of interesting stories from people from the wine making regions.

Harsh: You mentioned before that the only form of advertising you use is facebook. We are trying to see how to use SEO to make our website one of the top results on SERP. Do you have any insight on how we can better do that?

Expert: I don't but there are certainly resources out there. If you look for SEO or just online marketing optimization, there a lot of blogs and podcast that specialize in those things. It is a weird environment but there is a ton of truth in what they say, you can also hire firms to that for you depending on your budget. You can get pretty far by reading the blogs and podcasts.

Harsh: Is there a reason why you are not doing SEO for your website?

Expert: The reason is that people don't find us on google very often. If you search french wine Boston, we determined that people who search this are not really our customers. People who are searching online for wine are not generally looking for us. Sites like wine. Com, which is the amazon for wine, they are the site that people who search for 'french wine boston' will go to. People like us more because of our stories and our connections to the winemakers. The return we have seen from facebook ads are much more immediate and targeted which is why we are focusing on that for ads currently.

Harsh: This next question, partly from Diran, hypothetically, will you be interested in importing Armenian wine to US and why or why not?

Expert: Theoretically yes, sounds like an interesting addition. In practice, at least for now, no. We provide our best value to customers who are interested in Burgundy and wines that are very specific. It is very hard for us to introduce wine from unknown areas. Our best value is to be an importer of specialized wines from Burgundy. It is the niche that gives us the most value. We are not adding any wines from the rest of France, we wouldn't be interested in adding wines from other countries. I think if you find the right importer, they will be interested.

Harsh: When you think of [redacted] wines and what you are trying to sell, do you focus more on the wines themselves or on the experience.

Expert: The wine being good is a given, the wine has to be good or the business doesn't work. What makes us different, I think is we know both the wine makes and the wine drinkers personally. We try to eliminate the gap between them as much as possible. That's why we have stories of the winemakers on our site. We find that people enjoy the wine more if they know who they make it.

Harsh: Is there anything else you think we should explore or are there or are there people you think we should talk to?

Expert: It sounds like you are in the right place. I would say that the main thing from a website perspective is that it should be a visually captivating website. A good reference is the travel site

for Tourism Bureau of Maine. I think it's visitmaine.com. They have wonderful website. It's probably a little fancier than it needs to be but the photos are very captivating and the interface is very easy to use. There are a lot of things that those guys do that you guys could copy.

Harsh: That's all I had on my site.

Expert: I think that facebook ads is the one thing to take from this conversation. It is remarkably underpriced. There a lot of blogposts and podcast on that as well. The return we see using facebook ads is remarkable.

Harsh: Thank you so much for your time. This will be very helpful for our project.

Expert: Happy to help, if you have any other questions just shoot me an email.

Harsh: I will. Thank you. Have a great rest of your day.

Appendix E: Defining the Target Audience Survey

The aim of this form was to obtain information on potential tourists' preferences. We first sent out this survey via emails to various groups in the WPI community. To broaden our sample size, and reach groups such as wine enthusiasts and ethnic Armenians we also sent this survey to interest specific groups on Facebook.

Tourist's Preferences

Please take out 5-7 minutes of your time to help us understand why you travel.

*Required

1. **How old are you?** *

   _____

2. **What is your gender?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Female

   ◯ Male

   ◯ Prefer not to say/Other

3. **How many times do you travel internationally per year?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ 0 times

   ◯ 1-2 times

   ◯ 3-4 times

   ◯ 5 or more

4. **Would you consider yourself to be any of the following? (select all that apply)** *
   Tick all that apply.

   ☐ Adventure Tourist

   ☐ Leisure Tourist

   ☐ Wine Enthusiast

   ☐ Religious Enthusiast

   ☐ Ethnic Armenian

   ☐ History Buff

   ☐ None of the above

   ☐ Other: _____

5. **What forms of social media do you frequent? (select all that apply)** *
   Tick all that apply.

   ☐ Facebook

   ☐ Instagram

   ☐ Snapchat

   ☐ Twitter

   ☐ Pinterest

   ☐ LinkedIn

   ☐ Other: _____

6. **What is your estimated annual income (in USD)?**

Mark only one oval.

○ Under 30,000

○ 30,000-50,000

○ 50,000-70,000

○ 70,000-100,000

○ 100,000-200,000

○ 200,000+

○ Prefer not to say

○ Other: _____

What attributes of Armenia would you be most interested in visiting?

On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being not interested and 5 being very interested, if you were travelling to Armenia, what attributes would be of most interest to you?

7. **Monasteries and churches** *

Armenia was the first Christian state and is home to some of the oldest Churches and Monasteries in the world.
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	○	○	○	○	○	Very Interested

8. **Museums** *

Armenia is one of the most ancient countries of the world and has a rich history preserved in its famous museums.
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	○	○	○	○	○	Very Interested

9. **Wildlife Tours** *

Over 350 species of birds migrate through Armenia, several of which are rare or endangered. It is also home to other rare animals such as the Persian leopard, Syrian brown bear and the famous Karabakh horse.
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	○	○	○	○	○	Very Interested

150

10. **Ethnotourism** *

Armenian cultural practices include wine-making, carpet weaving and world famous stone carvings.
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very Interested

11. **Caves** *

Armenia is home to some of the most ancient caves in the world including the Areni-1 cave where a 6100 year old winery was discovered.
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very Interested

12. **Viniculture** *

One of the oldest branches of economic activity of Armenia was grape cultivation and wine production, Armenia also basts its diverse grape varietals
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very Interested

13. **Cuisine** *

Traditional Armenian food is some of the most delightful middle eastern food available to the modern tourists.
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very Interested

14. **Mountainous terrain** *

Armenia has intermediate mountain ranges and extinct volcanoes with Mount Aragats being the most famous due to its description as a "four-peaked volcano massif".
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Interested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very Interested

Other Consideration

Please use this section to describe what other factors you HIGHLY consider before deciding where to travel. (Ex: Costs, weather, airline connectivity etc.)

15. **Describe other considerations**

_____

_____

Appendix F: Site Content and Design Deliverable

CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Unique facts about the location

Both the Armenia.travel and the Visit Maine websites were quick to showcase unique facts about the locations. The New Zealand website did this as well, but more subtly.

Considering Armenia's rich history and the "ancient" aspect of the Vayots Dzor wine, incorporating a "did you know" mini-section would be hugely appealing to potential tourists and increase the value of the location.

The above mentioned websites' methods will be shows using their wireframes in the following slides.

Unique Facts (New Zealand)

This is the first section of the New Zealand website. It brings focus to a movie location in the country which is truly unique to the place

New Zealand website's first section wireframe
(first glimpse of website that a user experiences)

Unique Facts (Armenia.travels)

Did you know?

This is a section from the Armenia.travels websites which is a "did you know" sections and showcases the uniqueness of Armenia.

A section from the Armenia.travels website

Unique Facts (Visit Maine)

This is a section from the Visit Maine website which includes photos and small blurbs about their uniqueness. "Article mentions" and other tangible uniqueness factors are described and showcased.

HIKING TRAILS

ON A ROLL

LUV 2 RV?

A section from the Visit Maine website

Section of Past Tourist Experiences

The New Zealand, Visit Maine and the Armenia.travel websites all had a section to showcase the experience of past tourists.

This was incorporated by the above mentioned websites into the design in a variety of ways which will be shown in the following slides.

Tourist Experiences (New Zealand)

Get Inspired

See all things to do | All destinations | Recommended trips

#NZMustDo ->

Cycling ->

Walking & Hiking ->

Food & Wine ->

Backpacking ->

Luxurious getaways ->

Top picks ->

The #NZMustDo leads to a page with images and videos taken by other tourists during their visit.

Section from the New Zealand website wireframe

Tourist Experiences (Visit Maine)

Instagram photo

What's your #MaineThing ?

Photos submitted by Maine travellers like you.

▶ SEE MORE

This entire section showcases instagram posts by tourists who've used the hashtag #MaineThing.

The "see more" button leads to a page with additional posts by past tourists.

Section from the Visit Maine website wireframe

Tourist Experiences (Armenia.travel)

This entire section showcases photos by past tourists who've visited different parts of Armenia
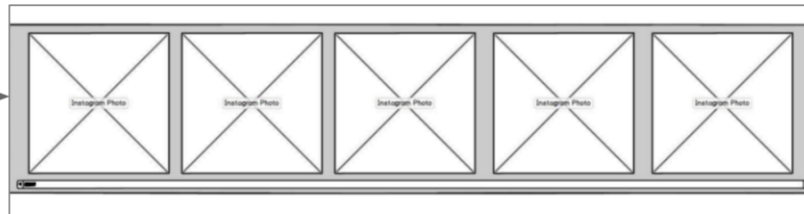
Section from the Armenia.travel website wireframe

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Complimentary Call to Actions

Both the New Zealand and Visit Maine websites used complementary Call To Action (CTA) buttons to further engage their website visitors.

Their methods of doing so will be shown in the following slides, along with our suggestions on how to use the same for the My Armenia and Vayots Dzor websites.

Complimentary Call to Actions (New Zealand)

There are three different call to action buttons in this section which all combine together to capture more "needs" of a user thus increase engagement

Get Inspired

See all things to do | All destinations | Recommended trips

Section from the New Zealand website wireframe
with three complimentary CTA buttons

Complimentary Call to Actions

Two different options provided on purpose. One to attract more structured and dependant travellers and other to attract more independant and self planning travellers.

Wake up in paradise

Find a travel agent | Getting to New Zealand
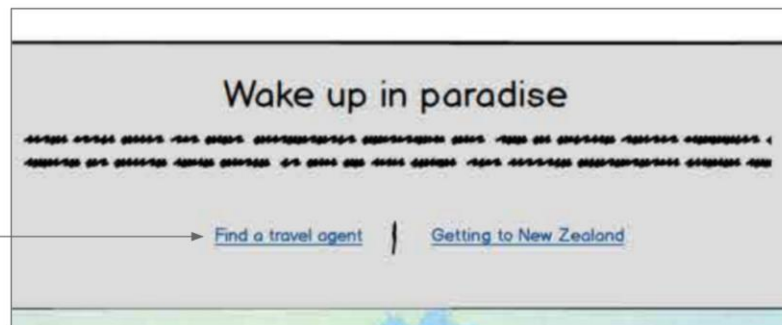
Section from the New Zealand website wireframe
with two complimentary CTA buttons

Reorder content or use Whitespace to shift focus

The New Zealand website got the highest overall rating in the usability study (28/30) followed by the Maine Website (26/30).

After thoroughly testing all websites, it was was clear that all team members overwhelmingly felt the desire to visit New Zealand and Maine more so than the other places.

Reorder content or use Whitespace to shift focus

On further inspection, we found that the above two websites had used similar strategies to create focus on the most important part of the websites.

For the New Zealand website it was a combination of using whitespace to shift focus to the "story" of the country and ordering content based on the most value.

Again for Maine, it was ordering content based on most value and these will be shown in the following slides.
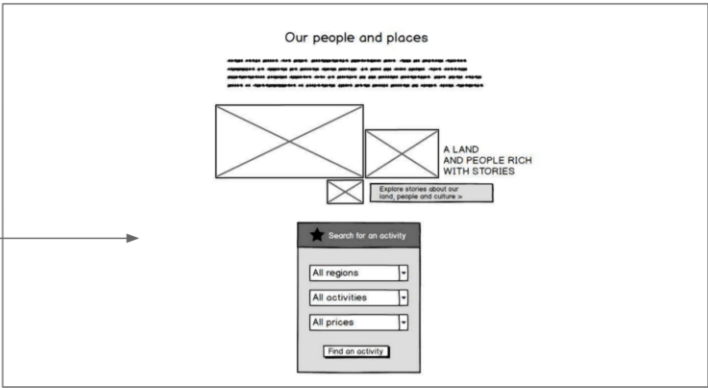
Whitespace to shift focus (New Zealand)

This is a section on the website about the "story of New Zealand". It uses almost 2:1 whitespace to content ratio to decrease distractions and draw users to the focus content.

Our people and places

A LAND AND PEOPLE RICH WITH STORIES

Explore stories about our land, people and culture >

Search for an activity

All regions
All activities
All prices
Find an activity

Section from the New Zealand website wireframe
with almost 60% whitespace

Reordering content to shift focus (New Zealand)

This is the first section of the New Zealand website and is covered with a photo of the most famous New Zealandic location where a very popular movie was shot. It takes the user essentially no time to realize this and get drawn in.
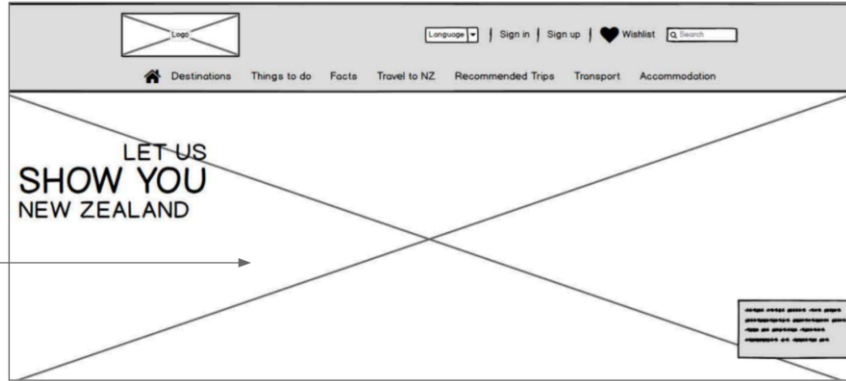
New Zealand website's first section wireframe
(first glimpse of website that a user experiences)

Reordering content to shift focus (Maine)

This is the first section of the Maine website. It uses a GIF styled looping video to showcase its beautiful landscapes and past tourist experiences within the first few moments of visiting the website

Maine website's first section wireframe
(first glimpse of website that a user experiences)

FUNCTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Language Options

The proposed websites have only 2 language options (Armenian and English)

- Argentina website has 7 languages

- Chile website has 6 languages

- Georgia website has 3 languages

- New Zealand website has 20 languages

Considering that more than 75% of the tourist demographic in Armenia is either Russian (41.6%) or Georgian (33.7%), the websites need to have language options for these countries.

Creative Social Media linkage

One of the biggest difference between the My Armenia and the other website's wireframes was the linkage to social media.

Social media including Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram are the most engaging part of a brand. Recognizing this, the other travel websites including Armenia.travel and Maine all have very creative ways to send their potential users towards their social media accounts.
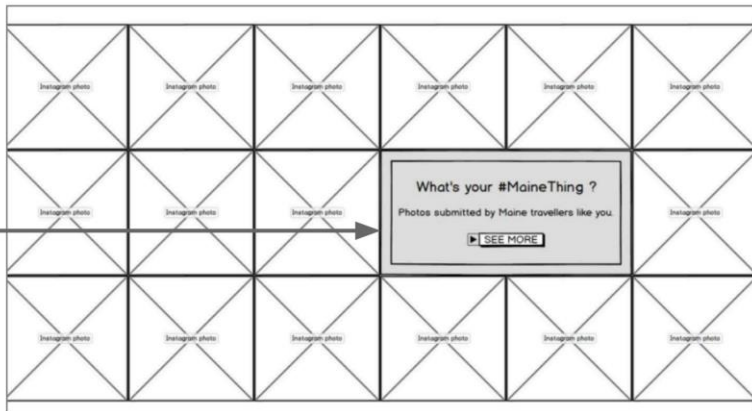
Examples of the same are in the following slides.

Social Media (Visit Maine)

This entire section of the VisitMaine website acts as a linkage to their Instagram account posts.

What's your #MaineThing ?
Photos submitted by Maine travellers like you.
▶ SEE MORE

Section from the Visit Maine website wireframe

Social Media (Armenia.travel)

This entire section showcases instagram posts by tourists who've previously travelled to Armenia.

Also every photo acts as a link to the Instagram page.
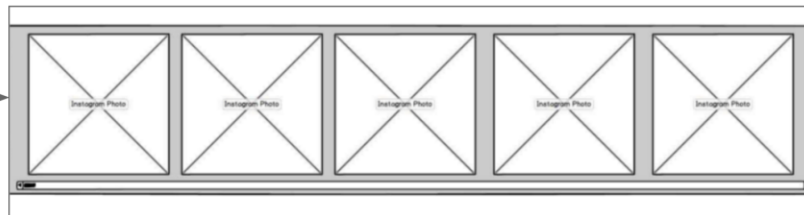
Section from the Armenia.travel website wireframe

Thank you

Hope you found this useful.

My Armenia IQP Team

Appendix G: Web Advertisement Deliverable

Social Media Presentation

Contents

- Social Media
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - Pinterest
  - Snapchat
  - Twitter

Facebook

Why

- Has two billion active monthly users

- 73% of marketers state that Facebook is very effective/effective for marketing purposes

> ❝
>
> Facebook gives us a platform where we can enhance our brand presence, build a user community and convert these users into paying customers. That's unique and powerful.
>
> **Herman Cheng**
>
> CEO, FunShare

Example: New Zealand
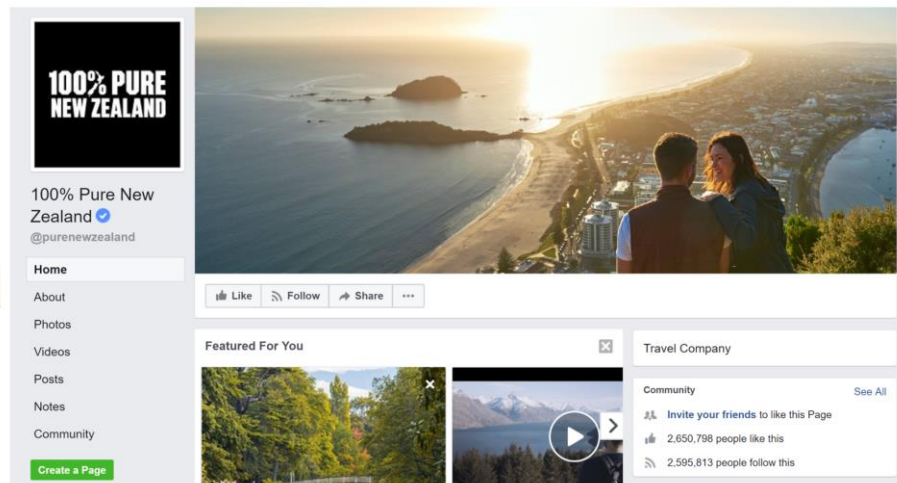
Official Tourism Page of New Zealand (2,500,000+ followers)
Consistent marketing campaigns through photos, videos and description of various experiences.

Example: Chile
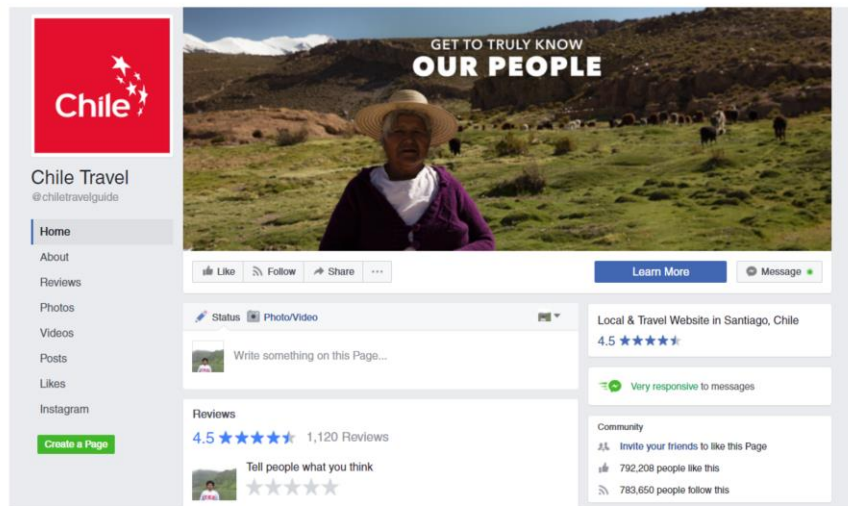
Official Tourism Page of Chile (750,000+ followers)
Over 1100 reviews by previous tourists with an average rating of 4.5 of the experience they had.

Recommended steps

- Invite Smithsonian followers to like the page

- Use Hashtags on Facebook

- Post Consistently

- Link sharing between new websites and facebook
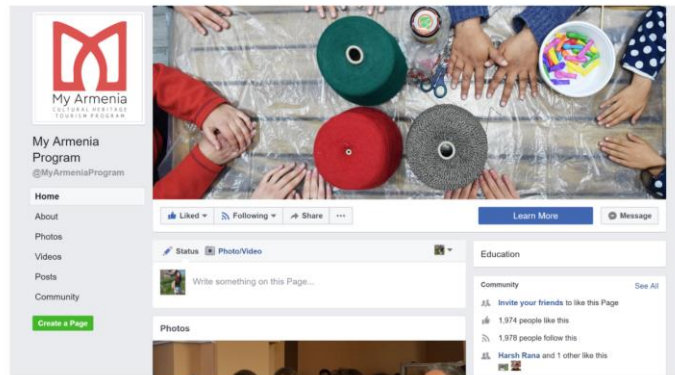
Long-term Benefits

- Testimonials of travelers
  - Will strengthen claims by putting a face behind them

- Engagement with potential tourists
  - Address issues/concerns. Point people towards resources

- Brand awareness
  - Make My Armenia a big name in the tourism industry.

Instagram

Why

- 700 million active monthly users

- More engaged audience than Facebook and Twitter

- Well maintained travel Instagrams tend to have a very strong following

"We started first in Indonesia, then expanded to South East Asia, and right now we have around 20,000 suppliers that joined our platform from 65 countries—all because of Instagram."

KEVIN MINTARAGA, CEO @thebridestory

"It's a powerful tool to display what we're all about and how customers live that lifestyle. Instagram is invaluable—if you want to get more customers, you want more engagement or you want more conversions."

SVEN ALWERUD, FOUNDER AND CEO @jellyskateboards

Example:
New Zealand

Official Tourism account of New Zealand (640,000+ followers)
Over 700 posts with an average posting rate of 1 post every 1-3 days. Often have professional quality video clips shared (made by travellers) on account.

Example: Chile

chiletravel Follow

1,946 posts   182k followers   340 following

Chile Travel Chile's Official Tourism Profile // Cuenta Oficial de Turismo en Chile
#VisitChile #Chiletravelrepost **www.chile.travel**

Official Tourism Page of Chile (180,000+ followers)
Over 1900 posts with an average posting rate of 1-3 posts per day. They also repost
photos by tourists thus gathering more attention to experiences.

Recommended Steps

- Create an Instagram account
  - Definitely a big opportunity and market

- Use #MyArmenia to make it a part of the experience
  - Will result in snowball effect and bring awareness to project and brand

- Post Consistently (at least once a day)
  - Needs to be more frequent when starting out

- Direct visitors to websites and facebook
  - Increase social reputation and boost SEO

Reach Out to Travel Instagrammers

- Ask travel instagrammers to use #MyArmenia and take pictures of the rural areas

- Ex. edkanyan (especially since the Smithsonian featured him in an article)

Long-term Benefits

- Documentation of rural Armenia

- Effectively market locations

- Engage with travellers through use of hashtags

- Sell the "Armenian Experience" through visuals

Pinterest

Pinterest - Why

- It is a fast growing website with 57% growth in members and a 111% growth in active users in the past year

- Pinterest users spend are more engaged and spend more than other social media users.

- Pinterest content is image based

- Many travel sites maintain Pinterest accounts

Pinterest - How

- User demographic is high income women
  - Market Armenia as a "dream trip"

- Use different boards for different attractions
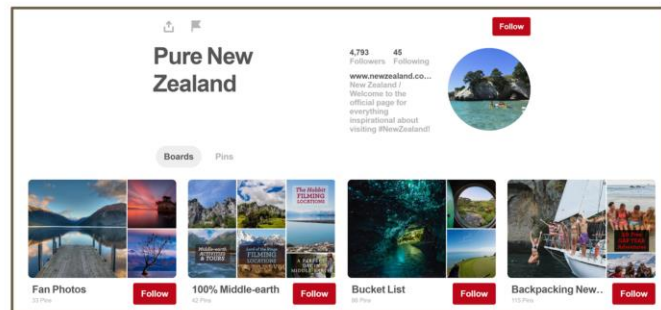
Snapchat

Snapchat - Why

- Snapchat has over 100 million daily active users

- 26% increase in smartphone users who are on snapchat and are 25-34 (2016)

- Creating a MyArmenia project snapchat account to post stories would be free

Snapchat - How

- My Story of
  - attractions of Armenia
  - happenings of the MyArmenia Project
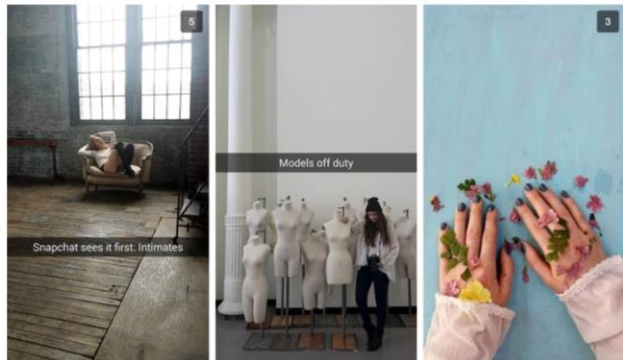
Twitter

Twitter - Why

- Has over 300 million active monthly users
- 79% of all twitter users are outside of the US
- 54% of Twitter users earn more than 50,000 USD a year

Twitter - How

- More Tweets in General
  - Especially Image and Video Posts

- Use one or two hashtags
  - More than this affects user engagement negatively

- Ask followers to "retweet"

12X Tweets that ask followers to "Retweet" receive 12x higher Retweet rates than those that do not; yet less than 1% of brands implement this strategy.

23x

10x

When followers are specifically asked to "Retweet", (by spelling it out), the Retweet rate is 23x higher than average!

Compare this to a Retweet rate of only 10X higher when followers are asked to "RT" (shortened).
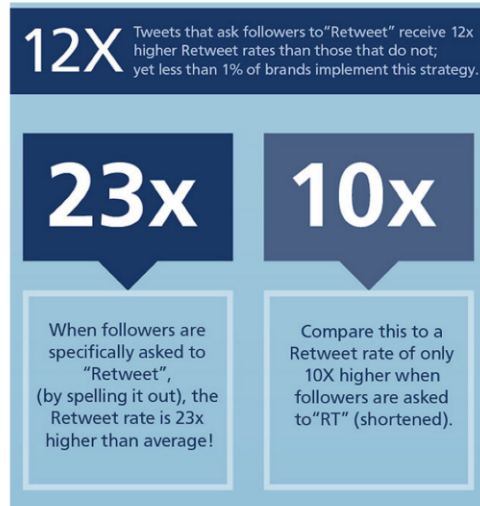
Hashtags

The Right Amount (Twitter & Facebook)

- Use one or two hashtags

- Use branded hashtags (ex. MyArmenia)

- Hashtags should be specific and relevant

2X

Tweets with hashtags receive 2X more engagement than those without hashtags.

21%

Tweets with one or two hashtags have 21% higher engagement than those with three or more hashtags.

17%

Tweets that use more than two hashtags actually show a 17% drop in engagement.
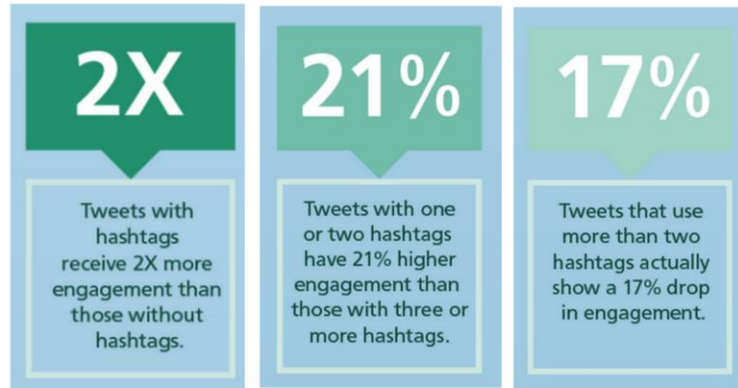
Best Number Of Hashtags
On Every Social Network

Facebook: ##
Use 1-2 hashtags per post

Twitter: ##
Use 1-2 hashtags per tweet

Instagram: ##########
Use 10+ hashtags

Pinterest: ###
Use 2-3 hashtags per pin

Google+: ###
Use 2-3 hashtags per post

CoSchedule

**Example:
Too many,
too general**
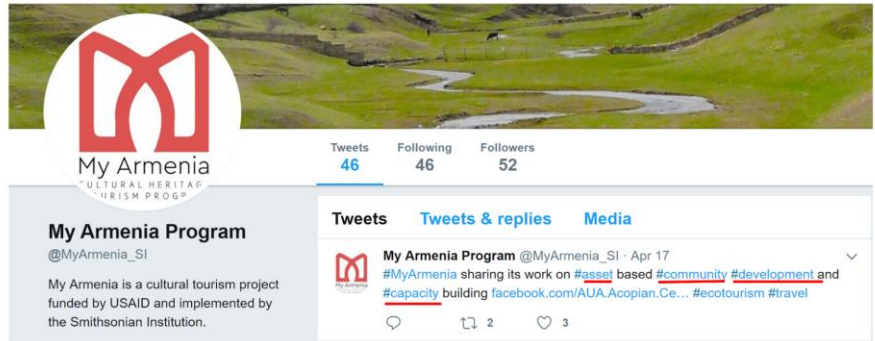
Thank you

My Armenia IQP Team

Enhancing Search Engine Optimization

Conventional and
Unconventional Advertisements

Contents

- Conventional Advertisement
  - Facebook & Instagram Ads
  - Google AdWords
  - Banner Ads
  - Native Ads
  - Bing + Yahoo Advertising
  - Twitter Ads
  - Snapchat Ads

- Unconventional Advertisements
  - Quora
  - Guest Blogging

Conventional Advertisements

Facebook and
Instagram Ads

Facebook Advertising - Why

- 1.2 Billion Unique Users every day

- Powerful demographic targeting tools

- Pay for engagement, not for putting up ad

- Powerful campaign measurement tools

FACEBOOK AD PERFORMANCE AND COSTS BY INDUSTRY
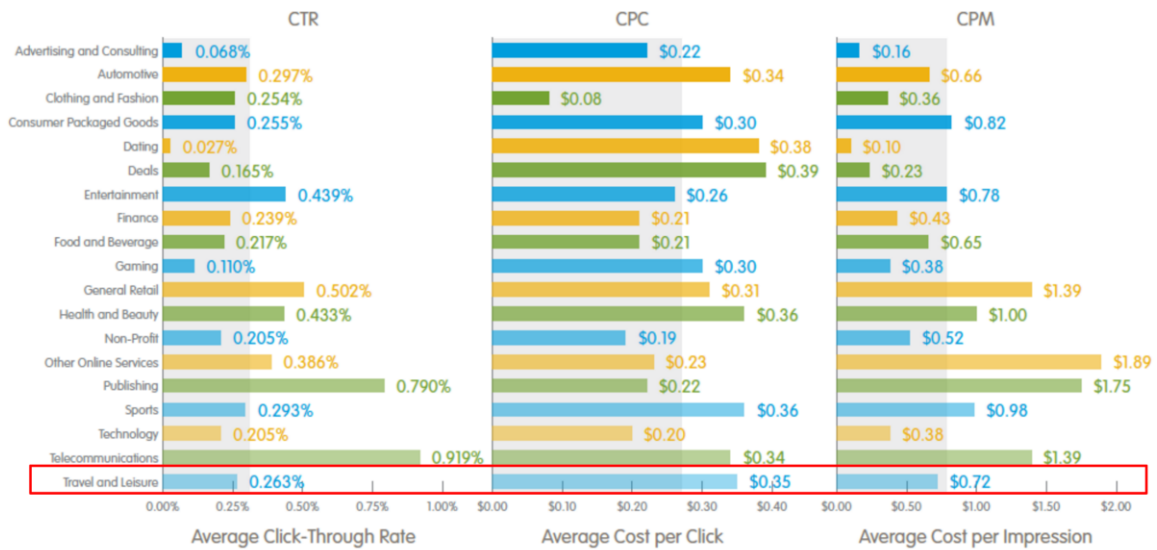
https://e27.co/what-is-the-average-ctr-cpc-cpm-of-facebook-ads-2015012
1/

182

Example: New Zealand

Facebook Advertising - How

- **6 steps** to start a campaign

- Step 1: Reason for campaign; Business goal
- Step 2: Target Audience
- Step 3: Decide Platforms and devices
- Step 4: Budget
- Step 5: Create ad(s)
- Step 6: Measure and track performance; Update campaign at any time

Instagram Advertising

- Can easily create Instagram ads when creating Facebook ads

- If using Facebook ads should also use Instagram ads

Google AdWords

Google AdWords - Why

- Pay per Click
- The Clickthrough rate for a mobile search ad on Google
  - in the first position is 27.7%
  - in the second position is 9.2%
- Businesses make an average of $2 in revenue for every $1 they spend on AdWords
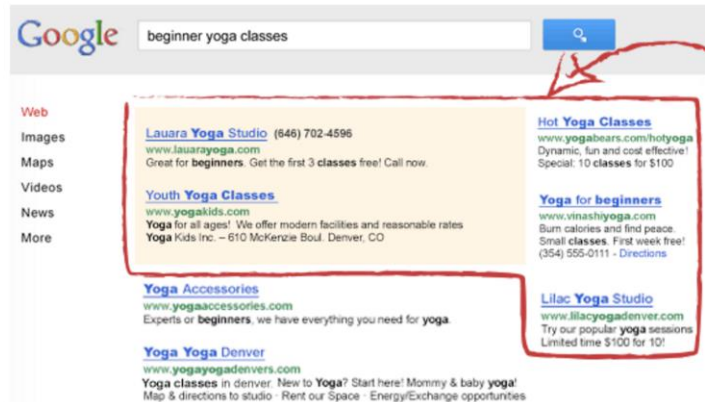
Example: New Zealand
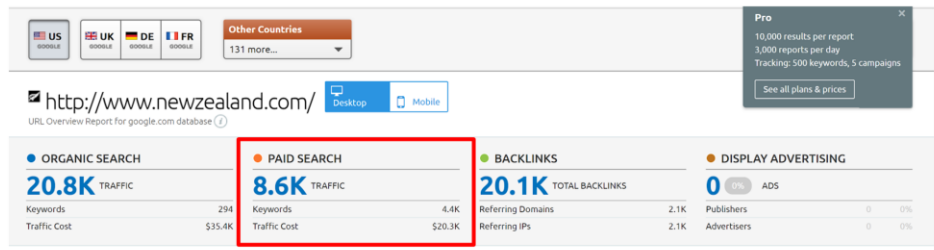
live update TOP PAID KEYWORDS (4,356)

Keyword	Pos.	Volume	CPC (USD)
new zealand	1	201,000	1.66
new zealand map	1	18,100	1.68
new zealand weather	1	8,100	1.10
wellington new zealand	1	8,100	2.50
where is new zealand	1	6,600	3.74

Google AdWords - How

- Can advertise on two main networks
  - Search network
  - Display network

- Bid on specific keywords that are relevant to the website

Banner Ads

Banner Ads - Why

- The CTR of banner ads is usually between 0.2% and 0.3%

- Very cheap (as low as 50 cents for non-targeted banner ads)

- Banner ads are very effective in the branding of a company
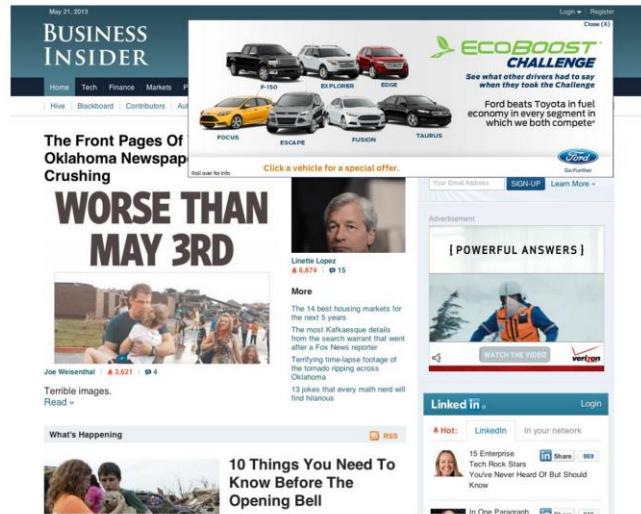
Banner Ads - How

- Target areas that have a large demographic of Ethnic Armenians
  - L.A. Glendale Area
  - Certain Regions in Argentina

- Use banner ads in reputable websites → increases trustworthiness

Native Ads

Native Ads - Why Not

- Very Expensive
  - Average cost of a native advertising campaign for top-tier news publishers was $54,014.29
  - For lower-tier publishers, which we categorized as having domain authority of less than 80, the cost drops to an average of between $8,000 and $70

Bing and Yahoo Ads

Bing and Yahoo Advertising - Why

- Similar to Google AdWords with a few differences

- Less competitive than Google AdWords

- Higher CTR than Google AdWords

- Less Expensive (On average, Yahoo/Bing is 50% to 70% less than Google Adwords)

Bing and Yahoo Advertising - How

- Essentially the same as Google AdWords

- Choose target keywords
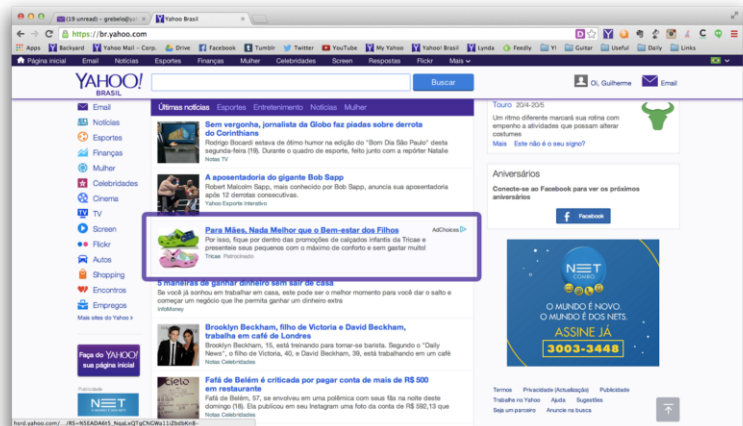
Twitter
Ads

Twitter Ads - Why

- Total ad engagements were up 91% year over year
- Twitter allows you to target users who follow a specific account
  - Armenia accounts, travel accounts → can target the same audience as competitors
- Targets based on keywords users interact with
- Twitter ads have a higher conversion rate (2.17%) than Facebook (0.74%)
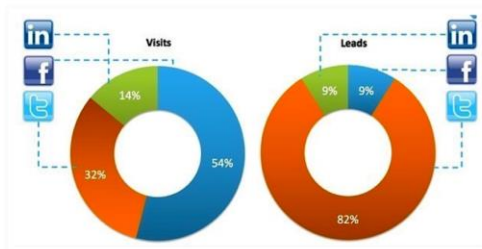
Example: Visit California

Twitter Ads - How

- Three types of twitter ads
  - Promoted Tweets
  - Promoted Accounts
  - Promoted Trends

- Target audience based on interests, specific pages followed, demographics

UNTUCKit
@UNTUCKit

Follow

Shirts designed so well, GQ called us 'Perfection'.
cards.twitter.com/cards/4zkf8b/z...
10:23 PM - 24 Sep 2015

UNTUCKit

FINALLY!
SHIRTS DESIGNED TO
BE WORN UNTUCKED.

Perfect Fitting Casual Shirts
untuckit.com

10   31

Snapchat Ads

Snapchat Ads - Why

- Can be inexpensive especially for a rural area

- Can specifically target large groups of tourists

OVER A STADIUM

RURAL - 60,000 SQUARE FEET

Snapchat Fee

Several hours, starting at: $5000

Looking for longer? We would be happy to chat!

Snapchat Fee

Several hours: approximately $12

24 hours: approximately $30
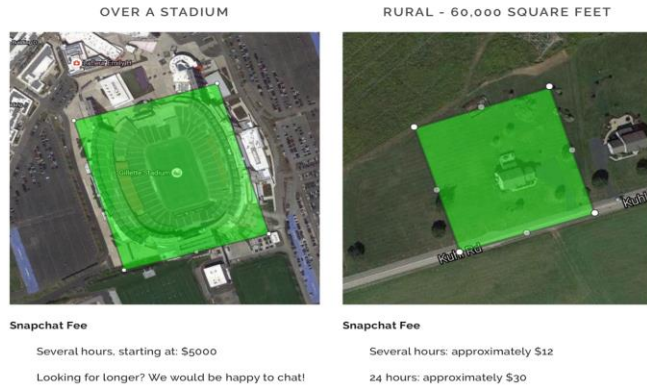
Snapchat Ads - How

- On Demand Geofilters
  - Cost: depends on location, size, and duration

- "Our Story" or Snapchat Live
  - Allows users to upload their videos to a public story
  - Public story could be called "My Armenia"
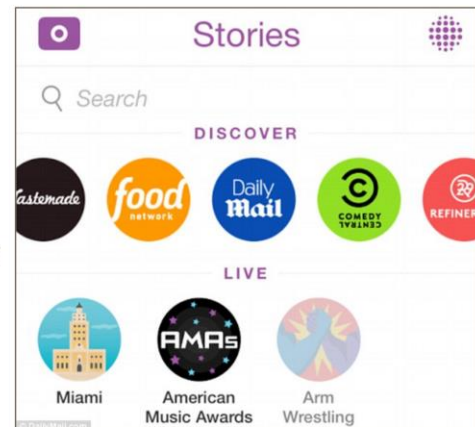
Example:
Taco Bell

Long Term Implementation
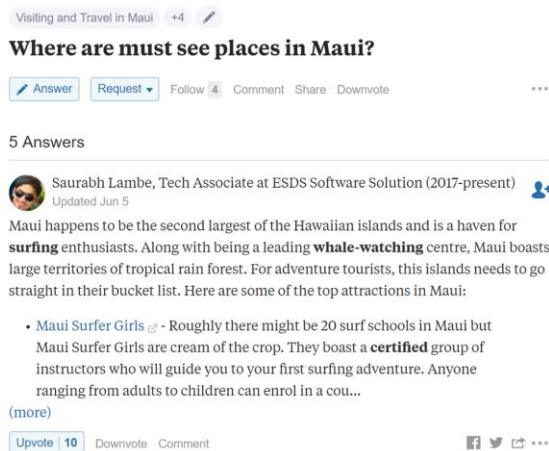
- Use geofilters during specific festivals or events with My Armenia logo

Unconventional Advertisements

Free Advertising on Quora

- 100 million monthly unique visitors

- Similar to a native text-based ad unit

- Unpaid: you can answer related questions with a link to your website

Visiting and Travel in Maui   +4 ✎

Where are must see places in Maui?

✎ Answer   Request ▾   Follow 4   Comment   Share   Downvote   ···

5 Answers

Saurabh Lambe, Tech Associate at ESDS Software Solution (2017-present) 👤+
Updated Jun 5

Maui happens to be the second largest of the Hawaiian islands and is a haven for **surfing** enthusiasts. Along with being a leading **whale-watching** centre, Maui boasts large territories of tropical rain forest. For adventure tourists, this islands needs to go straight in their bucket list. Here are some of the top attractions in Maui:

- Maui Surfer Girls ⬈ - Roughly there might be 20 surf schools in Maui but Maui Surfer Girls are cream of the crop. They boast a **certified** group of instructors who will guide you to your first surfing adventure. Anyone ranging from adults to children can enrol in a cou...

(more)

Upvote 10   Downvote Comment   f 𝕏 ⮫ ···

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Guest Blogging

- Bloggers write posts to be featured on other blogs

- Can be effectively used as a backlink building tool

- Increases brand awareness

- Almost always free

Potential Blogs to Guest Write From

- The Travel Belles
  - Have a food and wine section for different countries
  - 2-3 comments per post on average
  - Domain authority: 40/100
- McDuff's Food & Wine Trail
  - Essentially a wine blog
  - As many as 17 comments per post
  - Domain authority: 48/100
- Winerist.com/blog
  - Wine blog
  - Very updated but not a lot of audience engagement
  - Domain authority: 43/100
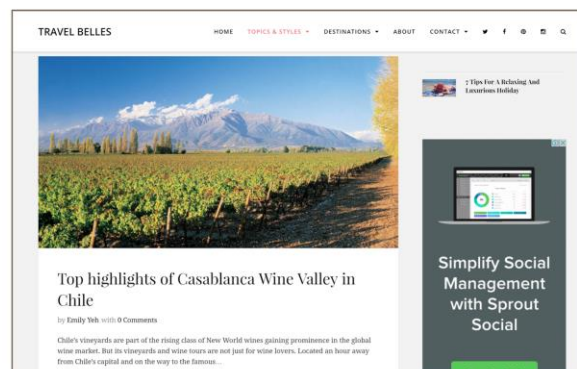
Thank you

My Armenia IQP Team

Enhancing Search Engine Optimization

Conversions

Contents

- Landing Pages
- The 4 Golden Rules
  - Good and bad examples of each analyzed and explained
- UI Mockup- My Armenia
- UI Mockup- Vayots Dzor

Landing Pages

Definition

A landing page is any webpage that a user can "land" on. It is used to increase the conversion rate of a website

Users reach landing pages through:
- Clicking on an advertisement

- Facebook, Instagram or other social media pages.
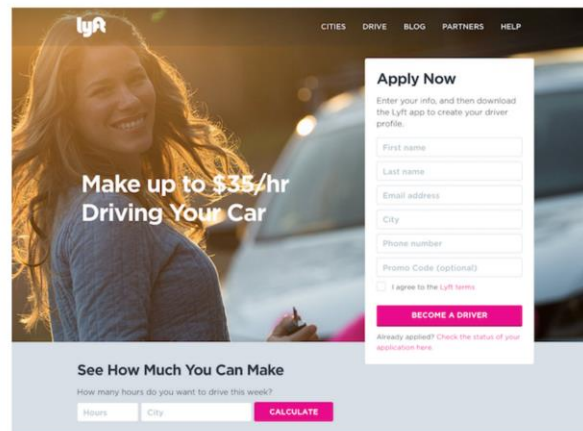
Lyft.com's Primary landing page

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Types

- Click through landing pages
  - Focuses on getting a user to further explore the website.

- Lead generation landing pages
  - Focuses on capturing user data by providing incentive

Jargon

- Conversion Rate
  - The percentage of users who take the desired action
  - Example: If conversion rate is 5%, then for every 100 people who visit the website, 5 people will actually sign up/explore.

- Call To Action
  - A piece of content intended to get the user to perform a specific act
  - Example: A signup button, a hyperlink to a resource etc.

Click through landing page: Example
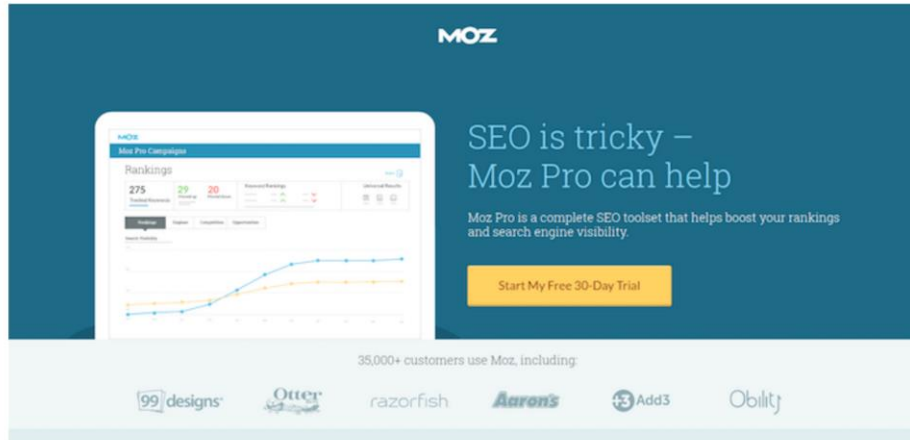
Moz's landing page clearly describes the service, provides proof of trust and has only one call to action, "Start My Free 30-Day Trial"

Lead Generation landing page: Example
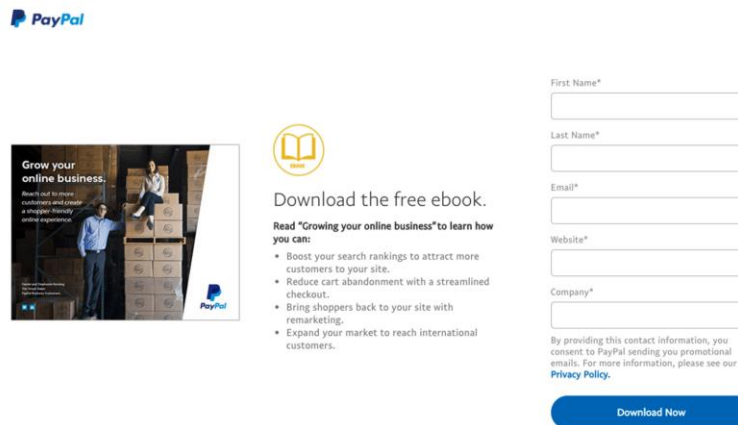
Paypal's landing page clearly is providing value (free eBook) in exchange of user information.

The 4 Golden Rules

The 4 Golden Rules

Our research has led us to believe that good landing pages with conversions rates often much higher than their competition, follow 4 golden rules:

- They make their unique value proposition(s) clear

- They remove distractions and keep it simple

- They have a very clear Call To Action (CTA)

- They don't ask for more information than needed

They make their Unique Value Proposition(s) clear

Landing pages exist to "sell" the company or product to a potential customer. This is done by providing information about what makes them unique, testimonials of past users, photos, videos and other tangible information.

The following slides will showcase this point.

Good Examples (Analyzed)
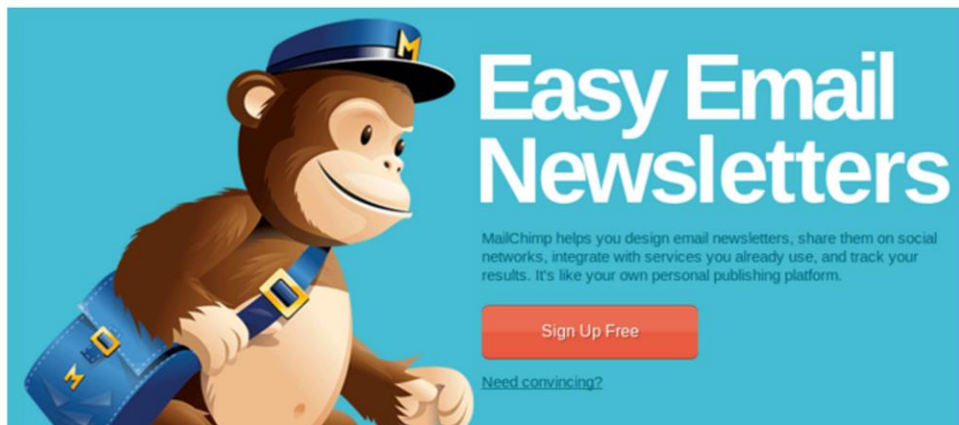
Clearly stated product which is further explained by use of descriptive text.
Bonus: Has two CTAs, both complementing each other to further "sell" the product

Good Examples (Analyzed)
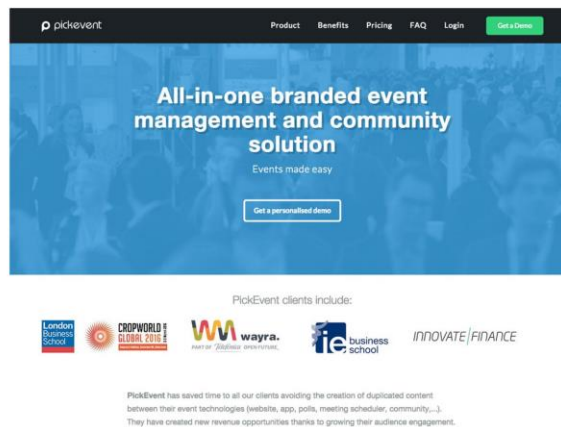
Again, product (free eBook) stated clearly. Clear value conveyed using description and testimonial.

Bad Examples (Analyzed)

Very generic product description. Includes clear buzzwords like "branded" and "solution". Lack of clear value to visiting website user

Bad Examples (Analyzed)
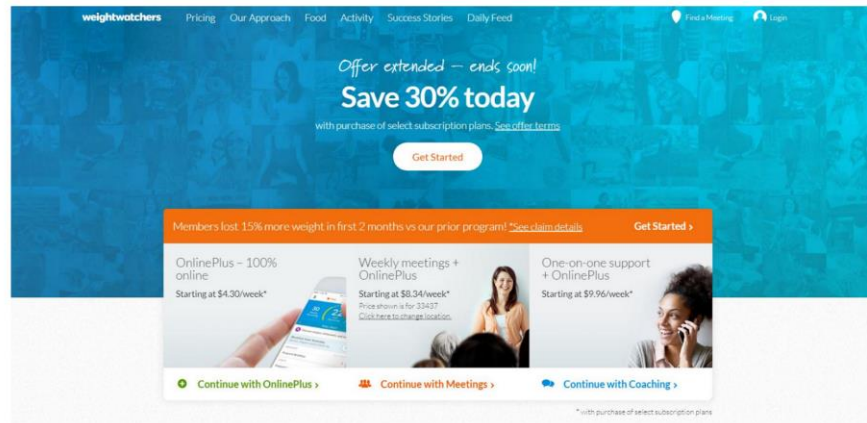
The most standout piece of content on the screen is "save 30% today", but product or service is unclear.

They remove distractions and keep it simple

A survey by Microsoft concluded that the average attention span had fallen to eight seconds, down from 12 in the year 2000. **We now have a shorter attention span than goldfish, the study found.** That is why, the more distractions on the landing page, the less likely a consumer is to take action.

The following slides will showcase this point.

Good Examples (Analyzed)

Simple; highlights the benefits of signing up and provides next steps.
Bonus: Tangible benefits (especially monetary) are very tempting to a visitor.

Good Examples (Analyzed)

Visually rich design, but attention is immediately draw to the most important parts of
the landing page. Simple signup form and next to no distractions

Bad Examples (Analyzed)

Too much clutter. The abundance of text on the screen fails to capture attention and thus makes it easy to not take any action.

Bad Examples (Analyzed)

Too many distracting and colorful elements in design. A new customer will likely get overwhelmed by this much information all at once.

They have a very clear Call To Action (CTA)

Call to actions are important because these convert casual website visitors into customers and website followers. They can be as simple as signing up for a newsletter, to creating an account on the website.

Lack of a clear Call to Action, or too many of them, results in a poor conversion rate.

Good Examples (Analyzed)

Clear "Create Account" Call to Action. It is also the only element on screen which doesn't follow the colors of the theme, thus strikes out. Arguably the most famous landing page in the world.

Good Examples (Analyzed)

Use of dual CTAs, which both provide the same service, complement each other. The
"Sign up now" button clearly sticks out due to contrast in color.

Bad Examples (Analyzed)

A grand total of 5 different CTAs spread across the screen. The user will experience
the "paradox of choice" and the landing page will likely have a lower conversion rate.

Bad Examples (Analyzed)
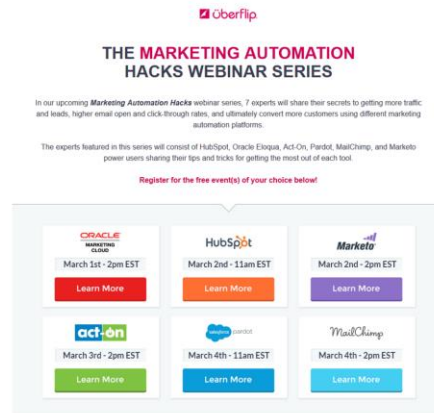
Again, overwhelming number of Call to Actions on webpage. No single CTA really stands out. Unless user knows exactly what he wants, they will be unlikely to explore.

They don't ask for more Information than needed

Asking for too much information from a visitor will end up making them feel insecure about their personal information. So keep it simple and only what is absolutely required.

The following slides will showcase this point.

Good Examples (Analyzed)

Form is short and is asking only for the bare essentials to sign up. The product is clearly mobile related, but phone number is still not asked for thus making users less reluctant to sign up.

Good Examples (Analyzed)

Outstanding use of keeping the landing page to only the essentials. Information such as credit card number, phone number, physical address (even though clearly required by company) is not asked for to become a customer.

Bad Examples (Analyzed)

Clearly long and overwhelming signup form. Information such as job title, company should be part of completing profile but not part of sign up process.

Bad Examples (Analyzed)

The product is an eBook/guide and should not require the excessive information. Will result in a very low conversion rate.

Wireframe Mockups

Wireframe Mockup: Lead generation landing page for the My Armenia website

Wireframe Mockup: Click through landing page for the Vayots Dzor website
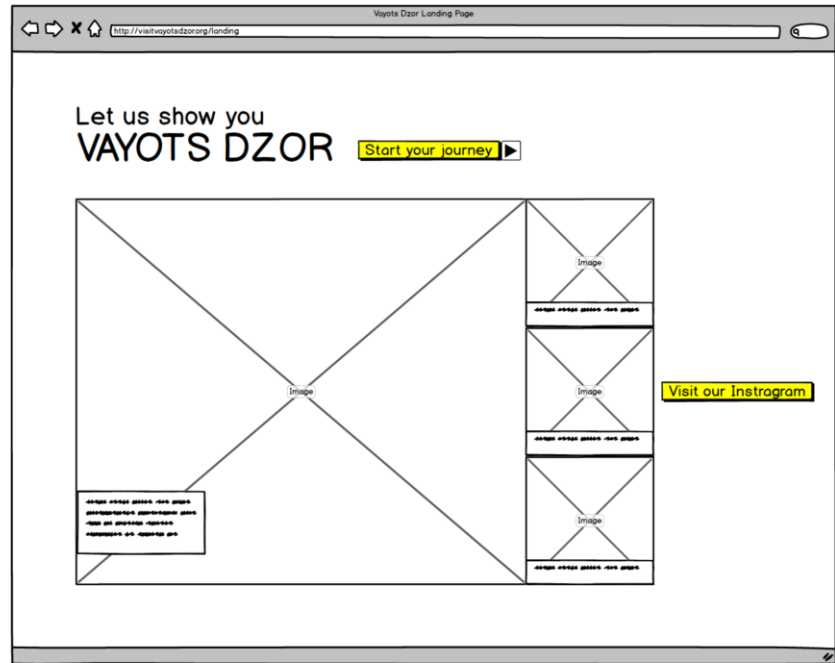
Thank you

My Armenia IQP Team

Appendix H: Analytics Plan Deliverable

Goal of Site

Having a high number of people demonstrate interest in traveling to Armenia by initiating contact with travel agency & accommodation sites.

We can measure success of the website in a couple ways:
- Number of contact forms filled out
- Tracking the number of visits to outbound links

According to a Social Identity Study done by Blue Research on Contact Forms:

- 54% leave websites instead

- 26% look for a different site

- 88% that fill out falsify information

- 70-90% bounce rate on landing pages with a form

- Users hesitate to fill out forms because of slack privacy policies

Methods to Improve Contact Form Efficiency

◉ Have a low number of fields: 3-4 is enough

◉ Avoid asking for phone numbers (leads to a 5% dip in conversion rate)

◉ Have certain fields be optional

◉ Consider third party vendors for signing in eg. Facebook, Twitter, Google +

◉ Don't use 'intimidating' Call to Action (CTA) buttons

   ◉ Do not use 'submit'

   ◉ Use buttons like 'go', 'click here'

In Conclusion

There will be more people that will be willing to visit external links on their own rather than fill out a contact form that will be sent to all tour companies. Therefore, contact form responses alone may not be the best way to judge the sites success.

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Goal of Site: To get Users to Visit Outbound Links

How will we measure success of the website?

◉ Track Number of Visits to Outbound Links

◉ Number of Contact Forms filled out

As well as

Have other measurable methods for the website success:

Utilize Google Analytics features that will measure other forms of user engagement with the website

Primary Tool in Google Analytics that will Help Measure Site Success

2

Tracking Outbound Links

Track number of visitors that:

◉ Click on links to tour companies
◉ Click on links to flight or hotel information
◉ Click on links that provide more information about a specific attraction

---

How

Tracking script

◉ Paste code into original Google Analytics Tracking code

◉ https://www.axllent.org/docs/view/track-outbound-links-with-analytics-js/

```
<script type="text/javascript">
    function _gaLt(event) {

        /* If GA is blocked or not loaded, or not main|middle|touch click then don't track */
        if (!ga.hasOwnProperty("loaded") || ga.loaded != true || (event.which != 1 && event.which != 2)) {
            return;
        }

        var el = event.srcElement || event.target;

        /* Loop up the DOM tree through parent elements if clicked element is not a link (eg: an image inside
        while (el && (typeof el.tagName == 'undefined' || el.tagName.toLowerCase() != 'a' || !el.href)) {
            el = el.parentNode;
        }

        /* if a link with valid href has been clicked */
        if (el && el.href) {

            var link = el.href;

            /* Only if it is an external link */
            if (link.indexOf(location.host) == -1 && !link.match(/'javascript\:/i)) {

                /* Is actual target set and not _(self|parent|top)? */
                var target = (el.target && !el.target.match(/^_(self|parent|top)$/i)) ? el.target : false;

                /* Assume a target if Ctrl|shift|meta-click */
                if (event.ctrlKey || event.shiftKey || event.metaKey || event.which == 2) {
                    target = "_blank";
                }

                var hbrun = false; // tracker has not yet run

                /* HitCallback to open link in same window after tracker */
                var hitBack = function() {
                    /* run once only */
                    if (hbrun) return;
                    hbrun = true;
```

Other Tools that Measure Site Content Engagement

3

Bounce Rate

Track number of visitors that leave after only visiting one page
Should be compared to websites of similar content

Average Session Duration & Active Session Duration

◉ Measures how long users stay on the website

◉ Can be made more accurate with Riveted (a plug in) which measures active session duration based on the amount of time spent moving the cursor, scrolling, typing, etc.
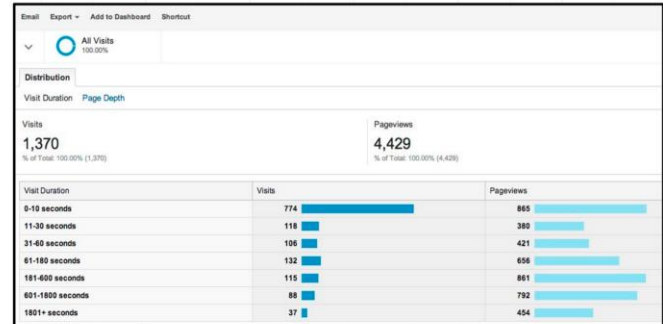
Audience: Frequency and Recency

◉ Measures percentage of returning visitors
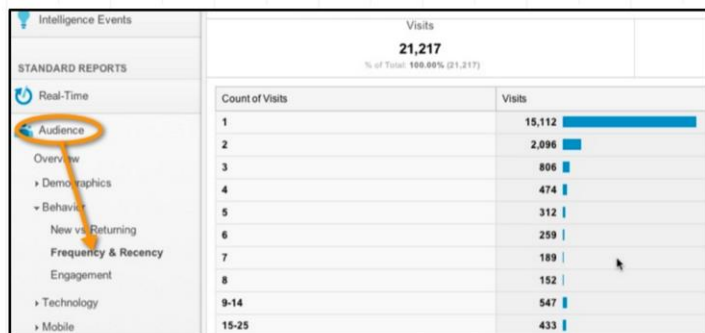
Site Search Setting

● Good way to measure engagement (how many people are searching for external links, other activities)

Average Number of Pages Per Visit

● Method to measure engagement

Scroll Depth

- Measures how engaged users are with page content

- Available through a plugin

Leading Consumers to Affiliates

4

Leading Consumers to Affiliates: newzealand.com

Leading Consumers to Affiliates: armenia.travel