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NaTour4CChange



MANUAL ON DESTINATION MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

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Project Overview

The Mediterranean region is one of the most vulnerable hotspots in the current biodiversity and climate crises, warming 20% faster than the global average and being the second biodiversity hotspot in the world. The increase of severe climate events is also likely to influence the choice of destinations and time to travel for its over 510 million inhabitants. The effects of climate change will put additional pressure on already strained ecosystems and vulnerable economies and societies, with Tourism being one of the most affected economic sectors.

The recent Transition Pathway for Tourism and the Glasgow Declaration are building a global momentum for Climate Action in Tourism, but policymakers and destinations need support to better develop efficient climate mitigation and adaptation policies using ecosystem-based approaches and improved multi-level governance structures, including robust planning and ensure the long-term engagement of the private sector and citizens. Indeed, ecosystem-based management is considered a good practice to effectively deal with these threats as it considers the different stakeholders and factors affecting ecosystems and the mechanisms involved, to find solutions.

NaTour4CChange builds on and capitalizes on successful experiences at the Mediterranean and global level to test solutions for increasing the resilience of coastal destinations in the Mediterranean. The project will aim to set common methods to allow participating regions to assess their tourism-related climate adaptation and mitigation priorities, and take climate action via plans and strategies, supported by cooperative governance.

In coastal destinations, cross-sector teams will deliver specific tourism climate Action Plans, focusing on climate adaptation, where Nature-based Solutions (NbS) will be tested to ensure their feasibility. At the same time, innovative destination marketing and communication approaches will engage private stakeholders, visitors, and residents in climate action.

The project will also ensure cross-fertilization among participating regions and destinations, to achieve common methods and to compare the different tested plans and solutions, leading to lessons, best practices, and policy.

Glossary

Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate measures to prevent or minimize the damage they may cause, or to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise.

Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) means making the impacts of climate change less severe by reducing the sources of emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere or by improving the storage of these gases.

Ecosystem Services (ES) are the benefits that an ecosystem brings to society and that improve people's health, economy, and quality of life.

Ecosystem-based Approaches (EbA) focus on managing biodiversity and ecological systems in a holistic way to maintain and enhance ecosystem services benefits and functions.

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) encompasses all actions that rely on ecosystems and the services they provide to respond to various societal challenges such as climate change, food security, resource management, or disaster risk.

Destination Management Company (DMC) is a company working in a specific destination to handle all bookings for tours or conferences, including hotel accommodation, transfers, sightseeing, meetings and special events.

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) an organization that promotes a location (city, region, state province, country) as a travel destination.

Social media are works of user-created video, audio, text or multimedia that are published and shared in a social environment, such as a blog, social networking site, photo or video hosting site.

Social Networking: The interaction between a group of people who share a common interest. Using websites such as Facebook and Twitter to network and share information and media. Individuals and businesses can use social networks to further customer relationships and extend the customer lifecycle.

Storytelling involves a two-way interaction between a storyteller and one or more listeners in person, online or through other means of communication. It is a first-person narrative that accompanies an experience, offers personal insights and can reflect the passion, values and humor of the experience provider/storyteller. Done well, it engages travelers.

User Experience (UX) encompasses all aspects of the visitor's interaction with your company. This includes their pre-travel information search experience, booking, selection of products, services and experiences, plus their online and face-to-face interactions across all touchpoints.

Word of Mouth: The phenomenon of a particular message or recommendation being passed from an individual to his/her contacts

through the internet or to the public at large through online means such as TripAdvisor, blogs, comment sections, YouTube, Instagram, etc.

E-marketing is using the Internet and other forms of electronic communications to communicate in the most cost-effective ways with target markets.

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FOREWORD

This manual, developed under the NaTour4CChange project, aims to provide practical guidance for climate-smart destination marketing and communication. Its purpose is to equip policymakers, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), tourism operators, and other stakeholders with strategies and tools to integrate climate action into tourism planning and promotion. By highlighting climate adaptation, mitigation, and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), the manual encourages destinations to engage residents, visitors, and the private sector in meaningful climate action.

The scope of this manual spans both strategic frameworks and tactical implementation, including digital and on-site communication, behavioral insights, campaign design, and community engagement. It emphasizes the importance of ecosystem-based approaches (Eba) and multi-level governance, enabling destinations to address climate risks while enhancing the resilience of tourism-dependent communities and ecosystems.

The manual is fully aligned with global climate and biodiversity agendas, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU Green Deal, and international frameworks such as the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism. These global initiatives provide momentum for coordinated climate action, yet local destinations often require guidance to translate these commitments into effective policies, strategies, and marketing practices. By building successful Mediterranean and international experiences, the NaTour4CChange project seeks to establish common methodologies, share lessons learned, and facilitate cross-fertilization among regions, enabling tourism stakeholders to jointly develop robust adaptation and mitigation plans.

Specifically, in coastal Mediterranean destinations, cross-sectoral teams will implement Tourism Climate Action Plans, testing Nature-based Solutions to improve environmental resilience while promoting sustainable visitor behavior. Innovative marketing and communication strategies will engage diverse stakeholders, residents, visitors, and private operators, creating a shared sense of responsibility for climate action.

Ultimately, this manual is a practical guide and a catalyst for action, supporting the Mediterranean tourism sector in its transition toward resilient, sustainable, and climate-smart destinations. It encourages collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that the region not only adapts to current climate challenges but also seizes opportunities to protect biodiversity, cultural heritage, and the long-term viability of its tourism economies.

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1. Understanding destination marketing in a climate action context - vulnerability mapping

Destination marketing is no longer limited to showcasing attractions, landscapes, or cultural experiences. In the era of accelerating climate change, it has evolved into a strategic instrument that shapes how visitors understand and interact with a destination. Marketing messages not only influence perceptions of destinations and decision-making regarding *where* people travel, but also shape *how* and *when* they do so, as well as the level of impact generated by the tourism activities undertaken at the destination. Furthermore, they affect how visitors understand and interact with places, raising awareness of their vulnerability and encouraging behaviors that contribute to their protection. In this context, destination marketing becomes part of the destination's climate response and must be responsible in the way it communicates risks, raises awareness, promotes responsible behaviors, and provides visitors with the tools and guidance needed to modify their behavior at the destination in support of environmental resilience: such as using public transport or avoiding sensitive habitats.

To fulfill this expanded role, destinations must first understand their own climate vulnerabilities. Vulnerability mapping is a systematic approach that identifies the areas, experiences, and communities most exposed to climate risks. These may include sensitive ecosystems under pressure from mass visitation, coastal areas affected by sea-level rise, regions prone to wildfires, areas experiencing water scarcity, or cultural sites threatened by extreme weather. Mapping these vulnerabilities enables destination managers and communicators to anticipate challenges, highlight priorities and develop marketing messages that guide visitors toward more sustainable travel and activity choices¹.

Vulnerability mapping helps destinations identify:

- Climate-sensitive zones where tourism must be carefully managed, such as dunes, wetlands, river corridors, or high-altitude trails.
- Risk-exposed infrastructure, including ferry terminals, heritage sites, mountain huts, or scenic routes affected by storms, heatwaves, or erosion.
- Visitor flows that may intensify pressures on fragile areas during peak season and require targeted communication, dispersal strategies, or adjusted messaging.

¹ Methodological frameworks for Regions and Destinations for assessing the main coastal tourism related issues concerning Climate Change

<https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/Fi1RNnjpRfqLDeRCRmTMUhyy>

- Local communities or sectors facing disproportionate climate impacts, whose perspectives should be meaningfully reflected in marketing narratives, for example, through resident stories, testimonials, co-created content, and the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge that frames climate change impacts and adaptation practices, to support just and inclusive climate action.

By integrating vulnerability into destination marketing, destinations can:

- Communicate risks clearly and responsibly without deterring visitors.
- Promote alternative routes, seasons, and experiences that reduce pressure on sensitive areas, while raising awareness of the condition and sensitivity of biodiversity and the conservation status of these areas.
- Support Nature-based Solutions by highlighting restored habitats, reforestation zones, or climate-adaptive landscapes.
- Strengthen the credibility of the destination brand by demonstrating transparency, preparedness, and climate commitment.
- Inspire visitors to participate in climate-smart behaviors, from low-carbon mobility choices to respecting site-specific environmental guidelines.

In practice, vulnerability mapping becomes a link between scientific data, strategic planning, and visitor communication. It transforms abstract climate data into concrete insights that can be integrated into storytelling, campaigns, maps, visitor guidance, and on-site interpretation. As such, it provides the foundation for a new generation of marketing approaches that protect both the visitor experience and the destination's environmental future.

1.2. Overview of existing frameworks and reference sources

Destination marketing for climate action does not exist in isolation. It builds on a growing body of global, regional, and sector-specific frameworks and authoritative reference sources that guide tourism toward sustainability, resilience, and low-carbon transformation. Understanding these frameworks interlinked frameworks and evidence bases helps destinations align their communication with recognized standards, strengthen credibility, and ensure consistency across policies, branding, and visitor engagement.

Several international frameworks and guidance instrument offer a foundation for climate-smart destination marketing:

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a universal language for communicating sustainability. Goals related to climate action (SDG 13), life on land (SDG 15), life below water (SDG 14), and responsible consumption (SDG 12) are especially relevant for tourism messaging and destination stewardship narratives.

The Paris Agreement outlines the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C. For tourism, this translates into promoting low-carbon mobility, reducing energy use in tourism infrastructure, and shifting visitor flows toward climate-resilient areas and seasons.

The EU Green Deal and EU Biodiversity Strategy introduce regulatory pathways that affect tourism destinations, including circular economy principles, emission reduction targets, and nature restoration obligations. These frameworks emphasize transparent communication on climate risks and highlight the importance of community involvement.

The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism calls for measurable emissions reductions across tourism value chains and encourages destinations to adopt climate action plans, an essential basis for truthful, evidence-based communication.

GSTC Criteria and other sustainability standards provide structured guidance for responsible destination management, governance, and marketing. Aligning communication with these criteria ensures that climate claims are grounded in verifiable actions, avoiding greenwashing.

IPCC reports and regional climate assessments offer scientific insights into local vulnerabilities, enabling destinations to communicate risks and adaptation measures clearly, responsibly, and in a way that supports informed visitor decision-making.

EU Transition Pathway for Tourism, provides strategic guidance on decarbonization, digitalization, and resilience in the tourism sector. Referenced alongside scientific assessments, it helps destinations contextualize climate communication within EU policy priorities and implementation timelines.

Nature Positive Tourism Framework emphasizes the tourism sector's potential to contribute to biodiversity regeneration. For destination marketers, this means highlighting tourism initiatives that actively restore ecosystems, such as reef rehabilitation or native forest regeneration as part of the brand narrative.

From a biodiversity perspective, complementary reference sources such as the **IPBES assessments and the Convention on Biological Diversity Global Biodiversity Framework** further strengthen climate-smart destination marketing. While not climate frameworks per se, they highlight the close interdependence between climate change, ecosystem degradation, and tourism impacts, supporting integrated narratives on nature protection, ecosystem services, and destination resilience.

Taken together, these frameworks and reference sources serve not only as points of alignment but also as communication tools. They help destinations translate technical climate data into accessible messages and position climate action as an integral part of their brand identity. By situating their marketing within established frameworks and policy-relevant guidance, destinations reinforce trust, demonstrate leadership, and speak in a language recognized by policymakers, partners, and travelers alike.

1.3. From awareness to action: influencing behavior through communication

Raising awareness about climate change is only the first step; effective destination marketing must ultimately influence **visitor behaviors**, how visitors travel, move through a destination, choose services, and engage with local environments. Behavior change communication is therefore at the heart of climate-smart marketing, bridging the gap between what visitors *know* and what they are willing and able to *do*.

Recent global guidance further reinforces this expanded role of communication. The IUCN WCPA Issues Paper No. 07 (Mandić et al., 2025) emphasizes that tourism, when strategically planned and governed, can actively support biodiversity conservation, community resilience, and public support for protected and conserved areas. In this context, destination marketing and communication are not peripheral promotional activities, but key instruments for shaping visitor behavior, strengthening social license for conservation, and aligning tourism with climate and biodiversity policy objectives. Visitors often express support for sustainability but struggle to translate this into action, a phenomenon known as the **value-action gap**. Destinations can help close this gap by designing communication grounded in behaviour change interventions that identify the climate-related behaviors to be addressed, the actors most likely to carry them out, and specific (S), measurable (M), achievable (A), relevant (R), and time-bound (T) strategies. This should be accompanied by emotionally resonant communication that effectively connects with visitors and is embedded throughout the visitor experience, from the moment of trip planning to the moment of departure.

:Behavior Change Communication Design: Quick Reference for Practitioners

This checklist translates behavioral science insights into actionable communication principles. Use it when designing materials across visitor touchpoints, from inspiration to departure.

<i>Design Principle</i>	Application in Destination Marketing
<i>Prominence</i>	Feature public transport options, low-carbon routes, and off-peak offers early and repeatedly in maps, booking platforms, and brochures.
<i>Empowerment Urgency</i> +	Pair facts with agency: <i>“Here’s the challenge—and here’s how you can help.”</i> Avoid crisis-only messaging.
<i>Positive Framing</i>	Present sustainable actions as enriching (authentic, local, adventurous) — not just ethical.

Social Proof	Showcase local guides, business owners, and residents modeling low-impact behaviors. Use testimonials and visuals.
Timely, Context-Specific Prompts	Place guidance where and when decisions are made (e.g. trail signage, QR codes, digital nudges).
Touchpoint Integration	Deliver aligned messages pre-trip , during booking, on-site, and post-visit to reinforce consistency.

Interventions should be designed using established Behavior Change Models to clearly identify the climate-related problem, the behaviors involved, who performs them, and when and where they occur, and to propose solutions that are simple, feasible, and easy for visitors to adopt.

Finally, climate communication should be honest, transparent, and grounded in real actions taken by the destination. Visitors can identify inconsistencies quickly, clear, and consistent messaging about vulnerabilities, adaptation efforts, and shared responsibility enhances credibility and fosters a culture of climate stewardship. Through thoughtful communication rooted in behavioural science (chapter 5), destinations can support a shift from passive awareness to active participation, helping visitors become partners in climate resilience rather than contributors to environmental pressures.

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary/ Action points
Destination marketing as a climate tool	Modern destination marketing shapes visitor choices, behaviors, and timing to support environmental resilience and climate adaptation.
Vulnerability mapping	Identify climate-sensitive zones, at-risk infrastructure, and community vulnerabilities to guide communication, manage visitor flows, and highlight Nature-based Solutions (NbS).
Integration with global frameworks	Align communication with SDGs, Paris Agreement, EU Green Deal, Glasgow Declaration, GSTC criteria, and IPCC to ensure credibility, consistency, and policy coherence.
Behavioral influence	Close the value-action gap using communication that is timely, emotionally resonant, and embedded throughout the visitor journey.

Positive, social, and experiential messaging	Emphasize promote sustainable behaviors by eing enjoyable, culturally immersive, and locally endorsed experiences. Use social proof, local ambassadors, and nudges.
Transparency and credibility	Communicate climate risks and climate measures openly. Show what the destination is doing and invite visitors to participate, building trust and shared ownership.
Nature Positive Tourism Framework	Highlight tourism initiatives that restore nature (e.g. wetland regeneration, native planting). Frame climate messaging around visitor contributions to ecosystem recovery and storytelling that connects actions to ecological impact.

2. FOUNDATIONS OF SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE-SMART DESTINATION MARKETING

Climate-smart destination marketing goes beyond promoting attractions. It places sustainability, climate responsibility, and regenerative practices at the heart of a destination's identity. This chapter outlines the core principles, evolving market dynamics, branding strategies, stakeholder engagement models, and the integration of biodiversity and cultural heritage that support effective climate-conscious marketing.

2.1. Principles of sustainable tourism and regenerative tourism

Sustainable tourism refers to tourism that meets the needs of current visitors and host communities, while preserving the ability of future generations to meet their own. It balances environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability, minimizing while seeking to reduce negative impacts on ecosystems, cultural heritage, and local livelihoods (GSTC, n.d.). It also promotes resource efficiency, biodiversity conservation, and respect for local cultural heritage.

Regenerative tourism goes beyond sustainability by actively seeking to restore, revitalize, and enhance destinations, leaving them better than they were before (Duarte et al., 2024; Bellato & Pollock, 2025). It emphasizes ecosystem healing, the revitalization of cultural and community heritage, and the strengthening of local social and economic ties. Rather than merely limiting harm, regenerative approaches aim for net-positive environmental and social outcomes, aligning tourism development with broader systemic frameworks such as planetary boundaries and doughnut economics, which stress operating within ecological limits while supporting human well-being. In destinations where tourism contributes meaningfully to local and planetary well-being, tourists also play an active role in regenerative tourism through their choices, behaviors, and engagement with local communities and environments.

Key principles shared across sustainable and regenerative tourism include:

- Minimizing environmental impact: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, energy and water consumption, and waste generation (GSTC, n.d.).
- Enhancing community well-being: Ensuring tourism delivers equitable economic opportunities, promotes social inclusion, and builds local resilience (García-García et al., 2023).
- Restoring ecosystems and heritage: Supporting biodiversity conservation, ecosystem regeneration, and the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural assets (Duarte et al., 2024) through joint actions involving local communities, institutions, and visitors.

Table 2.1. Core Principles of sustainable & regenerative Tourism

Principle	Sustainable Tourism	Regenerative Tourism
Environmental focus	Reduce harm & ecological footprint	Restore ecosystems & enhance biodiversity
Community impact	Support livelihoods & promote equity	Empower communities & revitalizing cultural identity
Economic goals	Long-term viability	Shared prosperity & reinvest in local systems
Climate relevance	Adaptation support & mitigation efforts	Net positive climate and ecosystem outcomes

2.2. Market trends in tourism climate policy

As climate awareness grows, tourists are increasingly seeking destinations that preserve ecosystems, implement conservation and restoration initiatives, and align with sustainability and conservation values, while also demonstrating visible and credible sustainability efforts. This shift is driven not only by environmental concern, but also by a desire for authentic, meaningful, and low-impact travel experiences. Destinations that respond to these trends position themselves competitively in a changing tourism market.

Current climate-related tourism trends include:

- **Low-carbon travel options:** Travelers are showing growing preference for rail transport, cycling, electric mobility solutions, and emerging low-emission aviation alternatives (Travel SEO Agency, 2025).
- **Eco-certifications and:** transparency recognized labels such as GSTC, EarthCheck, and Green Key influence travel decisions by offering credible assurance of sustainability performance (Travel SEO Agency, 2025).
- **Carbon offset initiatives:** Destination increasingly offer enabling travelers to offset emissions through reforestation, renewable, or conservation investments (Time, 2025).
- **Immersive, responsible experiences:** Tourists favor hand-on engagement with local communities, nature-based, learning and experiences that contribute to environmental or cultural protection (Travel SEO Agency, 2025), either through the financial support of their activities or by actively participating in initiatives that have a long-term impact on the conservation or regeneration of the ecosystem.
- **Slow travel, extended stays, and digital nomad lifestyles:** There is a growing interest in longer stays, remote working arrangements, and slow travel approaches that reduce travel frequency, spread visitor pressure

across seasons, and foster deeper connections with local communities. These patterns support lower per-day carbon footprints and align well with destination strategies focused on resilience, livability, and place-based sustainability.

Table 2.2. Key market trends for climate-conscious tourism

Trend	Description	Marketing Opportunity
Low-carbon travel	Reduced-emission transport alternatives	Promote rail, e-mobility, and multi-modal journeys through multi-trip cards at low cost, shared travel platforms that reduce emissions, e-bike rentals, and bus services.
Eco-certifications	Verified sustainability standards	Highlight certified accommodations and . Inform tourists which certifications can be trusted to ensure their trip aligns with the sustainability and conservation values promoted by the destination.
Carbon offsets	Visitor role in climate mitigation	Integrate offset options in booking promotions. Enable participation through payments supporting restoration initiatives or through activities where visitors actively engage with the community in ecosystem conservation
Responsible experiences	Nature and culture-based immersion	Promote volunteer tourism, citizen science, heritage walks to promote awareness, environmental consciousness, and willingness to act.

Understanding these trends helps destinations align climate action with visitor experiences, enabling them to differentiate their brand, build trust, and enhance market competitiveness through sustainability leadership. To fully leverage these trends, destinations must go beyond tactical offerings and embed climate responsibility into the core of their brand identity. This strategic shift underscores the importance of how climate-related values, actions, and narratives are

communicated through destination branding, a focus further developed in Section 2.3.

2.3. Positioning climate action as a core brand value

Climate-smart destination marketing requires a shift from treating sustainability as an add-on to embedding climate action at the heart of a destination’s brand identity. In the context of accelerating climate risks, destination brands are increasingly judged not only by the quality of their experiences but by their credibility, responsibility, and climate preparedness. Positioning climate action as a core brand value enables destinations to communicate trust, resilience, and long-term stewardship while responding to evolving visitor expectations and policy frameworks. Furthermore, embedding climate responsibility within the destination’s identity enhances both authenticity and market appeal (Duarte et al., 2024)

A climate-oriented destination brand reflects how a place understands and manages its environmental vulnerabilities, supports biodiversity and cultural heritage, and engages visitors as *active partners* in sustainability. This positioning must be grounded in real actions, such as climate adaptation, mitigation, and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), rather than symbolic or superficial claims. Transparency and consistency across strategy, operations, and communication are essential to avoid greenwashing and build long-term credibility. To maintain credibility, NbS-based branding must be grounded in the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions (IUCN, 2020) and clearly communicated as complementary to, not a substitute for, emissions reduction and decarbonization efforts.

Climate-smart branding positions destinations as *partners in planetary care*, not just places to visit.

Key elements of climate-smart destination branding include:

Integration of climate objectives into brand narratives	Climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience should be clearly reflected in destination storytelling, imagery, slogans, and value propositions. Highlighting restored ecosystems, climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable transport, and regenerative tourism offer.
Linking place identity with climate responsibility	Destinations can position climate action as part of their cultural and territorial identity, for example, by showcasing traditional land-use practices, coastal stewardship, or community-led conservation. This strengthens authenticity and emotional connection.

Emphasizing Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem services	NbS such as dune restoration, wetland protection, and urban green spaces can be promoted as both climate solutions and visitor experiences. This helps translate abstract climate goals into tangible local benefits.
Promoting low-carbon and climate-resilient experiences	Climate-smart branding can guide visitors toward off-season, low-impact activities that reduce pressure on vulnerable sites while enhancing quality. This aligns communication with vulnerability mapping.
Alignment with policy frameworks and standards	Branding should align with the EU Green Deal, SDGs, Glasgow Declaration, and GSTC standards to reinforce legitimacy and demonstrate climate leadership to partners and visitors alike.

By embedding climate action into the brand, marketing becomes a strategic tool for influencing visitor’s behavior, supporting policy goals, and enhancing the destination’s competitive long-term ness. Climate-smart branding positions destinations not only as places to visit, but as trusted stewards of environmental protection and community well-being the improvement of the planet, while ensuring.

2.4. Stakeholder engagement:

Effective climate-smart destination marketing depends on inclusive governance and active stakeholder engagement. Climate action in tourism cannot be .credibly communicated through top-down messaging alone; it requires shared ownership, coordinated cross-sectoral action, and consistent narratives across public institutions, tourism businesses, communities, and civil society, including bottom-up initiatives that can complement these efforts. Collaboration across sectors (is essential see Table 2.3.)

Table 2.3. Stakeholder roles in climate-smart marketing

Stakeholder	Role	Example Activity
Local communities	Cultural input and advocacy	Community storytelling events, participatory campaigns
DMOs	Strategy and coordination	Climate focused marketing and communications
Private sector	Implementation	Eco-certified experiences, climate-conscious mobility services

NGOs & Academia	Expertise	Biodiversity education, visitor behavior research
Protected Area Managers	Conservation oversight & management	Monitoring biodiversity, enforcing protection rules, guiding low-impact tourism activities

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) play a central coordinating role, but effective climate communication emerges from collaborative, multi-level engagement. Stakeholder participation ensures that messages reflect local realities, address vulnerabilities equitably, and support socially just climate action.

Table 2.4. Key principles of stakeholder-driven climate marketing (Fejzić & Usher, 2024)

Principle	Description
Multi-level governance and coordination	Marketing efforts should align local initiatives with national and EU tourism-climate policies. Clarify roles among municipalities, DMOs, protected area managers, and national tourism authorities.
Community involvement and local legitimacy	Residents, SMEs, and cultural leaders should co-create climate messages (García-García et al., 2023). Their voices enrich stories and build legitimacy for sustainable measures.
Private sector engagement and implementation	Early involvement of tourism providers allows for aligned messaging and increased adoption of low-carbon practices.
Cross-sector collaboration and knowledge exchange	Involve NGOs, researchers, and environmental agencies to improve scientific accuracy and behavioral design in messaging, , and helps craft messages that resonate with the target audience
Capacity building and internal alignment	Staff training across the destination should be trained in climate communication, risk framing, and sustainability reporting. Internal alignment is key to consistency.

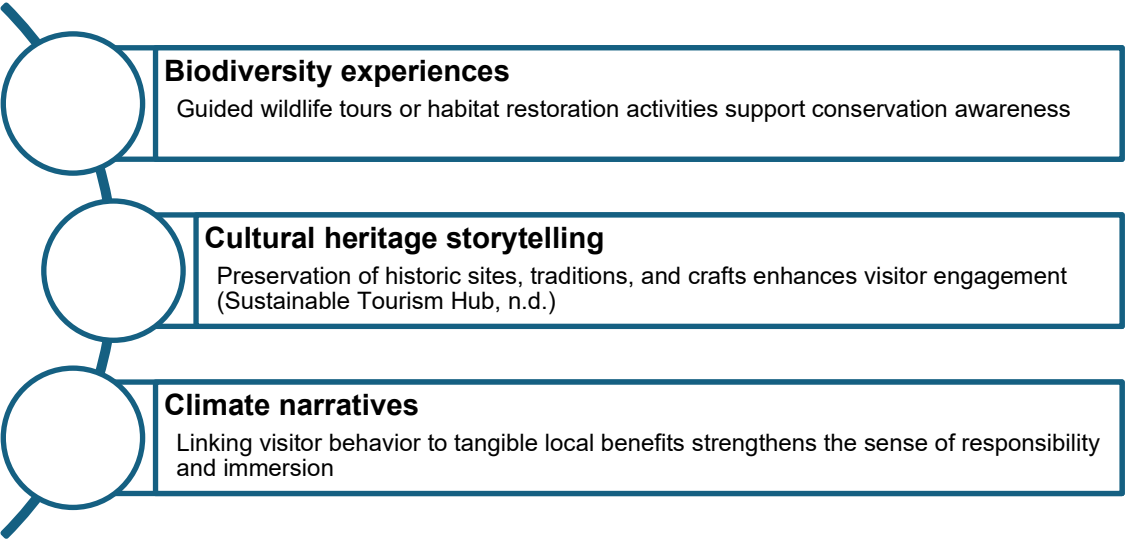
Stakeholder collaboration also enables **co-creation of content**, such as resident-led storytelling, ambassador programs, and context-specific nudges that guide visitor behavior. These approaches increase trust, reduce resistance, and help visitors see climate action as a shared journey, not an imposed external action.

In this manual m’s framework, stakeholder-driven governance is a foundational enabler of all other climate-smart marketing strategies. It ensures that destination communication is not only impactful and evidence-based but also locally grounded, inclusive, and resilient.

2.5. Intersection with biodiversity and cultural heritage

Sustainable tourism marketing intersects with biodiversity conservation and cultural heritage preservation, offering opportunities to create deeper, more meaningful visitor experiences. By linking tourism to conservation and heritage initiatives, destinations can foster visitor awareness, emotional engagement, and responsible behaviors. (see Table 2.5). These connections also support environmental and social goals, helping to safeguard both natural ecosystems and cultural identities.

Figure 2.1. Sustainable Tourism: Integrating Nature, Heritage, and Climate Narratives



Storytelling and interpretive strategies play a central role in helping visitors understand how their actions contribute to broader ecological and cultural goals. These tools not only enhance individual experiences, but also build a strong, place-based understating of climate resilience. As highlighted in recent IUCN WCPA guidance, tourism communication can also build social support for biodiversity conservation by connecting visitor experiences with the management and

protection of protected and conserved areas, local livelihoods, and ecosystem services (Mandić et al., 2025).

Table 2.5. Linking Climate Action to Visitor Experience

Focus Area	Climate & Conservation Link	Visitor Messaging Example
Biodiversity	Ecosystem protection, habitat restoration, species monitoring	“Explore thriving coastal habitats while supporting conservation”; “Discover restored wetlands and help protect migratory birds”
Cultural heritage	Heritage resilience, climate adaptation for historic sites, safeguarding intangible traditions	“Experience traditions preserved for future generations”; “Walk through historic towns safeguarded from climate impacts”
Climate action	Local climate solutions, carbon reduction, sustainable tourism practices	“Join our journey to carbon-neutral tourism”; “Support eco-certified experiences that reduce emissions”
Nature-based experiences	Ecosystem-based adaptation, NbS engagement, wildlife encounters	“Take part in reforestation hikes or coral restoration projects and see your impact firsthand”
Community & culture	Linking local knowledge with conservation, cultural storytelling	“Meet local artisans preserving traditions while contributing to sustainable livelihoods”
Education & awareness	Interpretive trails, visitor centers, guided tours	“Learn how your choices shape the future of our forests, rivers, and historic sites”

Marketing strategies should balance inspiration with clear, actionable steps, helping visitors become active participants in conservation. Encouraging hands-on engagement, such as volunteering, citizen science, or local heritage workshops, can deepen connection and create visible social proof of sustainable behavior.

These participatory approaches make climate action tangible, personal, and culturally resonant.

2.6. Transferable Lessons from European and Mediterranean Projects

A wide range of European and Mediterranean initiatives have demonstrated effective ways to integrate climate action, sustainability, and behavioral change into tourism development and communication. While this manual does not replicate these projects, their outcomes offer transferable lessons that can guide destinations toward more impactful climate-smart marketing strategies (see Table 2.6.).

Table 2.6. Transferable Lessons from previous projects

Strategic Focus	Project Example	Lessons Learned
Integration of conservation and tourism planning	<i>DestiMED Plus</i>	Aligning tourism with conservation strengthens environmental outcomes and brand value. Carefully designed ecotourism itineraries become communication tools linking biodiversity with visitor experience.
Behavioural insights and nudging	<i>Nudge My Tour</i>	Behavioural science can guide low-impact choices through subtle cues. Nudges embedded in apps, signage, and infrastructure can reduce emissions and resource use without imposing restrictions.
Capacity building and innovation for low-carbon tourism	<i>VINCI</i>	Training, digital tools, and innovation equip tourism professionals to embed climate objectives into daily operations. Awareness must be followed by skill-building.

Ecosystem-based coastal and landscape management	<i>POSBEMED 2</i>	Nature-based solutions in coastal destinations (e.g., dunes, wetlands) offer both protective functions and storytelling value. Translating ecological functions into engaging messages builds support.
Protected area co-design and community ecotourism	Creation of the Vjosa Wild River National Park	Involving local stakeholders in the creation of protected areas fosters ownership and generates authentic ecotourism narratives rooted in place and climate protection.

The collective initiatives show that climate-smart tourism marketing is most effective when it is:

- grounded in real environmental action,
- informed by behavioral science,
- supported by capacity building and innovation,
- embedded within robust governance and policy frameworks.

These aligns directly with the philosophy of this manual: that marketing is not a decorative layer, but a strategic lever for influencing visitor behavior, advancing policy goals, and reinforcing climate adaptation efforts.

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action points
Sustainable & regenerative tourism principles	Promote tourism that minimizes harm (sustainable) or restores and revitalizes ecosystems and communities (regenerative). Embed environmental, social, and economic sustainability.
Market trends & climate-conscious tourism	Respond to growing demand for low-carbon travel, eco-labels, immersive nature experiences, and climate action. Use trends to strengthen brand differentiation.

Climate action as a core brand value	Embed climate adaptation, mitigation, and NbS into brand identity. Prioritize transparency, alignment with frameworks, and storytelling rooted in real actions.
Stakeholder engagement & governance	Inclusive, multi-level collaboration among DMOs, businesses, civil society, academia, and local communities. Strengthen messaging with legitimacy and shared ownership.
Integration with biodiversity & cultural heritage	Design marketing that connects climate action to tangible conservation and heritage efforts. Use participatory and educational formats to build engagement.
Lessons from European & Mediterranean projects	Leverage proven strategies: ecotourism alignment, behavioral nudges, ecosystem-based communication, and peer learning. Adapt tools and methods to local needs.

3.UNDERSTANDING DMO NEEDS AND STATUS IN CLIMATE ACTION COMMUNICATION

3.1. Short overview of survey and sample

For the purpose of this study, empirical research was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 25 questions in total (18 closed and 7 open-ended). The survey took place in November 2025, using a purposive sample of 15 respondents. Purposive sampling was employed to capture expert perspectives from destination management organizations and related institutions with direct responsibility for strategic planning and climate-related decision-making in tourism. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms and shared via e-mail. While the sample size is relatively small, all participants were representatives of institutions highly relevant to this study, which lends significance to the insights gathered.

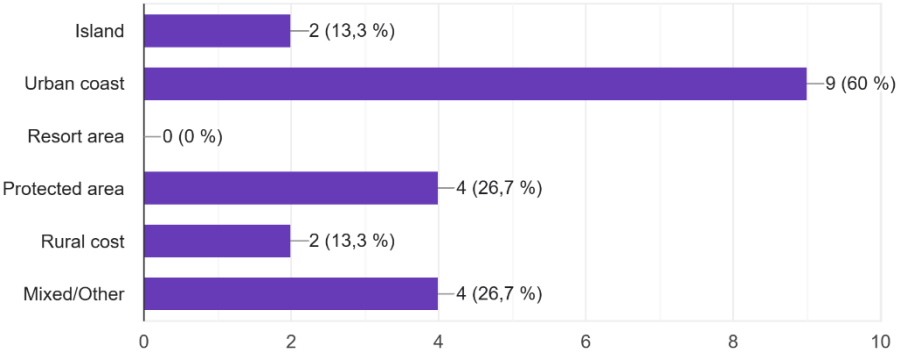
Participants represented a diverse geographical distribution: five from Croatia (Dubrovnik, Nin, Zadar, Split, and island of Krk), two from Montenegro (Budva and Herceg Novi), two from Spain (Barcelona province and Valencia), two from France (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, and Nice Côte d'Azur), and one each from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Neum), Italy (Roseto Capo Spulico, Calabria), Greece (Crete), and Lebanon (Omar Abi Ali).

In terms of professional roles, respondents were grouped into three categories:

1. *strategic leadership and policy roles – individuals responsible for tourism policies, funding decisions and long-term strategies* (DMO Director, Director, Head of Strategic Projects – Tourism Department, Head of Sustainable Tourism, Assistant Director and a Ministry Employee-tourism-related role);
2. *Project and operational management – professionals involved in coordination and implementation of tourism initiatives* (e.g.. manager, local administration manager, project manager, Leader of Sustainable Tourism Project and Project officer for sustainable tourism), and
3. *institutional and technical staff – those contributing technical expertise and execution tasks* (supporting., DMO associate, Heraklion Tourism Directorate employee, Local administration and Local administration-employee level).

Respondents were also asked to identify the type of coastal destination (they represent Figure 3.1.). The largest group (60%) represented urban coastal areas, followed by protected areas (26.7%), mixed/other types (26.7%), island destinations (13,3%), and rural coast (13.3%).

Figure 3.1. Type of coastal destination



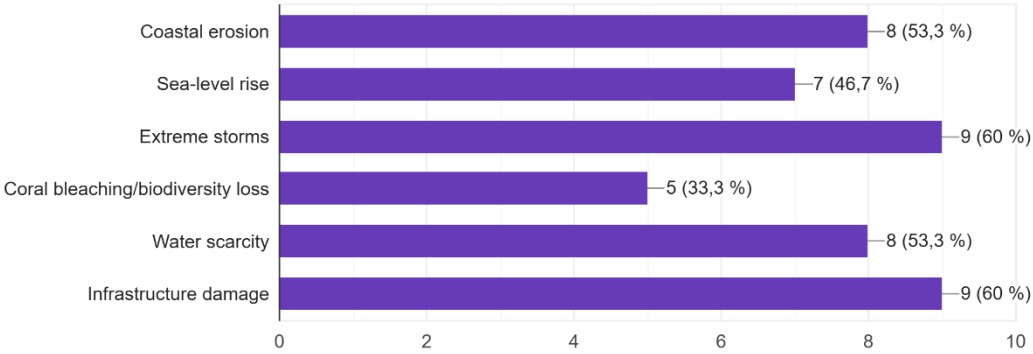
When asked about the annual number of overnights per year., responses varied widely, from 200,000 to 15.5 million, highlighting the different scales of tourism pressure and exposure among destinations

Respondents also reported the most visible climate impacts in their areas (Figure 3.2):

1. Infrastructure damage (60%),
2. Extreme storms (60%),
3. Coastal erosion (53.3%),
4. Water scarcity (53.3%),
5. Sea-level rise (46.7%),

Coral bleaching/biodiversity loss (33.3%).

Figure 3.2. Most visible climate impact in destinations



3.2. Status of marketing and communication of sustainability and climate topics

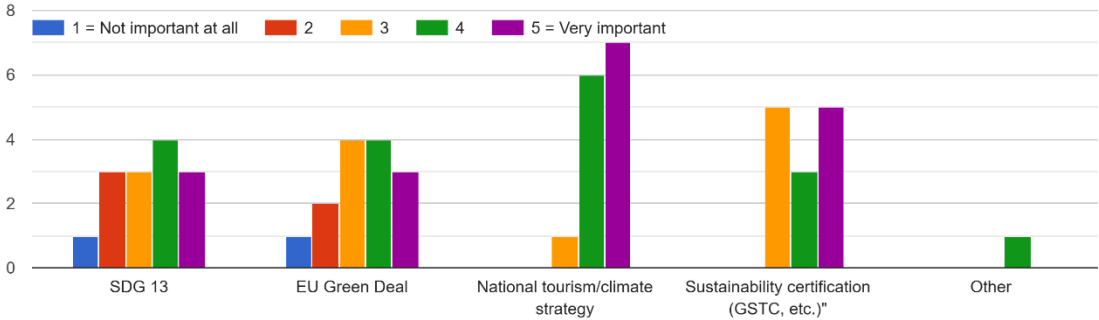
Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which climate action is integrated into their destination’s marketing efforts, using scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Most respondents (46.7%) rated the integration as moderate, while 26.7% considered it high or very high, and another 26.7% rated it as low.

To contextualize these ratings, respondents were also asked to identify the sustainability themes that currently receive the greatest emphasis in their marketing. The most frequently cited themes were: Community & culture (80%), Biodiversity protection (46.7%), after which follow Nature-based tourism (40%), Low-carbon/slow travel (40%), and Regeneration/resilience stories (33.3%).

In addition to thematic focus, the survey examined how well destination marketing aligns with international sustainability and climate frameworks (figure 3.3). Alignment levels varied:

1. 93% considered Natural tourism/Climate Strategy as the most important Sustainability
2. 61% regarded certification (GSTC, etc.) as very important, while 39% consider it moderately important.
3. 50% viewed SDG13 (Climate Action) as very important, while 29% found it not important, and 21% moderately important.
4. 50% considered EU Green deal very important, 29% moderately, and 21% not important.

Figure 3.3. Importance of alignment with global climate and sustainability frameworks



Respondents also identified the key actors involved in climate-related marketing decisions: Tourism operators, after which follow (80%), Government agencies (66.7%), Local communities (60%), NGOs (40%), Researchers (33.3%), and Visitors/residents (33.3%).

Despite the diversity of actors, perceptions of collaboration effectiveness were mixed. While 46.6% considered collaborations very effective, another 46.7% expressed neutral opinions, and 6.7% saw them effectively in.

Encouragingly, most respondents (73.3%) expressed interest in co-creating climate communication campaigns, with locals or visitors. A small proportion (13.3%) were neutral, and 13.3% expressed no interest.

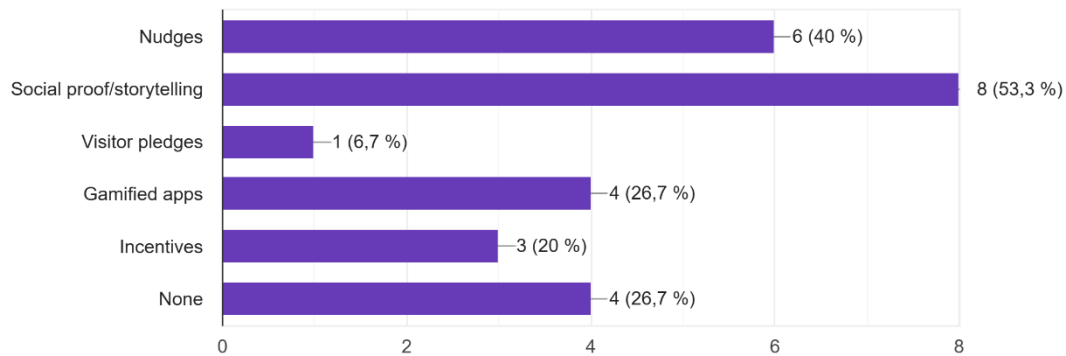
Respondents were also asked to identify which communication tools they believed had the most influence on visitor behavior (Figure 4.4.),. The responses were:

1. Social proof/storytelling (53.3%)
2. Nudges (40%),

3. Gamified apps (26.7%),
4. Incentives (20%),
5. Visitor pledges (6.7%),.

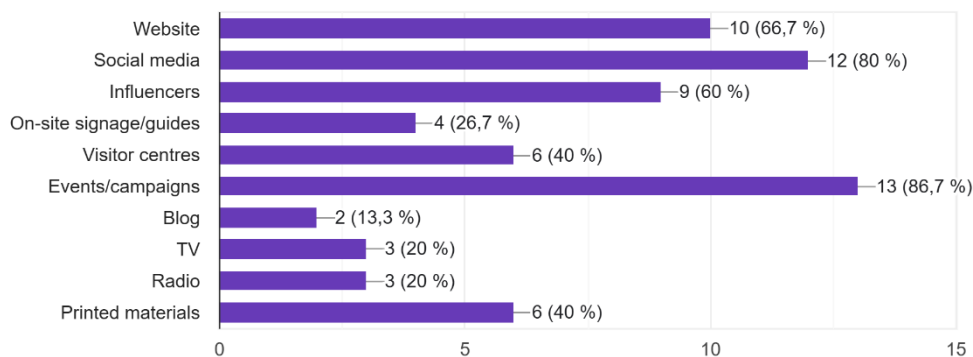
However, 26.7% of respondents stated that none of these tools listed had a noticeable effect on behavior.

Figure 3.4. Importance of tools impacting visitor behavior



Regarding communication channels used to promote sustainability (Figure 4.5), the most frequently used were: Events/campaigns (86.7%), ;Social media (80%); Website (66.7%); Influencers (60%); Printed materials (40%); Visitor centers (40%); On-site signage/guides (26.7%); TV (20%); Radio (20%); Blogs (13.3%).

Figure 3.5. Channels used in sustainability actions communication



While a variety of channels are used, the confidence of communicators in addressing climate topics remains limited: only 33.3% feel confident 33.3% marked their level of confidence with a moderate mark. 33.3% do not consider themselves confident.

This varying confidence may influence which messaging styles are adopted and how effectively they resonate with audiences.

When asked which messaging approaches generate the greatest impact on audiences, respondents gave the following responses:

1. inspirational stories and community-led initiatives: 73%), rated (very) high, 20% moderate, and 7% low. impact
2. Educational facts: 54% (very) high, 26% moderate, and 20% low. impact
3. Urgency/Risk *messaging*: 40% (very) high, 33% low, and 27% moderate. Impact

4. Hope/empowerment *narratives*: 40% (very) high, 40% moderate, 7% low impact.

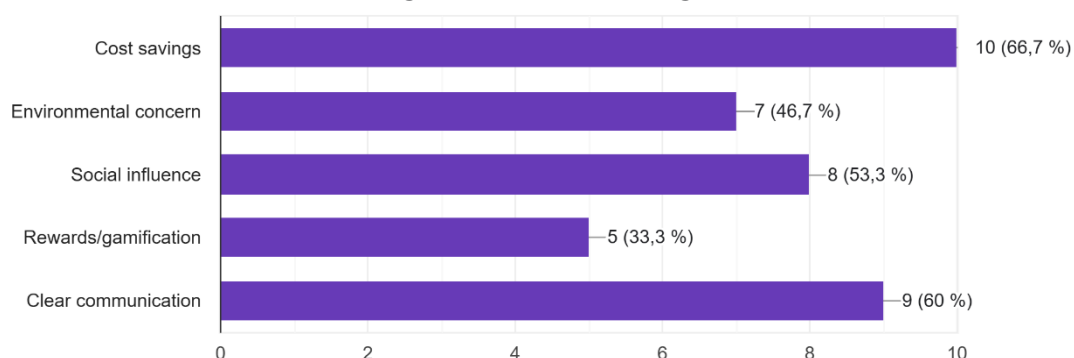
This indicates a preference for emotionally resonant and locally grounded messages, rather than purely informational or fear-based approaches.

3.3. Communication and marketing perspectives and needs

When asked which visitor behaviors need to change most urgently, respondents emphasized waste reduction (93.3%) as the top priority, follow Water and energy use (86.7%), seasonality (80%) and Transport choices (66.7%).

To better understand what motivate such behavior change (respondents were asked to identify the key drivers influencing visitors (Figure 3.6). The most cited motives were Cost savings (66.7%), Clear communication (60%); Social influence (53.3%); Environmental concern (46.7%); and Rewards/ gamification (33.3%). This suggests that framing climate-friendly behaviors as cost-effective and socially supported may be more persuasive than purely environmental appeals.

Figure 3.6. Main motives leading to behavior change



In parallel with behavioral, insights, the survey explored the internal capacity destination to deliver climate communication. When asked whether they had a dedicated role for sustainability or climate communication, responses were mixed: 46.7% responded negatively, 33.3% said yes, and 20% reported a shared role.

Respondents were also asked what type of support would most enhance their ability to promote change in behavior. The top responses include Funding (80%); Behavioral design skills (60%); Training on climate storytelling (53.3%); Visitor-carbon data tools (40%); Monitoring KPIs (33.3%); and Cofacilitation of c-creation (6.7%).

To assess the value of external guidance, respondents were asked about the usefulness of a manual on climate communication. An overwhelming 93.3% found such a manual very useful, with only one respondent (6.7%) indicating it would not be useful.

Perceptions of training module were more mixed: 66.6% rated it very useful, 26.7% considered it moderately useful, and 6.7% did not find it useful.

Despite this interest in support materials, respondents also highlighted significant structural and contextual barriers to effective climate communication. These barriers can be grouped into four interrelated thematic categories:

Awareness and behavioral barriers

- Low public awareness and limited understanding of climate impacts
- Resistance to adopting new behaviours
- Need for continuous environmental education

Economic and resource constraints

- Economic pressures, with residents and businesses prioritizing short-term income
- Limited funding and resources for engagement

Communication and messaging challenges

- Use of technical language that is inaccessible to non-specialist audiences
- Underuse of available communication channels
- Weak outreach tools, including limited signage and insufficient digital or cultural presence

Governance and coordination gaps

- Lack of coordination across tourism and governance stakeholders

Respondents were also invited to share examples of effective climate-related campaigns from their own destinations. These included:

1. Forest Fire Prevention campaigns using pre-season social media videos
2. School Climate Days involving tree planting and education activities
3. farmer training on water saving irrigation
4. awareness hikes that interpret climate impacts on ecosystems
5. Nin's long-standing EDEN label and related outreach activities
6. Bird Watching Days, cleanups, and commemorative materials winter
7. W-as-summer promotions to address seasonality
8. Interactive climate walks for children in Crete
9. "Trees of the Climate Pledge"—a participatory marathon event
10. "Zero Drop"—a water efficiency campaign in Heraklion.

Finally, when asked what types of support national, regional, or EU bodies should provide, respondents emphasized proposed:

1. Increased funding for conservation, fire prevention, water management, and sustainable tourism,
2. capacity-building programs for staff and service providers, clear policies
3. Cy and regulations frameworks (stronger national laws on protected areas, waste management, and land use to support climate action),
4. Better access to data (), infrastructure climate impacts, early warnings, etc.
5. investment (visitor center trails, water-saving systems), media
6. M campaigns on shared climate challenges, pilot
7. P projects to test local solutions/actions,
8. Legislative support for environmental protection,
9. Promotion of eco-tourism at national and international levels.

This feedback reflects both a desire for top-down coordination and the need for local implementation capacity. Respondents are eager to engage, but often lack the structural resources, time, or tools to do so effectively.

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action Points
Visible climate impacts	Infrastructure most observed: i damage, extreme storms, coastal erosion, water scarcity, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss.
Current marketing integration	Moderate Overall emphasis on community & culture, biodiversity, nature-based tourism, low-carbon travel, regeneration resilience narratives. partial alignment with global frameworks such as the SDGs, EU Green Deal, and sustainability certifications.
Stakeholders collaboration	Key actors include tourism operators, government agencies, local communities, NGOs, researchers, and visitors. While 46.6% rate collaboration as effective, 73.3% are open to co-creating campaigns.
Visitor behavior focus & motivators	Top behaviors targets: waste reduction, water/energy use, seasonality, and transport choice. Main motivators: cost savings, clear messaging, social proof, environmental concern, and gamification.
Tools & channels	Effective tools include storytelling, behavioral nudges, gamified apps, and incentives. Main channels: events, social media, websites, influencers, print media, visitor centers, and on-site signage.
Capacity needs & support	Dedicated climate communication roles are limited. Key needs include funding, training in behavioral design and storytelling, visitor-carbon tracking tools, KPI monitoring systems.
Barriers	Core barriers: awareness, economic, technical prioritization inaccessible language, fragmented messaging, limited outreach tools, cultural resistance, and funding/resource constraints.
Successful campaigns	Notable examples: fire prevention videos, school climate days, awareness hikes, green cleanups, climate-focused walks, participatory marathons (Trees of the Climate Pledge), and the Zero Drop water-saving campaign.

4.COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Effective climate communication is essential to mobilize stakeholders, inspire behavior change among visitors, strengthen collaboration, and enhance destination's credibility. Climate action messaging must be clear, engaging, and inclusive, balancing scientific accuracy with emotional resonance and practical relevance for diverse audiences.

4.1. Climate framing, storytelling techniques and NbS communication

Framing refers to how information is presented to shape audience understanding and interpretation an issue. In climate communication, framing influences strongly how people perceive urgency, relevance, and the potential for action. For example, presenting climate change local actions through **impacts on tourism assets** (e.g., sea-level rise threatening beaches or heritage sites) helps make abstract climate issues more relatable for residents and visitors.

Research shows that connecting climate messages to *personal values, cultural identity and community well-being* increases their relevance and behavioral impact.²

Storytelling adds a human and emotional layer to climate messaging, making complex information more accessible and memorable. Projects such as *MAIA Climate Narratives* show how climate science can be woven into cultural stories, visual metaphors, and community, across perspectives, shared via digital media, exhibitions, and social platforms³.

Examples of effective climate framing and storytelling:

- ✓ **Local heritage under threat:** A campaign may show how rising temperatures and extreme weather events endanger historic coastal ,towns directly linking climate impacts to beloved cultural landmarks.
- ✓ **Visitor testimonials:** Share stories of visitors who participate in sustainable actions, like eco-volunteering or low-emission travel.
- ✓ **“Journey” narratives:** Frame the visitor experience as a climate-positive journey, where travel, discovery, and conservation are connected.

² [Sustainability Directory](#)

³ maia-project.eu

Online Resource: *MAIA Climate Narratives: Scientific Storytelling Approaches for Climate Communication and Action* offer tools and tested narrative strategies that can be adapted to tourism contexts⁴.

Effective climate communication translates science into stories with emotional impact, calls to action, and visible (benefits Tab.5.1). Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) offer rich opportunities for this, as they link ecosystem restoration and biodiversity to visitor behavior. This approach is consistent with global best practice highlighted by the IUCN WCPA, which emphasizes the role of nature-based tourism and ecosystem restoration narratives in linking visitor experiences with tangible biodiversity and climate outcomes, particularly in protected and conserved areas (Mandić et al., 2025).

Recent international policy frameworks (IUCN, 2022) highlight NbS as a powerful communication bridge between climate action, biodiversity protection, and human well-being. In particular, the Global Biodiversity Framework emphasizes NbS under Targets 8 and 11, linking ecosystem restoration directly to climate resilience and nature’s contributions to people. These concepts translate well into tourism storytelling, allowing destinations to frame visitor actions as direct contributions to ecosystem services such as coastal protection, water regulation, and biodiversity recovery.

Table 4.1 NbS Communication Tools for Visitor Behavior Change

Tool / Channel	Mechanism	Tourism Example	Behavioral / Awareness Outcome
Interpretive Trails	On-site storytelling & engagement	Coastal dunes walk with signage explaining sand stabilization	Visitors learn about NbS benefits and adopt low-impact behaviors (staying on trails)
Signage & Visual Cues	Nudging & behavioral reminders	Wetland boards showing how restored marshes filter water	Promotes trail etiquette and reduced water use
Digital Nudging	gamification & reminders	Mobile alerts about tree planting or beach restoration challenges	Encourages participation and awareness

⁴ [MAIA Climate Narratives – Storytelling for Climate Engagement](#)

Visitor Centers & Exhibitions	Interactive storytelling	Live biodiversity dashboards from reforestation projects	Enhanced understanding of ecosystems and promotes voluntary climate action
Social Proof & Community Stories	Peer modeling	Videos of other visitors engaging in NbS activities	Strengthens adoption of climate-positive behaviors
Guided Tours & Ambassadors	Personal storytelling	Guides restored explain reef ration or mangrove planting	Emotion builds connection and social norms around sustainable travel
Activities with local communities	Participatory engagement & co-creation	Visitors helping local fishers restore mangroves or participating in community-led habitat restoration	Stronger connection to local culture and ecosystems, increased commitment to sustainable behaviors and conservation support

4.2. Strategic messaging: balancing inspiration, urgency, and hope

Effective messaging needs to balance urgency with inspiration and agency. Fear-based messaging alone often leads to apathy or disengagement. Instead, combining urgency with hope, actionable choices, and social norms positive stories empower audiences to act⁵.

Key elements of strategic messaging include:

⁵ [Sustainability Directory](#)



Clear, data driven insights on climate risks relevant to the destination (e.g., sea temperature rise affecting marine biodiversity)

Stories of successful climate initiatives or community led resilience projects

Tangible examples of what individuals and groups can do, such as choosing low carbon travel modes or participating in habitat restoration

Illustrative messaging examples:

- *“Protect our heritage, preserve our future”* - emphasizing visitor responsibility.
- *“Choose low-carbon experiences”*: – highlights sustainable travel modes.
- *“Your footprint matters”*: – encourages mindful habits like reusing water bottles or choosing eco-certified services.

4.3. Inclusive narratives: addressing diverse visitors and residents’ audiences

Climate communication must speak to diverse audiences, locals, international visitors, youth, older travelers, who have different values, languages, and climate awareness. Tailored and inclusive narratives foster engagement and reduce alienation⁶.

Strategies for inclusive messaging:

- ✓ Language & tone: avoid technical jargon; use plain terms, enhance understanding of the issue, raise awareness, and foster a greater willingness to act.
- ✓ Cultural relevance: Reflect local heritage, languages, and social norms.
- ✓ Community voices: Feature local stakeholders, guides, artisans, and residents in messaging.
- ✓ platforms diversity: Use multiple media types, e.g., social media, on-site signage, interpretive tours, brochures, for different groups.

⁶ [Sustainability Directory](#)

Example: For youth, climate action connects with *future freedom and justice*. For older audiences, it relates to *legacy, heritage preservation, and intergenerational responsibility*.

4.4. Tools for transparency and credibility (e.g., climate disclosures, carbon labels)

Trust is essential in climate messaging. Audiences are more likely to support destinations that are transparent, consistent, and accountable. Utilizing standardized tools builds credibility.

Examples of transparency tools and frameworks:

- Climate disclosures: Publish updates on carbon emissions, climate goals, and adaptation measures.⁷
- Carbon labels: Display product or experience carbon footprints to inform visitor's choices.
- Third-party certifications: Promote recognitions such as GSTC or Green Key to demonstrate commitment.
- Open data dashboards: Share environmental data (e.g., water use, biodiversity outcomes) openly to show progress.

Benefits of transparency tools:

- Reinforces *destination credibility*
- Builds *visitor trust and engagement*
- Enables benchmarking and improvement

Supports *alignment with international frameworks* (e.g., Glasgow Declaration⁸)
Online Resource: The *Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism* provides a framework and reports commitments for destinations aiming to align tourism with science-based climate goals⁹.

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action points
Purpose of climate communication	Mobilizing stakeholders, inspire visitor behavior change, enhance credibility, and drive engagement

⁷ [htz.hr](https://www.htz.hr)

⁸ <https://www.untourism.int/the-glasgow-declaration-on-climate-action-in-tourism>

⁹ <https://www.htz.hr/hr-HR/turisticka-zajednica-zagrebace-zupanije-prva-iz-hrvatske-potpisala-glasgow-declaration-climate-action-tourism>

	through emotionally resonant, scientifically sound, and inclusive messaging.
Climate framing & storytelling	Use local impacts stories, visitor testimonials, and “journey” narratives to make climate change relatable. Combine data with cultural and emotional dimensions.
Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for messaging	NbS like dune restoration, wetlands, reforestation, and coral reef restoration create tangible linking climate narratives tied to behavior change.
NbS communication tools	Interpretive Use trails, digital nudges, Inq visual cues, guided tours and community storytelling to deepen awareness, engagement, and adoption of sustainable behaviors.
Strategic messaging	Balance urgency with empowerment. Inspire action through targeted slogans and examples that show visitors how their choices matter.
Inclusive narratives	Adapt messages for different demographics. Ensure accessibility, cultural relevance, and broad platform reach. Involve community voices.
Transparency & credibility	Use climate disclosures, carbon labels, third-party certifications, and open dashboards to demonstrate real action and build long-term trust.

5. VISITOR AND RESIDENT BEHAVIOR CHANGE MODELS

Tourism destinations face increasing pressure to manage visitor behavior in ways that support environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and community well-being. Behavioral science provides valuable framework for understanding decision-making and influencing actions without imposing heavy restrictions. This section presents practical strategies for destination managers, policymakers, and tourism operators, drawing on concepts such as nudging, co-designed experiences, visitor codes of conduct, and digital behavior tools.

5.1. Behavioral science insights

Behavioral science offers tools to influence decisions by shaping the choice environment, making responsible actions easier, socially reinforced, and cognitively engaging. In tourism contexts, these approaches are particularly relevant because decisions are often made spontaneously, in unfamiliar settings, and under time pressure, with tourists relying more on cues, emotions, and social signals than on pre-existing norms or long-term intentions. Unlike general public behavior models, tourism behavior is situational, temporary, and highly context-dependent, which increases the effectiveness of well-designed behavioral interventions at the destination level.

Nudging: Choice structuring to guide behaviors without restricting freedom (Nudge). Examples include signage promoting respectful attire, floor markings directing visitor flows, and visual cues for waste sorting (Souza-Neto et al., 2023).

Social proof: Tourists are more likely to adopt sustainable behaviors when they observe others doing the same. Photos, videos, or testimonials that model desired behaviors help establish new social norms within destinations (Zakharova, 2020).

Consumer neuroscience: Insights from neurophysiological techniques help identify which natural or cultural stimuli capture attention, elicit emotional engagement, and influence tourists' decision-making. Applying these insights enables the design of more effective and impactful destination communication and marketing strategies.

Value-action gap: Although many tourists express positive attitudes toward sustainability, they often fail to act accordingly due to habits, convenience, or lack of immediate rewards. Bridging this gap requires interventions that make sustainable choices easier, more visible, and personally rewarding (Ni et al., 2025; Souza-Neto et al., 2023).

Table 5.1. Behavioral science tools for visitor behavior change

Tool	Mechanism	Tourism Example	Outcome
Nudging	Choice architecture	Signage for reducing energy use	Increased compliance
Social proof	Peer modeling	Photos of visitors following rules	Higher adherence
Value-action interventions	Simpler, rewarding choices	Reusable water bottles with prompts	Reduced single-use plastic
Digital nudging	Real-time reminders	Mobile alerts about cultural norms	Improved visitor behavior
Consumer neuroscience	Attention and emotion-based engagement	Eye-tracking, galvanic skin response & electroencephalography-informed signage to highlight the ecosystem stimuli that resonates most with tourists	Greater awareness, emotional connection, and sustainable behavioral adoption

5.2. Co-designing experiences with stakeholders for low-impact behavior

Co-designing processes involve local communities, tourism operators, and policymakers to create sustainability strategies that are locally relevant and socially supported. Tools include workshops, participatory mapping, and scenario planning. Evidence from protected and conserved areas globally shows that co-designed tourism experiences, developed jointly with local communities, protected area managers, and tourism operators, are more likely to achieve long-term compliance and positive conservation outcomes (Mandić et al., 2025). Such approaches

strengthen local legitimacy, reduce conflict, and embed visitor behavior change within broader governance systems.

Key benefits of co-design approaches:

- Tailored visitor experiences: e.g., walking tours, workshops, and thematic trails promoting low-impact behavior (Frey & George, 2010; Sofield et al., 2017).
- *Stronger community buy-in*, enhancing *legitimacy* and *compliance*.
- *Reduced over-tourism* through better spatial planning and crowd management.

Table 5.2. Co-design strategies for sustainable visitor experiences

Strategy	Stakeholders Involved	Example	Impact
Participatory workshops	Residents, tour operators, protected area managers, indigenous communities, private companies	Mapping sensitive heritage areas	Improved visitor flow
Collaborative experience design	Local businesses, , protected area managers, indigenous communities, private companies	Heritage, walks, food & craft tours	Lower-impact tourism
Feedback loops	Residents, visitors, municipal staff	Surveys, town halls	Adaptive visitor management

5.3. Visitor codes of conduct and how to communicate them

Visitor codes of conduct set clear behavioral expectations for in cultural and environmental settings. Their success depends on strategic communication,

especially before and during the visitor’s stay. Effective communication strategies include:

- **Pre-arrivale:** Include behavioral guidance in booking emails, travel confirmations, and visitor websites. This sets the tone early.
- **On-site signage:** Use multilingual, symbolic, and visually prominent signs in high-traffic zones. For example, signs in Dubrovnik and Split that request quiet conduct and respectful clothing in heritage areas.
- **Digital tools:** Mobile apps, QR codes, and interactive maps offer tailored nudges. These can also show real-time **feedback** or offer rewards for positive behavior.
- **Positive framing:** Focus on benefits over restrictions. For instance, “Protect your heritage and dress respectfully”) is more effective than “No inappropriate attire.”
- **Social reinforcement:** Use testimonials and peer examples to normalize responsible behavior and boost compliance (Zakharova, 2020; Bicchieri & Dimant, 2022).

Table 5.3. Communication channels for visitor codes of conduct

Channel	Approach	Behavioral Goal	Example
Pre-arrival	booking confirmation email, travel guides	Awareness & expectation setting	clothing & etiquette info
On-site	Signage visual icons	Immediate behavior guidance	Respectful conduct in churches
Digital	Apps, QR codes, prompts	Real-time nudging	Notifications on noise or littering
Social reinforcement	Peer modeling	Norm-setting	Photos of compliant visitors

Well-communicated visitor codes also reinforce **climate-conscious behavior**, such as choosing walking or cycling routes over motorized transport, reducing single-use plastics, or conserving water in accommodation settings.

5.4. Role of interpretation, gamification, and mobile apps

Interpretation techniques connect visitors to local values and history, fostering emotional investment and pro-environmental behavior (Engelen et al., 2018).

Gamification uses rewards and challenges to make sustainability fun and participatory:

- ✓ Badges for completing eco-friendly activities.
- ✓ Quizzes on heritage and sustainability.
- ✓ Leaderboards for small-group competitions.

Mobile tools enhance engagement and behavioral tracking:

- ✓ Real-time alerts about rules, sensitive areas, or best practices.
- ✓ Digital pledges for eco-behavior.
- ✓ Social features for community accountability.
- ✓ Augmented reality to visualize climate or cultural impact.

Table 5.4. Digital and gamification tools for visitor behavior management

Tool	Mechanism	Tourism Example	Outcome
Mobile apps	Real-time guidance	Alerts on restricted areas	Fewer rule violations
Digital pledges	Commitment mechanism	Promise to respect nature & heritage	Improved adherence
Gamification	Badges & Rewards challenges	Earn points for activities coupons	Higher engagement
Augmented reality	Immersive experiences	Visualize historic sites at risk	Deeper learning & responsibility

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action Points
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Behavioral science insights	Use nudging, social proof, and “value-action gap” strategies to make sustainable behavior easier, visible, and rewarding.
Behavioral tools	Signage examples include social modeling, mobile reminders, reusable items; outcomes: better compliance, reduced waste, informed visitors.
Co-designing of experiences	Involve communities and tourism actors in experience planning; outcomes: more relevant and accepted low-impact tourism models.
Codes of conduct	Communications layered (pre-arrival, on-site, digital); and social reinforcement; positive framing encourages voluntary compliance.
Interpretation & gamification	Emotional storytelling, AR, digital pledges, and competitions boost learning and motivate sustained behavior change.
Digital integration & monitoring	Combine mobile platforms with behavior prompts and monitoring tools to guide choices and track impact in real time.

6.TACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

Once strategic goals for climate-smart destination communication are set, the next step is to translate them into concrete, actionable activities. This chapter outlines practical implementation approaches using digital channels, on-site communication tools, and integrated campaigns to promote climate action, influence visitor behavior, and strengthen community engagement, based on results of research presented in chapter 3.

6.1. Digital and Social Media

Digital platforms are indispensable for contemporary destination communication. They enable destinations to reach global audiences, tell compelling climate stories, and engage visitors before, during, and after their travel (Mulahasanović, 2024). This importance is reinforced by the survey results, which show that digital campaigns and events (86.7%), social media (80%), websites (66.7%), and influencers (60%) are among the most frequently used channels for communicating sustainability topics. Given respondents' moderate overall confidence in climate communication and their strong belief in storytelling and social proof as effective behavior-change tools, digital channels emerge as a critical entry point for scalable, low-cost, and adaptable climate messaging.

6.1.1. communication, combined with behavior-effective Climate-focused content planning and storytelling

Survey findings (chapter 3.) indicate that social proof and storytelling are perceived as the most impactful tools for influencing visitor behavior, while inspirational stories and community-led initiatives are rated as highly effective forms of messaging. Climate-focused content planning therefore provides a structured mechanism for translating local climate action emotionally. Strategic storytelling also responds to the identified challenge of low awareness and limited understanding of climate impacts among visitors and residents, by making complex climate issues tangible, place-based, and human-centered. Resonant narratives directly to identified in the survey, change and tangible

What to do:

- Develop an editorial calendar featuring local climate initiatives, climate impact on heritage and nature, and sustainable visitor experiences.
- Publish stories on NbS such as wetland restoration, reforestation, or dune stabilization, clearly linking them to climate adaptation and biodiversity outcomes.

Example implementation:

- Launch a series such as “*Climate Voices*” of (*Destination*), featuring conservationists, guides, or cultural custodians.

- Share user-generated content from visitors participating in restoration activities for low-carbon travel experiences.

Why it works: Storytelling transforms abstract climate data into *relatable narratives* that foster empathy and motivate action.¹⁰

Proposed KPI:

- Engagement rate (likes, comments, shares) on climate-related storytelling content
- Completion rate or average watch time for video stories

6.1.2. Influencer collaborations with environmental alignment

The survey highlights influencers as a widely used communication channel (60%), while social influences identified as a key motivator for visitor behavior change (53.3%). Influencer collaborations therefore sit at the intersection of channel effectiveness and behavioral drivers.

When carefully selected and value-aligned, influencers can increase trust, reduce the perceived abstractness of climate messaging, and model climate-positive behaviors in relatable ways. For destinations with limited communication capacity or moderate confidence in climate messaging, influencers can act as intermediaries, translating technical or policy-driven climate objectives into accessible stories grounded in lived travel experiences.

What to do:

Partner with influencers whose content and values demonstrably align with sustainability and responsible travel.

Examples:

- A “*Nature Lab*” collaboration in Scotland documenting low-impacts outdoor activities and Leave No Trace principles¹¹.
- eco-travel creators highlighting electric mobility, biodiversity experiences, or conservation volunteering.

Implementation tips:

- Priorities credibility and environmental commitment overreach alone.
- Set clear messaging guidelines focused on climate-positive behavior.

¹⁰ Resource: EU [Climate-ADAPT – Climate Change Outreach and Communication](https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/hr/metadata/tools/climate-change-outreach-and-communication-guide).
– <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/hr/metadata/tools/climate-change-outreach-and-communication-guide>

¹¹ [BALANCED TOURISM](#)

- Co-create content such as *Instagram takeovers*, *TikTok day-in-destination stories*, or *YouTube mini-series*.
- To avoid reputational risks and accusations of greenwashing, destinations should ensure full transparency, long-term value alignment, and verifiable sustainability practices when selecting influencers, rather than relying solely on popularity or aesthetic appeal.

Proposed KPI:

- Reach and engagement rate of influencer-generated climate content
- Click-through rate (CTR) to destination sustainability pages or NbS initiatives

6.1.3. Social listening and sentiment tracking

Respondents identified low awareness, weak outreach tools, and inconsistent messaging as key barriers to effective climate communication, social listening provides a practical mechanism to address these. By monitoring challenges how climate messages are received and interpreted by visitors and residents in real time. By systematically monitoring online conversations, destinations can identify misunderstandings, emerging concerns, or resistance early, allowing communication strategies to be refined before misinformation or disengagement escalates. This approach directly responds to respondents expressed need for evidence-based tools and adaptive communication practices.

What to do:

Use social listening to monitor visitors and residents' discourse on climate and tourism topics, with particular attention responses to NbS campaigns.

Why it matters:

- Enables real-time adjustment of messaging.
- Identifies misunderstanding of emerging concerns early.
- Supports evidence-based communication, an area respondents identified as needing stronger tools.

Example Implementation: monitor hashtags such as #SustainableDestination, #ClimateSmartTravel after campaign launches and refine content based on sentiment patterns.

Proposed KPI:

- Sentiment score (positive/neutral/negative) related to climate and sustainability keywords
- Volume of climate-related mentions before and after campaign launch

6.2. On-Site Communication

While digital channels dominate pre-trip phases, survey on-site communication remains essential for influencing visitor behavior at the moment decisions are made. Findings confirm that on-site tools, such as events, visitor centers, signage, and guided experiences remain essential for reinforcing sustainability messages at the destination level.

On-site communication directly addresses priority behaviors identified in Chapter 3, including waste reduction, water and energy use, transport choices, and seasonality. It also allows for interpersonal engagement, helping compensate for the limited confidence many respondents reported in discussing climate topics.

6.2.1. Signage, guided experiences, and local ambassadors

Survey respondents identified waste reduction and resource use as the most urgent visitor behaviors requiring change, highlighting the need for clear, visible, and easily understood guidance at destination level. Signage, guided experiences, and local ambassadors translate climate objectives into simple, context-specific actions.

These tools are especially valuable in destinations where staff report limited confidence in discussing climate change, as they rely on visual cues, storytelling, and human interaction rather than technical explanations. When well-designed, they help normalize sustainable behavior and reinforce local norms.

What to do:

- Deploy clear, climate-smart signage encouraging low-impact behavior.
- Train local ambassadors or volunteers to communicate climate and heritage messages.
- Use QR codes linking to deeper content on NbS, ecosystem services, or monitoring results.

Example Implementation:

- At coastal heritage sites, signage explaining sea-level rise impacts and visitors actions to reduce pressure.
- QR codes linking to short videos or interactive maps.

Comment: Ensure consistency in tone and visuals across sites to avoid fragmented messaging.

Proposed KPI:

- Sentiment score (positive/neutral/negative) related to climate and sustainability keywords
- Volume of climate-related mentions before and after campaign launch

6.2.2. Climate-smart visitor centers and exhibitions

Visitor centers were identified as an underutilized but important channel, suggesting significant untapped potential for deeper climate engagement. Climate-smart visitor centers can respond to the need for continuous education, clearer messaging, and improved outreach by providing dedicated spaces for learning, reflection, and dialogue.

When designed strategically, visitor centers can bridge the gap between abstract climate goals and tangible local action, helping visitors understand how destination-level initiatives, such as NbS or resource management, relate to their own behavior and choices.

What to do:

- Design visitor centers as learning and engagement *hubs*.

Integrate interactive exhibitions, real-time dashboards, and NbS impact displays.

Example Implementation:

- AR/VR experiences showing coastal change under different climate scenarios.
- Live dashboards displaying local emissions reductions or biodiversity indicators.

Why it works: Visitor centers move from information points to climate *literacy spaces*.

Proposed KPI:

- Average dwell time in climate-related exhibition areas
- Number of visitors engaging with interactive elements (screens, dashboards, AR/VR)

6.2.3. Interpretive trails, QR codes, and immersive technologies

Respondents highlighted experiential storytelling, nature-based tourism, and community-led initiatives as particularly effective communication approaches. Interpretive trails and immersive tools build on these preferences by combining physical experience with layered digital interpretation, allowing visitors to engage with climate and biodiversity themes in situ.

These tools enable destinations to move beyond static information toward interactive, place-based learning, helping visitors understand climate impacts while directly engaging with landscapes, ecosystems, and cultural heritage.

What to do:

- Develop interpretive trails explaining climate and biodiversity themes.
- Use QR codes linking to multimedia content.
- Offer participatory NbS activities, such as tree planting or citizen science.
- Introduce AR/VR experiences visualizing climate impacts and restoration outcomes.

Example Implementation: A Climate Interpretation Trail QR with -enabled audio explanations from local scientists.

Comment: Consider accessibility (language, mobility, sensory needs) explicitly in trail design.

Proposed KPI:

- QR code scan rate along interpretive trails
- Participation rate in NbS or citizen-science activities

6.3. Campaign Design

Campaign design connects digital and on-site tactics into coherent, measurable initiatives. Survey findings show strong interest in improving coordination across tools, channels, and stakeholders., making campaign design essential for moving beyond fragmented actions.

Well-designed campaigns help destinations move from fragmented activities toward strategic communication, ensuring that messages addressing priority behaviors are consistent, visible, and measurable over time.

6.3.1. Designing integrated climate action campaigns

Events and campaigns are the most frequently used sustainability channels, while storytelling and social proof are perceived as the most effective behavior-change tools. Integrated campaigns combining these strengths while supporting clear objectives and monitoring.

An integrated campaign includes synchronized activities across digital platforms, on-site touchpoints, media relations, and stakeholder engagement.

Steps:

1. Define objectives (e.g., increase sustainable transport awareness by 30% in six months).
2. Segment audiences (e.g., families, adventure travelers, cultural tourists).
3. Develop key messages blending inspiration and practical action.
4. Select coordinated channels (social media, visitor centers, email newsletters, local press).
5. Measure impact (engagement metrics, sentiment, behavior indicators).

Example: A “*Clean & Green Coast*” campaign linking waste reduction, volunteering, and digital storytelling.

Proposed KPI:

- Campaigns reach across channels combined with engagement rate
- Self-reported behavior change (survey-based) related to target actions

6.3.2. Community-based marketing initiatives

Community-led initiatives emerged in the survey as one of the most effective communication approaches, and a large majority of respondents expressed in collaborating willingness with residents and visitors in co-creating campaigns. Community-based marketing builds on this readiness by positioning climate action not as an external or regulatory requirement, but as a shared local value embedded in culture, identity, and everyday practice. Global experience from protected and conserved areas demonstrates that tourism initiatives grounded in local governance, Indigenous knowledge, and community benefit-sharing are more resilient and credible over time (Mandić et al., 2025). This approach also helps address barriers identified in the survey, including low awareness, cultural resistance, and fragmented or inconsistent messaging among stakeholders.

What to do: Work with residents, local businesses, community groups, and NGOs to co-design marketing initiatives that frame climate action as a collective responsibility and opportunity.

Examples:

- Community photo or storytelling contests highlighting climate-positive practices (e.g., sustainable dining, cycling tours, local conservation activities).
- Local festivals or events linking climate action with culture and heritage, including talks, exhibitions, and hands-on workshops.

Why it’s effective: Community involvement enhances credibility, fosters local ownership, and broadens the impact of campaigns beyond visitors. and legitimacy extends s, reinforcing climate-positive norms within the destination. To ensure integrity, NbS-focused campaigns should follow recognized standards such as the IUCN Global Standard for NbS, clearly communicate social and environmental safeguards, and avoid presenting NbS as stand-alone climate solutions or offset mechanisms (IUCN, 2020; UNEP & IUCN, 2021).

Proposed KPI:

- Number of local stakeholders actively involved in campaign co-creation
- Participation levels at community events or initiatives

6.3.3. NbS-Focused Marketing Campaigns

Campaigns that communicate the value of NbS can significantly increase visitor understanding, inspire behavior aligned with ecosystem protection, and foster active participation in restoration and conservation initiatives. By integrating NbS into marketing campaigns, destinations can directly link visitor experiences to environmental outcomes, reinforcing tourism's role in climate adaptation and resilience (table 6.1).

What to do: Design campaigns that highlight NbS benefits through storytelling, on-site interpretation, and digital engagement. Integrate, where appropriate, behavioral nudges that guide low-impact travel choices and encourage participation in NbS activities. Ensure that messaging aligns with EU and national climate and biodiversity priorities, making ecosystem services visible, concrete, and relatable to visitors.

Examples:

- Digital storytelling on social media featuring wetland restoration, dune stabilization, or forest regeneration projects.
- Interpretive trails with signage explaining ecosystem services and their role in climate adaptation.
- Community-led NbS *activities*, such as tree-planting days, coastal clean-ups, or citizen-science monitoring.
- Gamified mobile *tools* offer badges or rewards for participating in NbS activities or choosing sustainable routes.

Why it's effective: Communicating NbS through combined digital, on-site, and community channels improves understanding of ecosystem services, encourages climate-positive behaviours, and strengthens destination credibility. Participation-based experiences generate social proof, foster shared ownership of conservation outcomes, and support long-term engagement with low-impact tourism practices. Moreover, well-documented NbS campaigns can contribute to regional and EU-level biodiversity reporting and help justify access to biodiversity and climate adaptation funding, as nature-based solutions are explicitly recognized for their multifunctional benefits in EU policy and funding frameworks that support both biodiversity and ecosystem services outcomes¹².

Proposed KPI:

- Participation rate in NbS activities (e.g. tree planting, clean-ups)
- Increase in visitor understanding of ecosystem services (pre/post survey)

¹² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/nature-based-solutions_en?

Table 6.1. Tactical actions integrating NbS

Tactical Area	Action	Channel / Format	Behavioral / Engagement Outcome
Digital Campaigns	NbS storytelling & immersive content	Social media, apps, AR/VR, blogs	Improved understanding of ecosystem services; increased participation in NbS activities
Digital Gamification	Points, badges, challenges linked to NbS	Mobile apps, QR codes	Encourages sustainable behavior (e.g., clean-ups, tree planting, trail usage)
On-Site Interpretation	Trails, signage, QR codes with NbS information	Interpretive trails, visitor centers, exhibitions	Real-time education; reinforcement of respectful behaviors
Guided Experiences	Participation in NbS projects	Local guides, ambassadors	Active engagement; strengthens visitor–nature connection
Community Initiatives	Festivals, workshops, citizen science	Local events, volunteer programs	Social reinforcement and shared ownership of sustainability goals
Integrated Campaigns	Combine channels for NbS storytelling	Digital, on-site community platform	Consistent messaging; increased awareness and behavior change
Monitoring & Feedback	Track NbS participation and impact	Surveys, apps, KPI dashboards	Evidence-based evaluation and adaptive improvement

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action Points
Digital & social media	Use digital platforms to share climate stories, highlight NbS projects, and inspirational sustainable behavior through storytelling and social proof.
Influencer collaborations	Work with credible, eco-aligned influencers to model responsible behaviors and build trust.
Social listening	Monitor sentiment and online discussion source to refine messaging and address misconceptions in real time.
On-site communication	Use signage, ambassadors, visitor centers, and guided experiences to influence behavior at the point of decision.
Integrated campaigns	Align digital, on-site, and community actions with clear objectives and measurable outcomes.
Community-based marketing	Co-create initiatives with residents and local actors to strengthen legitimacy, ownership, and long-term impact.
NbS-focused Campaigns	Communicate ecosystem services and restoration outcomes through participatory, experiential, and gamified approaches.
Monitoring & feedback	Track behavior, participation, and engagement to support continuous improvement and accountability.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

Institutionalizing climate marketing within destination governance structures is essential for ensuring continuity, credibility, and long-term impact of climate action. Survey results indicate that while climate action is increasingly recognized as important within destination marketing, its institutional integration remains uneven and predominately moderate across destinations. Persistent limitations related to funding availability, staff capacity, confidence in climate communication, and coordination among stakeholders continue to constrain systematic implementation.

To address these challenges, climate marketing must be embedded more firmly within Destination Management Organization (DMO) structures, planning instruments, and governance frameworks, rather than relying on short-term campaigns or individual initiatives. The recommendations below outline practical pathways for institutional integration, ensuring that climate communication becomes a sustained, strategic function of destination management rather than an ad hoc activity.

Embedding climate marketing into institutional frameworks, from destination strategies to national and EU policy instruments, not only increases coherence and impact but also improves access to critical funding, strengthens policy alignment, and fosters cross-sector collaboration. Policies such as the European Green Deal and emerging EU tourism strategies creating opportunities for synergies between climate action, tourism development, and digital transformation priorities¹³.

7.1. Embedding climate marketing in DMO operations and existing plans

Survey findings show that fewer than half of respondents have a dedicated sustainability or climate communication role, with many relying on shared or informal responsibilities. This highlights a structural gap rather than a lack of awareness, underscoring the need to institutionalize climate marketing within core DMO operations.

Climate communication objectives should be explicitly integrated into destination strategies, marketing plans, and annual action programs, rather than treated as standalone campaigns. This requires a shift from project-based implementation toward climate integration as a permanent objective.

Aligning climate marketing with national and regional tourism strategies further strengthens legitimacy, policy coherence, and funding potential. For example, Croatia's Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy, linked to the

¹³EU Transition Pathways Platform, available at: <https://transition-pathways.europa.eu/tourism/news/eu-unveils-first-tourism-strategy-focused-sustainability-and-community-well-being?>

Recovery and Resilience Facility and green transition investments, embeds sustainability within broader tourism reforms and diversification efforts¹⁴.

DMOs should integrate climate marketing into formal destination plans, annual work programs, and performance indicators. This includes linking visitor communication objectives with national and regional climate and tourism priorities, such as Spain's Destination Tourism Sustainability Plans, which explicitly support climate-resilient tourism models¹⁵.

Operationalizing climate marketing also requires internal governance mechanisms, including:

1. dedicated or formally shared roles,
2. cross-functional coordination between marketing, planning, and sustainability units, and
3. standardized communication protocols ensuring consistency across digital and on-site channels.

Embedding these mechanisms within annual budgeting cycles and KPI frameworks enables climate communication to be planned, monitored, and resourced systematically. Linking destination level efforts with national climate action plans (e.g., National Energy and Climate Plans) further aligns marketing outputs with national mitigation and adaptation goals.

7.2. Policy support and cross-departmental collaboration

The survey underscores the importance of collaboration. Effective tourism governance for climate and biodiversity outcomes requires collaborative management models that integrate tourism authorities, conservation agencies, local communities, and private operators within shared decision-making frameworks (Mandić et al., 2025). Embedding climate marketing within such governance structures strengthens policy coherence, accountability, and long-term impact. also identifying tourism operators, government agencies, and local communities as key actors in climate-related marketing decisions. However, mixed perceptions of collaborations effectiveness indicate a need for clearer coordination mechanisms. and stronger policy backing

International biodiversity and climate frameworks increasingly position NbS as a core implementation pathway. Aligning destination marketing with the Global Biodiversity Framework, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action

¹⁴ European Commission, available at: https://commission.europa.eu/projects/enhancing-resilience-and-sustainability-tourism-sector_en?

¹⁵Climate-ADAPT+1, available at: <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/funding/opportunities/destination-tourism-sustainability-plans-pstd?>

Plans (NBSAPs), and the IUCN Global Standard for NbS strengthens policy coherence and supports access to EU and international funding (IUCN, 2022).

Climate communication should be explicitly recognized in policy frameworks as a shared responsibility across tourism, environment, culture, transport, and education sectors. Without this recognition, climate marketing risks remain fragmented or contradictory.

Cross-departmental working groups or climate tourism task forces can support alignment of narratives, avoid conflicting signals, and support joint campaigns. Policy frameworks should also provide guidance on:

1. acceptable climate claims,
2. avoiding greenwashing, and
3. alignment with national and EU climate strategies.

Climate marketing cannot be siloed within tourism departments alone. Alignment with broader objectives, such as the EU's commitments to cut emissions by 55% by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, requires coordinated action across sectors.

The EU's first sustainable tourism strategy¹⁶, anchored in the European Green Deal, emphasizes resource efficiency, emissions reduction, and tourism that supports local well-being. Several countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, France, Croatia) are already leveraging EU instruments such as the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) to strengthen sustainable tourism governance¹⁷.

At destination level, cross-departmental climate tourism task forces can connect marketing with planning, transport, infrastructure, and environmental protection. platforms, such as Regional Coordination units (RCUs) established under the NaTour4CChange project illustrate how governance mechanisms can harmonize messaging and support integrated actions.

Enhanced policy support also clarified standards for climate claims, provides regulatory backing for communication guidelines, and reduces fragmentation, a barrier repeatedly identified in the survey.

7.3. Capacity building

Capacity constraints emerged as a central challenge, with funding shortages, limited behavioral design skills, lack of climate storytelling training, and insufficient data tools identified as priority needs. Addressing these gaps requires sustained institutional investment, not one-off training sessions.

Training should cover not only climate knowledge, but also practical communication skills, behavioral insights, campaign design, and evaluation methods. EU instruments such as the Technical Support Instrument, LIFE

¹⁶EU Tourism Platform: <https://transition-pathways.europa.eu/tourism/news/eu-unveils-first-tourism-strategy-focused-sustainability-and-community-well-being>

¹⁷Reform Support: https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/our-projects/support-tourism-ecosystem-towards-more-sustainable-resilient-and-digital-tourism_en?prefLang=da

program¹⁸, and Cohesion Policy funds can co-finance training, digital tools, and knowledge exchanges platforms. National policy frameworks in countries like Greece, Italy, Spain, and France increasingly emphasize evidence-based policy development and data systems for sustainable tourism, offering a foundation for integrated training and capacity building frameworks¹⁹.

Developing modular training programs, manuals, and peer-learning networks can reduce duplication and support scalability. Partnerships with universities, NGOs, and research institutions further enhance access to expertise and innovation.

Strengthening institutional capacity is essential to enable DMOs and partners to communicate climate action confidently, consistently and credibly.

Capacity building should include:

- ✓ Formal training modules on climate science, storytelling, and behavior change communication.
- ✓ Peer-to-peer networks *and* regional hubs for experience exchange.
- ✓ Academic partnerships for evidence-based indicators and evaluation frameworks.
- ✓ Targeted support to SMEs for digital and climate marketing tools.

7.4. Checklist for DMOs

Integrating climate marketing into DMO operations is not simply a communication task, but an institutional reform process. It requires embedding climate objectives into planning documents, clarifying responsibilities, strengthening coordination mechanisms, and aligning destination-level action with national and EU frameworks

To support practical implementation, the following checklist translates the above recommendations into operational steps for DMOs.

Checklist for DMOs: Operationalizing Institutional Integration of Climate Marketing

Strategic Integration

- ✓ Explicitly include climate communication objectives in destination strategies and marketing plans
- ✓ Align marketing goals with national tourism and climate policies
- ✓ Ensure consistency with EU Green Deal priorities (climate neutrality, biodiversity, circular economy)

Organizational Structure

¹⁸ Life programme, available at: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

¹⁹ OECD: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/strengthening-the-evidence-base-for-a-sustainable-tourism-future-in-greece_6e46e845-en.html?

- ✓ Assign a dedicated sustainability/climate communication role or formalize shared responsibilities
- ✓ Integrate climate marketing tasks into job descriptions and annual work programs
- ✓ Establish internal coordination between marketing, planning, and sustainability units

Policy Alignment & Collaboration

- ✓ Participate in or initiate cross-departmental climate tourism working groups
- ✓ Coordinate messaging with environmental, transport, cultural, and education authorities
- ✓ Align campaigns with national and EU-funded climate and tourism initiatives

Funding & Programme Alignment

- ✓ Map relevant EU funding instruments (RRF, ERDF, Interreg, LIFE, Horizon Europe)
- ✓ Ensure climate marketing actions contribute to funded project objectives
- ✓ Use policy alignment to strengthen funding applications and reporting

Stakeholder Engagement

- ✓ Involve local communities, tourism operators, NGOs, and researchers in campaign design
- ✓ Support co-creation of messages and initiatives to enhance credibility and ownership
- ✓ Coordinate stakeholder communication to ensure consistent narratives

Monitoring & Accountability

- ✓ Define KPIs for climate communication and behavior change
- ✓ Align monitoring indicators with national and EU reporting requirements
- ✓ Regularly evaluate campaign effectiveness and adapt strategies

Capacity Building

- ✓ Invest in staff training on climate storytelling, behavioral insights, and data tools
- ✓ Participate in EU-supported peer-learning networks and knowledge exchanges

- ✓ Collaborate with universities and research institutions for evidence-based communication

7.5. Overview of management and governance process

Before presenting the methodological proposal for communication and marketing strategies, comprehensive logic model can help DMOs understand how survey findings, recommended actions and expected policy outcomes are connected. This model is fully aligned with EU Green Deal priorities, EU funding instruments, and national tourism and climate policies across participating countries.

Table 7.1. Linking Survey Findings to Actions and Policy Outcomes

Survey Findings / Needs	Recommended Actions	Expected Policy & Governance Outcomes	EU & National Policy Alignment
Moderate integration of climate action in destination marketing (46.7% rated “moderate”)	Embed climate marketing in objectives to DMO strategic documents, annual marketing plans, and operational frameworks	Climate formal communication becomes a governance function; sustainability messaging is consistent, measurable, and sustained over time, rather than campaign-based	EU Green Deal (climate neutrality, sustainable tourism); National Tourism Strategies (Croatia, Spain, Italy, Greece, France); eligibility for RRF & Cohesion Policy funding
Low confidence in discussing climate topics among staff (33.3% rated “not confident”)	Provide structured training in climate communication, storytelling, and behavioral design; develop manuals and toolkits	Increased institutional capacity and staff confidence, enabling more effective, credible, and coherent climate messaging across channels	LIFE Program; Technical Support Instrument (TSI); National training programs for tourism and public sector staff

Social proof, storytelling, and community-led initiatives rated highly effective (53.3%–73.3%)	Design campaigns and on-site experiences centered on narratives, inspirational stories, and local participation	Behavior Observable visitor change (waste reduction, low-carbon mobility, water and energy); conservation and higher engagement levels	EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy; National climate communication initiatives; Interreg Euro-MED and other territorial cooperation programs
Stakeholder uneven collaboration; mixed perceptions of effectiveness (46.6% “very effective,” 46.7% “neutral”)	Establish cross-departmental working groups, inter-agency task forces, and community co-creation platforms	Harmonized messaging, coordinated campaigns, and shared ownership of sustainability goals across tourism, environment, culture, and transport	National climate and tourism policies (Italy, Greece, Croatia); EU Tourism Transition Pathway; European Green Deal implementation frameworks
Funding, capacity, and technical support identified as critical gaps (80%–60%)	Secure EU and national funding (RRF, ERDF, LIFE, Horizon Europe); co-finance capacity building and monitoring & evaluation tools	Scalable and financially sustainable climate marketing initiatives, supported by KPIs, reporting systems, and continuous improvement	EU Cohesion Policy; Horizon Europe; national climate adaptation and recovery plans
Low awareness and limited understanding of climate impacts among visitors	Deploy coordinated digital platforms (social media, websites, influencer collaborations) and on-site tools (signage, visitor centers, interpretive trails, immersive technologies)	Increased visitor awareness, understanding and adoption of sustainable behaviors at key decision points	EU Green Deal; National Environmental Education Strategies; Destination Sustainability Plans

Priority visitor behaviors identified: waste reduction (93.3%), water/energy use (86.7%), seasonality (80%), transport choice (66.7%)	Develop targeted campaigns, interactive experiences, interpretive trails, and gamified tools addressing these specific behaviors	Measurable reductions in resource use and improved compliance with sustainability practices at destination level	EU Circular Economy Action Plan; National Climate Adaptation Plans; Sustainable Tourism Action Plans
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SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action Points
Embedding climate marketing in DMOs	Integrate climate objectives systematically into destination strategies, annual marketing plans, and operational frameworks; assign dedicated or shared roles, establish cross-functional teams, and align communication with national and EU climate and tourism policies.
Policy support & cross-departmental collaboration	Establish inter-departmental task forces and coordination mechanisms across tourism, environment, culture, transport, and education; align messaging and campaigns with national and EU climate strategies to avoid contradictory signals and reduce greenwashing risks.
Capacity building	Invest in staff training on climate storytelling, behavioral insights, and digital communication tools; develop peer-learning networks, modular courses, manuals, and academic partnerships to strengthen long-term institutional knowledge and skills.
Stakeholder engagement	Involve local communities, tourism operators, NGOs, and researchers in co-creating campaigns and messaging; outcomes: include increased credibility, shared ownership, local legitimacy, and more coherent sustainability efforts.
Funding & program alignment	Secure EU and national funding (RRF, ERDF, LIFE, Horizon Europe) to support climate marketing actions, capacity building, and evaluation; ensure campaigns are explicitly linked to funding objectives and policy priorities.

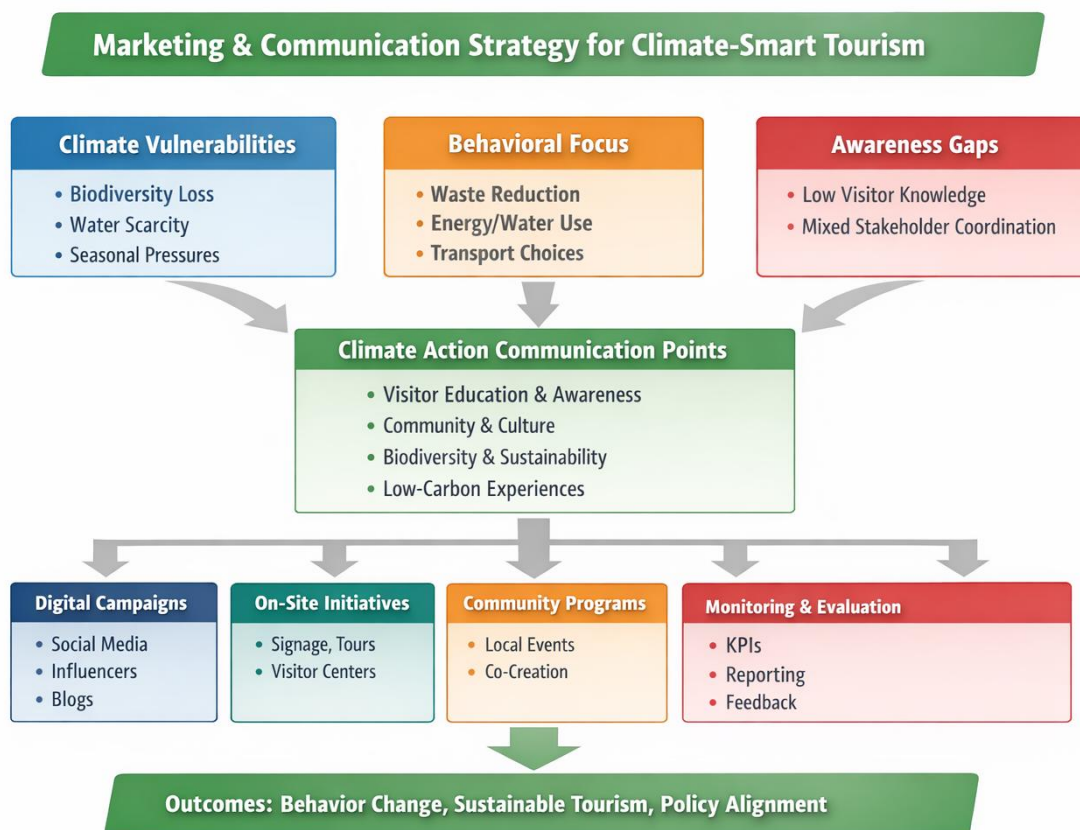
Monitoring & accountability	Define KPIs for climate communication and behavior change, align indicators with national and EU reporting, requirements; regularly evaluate campaign effectiveness and use results for continuous improvement.
Digital & on-site tools	Use a coordinated mix of social media, websites, influencer collaborations, signage, visitor centers, interpretive trails, and immersive technologies to increase visitor awareness and adoption of sustainable behaviors. at key decisions points
Community & narrative-based campaigns	Emphasize social proof, storytelling, and participatory initiatives to motivate behavior change in priority areas, such as waste reduction, water and energy use, transport choice, seasonality.
Strategic alignment & governance	Link DMO actions to national tourism strategies, EU Green Deal priorities, and climate adaptation plans; ensure climate marketing is institutionally embedded rather than implemented through ad hoc or short-term campaigns.
Checklist for DMOs	Operationalize institutional integration through strategic inclusion, clear organizational roles, policy alignment, funding strategies, stakeholder engagement, monitoring systems, and continuous capacity building to ensure long-term, consistent and measurable climate communication.

8. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OUTLINE

This chapter presents a step-by-step guide for developing a marketing and communication strategy that integrates climate action into tourism marketing. The proposed strategy provides a structured roadmap for aligning destination-level initiatives with EU Green Deal priorities, national climate and tourism policies, and best practices in sustainable tourism communication, ensuring coherence across governance levels and implementation contexts.

The strategy is designed to be led and coordinated by the destination management organization (DMO), in close collaboration with local stakeholders. Rather than a static plan, the chapter outlines an iterative, phased process (Figure 9.1) that guides destinations from strategic framing and stakeholder engagement through implementation, monitoring, and review. It combines digital and on-site approaches, prioritizes behavior change, leverages stakeholder collaboration, and is regularly reviewed (e.g. annually) to ensure measurable, adaptive, and context-responsive outcomes over time.

Figure 8.1. Overview of strategic process



8.1. Overview of existing practices in tourism marketing

This section provides a baseline assessment of how the destination currently markets itself to visitors, highlighting communication channels, campaigns, governance arrangements, and stakeholder involvement. It identifies strengths, gaps, and the extent to which climate action and sustainability considerations are embedded in existing marketing practices. Establishing this baseline is essential for designing targeted, evidence-based, and climate-informed communication strategies.

Main Focus:

- Document systematically current tourism marketing practices at the destination level.
- Identify channels, campaigns, tools, stakeholders, and perceive effectiveness.
- Highlight strengths and gaps, with specific attention to climate and sustainability integration.

Key Points to Cover:

- ✓ Digital marketing channels: social media, websites, email newsletters, influencers
- ✓ On-site communication: visitor centers, guided experiences, signage, events
- ✓ Print and traditional media: brochures, local newspapers, posters
- ✓ Stakeholder roles, coordination mechanisms, and decision-making responsibilities
- ✓ Effectiveness assessment: how and to what extent current campaigns promote sustainability and climate action

Suggested Length: 2-3 pages

Notes: Use survey data to support findings; include charts or tables showing frequency of use, effectiveness ratings, and stakeholder involvement.

Proposal of the outline:

1. Overview of existing practices in tourism marketing

1.1 Current Marketing Channels

Digital: social media, websites, influencers, email campaigns, online ads

On-site: visitor centers, guided tours, signage, interactive experiences, events

Print: brochures, posters, local media campaigns

1.2 Campaign Types and Frequency

Regular campaigns: seasonal promotions, heritage events, cultural festivals

Sustainability-related initiatives: eco-events, community-led campaigns, awareness drives

1.3 Key Stakeholders in Current Marketing Practices

Internal: DMO marketing teams, sustainability officers, planners

External: tourism operators, local communities, NGOs, researchers, influencers

1.4 Assessment of Current Effectiveness

Integration of climate action, storytelling and social proof perceived as most effective, events/campaigns and social media are the most frequently used channels

8.2. Overview of climate vulnerability assessment – detecting communication focus

This section examines the destination's exposure and sensitivity to climate risks, identifying the most critical environmental and tourism-related vulnerabilities (Del. 2.5.1. and Del. 3.4.1.). It also considers priority visitor behavior and awareness gaps, highlighting where communication interventions can be most impactful and timely. Linking vulnerabilities assessment to communication design ensures that marketing messages are relevant, credible, and behaviorally targeted rather than generic. Vulnerability severity should directly inform communication priorities, with high-risk areas and behaviors receiving greater visibility, emphasis, and tailored messaging to ensure that interventions are timely, relevant, and capable of driving meaningful behavior change.

Main Focus:

- Summarize climate risks and vulnerabilities relevant to the destination and its tourism sector.
- Identify visitor behaviors and destination components most affected by climate change.
- Detect priority areas for targeted, risk-informed communication and marketing.

Key Points to Cover:

- Environmental vulnerabilities: biodiversity loss, water scarcity, forest fires, sea-level rise, heatwaves
- Visitor behavior priorities: waste reduction, water/energy use, seasonality, transport choices
- Gaps in awareness or knowledge among visitors and staff
- Implications for communication: messaging priorities, risk framing, storytelling approaches and channel selection.

Suggested Length: 2–4pages

Notes: Include visuals such as risk maps or vulnerability charts; link findings to survey data and national climate adaptation strategies.

Proposal of the outline:

2 Overview of Climate Vulnerability Assessment – Detecting Focus

2.1 Identification of Priority Climate Impacts on Destinations

Key vulnerabilities: biodiversity loss, water scarcity, forest fires, sea-level rise, heatwaves, seasonal tourism pressures

2.2 Visitor Behavior Priorities

Waste reduction, water/energy use, seasonality (80%), transport choice

2.3. Implications for Marketing

Messaging should prioritize the most urgent climate-related behaviors, simplify technical content, and focus on experiential and community-led narratives

8.3. Overview of climate action plan – detecting main communication points

This section summarizes the destination's climate action plan and extracts the key messages, narratives and commitments that should inform marketing and communication efforts. It identifies thematic priorities, storytelling opportunities, and appropriate outreach channels. Aligning marketing with the climate action plan ensures consistency, avoids greenwashing risks, and reinforces credibility in relation to EU and national policies frameworks.

Main Focus:

- Present key climate objectives and commitments outlined in the destination's climate action plan.
- climate and tourism is sustainability Where NbS are identified as priority actions, communication planning should reference the IUCN Global Standard for NbS to ensure consistency, safeguards, and measurable outcomes.
- Clearly defining enables realistic design capacity building more efficient
- Identify organizational and human resources needed for climate communication.
- Assess stakeholder coordination and governance gaps.
- Define financial, technical, and data-related requirements.

Key Points to Cover:

- Availability of dedicated or shared climate communication roles
- Staff skills gaps (climate literacy, storytelling, behavioral design, data use)
- Stakeholder coordination and decision-making mechanisms
- Funding and technical resource needs
- Implications for training, partnerships, and external support.

Suggested Length: 4–5 pages

Use survey evidence and institutional analysis to identify organizational, capacity, stakeholder, and resource gaps that may affect implementation, and clearly link these needs to the actions proposed in Section 9.5.

Notes: Focus on actionable communication points and provide examples of potential stories, campaigns, or events, while avoiding promotion of initiatives or outcomes that have not yet been implemented to minimize the risk of greenwashing.

Proposal of the outline:

3 Overview of Climate Action Plan – Detecting Main Communication Points

3.1 Integration of Climate Objectives

Climate action incorporated into DMO strategy, aligned with national plans and EU Green Deal priorities (carbon reduction, biodiversity, circular economy, sustainable tourism)

3.2 Key Themes and Stories for Communication

Community & culture, biodiversity protection, nature-based tourism, low-carbon/slow travel, regeneration/resilience stories

3.3 Strategic Messaging Approaches

Inspirational stories, social proof, hope/empowerment narratives, educational content, urgency/risk framing

3.4 Channels and Tools

Digital: social media, websites, influencers, gamified apps, visitor pledges
On-site: signage, interpretive trails, visitor centers, immersive AR/VR experiences

3.5 Integration with Funding and Standards

GSTC certification, SDGs, EU eco-labels; link communication campaigns to RRF, LIFE, Cohesion Policy, Interreg, Horizon Europe

8.4. Defining needs

This section identifies organizational, capacity, stakeholder, and resource need to implement effective climate marketing. It highlights gaps in staff skills, collaboration, and funding that could limit campaign impact. Recognizing these needs allows for strategic planning, targeted training, and better allocation of resources to support climate communication.

Main Focus:

- Present key climate objectives of the destination's climate action plan.
- Identify main messages, storytelling themes, and communication opportunities.
- Align communication priorities with EU and national policies.

Key Points to Cover:

- Climate action goals and targets (carbon reduction, resilience, biodiversity protection)
- Strategic messaging themes: community & culture, nature-based tourism, low-carbon travel, regenerative tourism
- Channels and formats: digital platforms, on-site experiences, immersive technology
- Link to funding opportunities, certifications (GSTC, SDGs, EU eco-labels), and KPIs

Suggested Length: 3–4 pages

Proposal of the outline:

4 Defining Needs

4.1 Organizational Needs

Dedicated climate marketing roles, internal guidelines, editorial calendars, KPIs

4.2 Capacity Gaps

Training in climate storytelling, behavioral design, data-driven evaluation, monitoring tools

4.3 Stakeholder Engagement Needs

Cross-departmental collaboration, local community involvement, co-created messaging

4.4 Resource and Funding Needs

Financial support for campaigns, digital platforms, capacity building, on-site installations

8.5. Detecting marketing and communication actions

This section translates strategic priorities into concrete, implementable actions for climate-smart destination marketing. It covers digital campaigns, on-site interventions, community-based initiatives, and monitoring mechanisms. By operationalizing strategy into action, this section provides a clear roadmap for influencing visitor behaviour, engaging stakeholders, and aligning communication with policy and funding frameworks.

Where relevant, actions may be tailored to different visitor or stakeholder groups, allowing destinations to adapt messages and tools to specific audiences without requiring complex segmentation processes.

Main Focus:

- Identify specific, actionable measures addressing climate and sustainability goals.
- Propose integrated digital, on-site, and community-based initiatives.
- Define monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and impact.

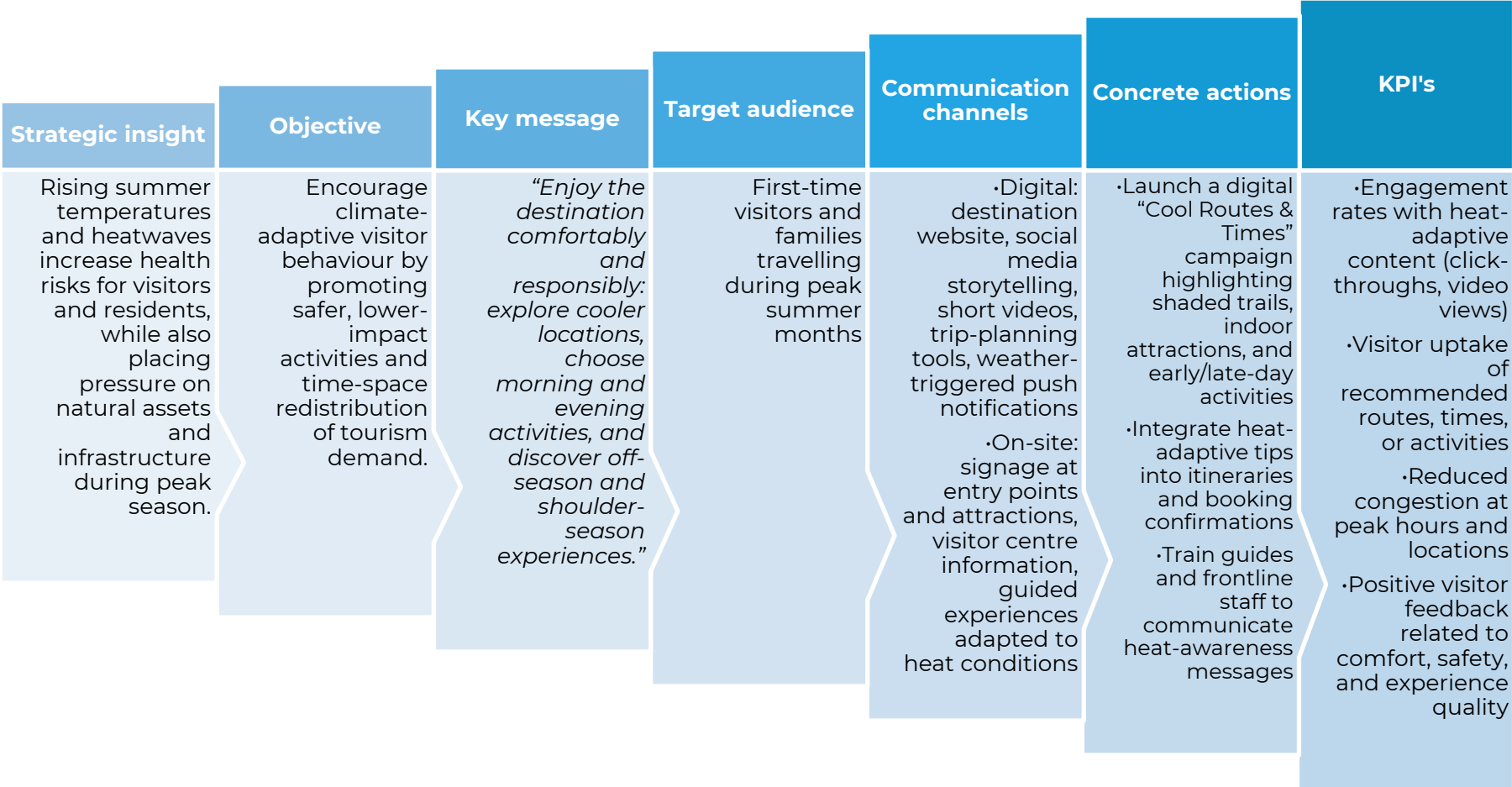
Key Points to Cover:

- Digital actions: social media storytelling, influencer partnerships, gamified apps, campaigns
- On-site actions: signage, guided experiences, interpretive trails, visitor centers, immersive AR/VR
-
- Integrated campaigns: combining digital and on-site channels for behavior change
- Community-based initiatives: co-created campaigns, festivals, school activities, contests
- Monitoring and evaluation: KPIs, metrics, alignment with national and EU reporting.

Suggested Length: 5–7 pages

Notes: Include action matrices, timelines, and alignment with funding programs and policy frameworks.

Figure 8.1. Illustrative action pathway: from insight to impact



Proposal of the outline:

5 Detecting Marketing and Communication Actions

5.1 Digital Communication Actions

Climate-focused storytelling campaigns, influencer collaborations, social listening and sentiment tracking, content calendars, blog/video/photo series

5.2 On-Site Communication Actions

Signage, guided experiences, local ambassador programs, visitor center exhibitions, interpretive trails, immersive experiences (AR/VR, QR codes)

5.3 Integrated Campaign Design

Combine digital and on-site actions into coherent campaigns (e.g., “Clean & Green Coast”), linking behavior change targets to measurable KPIs

5.4 Community-Based Initiatives

Photo contests, school activities, festivals, local workshops, co-created messaging with residents and NGOs

5.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

KPIs for engagement, visitor behavior, awareness, and sustainability performance; link metrics to national reporting and EU-funded project requirements

5.6 Policy and Certification Alignment

Ensure all campaigns and messaging are consistent with GSTC criteria, SDG13, EU eco-labels, and national climate/tourism policies

Optional Additions

6 Funding and Resource Alignment

Map EU and national funding sources to actions (RRF, ERDF, Interreg, LIFE, Horizon Europe)

7 Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Identify potential reputational risks, greenwashing risks, cultural sensitivities, and operational constraints

8 Timeline and Phased Implementation

Short-term: digital campaigns, training, signage

Medium-term: integrated campaigns, visitor centers, immersive tech

Long-term: policy alignment, certification, cross-border cooperation

SUMMARY

Key Concept	Summary / Action Points
Overview of existing tourism marketing	Document current channels, campaigns, stakeholder roles, and effectiveness; identify gaps in climate integration; include digital, on-site, and traditional media.
Climate vulnerability assessment	Map environmental risks and visitor behavior priorities; detect awareness gaps; prioritize communication to target urgent vulnerabilities effectively.
Climate action plan communication points	Extract key messages from climate action plans; define storytelling themes and align messaging with EU/national policies and certifications.
Defining needs	Identify organizational, capacity, stakeholder, and resource gaps; plan targeted training and resource allocation.
Marketing and communication actions	Define concrete digital, on-site, and integrated actions linked to behavior change and policy objectives.
Community-based initiatives	Co-create campaigns with local communities, schools, NGOs to strengthen credibility and shared ownership.
Monitoring and evaluation	Define KPIs, track behavior change, and align reporting with national and EU frameworks.
Integrated strategic approach	Combine digital, on-site, and community actions into coherent measurable, policy-aligned campaigns.

9. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

Integrating climate action into destination marketing is no longer a discretionary or symbolic exercise; it is a strategic necessity for sustainable tourism development. This Manual demonstrates that although many destinations acknowledge the importance of climate communication, current practices remain only partially integrated within destination marketing systems. Gaps in institutional capacity, staff confidence, stakeholder coordination, and behavior-focused communication continue to limit the effectiveness and consistency of climate action messaging.

The findings presented throughout this Manual clearly show that climate-smart destination marketing must move beyond awareness-raising toward structured approach, behavior-oriented, and institutionally anchored. By systematically linking climate vulnerabilities, priorities visitor behaviors, and awareness gaps with concrete communication tools and channels, this document provides destinations with a practical roadmap for embedding climate action into everyday marketing practice

Digital campaigns, on-site communication, and community-based initiatives are most effective when deployed as integrated systems rather than isolated actions. When aligned, these tools reinforce consistent narratives, guide visitors toward low-impact choices at key decision points and support local ownership of climate action. Dedicated roles within DMOs, cross-departmental coordination, and targeted capacity-building further strengthen the credibility, coherence, and long-term effectiveness of climate communication.

Crucially, a marketing strategy with national climate and tourism policies, EU Green Deal priorities, and recognized certification frameworks (GSTC, SDGs, EU eco-labels) enhance both legitimacy and funding opportunities. Destinations that institutionalize climate marketing within operational plans, establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and co-create initiatives with local stakeholders are better positioned to deliver measurable outcomes, including environmental pressures, improved visitor behavior, and strengthened community resilience. As emphasized in recent IUCN WCPA guidance, tourism destinations that integrate climate communication, biodiversity conservation, and inclusive governance are better positioned to build resilience, legitimacy, and long-term sustainability in a rapidly changing climate (Mandić et al., 2025).

This manual therefore offers DMOs a practical, evidence-based guide to reposition climate action from a peripheral concern to a core strategic pillar of destination marketing and governance. By implementing the recommended actions, destinations not only influence visitor behavior, but also support broader policy objectives, contribute to national and EU climate targets and enhance the long-term competitiveness of their tourism systems.

The call to action is clear. Destinations have the tools, knowledge, and policy support needed to act. By embedding climate action into marketing, inspiring strategies today's can be responsible travel choices, empower local

communities, and safeguard natural and cultural heritage, ensuring that tourism remains both attractive and viable in a climate-constrained future.

The time to act is now.

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ANNEX: CLIMATE COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

How to Use This Toolkit

This annexed toolkit is designed to support Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), local authorities, protected area managers, and tourism stakeholders in operationalizing climate-smart destination marketing and communication, as outlined in the Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action.

While the Manual provides the conceptual framework, policy context, and strategic guidance, this toolkit translates those principles into practical, ready-to-use tools that destinations can directly apply in day-to-day marketing, campaign planning, stakeholder engagement, and evaluation processes.

Importantly, the toolkit is designed to be flexible and scalable. Not all destinations are expected to implement all tools simultaneously. Instead, the tools can be approached progressively, depending on institutional capacity, available resources, and level of climate communication maturity.

Purpose of the Toolkit

The toolkit aims to help destinations:

- Integrate **climate action objectives** into marketing and communication practices
- Influence **visitor behaviour** toward low-impact and climate-responsible choices
- Communicate **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** and climate adaptation measures clearly and credibly
- Strengthen **stakeholder collaboration and community engagement**
- Support **monitoring, evaluation, and reporting** aligned with national and EU frameworks

The tools respond directly to needs identified through the DMO survey presented in Chapter 4, including capacity constraints, uneven integration of climate topics, and demand for practical guidance.

Who the Toolkit Is For

The toolkit is intended for:

- Destination Management Organizations (national, regional, local)
- Municipal tourism and sustainability departments
- Protected and conserved area managers
- Tourism boards, clusters, and networks
- Project teams implementing EU-funded tourism, climate, or biodiversity initiatives
- Communication officers, campaign managers, and sustainability coordinators

The tools are adaptable to different destination types (urban, coastal, island, rural, protected areas) and varying institutional capacities.

How the Toolkit Is Structured

The toolkit consists of **seven complementary tools**, each addressing a specific stage of climate-smart destination communication:

To reflect different levels of ambition and capacity, the tools can be grouped into three progressive stages:

Foundational (“Zero Stage”) – Essential starting tools for all destinations, including those with limited resources:

1. **Climate-Smart Communication Strategy Template**
Supports the design of a destination-level communication strategy aligned with climate objectives and vulnerability mapping.
Related Manual sections: Chapters 2, 3, 5
2. **Behavior Change Messaging Checklist**
A practical checklist to assess whether messages effectively promote low-impact visitor behaviour using behavioural science principles.
Related Manual sections: Chapters 5, 6

Intermediate – Tools for destinations that wish to move beyond basic integration and implement structured campaigns:

3. **Campaign Planning Canvas**
A one-page planning tool to structure climate-focused campaigns, defining goals, audiences, messages, channels, and expected behaviour change.
Related Manual sections: Chapters 5, 7
4. **Visitor Pre-Trip Digital Communication Script**
A ready-to-use example of pre-trip messaging to prepare visitors for climate-conscious travel choices.
Related Manual sections: Chapters 5, 7
5. **Stakeholder Co-Creation Workshop Template**
A facilitation guide for engaging residents, businesses, and institutions in developing shared climate narratives and campaigns.
Related Manual sections: Chapters 3, 4, 7

Advanced – For destinations seeking systematic monitoring, performance tracking, and integrated communication management:

6. **Monitoring & Evaluation Framework**
A template to track communication performance, visitor engagement, and behaviour change using KPIs aligned with policy and funding requirements.
Related Manual sections: Chapters 4, 6, 8
7. **Visitor Communication Channel Matrix**
A planning table to map climate messages across visitor touchpoints along the visitor journey (pre-trip, on-site, post-visit).
Related Manual sections: Chapters 5, 7

How to Apply the Toolkit

The tools can be used:

- **Individually**, to address a specific need (e.g. improving pre-trip messaging)
- **Sequentially**, following the logic of strategy → messaging → campaigns → evaluation
- **In workshops**, for internal teams or stakeholder co-creation sessions
- **Within EU-funded projects**, as part of deliverables related to communication, capacity building, or behaviour change
- **As a practical implementation layer within existing strategic and policy documents**, translating high-level climate and tourism objectives into concrete communication actions

Destinations with limited capacity may start with a minimum set of tools, such as:

- Behavior Change Messaging Checklist
- Visitor Pre-Trip Communication Script
- Visitor Communication Channel Matrix

More advanced destinations, or those supported by dedicated climate staff or EU-funded projects, may gradually incorporate monitoring systems, cross-channel integration tools, and structured stakeholder co-creation processes.

Link to Policy and Funding Frameworks

The toolkit is aligned with:

- The EU Green Deal
- The EU Tourism Transition Pathway
- The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism
- The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria
- Nature-based Solutions standards (IUCN Global Standard)
- National climate and tourism strategies in EU and neighboring countries

Using these tools can support policy coherence, strengthen funding applications, and facilitate monitoring and reporting for EU and national programs.

1. Climate-Smart Communication Strategy Template

Use this template to design a local communication strategy that integrates climate objectives into visitor engagement.

Purpose of the Tool

This template supports the development of a **destination-level** climate-smart communication strategy that translates climate objectives, vulnerability insights, and sustainability priorities into clear, actionable visitor communication. It is designed for Destination

Management Organizations (DMOs), municipalities, protected area managers, and tourism partners seeking to influence visitor behaviour, strengthen destination credibility, and support climate adaptation and mitigation goals.

The template can be used as:

- a standalone strategy document,
- a working tool in internal planning sessions, or
- a foundation for EU- or nationally funded communication actions.

1. Strategic Goal

Define the overarching purpose of your climate communication strategy. The strategic goal should clearly link tourism marketing, climate action, and destination resilience, and be aligned with wider destination strategies and policies (e.g. climate action plans, sustainable tourism strategies).

Guidance:

A strong strategic goal answers the question: *What do we want visitors (and stakeholders) to understand or do differently as a result of our communication?*

Examples:

- Increase visitor awareness of local climate risks and adaptation measures
- Encourage low-carbon mobility choices within and to the destination
- Support participation in conservation initiatives and Nature-based Solutions (NbS)
- Reduce pressure on climate-sensitive areas during peak seasons

Write your strategic goal here:

.....

2. Target Audiences

Identify the key audiences your strategy aims to reach. Different audiences require different tones, messages, and channels, even when addressing the same climate objective.

Guidance:

Consider both **visitors** and **local stakeholders**, and segment audiences where possible.

Examples:

- International visitors interested in nature, culture, and sustainability
- Domestic family travellers or short-break visitors
- Day visitors or cruise passengers
- Tourism workers and service providers
- Residents, students, youth groups, or community organisations

List your key audience segments (ranked by strategic importance or potential impact):

.....

3. Key Messages

Define concise, clear, and actionable messages for each audience segment. Messages should:

- reflect the destination’s identity and values,
- connect climate action to the visitor experience,
- clearly indicate *what visitors are expected to do*.

Guidance:

Effective messages are positive, place-based, and behaviour-oriented rather than abstract or technical. However, in certain contexts, particularly when addressing local communities or stakeholders directly affected by climate risks, messages may appropriately reflect real threats and vulnerabilities, provided they are paired with clear solutions, agency, and pathways for action.

Examples:

- “Support our marine life – choose reef-friendly sunscreen.”
- “This path protects the dunes – please stay on the marked trail.”
- “Explore by e-bike – low carbon travel, full local experience.”

Write your key messages (by audience, if relevant):

.....

4. Communication Channels

Identify the communication channels and touchpoints through which messages will be delivered. Consider the full visitor journey: before arrival, during the visit, and after departure.

Guidance:

Use a mix of digital, on-site, and interpersonal channels to reinforce messages at the moment decisions are made.

Examples:

- Destination website and booking platforms
- Social media channels and digital campaigns
- Pre-trip emails or confirmation messages
- Signage at transport hubs, attractions, and trails
- Visitor centres, guided tours, and local ambassadors

List your selected communication channels:

.....

5. Tactics and Activities

Describe the concrete actions that will implement the strategy. These are the **practical activities** that turn messages into visible communication and engagement.

Guidance:

Tactics should be realistic, scalable, and clearly linked to the strategic goal and target behaviours.

Examples:

- Produce short videos featuring local climate ambassadors or guides
- Install refill water stations with behavioural prompts and signage
- Develop a climate-smart travel guide for accommodation providers
- Organise workshops with tourism businesses to align messaging
- Launch a seasonal campaign promoting off-peak or low-impact experiences

Describe your planned tactics and activities:

.....

6. Timeline

Define when activities will be implemented, taking into account:

- seasonal visitor flows,
- climate-sensitive periods (e.g. heatwaves, fire risk),
- relevant awareness days or events.

Example structure:

- **January–March:** Strategy refinement, content planning, stakeholder co-creation
- **April–June:** Launch spring campaigns linked to biodiversity or climate days
- **July–September:** Reinforce behaviour change during peak visitation
- **October–December:** Evaluation, learning, and preparation for next cycle

Draft your timeline:

.....

7. Success Indicators

Define how success will be measured. Indicators should reflect communication performance, engagement, and, where possible, behaviour change.

Guidance:

Select a limited number of indicators that are realistic to monitor and useful for learning and reporting.

Examples:

- Reach and engagement metrics (website visits, social media interactions)

- Visitor awareness or understanding of local climate or NbS initiatives
- Reported behaviour change (e.g. increased use of refill stations or public transport)
- Feedback from tourism partners or guides
- Qualitative visitor comments or survey responses

List your success indicators:

.....

2. Behavior Change Messaging Checklist

Checklist for creating messages that promote low-impact behaviors using behavioral science insights.

Purpose of the Tool

This checklist supports the design and review of communication messages that encourage climate-friendly and low-impact visitor behaviour. It draws on behavioural science, including nudging, social marketing, and environmental psychology, and helps ensure that messages are clear, motivating, and actionable.

Use this checklist when developing:

- signage and on-site prompts,
- website and booking messages,
- social media posts and campaigns,
- visitor centre content, or
- guide and ambassador scripts.

A strong climate message does not need to meet every criterion, but it should meet most of them.

1. Is there a clear, specific action?

- Avoid vague phrases like “Be responsible” or “Care for the environment.”
- Use concrete prompts like:
 - “Bring a reusable water bottle”
 - “Use the refill station at the visitor center”
 - “Join our 30-minute guided nature walk”

Example applied: “Stay on marked trails to protect our native dune plants.”

2. Does the message feel easy and achievable?

- Highlight low-effort behaviors with visible results
- Remove perceived barriers (e.g., mention how easy it is to find refill points or public transport)

Example applied: “Choose the eco-route: it’s safe, scenic, and just 5 minutes longer.”

3. Is the message emotionally engaging?

- Appeal to positive emotions like pride, connection, belonging, or hope
- Avoid guilt-heavy or fear-based tones unless paired with solutions

Example applied: “This forest protects our clean air—thank you for walking gently through it.”

4. Does it reflect social norms or social proof?

- Show that other people are already doing it
- Use peer influence in a subtle, inclusive way

Example applied: “9 out of 10 visitors refill their bottles here instead of buying plastic.”

5. Is the timing and placement of the message strategic?

- Deliver the message at the point of decision (e.g., at the entrance to a trail or while booking)
- Repeat across different touchpoints: signs, social media, guides

Example applied: Booking page reminder: “Most guests travel here by train—easy, scenic, and low-carbon.”

6. Is the message framed positively?

- Focus on benefits and what people gain, not just what they must avoid
- Avoid language like “Don’t litter” or “Don’t stray off trail” as primary phrasing

Example applied: Better framing: “Help keep the trails beautiful—use the bins along the path.”

7. Does the message align with audience values?

- Consider what matters to your audience: nature, family, adventure, heritage
- Tailor language and visuals to resonate with their travel motivations

Example applied: For nature-lovers: “Your footsteps support conservation—thank you for staying on the path.”

8. Is the language simple and accessible?

- Avoid jargon or abstract climate terms
- Use short sentences and everyday language

Example applied: Instead of: “Reduce anthropogenic emissions by minimizing single-use plastics”

Say: “Skip the plastic. Bring your reusable bottle.”

9. Is it visually supported?

- Combine the message with photos, symbols, or icons to increase comprehension and recall
- Place near eye level or where attention is naturally drawn

Example applied: An icon of a reusable bottle next to a refill station with the caption:

“Free, fresh, plastic-free water here.”

How to Use This Checklist

- Apply the checklist when **reviewing** draft materials before publication.
- Use it collaboratively with local partners, guides, or community representatives.
- Test messages informally with visitors where possible and adjust wording based on feedback.

This checklist works best when combined with local knowledge, clear destination values, and consistent reinforcement across channels.

Practical Message Review Table

Message being reviewed:

.....

Criterion	Yes	Partly	No	Notes / Suggested Improvements
-----------	-----	--------	----	--------------------------------

1. Clear, specific action is stated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Action feels easy and achievable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Emotionally engaging (positive or constructively urgent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Uses social proof or norm where relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Placed at the right decision point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Framed positively (or paired threat + solution if needed)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Aligned with audience values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Simple and accessible language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Visually supported (icon, layout, emphasis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Optional Scoring

Score:

- Yes = 2 points
- Partly = 1 point
- No = 0 points

Total Score: _____ / 18

Interpretation:

- 15–18 → Strong behaviour-change message
- 10–14 → Good but can be strengthened
- Below 10 → Revise before publication

3. Campaign Planning Canvas

A one-page tool to define campaign goals, messages, audiences, and channels

Purpose of the Tool

This canvas helps destination teams, DMOs, and partners plan focused, climate-smart communication campaigns that support visitor behaviour change and align with destination sustainability objectives.

It is suitable for:

- internal planning by DMOs,
- multi-stakeholder workshops,
- co-creation sessions with communities or tourism operators,
- preparation of EU- or nationally funded campaigns.

Complete the canvas collaboratively where possible.

Why This Tool Matters

Although the Campaign Planning Canvas is primarily an internal planning document, it plays a critical strategic role. It ensures that climate communication campaigns are aligned with destination objectives, clearly targeted, behaviour-focused, and measurable. By structuring thinking before launch, it reduces fragmented messaging, improves coordination among stakeholders, and strengthens justification for funding, reporting, and policy alignment.

1. Campaign Title

Give your campaign a short, clear name that reflects its message and purpose.

Examples:

- “Refill & Respect”
- “Trail Wise Travelers”
- “Nature Needs You”

Write your campaign title:

2. Campaign Goal

Define what you want to achieve with this campaign. The goal should be specific and measurable.

Examples:

- Reduce littering in protected areas
- Promote public transport use among day visitors
- Increase participation in nature-based activities

State your main goal:

3. Target Audience

Identify who the campaign is for. Think about their motivations, travel habits, and information sources.

Examples:

- Domestic family travelers
- Youth visiting for festivals or events
- Eco-conscious international tourists

List your primary audience(s):

4. Key Messages

Craft 2–4 short messages that speak directly to the audience and reflect the campaign’s climate goals. Use the Behavior Change Checklist for support.

Examples:

- “Refill your bottle—clean, free water at every trail start.”
- “Protect what you came to see—stay on the path.”
- “Hop on the e-bus: it’s quiet, cool, and low-carbon.”

Write your core messages:

5. Tone and Style

Decide how the campaign should feel to your audience. The tone should match your destination brand and audience values.

Examples:

- Friendly and humorous
- Inspiring and nature-connected
- Local and personal

Describe your tone/style:

6. Main Channels

List the communication platforms and tools you will use. Choose based on where your audience is most reachable.

Examples:

- Instagram, Facebook
- Trailhead signs and posters
- Email newsletter to booking list
- Local influencer collaborations

List your channels:

7. Partners and Contributors

Identify local stakeholders who can help amplify the campaign. These may include tour operators, guides, conservation groups, schools, or

media.

Examples:

- Local accommodation providers
- National park authority
- Youth ambassadors or eco-clubs

List potential partners:

8. Timeline and Milestones

Set a realistic timeline, including preparation, launch, and follow-up. Note any key dates (e.g., events, holidays, Earth Day).

Example structure:

- Planning & content creation: March
- Campaign launch: April 15 (Earth Day lead-in)
- Mid-campaign check-in: May 10
- End-of-campaign survey: June

Draft your timeline:

9. Success Criteria / KPIs

Define how you'll measure the campaign's impact. Select a few indicators that match your goal.

Examples:

- Number of refill station users (counted manually or via QR code scans)
- Social media engagement (shares, comments)
- Surveyed awareness or behavior change
- Stakeholder feedback

List your KPIs:

How to Use This Canvas

- Use it as a planning tool before launching campaigns.
- Revisit it during implementation to check alignment.
- Attach it to funding applications or internal approval processes.

When combined with Tool 1 (Strategy Template) and Tool 2 (Behavior Change Checklist), this canvas ensures that campaigns are not only creative but strategically aligned, behavior-focused, measurable, and institutionally accountable.

Example: Completed Campaign Planning Canvas

Campaign Title:

"Refill & Respect – Plastic-Free Coast"

Campaign Goal:

Increase refillable bottle use by 30% at main beach access points during peak season (June–August).

Target Audience:

1. Day visitors arriving by car
2. International summer tourists (18–45)
3. Local youth groups

Key Messages:

- “Refill your bottle — free fresh water at every beach entrance.”
- “Protect our sea — skip single-use plastic.”
- “Join 8 out of 10 visitors choosing refill over landfill.”

Tone and Style:

Positive, community-oriented, summer-friendly, visually bold and simple.

Main Channels:

- Beach entrance signage
- Instagram & TikTok short videos
- Accommodation welcome emails
- QR code stickers at refill stations

Partners and Contributors:

- Local water utility
- Beach concession operators
- Youth environmental NGO
- Municipal waste management authority

Timeline and Milestones:

- May: Design & production
- June 1: Campaign launch
- July: Mid-season monitoring
- September: Impact review

Success Criteria / KPIs:

- Refill station usage counts (weekly)
- Reduction in plastic bottle waste (waste audit)
- Social media engagement rate
- Visitor survey: awareness of refill stations

4. Visitor Pre-Trip Digital Communication Script

Draft email or web content that can be sent/shared with visitors before their trip to prepare them for climate-conscious travel. While DMOs may host or provide this template, it is particularly effective when shared by accommodation providers, tour operators, or booking intermediaries who communicate directly with confirmed guests.

Purpose of the Tool

This script helps Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), accommodation providers, and tour operators set expectations before arrival, encourage low-impact behaviour, and position visitors as active partners in climate action.

Pre-trip communication is one of the most effective moments for behaviour change, as choices around transport, packing, and activities are still flexible.

Subject Line Options (for Email):

- Welcome to [Destination Name] – Travel Light, Tread Right
- Your Journey Starts Here: Travel Smart in [Destination Name]
- Get Ready for a Climate-Friendly Adventure in [Destination Name]

Email / Web Content Template:

Dear [Visitor Name],

We're thrilled that you've chosen to visit [Destination Name], a place where nature, heritage, and community thrive together. As a destination committed to climate resilience and sustainability, we're proud to invite you to become part of that effort during your stay.

Here are a few simple ways you can help protect what makes this place so special:

Before You Pack

- Bring a **reusable water bottle** – refill stations are available throughout the destination.

- Pack **reusable bags, utensils,** and **reef-safe sunscreen** to reduce waste and protect our ecosystems.
- Download our free **eco-travel map** or mobile app for low-impact travel tips.

Getting Around

- Choose low-carbon transport where possible: public buses, bikes, or walking trails are all safe and scenic options.
- If driving, consider carpooling or electric car hire services.

While You're Here

- Stay on marked paths to protect fragile habitats like dunes, wetlands, or forests.
- Support **local food, artisans, and experiences** that give back to the community.
- Join one of our **Nature-based Solution activities** like tree planting, beach clean-ups, or guided ecology walks.

When You Leave

- Take your memories, and your waste, with you. Help us keep this destination clean and beautiful for the next visitor.
- Share your positive experience with friends, or tag us using #[DestinationHashtag].

We believe in travel that gives more than it takes. Thank you for choosing to be a respectful and mindful guest.

Warm regards,

[Your DMO / Tourism Board / Accommodation Name]

[Contact Info] | [Sustainability Page or Local App Download Link]

Optional Additions:

- Use these selectively depending on audience and capacity:
- Link to a 1–2 minute welcome video featuring local voices
- Downloadable packing checklist for climate-friendly travel
- Pre-trip climate impact or mobility calculator (if available)
- QR code linking to a digital visitor guide or sustainability page

Practical Tips for Use

- Send 7–14 days before arrival for maximum impact.
- Adapt tone slightly for families, youth, or eco-focused visitors.
- Reuse content snippets across booking confirmations, apps, and websites for consistency.

5. Stakeholder Co-Creation Workshop Template

Engaging local actors in collaborative climate communication

Purpose of the Tool

This workshop template supports Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and local authorities in co-creating visitor communication messages with businesses, residents, and community actors. Co-creation increases credibility, cultural relevance, and local ownership of climate action messaging, while ensuring that communication reflects lived experience and local values rather than top-down prescriptions.

Workshop Title (Suggested):

“Voices for a Climate-Resilient Destination: Co-Creating Visitor Messages Together”

Workshop Duration:

2.5–3 hours (flexible depending on group size)

Target Participants:

Invite a balanced mix of perspectives, including:

- Local business owners (accommodation, tours, transport)
- Tourism board staff
- Park rangers, guides, and interpreters
- Municipal representatives
- Youth organizations, NGOs, schools
- Cultural or heritage leaders
- Residents interested in sustainable tourism

Workshop Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will:

1. Share a common understanding of local climate challenges and opportunities related to tourism
2. Identify priority visitor behaviours that support local climate and sustainability goals
3. Co-develop concrete, locally grounded communication messages for visitors
4. Agree on next steps for testing, refining, and implementing these messages across channels

Materials Needed:

- Flip charts, markers, sticky notes
- Projector or screen (optional for presentation)
- Printed visitor personas or traveler profiles

- Sample posters, slogans, or social media posts (real or mock-ups)
- Feedback forms or post-it voting dots

Workshop Agenda (Sample Format):

Time	Session	Description
00:00	Welcome & Introductions	Welcome participants, clarify objectives, outline agenda, and establish a collaborative tone.
00:20	Presentation: Climate & Tourism in [Destination Name]	Present 5–7 key facts on local climate impacts, vulnerabilities, and responses (e.g. water stress, erosion, heat, NbS initiatives). Use local visuals and examples.
00:40	Group Activity 1: Visitor Impact Mapping	In small, mixed groups, map common visitor behaviours that positively or negatively affect the destination. Use personas to anchor discussion.
01:10	Group Activity 2: Message Prototyping	Each group selects 1–2 priority behaviours and drafts short, positive messages (e.g. signage text, Instagram captions, booking-stage prompts).
01:45	Group Sharing & Peer Feedback	Groups present messages. Participants provide feedback using voting dots, sticky notes, or facilitated discussion.
02:15	Wrap-up & Next Steps	Identify strongest messages, agree on where they will be tested, assign follow-up roles, and gather feedback on the workshop.

Facilitation Tips:

- Encourage use of local language, dialects, humour, and cultural references
- Mix participants across sectors to foster cross-sector learning
- Use images, maps, or examples to spark creativity and discussion
- Ensure inclusive participation by actively inviting youth voices, women-led businesses, and underrepresented groups
- Keep messages positive, practical, and action-oriented

Outputs:

- 5–10 co-created draft messages or slogans reflecting local identity
- A shortlist of priority behaviours to address (e.g. water use, mobility, waste)
- Suggested channels and formats (signage, social media, guides, apps)
- Increased trust, engagement, and ownership among participating stakeholders

How to Use the Results

- Integrate selected messages into campaign planning (Tool 3)
- Adapt messages for pre-trip communication (Tool 4) and on-site signage
- Test messages through pilot campaigns and refine based on feedback
- Document outputs to support monitoring, reporting, and funding applications

6. Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Tracking the effectiveness of climate communication and behaviour change

Purpose of the Tool

This Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Framework helps Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and partners systematically assess the performance of climate-related communication and marketing activities.

It supports evidence-based decision-making, continuous improvement, and accountability by linking communication objectives to clear indicators, simple data collection methods, and adaptive learning.

The framework is designed to be:

- Lightweight and realistic for small and medium destinations
- Applicable to digital, on-site, and campaign-based communication
- Compatible with national and EU reporting expectations where relevant

Step 1: Define Your Communication Objectives

Start by clearly stating what you want your communication to change or improve. Objectives should be specific, realistic, and directly linked to climate or sustainability goals.

Examples:

- Increase visitor awareness of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in the destination
- Reduce single-use plastic consumption at key visitor sites
- Encourage use of public transport or low-carbon mobility by 20%
- Increase participation of local businesses in climate-related messaging

Your objective(s):

Step 2: Identify Indicators (KPIs)

Select measurable indicators that align with your objectives. These can include both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Indicator	Description	Data Source / Method	Frequency
Social media engagement	Likes, shares, comments on climate messages	Platform analytics	Weekly or campaign duration
Visitor behavior change	% of visitors using refill stations, eco-transport, or trails	Observation, QR check-ins, surveys	Monthly or by season
Awareness levels	Visitor understanding of climate actions or NbS	Pre/post-visit surveys, interviews	Before and after campaign
Local partner engagement	Number of local stakeholders adopting campaign messages	Partner check-ins, message visibility	Quarterly
Campaign reach	Number of visitors exposed to messages	Website views, poster distribution, impressions	Ongoing
Visitor satisfaction	Perception of communication clarity and usefulness	Exit surveys, online feedback	Continuous

Message recall	Can visitors remember and explain key messages?	Spot surveys, interviews	At visitor site or event
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Step 3: Collect and Analyze Data

Use simple, low-cost tools that fit existing workflows. The goal is consistency rather than perfection.

Methods may include:

- Online analytics (Meta, Google, TikTok, etc.)
- QR-code scans at signage
- Short visitor surveys (3–5 questions max)
- Interviews with guides, rangers, or staff
- Staff observations using a quick checklist
- Social listening (e.g., visitor posts and hashtags)

Tip: Assign clear responsibility for data collection (e.g. marketing officer, visitor centre staff) to ensure continuity.

Step 4: Interpret and Report Findings

At regular intervals (e.g. quarterly or post-campaign), synthesize what you've learned:

- Which messages performed best?
- Were visitors acting differently?
- Did awareness or satisfaction improve?
- Are some segments more responsive than others?

Use simple visuals (bar charts, trend lines, short quotes) to communicate findings internally and with partners.

Step 5: Adapt and Improve

Monitoring is valuable only if it leads to action. Use findings to:

- Scale up what works
- Adjust or redesign underperforming messages or channels
- Refine audience targeting and timing
- Design follow-up campaigns based on insights
- Share results with stakeholders to build trust and support

Optional Template (Quick Format)

Objective	Indicator	Data Source	Status / Result	Notes for Improvement

Reduce plastic waste	% of refill bottle use	Survey + staff observation	45% in July	Add map of refill points to signage
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How to Use This Framework

- Apply at campaign level (Section 7) and strategy level (Section 9)
- Use results to support funding reports, policy alignment, and learning
- Keep the framework flexible and iterative, adapting indicators as priorities evolve

This M&E Framework should be treated as a living tool, supporting continuous learning and ensuring that climate communication efforts remain effective, credible, and aligned with destination goals.

7. Visitor Communication Channel Matrix

Mapping climate messages across the visitor journey

Purpose of the Tool

The Visitor Communication Channel Matrix helps destinations systematically place climate and sustainability messages across the full visitor journey, ensuring that messages are:

- Delivered at the right moment
- Presented through the most effective channel
- Reinforced consistently across touchpoints
- Adapted to different formats and attention levels

This tool supports behaviour change, reduces message fragmentation, and helps DMOs coordinate communication across digital, on-site, and partner-managed channels.

Note: Even in destinations where the visitor journey is largely individual and not centrally organized, this matrix can still be used to improve coordination among available touchpoints (e.g. website, signage, accommodation providers). It does not require full control over the journey, but rather strategic alignment of key messages where influence is possible.

How to Use This Tool

1. Identify your priority climate messages

Examples: reduce plastic waste, use public transport, protect fragile ecosystems, participate in Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

Recommendation: Start with one or two priority behaviours only. Focusing on a limited number of clear, high-impact climate messages increases realism, consistency, and behavioural uptake—especially in destinations with limited capacity.

2. Map each message to visitor journey stages

Consider when visitors are planning, arriving, experiencing the destination, and reflecting after departure.

If full journey coordination is not feasible, focus on the stages where your organization has the strongest influence (e.g. pre-trip website, key visitor sites, partner accommodation providers).

3. Select the most appropriate channels

Match message complexity and tone to the channel (e.g. simple nudges on signage, richer stories online).

4. Ensure consistency and reinforcement

The same core message should appear in multiple places, adapted in format but aligned in meaning.

Consistency around 1–2 core climate priorities is often more effective than dispersing attention across many sustainability themes.

5. Review and update regularly

Update the matrix before peak seasons, new campaigns, or when introducing new visitor behaviours.

Sample Matrix

Climate Message	Pre-Trip (Website, Email, Social Media)	On Arrival (Info Points, Welcome Signs)	During Stay (Trailheads, Hotels, Guides)	Post-Visit (Email, Social, Reviews)
Refill, not landfill	Tip on packing list; blog post; email reminder	Signage at bus/train station; refill station map	Refill reminders on maps; bottle refill stations; stickers	“Thank you for reducing plastic!” follow-up message
Use low-carbon transport	Public transport section on site; booking email suggestion	Transit maps at arrivals; eco-mobility tips sign	Hotel front desk tips; posters at bike rentals	Survey on travel choices; social post on impact
Protect the trails	Pre-arrival guide: “5 ways to respect our trails”	Welcome signage: “Stay on paths, protect nature”	Trailhead signs; ranger/guided tour explanations	“You helped save our dunes” message on departure

Support local	Feature on local food/crafts in pre-trip email	Welcome flyer: “Meet our local heroes”	Tent cards at restaurants; vendor shoutouts	Social thank-you post; local stories newsletter
Join nature action	Invitation in booking email; sign-up link	“This week’s eco-activity” board at info center	Flyers at eco-lodges; reminders via WhatsApp or app	Photo highlights on social media; feedback survey

Key Communication Channels to Consider

Channel	Use Case
Website	Education, planning, storytelling, sign-ups
Email	Pre-trip preparation, itinerary additions
Social Media	Behavior nudges, community-building, reminders
Signage	Physical cues and reinforcements at key locations
Guides & Staff	Personal delivery of messages, storytelling
Digital Apps / QR Codes	Interactive content, mapping, gamification
Accommodation Providers	Partner messaging, in-room tips, frontline delivery
Post-Visit Channels	Feedback loops, impact sharing, retention

Tips for Effective Message Placement

- Match tone to channel: friendly and inspirational online, clear and concise on signage, personal through guides
- Reinforce key behaviours at least three times across different touchpoints
- Use icons, visuals, and QR codes to support fast comprehension
- Ensure multilingual and accessible formats where relevant
- Always include “what to do” and “why it matters”

How This Tool Supports the Manual

This matrix directly supports:

- **Section 5** (Strategic messaging and framing)
- **Section 6** (Behaviour change models)
- **Section 7** (Tactical implementation)
- **Section 9** (Marketing and communication strategy outline)

Used together with visitor personas and campaign planning tools, it helps translate strategy into coordinated, measurable action. For destinations at an early stage, this matrix can be applied in a simplified form by mapping just one priority climate behaviour across 2–3 key channels.