



MedDiet Go

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**Activity 1.3**  
**Deliverable 1.3.1**  
**Common guidance on MDG digital tools**

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# Deliverables 1.3.1 Common guidance on MDG digital tools

## Table of Contents

**SCOPE OF THE ACTIVITY** ..... 3

**METHODOLOGY** ..... 4

**THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE IN MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM** ..... 5

The Role of Digitalisation in Sustainable Tourism .....5

Digital Maturity Across Partner Regions.....5

Key Digital Trends Shaping Tourism .....5

**ANALYSIS OF KEY DIGITAL TOOL CATEGORIES** ..... 7

Discovery and Promotion Platforms .....7

Booking and Reservation Systems .....7

Digital Storytelling and Content Tools .....8

Route and Itinerary Applications.....8

Data Intelligence and Analytics Platforms.....8

Communication, Community, and Network Tools .....9

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MDG DIGITAL STRATEGY** ..... 10

Adopt a Layered Digital Architecture .....10

Build Digital Capacity Among Rural SMEs .....10

Develop the MDG Platform as a Tool for the Med-DietEurocluster .....10

Establish a Common Digital Content Protocol .....10

Ensure GDPR Compliance and Digital Ethics .....10

**CONCLUSIONS** ..... 11

**ANNEX A: DIGITAL TOOL CATEGORIES – SUMMARY REFERENCE TABLE** ..... 12





## Scope of the activity

WPI - Raise awareness of the MDG strategy (MD Branding) - is the critical phase of MDG process allowing to consolidate knowledge to be shared, exploited and reused by the MDG local stakeholders in the following phases to strengthen the economic potential of rural economies within the international market. According to the Interreg Euro Med programme, the WPI must produce "Jointly developed solutions": One common updated and modernised strategy to foster Mediterranean Diet values in the Mediterranean, through digital tools and available resources.

According to the Application Form the activity 1.3 (Networking digital tools) aims to explore, explain, and discuss the digital 3.0 and 4.0 components used in tourism industry applications, based on the previous projects' findings. The activity primarily demonstrates the advantages and disadvantages of various applications from a dual perspective, comprising both the demand side (tourists and customers) and the supply side (employees, managers, systems, and processes). The overview and analysis of the most important applications will aim to show that the digitalisation not only creates added value in the form of enabling speed of access and use and enhancing the experience for tourists but also enables cost advantages for businesses operating in the tourism industry. Also, the activity will analyse the possible local applications, showing the transformation in the business, requiring developing database-oriented services, personalised tourist experiences, and real-time service deliveries.

In order to analyse these applications, the partners listed the most used ones and reviewed the services they provided.

Once the applications' services are detailed the activity compares them to the needs of the Mediterranean Diet producers, consumers, and members of the Med-DietEurocluster.

The A.1.3 results can be considered the baseline for the creation of a platform for the digital tools related to the Med-DietEurocluster, such as the Deliverable 1.3.2 (Tourism interactive map).





## Methodology

To prepare the D.1.3.1 deliverable, the partners focus on the categorization of the existing apps. Having in mind that the main goal of the tools developed by the project is to create a common space for sustainable tourism for all the Mediterranean Region.

The guidance draws on previous achievements from the MD.net project, benchmarks current practice in digital tourism tools, and analyses their applicability from both the demand side (tourists and end-users) and the supply side (businesses, destination managers, and institutional stakeholders). The report identifies the most impactful digital tool categories — covering discovery and booking, content and storytelling, route and experience apps, data intelligence platforms, and communication and community tools — and proposes a recommended adoption pathway for each partner region.

The analysis presented in this document was developed through a collaborative, multi-partner process encompassing the following stages:

- **Review of MD.net Digital Assets:** All digital tools, platforms, and assets developed or utilised during the MD.net project were catalogued and assessed for relevance to the current MDG context. This included the MD.net stakeholder database, the MD.net platform architecture, and the communication tools employed during the previous project cycle.
- **Benchmarking of Current Digital Tourism Tools:** A landscape review of digital tools currently deployed in sustainable and cultural tourism contexts was conducted, with particular attention to tools applicable to rural, gastronomic, and heritage tourism. Best practice examples from Mediterranean contexts and beyond were collected, including references to UNESCO, UNWTO, and FAO-GIAHS pilot applications.
- **Partner Region Digital Profiles:** Each partner organisation contributed a regional digital profile, summarising the current state of digital tool adoption among local tourism stakeholders, the regulatory and infrastructure context, and the specific needs and gaps identified in their territory. These profiles informed the 'local applicability' analysis.
- **Dual-Perspective Analytical Framework:** The analytical framework adopted for this document evaluates each tool category from two complementary angles: the demand side (tourists, consumers, and end-users) and the supply side (businesses, destination managers, and institutional actors). This dual lens ensures that guidance is grounded in the real needs of all stakeholders in the MD tourism ecosystem.





## The Digital Landscape in Mediterranean Tourism

### The Role of Digitalisation in Sustainable Tourism

Digitalisation has fundamentally restructured the tourism value chain over the past decade. The shift from analogue discovery and booking processes to digital-first consumer journeys has created both opportunities and challenges for rural and heritage-focused tourism destinations, which often lack the resources and technical capacity of large urban tourism operators.

For Mediterranean Diet tourism specifically, digitalisation offers a strategic opportunity to bridge the gap between the intrinsic richness of the MD heritage — its landscapes, producers, culinary traditions, and cultural practices — and the growing global demand for authentic, sustainable travel experiences. Digital tools can make the MD offer more discoverable, more bookable, and more experientially engaging for international and domestic tourists alike.

At the same time, digitalisation poses a risk of exclusion for micro and small enterprises — the backbone of rural MD tourism — if adoption is not guided by clear, practical, and appropriately scaled recommendations. This document aims to provide exactly that guidance.

### Digital Maturity Across Partner Regions

Digital maturity varies considerably across the seven MDG partner regions. Regions such as Catalonia (FDM) and Andalusia (CCSEV) benefit from relatively well-developed digital ecosystems for tourism promotion, including regional destination management organisations (DMOs) with established digital presence. Regions such as Alentejo (ADRAL), the North Aegean (ELORIS), Puglia (PUGLIA), and Vratsa (VRATSA) present significant opportunities for improvement, particularly among rural SMEs and artisanal food producers. Slovenia (E-Zavod), with its experience in ICT tools for innovation in agriculture developed during projects such as Interreg ADRION INNOVAGRO, is particularly well-positioned to contribute technical expertise on digital tools for the agri-food and rural tourism sectors.

This variability underscores the importance of a common guidance framework that is flexible enough to accommodate different starting points, while providing a shared direction for digital development across the partnership.

### Key Digital Trends Shaping Tourism

Several overarching trends in digital technology are reshaping the tourism landscape and are particularly relevant to MD tourism:

- **Hyper-personalisation:** Tourists increasingly expect experiences tailored to their preferences, dietary habits, cultural interests, and travel styles. AI-driven recommendation engines and data platforms make this possible at scale.
- **Mobile-first consumption:** Most tourist information searches, bookings, and in-destination interactions now occur on mobile devices, making mobile-optimised digital tools essential.
- **Experiential and immersive content:** Virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and high-quality video content are becoming important tools for inspiring pre-trip decisions and enriching in-destination experiences.
- **Sustainability communication:** Digital tools are increasingly used to communicate sustainability credentials, provenance, and ethical sourcing — areas of great relevance to Mediterranean Diet products and producers.





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- Data-driven destination management: Smart tourism platforms and analytics tools allow destination managers to understand visitor flows, preferences, and impacts, enabling more sustainable and responsive management.





## Analysis of Key Digital Tool Categories

The following sections analyse the most relevant categories of digital tools for Mediterranean Diet tourism, evaluating each from both the demand and supply perspectives.

### Discovery and Promotion Platforms

- **Description**  
Discovery platforms encompass digital channels through which tourists first encounter and explore Mediterranean Diet tourism offers. These include destination websites, social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, Facebook), travel inspiration platforms (TripAdvisor, Google Travel), and specialised food and sustainable travel platforms.
- **Demand-Side Value**  
For tourists, discovery platforms represent the primary entry point into the MD tourism ecosystem. High-quality visual content — photographs of landscapes, food products, traditional recipes, and cultural events — is the most powerful driver of inspiration at the discovery stage. Social proof (reviews, user-generated content) plays an important secondary role in building confidence in the offer.
- **Supply-Side Value**  
For businesses and destination managers, maintaining a strong presence on discovery platforms is fundamental to visibility. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Social Media Optimisation (SMO) are therefore key competencies. Regional DMOs can play an aggregator role, curating and amplifying the digital presence of individual SMEs and producers who may lack the capacity to manage their own digital promotion effectively.
- **Considerations and Risks**  
Over-reliance on third-party platforms (e.g., major social networks) creates dependency on algorithms and platform policies that can change unpredictably. A balanced strategy combining owned channels (regional MD tourism websites, newsletters) with presence on third-party platforms is recommended.

### Booking and Reservation Systems

- **Description**  
Booking and reservation systems enable tourists to book accommodation, experiences, tours, tasting sessions, cooking classes, and food-related activities online. These range from global platforms (Booking.com, Airbnb Experiences, Viator/TripAdvisor Experiences) to regional and local booking engines integrated into destination websites.
- **Demand-Side Value**  
Online booking is now an expectation rather than an option for most tourists. The ability to discover, compare, and book an MD tourism experience in a single digital journey — ideally on a mobile device — is a critical conversion factor. Frictionless booking processes, transparent pricing, and clear cancellation policies are key demand-side requirements.
- **Supply-Side Value**  
For SMEs and producers, integration into booking platforms significantly extends their market reach. However, commission structures on major platforms (typically 15–25%) can be challenging for micro-enterprises. Channel Manager tools, which synchronise availability across multiple platforms, can reduce administrative burden for businesses operating on several channels simultaneously.





### **Digital Storytelling and Content Tools**

- **Description**  
Digital storytelling tools encompass the full spectrum of content creation and publication technologies: video production tools, podcast platforms, blog and article publishing systems, newsletters, interactive maps, and multimedia story formats. These are used to communicate the narrative of the Mediterranean Diet — its history, values, producers, landscapes, and cultural significance.
- **Demand-Side Value**  
Compelling storytelling is the most effective means of creating emotional connection with the MD offer. Tourists who understand the story behind a product — the family that has produced olive oil for five generations, the community that has maintained a centuries-old bread-making tradition — are more likely to seek out that experience, pay a premium, and share it with their networks.
- **Supply-Side Value**  
For MDG partners, digital storytelling tools enable the production of reusable content assets — videos, articles, social media series — that can serve multiple channels and purposes. Collaborative content production across partner regions (for example, a series of short documentary films profiling MD producers in each partner territory) would generate significant value at relatively low marginal cost per region.
- **Recommended Tools**  
Content Management Systems (CMS) such as WordPress or Contentful for web publishing; video platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo; podcast platforms such as Spotify or Apple Podcasts; and newsletter platforms such as Mailchimp or Substack are all well-suited to the Mediterranean Diet focussed tourism sector's communication needs and widely accessible to partners at low or no cost.

### **Route and Itinerary Applications**

- **Description**  
Route and itinerary applications enable tourists to navigate MD tourism circuits and thematic itineraries digitally. These include dedicated tourism app platforms, interactive mapping tools (Google Maps, Wikiloc, Komoot), and customisable itinerary builders embedded in destination websites.
- **Demand-Side Value**  
The ability to follow a curated MD circuit — visiting producers, restaurants, markets, and heritage sites in a logical geographic sequence — significantly enhances the in-destination experience. GPS-enabled route guidance, offline map access, and integration with booking systems (so that tourists can reserve a tasting session directly from the route app) are high-value features.
- **Supply-Side Value**  
Route applications drive traffic to participating businesses along the circuit and create a structured framework for collaboration among otherwise competing enterprises. The 'MD Circuit' concept developed during MD.net is ideally suited to digital implementation as a multi-region route application, linking the pilot actions in each region.

### **Data Intelligence and Analytics Platforms**

- **Description**  
Data intelligence platforms aggregate and analyse data on tourist behaviour, preferences, flows, and spending patterns. These include web analytics tools (Google Analytics, Matomo), social media analytics, visitor survey platforms, and advanced smart tourism platforms integrating data from multiple sources.





- **Demand-Side Value**  
While tourists do not interact directly with analytics platforms, the insights generated feed back into improved personalisation, better-designed experiences, and more relevant communications — all of which enhance the tourist experience.
- **Supply-Side Value**  
For destination managers and DMOs, data intelligence is the foundation of evidence-based tourism management. Understanding which content attracts the most engagement, which itineraries generate the most bookings, and which visitor segments are most interested in MD tourism enables continuous improvement of the offer and more effective allocation of promotional resources.
- **Considerations**  
Data collection and use must comply with GDPR and applicable national regulations. Partners should adopt a privacy-by-design approach to analytics, using anonymised and aggregated data wherever possible. Open-source analytics tools (e.g., Matomo) provide a privacy-compliant alternative to proprietary platforms for organisations with data sovereignty concerns

### **Communication, Community, and Network Tools**

- **Description**  
Communication and community tools support the networking dimension of MD tourism — connecting producers, businesses, institutions, and consumers in a shared digital ecosystem. These include stakeholder communication platforms (newsletters, WhatsApp/Telegram groups, Slack or Teams workspaces), social media community management tools, CRM systems, and the MD.net platform itself.
- **Demand-Side Value**  
From a consumer perspective, community tools manifest primarily as loyalty programmes, ambassador schemes, and MD consumer communities — channels through which engaged tourists can deepen their relationship with the MD brand, receive exclusive content and offers, and become active advocates.
- **Supply-Side Value**  
For the MDG partnership, robust communication tools are essential for coordination across seven organisations in six countries. The MDG platform — established as a hub for the Mediterranean Diet stakeholder community — provides the foundation for the Med-DietEurocluster's digital network infrastructure. Its functionality should be assessed and, where necessary, enhanced to support the expanded partnership and the new digital tools developed in this project.





## **Recommendations for the MDG Digital Strategy**

### **Adopt a Layered Digital Architecture**

MDG should adopt a layered digital architecture that allow the users of the tools developed to find the solutions needed in each case. The division will be done by subject (Networking, Innovation, Training, Internationalization and trade), however it will also allow the users to find solutions on different levels of impact.

### **Build Digital Capacity Among Rural SMEs**

The most significant gap identified across partner regions is not the absence of digital tools, but the limited capacity of rural SMEs and artisanal producers to adopt and use them effectively. A targeted digital capacity-building programme — combining online resources, peer-learning workshops, and one-to-one technical support — is recommended as a complementary activity to the tool deployment activities in this deliverable; however, as this opportunity is not feasible in the context of this project this capacity will be shared through the One Stop Shops developed in WP2, where all that's needed by the MD producers can be obtained.

### **Develop the MDG Platform as a Tool for the Med-DietEurocluster**

The MDG Platform — a multi-region, mobile-friendly application linking MD experiences across all partner territories — is identified as the highest-priority digital development for the project. It represents the most visible manifestation of the MDG digital strategy and the most directly actionable tool for driving tourist engagement with the MD offer in all partner regions.

### **Establish a Common Digital Content Protocol**

A common protocol for digital content production and sharing across the partnership could be established, covering: content formats and quality standards; intellectual property and licensing arrangements; translation and localisation requirements; and publication schedules. This protocol will ensure that the digital storytelling assets produced by each partner are interoperable and can be effectively amplified across the shared MDG digital channels. Once the project is finished the Med-DietEurocluster will take care of the platform and its content.

### **Ensure GDPR Compliance and Digital Ethics**

All digital tools and data collection activities undertaken under MDG must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and applicable national data protection legislation. Partners should adopt a data minimisation principle, collecting only the data strictly necessary for project purposes, and should publish clear privacy notices for all digital channels and tools.





## Conclusions

This deliverable has provided a comprehensive overview and analysis of the digital tools most relevant to Mediterranean Diet tourism, evaluated from both a demand (tourist/consumer) and supply (business/institutional) perspective. It has demonstrated that digitalisation is not a peripheral add-on to the MDG strategy, but a central enabler of its core objectives: raising awareness of the economic potential of the Mediterranean Diet, strengthening rural competitiveness, and facilitating the transition to sustainable, responsible, and smarter tourism.

The analysis has identified five key tool categories — discovery and promotion platforms, booking and reservation systems, digital storytelling tools, route and itinerary applications, and data intelligence platforms — each with distinct value propositions for different stakeholder groups.

The recommendations provide a practical roadmap for the digital strand of the MDG project, grounded in the realities of the partner regions and aligned with the strategic objectives of Work Package 1. Implementation of these recommendations will require ongoing collaboration across the partnership and especially with the Cluster.

Mediterranean Diet tourism has a compelling story to tell. The digital tools and strategies outlined in this document are how that story can reach — and inspire — audiences across the Mediterranean and beyond.





### Annex A: Digital Tool Categories – Summary Reference Table

Tool Category	Example Platforms / Tools	MDG Relevance
<b>Discovery &amp; Promotion</b>	Instagram, TripAdvisor, Google Travel, Regional DMO sites	International visibility of MD tourism offer; inspiration and awareness for potential tourists
<b>Booking &amp; Reservation</b>	Booking.com, Viator, Airbnb Experiences, Regional engines	Conversion of interest into bookings; market reach for rural SMEs and experience providers
<b>Digital Storytelling</b>	WordPress, YouTube, Mailchimp, Podcast platforms	Narrative communication of MD heritage; emotional connection with brand and offer
<b>Route &amp; Itinerary Apps</b>	Wikiloc, Komoot, Custom MDG Circuit App, Google Maps	In-destination experience; navigation of MD circuits; discovery of local producers
<b>Data Intelligence</b>	Google Analytics, Matomo, Social media analytics	Evidence-based destination management; optimisation of digital strategy; visitor insight
<b>Community &amp; Network</b>	MD.net platform, CRM, Newsletter tools, Stakeholder portals	Partnership coordination; stakeholder engagement; MD consumer community management

