

Filipa Fontes, Elsa Esteves, Elisabete Paulo Morais\*

# Digital Marketing in Wine Tourism – Trás-Os-Montes and Dão Case Study

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**Abstract:** Having quality wine is important for a wine company; however, it is necessary to have a communication strategy and be aware that digital marketing activities are constantly evolving and that companies need to adapt to stay close to their audience. Increasingly, the wine sector sees digital marketing as a valuable and convenient tool for promoting companies and as a way to reach consumers. The Regional Wine Commissions (RWC) are entities whose mission is to promote and publicise the wine products of their region. The aim of this paper is to analyse the performance, on a digital level (Facebook, Instagram and website), and the use of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) techniques of two RWCs, that of the Trás-os-Montes Region and the Dão Region, both located in Portugal. It is also intended to identify how they promote regional producers and the wine tourism offers on their websites.

**Keywords:** wine tourism; digital marketing; SEO; social networks

## 1 Introduction

The Regional Wine Commissions (RWC) existing in Portugal correspond to the wine regions of Vinhos Verdes, Bairrada, Alentejo, Algarve, Beira Interior, Lisboa, Península de Setúbal, Trás-os-Montes, Dão, Tejo and Açores (IVV, 2023). The main function of the RWCs is the certification

of wines from the region under their jurisdiction, and it is the responsibility of these organisations to supervise viticultural techniques and winemaking processes, as well as fulfilling the functions of promotion and dissemination of wine products from their region (Infovini, n.d.).

The Trás-os-Montes region is made up of three sub-regions that produce quality wines with the Trás-os-Montes Denomination of Origin (DO): Chaves, Valpaços and Planalto Mirandês. The Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region was created in 1997 with the aim of promoting the development of the region and that of the wines of the Trás-os-Montes region, both nationally and internationally. It started its activity with only one economic actor and currently has 85 registered producers who have contributed to the rebirth of the region and have increased the quality of its wines (CVRTM, 2023).

The Dão Regional Wine Commission, on the other hand, represents the interests of the economic agents involved in the production and marketing of wine products with the Dão Controlled Origin Denomination (CVRDÃO, 2023). It is responsible for ensuring the authenticity and quality of wine products, which it does by subjecting them to strict coordination and control.

The growing importance attributed to digital marketing and the growth of social media has become exponential thanks to the emergence of the second phase of the Internet: The so-called Web 2.0, in which everyone plays a passive role, receiving all kinds of information, and an active role, sharing recommendations and advice with each other, acting as influencers (Ingrassia et al., 2022). Companies have increasingly adopted the use of social networks and other digital marketing tools, a phenomenon that promotes a change in organisational practices and relationships (Obermayer et al., 2022). In this sense, the aim of this article is to analyse the digital performance of the two RWCs presented above, and to verify how they promote regional producers and the wine tourism offered on digital websites.

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\*Corresponding author: Elisabete Paulo Morais, Researcher at the Applied Management Research Unit (UNIAG). Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Email: beta@ipb.pt

Filipa Fontes, Researcher at Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

Elsa Esteves, Researcher at the Centre for Research, Development and Innovation in Tourism (CITUR). Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Wine Tourism

Wine tourism is growing not only due to its economic impact on wineries, but also due to the organisation of events related to wine production, which stimulate the flow of tourists and represent an opportunity for local wineries to engage with and attract tourists (Montella, 2017). This is, therefore, a growing activity that contributes to the economic development of wine regions and the building of a strong brand image for wine destinations (Vo Thanh & Kirova, 2018).

According to Getz (2000), wine tourism combines culture, lifestyle and territory. Wine tourism activities involve the participation of groups of individuals seeking experiences related to wine and wineries in wine tourism destinations (Yuan *et al.*, 2008). According to Rachão *et al.* (2020), for tourists, gastronomic and wine related activities are an important part of their tourist experience as travellers. The wine tourism experience can be provided for in a number of ways, the most notable being events and festivals, cultural heritage, dining, hospitality, education, tasting and cellar door sales, and winery tours (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002). Increasingly, wine tourism offers the creation of unique and authentic tourist experiences, which need to be more personalised and differentiated, with memorable, enriching and stimulating experiences (Santos *et al.*, 2019).

Getz and Brown (2006) claim that there are at least three main perspectives on wine tourism: Wine producers, tourism agencies (representing destinations) and consumers. Wine tourism can therefore be seen as a form of consumer behaviour, a strategy by which destinations develop and market attractions related to wine products, and also as a marketing opportunity for the direct sale of such products.

### 2.2 Digital Marketing in Wine Tourism

Technological changes related to the Internet, including digital marketing, have revolutionised the tourism sector in general, transforming it from a traditional service sector to a network of ubiquitous travel services with strong digital support (Garima & Dharmendra, 2023). The rapid development of techniques and technologies has completely changed the environment in which companies operate, making markets volatile, more competitive and uncertain, thus posing various challenges for companies, creating new opportunities and acting as a business driver

that gradually changes traditional methods and tools (Veleva & Tsvetanova, 2019). Digital marketing provides a set of tools for creating content at the digital level through interaction channels, which enables the implementation of a marketing action with an impact on the target audience (Sokolova & Titova, 2019). According to Veleva and Tsvetanova (2019), digital marketing tools are divided into online and offline action tools, and offline, there are television, radio, digital billboards and SMS or MMS messages. Digital marketing tools in an online environment are described in Table 1.

The increasing use of social media has significantly changed people's attitudes, and the proliferation of smartphones means that people can search the web for all the information and news they need, from choosing a tourist destination to choosing a restaurant, from traditional foods to cultural and ethical issues in different places (Ingrassia *et al.*, 2022).

Increasing technological development and the use of resources such as virtual and augmented reality and 4D technology are changing the nature of the tourist experience is (Aramendia *et al.*, 2021). The importance of E-WOM (electronic word of mouth) overlaps with WOM (word of mouth), which allows wine companies to control what others say about them and their experience, with the aim of offering guidance to the consumer (Dellarocas, 2003). This search for information must be supported in the digital world through the use of the website, which in most cases is the customer's first contact with the winery and its wines (Cho & Sung, 2012). It should include links to the company's social networks, which encourage and attract customers to participate in these platforms, which are essential for sharing audiovisual content and interacting more directly (Aramendia *et al.*, 2021). According to the authors Velázquez *et al.* (2019), the indicators that are directly related to the selection of wineries by visitors are the company's websites, followed by the influence of tastes and feelings shared in social media publications, published opinions and, finally, the ratings given by other users on the official pages of the company's social networks.

Websites and social networks of wine companies are increasingly used to share information about products and services, display photos, promote tourist activities, share family stories, as well as to sell products and services online (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). Since the website is also an essential element of digital marketing, Alebaki *et al.* (2022) state that, specifically, the website must provide information about the winery and its wines, include contact information, the possibility of interactive communication, as well as the option to book or purchase available products and experiences.

**Table 1:** Online Digital Marketing Tools

Website	Includes corporate website; online store; online platform aggregating services or products; Internet application for services.
Email Marketing	Based on email technology. An extremely effective means of reaching the target audience, even a specific user. Helps to establish personal communication with real and potential users
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter; LinkedIn; Instagram and others)	The main goal of marketing in social media is to build the so-called communication funnel to help find and attract users by directing people (users) from social media communities to company websites, blogs or e-shops. Social networks create the opportunity to advertise businesses and also to offer customer assistance. This, in turn, would lead to a significant increase in consumer satisfaction and create preconditions for building loyalty.
Blogs	An electronic platform that provides a field for discussing various issues and finding relevant information
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	Website optimisation process, using various techniques and tools, to make it easier for these sites to be discovered and ranked higher in search engines.
Big Data Marketing	Provides tools for collecting, processing, analysing and interpreting data sets for various marketing purposes - segmentation, planning, feedback, user habits and forecasting.
Internet Advertising	Various paid forms of controlled impact made through the Internet to offer products or services in the interest of a specific, explicit source. There are various formats of Internet advertising: Banners; VIP links; rich media; streaming advertising; pop-ups; online games, contests, polls; online seminars; intermediate pages; landing pages; floating ads; wallpaper ads; trick banner; RSS, site sponsorship; paid search; promotional articles; Google AdWords paid ad slots; batch ads; and more.
Visual Marketing	Includes activities that marketed products/services through visual communication tools.
Mobile Marketing	Mobile application services providing various aspects of the daily life of the users—from meeting daily needs to entertaining and useful activities. It is possible to create virtualisation by scanning visual images and adding information to them, in order to offer detailed information to users in an interactive way, relying solely on their permission.

Source: Adapted from Veleva and Tsvetanova (2019)

### 2.3 Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Web programmers, have to take into account SEO standards when building websites, as there are several factors involved in the ranking of the website in the search results (Khan & Mahmood, 2018). Users search for the name of a company or brand in search engines, and the results that appear in the best position have a significant impact on the image that the brand/company conveys (Setiawan et al., 2020).

According to Ullah et al. (2018), nowadays, most of the traffic is driven by search engines. In this way, SEO strategies are an important part of creating a website as a way to achieve the best position or strategic ranking in a search engine (Setiawan et al., 2020). At a conceptual level, according to Ankalkoti (2017), there are two forms of SEO optimisation, on-page SEO and off-page SEO. According to the same author, on-page SEO includes providing good content, placing keywords in specific places, and assigning an appropriate title to each page, while off-page SEO includes creating external links to a website and increasing link visibility through submission to directories and search engines (Ankalkoti, 2017).

There are a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) that are most commonly used to perform SEO analysis, and their data can be collected using tools such as Google Analytics, Google Search Console and Ubersuggest (Table 2).

## 3 Methodology

This paper aims to analyse and compare the digital presence of the Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region and the Wine Commission of the Dão Region, in order to understand their performance in different digital media, such as Facebook, Instagram and through websites. Facebook and Instagram were chosen because they are the social networks where both are present. The Wine Commission of the Dão Region Commission is also present on LinkedIn, X and YouTube.

The present research followed a quantitative methodology approach, based on a previous theoretical approach, being later substantiated through the analysis of indicators of several digital channels of the two entities. The data

**Table 2:** SEO Indicators

Indicator	Description
Load time	Time required to load the content of a page, where the ideal speed should be less than 2.5 seconds (NEILPATEL, n.d.).
Interactivity	Time it takes for pages to respond to a user's click or button press. An ideal speed should be less than 100 milliseconds (NEILPATEL, n.d.).
Backlinks	These refer to links on a website that point to another website. Search engines, such as Google, see this indicator as revealing that the page's content has quality and recognition from other sites (Brockbank, 2020).
Organic Keywords	They are keywords used in SEO to attract free traffic, where the free factor makes them a cost-effective online marketing tool (Ofiwe, 2021).
Organic Monthly Traffic	The estimated total monthly traffic a domain receives considering organic keywords (NEILPATEL, n.d.).
On-Page SEO Score	Process of optimising the pages of a website to improve rankings and user experience. On-page SEO elements include title tags, internal links, HTML code, URL optimisation, content and images. It is a score of 0–100, which represents a combination of the ratio of errors found with the number of checks performed by the audit tools (Casagrande, 2022).
Domain Authority	Search engine ranking score (from 0 to 100). This relevance has a direct impact on its ranking by search engines and can be described through four dimensions: Prestige of a site and its authors; quality of the information presented; information and centrality of the site; competitive situation around a subject (NEILPATEL, n.d.).

Source: *Self-elaboration*

were collected from the websites and social networks where the two organisations were present—Facebook and Instagram. In order to carry out the analysis of the social networks of Facebook and Instagram, the numbers of likes, comments and shares were analysed, since activity and popularity are crucial aspects to analyse on social networks (Baghirov *et al.*, 2019; Kromidha & Robson, 2021), and finally calculations were made concerning the average of monthly publications, average of likes per publication, average of comments per publication and average of shares per publication. The website was analysed using the online platforms Ubersuggest and Access Monitor, which allowed for the analysis of the website's response time, interactivity, backlinks, organic keywords, monthly organic traffic, on-page SEO score, domain authority and the aspects to be improved in the design of the web pages.

The analysis of social networks considers the period of publications for six months (July 2022 to December 2022), with analysis in March 2023, and was carried out by the authors. The website analyses in terms of SEO strategies were considered data collected during the month of March 2023.

## 4 Analysis of the Results

The Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region has 85 wine producers, and its website has a page listing each of them. As far as wine tourism is concerned, it also has a

page alluding to the offer, but it only has three economic agents, and there are more wine companies with this type of offer in the region. At the tourist level, there are also two more pages dedicated to the wine press dug into the Rock, used by the Romans to make wine, and even a page alluding to the “wine of the dead”, an old Portuguese tradition of burying bottles of wine in the ground.

The Wine Commission of the Dão Region, for its part, has 196 economic members in the sector who are also listed on the CVR website. As for the wine-tourism offer, it has a dedicated page where it promotes the “Solar do Vinho do Dão”, the existing wineries, the Dão Wine Route, experiences in the Dão and even points of interest. As for the promotional page of the “Solar do Vinho do Dão”, it has information about its history, the main wines, prices for tasting and buying different wines, and even a harvesting programme in which tourists can participate. It should be noted that on the page promoting the region's wineries, it is possible to book visits to each winery on the website of the Dão Regional Wine Commission. The Dão Wine Route is made up of 48 members, covering 16 municipalities, with five different routes, the maps of which can also be found on the website.

### 4.1 Digital Presence

In a first phase, the digital presence of the two Wine Commissions was analysed. It was verified that the Wine Commis-

sion of the Dão Region is present on the following channels: Through a website (<https://www.cvrdao.pt/>), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. The Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region is present through its website (<https://cvrtm.pt/>), Facebook and Instagram, but does not have a LinkedIn page or a YouTube channel.

As both entities have a website, Instagram and Facebook, these will be the digital channels analysed.

#### 4.1.1 Social Networks Analysis

In terms of presence on Facebook, the Wine Commission of Trás-os-Montes Region has the highest number of likes and followers (Table 3). In terms of the average number of monthly publications, the Dão Regional Wine Commission stands out with 22 monthly publications, while the Trás-os-Montes Regional Wine Commission has only eight. However, in terms of followers' reactions, the publications of the Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region have a higher number of likes, comments and shares.

On Instagram, the situation is different if we look at the performance of the two entities on Facebook (Table 4). On this social network, the Wine Commission of the Dão Region stands out with 32,000 followers and 1,201 publications. The Wine Commission of Trás-os-Montes Region, on the other hand, does not have a regular presence on Instagram, its last publication being in 2017, which is why publication averages, likes and comments have not been added. As on Facebook, the Wine Commission of the Dão

Region has an average of 22 monthly publications, 679 likes and 386 comments, on average, per publication. By analysing the different contents of the publications corresponding to the six-months period, it seems that these figures are mainly publications that contain hobbies and use influencers (e.g. Brazilian actress Monique Alfradique). It seems that there is a relationship with the Brazilian market, which given the size of the country, favours a greater reach and therefore a greater number of actions by followers.

#### 4.1.2 SEO Analysis

With regard to the websites of the two entities, a comparison was made of the indicators at the level of SEO (Table 5). In terms of traffic generated, it is clear that the Wine Commission of the Dão Region surpasses the Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region, with an average of 3,268 monthly visits, compared to only 95 for the website of the Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region. The Wine Commission of the Dão Region website has the highest number of organic keywords, as well as domain authority and number of backlinks. In terms of load time, interactivity and visual stability, both pages are within the criteria considered good by the Ubersuggest analysis platform. If we look at the on-page SEO score indicator for the websites of the Trás-os-Montes Regional Wine Commission and the Dão Regional Wine Commission, the values are not very different, with 61 and 65, respectively.

**Table 3:** Facebook Page Analysis

Entity	Likes	Followers	Average Monthly Posts	Average likes per Post	Average Comments per Post	Average Shares per Post
Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region	13.000	14.000	8	32	1	7
Wine Commission of the Dão Region	9.700	11.000	22	20	0,29	2

Source: Self-elaboration

**Table 4:** Instagram Page Analysis

Entity	Followers	Posts	Average Monthly Posts	Average Likes per Post	Average Comments per Post
Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region	698	-	-	-	-
Wine Commission of the Dão Region	32.000	131	22	679	386

Source: Self-elaboration

**Table 5:** SEO Indicators Analysis

Indicator	Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region	Wine Commission of the Dão Region
Monthly Organic Traffic	95	3.268
Organic Keywords	100	641
Domain Authority	21	38
Backlinks	556	6.277
Load Time	0,95 seconds	1,57 seconds
Interactivity	121,5 milliseconds	2 milliseconds
Visual Stability	0 seconds	0 seconds
On-Page SEO Score	61	65

Source: Self-elaboration through Ubersuggest

**Table 6:** Keywords From the Regional Wine Commission of Trás-os-Montes Website

Keyword	volume	estimated monthly visits	SEO difficulty
Vinhos Trás os Montes	140	76	38
Cvr	590	5	40
Moraes Sarmento	720	4	41
A Trás	1900	3	60
Cv r	590	2	67
Heritage Wines	170	1	42
Vinho dos Mortos	480	1	44
Vitivinicola	260	1	52
Inovar Valpaços	140	1	33
Tras os Montes	6600	0	45

Source: Self-elaboration through Ubersuggest

Using the analysis platform Ubersuggest, 10 different keywords were displayed for the two websites. For their evaluation, the volume (the number of searches of this particular keyword during a month), the estimated monthly visits (estimated traffic that this website received from Google for this particular term) and the difficulty in terms of SEO (estimated competition in organic search, where the higher the indicator, the more competitive the keyword) were used. With the data obtained, on the website of the Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region (Table 6), it can be seen that, in general, the keywords are related to the region of Trás-os-Montes, wines, and the name CVR. The keywords with a higher volume of searches are “Tras os montes”, “A trás” and “Moraes sarmento”. The words that generate the most visits are “vinhos tras os montes”, “cvr” and “Moraes sarmento”. The words with the greatest difficulty in terms of SEO are “Cv r”, “A trás” and “vitivinicola”.

The website of the Dão Regional Wine Commission (Table 7) generally related to the Dão region and the

region’s wines. The keywords with a higher search volume are “dao”, “dão” and “vinhos dão”. The words that generated the most visits are “dao”, “vinhos dão” and “dão”. The words with the most difficulty in terms of SEO were “dao”, “cvr dao” and “dão”.

With regards to the aspects that can be improved in terms of SEO techniques, they are found on both websites and are mainly related to the lack of content at the programming level, errors in the html code, colour combinations and the first link that does not direct to the main content of the website (Table 8).

In the case of image ALT attributes, these correspond to the alternative text that is used to describe images and provide information to search engine crawlers. In terms of colour combinations, the WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) allows for sufficient contrast between the text and the background so that it can be read by people with moderately impaired vision.

The fact that the first link does not allow you to jump to the main content of the website may be due to the fact

**Table 7:** Keywords From the Regional Wine Commission of Dão Website

Keyword	volume	estimated monthly visits	SEO difficulty
Dao	2.400	1.087	61
Vinhos Dão	720	392	34
Dão	880	339	44
Vinhos do Dão	720	286	35
Vinhos do Dao	720	238	35
Solar do Vinho do Dão	320	134	41
Dão Vinhos	210	85	33
Região Demarcada do Dão	170	85	38
Cvr Dão	210	83	54
Vinhos Dao	720	76	33

Source: Self-elaboration through Ubersuggest

**Table 8:** Aspects to Improve SEO

Wine Commission of Trás-os-Montes Region	Wine Commission of Dão Region
The 1st link does not allow jumping to the main content.	The 1st link does not allow jumping to the main content.
Four links whose content is empty (e.g. <a href="#" class="no-lightbox"> </a>).	One form without a submit button.
One colour combination whose contrast ratio is less than the minimum contrast allowed by WCAG (e.g. <div id="copyright" class="clr" role="contentinfo"> 2022 © CVRTM, all rights reserved. Powered by iNTODesign. </div>).	Six colour combinations whose contrast ratio is lower than the minimum contrast ratio allowed by WCAG (e. g. <h4 class="ma-font-02"> Grandes Escolhas Awards   2022 </h4>).
Nine HTML errors related to the use of the style element.	Four html errors, related to the use of the <p> element and the lack of the mandatory “a” attribute of the href element.
Five images with null alt (e.g. ).	One case where redundant event handlers are not used, where you must ensure that JavaScript events are activated not only via the mouse but also via the keyboard (<a id="cph1_footer_0_enviar_2" class="button" data-validationgroup ="validaForm2" data-idform="2" data-guid="626ec1ba-917d-495d-8dd7-875bf391f8e0" onclick="return MaModulosJs.maforms.enviarForm(this);"></a>).

Source: Self-elaboration through Accessmonitor

that the link included in the logos, usually located in the header of the web pages, does not appear as the first link in the order of the html code.

## 5 Discussion

Wine tourism has an important role to play in combating regional disparities, in particular by revitalising rural areas, raising their profile and helping to valorise their heritage, and digital marketing can be an important ally in doing this (Quintela et al., 2023; Remeňová et al., 2019; Vukovic et al., 2020).

Social media has become essential for tourism businesses to increase their online presence, communicate more closely with tourism consumers and remain competitive. The website is usually a company’s ‘home’, providing more information about the company, with SEO optimisation allowing companies to achieve better search engine results.

Both of the organisations analysed have a website and a presence on the social networks of Facebook and Instagram. Other studies have also found that Facebook and Instagram are the social networks that organisations are most keen to be on (Duque & Martins, 2023; Rodrigues & Morais, 2023).

In terms of SEO, the main problems identified relate to the low number of keywords, long page-load times, the lack of page titles and issues relating to the safe navigation of websites. To some extent, these are also the problems identified in a study of the hospitality sector in the same region (Morais *et al.*, 2023).

## 6 Conclusions

The alliance between wine tourism and digital marketing is essential not only for the promotion of wine businesses, but also for the dissemination of the wine tourism offers in a region. Digital marketing is indeed a valuable and appropriate tool to communicate and reach tourists, and owners of wine tourism products must increasingly develop strategies to be present in the digital world.

Considering that the Trás-os-Montes region has great potential for wine tourism, the Trás-os-Montes Regional Wine Commission, one of the main promotion agents, should invest more in the construction of a structured wine tourism offer, since it has a heritage and historical wealth left by the Roman people, which is being promoted by the growing emergence of new producers. Contrary to what seems to be the strategy of the Wine Commission of the Dão Region's, the Wine Commission of the Trás-os-Montes Region relies more on its presence on Facebook and is not very active on Instagram.

The Dão Regional Wine Commission has a more consistent and structured wine tourism offer, especially through its website, where it promotes the different visits, such as the existing wineries, the Dão Wine Route, which is duly described, and where it is also possible to book visits. This RWC has made a more solid bet on the Instagram social network, promoting leisure activities and using public figures to achieve greater reach. In terms of website optimisation strategies, the Dão Regional Wine Commission is also more prominent, with greater traffic, a greater number of keywords and a higher domain authority compared to the values presented by the website of the Trás-os-Montes Regional Wine Commission. A regular presence, with good content, is essential for these two entities, which are partly responsible for promoting a wine region. Because it is on Instagram that the Dão Regional Wine Commission achieves greater reach and reactions from its followers. It would be beneficial for the Trás-os-Montes Regional Wine Commission to reformulate its presence on the Instagram social network and keep it up to date.

The limitations of the study include the fact that the analyses were based only on the information available on the digital platforms where the entities are present. The analysis of social networks covered a period of only six months and, in the case of websites, was carried out on platforms available online and free of charge. It would have been possible to use the Meta Business Suite tools (which analyse social network statistics) integrated with Facebook and Instagram, as well as the use of Google Analytics (which analyses the website), in order to obtain more data and indicators on the presence of companies at the digital level. It should be noted that these tools are only available to the company itself, which has access to both its social media accounts and its website.

As a suggestion for future research, a comparative study is proposed with the digital performance of other Regional Wine Commissions in Portugal. In this way, it will be possible to analyse, in general, the digital presence of the different entities distributed in the different regions of the country.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors of the article “DIGITAL MARKETING IN WINE TOURISM – TRÁS-OS-MONTES AND DÃO CASE STUDY” declare no conflicts of interest.

## Bionotes

**Filipa Fontes** has a degree in Marketing and is studying for a master's degree in Tourism Marketing at the School of Communication, Administration and Tourism. ORCID ID: 0009-0004-6177-420X

**Elsa Esteves** is an Assistant Professor at the Higher School of Communication, Administration and Tourism (EsACT) and has a PhD in Business Science.

Esteves is an EsACT representative in RIPTUR (Network of Public Institutions of Polytechnic Higher Education

with Tourism course), a member of the scientific council of the Master's program in Tourism Marketing, a supervisor of several works within the Master of Tourism Marketing and the Bachelor of Marketing and Tourism, with themes of tourist–consumer behaviour, tourism communication, tourism entertainment management and hotel management. Her research interests focus on tourist–consumer behaviour and tourism communication. She is the author of some scientific articles in peer-reviewed and indexed scientific journals (WoS/Scopus databases). She has also participated in some national and international indexed conferences and has been a member of several Scientific Committees. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8463-9842

**Elisabete Paulo Morais** graduated in Computer Engineering, received a MSc Degree in Information Management and a PhD in Computer Science (2009). She is currently a Full Professor of the Department of Informatics and Mathematics at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança - Portugal. She has taught several courses in the area of Computer Science since 1997. She was coordinator of the Department of Informatics and Mathematics and is vice-president of the Scientific Technical Council of the Superior School of Communication, Administration and Tourism of Mirandela. She has several publications in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters and proceedings, and has several communications at international scientific conferences. She serves as a member of Program Board for some Scientific Committees of International Conferences and has collaborated as reviewer with several journals. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1923-2341

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