

HERMES: Región de Murcia's Platform for the Tourism Industry



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Organisation: Tourism Institute of Región de Murcia, Regional Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Country: Spain

Level of government: Regional/State government

Sector: Economic affairs

Type: Communication, Digital

Launched in: 2011

Overall development time: 2 year(s) 10 month(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The HERMES project aims to make it easier for tourist companies to access services related to the regional tourism industry such as news, employment, innovation, training, etc. The platform has several tools enabling product design, price quotations, scheduling and sales to professional channels and target audiences. It serves a range of tourist companies such as those that provide accommodation, travel, and the like.

Why the innovation was developed

- The tourist accommodation sector in Región de Murcia covered 3,229 establishments, of which 223 were hotels, 2,453 tourist apartments, and the rest rural accommodation. Very few among these establishments belonged to big hotel chains and most of them did not have access to online tools, e.g. for contacting online travel operators.
 - The Región de Murcia's tourist services were not visible online. In 2010, small and medium sized hotels were losing business and were not taking advantage of online commerce.
 - The project 'Hermes' emerged as a result of the needs expressed by Región de Murcia's hotel sector. They needed to have technologies to adapt their sales patterns to the new online environment and to close the technology gap between with the big tour operators.
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Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve user satisfaction, Support economic growth

- To increase the online presence of the Región de Murcia's tourist industry.
 - To establish links between the regional tourism industry and online tourism agencies.
 - To develop free information and communication technology (ICT) tools which allow small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to access online business and improve their competitiveness.
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Main beneficiaries

Businesses, General population, Government staff

- Businesses: 203 companies in Región de Murcia use the platform; 1 039 059 products have been distributed and a total of 50 tour operators have joined the platform.

Results

Efficiency

- Before the project each tour company needed to work with each of the tour operator websites individually to sell their product.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- The platform supports the management of tourist establishments in a practical and flexible way.
- It supports the visibility of the product on multiple sales websites (the own establishment's web, hotel chains, institutional webs such as murciaturistica.es, etc.).
- It allows integration with similar platforms (M2M: machine to machine), where the platforms, without directed intervention, share their databases and automatically carry out all processes.
- It means that the tourism companies no longer need to contact each of the online tourist agencies to update prices.

Development

Design

The project emerged as a result of the needs expressed by Región de Murcia's hotel sector. They asked the Consejería de Cultura y Turismo (Regional Ministry of Culture and Tourism) for support, since they needed technologies to be able to adapt their sales patterns to the new online environment and to close the technology gap between them and the big tour operators.

Working groups were created, with each group focusing on the different technology needs of the hotel companies.

Design time: 10 month(s)

Testing

- The project was developed in four phases, with each phase corresponding to the implementation of one of its tools.
- To test the accommodation management tool a team of 20 hotels was formed. They tested the tool with the main online operator for tasks such as booking a hotel bed.

Testing time: 6 month(s)

Implementation

Tools used:

- We developed a training programme in two phases:
- First phase: to publicise the new technology tools to regional tourism companies, its advantages and its use.
- Second phase: individualised training for each of the tourism companies, for installation, connection to each of the tour operators and distribution of their product.
- We use the online platform for this training, to describe the use of the tools.

Resources used:

- A team of eight technicians, led by the Director of the Office of Innovation.
- A team of three trainers for the implementation phase.
- Estimated project budget of EUR 2 million.

Implementation time: 1 year(s) 2 month(s)

Diffusion

- In June 2012 the Región de Murcia freely provided the platform to autonomous regions in Spain for their use. The objective of this project is to create synergies and to share innovative technologies in the tourist sector, as part of the project 'Sharing Initiatives' of Segittur (Spanish society for management of innovation and tourist technologies).
- In September 2012, Hermes joined the project 'Social Tourism European Exchanges Platform' (www.ecalypso.eu) which is a platform that aims to support holidays for youth, families facing difficulties, seniors and people with difficulties. The Hermes platform is now being adapted to the needs of the European project, going from local to international dimensions.

Diffusion time: 4 month(s)

Challenges and solutions

- Regional tourist industry had low level of knowledge about online marketing systems. It was necessary to develop training and awareness programmes for companies and managers.
 - Lack of engagement with a large number of tour operators. The tools had to be adapted to the requirements and specifications of each of the tour operators involved, since without this it might create difficulties for the user.
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Partnerships

Regional hotel companies

Private sector

For the development of the project, the collaboration of various hotels in the region of Murcia was integrated through the Regional Federation of Employers of Hospitality and Tourism in the region of Murcia and the Association of Hospitality and Accommodation in the Shire of Cartagena. Their role was to conduct the pilot testing of the tools and advise the technical team in design and development.

Asociación Náutica Del Mar Menor

Private sector

A consortia from Murcia including hotels and tourist activities from several municipalities also participated in the project, playing a key role in the design and testing of tools.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- This initiative was made possible thanks to the collaboration between government and private tourism companies in the region of Murcia. These companies have been active in the design, development and testing of tools and it is they who determine the future objectives.
 - The HERMES platform is constantly evolving as new tour operators join, and the platform is further integrated with facilities management software and machine to machine. It is the companies that advise as 'experts' on the platform.
 - The platform, developed entirely by the Tourism Institute of Región de Murcia, is not considered a lucrative business, but as a management service for businesses. This peculiarity enables fast and effective control over the tools, upgrades and modifications, and ensures that the tool is completely free for tourism enterprises in the region of Murcia to use. All the innovations and improvements suggested by companies are used for the improvement of the tool and benefit the entire connected enterprise.
 - By facilitating the access of tourism enterprises in the region of Murcia to the sales channels of online marketing, it increases the visibility of regional tourism on the internet and thus is generating an indirect promotion of the Region de Murcia.
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Conditions for success

- The support of the regional public administration to create and develop a project that belongs to a 'destination' and so capture the attention of online tour operators.
 - The constant involvement of tourism enterprises in the project, financial support to address the constant changes and programming and integration modifications to the tool and a multidisciplinary team available to help companies in their training and use of tools.
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Other information

<http://www.itrem.es/itrem/inicio>

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