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Mayrhofen HIPPACH

Digital destination development: Ecotourism in comparison to Agritourism

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Problemstatement and Relevance

- **supply** and **demand** influence the development of tourism products and services (Sharpley, 2006)
- **ecotourism** as a significant **travel trend** (Khanra et al., 2021)
- **agritourism** as an attractive **travel option** for **ecotourism consumers** (Leuthold, 2001)

⇨ (digital) tourism platforms to further **increase the attractiveness** of farm vacations/agricultural events and **strengthen sustainability**

Source: UaB Austria - Siedlerhof

Theoretical background of the study I

Source: Envato Elements; MindCon

Ecotourism

- as **nature-based tourism** (UNWTO, n.d.)
- travel must, for example, **preserve and protect the natural landscape** (UNWTO, n.d.)
- **responsible, environmentally behavior** of ecotourists (Sharpley, 2006)
- **focus:** getting to know new landscapes and farm vacations (Leuthold, 2001)

Agritourism

- **accommodation directly on the farm** (Stotten et al., 2019)
- **participation in daily life** (Stotten et al., 2019)
- contributes to the **preservation of agricultural land** (Schilling et al., 2006; Veeck et al., 2006)
- **authenticity and sustainability** play an important role (Liang, 2017)

Theoretical background of the study II

Source: Envato Elements; MindCon

(Digital) Interfaces/Smart Data Management

- in **response to the future challenges** of agritourism (Pikkemaat et al., 2019)
- **suitable digitalization concepts** to promote sustainability (Buhalis et al., 2023) and personalized offers (Choi et al., 2021; Lee & Jan, 2023)
- **sufficient information** that needs to be **constantly updated** (Şengel et al., 2021)

⇨ **ecologically sustainable tourism strategy** leads, for example, to **the preservation of traditions, the protection of biodiversity and the promotion of coexistence** (Ristić et al., 2019)

Aim of the study

Mixed method:

- systematic literature review
- 41 semi-structured interviews
- 5 focus groups with 41 participants

in Vorarlberg and Tyrol between 2022 and 2023

The **research questions** are:

What are the similarities and differences between ecotourism and agritourism?
Which concept is better suited to the sustainable development of smart data management between agriculture and tourism?

The **aim** of this study is:

(1) to compare both concepts to determine whether agritourism is an exemplary form of ecotourism and
(2) to determine which concept is more suitable for digital interface and SDM in the existing digital destination infrastructure

Coding tree and Key statements

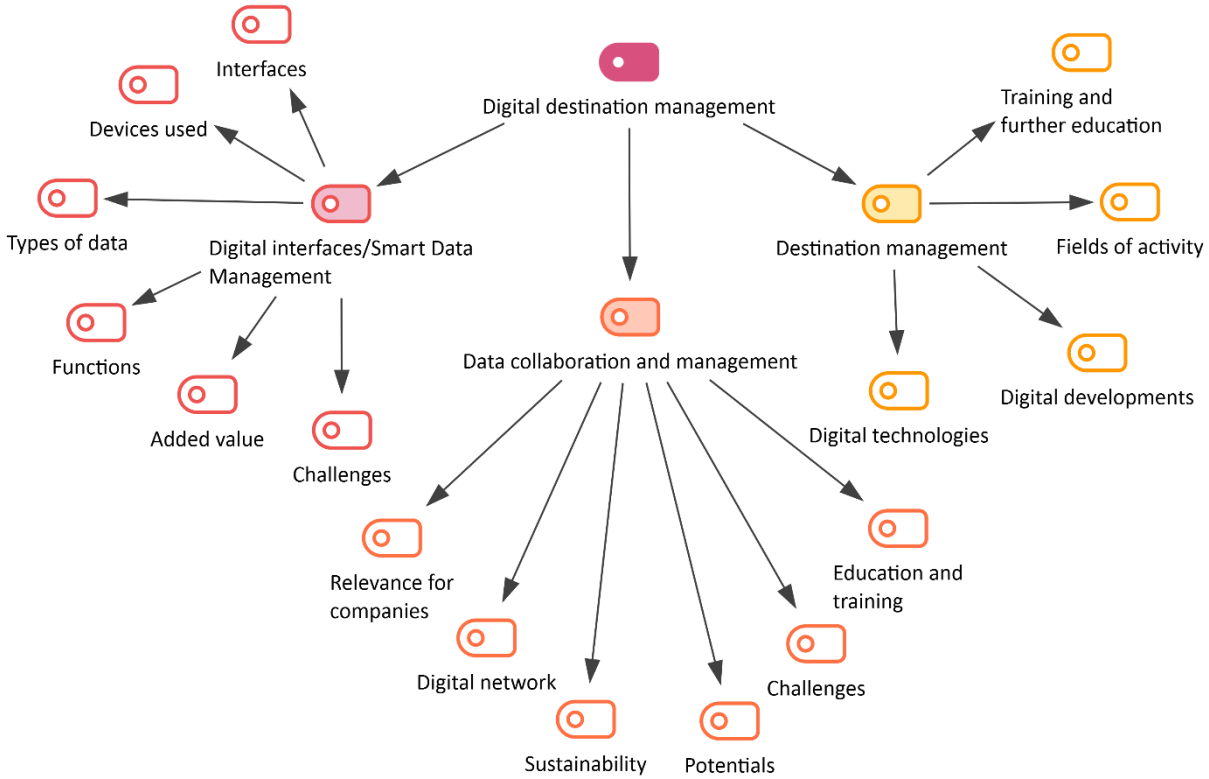


Figure 1: Coding tree of digital destination management (created with MAXQDA-2024)

"The employees who work with it are completely overwhelmed when it comes to actually using and utilizing this data for further development, for innovation, for increasing efficiency, for optimization. [...] And that's where external partners [...] come into play." (Ex1)

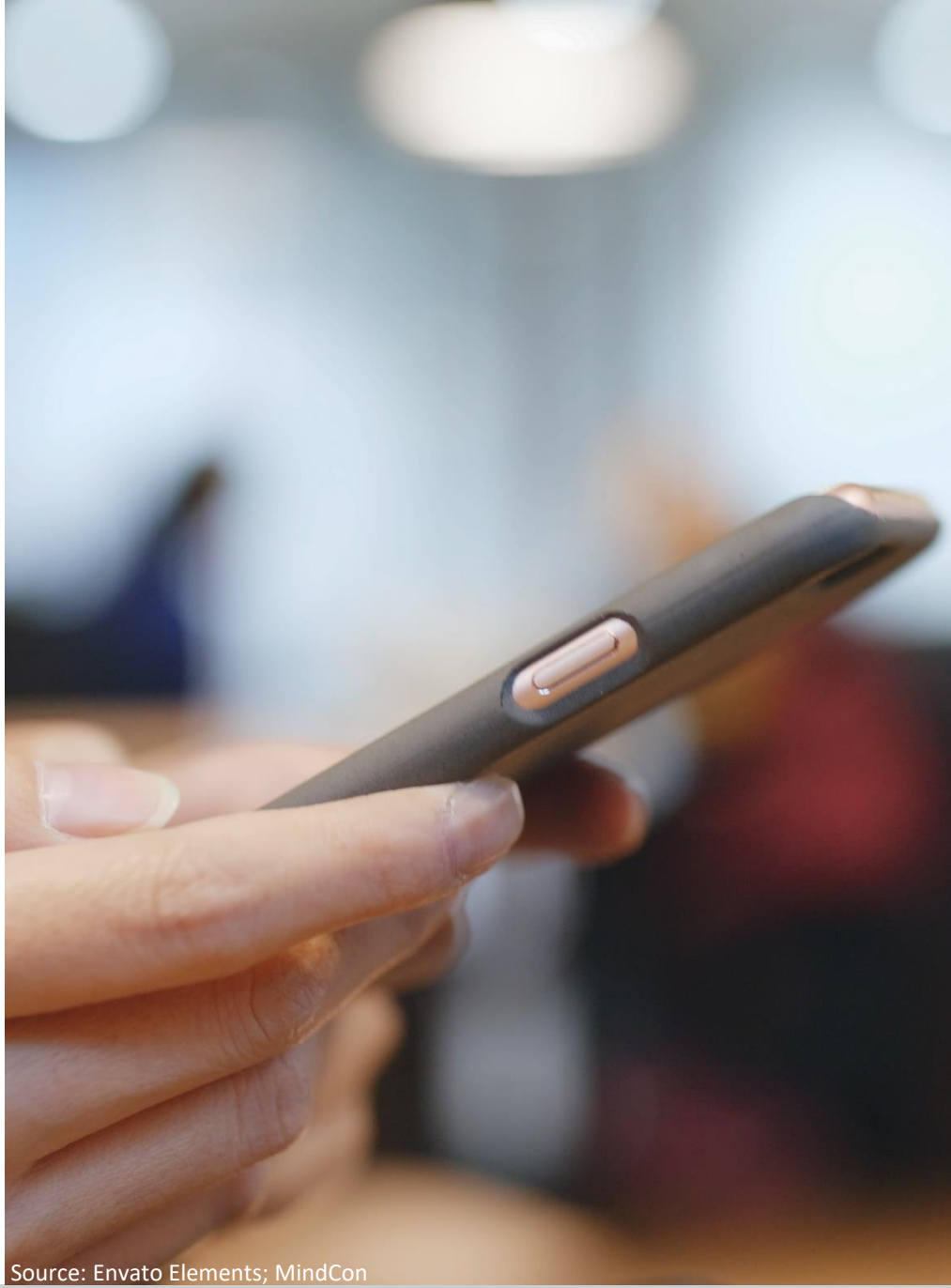
"**Of course, it's much better for the guest if [..] [he/she can] book it directly,** because then [..] [he/she] can see ok, we're going there, we're doing this [...]." (B2)

"[...] because of course it is very well received when tourism and agriculture work 'hand in hand' and the whole thing meshes well, so to speak, and also indirectly again that common goals are pursued in the sense that [...] both sides simply benefit from it, [...] I think that is very, very important." (P6)

Main results I

Digital interfaces/Smart Data Management

- digitalization can be helpful and beneficial for agritourism and ecotourism
- common interfaces to improve cooperation (e.g., platforms, apps)
- simple, clear, efficient and supportive design of digital interfaces
- data from products, farms and customers
- digital and organizational interfaces and (smart) data management are important



Source: Envato Elements; MindCon

Main results II

Data collaboration and management

- data exchange is essential for offering personalized services
- data management is crucial for collaboration
- shared digital network helpful
- challenges: updating effort, time, lack of expertise
- important: training and education

Source: Envato Elements, MindCon

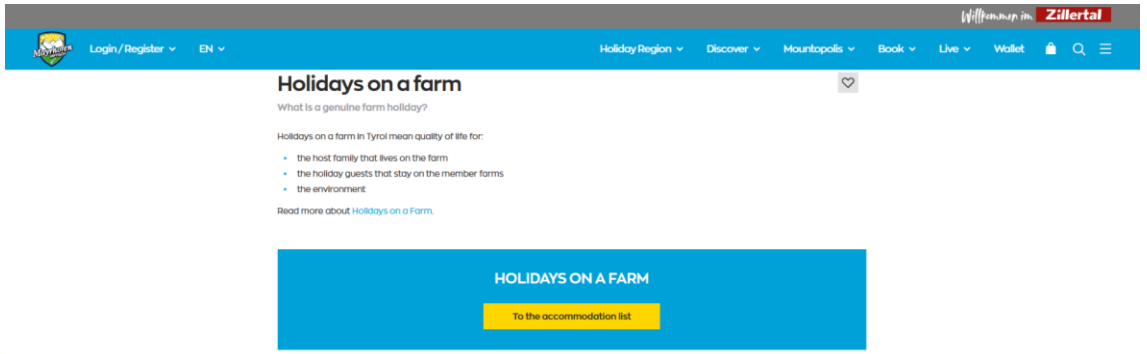
Main results III

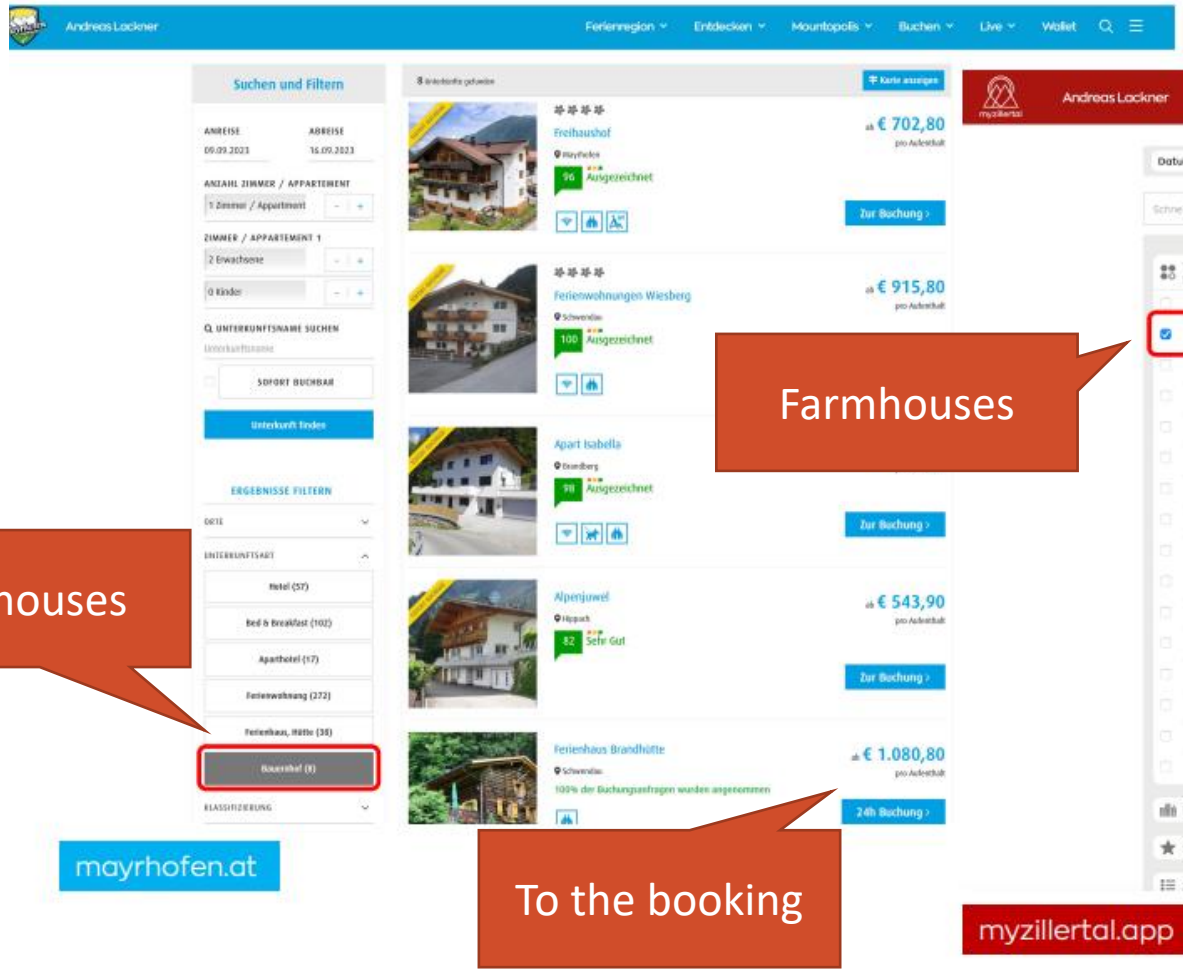
Destination management

- as support for digital collaboration between agriculture and tourism
- aim: comprehensive, digital marketing of agritourism and ecotourism products and services
- tasks: distribution of information, marketing, presentation of offers
- important: training and further education

Source: Envato Elements; MindCon

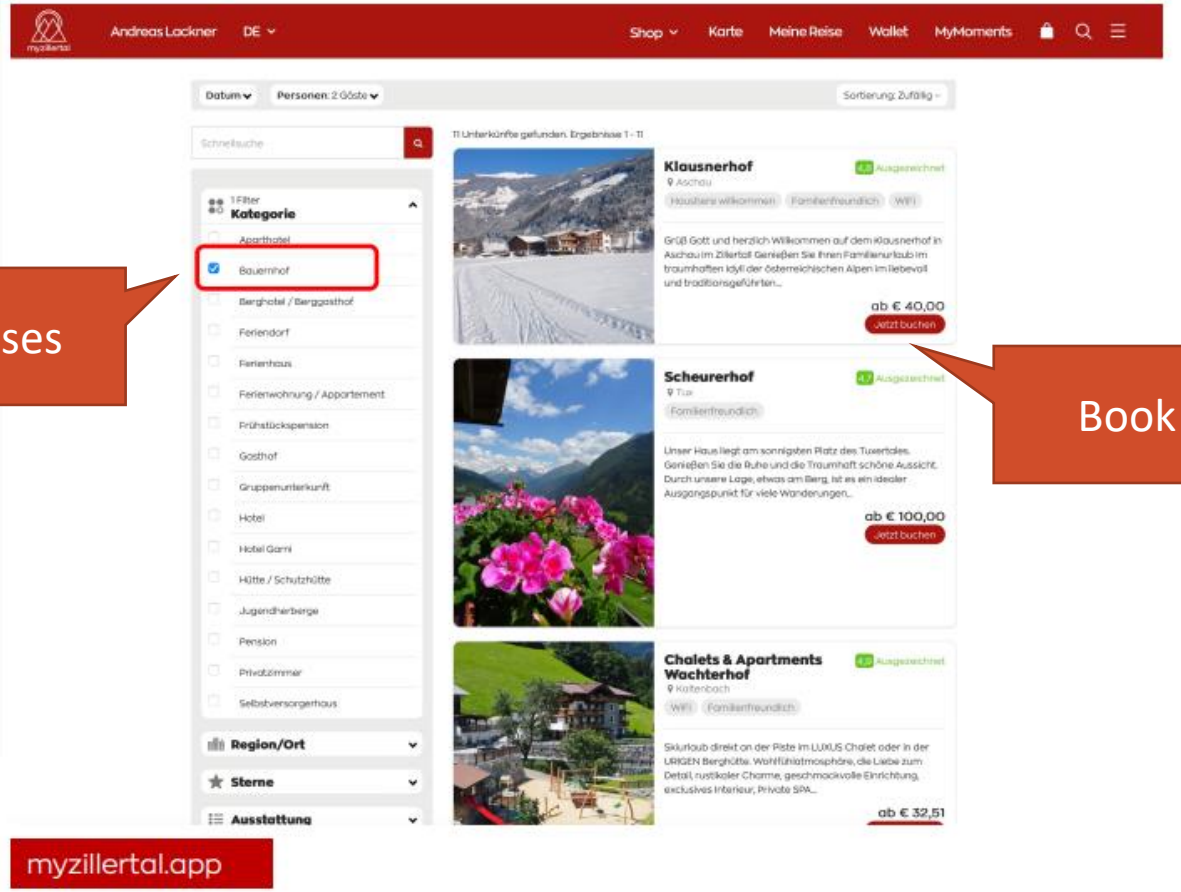
Agritourism offers on digital platforms I





Farmhouses

To the booking

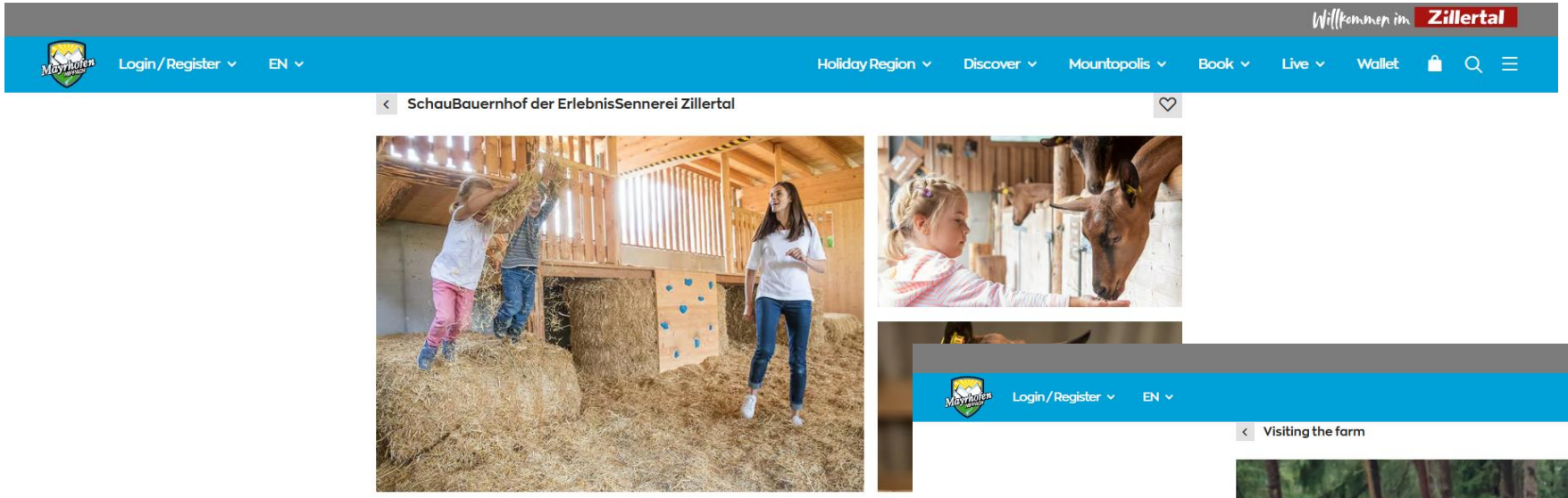


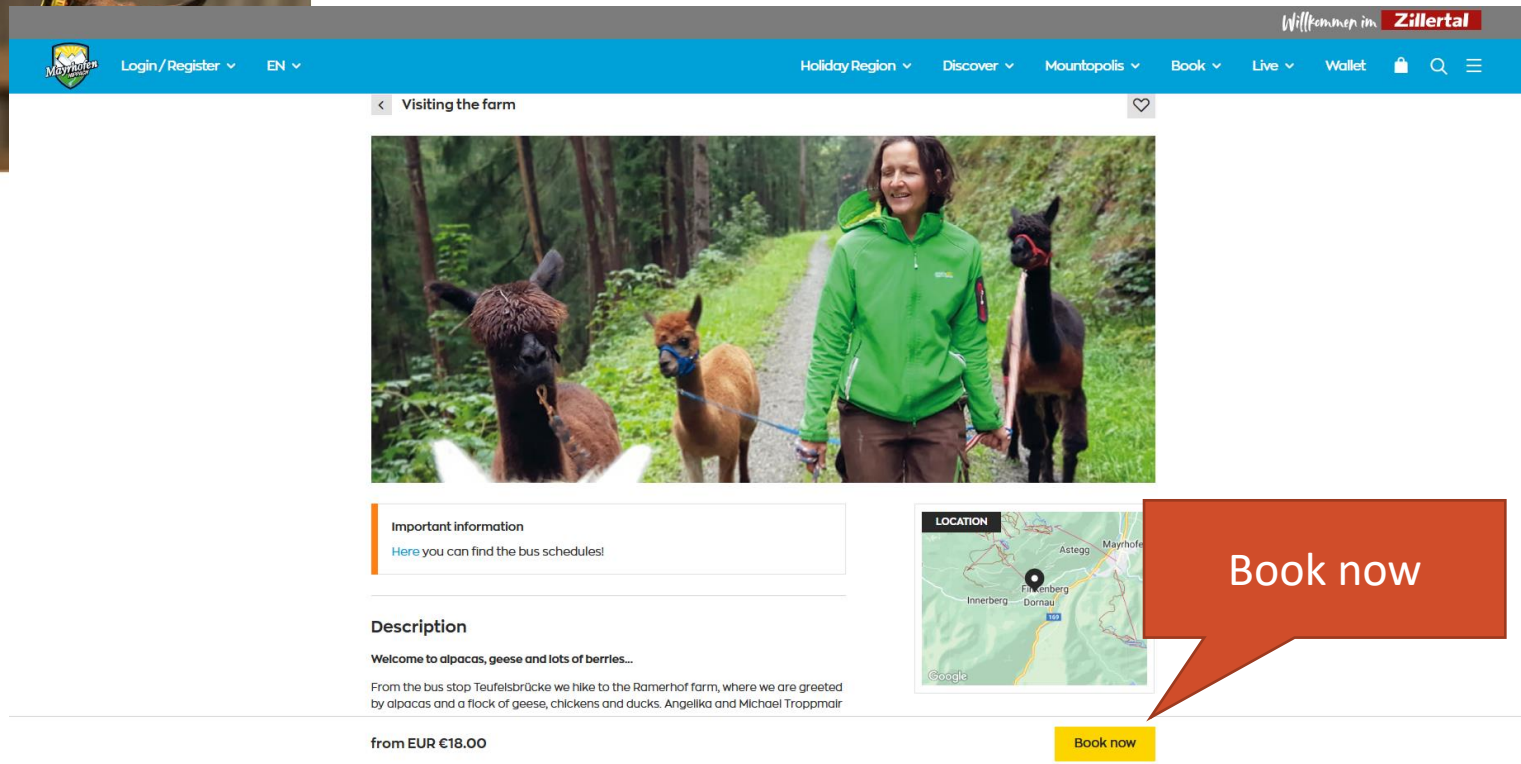
Farmhouses

Book now

Source: own screenshots from https://www.mayrhofen.at/en and https://www.myzillertal.at/en

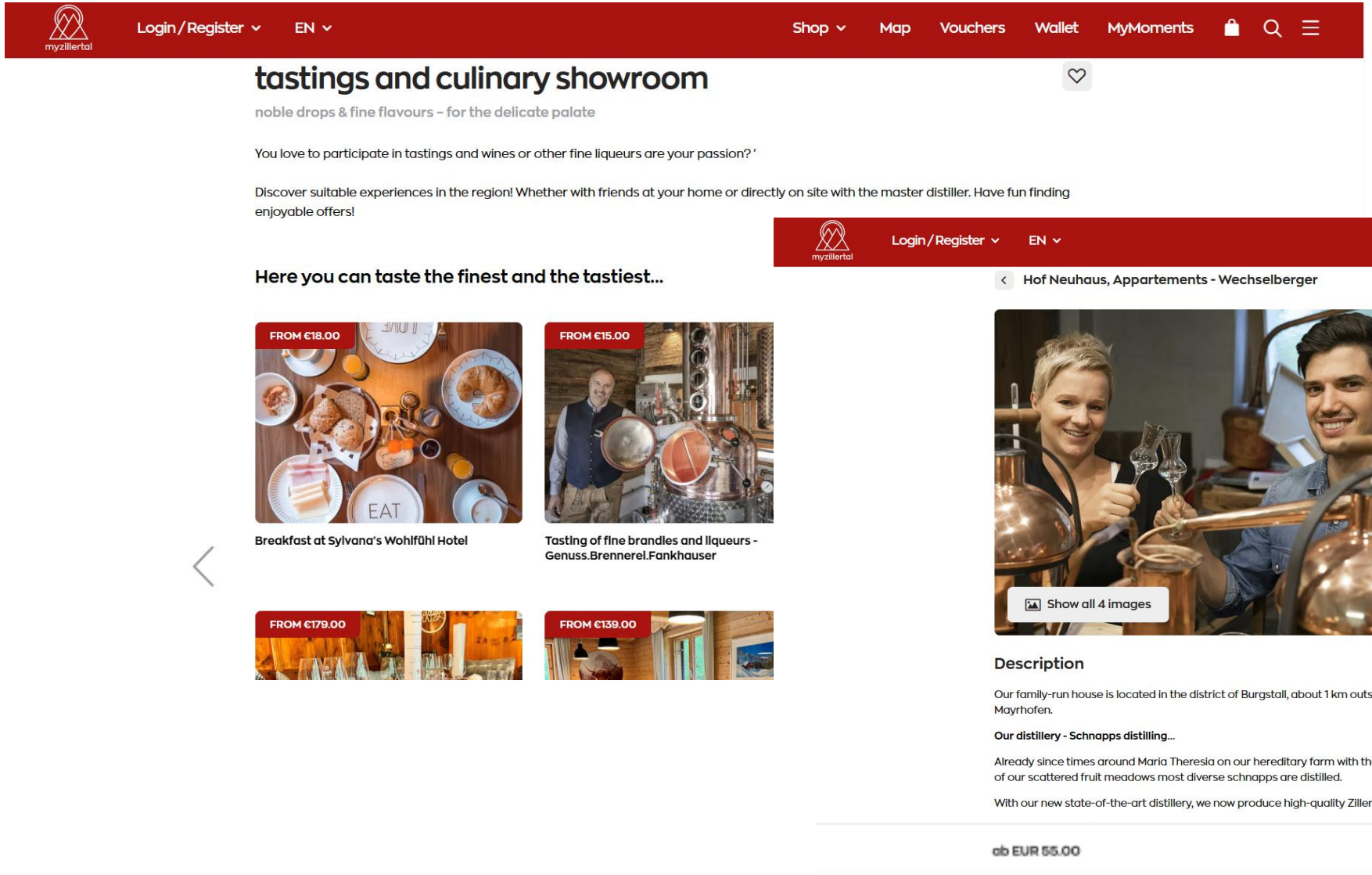
Agritourism offers on digital platforms II

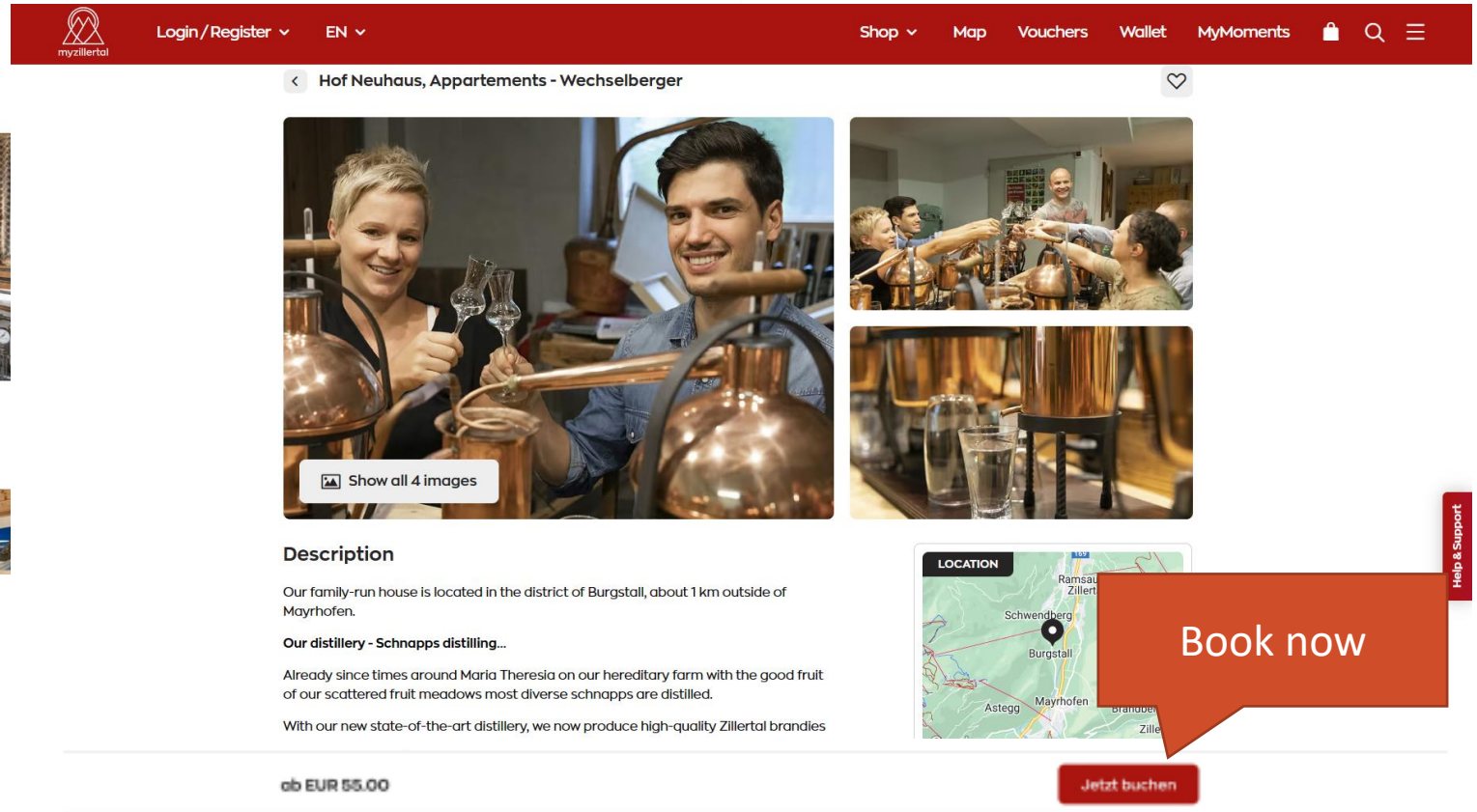




Source: own screenshots from https://www.mayrhofen.at/en

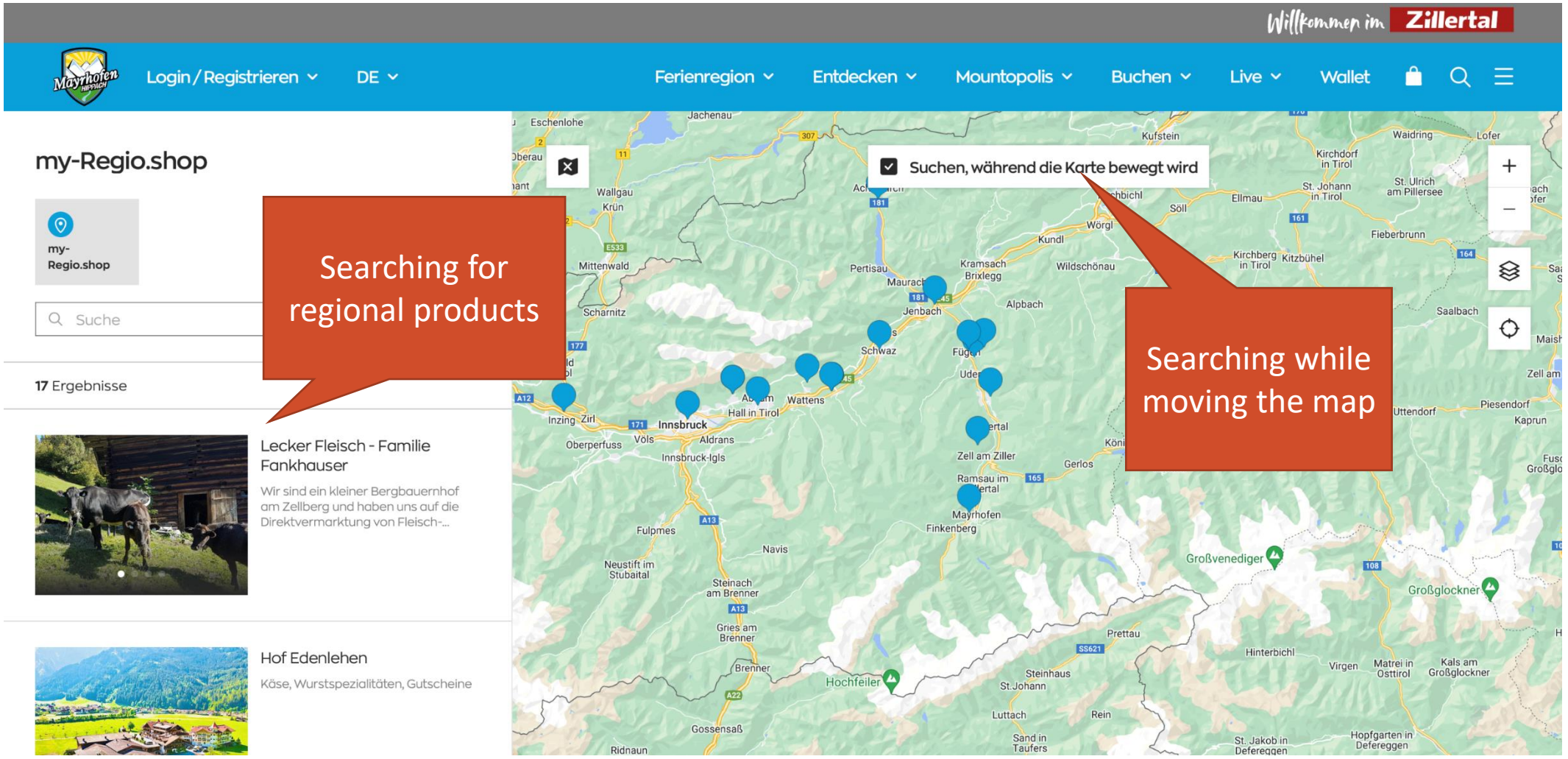
Agritourism offers on digital platforms III





Source: own screenshots from https://www.myzillertal.at/en

Agritourism offers on digital platforms IV



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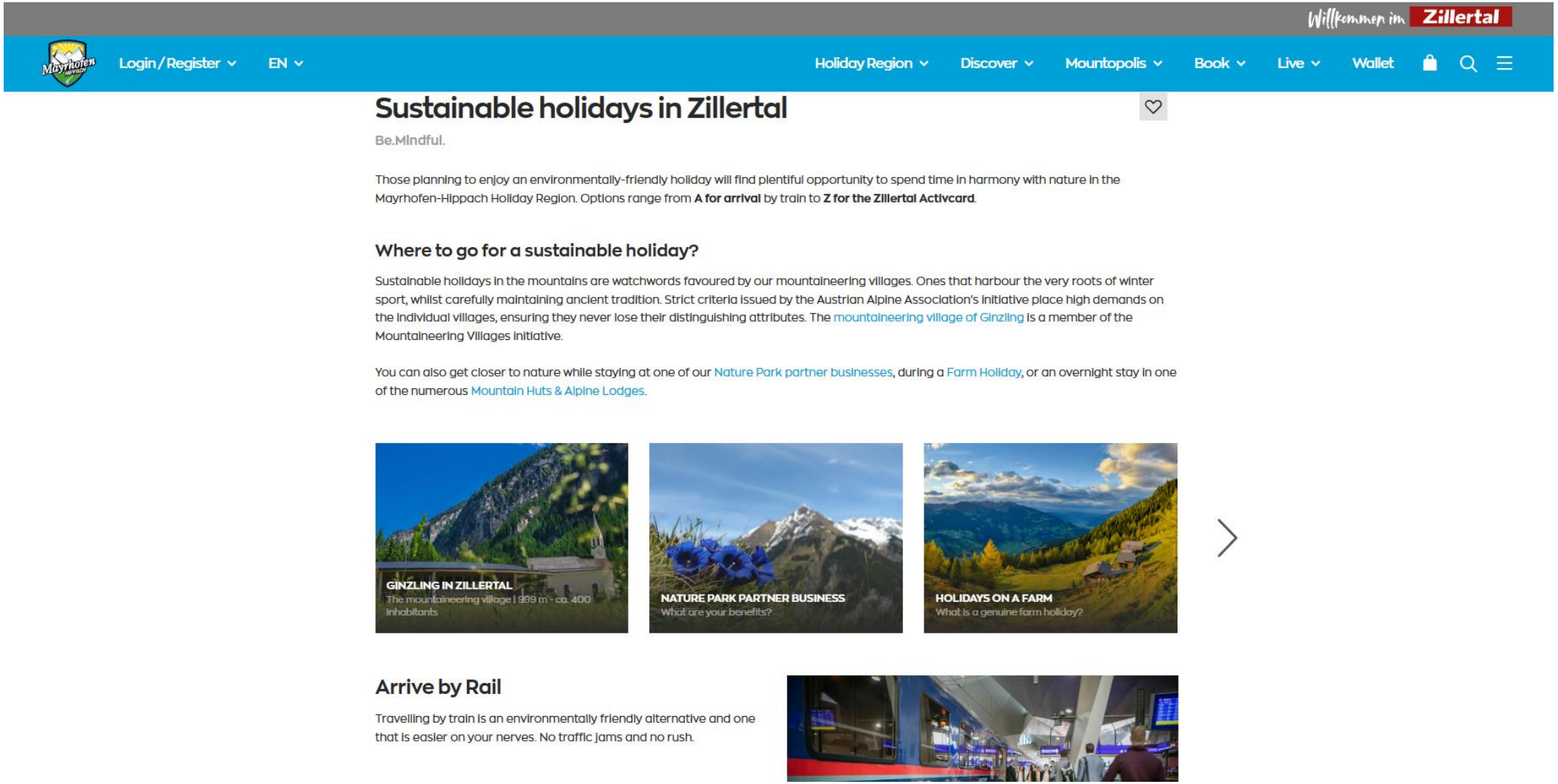
Ecotourism offers on digital platforms



Source: own screenshot from https://www.mayrhofen.at/en

Conclusion

- **agritourism and ecotourism** focus on the **preservation of landscapes**
- **agritourism** focuses on **agriculture**
- **ecotourism** is **broader** (includes e.g., nature parks, eco-museums)
- strengthening **cooperation** through several **digital interfaces and apps**
- **myZillertal-App** can act as an interface for both **agritourism and ecotourism offers**

Source: Envato Elements: MindCon

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For the future (digital) development of destination management, is a uniform concept desirable to link agritourism and ecotourism more closely?

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Regional Development