



## DIGI-TOUR-SKILLS

UPSCALING DIGITAL SKILLS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

# CASE STUDIES



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# THE SLOW ROAD - A NICHE TOUR OPERATOR'S CONTENT SUCCESS

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## Overview

Name: Butterfield & Robinson (Content platform is "The Slow Road")

Location: Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, but operates tours globally, with a strong presence in European destinations like Italy, France, and Spain.

Type: Niche Luxury Tour Operator

## Introduction

This case study focuses on The Slow Road (by Butterfield & Robinson), a luxury tour operator that specializes in high-end walking and biking tours. It demonstrates how a niche business with a high-value product can use content marketing to build a loyal community and drive sales. Their strategy proves that content doesn't always need to go viral to be effective; instead, it needs to reach the right audience with a message that resonates deeply.

## Implementation

**The problem:** As a luxury brand, Butterfield & Robinson (B&R) operates in a competitive market. Their price point is significantly higher than average, so their marketing needs to justify that value proposition. The challenge wasn't just to sell a trip, but to sell a philosophy of travel—"slowing down to see the world." They needed to attract a discerning clientele that values immersive experiences, expert guidance, and behind-the-scenes access over a checklist of sights.

Adopting content marketing: B&R's content strategy is embodied in their blog and magazine, "The Slow Road." This platform is not just a sales tool; it's a beautifully curated collection of stories, guides, and interviews that reflect the company's travel philosophy. Their content includes:

- **Long-form travel stories:** In-depth narratives from their guides and trip planners that go beyond the itinerary, focusing on the people, culture, and moments of connection that make a trip special.
- **"A Day in the Life" guides:** Highly detailed articles that showcase what it's truly like to be on one of their trips, from the morning coffee to the evening wine.
- **Expert interviews:** Conversations with local artisans, chefs, and historians that B&R partners with, highlighting the unique access their trips provide.



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- **High-Quality Photography and Videography:** The visual content is stunning, evoking a sense of place and luxury that aligns perfectly with the brand.
- **This content is distributed via their website,** a sophisticated email marketing program, and high-end print magazines sent to past and prospective clients.

## Key Insights

- **Success factors:** The success of "The Slow Road" comes from its unwavering commitment to its brand ethos. The content is an extension of the product itself: it's thoughtful, expertly crafted, and luxurious. It successfully builds a world around the brand that clients want to be a part of. The content serves to qualify leads; by the time a potential client contacts them, they are already invested in the B&R philosophy and understand the value of the experience, making the sales process smoother.
- **Tangible results:** While B&R is a private company and doesn't release detailed financial data, their longevity and position as a leader in the luxury travel market for over 50 years is a testament to their successful strategy.
  - They boast an extremely high rate of repeat customers and referrals, which is the gold standard for a luxury service business. Their content marketing is crucial for nurturing these long-term relationships.
  - "The Slow Road" blog is a recognized source of high-quality travel writing, winning awards and establishing the company's authority and credibility in the travel industry.
  - Their email marketing, fueled by this content, achieves high open and click-through rates because subscribers see it as valuable content, not just advertising.



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## Recommendations

- **Let your content reflect your brand value:** If you are a premium brand, your content must also be premium. Invest in high-quality writing, photography, and design.
- **Nurture, don't just sell:** Use content to build a long-term relationship with your audience. Provide value and build trust over time. This is especially important for high-ticket items with a long sales cycle.
- **Go deep, not wide:** For niche businesses, it's more effective to create in-depth content for a small, dedicated audience than to create superficial content for the masses. Become the go-to resource for your specific area of expertise.
- **Show, don't just tell:** Use storytelling to illustrate the value of your product or service. Instead of saying your tours are "immersive," tell a story that shows a traveler having an immersive experience.

## References

Butterfield & Robinson. (n.d.). The slow road. Butterfield & Robinson. <https://www.butterfield.com>

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