



MARKETING STRATEGY FOR PROMOTION OF "HIDDEN" HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES AMONG YOUNG TOURISTS – SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF DUPNITSA AND KRIVA PALANKA

Project CB006.2.21.150 Sustainable Utilization of Cultural Heritage in Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka

Lead Partner: Municipality of Dupnitsa

Project Partner: Municipality of Kriva Palanka

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Market Competitors

Taking into account the specifics of the "hidden" cultural and historical sites, as well as taking into account the characteristic of young tourists as the target group of the current project, who use social media and modern technologies, we can indicate some of the market competitors, which can be applied to the "hidden" sites of Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka.

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Google Arts and Culture

- Google Arts & Culture is an online platform through which high-quality images and videos of various artworks and cultural artifacts of partner cultural organizations around the world can be viewed. The digital platform allows the viewer to take a virtual walk through galleries and expositions, having the opportunity to look at different works of art and get specific information about them. The digital platform is available in 18 languages, including English, Chinese, French, Italian, Polish and Portuguese.
- The platform has become extremely popular especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, with extremely high resolution images currently available from over 1,200 museums and locations worldwide. The platform is available both as a desktop version and through a specially developed application (app).

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Creative Iceland Marketing Platform

Visitors wishing to immerse themselves in the authentic spirit of Icelandic culture can book typical activities organized in the form of knitting and embroidery workshops, cooking classes, photography walks, creative writing workshops, Icelandic language courses and more. Creators and experts who want to organize activities related to their field receive support from the "Creative Iceland" Marketing Platform, and invitations to the organized events are placed on the website. Attendees of the organized events are invited to share their experiences on the initiative's official Facebook page.

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Future for religious heritage

Future for Religious Heritage is an independent non-governmental organization which main purpose is the preservation of religious buildings with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. The organization focuses on the leading place of religion in Europe's cultural heritage and encourages the EU to develop and develop a policy to support it. FRH works with its members to develop cross-border projects funded by EU and other sources.

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Good examples of promoting "hidden" cultural and historical sites

- ✓ **Culinary festivals in France** - every year in January, a weekend is dedicated to the Truffle and Foie gras Festival in the commune of Sarlat , Southwestern France. A culinary academy is also organized, within which various workshops , cooking courses and open demonstrations are held, as well as tastings of various local products containing truffles.
- ✓ **The historical carnival in Ivrea , Italy** – figures from different historical eras take part in the Historical Carnival of Ivrea . They are the main actors at different times of the carnival and are part of the Historical Procession. The orange battles are the most spectacular event of the carnival in Ivrea and symbolize the people's struggle for freedom. They take place on three consecutive afternoons: Carnival Sunday, Fat Monday and Fat Tuesday, and are attended by thousands of people, young and old. Beans were thrown in the Middle Ages. Twice a year the feudal lord would give a pot of beans to poor families and they would throw it in the streets out of disrespect. The bean was also used at carnival time, when improvised opponents were jokingly challenged with it.

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✓ *Calcotada in Catalonia, Spain* - Winter is the season of the so-called " Calcotada " in the Spanish autonomous region of Catalonia, and local onions take center stage. The southern town of Valls hosts the region's main food festival celebrating this unique and quirky culinary tradition.

The Spanish "Calcotada" is a popular festival that consists of roasting white onions, specially cultivated to last a long time. The main event is a competition in which contestants must consume as many onions (calch) as possible in 45 minutes. It is the most popular gastronomic festival in Catalonia. For Catalans , the ritual of eating calçotada is eccentric, fun and delicious.

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Target Markets

- Based on the information from the visits of foreign tourists in North Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria, three main markets can be classified - traditional markets, perspective markets and distant markets. Traditional markets are the ones that have realized the most number of tourists, namely the Balkan countries, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Turkey. A large amount , however, is not always associated with large come , as sometimes large groups of tourists have a low share of income from tourism. This means that in the near future a decline in demand can be expected . In this sense, it is necessary to shift the focus so that the behavior of tourists is directed in the desired direction.
- Special attention should be paid to tourists from Israel, as the Balkans are a preferred destination for them, which is also related to tradition historical presence of the Jewish community in the region and its contribution to the formation of the cultural, architectural and economic image of the region .

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- We should not forget the countries of North and South America and Africa, which in the long term with an adequate, targeted policy and marketing strategy have a potential that should not be missed. Special attention as potential markets should be addressed to the USA and Canada, inclusive the ***Macedonian and Bulgarian diasporas in these distant markets***. A decisive role for the achievement to these markets would be the joint and coordinated the work of embassies and foreign representatives in these countries, as well as of local communities and organizations.
- By popularizing specific products that meet the interests of tourists from these countries, their interest in visiting Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka and the "hidden" cultural and historical sites will certainly increase. Statistics show that tourists from these markets tend to spend more during their travels in Europe compared to tourists from European markets.

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Current measures to promote tourism

➤ *Macedonia and Kriva Palanka*

The Municipality of Kriva Palanka has adopted a Tourism Development Strategy for the period 2020-2025 .

Tourism in the municipality is defined as one of the priority economic activities. In its strategy, the Municipality of Kriva Palanka relies on registration of the property status of tourist spaces and facilities, construction of new tourist sites and restoration and maintenance of existing ones. It has been reported as a necessity that the existing infrastructure be modernized so that it is accessible to foreign tourists.

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➤ Bulgaria and Dupnitsa Municipality

In the present world crisis affected since the pandemic with the COVID-19 virus, the Ministry of Tourism has updated the advertising activities defined in the Annual program for national tourist advertising in 2022 (adopted on 28.10.2021).

The focus and implementation of the Program are placed on:

- Promotion of domestic tourism. The Ministry of Tourism plans to focus on the Bulgarian tourist product , the advantages of the national resorts , the possibilities for health and spa tourism, the uniqueness of culture, traditions, customs , the charm of small towns , quality food and wines, modern cities , etc.
- Taking steps to promote flow of tourists between Bulgaria and neighboring countries - Romania, Greece, Serbia, Turkey and North Macedonia . Bulgaria is good for the neighbors a well-known destination offering sea vacations, winter tourism, cultural tourism, balneo and spa tourism, and the products with a large potential for development are city breaks , visits to festivals, concerts , wine and gourmet tourism, eco and rural tourism, etc.
- European markets involving land travel or air travel , which are traditional target markets for inbound tourism

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Current distribution channels

➤ *Kriva Palanka:*

In his own online marketing communication Kriva Palanka uses primarily the following websites : In social media, the city of Kriva Palanka has a Facebook profile and Instagram with published attractive photos of themselves historical and cultural objects and information about the city and its history .

Kriva Palanka has a website at the following address: www.KrivaPalanka.gov.mk. This website provides extensive information on various tourist products - cultural tourism, eco- tourism, religious tourism, culinary tourism, amateur tourism, business and events, as well as folklore , as well as other aspects of the life of the citizens of Kriva Palanka.

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➤ *Municipality of Dupnitsa:*

In his own online marketing communication Dupnitsa uses mainly the following websites : In social media, the city of Dupnitsa has a Facebook and Instagram profile with published attractive photos of its historical and cultural objects and information about the city and its history .

Dupnitsa has a website at the following address: www.dupnitsa.bg. This website provides detailed information on various tourist products - cultural tourism, eco-tourism, religious tourism, culinary tourism, amateur tourism, business and events.

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SWOT Analysis

- Strengths - factors that give an advantage over competitors;
- Weaknesses - obstacles that hinder development and progress and that are subject to change or improvement, and in the event that this cannot be achieved, then they should be avoided and circumvented;
- Opportunities - elements and factors that can be used to create a competitive advantage;
- Threats – elements and factors that they can make it difficult or in the long term even slow down the development.

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The present analysis aims to assess *the competitive advantages of the cross-border region, including the municipalities of Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka*. They are subject to analysis as the positive sides of the existing situation, which can be counted on for the future development of tourism in the region, as well as the shortcomings that are an obstacle to the full realization of the region's potential. Based on the assessment, a thorough study of the needs for the development of tourism in the region, which must be taken into account when implementing the current strategy, was carried out.

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Strengths

- **The rich cultural-historical inheritance** . With its cultural monuments, the hundreds natural attractions, and a number of "hidden" cultural and historical sites, the cross-border region has an attractive network of historical and cultural heritage. Something moreover, all this is concentrated in a relatively small area, allowing easy and quick access. The combination between greatness number of cultural monuments and "hidden" cultural and historical sites and the wealth of traditions, customs and livelihoods gives the region a significant one advantage in the field of tourism.
- **There is the main one necessary infrastructure, although in most cases it is not at the necessary level** . The improvement of the road network and the placement of signs would bring a number of benefits for the development of local communities .
- **Increasing investments in tourism** - Tourism is gradually becoming a significant source of tax revenue for Bulgaria and Macedonia, as leading investments in the private sector .
- **More and more non-governmental organizations are using tourism as a tool for sustainable development**
- **NGOs create links between the public and the business sector to promote tourism and "hidden" historical and cultural sites**

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Weaknesses

- **Lack of communication and cooperation** between the various institutions and bodies responsible for the maintenance and exploitation of the "hidden" cultural and historical objects;
- **Lack of systematized and comprehensive information about the "hidden" cultural and historical sites** - visitors and tourists find it difficult to find information about the cultural monuments, events and other attractions in the two municipalities.
- **Lack of an established national tourism policy in territories that are not centers of heavy and mass tourism;**
- **Tourism is poorly represented** at the national , regional and municipal levels development plans - tourism is comparatively a new industry for Bulgaria and North Macedonia , because which in national and regional device plans is not represented sufficiently.
- **The existing tourist infrastructure is not fully developed suitable** - the state of the road network is unsatisfactory, there are no appropriate signposts, and most of the "hidden" historical and cultural sites are inaccessible to persons in a disadvantaged position.

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- **Insufficient services for visitors** - There are no services, road signs and maps in foreign languages, as well as other types of services to facilitate Bulgarian and foreign tourists.
- **Goods and services offered on the domestic market by tour operators of regions are exceptional limited .**
- **The internal market is underdeveloped** - The internal market remains the same underdeveloped and unused .
- **The tourist products of the region are not enough developed**
- **Marketing campaigns still fail to create a whole identity of the region**
- **Lack of coordination to diversify the experiences of foreign tourists**
- **Lack of resources for targeted advertising for the domestic market**
- **Misunderstanding of the client 's needs**
- **Lack of information about customer expectations**

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Possibilities

- a developing sector internationally level
- Tourism in Bulgaria is on the rise
- International trends in the development of cultural tourism are favorable . Cultural tourism is proving to be an important sub -sector of the international market. Hidden cultural and historical sites are proving to be an attractive destination for young tourists.

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Threats

- Introducing restrictive travel and social distancing measures in relation to the fight against COVID-19;
- Political instability and political crises;
- Global climate change and vulnerability of geographic regions;
- Pollution of air, water and soil leading to serious changes in the environment;
- Lack of a stable legal and regulatory framework in the tourism sector.

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TENDENCIES

- It is necessary to attract tourists from younger age groups. They most easily accept the challenges of the modern world and easily fit into it. They are the ones who can present the "hidden" historical and cultural objects of the region such as modern and attractive sights and at the same time draw the vision for their future development.
- The image of Dupnitsa and Kriva palanka must have a connection with the rest of Europe and the world. Cultural events could be held near the "hidden" historical and cultural sites of the territory of Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka and should be part of the cultural events characteristic of the respective regions.
- On the basis of local customs, the uniqueness of the "hidden" historical and cultural sites of Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka can be highlighted. The presentation of a given folklore tradition must be done in a way accessible for its recreation by the tourists themselves.

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Global practice proves that **the product is the best brand**. In this sense, the municipalities should direct its efforts to improve the neglected condition of the "hidden" historical and cultural sites of Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka and their development and opening to the wider population and raising awareness of their importance and their touristic significance.

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Trends in tourism advertising on the territory of the region

Because of exceptional the importance of advertising for the development of tourism in the region , below is an example scheme for planning and regulating advertising in tourism. It covers 9 stages.

1. Determination of advertising objectives

Determining the content and structure of advertising objectives is a key element in holistic marketing.

2. Establishing responsibilities _

There are two types of advertising among advertising agencies – comprehensive advertising and limited scope advertising.

3. Determining the advertising budget

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4. Development of the theme and mechanism of the campaign

5. Selection of means of advertising, resp. the channels for their implementation

6. Creating an adequate advertising message

7. Determination the time and intensity of the advertising campaign

8. Analysis of the efforts made to carry out the advertising campaign

9. Determining the results of the advertising campaign

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- Tourism is seen as a highly profitable industry potential for development, in view of which its development is considered at the national level. The main challenges facing the development of tourism in the context of the "hidden" historical and cultural sites of Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka can be summarized in the following groups:
- improvement of the infrastructure;
- creation of conditions for year- round tourism;
- improvement the quality of service;
- determination of uniqueness;
- Investment in the development of the tourist product.

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