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Study on modern marketing practices for popularization of Old Urban Lifestyle heritage



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The project aims at preservation, presentation and popularization of the Urban Lifestyle Heritage from the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century in the Cross-border region. It will provide for presentation on the way of life of our predecessors one century ago. Furthermore, it will provide common touristic offer of the two renovated and conserved cultural centers that will show the urban lifestyle heritage – the former Hotel “Solun” in Kumanovo and the Old District Hall Building in Dupnitsa. This approach tries to emphasize the cohesion of the whole cross-border region's monuments as unique variation and high attractiveness for tourist visit. Additionally, it will create a virtual museum of the old urban lifestyle heritage in the CBC region. This will provide for the popularization of our urban heritage and for exhibiting of the huge variety of information about the urban life in our region one century ago. It will be interactive and it will allow local people to upload and present their pieces of information about the urban life in Kumanovo and Dupnitsa during the last century. In this way, we will be able to preserve and present additional information on our common heritage.

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Introduction

Tourism has lots of potentials to be one of the key economic development branches connecting people in Bulgaria and Macedonia, with lots of underdeveloped sectors and areas. The Project aims at preservation, presentation and popularization of the Urban Lifestyle Heritage from the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century in the Cross-border region. It will provide for presentation on the way of life of our predecessors one century ago.

In many countries the presentation of the urban lifestyle during the last centuries has turned into a very successful niche for attracting tourists. Unfortunately, it has been significantly underestimated in Bulgaria and Macedonia, especially in our CBC region.

There is a lack of information on the lifestyle of the people from the urban communities in the cross border region during the last century. There are no facilities to show it; there are no established communication channels to popularize it. Thus, local people and the potential tourists are not aware of our rich cultural heritage.

The Project will provide for the development of this tourism niche by three major types of activities:

(1) restoration and conservation of two cultural monuments, which aim to present the urban lifestyle during the last century in the CBC region, especially in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo - the former Hotel “Solun” in Kumanovo and the Old District Hall Building in Dupnitsa;

(2) development of a modern communication channel through creation of a virtual museum of the old urban lifestyle heritage in the CBC region. It will provide for the popularization of our urban heritage and for exhibiting of the huge variety of information about the urban life in our region one century ago. It will be interactive and it will allow local people to upload and present their pieces of information about the urban life in Kumanovo and Dupnitsa during the last century. In this way, we will be able to preserve and present additional information on our common heritage;

(3) capacity development of local stakeholders engaged in cultural tourism through studies and trainings;



(4) raising awareness of our cultural heritage through attractive promotional campaigns: the festival of the urban lifestyle heritage.

This approach tries to emphasize the cohesion of the whole cross-border region's monuments as unique variation and high attractiveness for tourist visit.

By developing joint investments in the touristic infrastructure the partners will increase competitiveness of the region and strengthening of the tourist market, introducing Kumanovo and Dupnitsa as leaders of joint CBC tourist measures and will enhance the economic development of Kumanovo and Dupnitsa as well as will encourage promotion and raising awareness of local touristic products, that most of the people are not aware of.

A brief SWAT analysis reveals the following needs, strengths and constraints:

Needs: A new touristic infrastructure, supported with new touristic services should be built up or renewed. It will support employment, economic growth and decrease strong socio economic pressure in the region.

A need to establish modern communication channels in order to raise the awareness of our heritage and to attract tourists.

A need for new project management knowledge is essential in order to validate all touristic, cultural and general strengths and potentials in the region.

Strengths: Rich cultural heritage in the cross border region. Tourists have awareness of historical sites in Kumanovo and Dupnitsa and visit them as touristic destinations of great importance and high attractiveness.

Constraints: lack of communication and cooperation between different institutions and bodies in charge for taking care and utilization of this heritage.

Proposed strategy: establishment of both tangible and virtual tourism infrastructure; capacity building; attractive awareness campaigns. In this way we will be able to present our heritage to wider public and to raise the awareness of its variety and touristic significance.



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Objectives of the study





Main objective of the study

The main objective of the present document is to present thorough and objective study on specific approaches which can be used for attracting the target groups and actively and meaningfully promoting Old Urban Lifestyle heritage

Specific objectives of the study

The following specific objectives are also envisaged for achieving the overall objective of the study:

- ▶ Presentation and analysis of the current state of the tourism in the CBC region and in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo in particular;
- ▶ Presentation and analysis of modern marketing practices for cultural tourism popularization;
- ▶ Presentation and analysis of EU best practices and policies;
- ▶ Identification of modern marketing methods for popularization of the Old Urban Lifestyle heritage in the context of the specific characteristics of the region.

Expected results from the study

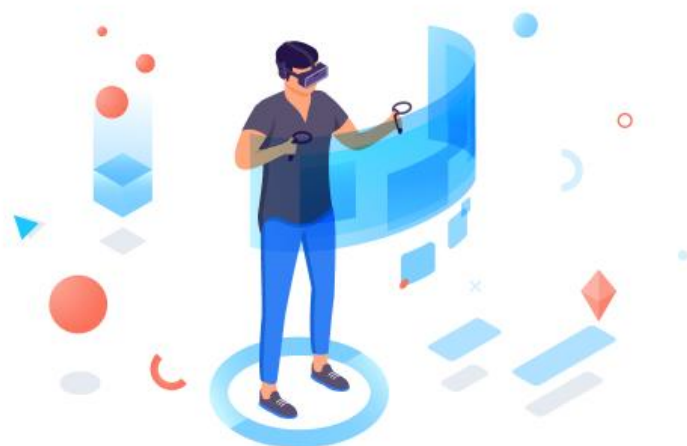
The developed study will present modern practices for popularization of Old Urban Lifestyle heritage which will be used for elaborating a the Marketing strategy for promotion of Old Urban Lifestyle heritage tourism in the CBC region; the obtained and analyzed data, the gathered best practices/ good examples, the reached conclusions, etc. will create the necessary foundation, which will be used for the development of comprehensive, correspondent to the actual condition and highly effective marketing strategy.



Direct beneficiaries

The developed study on modern marketing practices for popularization of Old Urban Lifestyle heritage will be actively disseminated and will be used by:

- ▶ Professionals in the field of cultural heritage - cultural and heritage professionals, museum staff, history professionals, experts on preservation and others;
- ▶ Public authorities responsible for cultural heritage and tourism development - local authorities, historic heritage management, public servants and others;
- ▶ Public and private organizations operating in the field of tourism and culture - touristic companies and tour operators, artistic community, entrepreneurs, representatives of the NGOs and others;
- ▶ Other interested parties – tourists, staff from public, private, educational institutions, artistic community, citizens including children with parents, visiting cultural heritage sites, media and others.





Overview of the current situation of the tourism in the CBC region





Tourist resources

Subject of the present study are the regions of Kyustendil and Bulgaria and the Northeast region in North Macedonia. The tourism in both regions is characterized by rich natural resources including protected natural areas and parks in the recent years the local authorities are also trying to enrich the tourism offerings by including more cultural sites and events although cultural sites in particular are not that abundant and alternative forms for attracting tourists and diversifying the tourism products are needed.

On the territory of Kyustendil region is located Part of Rila National Park. It is the largest national park in Bulgaria and one of the largest European parks. It includes the treeless parts along the Ridge of Rila Mountain and part of the forest coniferous complexes below it in the four main parts of the mountain with a total area of 81046 ha. Rila National Park includes 4 reserves - "Parangalitsa", "Central Rila Reserve", "Ibar" and "Skakavitsa". They are protected areas that are specimens of natural ecosystems with characteristic and remarkable wild plant and animal species and habitats.

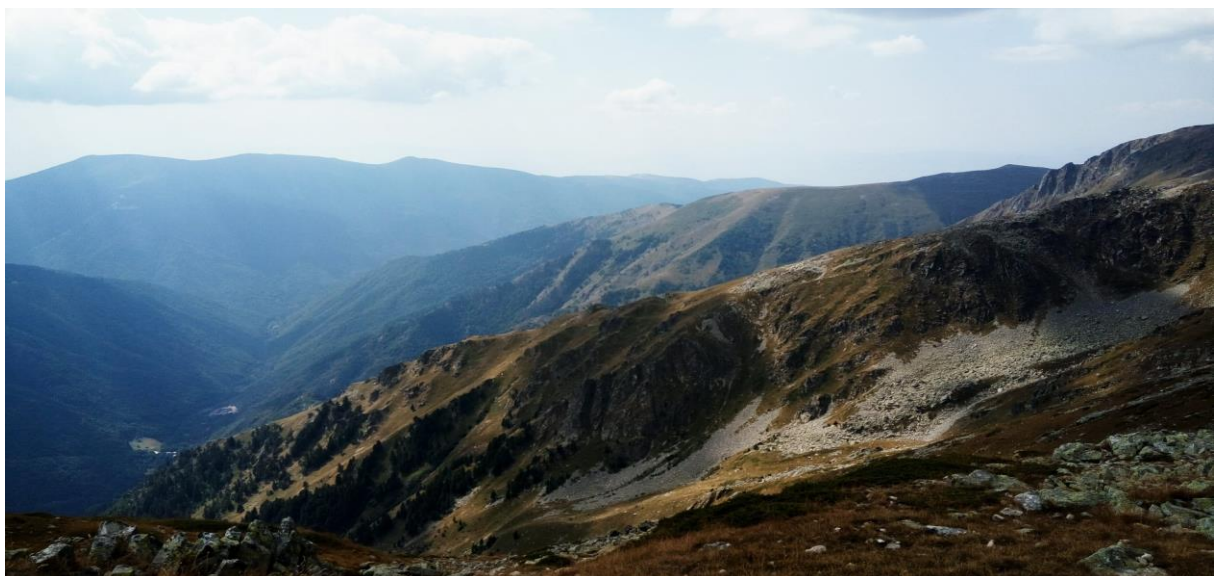
„Skakavitsa“ Reserve is one of the smallest in Bulgaria and was declared as such in 1968. It is located in the northern part of Rila National Park. Its area is nearly 70 hectares and is at 1850 and 2050 m above sea level. On the territory of the reserve is the highest waterfall in the Rila Mountains - Skakavitsa. It is a typical forest reserve, which preserves centuries-old forests of white fir. Among the protected plant species here are mountain peony, Bulgarian enchantress, golden chandelier, goldenrod, and among the rare species - mountain dilyanka, northern marigold, transitional ant. The most common mammals are deer, wild boar, fox, wolf and others. There are also capercaillie, black woodpecker, soccer, viper, mountain water frog.



The waterfall is 10-15 minutes from the eponymous hut "Skakavitsa" - in the northwestern part of the Rila Mountains in the picturesque valley of the river Skakavitsa at about 750 meters above sea level. This is the highest waterfall in Rila (70 meters). The surrounding area is extremely beautiful. There are karst springs near the waterfall.



"Parangalitsa" Reserve preserves one of the most magnificent centuries-old coniferous forests of Rila. Between 1750 and 2000 m above sea level are pure spruce (75%) spruce-white Moore forests. It is officially recognized that here are some of the most favorable conditions for the development of spruce in Europe. These forests are a real fairytale extravaganza with the thin threads of the bearded lichen sagging like garlands and the ground fusion of some trees. The straight slender trunks of the spruce are crowned at the top with pyramidal crowns. Their height is usually 30-40 m, but some specimens rise to 60 m. A 350-year-old spruce was measured in "Parangalitsa", with a height of 62 m - the highest in Bulgaria.





"Central Rila Reserve" is part of the Rila National Park. As a territory, it is the largest reserve in Bulgaria and the Balkans and ranks among the largest reserves in Europe. The reserve covers the high parts of Central, Eastern and Northwestern Rila, and the total area of which is situated is 12393.7 hectares. There are numerous peaks on its territory, among which is the highest peak in the Balkans – Musala peak, as well as peaks Golyam Skakvets, Deno, Malak Skakavets and Mancho Peak. It also includes the valleys of the Beli Iskar, Maritza and Levi Iskar rivers, the Skakavishki, Mursalen and Marichine lakes, as well as many natural landmarks such as caves, rock formations, waterfalls and more.



"Ibar" Reserve was established on February 26, 1985 and covers an area of 2,248.6 hectares. The purpose of the reserve is the protection of relict species, as well as rare and endangered animals. The reserve is located in the northern part of Rila, between the peaks Ibar and Belmeken. It is named after Ibar peak, located near the reserve. About 400 species of higher plants have been found here. The most common are , alpine rose and Transylvanian bell. Of great importance is the large population of bog pine - in the highest parts of the Ibar reserve. The animal world is rich and diverse. About 50 species of birds have been



identified, including the bald eagle and the great hawk, which are endangered. There are relict species dating from the ice age. Mammals include wolf, roe deer, brown bear, wild boar and others.

In June 2000, a part of Rila National Park was re-categorized into Rila Monastery Nature Park, which covers the central part of Rila Mountain. With steep, impassable slopes, overgrown with mixed deciduous and coniferous forests, with dwarf formations and alpine pastures, with beautiful valleys through which pass sparkling rivers, with varied relief, with majestic rock peaks, with wonderful glacial lakes, with its diverse vegetation and wildlife, it is an attractive center for recreation and ecotourism. In 1986, with an area of 3676.5 ha, the Rila Monastery Nature Park was declared. It was created to preserve primary forest ecosystems of coniferous and mixed fir-beech forests, as well as the natural environment of the architectural and historical reserve "Rila Monastery", declared by UNESCO in 1983 a world cultural monument.

Another extremely popular landmark of the region are the Seven Rila Lakes again part of the Rila National Park. These are glacial lakes located one above the other and are connected by small streams, which form tiny waterfalls and cascades. Each lake carries a name associated with its most characteristic feature. The highest one is called Salzata ("The Tear") due to its





clear waters that allow visibility in depth. The next one in height carries the name Okoto ("The Eye") after its almost perfectly oval form. Okoto is the deepest cirque lake in Bulgaria, with a depth of 37.5 m. Babreka ("The Kidney") is the lake with the steepest shores of the entire group. Bliznaka ("The Twin") is the largest one by area. Trilistnika ("The Trefoil") has an irregular shape and low shores. The shallowest lake is Ribnoto Ezero ("The Fish Lake") and the lowest one is Dolnoto Ezero ("The Lower Lake"), where the waters that flow out of the other lakes are gathered to form the Dzherman River.



Of particular interest are the Stob pyramids, located in the southwestern part of Rila near the village of Stob. They are located on both sides of the watershed (mainly on its southern side), dividing the dry lands Grchkovets (from the north) and Busovets (from the south). They are divided into separate groups, called by the people with different names - Kulite, Chukite, Samodivski komini and others. The most famous group is called "Svatovete" and is associated with a legend. Most of the earth pyramids are crowned with stone hats. The Stob pyramids are especially beautiful at sunset or moonlit.

The Tsarna Reka Nature Reserve is located in the Osogovo Mountain, declared a reserve in 1980 and covers a representative ecosystem of primary beech communities in the climacteric phase and presents the most characteristic biocenoses of the mountain. On the territory of the mountain are also located: the natural landmark "Bekbunar" - a group of redwood trees aged 110 years and the natural landmark "Century Beech Forest", near the medieval monastery "St. Luka". Not far from Bekbunar there are mountain peat bogs with characteristic vegetation, which are of interest for ecotourism. The terrain of the mountain is convenient for hiking.



Gabra Reserve is located in Vlahina Mountain in the area of Malkiya Sredok, near the village of Tsarvaritsa. It is one of the oldest reserves in Bulgaria, declared in 1949 on an area of 89.2 ha. The protected area is a natural black pine plantation with an admixture of winter oak, cer, beech and hornbeam. The age of the trees is from 50 to 60 years, and their height exceeds 40 m.



There are many more natural landmarks in the area like the Zemen Gorge, the Dark Hole Caves and the Haidushka Mill.



The Northeast region is also characterized by protected natural areas and ecological corridors of the national ecological network for connecting protected areas and environmentally important areas. As representative areas are defined several sites such as Kumanovo Kozjak, which is proposed for a Nature Park despite the rocky sections important for nesting several species of birds of prey, the area is the ultimate northern range of the spread of some Mediterranean species (Greek turtle, big Sylvia atricapilla, Sitta neumayer). In the remnants of oak and beech forests on the northern slopes, other significant bird species are also found (reddish flywheel, Ficedula semitorquata).

Of a great cultural significance is the mysterious ancient observatory Kokino located in about 19 kilometers northeast of the city Kumanovo, in what is administratively known as the municipality of Staro Nagornicane. It was discovered in 2001 by Jovica Stankovski from the National museum of Kumanovo- Macedonia. At first, nothing about this site blends in with the surroundings. Standing tall in the middle of nowhere, it appears quite outlandish. Occupying almost 5000 square meters, it rests on two scale-like established platforms, beneath the mountaintop Taticev Kamen with an altitude of 1013 meters. The entirety of the observatory is



volcanic rock. But carving and shapes alone, though interesting, are of significantly less value when compared to what this site once served for. Namely, it has seven markers that were once used for following the Sun and the Moon in order to understand astronomy. Three of the marker cuttings were intended to mark the rising of the Sun in the day of the summer solstice, the autumn and the spring equinox and the winter solstice. The six remaining marker cuttings marked the spots of the rising of the full Moon in the days when it has the smallest and the biggest declination during winter and summer.



In the region is also located the stone town of Kuklica which is an area consisting of over 120 naturally formed stone pillars, located in the village of Kuklica, near Kratovo in Macedonia. The stone formations are situated on the right bank of the Kriva River valley. The area has an altitude of 415-420 m and extends over an area of 0.3 square km. There are two main legends surrounding the formation of the strange stone pillars in Kuklica. The most famous legend is that of a man who could not decide which of two women he should marry. So, the man planned to marry each woman on the same day at different times. When the first wedding was in progress, the woman to marry the man second went to see who was getting married on the same day as she. When she saw her future husband marrying another woman, she cursed all in attendance at the wedding and turned them into stone.



villagers, new figures appear every 5-6 years.

Another popular legend is that there was once a forest in the area, but due to battles it was burned down. Then, the area became a wasteland. The temperatures were very low and when the army passed through the wasteland, all of the soldiers turned into rocks. According to the local

Aside from mystic stories and legends, the earth pyramid in Kuklica was formed as a result of natural erosion processes in the Holocene, during the past 100,000 years. Differences in the erodibility of the volcanic rocks of the area are the main factor for the pillars creation. Thus, soft tuffs rocks on the base are overlaid by solid, sturdy andesites and ignimbrites on the top, which are nearly 30 million years old.

Bislimska Klisura - a small gorge on the river Pchina that stretches from the confluence of the Kumanovska River to the village of Pchia is 6.5 km long. It is cut in limestone carps and has steep sides, in certain places the vertebrae are vertical, making it look like a canyon. There are a dozen caves and precipices in the gorge, up to 90 m long. The longest cave is Studen Peshter (90 m), and the deepest abyss is Markova Kuga, about 40 m deep. With its cave ornaments, the most interesting is Lishkov Peshter, in the south the gorge. Along the caves and precipices, the relief is very interesting, with numerous scrapes, spindles, dry lands, faults, etc. In the Bislim gorge there is a variety of flora and fauna (lilacs, falcons, eagles, tugs - especially hops, etc.). In the middle part of the gorge and in the caves there are remains of ancient buildings, probably from the





Roman period. Due to all its characteristics, the Bislim Gorge deserves to be a protected area, especially considering that it is located very close to the town of Kumanovo. However, it is quite degraded by the polluted waters of Pchia, which come from Kumanovo.

On the territory of the Northeast region, Osogovo Mountains, which possess significant values from a biological point of view, partly extend. A number of internationally and nationally significant species of flora and fauna have been identified, of which a significant segment are affected, endemic or rare species. In addition, Osogovo is identified as: Important Area of Plantation (ZRP), Important Area for Birds (ZOL), An important corridor for the movement of wild plant and animal species within the pan-European ecological network for south eastern Europe (PEEN SEE) and Emerald area. There are 18 habitats registered under the EUNIS classification system for habitats, five of which are significant for conservation under the Habitats Directive. There are 1007 types and subspecies of plants registered, of which 18 are registered only on Osogovo, among which: *Viola biflora*, *Anemone narcissiflora*, *Myriophyllum verticillatum*, *Pulsatilla montana* ssp. *Slaviankae* etc.

The peak Carev Vrv is the only site for *Genista fukarekiana* (endemic plant, encountered only on the Osogovo Mountains), *Hypericum maculatum* ssp. *Maculatum* and *Viola biflora*. On Osogovo there are 258 species of macromycetes registered. The presence of 24 species of mammals has been established. 133 species of birds are registered, of which 36 are significant species.

A particularly important ornithological site is "Ratkova Skala". 10 species of amphibians and 21 species of reptiles have been identified. There are 11 fish species known, eight of which are included on the IUCN Red List. There are 16 Balkan endemites from the group of snails recorded in Osogovo, 243 species of spiders (14 endemic), 37 species of locusts (5 Balkan endemics), 15 species of fairy ponies, 99 species of daily butterflies (*Erebia aethiops* and *Minois dryas* are found only on Osogovo), 203 species of Carabidae. Osogovo is characterized by interaction between people and nature, and the biological diversity and human heritage, preserved in natural landscapes, has contributed to the formation of characteristic areas.



The cultural resources in these two CBC regions are not well discovered and promoted and hence are not very popular as the natural resources described above.

The territory of Kyustendil district bears the traces of all historical epochs. Thracian, Hellenic, Byzantine, Revival and modern presence have layered culture and values. The high cultural-historical and cognitive value of unique monuments from the ancient and medieval Bulgarian era turn Kyustendil and the region into a field for research, a base for tourist products, a "cultural backbone" of present generations and a "bridge" for transferring values to future ones.

More than 1,050 archeological, architectural, historical and artistic immovable cultural objects have been announced and declared in the district. Among them is the Rila Monastery (a monument of world importance) and 35 monuments of national importance. Among them stand out: architectural and archeological reserve "Pautalia-Velbuzhd-Kyustendil", medieval bridge "Kadin bridge", Nevestino village, medieval fortress "Kulata", district house, Clock tower - Dupnitsa. Museums and museum collections (in Kyustendil, Rila Monastery, Boboshevo, Sapareva Banya and Rila) store over 150,000 valuable exhibits from all cultural strata and eras. The Kyustendil Art Gallery "Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master" has rich collections of Bulgarian Revival and foreign art. Other centers of cultural life are 28 community centers and over 50 public libraries. The area also enjoys a rich cultural calendar. Every year many festivals, competitions and open-air vents are held.



Rila Monastery is located at 1300 m. altitude in the middle of the forests and peaks of Rila Mountain. Apart of being a holly place for the Orthodox Church, the monastery is also a spiritual, cultural and religious centre for all Bulgarians. During the 5 centuries when Bulgaria



was under Ottoman domination, the Rila monastery has been preserving the Christianity and the culture of the country. It has also served as shelter for the persecuted revolutionaries and educational centre for all Bulgarians. In the centre of the complex yard are located the main church “The Nativity of the Virgin” and the tower of Hreljo. The monastery is also famous for its library where lots of important Bulgarian written records are kept safe: about 250 manuscripts from XI-XIX century, 9000 old-printed books and others. The monastery complex has also a history museum with intriguing exposition – a historical collection of 35 000 exponents, rich collections of icons, wood-carvings, cultural and ethnographical items.

Architectural and archeological reserve "Pautalia-Velbuzhd-Kyustendil" – the systematic archeological excavations, which date back to 1906, reveal the historical and cultural richness of Kyustendil with its thousand-year settlement history. In written sources, the town of Kyustendil was first attested in 13 years under the name Pautalia / Ulpia Pautalia and was located in the center of today's city. The city was firmly protected by its fortress walls. The specific conditions of Pautalia, caused by the healing springs and the favorable climate, placed the worship of the health god Asclepius at a great height. A health center (Asklepion) was built in his honor, which ranks immediately after the Epidauros, the largest within the Roman Empire. Probably part of it are the Roman baths, built in the II-III century. Of the Roman baths



known so far on the territory of Bulgaria, the Pautali baths are the second largest after the baths of Odessos.

On the highest plain part of the hill "Hisarlaka", rising to 0.71 km. southeast of Kyustendil was a fortress built in the late IV-early V century. Repaired in the VI century, it survived the First and Second Bulgarian state and was overthrown by the Ottoman conquerors in the XV century. In late antiquity IV-VI c. Pautalia also had a second fortress located on Hisarlaka. The exceptional urban conditions and economic preconditions raised Pautalia among the most prosperous settlements of that time. The last time the name of the town was mentioned was in 553, after which it is mentioned as Velbuzhd.



The center, under which the ancient city of Pautalia is located, has been declared the National Architectural and Archaeological Reserve "Pautalia - Velbuzhd". The studied monuments and the found objects allow to analyze different periods of the city's development, covering a very wide chronological range - from the Stone-Copper to the Late Middle Ages. Among the largest sites studied within the reserve and the most significant, in view of the discovered monuments, stand out "Cell School", "Youth Home", "Eastern Gate". "Art Gallery", "Chitalishte", "Dervish Bath" and others. The discovered architectural complexes of



high cultural and historical value, dating mainly from the Roman and early Byzantine eras - City Baths, Southeast Tower, Eastern Gate and others are preserved and exposed.

Kadin Bridge (Bride's Bridge) is an impressive architectural monument in the centre of Nevestino. This is a Medieval 100-meter long bridge built over the river Struma and has five circle vaults, the highest of which is in the middle. The architecture of the bridge is a mixture of ancient, medieval and Renaissance elements, which are locally reproduced. It is covered with granite slabs some of which have inscriptions taken from ancient ruins. It is decorated with stalactite ornaments and rosettes. There is a granite plate with an inscription in Turkish built in the southern part of the eastern parapet. This inscription says that the bridge was built on the orders of Vizier Isaac Pasha from Egira in 1470.

The Regional Historical Museum "Acad. Yordan Ivanov" in the town of Kyustendil was established in 1897. It is one of the oldest museums in the Republic of Bulgaria and has extremely rich museum funds and collections from all historical epochs. The museum has the following departments: "Archeology", "Ethnography", "New and Recent History", "Renaissance", "Scientific Group", "Funds", "Conservation and Restoration Studio", "Photo Studio and Laboratory", "Library and Scientific Archive", "Publishing Unit".

„Ahmed Bey“ Mosque is located



in the central part of the town of Kyustendil, next to the Roman baths. It was built in the middle of the 15th century. In 1904 a strong earthquake cracked the minaret and it was finally removed by the city government. The mosque is an impressive building with a wide dome and marble pillars and supports. The



entrance arcade, covered with three small domes, is preserved in its original form. The facades are varied with pointed arches - niches above the window openings. The mosque is built of stone blocks and bricks from earlier eras. It is distinguished by decorative brick decoration, typical for the medieval Bulgarian architecture - cornice "wolf's tooth", brick ornaments and others. The mosque is inactive and is currently an exhibition hall of the museum in Kyustendil. It is an architectural monument of culture with a category of "national significance".



House-Museum "Ilio Voivoda" "Konstantin Popgeorgiev Berovski" and "Tonche Kadinmostki" form a complete Revival memorial complex. The struggles of the Bulgarian population from the 15th century to the Liberation and its contribution to the liberation

and unification of the Bulgarian people at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century are traced. The exposition is located in six halls on an area of 150 square meters and contains about 800 exhibits. It traces the national liberation manifestations of the population in the Kyustendil region until the Liberation of Bulgaria. The main highlights are the life and work of Ilio Voivoda, the Razlov Uprising of May 1876, the participation of the local population in the Bulgarian uprising and the liberation of the city from Ottoman rule in January 1878.

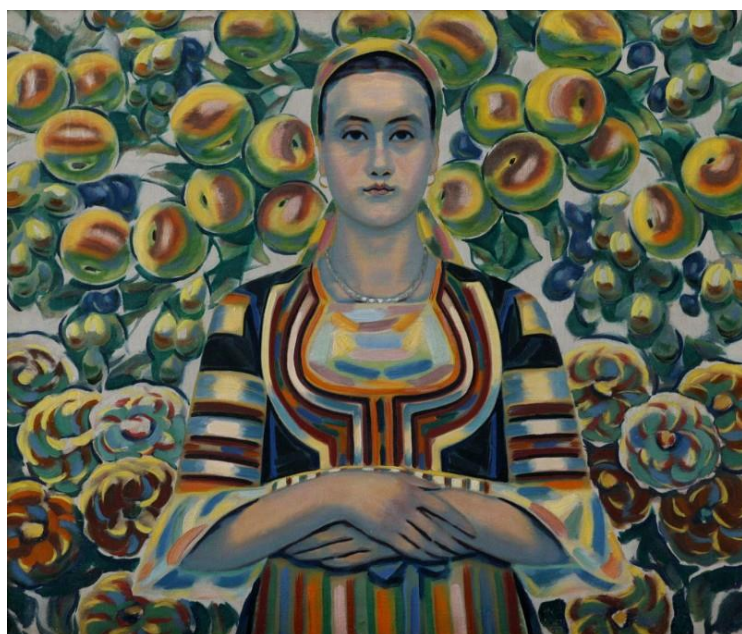
House-Museum "Dimitar Peshev" - Dimitar Peshev was born in Kyustendil in 1894. He is a Bulgarian politician, was Minister of Justice in the first cabinet of Georgi Kyoseivanov and vice-president of the XXIV and XXV Ordinary National Assembly. Known for his role in saving over 50,000 Bulgarian Jews. Peshev is an honorary citizen of Israel, and in 1997 he was posthumously awarded the highest Bulgarian order "Stara Planina".



The Emfiedzhieva House, an architectural monument from the Renaissance era, houses the museum exposition "Urban Life and Culture of the Population in Kyustendil from the End of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Century". An ordinance of the town hall of the wealthier



part of the intelligentsia in the town is shown - a large representative hall with Revival furniture for welcoming guests; bedroom; kitchen with dining area and small lounge for afternoon visits. The furniture and household items belonged to rich and famous Kyustendil families.



Kyustendil Art Gallery
"Vladimir Dimitrov - The Maystora" - Vladimir Dimitrov — Maystora (The Master) was a Bulgarian painter, draughtsman and teacher, born in a village in Kyustendil. He is considered one of the most talented 20th century Bulgarian painters and probably the most remarkable stylist in Bulgarian painting in the post-Russo-Turkish War era. His

portraits and compositions have expressive and vivid color, idealistic quality of the image, profound symbolic strength and originality. The main topic which he explores is the relation between man and nature. Although he does not consider himself religious, he regards Nature as governed by a supreme spirit; he shares that the main purpose of his paintings is to elevate man and humanity, to bring it closer to harmony, represented by this omnipresent spirit. In the gallery, in addition to works by Vladimir Dimitrov-The Master, there are also those by other

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artists such as Moritz Benzionov, Stoyan Venev, Asen Vassilev, Nikola Mirchev and others. Since its founding until today, more than 500 solo and group exhibitions have been held.

In the vicinity of Kumanovo are the monastery H. Bogorodica near the village Matejce (XIV), the church of St. Gjorgi in the village of Staro Nagorichino (XIV), the monastery H. Presveta Bogorodica - Karpinski Monastery near the village of Orah, the ossuary Zebrnjak and so on.

The monastery H. Bogorodica near the village Matejce was built in the 14th century on the ruins of an older, Byzantine Greek church built in 1057–59, evident in preserved Greek inscriptions. It was mentioned for the first time in 1300 in a chrysobull of Serbian king Stefan Milutin (r. 1282–1321). In the mid-14th century, Serbian emperor Stefan Dušan (r.



1331–55) started reconstructing the monastery, finished by his son Stefan Uroš V in 1357 (becoming his endowment). Coins of Uros V has been found at the site. Isaiah the Serb and Vladislav Gramatik lived in the monastery. In the 18th century the roof was removed by the Ottomans and put on the Eski Mosque in Kumanovo, after which it deteriorated. In 1926–34 the monastery was renovated.



The church St. Gjorgi is located in the village of Staro Nagorichino and it is distinguished with special beauty. According to the inscribed inscription, it is said that the church was built in 1313, and the second inscription from 1317/18 refers to the date when it was painted by famous painters Mihail and Evtihij. The church is a five-dome three-nave structure in the form of an inscribed cross with an elongated 162 curve towards the east and west. In its architectural conception, it is similar to the church of H. Mother of God, in the monastery of Matejce. From the many frescos compositions, the most remarkable are the "Communion of the Apostles", "The Last

Supper", "Washing the Feet", "Crucifixion", "Going on the Golgotha", "Climbing the Cross," "The Mocking of Christ", "The Assumption of the Virgin" and so on.

The Zabel Monastery - "Holy Mother of God" is located in the center of the triangle described by the villages of Staro Nagorichane, Nikulane and Chelopek. It is located in a wooded area in the Ruen Mountains. Today the monastery is inactive. It is a complex of a church and crumbling old monastery buildings ("lodgings"). The cathedral, according to the plan of a three-nave basilica, is quite impressive - a monumental building with a five-aisled apse and a central octagonal dome. The roof is gabled with tiles. The facade is enlivened with four-leaf openings and a round rosette, in the lunettes of the east and west walls. The interior of the temple is not painted. Impressive is the large iconostasis with a large cross - Wreath on top. The icons were made one year after the construction of the church - 1857 and are the work of artists from the Debar school - Dicho Zograf and Zafir Vassilev. Zabel Monastery is a typical representative of the Bulgarian Revival architectural and fine arts from the XIX century.



In the area of the village Mlado Nagoricane (Младо Нагоричане) is located the Zebrnjak monument erected in honor of victims of the First Balkan War, who lost their lives on this place at the famous Kumanovo battle in 1912. The Kumanovo battle (23 and 24 October 1912) was one of the battles that

determined the outcome of the First Balkan War. The monument was built in 1937 from gray basalt stone. Above the circular crypt 18.5 meters high, was raised three sided pyramidal tower 30 meters high, which is missing today, since it was destroyed during the Bulgarian occupation in 1942. By its architecture, this monument was unique in the Balkans, the work of the Belgrade architect Momir P. Korunovik.

The Monastery St. Joakim Osogovski is located on the slopes of the Osogovo Mountains, near the road leading from Kriva Palanka to Kyustendil in Bulgaria. The monastery is dedicated to the hermit St. Joakim Osogovski, who in the XI century led an ascetic life in a cave, near the monastery, in the place Babin Dol. Its revival began in the



middle of the XIX century. Namely, at the initiative of the main founder Hadzi Stefan Begilchia from Kriva Palanka, in 1847, under the leadership of the famous builder Andreja Damjanov, the construction of the great "cathedral" church dedicated to Joakim Osogovski began. In 1851 it was completed and sanctified. The other, smaller in size church, is dedicated to H. Bogorodica, built, according to one in the 14th century, and according to others in the 16th-17th century. The great church has twelve domes and a space nave, surrounded by a porch on the west and on the south side.



The city of Kratovo is known for its distinctive location, located in the crater of an extinguished volcano. It is precisely because of its specific location and the Kratovo River that cut the crater and passes through the middle of the city, a special city architecture has been formed. The remarkable buildings are the Kratovo Ajduk bazaar, as well as the Kratovo towers and bridges. In Kratovo, from

the former 13 towers, today there are six: Simiceva Kula, Zlatkova Kula, Hadzi-Kostova Kula, Saat Kula (Clock Tower), Krsteva Kula and Emin-bey Tower. From the bridges, the most famous are: Carsiski Most, Radin Most, Argulichki Most, Grofchanski Most and Yorkshire Bridge. Other outstanding cultural sites in the town are church of St. Gjorgi Kratovski, St. Nikola Cudotvorec, St. Jovan Preteca, the local museums and others.

The most famous events from the cultural calendar of Kyustendil region are the festival „Kyustendil spring” and the Cherry Festival.

Several manifestations are organized in the region, among which are: "Tumba Fest", "Days of comedy" and "International Jazz Festival" in Kumanovo, "Golden Days" in Kratovo, Folk Festival "St. Joakim Osogovski" in Kriva Palanka, various art colonies (the art colony "St. Joakim Osogovski") and more.



Tourist infrastructure

As it can be deducted from the presented natural and cultural tourists' sites the region is mostly popular for national parks, followed by monasteries and churches. The museums, cultural sites, galleries etc. are not that well developed and the regions are mostly visited for short term vacations hence there are not many hotels and the tourism infrastructure in general is not very well developed.

According to the available statistics for 2019 in the Kyustendil region there are 92 places for accommodation mostly 2 and 3 star hotels and family guest houses with a total of 3,402 beds as accommodation capacity. The tourist infrastructure in the Northeast region shows even lower development, it is the region with the lowest number of places for accommodation in North Macedonia. It has in total 14 places for accommodation with capacity of 673 beds. Out of these only 4 are hotels again of 2 or 3 stars. Despite of the slow development of the tourism the number of places for accommodation in the Kyustendil region is rising compared to previous years.

Table 1 Places for accommodation in Kyustendil region (NSI)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Places for accommodation	66	78	78	87	92
Number of beds	3,186	3,342	3,223	3,298	3,402

Table 2 Places for accommodation in Northeast region (NSI)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of rooms	302	306	300	298	315
Number of beds	645	653	647	648	673



With the growing popularity of the online booking platforms many local people in both regions are investing in offering apartments for tourists but in many cases these activities are not properly registered and are not included correctly in the available statistics.

The major towns in the two regions are easy to be accessed by tourist mostly thanks to their vicinity to the capital cities, their airports and the developed road infrastructure. Nevertheless, the access to some of the most remote tourist sites is more difficult due to the bad conditions of the roads to them. Proper signalization for tourists, especially one in English language for foreign tourists, is also missing. This leads to major visits to the more popular natural and cultural sites, while the smaller and more remote ones remain only accessibly by locals. In this case internet is also helping to some extent, as tourist can read more information in advance about the places of interest and can use navigations to get to most of them.

The available information about the tourist sites on internet is not very rich, and in many cases is only available in local language or in English. There are descriptions of the cultural, historic and natural sites but in many cases the directions are not easily available and the places have to be searched additionally. The different alphabets and transcription of the names to foreign languages makes the search of the places even more difficult and confusing for tourists. And even though the regions are mostly popular for their mountains, information about the routs to be followed is also not easily available and tourist should use organized excursions, local guides or information from friends in order to visit most of the tourist sites in the two regions. Mostly the internet sites which are used are not very well designed, do not provide interesting information and in many cases are only in local language.

The restaurants and places for leisure in the Kyustendil region and in the Northeast region are also mostly family restaurants and bars with local cuisine and atmosphere. Here again there is not much information available about their offerings and ranking and the working with foreign tourists in different languages is still difficult.

Finally the tourist infrastructure is not modernized and is especially not made easily accessible for people with disabilities – the information provided is not available for blind or deaf people and many of the sites cannot be visited by people in wheelchairs.



Characteristics of the tourist market

For 2019 the total number of nights spent in the Kyustendil region are 184 802 out of which only 26 279 are from foreign tourists. The total number of people visited the region is 106 607 out of which 15 224 foreign tourists. And finally the statistical data from the National statistics institute indicates that for 2019 the income from nights spent in the region is 6 340 019 BGN out of which 1 135 477 is from foreign tourists. Compared to the previous years the number of nights spent and the income from them are increasing for both regions. Interesting information from the available statistics even though it is for different years is that in the Kyustendil region most of the visits are from national tourists, while for the Northeast region the great majority of the visits are from foreign tourists.

Table 3 Nights spent in Kyustendil region (NSI)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Nights spent	76,239	92,149	99,255	111,325	106,607
Out of which nights spent by foreign tourists	10,700	12,872	14,500	15,859	15,224
Income from nights spent BGN	4,147,054	5,120,319	5,671,484	6,485,869	6,340,019
Out of which income from nights spent by foreign	The information is not available	1,046,812	The information is not available	The information is not available	1,135,477



tourists					
BGN					

Table 4 Nights spent in Northeast region (NSI)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nights spent	6,807	7,920	8,244	10,671	15,229
Out of which nights spent by foreign tourists	4,829	6,105	5,691	6,206	12,366

The main profile of tourists visiting the two regions are tourists who prefer hiking, climbing mountain picks, ornithologists, and in general people who prefer to be out in the nature. They come to the regions to visit the mountains and the national parks, are usually in organized groups and do not spent much time in the towns themselves. In some of the towns many of the nights spent are only due to work/business purposes. And very few are only due to the cultural sites and events in the two regions.

Additionally, very characteristic for the tourism in Kyustendil region is the spa and balneological tourism. In particular the mineral water in Sapareva Banya is characterized as hyperthermal, with low mineralization, sulfate-hydrocarbonate, sodium, fluorine, silicon and sulfide. Sapareva Banya mineral water is clear, colorless, with the smell of hydrogen sulfide. The temperature at its source is 102 °C.

The resorts and medical establishments in Sapareva Banya are profiled and specialized for the treatment of diseases of the musculoskeletal system, the peripheral nervous system, lesions of the central nervous system, gynecological diseases, acute and chronic poisoning with heavy metal salts, skin diseases, upper respiratory tract, etc. The healing properties of the mineral waters gushing at Sapareva Banya were known to the most ancient inhabitants of this beautiful part of Bulgaria and they largely predetermine its rich and interesting history.



There are also several sources of mineral water in the Kumanovo region. The most famous are those near the village Proevce, followed by Lipkovo, near the village Strnovac, in Klechovce and others. So far, the healing waters from these springs are only used in the village of Proevce, the Kumanovo Spa and the exploitation of the mineral waters in the villages of Proevce and Klechovce. The water temperature of the Proevski springs is 28 degrees.

As last reason to visit the two regions among the tourists are the cultural sites in the cities in them, probably the only exception is Rila Monastery which is one of the landmarks not only for the region but for Bulgarian as a whole. The museums, houses and galleries are mostly visited by locals (students and other organized groups) or by other tourists in their free time after or before visiting the mountains and the national parks in the regions. Although the regions have rich culture and history the cultural sites are not well presented to tourists, the exhibitions in the museums and houses are not attractively arranged mostly show objects, photos and furniture but do not immerse the visitor in the specific historic time and events which is extremely important for attracting the interest of your people, students and foreigners.

The festivals and outdoor events organized in the two regions are also mostly popular among the local population, they are not well popularized and hence do not attracts many tourists from other parts of the countries or from abroad.

Development potential

The two regions have rich natural and cultural heritage but they need to develop their tourism offering a lot in order to use them in an effective way meeting the needs and interests of the modern national and international tourists.

The regions have similar natural and cultural tourist sites which can be combined in common offerings and routs in order to provide more comprehensive products for tourists making them spent more time in them or visit them more than once.

In general all hiking routs can be introduced in online platforms and applications making it easy for the tourists to choose and follow them as well as making their walks in the national



parks safer. Free tours and guides can be introduced in order to make it easier for new visitors to access and get familiar with the tourist sites. The information materials, tables and signs can also be renovated and enhanced so that anyone could easily find the tourist sites and routes.

All information should be presented in an attractive manner in user friendly websites and applications in different languages and with easy instructions for reaching their locations, including easy finding on GPS and online maps. Tourist information centers should be established and well-functioning. Guides and other employees in the tourist sector should be trained in order to be able to answer informatively any question that tourist may have including sufficient knowledge of English or other languages if possible.

The exhibitions in the museums, houses, churches and monasteries in the regions should also be organized in a more informative and attractive manner even including interaction with the tourists in order to make them really feel the atmosphere and the spirit of the historic times and events. Both regions have common historic past and have been key in different national movements and even wars which can also be used to create new tourist products and experiences. These events and information can be reproduced using actors and modern technology including visualization, 3D mapping, games and others.

The regions can also capitalize on the extremely rich and rare flora and fauna by organizing educational expeditions for students, scientific seminars and events for professionals in different fields, as well as other events for photographers and the very popular nowadays online bloggers and influencers in Facebook, Instagram and other platforms.

The fragmented tourist infrastructure of small family hotels and restaurants can also be used in an efficient manner by introducing common vision and marketing approach through which the quality of the offered services will be enhanced and the places will be easily recognized under a general brand.

The fact that currently the tourism in the two regions is not very well developed and that there are many cultural, historic and natural resources which are still to be developed and used is a very good starting point for creating new tourism products, establishing a general tourism brand and introducing modern technologies and marketing practices which to be well accepted by most of the organizations and workers in the tourism sector in the region. The use of any



new approach for attracting tourist will also be well perceived by them as this will be something completely new for the regions which will immediately call the attention of the desired target groups.



In-depth analysis of the current situation of the tourism in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo





Tourist resources

Dupnitsa

Traces of human presence have been discovered in the town of Dupnitsa and its surroundings since the time of the Late Stone Age and antiquity. As a result of archeological excavations in 1993–1995 in the area of Kulata - the hill in the northeastern part of the town, the foundations of a fortress were discovered, which existed in the IV-V century. The name Dupnitsa first appeared in an Ottoman register from the third quarter of the 15th century. Later descriptions of the city and the population are found in the notes of travelers: the knight Arnold von Harf (1499), Evliya Chelebi (18th century) and Ami Bue (19th century). In the pre-liberation era, the economic life of Dupnitsa was mainly associated with mining. Crafts and trade prospered. There are various craft and guild organizations - bakers, furriers, ironworkers, carpenters, and others. The beginning of industrialization in the city was set in the 60-70s of the XIX century, when three enterprises of manufactory type began to work – abadzhiyski (processing of wool for clothing), woodworking and for cutting tobacco. The city began to take shape as one of the major tobacco production centers of the twentieth century. In the first half of the 19th century there were four churches in the town, the convents of the Rila, Hilendar and Zografski monasteries, and towards the end of the century there were eight schools, one of which was a girls' school and one – a community center. Along with the development of the cultural and educational activities, the people of Dupnitsa became involved in the struggle for national liberation which has significantly marked the cultural life and heritage in the town.



The landmark of the city is the Clock Tower. It was built in 1782 and was a battle tower with four loopholes, which were for defense. Later, at the end of the 18th century, it was adapted for the clock. It is located in the City Garden, near the center of Dupnitsa. From the main street of the city the

tower is reached by stone stairs, you pass the monument "Yatachkata" and the slabs of the Jewish warriors. The clock tower has a quadrangular, rather elongated base, followed by a wooden part. The clocks are placed on the wooden part and the tower ends with a metal dome. There are many benches and alleys around it for walking and relaxation. The parts of the old clock are made by local craftsmen. It has strong, beautiful gears and axles and was once checked every 24 hours. The time was determined approximately. According to legend, the bell was cast in Vienna in 1782. In 1993, the City History Museum took on the task of renovating the mechanism. Today, only a part of the old mechanism from the 17th century remains in the tower, which works together with modern electrical automation and electronics. According to archeological excavations, there was an old early Byzantine fortress from the 5th-6th century on the site of the city garden and the clock tower, which lasted until the 12th century. There was also a bridge in the past.

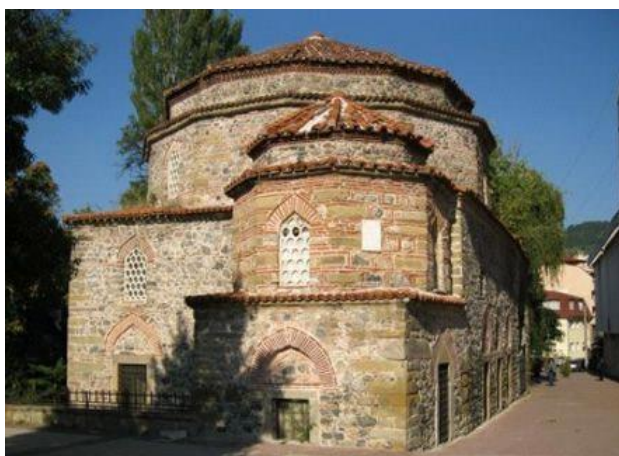
Another remarkable monument from the time of antiquity, as well as a symbol of the town of Dupnitsa, is the fortress in the area "Kulata", located on a natural hill, in the northeastern part of the town, on the right bank of the river German. The fortress wall, built of quarry stones welded with white mortar, which runs along the edge and encloses an area of 5-6 decares. From the archeological excavations carried out in 2009-2010 it was established that the fortress was built in the period V-VI century. During the Turkish invasion of these lands, the fortress was completely destroyed. It is interesting that during the last excavations, a pit and objects from the prehistoric era were discovered under the ancient buildings.



The oldest church in Dupnitsa is the Holy Mother of God. There is no information when the original temple was built, but it must have been in the Middle Ages. The whole spiritual life of the city before the Liberation was centered around this church, even in its yard was the old school. In 1929 a bell tower was added to the church. In the church of the Holy Mother of God there were icons from the end of the XVIII century to the beginning of the XIX century, the oldest of which is an image of Jesus Christ from 1783.



"St. George the Victorious" is a cathedral church, the largest in the city of Dupnitsa. It is a triangular structure, whose two entrances are fenced gates. The altar and the iconostasis are beautifully carved. The golden-colored domes attract the eyes of the inhabitants and guests of the city. A parish center is set up there, where summer theology camps are organized each year for children from different ethnic groups. In the temple are preserved multicast icons. It was built by master Save Djambazki. On the facade above the main entrance, on the occasion of the 108th anniversary of the consecration, St. George was painted. The majors of the iconostasis are the 12 large / 2 m high and 1 m wide icons made and brought from Kiev, which are extremely rare in their size in Bulgaria. The church is declared a monument of culture of local importance.



The cultural monument "Tyurmeto" - the mosque is located on Svoboda Square in the very center of Dupnitsa, opposite the community center building. According to a number of sources, the mosque dates back to the late 15th century. It is a bearer of architectural and historical significance for the city. According to the historical literature, its construction was carried out on the foundations of an Orthodox church. The mosque played an important religious role in these



centuries for the Bulgarian Orthodox faith. The choice of the city to build the mosque is not accidental. In the Middle Ages, the town of Dupnitsa was associated with the Rila Monastery, which is the center of the Christian faith. Immediately after the liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish slavery, its minaret was demolished. However, the building is preserved as a cultural monument due to its impressive age. Today, the mosque in the town of Dupnitsa has been turned into an exhibition hall for works by local and other artists. The place is a bearer of the Christian and Ottoman faiths at different times. It has been a temple of hope for both Christians and Muslims for years, in different eras. Currently, it houses the Municipal Art Gallery and the House of Arts. It is a cultural center that continues the artistic traditions of the city, dating back centuries. In it are organized cultural events - various exhibitions, literary book presentations, poetry evenings and more. In the gallery "District House" prominent artists from the region and the country exhibit their paintings, watercolors, graphics, small sculptures and sculptors. The National History Museum also visited with its expositions. The gallery is one of the cultural centers of Dupnitsa.

The Historical Museum in Dupnitsa was established on May 8, 1992. It is housed in the building of the former Youth Home. The museum maintains a fund of 8,400 museum units, including both movable cultural monuments and museum exhibits. It maintains a main (non-permanent) exhibition in the Youth Home, and another one in the Ethnographic Museum (the house-museum "Stanke Dimitrov - Marek") and in the Art Gallery. The museum inherits the funds of the closed houses - museums "Stanke Dimitrov - Marek" and "Vasil Demirevski - Zhelyo", closely specialized in the collection of documents and artifacts related to the labor and anti-fascist movement. At present, the movable cultural values entered in the fund of the museum are more than 8400 museum units from the main and scientific-auxiliary fund, which are important for the research, exposition and popularization activity.



It has a large collection of documents, photographs, negatives and periodicals from modern and contemporary times, related to the history and culture of Dupnitsa and the region. The ethnographic collection of clothes, handicrafts, jewelry, reflecting the way of life and livelihood of the population of different ethnic groups who lived there, is also interesting. Other collections are: a collection of old printed books, a numismatic collection, a collection of crosses and objects with images of a cross, as well as an archeological fund, which includes artifacts discovered in recent seasons during archeological excavations of the late ancient Dupnitsa fortress on the hill.



In 1984 the house-museum "Zhelyu Demirevski" was opened. The activity of the museum is extremely difficult due to the constant lack of sufficient funds. The museum has good premises that need renovation and adaptation of the museum exposition. Educational activities are also hampered by the lack of permanent expositions. The museum archive has 7,442 movable cultural monuments, museum exhibits, which are inventoried in the main and research support fund. Of particular interest are the encolpions - medieval crosses.



The Municipal Drama Theater "Nevena Kokanova" has long and permanently established its name in the cultural life of the municipality of Dupnitsa. Information about the origin of theatrical art in the city dates back to 1894 with the presentation of the play "Assen and Peter" in the inn of Dupnitsa Goge Lazov. The theatrical activity is more intensive in the next few years, when a room in the boarding school is adapted for a stage and a hall. In 1902, a group of enthusiasts founded the theater troupe "Enlightenment", which marked the beginning of organized theater in the city. In 1922 the theatrical troupe "Awakening" was founded with director Stanislav Kazakov - a man with artistic talent and tireless guardian of theatrical work. In 1947 in Dupnitsa the State Theater for Sofia and Gornodzhumai region was established with nine full-time artists. By 1951, the troupe numbered 23 people. A new, higher step in the development of the theatrical work in Dupnitsa is the State National Theater in Dupnitsa, established in 1958. By Decree No. 35 of the Council of Ministers of 1964, the State Theater in Dupnitsa was closed. Years followed, during which the status of the theater often changed -



amateur, community center, a branch of the Kyustendil State Theater, semi-professional, to reach 1991, when it was reestablished as Municipal Drama Theater. By decision of the Municipal Council, the theater is named after the great Bulgarian actress Nevena Kokanova.

In the recent years the municipality has invested a lot in the creation of "Rila" Park. This is the newest and one of the most modern park in Bulgaria. It is situated on an area of 280 decares, its length is 2 km, there are 8 km of stone alleys. The park is located 1.5 km away from the city center, and there is a special bicycle track with a length of 0.2 km. There are no cars in the park, which is why a car parking is built in front of the park. The Bistritsa River passes through its territory, over which 38 bridges are built. Above the park is the Chapel "St. Petka". In the park are located: a lake with water wheels, a football field, a volleyball court, tennis courts, a basketball court, a swimming pool with Olympic dimensions, a children's pool, a zoo, theater scenes, a children's playground, 10 barbeques for 25 people each and fitness court.



In 2015 the Municipality of Dupnitsa has also finalized a project for regional tourism product “Dupnitsa-Rila-boboshevo”. The Dupnitsa-Rila-Boboshevo region has been popularized as a tourist destination through advertisements in print, radio, television and the Internet, as well as through distribution of information materials. The campaign is aimed at highlighting the combination of religious sites and the intangible cultural heritage of the region, as well as archeological sites and mythology related to the legends in Rila. An important focus are also the opportunities for sports and entertainment.

Kumanovo

The first facts about the populated area of Kumanovo date back to 1519, and the source of information comes from the archives in Istanbul, Turkey. Initially, the area was inhabited by 52 families and 300 inhabitants. The most detailed data are from Evliya Chelebi, who traveled to the region and who noticed the following: “The populated area of Kumanovo is located on the territory of the Skopje Sandzak. The city has many rivers and about 600 houses covered with roof tiles. The mosque, located in the shopping area, is beautiful and has a school (madrasa), hammam, shopping center, while the climate in the city is mild. There are many vineyards and lands where different kinds of fruits are planted.”

Kumanovo became an urban area with an administrative center, Nahiyat, in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. After the Karposh uprising in 1689, Kumanovo entered a period of stagnation and until the end of the XVIII century was a Turkish town (small town). At the end of the 19th century, the city experienced an economic boom (agriculture, handicrafts and trade), but there was no significant industrial development until the end of World War II. After 1945, Kumanovo experienced rapid economic, administrative and cultural development. Today, it is a modern city with more than 105,484 inhabitants.

As a result of the rich history and the surroundings, on the territory of the city and the surrounding area there are many historical and cultural sights, which date from prehistoric times to the present day. The oldest sites are: Kostoperska karpa, Gradishte near the village of Pelince, the Neolithic site near the village of Dolno Nagoricane. The church of St. George (Staro



Nagoricane) built in 1071, reconstructed in 1318 and the church of St. Bogorodica (village Matejce) from 1350 which are the most famous cultural and religious buildings of this era. The following landmarks have remained in Kumanovo since the 17th century: the church of St. Petka in the village of Staro Nagoricane, the Exi Mosque, the church of St. Nicholas, as well as the monastery in the village of Gradiste.

In Kumanovo as well as in Dupnitsa the churches prevail, we single out the churches St. Nikola (1851) and "Holy Trinity". The church "St. Nicholas", known among the people of Kumanovo as the Old Church, was built in 1851 on the site where before that was a small church, dug into the ground with



nine steps, also "St. Nicholas". The church "St. Nicholas" is the work of the famous master builder Andreja Damjanov from the village Papradishte, Veles. It is built of bricks and has the shape of a three-aisled basilica. The church is surrounded by magnificent porches filled with frescoes and a high bell tower in the narthex. The interior of the church "St. Nicholas" is characterized by lavish galleries, large iconostasis and church furniture. The interior of the church is characterized by the wooden cassette ceilings of the galleries, which is a feature of the Macedonian house in the XIX century. Also interesting is the church furniture consisting of a choir, an episcopal throne and side vertical, wooden benches for the faithful, while attending the service. This largest Christian church in Kumanovo is decorated with a spacious churchyard, with a large area surrounded by high walls, as well as several rooms in the service of the church.

In the church of St. Nicholas is also located the gallery of icons with a collection of icons from the Kumanovo area. The collection is a cultural treasure of exceptional importance that speaks to the art of the past. The gallery is located on the first floor of the church. The permanent exhibition was opened on the occasion of marking the 150th anniversary of the construction of the church in January 2001. The gallery contains icons that originate from several churches and monasteries from the Kumanovo region, which are located in remote and



passive places, where they were subject to extinction and oblivion: Zabel Monastery, Church of the Holy Mother of God, Karpin Monastery, Church of the Introduction of the Mother of God, church of St. George the Victorious - Mlado Nagoricane, church of St. Nicholas - Pavleshence, church of the Assumption - Rezanovce, church of St. Spas - Dovezence, church of St. Elijah - Nikuljane, church of St. Nicholas - Kolicko, church of St. Elijah - Zhivinje, church of St. Paraskeva - Murgash, church of St. Paraskeva - Pezovo, there are also icons from the city churches - St. Nicholas and St. "Holy Trinity". The icons are from the period from the 16th to the 19th century, while the authors are the most famous Macedonian painters: Dicho Zograf, Veno Zograf, Zafir Zograf, Dimitar Andonov - Papradishki, Andrea Damjanov and Hadzi Kostadin from Veles.

The Church "Holy Trinity" is a Macedonian Orthodox Christian church located in the center of the city of Kumanovo, near the House of Culture "Trajko Prokopiev". It is a newer church built after the Ottoman rule, the second in the center of Kumanovo, next to the cathedral "St. Nicholas". The church was built during 1901. The iconostasis was made by a donation from Queen Draga of Serbia and has many Serbian saints on it such as Saint Sava, Prince Lazar and Saint Uros.



Tartar Sinan Bey Mosque belongs to the type of single-domed, "sultan" mosques and is known as Eski old mosque, built in 1532 in the Turkish Orta - Bunar maalo, where it is located today. It is built of precisely processed yellowish stone blocks. The unusually high circular drum on the dome and the small drum on the central dome of the porch, which are circular inside and out, as well as the rare transitional solution inside the prayer space from the so-called frieze of Turkish triangles on the dome, place it among the most interesting mosques from the Early Ottoman period, as well as the only example with such an architectural solution in Macedonia from the XVI century.

National Institution Museum – Kumanovo is located in a building which was once the villa of the wealthy industrialist from Peskovac, Zivko Stojiljkovic, built in 1926 with a typical feature of the old city architecture. In its many years of existence, the museum is affirmed as



an important scientific and cultural-educational institution. According to its organizational set-up, it belongs to the general museums with the following departments - archeological, historical, ethnological, art and department for records, documentation and protection. It has a total of 7000 exhibits from all collections of the departments, which is the result of field research and scientific processing. This cultural heritage was continuously presented through occasional thematic exhibitions, the number of which is over 650, and today the museum material is exhibited in a permanent exhibition in the museum building, on the ground floor and first floor, on an area of 250 m².

Over 250 archeological sites have been registered in the Kumanovo region, and only 14 have been partially explored. The oldest habitation, confirmed by archeological excavations, originates from the young Stone Age, Neolithic. Archaeological objects are arranged in 4 collections: prehistory, antiquity, the Middle Ages and numismatics. The fund of the historical department is the richest, distributed in 4 collections by periods. National-revolutionary movement, between the two world wars, the National Liberation War and the socialist period. The ethnology department contains several collections. Folk costumes and fabrics, items for personal use, household items, folk economy, folk musical instruments and folk customs. The most numerous is the collection of folk costumes and fabrics.

The art gallery is located in the complex of the old municipal building, a building built in the thirties of the last century, designed by the municipal architect Vladimir Antonov. It was opened on June 16, 1967 with the first art exhibition "Yugoslav and Foreign Artists", and during 2006 it was renovated again. The building has 5 exhibition halls (187 m²), a depot and a working room. It is intended for temporary exhibitions, both from the fine arts and from archeology, history, ethnology and art history.

The House of Culture "Trajko Prokopiev" started its activity in 1980. It has a total area of 3,766 square meters and makes a special contribution to the enrichment of the cultural life in the Municipality. The home activities give a special quality in the activity of the House, which creates conditions for cultural and artistic creation of the citizens of Kumanovo. By organizing theater performances, concerts, collective and solo art exhibitions, museum exhibitions, book promotions, literary events, film and video programs, academies, forums and



other diverse activities, the House of Culture is a true temple of culture in the city that provides a huge contribution to the development and nurturing of this kind of work.

At the initiative of the lovers of dramatic art, which has its deep roots from the period between the two world wars, in December 1944, the City Amateur Theater was established, whose first performance was on the City Square in Kumanovo. In 1947, the Theater acquired its own building and stage and in the period from 1948 to 1954, it worked as a semi-professional and later as a professional institution. In 1954 it was closed as an act of a wrong policy that was created in Skopje at that time. The break lasted until 1959, when a group of enthusiasts, within the Workers' University, formed a youth scene, whose successful work enabled the renovation of the Kumanovo Theater in 1961 with the newly built theater and all the necessary rooms in which the ensemble still operates today.

Tourist infrastructure

The tourist infrastructure in the two municipalities in terms of available hotels and accommodation is not very well developed. In Dupnitsa there are a total of 4 accommodation establishments with 122 rooms and 254 bed, only two of these are hotels with a total of 93 rooms and 170 beds. In Kumanovo there are 5 small two and three star hotels, but in addition to these on the online booking platforms there are various private apartments.

The two cities are easy to be accessed by tourist mostly thanks to their vicinity to the capital cities, their airports and the developed road infrastructure. There is no proper signalization for tourists, especially one in English language for foreign tourists. This leads to major visits to the more popular sites, while the smaller and more remote ones remain only accessibly by locals. In this case internet is also helping to some extent, as tourist can read more information in advance about the places of interest and can use navigations to get to most of them. But the information available in the tourist sites of the municipalities is very limited and in many cases is not edited in an attractive way for tourists. Additionally in the cities there are no tourist information centers or other organized tourist guide and information services.



Many of the tourism sites are preserved and are not in good conditions, currently they are not attractive for tourist and they are even subject to further deterioration due to natural forces, treasure hunters and pollution. This even makes some of the most remote sites dangerous for visitors.

The available information about the tourist sites on internet is not very rich, and in many cases is only available in local language or in English. There are descriptions of the cultural, historic and natural sites but in many cases the directions are not easily available and the places have to be searched additionally. The different alphabets and transcription of the names to foreign languages makes the search of the places even more difficult and confusing for tourists. Mostly the internet sites which are used are not very well designed and do not provide interesting information. Kumanovo has a tourist site “visit Kumanovo” which is well structured provides information about places to visit, accommodations, restaurants, monument and events, it also has links for directions to Google maps and to the websites or profiles in social media of the places it is promoting. Additionally it gives contacts of local guides and informational brochures. Nevertheless, the design of the website could be enhanced, the information in it could be updated and the website itself could be better promoted.

The restaurants and places for leisure in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo are also mostly family restaurants and bars with local cuisine and atmosphere. Here again there is not much information available about their offerings and ranking and the working with foreign tourists in different languages is still difficult.

Finally the tourist infrastructure is not modernized and is especially not made easily accessible for people with disabilities – the information provided is not available for blind or deaf people and many of the sites cannot be visited by people in wheelchairs

Characteristics of the tourist market

Most of the tourists who visit Kumanovo and Dupnitsa come for business or are passing by on their way to the more popular tourist sites in the region of Kyustendil and the Northeast region. The churches, galleries, museums and theaters are mostly visited by locals and are not



popular sites of interest among the common tourists. This is also confirmed by the data for visitors in the hotels in Dupnitsa for 2018 which were only 6340 people.

There is no official and statistical information about the made visits and the incomes from tourists of the museums, churches and other tourist sites. Nevertheless from the available information it is deducted that many of the house museums, museums, excavation sites, theaters and galleries do not have the sufficient funding for maintaining their operation, preserving the objects in them, inviting exhibitions and using marketing means to attract tourists. Additionally, many of the houses of popular historical figures from the 19th and 20th centuries remain closed for the public due to lack of funds for their restoration and maintenance.

Additional resources and registers show that many of the local cultural and historic sites are not properly categorized and registered as per the requirements of the applicable laws and regulations. There are scarcely any investments made for their preservation, there is not enough information for tourists for their visits nor appropriate infrastructure for their access.

The festivals and outdoor events organized in the two regions are also mostly popular among the local population, they are not well popularized and hence do not attract many tourists from other parts of the countries or from abroad.

Not much can be said about the touristic market as the cities are not perceived as popular touristic destinations, so far the measures for popularization and creation of tourist products have not resulted in high increase in the interest to visit Dupnitsa and Kumanovo. Considering the lack of sufficient funding for the tourist sites alternative measures for modernization and popularization of the tourism in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo should be explored. These measures should include mostly activities which do not require major capital investments, costs for hiring professional staff, for developing marketing and promotional materials or for participating in tourism events. Internet and the modern technologies can offer very good and sustainable solutions which could bring new life to the tourism in the two municipalities.

Very important aspect characterizing the current tourism market not only on local level but also worldwide is the current closing of borders and imposing of social distancing measures due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although it is expected that these measures will have negative effect on the economies and on tourism in particular, Dupnitsa and Kumanovo can try and



capitalize on the travel restrictions. As people cannot easily travel abroad they are starting to look for new places to visit and travel in their own countries. This can help the two municipalities attract tourists who have previously preferred other destinations and who have not perceived Dupnitsa and Kumanovo as interesting destinations for tourism and leisure.

Development potential

The results of the presented study on the current state of the tourism in the municipalities of Dupnitsa and Kumanovo, shows that tourism is not the main aspect on focus for the municipalities, very few tourist sites are actively functioning, but they are not attracting many tourists. Apart from information in few local tourist sites and the implementation of regional projects for creation of tourist destinations, there are no specific marketing activities aimed at attracting national and international tourists. Simply proposing and applying marketing practices as creation of tourist applications, interactive videos, use of social media etc. will not have the desired effect of promoting Dupnitsa and Kumanovo as tourist destinations showing the Old Urban Lifestyle from the 19th and 20th century. The marketing and communication tools should be combined with new and modern tourist products in order to create a comprehensive tourist offering and to build a recognizable brand of Dupnitsa and Kumanovo as tourist destinations. For this reason the next chapters of the study will go beyond the exploration of modern marketing tools and will incorporate these with suitable modern tourist products.

The presented current cultural and historic tourist sites which inform tourists about the past of the two cities can be summarized as churches, mosques, historic museums and art galleries. Due to the insufficient funding the rich historic past of Dupnitsa and Kumanovo is not exposed fully and many of the objects and information are just stored in the archives. The study shows that the Old Urban Lifestyle from the 19th and 20th century in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo is mostly characterized by specific for the region handicrafts, reconstruction of churches and iconography, crossroad of important trade routes, the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan wars, specific architecture and famous painters.

The two municipalities have common past which dates way back in the centuries. An interesting source to follow which can be used as theme for tourist product and marketing tool are the travel books of Evliya Chelebi who was an Ottoman explorer who travelled through the



territory of the Ottoman Empire and neighboring lands over a period of forty years, recording his commentary in a travelogue called the Seyâhatnâme ("Book of Travel"). Although many of the descriptions the Seyâhatnâme were written in an exaggerated manner or were plainly inventive fiction or third-source misinterpretation, his notes remain a useful guide to the culture and lifestyles of the 17th century Ottoman Empire. Both Dupnitsa and Kumanovo are described in his books. His texts along with additional information can be used for marketing of the two municipalities as places of interest from centuries targeted at young explorers and travelers.

Another interesting aspect connecting the two municipalities is their close position to important trade roads from the past. The settlements on the territory of Dupnitsa have existed since the Late Stone Age and antiquity. Near Dupnitsa passed the important trade and military ancient Roman Dalmatian road, connecting Drach, Skopje, Pautalia, Germany, Samokov, Philippopolis and Constantinople. At the village of Cherven Breg, where there was a road station, the ancient road deviated in a westerly direction and passed over today's town, through the area "Bineko", and from there to Pautalia (now Kyustendil). As part of the Ottoman Empire the two municipalities have also been close to the trade roads of important goods. This aspect can also be studied further and specific tourist and marketing products could be defined in order to attract tourists.

The specific handicrafts in the Balkans are always interesting not only for foreign tourists but also for kids and students as well as for people looking for ways to escape from their everyday tasks and find a new hobby. Very popular nowadays are the groups painting and pottery classes which in the cases of Dupnitsa and Kumanovo can be diversified to classes in baking, carpentry, iron working, abadzhiystvo (processing of wool for clothing), knitting, elaboration of traditional costumes and others.

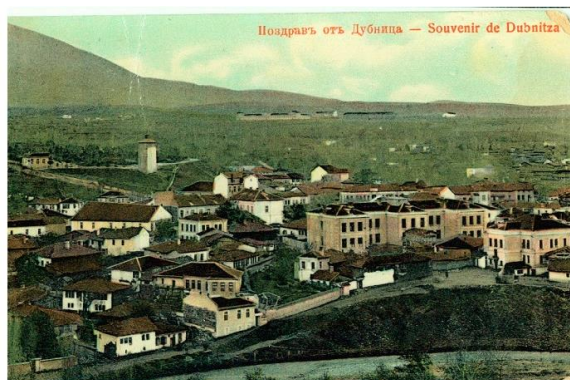
The rich heritage of churches and monasteries in the two municipalities can be used now only for religious tourism but can also be diversified as by emphasizing on the iconography from the 19th century. In the city of Kumanovo there is already a gallery with icons that originate from several churches and monasteries from the Kumanovo region. Photos and videos of the icons, especially from more remotes and hard to access churches, can be gathered in digital format along with information about their origin, used techniques, specific features and other.



The architecture from the 19th century in the two municipalities is also typical and interesting for foreign tourists and students. During the period of the formation of a firm town bourgeoisie, the town houses were made in the style of the Bey homes, with large and high rooms, and with architectural and aesthetic values. On

the first floor of the house typically was built a large terrace (čardak), inside are set spacious rooms, with decorative elements and with the influence of the oriental homes from the 19th century, that are inserted in the frames of the characteristic Balkan homes from the 19th century. A special accent is given to the large courtyard, forming a spacious place.

As many of these houses need lots of investments for their restoration their plans, photos and drawings can also be digitalized and included in modern types of exhibitions, applications and other tourist and marketing materials. This information can also be enhanced by data and photos of landmarks of the cities through the 19th and 20th century such as the town squares, main central streets, schools, churches, socialism architecture, parks and others.



The typical for the 19th and 20th century clothes, accessories, traditional costumes, furniture and appliances are also for presentation among tourists and students, through photos, videos and exhibitions.

Another interesting and common element from the period of the 19th and 20th century which could be used for creating a new tourism product for the marketing of the destinations are the historical events around the Balkan Wars. Information, photos, clothes and weapons from the wars can be gathered and presented to tourists in exhibitions or through digital means further information about local heroes can also be included in order to raise more interest among the target groups.



Finally the galleries in the municipalities can also be used in order to attract tourists in modern ways by presenting the works of famous local artists and inviting guest exhibitions. Dupnitsa in particular is close to the Kyustendil Art Gallery "Vladimir Dimitrov - The Maystora" which presents the work of one of the most famous painters in Bulgaria. Together with the works of other artists and by using modern technologies for immersing the tourists in the works of art the galleries can offer unique experiences for their visitors.

The lack of tourist information centers and other more centralized tourist guide and information services can be tackled by using locals as free guides. Free tours by locals are a popular service in many European cities through which tourists who do not use organized excursions can easily receive interesting information and see the cities and their landmarks without having to search materials on the Internet.

When planning the marketing of the tourist sites and products it should be taken into account that today's consumers "connect" directly with tourism products through the use of the Internet and social media and are not completely dependent on intermediaries for their transactions. The distribution system should reflect current changes and trends in the distribution of tourism products.

As the imposed travel and social restrictions from the current pandemic Covid-19 won't allow many tourists to travel and restrict the number of people visiting public events tourist products and marketing tools should be focused on digital technologies in order to provide access and attract more tourists who cannot physically visit the tourist sites. This digitalization will be beneficial for the two municipalities also in respect to the lack of funds for maintaining permanent exhibitions and also in terms of the need to provide access to people with different disabilities who currently cannot visit the majority of the tourist sites.



S. W.O.T. analysis





1. Strengths

- ▶ Location in the most attractive regions of Europe;
- ▶ High competitiveness in terms of price;
- ▶ Relative proximity to generating markets;
- ▶ Great variety of natural and cultural-historical resources;
- ▶ A large number of reserves, natural landmarks, natural and national parks and protected areas;
- ▶ Wealth of religious sites, lack of religious restrictions and good interaction with church institutions;
- ▶ Rich cultural heritage;
- ▶ Available typical cultural and historic architecture;
- ▶ Iconographic and art heritage;
- ▶ High degree of territorial proximity of natural and cultural sites - an opportunity to combine recreational activities in time and space;
- ▶ Variety of festivals and events;
- ▶ Highly motivated local communities for joint work and enrichment of tourist services in the areas of protected areas;
- ▶ Relatively good conditions for the functioning of all types of transport - road, rail, sea, river, air and intermodal;
- ▶ Good network of mountain trails, built and maintained park infrastructure for tourism and recreation, interpretive routes;
- ▶ Potential for development of new types of tourism;
- ▶ Developed basic regional and local tourism products, combining different opportunities for tourism;
- ▶ Created websites with basic information for tourists;
- ▶ Implemented EU projects aimed at creating tourist products and promoting them on national and international level;
- ▶ Availability of funding under the various European programs and funds.



2. Weaknesses

- ▶ Deficits in the normative and sub-normative regulation, regulating the tourist development;
- ▶ Lack of basic strategic documents – regional and local marketing and brand strategy;
- ▶ Large share of the gray sector, lack of real information about the state and development of tourism enterprises;
- ▶ Lack of policy regarding quality management and sustainability in tourism development;
- ▶ Lack of reliable mechanisms for sustainable valorization of tourist resources;
- ▶ Formation of competitive advantage on the basis of extensive use of tourist resources and low factor cost;
- ▶ Lack of methodological support for tourism enterprises (business aids)
- ▶ Lack of established and operating tourist area management organization;
- ▶ Insufficiently good interaction between the state administration and NGOs in tourism;
- ▶ Insufficiently and unevenly developed transport infrastructure, high share of transport infrastructure in poor condition
- ▶ Lack of investments for maintenance and development of the discovered cultural and historic sites and the already existing ones;
- ▶ Restricted access for people with disabilities;
- ▶ Underdeveloped transport connections in remote rural and mountainous areas and difficult movement of tourists by public transport;
- ▶ Insufficient and / or poor quality markings, lack of markings in English;
- ▶ Insufficient investment in the development of the museum network, small number of visitors;
- ▶ Lack of a high degree of preservation and good transport accessibility to the cultural and historical sites;
- ▶ Insufficient opportunities for holding major international events;



- ▶ Poor performance of religious sites such as tourism sites, a small number of programs and offers for pilgrimage tourism, which cover a small number of sites;
- ▶ Poor marketing of folklore events, singing festivals and traditional Bulgarian holidays with the potential to attract many tourists;
- ▶ Hard to find, inconvenient to use and poorly structured event calendar;
- ▶ Low popularity of the wine tourist product on the domestic and foreign markets;
- ▶ Low popularity of the health tourism product on foreign markets;
- ▶ Lack of quality staff;
- ▶ Lack of well-trained guides in various fields;
- ▶ Insufficiently used potential of the sites for activating direct sales;
- ▶ Insufficient flexibility in the use of alternative distribution channels (in addition to tour operators);
- ▶ Less online hotel presence compared to competing destinations;
- ▶ Low share of online sales at hotels;
- ▶ Poor supply of loyalty programs (especially for seaside holiday hotels);
- ▶ Pale image, without special distinctive features;
- ▶ Significantly less funds for marketing and advertising compared to competitors;
- ▶ Low cost efficiency for tourism marketing;
- ▶ Insufficiently specific and distinctive advertising, lack of a clear link between the ad and the destination;
- ▶ Insufficient consistency in presentation as a tourist destination;
- ▶ Large investments in advertising in traditional generating markets, where the impact of advertising on travel purchases is low;
- ▶ Insufficient flexibility in promotion as a tourist destination, using mainly traditional channels;
- ▶ Obsolete in design and outdated in content tourist sites;
- ▶ Lack of tourist information centers;
- ▶ Lack of a functioning Unified system for tourist information;
- ▶ Deficits in terms of systematization, analysis and presentation of existing information on tourism development;



- ▶ Incomplete and often unfit for analysis information about the tourism industry and the state of tourism;
- ▶ Lack of reliable information about the condition and access to tourist attractions;
- ▶ Lack of up-to-date information on the characteristics of tourists;
- ▶ Lack of systematized and presented for business use information about the main competitors.

3. Opportunities

- ▶ Commitment with tourist organizations and opportunity for intensive participation in the processes related to the development of tourism, better positioning as a tourist destination and providing support for the tourism industry;
- ▶ Creating new tourism products using modern digital and IT technologies;
- ▶ Redirection of tourist flows from competing destinations as a result of newly created tourist products;
- ▶ Favorable and relatively stable economic environment for the development of tourism worldwide;
- ▶ Improving the economic well-being and living standards of the population;
- ▶ Increasing leisure time in response to new technologies and changes in lifestyle and lifestyle;
- ▶ Activation of intercultural relations and cooperation;
- ▶ Aging population and growing popularity of opportunities for development of various forms of health and cultural tourism;
- ▶ Increasing travel near home;
- ▶ Increasing the number of trips at the expense of duration and search for new destinations;
- ▶ Increasing the number of people related to nature and ecological lifestyle, with requirements for the appropriate use of natural resources and the practice of sustainable tourism;



- ▶ Growing popularity of specialized types of tourism;
- ▶ Increasing price advantage when looking for a tourist trip;
- ▶ Increasing influence of technologies in the development of tourism;
- ▶ Withdrawal of tourists from traditionally attractive destinations due to global climate change;
- ▶ Limited opportunities for Bulgarian tourists to travel abroad as a result of the imposed bans in the fight against Covid-19;
- ▶ Search for alternative less visited destinations for social isolation in the fight against Covid-19;
- ▶ Coherence of the Bulgarian tourism policy with international pacts, conventions and other instruments for regulation of the international tourist activity.

4. Threats

- ▶ Restrictive travel and social distance measures as a result of the fight against Covid-19;
- ▶ Instability in the national policy and political system;
- ▶ Global climate change and vulnerability of geographical regions;
- ▶ Pollution of air, water and soil, which changes the material environment and anthropogenic resources needed by tourism;
- ▶ Strong competitors in terms of basic tourism products;
- ▶ Strong competitors in terms of tourism products with significant potential for development;
- ▶ Increasing number, creativity and flexibility of tourist offers (dynamic packages);
- ▶ A growing share of "online tourists" - impatient, curious, communicative, with a strong personality, searching and using mostly information on the Internet.



PESTEL analysis





1. Political factors

Relative political stability (EU membership of Bulgaria and pre-accession phases for North Macedonia) now and in the future; low impact of terrorism (Global peace index, 2018) and maintaining traditionally low levels of crime, which leads to redirection of tourist flow from neighboring countries; facilitating visa procedures for non-EU countries; established legislation and program framework based on European strategic documents. All this shows a favorable influence of political and legal factors on the development of tourism in the two municipalities. The perception of corruption in the countries has a negative impact; the tendency to increase the tax burden, depending on the degree of pollution; Britain's withdrawal from the European Union and the resulting changes in travel, related to the necessary documents, visa regime, standards for tourist services and other organizational and technical changes.

Additionally imposed travel restrictions as result of the prevention measures taken due to the Covid-19 world pandemic.

Available EU grants for many types of public organizations and services, businesses and NGOs giving the opportunity to take advantage of various funding to start and develop their innovative services, preserve the cultural and historic heritage, create and promote new tourism destinations, hire employees, introduce IT systems and others.

Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism helping to develop and implement programs to stimulate alternative types of tourism such as:

- ▶ Mountain and road bike, equestrian tourism, climbing, speleology, hang gliding;
- ▶ Trips for those interested in geology, ornithology, botany, wildlife observation;
- ▶ Trips for those interested in interest in architecture and archeology;
- ▶ Visits to monasteries, consecrated places and sacred places;
- ▶ Observation and training in traditional crafts: embroidery, weaving, knitting, ceramics, woodcarving, casting vats and making musical instruments;
- ▶ Rural and wine tourism;
- ▶ Travels related to the traditional Bulgarian calendar and cuisine.



2. Economic factors

Currently, the economies of Bulgaria and North Macedonia offer poor conditions for new services and business development due to lower consumer demand for services. The external environment is uncertain. Loans are granted under relatively unfavorable conditions - high floating interest rates and a complicated approval procedure. Worsened economic conditions as a result of the lock down of some business and services and the laying off of employees. The high unemployment implies easy finding of cheaper labor. Currently, many people apply for the same position and each manager can choose the most suitable person for the job from among the applications. But very strict measures should be taken for ensuring the safety of the employees and clients again in view of the measures against Covid-19. Additionally, the pandemic has triggered a global economic crisis, and many economies are falling into recession. Early OECD macro-economic estimates indicated that for each month strict containment measures are in place, there would be a loss of output equivalent to 2 percentage points in annual GDP growth. If the shutdown continued for three months, with no offsetting factors, annual GDP growth could be between 4-6 percentage points lower than it otherwise might have been. However, with the outlook becoming gloomier, this in turn will have consequences for the economic recovery and tourism recovery in particular.

3. Social factors

Diverse demographic profile of the population in both countries- concentrated in large cities, where people with higher education predominate, incomes are higher and there is more free time, but in the countries as a whole life expectancy is relatively short, the growth rate of the income is slow; the industry does not have enough qualified employees.

In the municipalities there are no universities or colleges of tourism, which means that there is low opportunity to hire young professionals for the needs of the tourism. Nevertheless, they are close to the capital cities and the roads are in relatively good condition and easily passable, which means that there will be no need to incur large costs for transporting staff.



People are increasingly oriented towards modern technologies, unique attractions, environmentally friendly living and prefer remote places to rest. Therefore, there will be interest in alternative forms of tourism. This type of tourism is not as widespread as sea tourism, but it has its regular clientele. Customers of this type of vacation usually avoid mass destinations, which makes them reliable and desirable customers. Currently as a result of the pandemic many people prefer to reduce their travels and not to go to crowded places which is also beneficial for the tourism in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo, which are not popular destinations. Also there are people who prefer to stay mostly at their homes so providing them the opportunity to visit the historic sites, objects and exhibitions remotely through digital means will be of interest to them and will generate more tourists visiting the cities once the situation with the pandemic is resolved. Finally, the creation of digital products and the use of modern marketing will also make the tourist sites in the two municipalities accessible to people with disabilities.

4. Technological factors

A key feature in the current and the upcoming 5-10 years is the transition to digitalization of all business and technological processes. A prerequisite for successful digitalization is the high level of high-speed Internet provision throughout the countries, but the shortage of specialists is expected to be an obstacle.

Modern technologies as digitalization of the objects and archives of museums and galleries, 3D mapping and visualizations, use of virtual realities, creation of applications and others are increasingly popular in the tourism sector at the moment. The municipalities have the opportunity to study and review already established good practices and to choose those examples that best suit their capabilities, needs and the interests of the tourists they are planning to attract.



5. Environment

In most cases, tourism is a threat to the environment and especially to nature. Tourism contributes to the destruction and deterioration of the same natural and historic resources that originally attracted tourists to the area. The damages caused by the development of tourism are in direct proportion to the number of visitors and the length of their stay, i.e. when there is an "over-attendance" of a tourist destination, a term introduced in the Anglo-American literature to express the overexploitation of natural areas. The environmental consequences of tourism development can be divided into several groups:

- ▶ Exhaustion and depletion of natural resources such as land, water and other local resources;
- ▶ Pollution of air, water and soil. Disposal of solid waste, spills. Landscape degradation and architectural pollution. High noise levels;
- ▶ Loss of biodiversity;
- ▶ Climate change associated with increasing greenhouse effects and ozone depletion.

Tourism can also make a positive contribution to improving the environment by becoming an incentive to conserve, preserve and protect natural and historic resources. The tourism industry can draw attention to important environmental issues and provoke the adoption of projects that preserve and conserve the natural environment and the historic sites. Tourism can increase the interest in natural and anthropogenic resources and thus allows them to be protected and conserved. The creation of national and nature parks supports the conservation of valuable natural resources, while being accessible to tourists. The reserves, as a protected area, aim to preserve the intact appearance of the natural environment, as in some of them the visits are limited, and in others the access to them is allowed only for specialists. Additionally the classification and enlisting of the historical sites as objects of national value also imposes specific requirements for their preservation and maintenance. The creation and expansion of protected areas and sites contributes to the efficient use of natural and historic resources and the imposition of sanctions for their damage.



6. Legal

The legal and normative base of tourism is built in the spirit and principles of the Constitutions of the countries. It determines the legal framework of the organizational and socio-economic bases for the implementation of the national tourism policies and the making of strategic decisions in this field. The parliaments are responsible for drafting and adopting laws. The governments issue by-laws, ensuring the application of the laws, manage the institutions, organizing and controlling the application and the observance of the normative base.

The spheres and aspects of application of the normative base of tourism are differentiated depending on the levels of management of the system. The macro level (national level) is related to the determination of the legal principles and norms regarding the organization of the management, the tourist zoning of the countries, the coordination between the ministries and the departments regarding the tourism.

European standards require gradual decentralization - the management and development of the functions of regional and local structures. The meso level determines the regional level of tourism management. The normative base regulates the issues related to its organization, the territorial organization and the regional development, the investment policy in the resorts and the resort zones, as well as the infrastructure. At this level the actions of the state bodies are coordinated - order and security, healthcare, training, environmental protection. It is influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of the population and the capacity of the available resort resources.

At the local level (micro level) the normative base determines the legal framework of the joint actions of the municipalities and the companies from the tourist industry. An important aspect in this regard is the coherence of the activity of the tourist structures with the bodies of the local self-government and the local administrations.



Presentation and analysis of modern marketing practices for cultural tourism popularization





Contemporary tendencies in cultural tourism

The World Tourism Organization defines “cultural tourism” as trips with the main or concomitant goal of visiting sites and events with cultural and historical value. Cultural tourism includes a means or opportunity to enjoy past human accomplishments. In other words, “visiting such places creates admiration, national pride, and the rediscovery of the achievements of our ancestors.” An important aspect of cultural tourism is intangible cultural heritage. This is defined as those practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Transmitted through generations and constantly recreated, they provide humanity with a sense of identity and continuity.

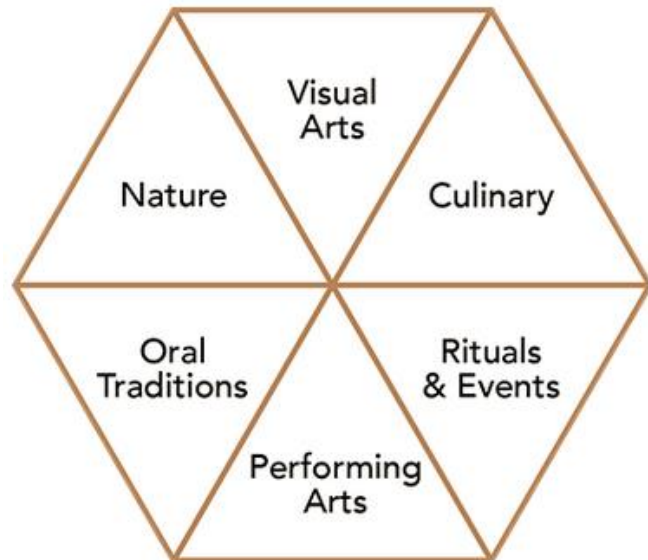


When considering cultural tourism, there are often natural tensions which occur with respect to intended outcomes, program management, and the use of specific tourism assets. For instance, there is sometimes a lack of understanding with respect to the potential economic impact of increased tourism and who should benefit from the incremental revenues. Cultural tourism spreads the economic impact across many different constituents, especially those who typically do not gain from traditional destination marketing. There are often issues associated with preservation, maintenance cost, economic exploitation, privacy, and the specific strategies used to promote cultural assets. In fact, Cultural tourism helps preserve and promote the unique cultural aspects of a place, preventing them from being forgotten or forever lost. But despite the barriers, most civic, state, and regional leaders agree that cultural tourism is an increasing trend and one that provides return on investment for its practitioners. Given the often sensitive and politicized nature of cultural heritage, it makes sense to emphasize and frequently remind stakeholders of the benefits.



The most comprehensive view of cultural tourism comes from the World Trade Organization. Based on 2012 global survey, they identified six categories:

1. Handicrafts and visual arts;
2. Gastronomy and culinary;
3. Social practices, rituals, and festive events;
4. Music and performing arts;
5. Oral traditions and expressions;
6. Knowledge and practices concerning nature.



They consider these “pivotal areas” to be the basis of cultural tourism success.

To the extent a local planning or leadership team can discover, develop, package, and promote these six aspects of local culture, a destination can build a more robust tourism program. The obvious implication is that most destinations do not necessarily have an even or symmetrical understanding across the six areas. Some areas are well-developed strengths while others are not well understood and/or represent latent opportunities at best. So, optimization across the six categories is the hallmark of an effective program.


Tourism promotion is more effective when the destination is connected to a strong branding idea. Brands create interest, relevancy, and differentiation. A set of assets are more easily understood and remembered when they are associated with a brand idea. Local culture and the branding idea that supports it are more discovered than they are created. Therefore, a discovery process is necessary to understand and gain consensus around a set of marketable ideas.

At 7.8%, the contribution of cultural tourism may appear to be a relatively small part of the overall tourism industry in Europe. However, it is considered to be a highly profitable market segment, because it attracts many different target groups of a rather wealthy and highly



educated background ("silver agers", quality travelers, families travelling with children, etc.). Following a recent study, Bulgaria can even count one out of ten visitors as cultural tourists, an indicator for substantial economic growth. In addition to cultural institutions, income and turnover are generated by many different economic sectors, such as retail, hospitality, catering, the leisure and entertainment industries, as well as other service industries (e.g. local transport, car rental, meeting facilities, the wine industry, small food manufacturers, farm shops, etc.).

The tourists of the cultural tourism heritage market can be split in the following segments:

- 
- Purposeful - for these tourists, cultural heritage is their main reason for travel. They will have excellent knowledge of a wide range of cultural heritage, and very high expectations. They are prepared to spend a lot of money on cultural heritage tourism products, but they expect deep and meaningful experiences in return.
 - Interested - for these tourists, cultural heritage is an important part of their holiday, but only one of a few things that motivates them to visit a destination. As well as cultural heritage, they will also be interested in shopping opportunities, entertainment, eating and drinking and relaxing. These tourists will spend money on cultural heritage products if they are really well integrated into other offers, or if the destination can offer them more than 'just' culture.
 - Casual - casual cultural tourists are interested in culture, but it wouldn't be enough to make them choose a destination or an attraction on its own. If there is some cultural-heritage on offer for them as part of a trip, they might spend money if it has a 'wow' factor, or a fantastic local reputation.
 - Accidental - these tourists don't know they are interested in cultural heritage until they come across it, and won't be interested in deep experiences or



spending lots of money on culture. They will visit cultural heritage and attractions if they are part of organized trips and excursions, but they are a high volume, low value customer.

The most suitable digital marketing and experiences that will help target these different segments are presented in the table below:

Table 5 Digital marketing and experiences per tourist segment

Segment	Marketing emphasis	Experiences that engage them	Benefits for the destination
Purposeful	Excellent website content with a depth of information	Creative experiences and learning opportunities	High spending Potential repeat visitors Electronic Word of Mouth
Interested	High visibility marketing using social media and destination websites	Short experiences that can be built into a busy destination schedule	Medium spending Potential to convert to future purposeful repeat visitors Electronic Word of Mouth
Casual	Great reviews on travel sites and social media	Simple activities with low barriers to entry	Medium spending Electronic Word of Mouth
Accidental	Relationships with other tourism business and tour operators in the destination	Quick, exciting experiences Opportunities to buy souvenirs and authentic products	Low spending, but high-value



Additionally, when planning the marketing of the tourist sites and products it should be taken into account that today's consumers "connect" directly with tourism products through the use of the Internet and social media and are not completely dependent on intermediaries for their transactions. The distribution system should reflect current changes and trends in the distribution of tourism products.

For the most part, the concrete realization of the tourist product of the destination takes place through the distribution channels of the accommodation places. The modern online channels through which the hotel product is distributed to the tourist destinations are: web-based reservation systems - WBE (Web Booking Engines); global distribution channels - GDSs (Global Distribution Channels); OPA (Online Travel Agencies). Along with electronic channels, new, hybrid forms of hotel reservation systems are constantly emerging. Today, online distribution channels cover 50% of hotel reservations in Europe and 30% of those in the Middle East and North America. However, despite the growth of online distribution in the tourism industry, many hotels from the CBC region and Dupnitsa and Kumanovo in particular still do not use the full potential of their sites to activate direct sales and gain an advantage over the competition.

Meta-search engines are becoming more and more active in the online market. The meta-search engine filters prices and hotel occupancy on other sites and displays aggregate results in one place. Examples of meta-search engines are Webjet, Tripadvisor, Trivago and especially Hotelscombined.com.

Social media is increasingly used by hoteliers as an important source of information and advertising. Their relatively low price makes them a useful tool for optimizing hotel occupancy. They are also used by tourist organizations as one of the best means of advertising. Most hotels in Bulgaria and North Macedonia are present in at least one social network, which pursues higher popularity. They try to use user-written content as a marketing tool to attract new guests. The most frequently used social media by the hoteliers are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.





When planning advertising campaigns, it should be borne in mind that although advertising has a positive effect on declarative travel intentions, it is last among the factors for choosing a destination. Leading the choice are the advantageous offer and the recommendation from a relative. Although television and Internet advertising, as well as leaflets, catalogs and brochures, are among the communication channels with the widest scope, in the media the planning of subsequent advertising campaigns should not rely solely on traditional media (including Internet). It would be useful to look for opportunities to provoke interest in the municipalities of Dupnitsa and Kumanovo by word of mouth, through blogs, social media sharing, opinion leaders among certain target audiences. It is extremely important to work with tour operators to raise their awareness of the municipalities as tourism destination and increase supply, as well as interaction with journalists from tourism in the countries to improve the image of Dupnitsa and Kumanovo through materials in reputable media. However, regularity is needed in this communication - it should not be carried out on a campaign if the goal is sustainable effect in the future.

Finally, at present a very important aspect of the tendencies in tourism in general are the restrictions imposed as a result of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis in the tourism economy, given the immediate and immense shock to the sector.

Revised scenarios indicate that the implied shock could amount to a 60-80% decline in the international tourism economy in 2020, depending on the duration of the crisis and the speed with which travel and tourism rebounds. Maintaining the baseline that tourism flows have remained severely restricted up to June, these estimates are based on the revision of two earlier scenarios for international tourism arrivals for the OECD area, supplemented by a third scenario which would see any meaningful recovery essentially delayed until 2021:

- ▶ Scenario 1 (revised): International tourist arrivals start to recover in July, and strengthen progressively in the second half of the year, but at a slower rate than previously foreseen (-60%);
- ▶ Scenario 2 (revised): International tourist arrivals start to recover in September, and then strengthen progressively in the final quarter of the year, but at a slower rate than previously foreseen (-75%)

- This study is developed under Project CB006.2.21.144 “Common History and Culture - Bridge across borders” co-funded by EU through the Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria–the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Programme. The contents of the study is are the sole responsibility of the Dupnitsa Municipality and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.



measured in real time and it also allows effective management of resources and budget. Digital marketing techniques include the use of social media, blogging, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Pay Per Click Management (PPC), Branding, content marketing, video marketing, and the creation of App.

The website is one of the key communication platforms between the tourism products and services and the cultural tourists. The website should provide information about the product and the services in order to increase the awareness of the cultural tourists. Cultural tourists are looking for accurate and detailed information from the websites. Specifically in the case of historical cultural heritage, they are expecting comprehensive and exclusive information about the site. In respect to event-related products, cultural tourists are interested in information about agenda, set list, map, accessibility, previous events, and bookings. In general, consumers want to be excited, entertained, informed, or interested by every section of the site. When designing the website, the following should be taken into account:

- ▶ Offered detailed information about the product/service, including, vision and missions, locations, booking channels, and partners/stakeholders;
- ▶ Good web design to make sure the whole user experience is pleasant and satisfied. Continual testing and evaluation of the web site to retain its attractiveness;
- ▶ Built strong and consistent brand identity, related to the identity with the cultural site and/or event;
- ▶ Provided links to the social media pages, emails and other applications;
- ▶ Included visual contents (videos, photos) of previous events, offered products, etc.;

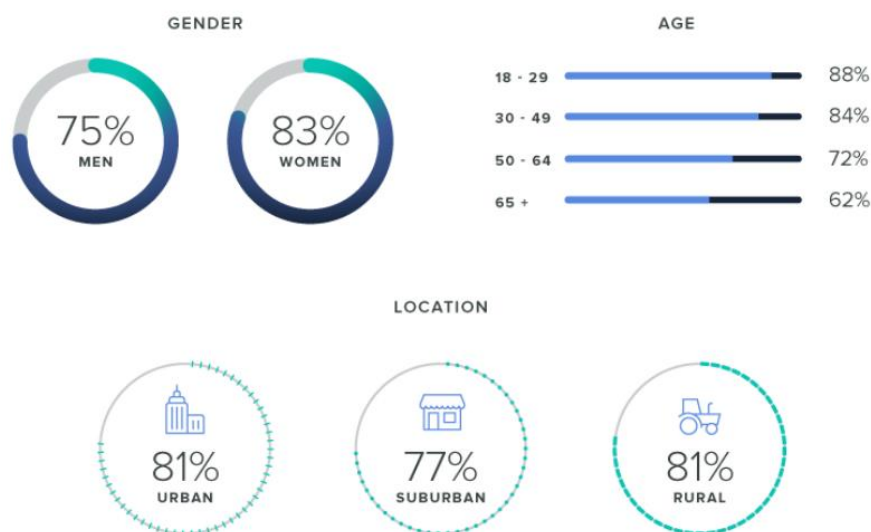


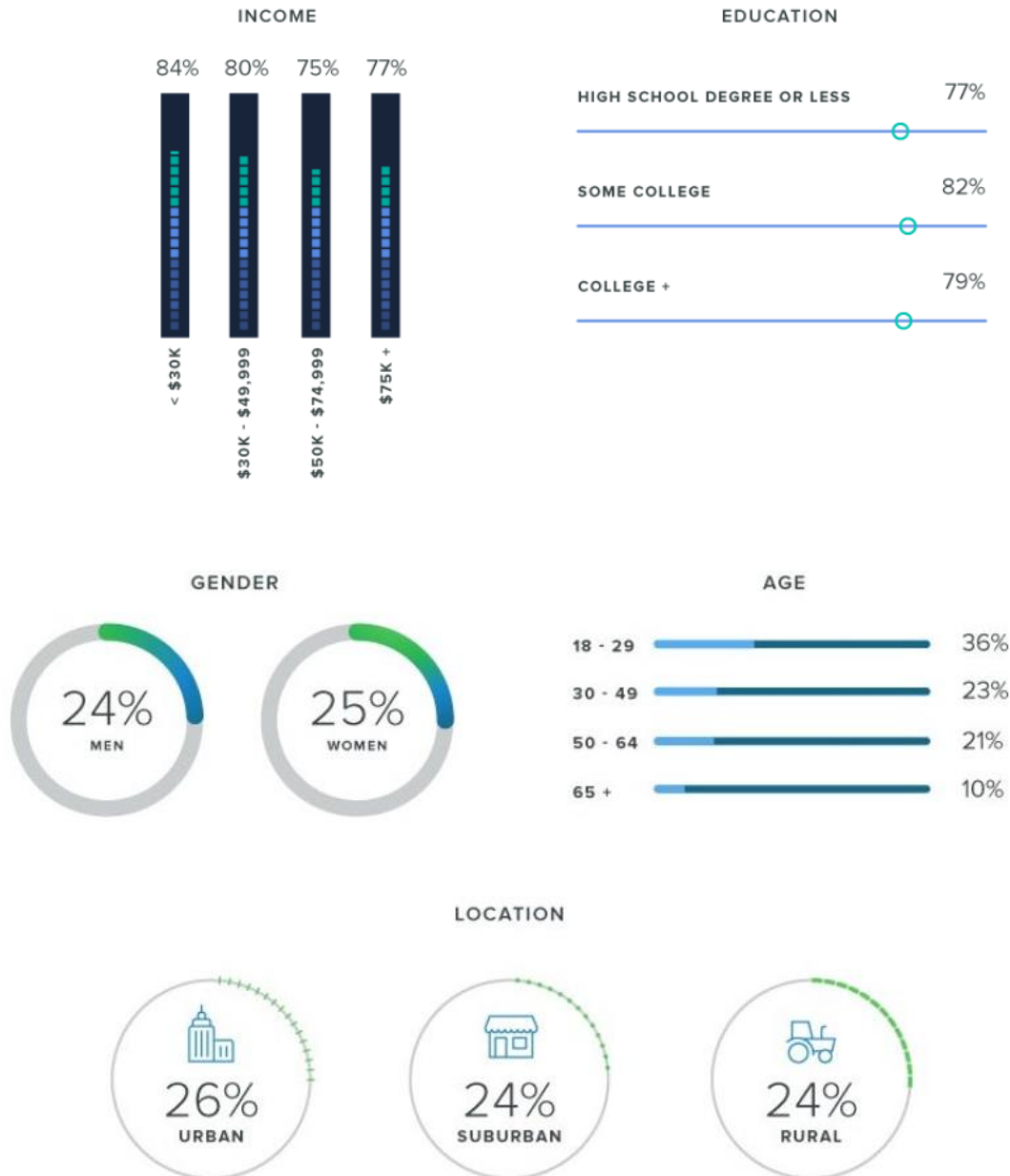
- Provided straight forward and interactive platform for users to request information and get meaningful answers (e.g. ‘Contact Us’ and ‘FAQ’ section on the site).

Social media is another powerful tool for destinations, museums and others to engage and establish a strong relationship with cultural tourists. With overabundance of options, it is essential to target the most suitable social media channels in order to develop an effective digital marketing strategy. Facebook is perhaps the most powerful Social Media tool available, despite recent concerns of its over commercialization and data handling. It is particularly



strong when it comes to communicating videos, photos, and events, immediately creating and attracting an audience for the product or service. Organizations/museums/sites can create Facebook page or join, and/or create groups of interest around a specific product, service, or destination, thereby becoming an opinion leader and stimulating discussions among peers, followers, potential and existing clients. Facebook has 1.45 billion daily active users. 1 million links were shared every 20 minutes through this platform. More information about the demographics of Facebook is shown in the next info graphic:

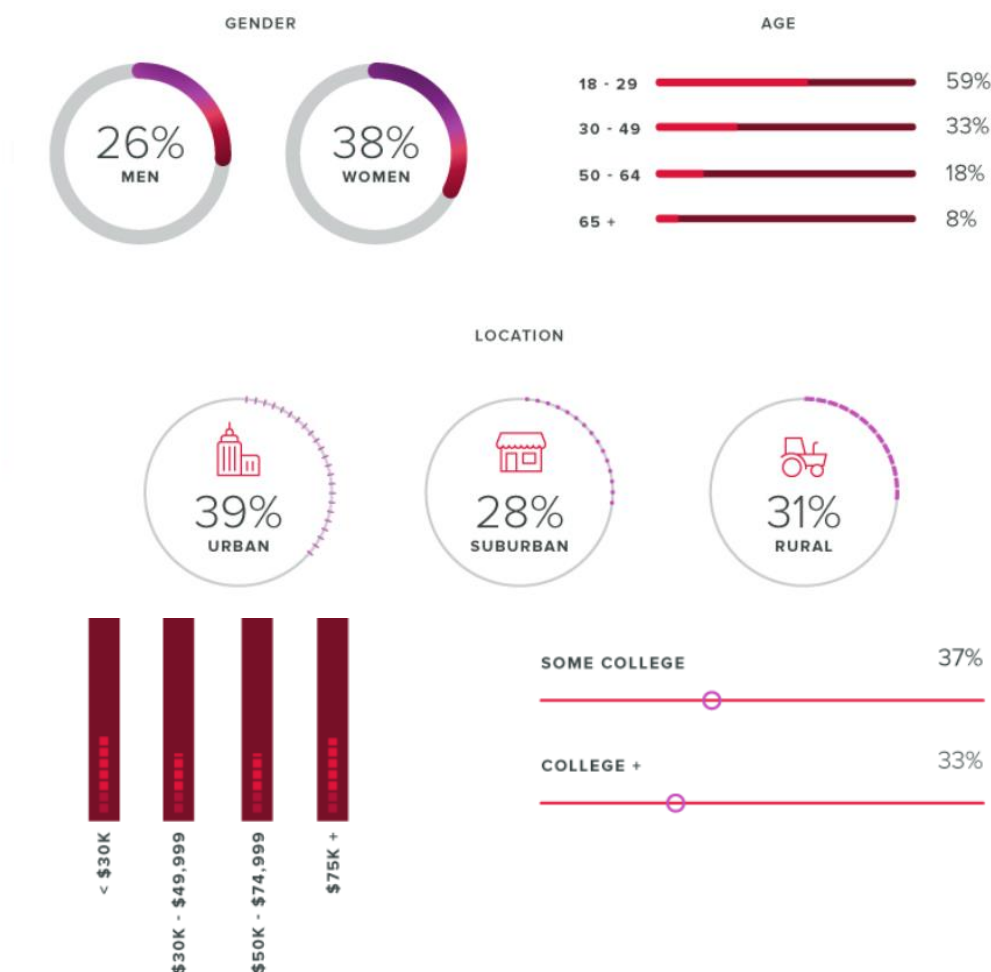




Twitter is a short message service limited to 280 characters per tweet; it again relies heavily on the use and function of hashtags, which drive entire news businesses and campaigns around them. Twitter can become a very powerful tool for communication, especially when addressing English-speaking and emerging global markets. 6,000 tweets are posted on average happen every second. The demographics of this platform is the following:

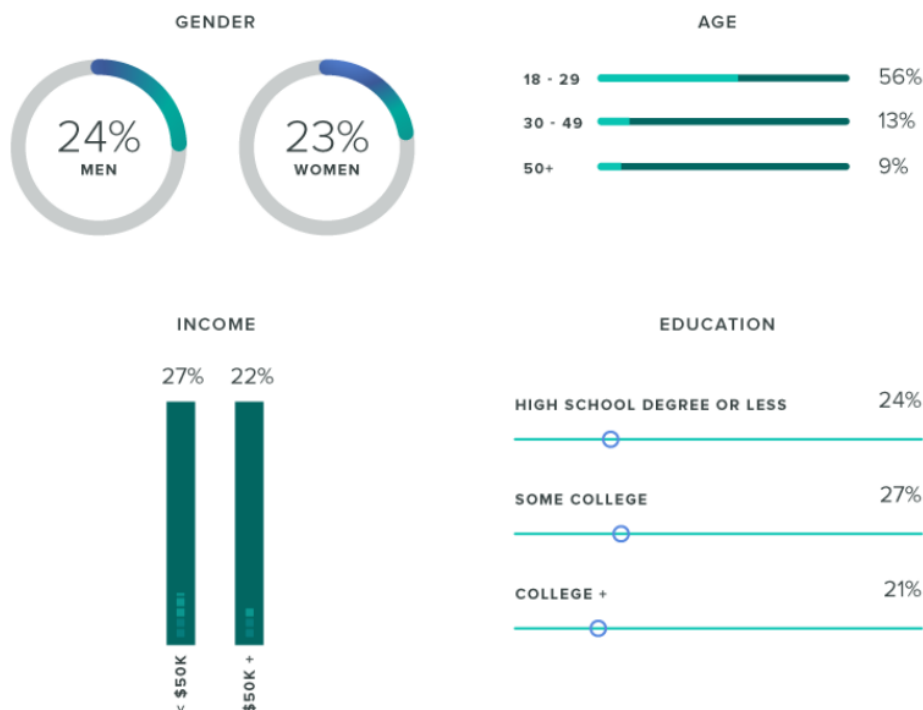


Instagram is a visual-based social sharing platform for posting pictures and 60 second videos. The majority of the users of this platform are millennials. Many brands actively participating through the use of locations and hashtags. Consumers also relate strongly to visual contents. It is visually attractive and works through the use and proliferation of hashtags (= Social Media key words), such as #CreativeTravel #Monastery. Any user typing in those key words either on Instagram, or in Google, will likely find a whole host of images related to their particular search, thereby encouraging visitor information and travel flows. The posted particular picture should be visually appealing, convey a message and stimulate a discussion among followers. Instagram photo feed can also easily be integrated and displayed on a website, adding a sense of actual sharing and participation to an otherwise possibly static page.





Snapchat is a social media app for sending videos and pictures that disappear after being viewed. It is the most used platform among 12-24 years old, and the majority of the users are female. There are more than 10 billion video views daily.



YouTube, Vimeo and other broadcasting services have been designed to upload and share own videos, thereby adding “video” as an important digital marketing trend to the portfolio of presenting organizations and sites online. YouTube itself is said to be the world’s second largest search engine after Google, which hints at just how powerful the search for (and use of) these types of broadcasting services really is. The user can easily embed YouTube or Vimeo videos into his website, and integrate them with the overall of his Social Media and web activities.



Blogging is another powerful platform that can help engage with cultural tourists with stories, backgrounds, and detailed information. More than 409 million people viewed approximately 23.6 billion pages on WordPress each month. Millennials are the main force of bloggers. Compared with short and fragmented information on social media platform such as Instagram and Twitter, blogs offer a space to provide more contextual and

Apart from the social media networks, Direct Digital Marketing (DDM) is the electronic delivery of relevant communications to specific recipients. DDM uses email, Web sites and mobile services in the same way that direct marketing in the real world uses the postal service. Nowadays, as an email address, a browser cookie, and a



mobile phone number, these three channels can be utilized to deliver direct messages to their customers. Nevertheless, when applying these tools museums, galleries, other service providers and organizations should observe the risks related to perceiving the messages as spam or virus and should also be compliant with the regulations imposed by the general data protection regulation (GDPR) which has a direct impact on digital direct marketing practices. With GDPR effected on 25 May 2018, all marketers need to collect freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous consent (Article 32).

For creating a comprehensive brand which could be easily recognized by tourists, an effective marketing practice is the so called affinity marketing which involves working with other organizations who share the same values and most importantly – customers. Within a tourism destination, business/organizations/destinations will be cooperating and competing on a daily basis. A strong relationships with business/organizations/destinations who can bring customers should be built, as well as with other business that tourists/customers can benefits from. For example, working closely with a local tour operator who can include the site/destination in their itineraries, as well as local restaurants/hotels that can send customers. In practical terms this involves sharing digital marketing space with each other – working together on each ones websites, social media and e-marketing – as well as on offline marketing such as discounts and word of mouth. When affinity marketing works, it helps gain more customers, maximize the return on investment of the marketing campaigns, and to get access to the skills and expertise of available partners – all of whom are facing the same challenges in attracting and delighting cultural heritage tourists.

Another popular aspect in the popularization of cultural tourism and historic sites is the experiential marketing. This is the process of identifying and satisfying cultural tourists' needs and aspirations, profitably, engaging them through the creation of multisensory, interactive communications (e.g. memorable events) that bring brand personalities to life and add value for the cultural tourists. Experiential marketing can be understood as creating or co-creating innovative visitor experiences that are meaningful to the visitors as special individuals. This marketing practice is all about creating personalized experiences for individuals. In relation to tangible cultural heritage sites, it is essential to look beyond museum collection and monument, and create multisensory stories around it. Approaches such as story-telling, workshops, public



lectures, and simulation activities can facilitate multisensory and immersing experiences. For intangible cultural heritage, it is crucial to take ‘co-creation’ into account.

Using events as marketing tool is a further step to attracting and engaging tourists in order to promote a destination. Event marketing describes the process of developing an event or series of event such as themed exhibit, display, or presentation (can be either online or offline) to develop, intensify and expand a relationship with target consumers by bringing together emotions and experience. Events offer a unique opportunity for consumers to interact with brands to get a first-hand experience of the destination’s focus and personality. Using event in marketing effectively can firstly help establish awareness and express identity. Events are the most direct way to share and communicate ideas and values. Secondly, participating in the suitable event allows the organization/destination/site to successfully engage with a group of prospects with interests in the specific tourist product/site. Thirdly, event brings consumer engagement to another level, with an opportunity to build customer loyalty by delivering positive personal interaction. Last but not least, many consumers attending events to be educated, which is perfect for many museums and galleries with education in their focus. A successful event should impart knowledge that the audience will value, and that will establish a long-term relationship.



New technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and new payment technology have largely reshaped the landscape of the tourism products and marketing. They can be very helpful to improve consumers' multi-sensory experience and



speed up service process. It is essential to seize the opportunities, but more importantly, choose the suitable technology for the specific product/destination.

Augmented Reality (AR) is an interactive experience of a real-world environment whereby the objects that reside in the real-world are "augmented" by computer-generated perceptual information. Pokémon GO is a popular example of AR technology. AR technology has large potential in the heritage site to co-create values with consumers in terms of sustainable education and embodied experience. Re-creation of ancient temples and historic buildings is a topic that lends itself naturally to AR with a number of developed prototypical and commercial systems.

Virtual reality (VR) is an interactive computer-generated experience taking place within a simulated environment, that incorporates mainly auditory and visual, but also other types of sensory feedback like haptic. In the tourism sector, VR has been largely adopted in destination marketing. VR not only offers consumers an immersive experience of a destination before they get there, but also manages their expectations of it and, overall, help them come to a more



informed purchasing decision. For cultural heritage, VR technology provides a unique experience to travel back in time, and enhance travel experience.

With the development of biometric authentication and improving security, mobile payment such as ApplePay, AliPay, Yoyo Wallet, and Revolute has become popular among millennials. Since the level of acceptance varies across the world, it is crucial for the organizations in the tourism sector to understand user acceptance of their target market, and wisely choose the suitable mobile payment technology. For instance, as the largest e-commerce market in the world, Chinese consumers have enthusiastically embraced eWallets and social app payments, and continue to see healthy growth in these areas. Alipay, Tenpay and WeChat Pay currently lead the market in the eWallet space. Key retailers and attractions (e.g. Merlin Entertainments) who target Chinese markets in the UK has introduced Alipay and WeChat pay to attract more Chinese consumers and increase their travel experiences.



Overview of the approaches towards better optimization of the capability of the cultural assets and more particularly the Old Urban Lifestyle to provoke long-lasting interest and meaningful experience to the tourists

Demand for cultural tourism has long focused on socio-demographic and motivational criteria, attributing culture tourists a certain age, education, income, social status, willingness to learn, etc. This was rebutted by recent research, but the majority of cultural travelers still fit in the picture: age 50+, well off, education-orientated, and mobile. However, with the advent of the so-called “experience economy”, there is a need to reconsider the traditional ways of attracting tourists.



As the travelling population becomes more and more informed, alternative interest groups emerge in favor of traditional categories such as nation states, class or gender. Increasingly, these have to do with, and / or are rooted in the proliferation of Social Media networks across the globe. Creative tourism is one such example, taking place both in urban as well as in rural settings. Creative tourism, especially in rural areas, has become an important strategy for cultural tourism to remain competitive within today’s mass tourism market, all without losing any of the local authenticity cultural tourism depends on. As an emerging trend, creative travel is rooted in the rise and mass democratization of cultural travel. The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) shows that the experiences most enjoyed by cultural travelers are those offering a real

taste of the local culture. The more experienced travelers are, the more likely they become to add specific educational goals to their travels over mere rest and relaxation. In the past, cultural travel has largely been based on cultural heritage, such as visits to museums or monuments. With the rise of the creative class, a socioeconomic class whose key driving force is economic development through education and entertainment, this focus is gradually shifting.



Destinations renowned for their creative vibe excel at providing travelers with a sense of achievement from learning a new skill. By creating their own souvenirs, travelers are more likely to have a lasting emotional attachment to the creative travel destination, to talk, blog, or tweet about it in a positive way, and to make a return visit. Essentially, creative tourism addresses travelers who are looking for time, space, and energy to unlock and unfold their creative potential, who truly wish to be in touch with the local communities they visit.

Creative travel allows travelers to bridge the gap between being a mere observer and being an active participant in the local fabric of the place they are visiting. The buzz word in this context is “active” instead of passive. Thanks to active participation, travelers are as much a part of the overall travel experience as is the person delivering and facilitating the experience for them: Cooking classes require individual effort to learn how to prepare local foods. Craft workshops require a pair of hands to shape a bowl at the potter’s wheel. Dance lessons require anyone involved to actually take the first step.

Another trend used for achieving a long-lasting and meaningful experience for tourists is the establishment of religious/pilgrimage tourism products. Religious tourism is tourism based on people traveling individually or in groups for motives of pilgrimage, missionary goals, or leisure purposes. According to the UNWTO United Nations World Tourism Organization, an estimated 300 million pilgrims visit the world’s most famous religious sites every year. There are many aspects involved in these types of visits: Shrine visits, pilgrimage journeys such as along the Way of Saint James, monastery visits and guest-stays, leisure vacations or day visits of religious tourist attractions.

Religious tourism has existed since antiquity. Pilgrims, for instance, are said to travel for a number of reasons:

- ▶ To understand and appreciate their religion through a tangible cultural heritage experience;
- ▶ To feel secure about their religious beliefs;
- ▶ To connect personally to a holy city or place.

There is no doubt that religion has played a major role in encouraging early travelers and pilgrims to cross the European continent in order to visit sacred sites. Today, hundreds of



them make up the world's map as important heritage attractions in their specific country or religion. Many of those travelers are faced with an abundance of Social Media tools to help them planning and managing their journey, such as Camino apps for walking the Way of Saint James, forums and Facebook groups to enable an exchange in many different languages, travel blogs with detailed experience accounts of actual pilgrims, (digital) guide books, etc. Site managers at religious heritage places face the delicate task of catering to various user groups (from the eagerly anticipated pilgrim to the idle leisure tourist), while at the same time being tied to various public and private sector interests.



The minimum requirements for effective management practices in the context of digitalization and religious / pilgrimage tourism include:

- ▶ Sound interpretive facilities at the religious heritage site / local town hall / visitor information office (including bilingual or multilingual information, (audio) guides, etc.);
- ▶ Safe access to and from the site, basic catering and refreshment facilities, further tourism infrastructure such as restaurants or accommodation in the nearby or not too distant vicinity of the attraction;
- ▶ State-of-the-art ICT i.e. websites, blogs, apps, Social Media pages or other ways for visitors to get and stay in touch before, during and after their visit; all conveying the important feeling of connectivity, and representing the required care about the heritage resource visited;
- ▶ Provision of energy supply and Wi-Fi at religious sites and pilgrims' shelters;
- ▶ Access to weather forecasts, e.g. by recommendations for best local weather apps, etc.



Furthermore, as presented above the use of Social Media in the tourism and travel industry is growing constantly, as Social Media has become an important marketing instrument. Tourists plan their trips and gather information using social networks; they collect tips from friends and other virtual contacts. Social media as a marketing

tool helps businesses to save costs, build and strengthen relations and to communicate with their audiences. Currently, most marketing strategies cover measures related to Social Media. The main advantage is to reach customers in different parts of the world and receive feedback in real time, employing minimum resources. Cultural travelers rely on information provided by so-called “travel influencers”, in order to show the authentic side of the destination visited.

Communicating with (potential) target groups may therefore also be done by hosting these influencers on PR campaigns, digital storytelling contests, or other forms of professional cooperation. “Influencers” are relatively new on the market, and are considered “digital opinion leaders” with a wide reach among their (often very specific) target groups (influencers = potential guests and visitors!).

Travelers have the possibility to write reviews, leave comments, and present different perceptions of destinations through a sheer countless amount of review sites and Social Media platforms. As a consequence, they become prosumers in social media, meaning that travelers are benefiting from marketing activities initiated by companies, but also getting involved in promoting and improving the very tourism products and packages they consume. Moreover, tourists trust more other tourists who have had similar cultural tourism experiences, instead of nice, eye-catching presentations of companies from websites, brochures, leaflets, TV, etc.

Cultural products and services well promoted and presented in the media become a stimulus for tourism, empowering the consumer and helping entrepreneurs with promotion and innovative ideas. This is both true at an internal as well as an external marketing level. Consequently, Social Media contributes to the improvement of tourism service quality and enriches visitor satisfaction.



The impact of tourism on local businesses is mostly felt when tourism arrivals fall suddenly, following crises such as natural disasters or as it is in the current case the Covid-19 pandemic. It is understood that different crises require different responses. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, tourism marketing is usually suspended as its effect is lost behind mainstream news coverage. Furthermore, discussing a crisis requires knowledge of the issues involved and care in discussing them.

Nevertheless, travel influencers ‘on the ground’ can be of real assistance during the recovery phase. In those times, the organizations, products or destinations will benefit from working together with travel influencers they have worked with before, because they really know the product and destination (this also underlines the importance of establishing long-term relationships). The following benefits of working with digital travel influencer following a crisis can be made:

- ▶ Travel influencers can offer authentic personal testimony of the real situation in the destination;
- ▶ They can offer a new angle, or even a counter narrative to mainstream media coverage;
- ▶ They can be particularly helpful in ‘giving a voice’ to smaller destinations, whose authorities have less experience or leverage in shaping mainstream media coverage;
- ▶ They are highly experienced in using social media and can offer support to local businesses that may need it.



Presentation and analysis of EU best practices





Ancient Rome virtual tour with lessons



The city of Rome together with the University of Reading have developed a 3D digital model of the ancient city of Rome with the purpose to present its architecture and history through free online course. The course has a

duration of 5 weeks, 3 hours per week and its basic content is offered for free. The users can explore Rome's architecture and how it was used – how did Romans worship their gods and meet their political masters? How was drinking water supplied to the city's million inhabitants? Moving seamlessly between footage of contemporary Rome and the digital model (including interactive elements), tourists/students can explore these questions and much more. The course is divided in different topics for each week including - Ancient Rome location and infrastructure; Political architecture in Ancient Rome; Religious architecture in Ancient Rome; Life and death in Ancient Rome and Bread and circuses (entertainment architecture) in Ancient Rome.

As achievements from the course are enlisted the following:

- ▶ Explore different categories of building within the city, and the functions they housed;
- ▶ Investigate a range of evidence including archaeological remains, coins, literary texts, and inscriptions to learn how we can understand and interpret the ancient past;
- ▶ Discuss the way the rulers of Rome used architecture to adorn the city and keep it functioning;
- ▶ Experience digital modelling as a way of presenting the ancient past, exploring models on screen and in videos and discussing what they can show us.



In the current Covid-19 situation and restrictions to travel this course is a great opportunity for people who are passionate about history and architecture to explore the city of Rome. Nevertheless, the course is offered only in English and is conducted in specific days for which participants have to enroll in advance.

[Anne Frank House Virtual Tour and VR app](#)

The Anne Frank House is a museum with a story. As a visitor, tourists experience this story through quotes, photos, videos, and original items. Currently for tourists who cannot visit the house, the museum has developed an online Anne Frank House which gives the opportunity to look around the Secret Annex online and find out more about what happened there and even through using an VR app and VR glasses tourists are taken to a virtual stroll through the hiding place where Anne Frank wrote her diary. Visitors can also take a look around the house where Anne and her family lived before going into hiding and visit an online exhibition about Anne Frank's life.



In the VR app, all of the rooms in the secret annex are furnished according to how it was when occupied by the group in hiding, between 1942 and 1944. In the actual museum, the secret annex is empty. After the eight people hiding in the house were found and arrested, the furniture was removed. Leaving the rooms of the secret annex empty was the wish of Otto Frank, Anne's



father. So actually this application and online format are providing additional experience for visitors. They can choose where to go, can select objects, and read about the history of the rooms. The virtual reality tour takes about 25 minutes, provides background information and is available in seven languages: Dutch, English, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Hebrew. The Anne Frank House VR app is available for visitors to the Anne Frank House who have limited mobility: those who cannot climb the stairs to visit the secret annex.

The virtual reality tour is already used by dozens of other museums and institutions all over the world. In this way, institutions such as the Anne Frank Centre for Mutual Respect in New York, the Anne Frank Centre in Berlin, Centro Ana Frank Argentina in Buenos Aires and the Instituto Plataforma Brasil in Sao Paolo, Brazil use the tour for education purposes. There are also museums in the United States and Asia which use the app as part of their exhibition.

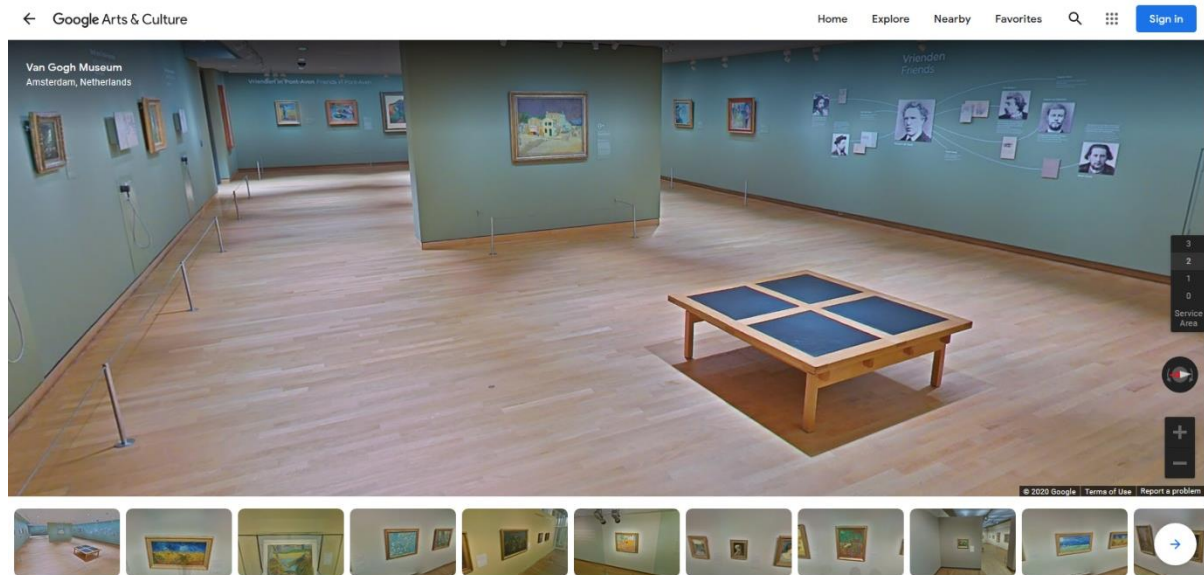
The experience is extremely interesting and can additionally be combined with other services the internet site of the museum offers such as videos, learning materials and many different scientific articles. In terms of the VR app the only inconvenience is the need of special technology and VR glasses in order for tourists to be able to use the application.

[Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam](#)

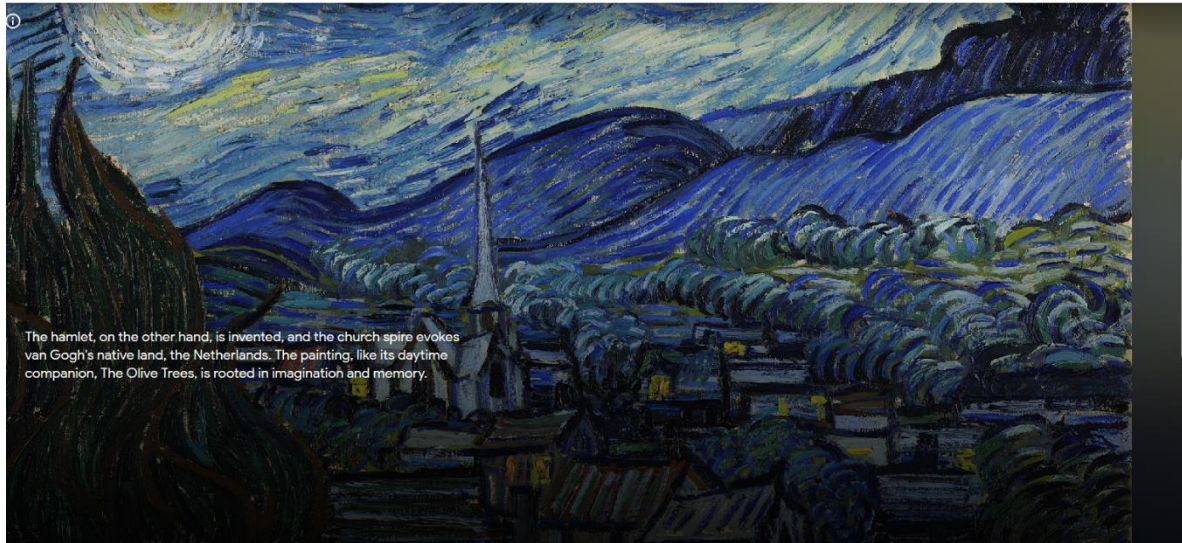
The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam houses the largest collection of artworks by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) in the world. The permanent collection includes over 200 paintings by Vincent van Gogh, 500 drawings and more than 750 letters. The museum also presents exhibitions on various subjects from 19th century art history. In order to visit the museum tourists have to book a tour in advance which in many cases are already fully booked. In order for tourists to be able to see the exhibition of the museum and become more familiar with the work of Van Gogh the museum has also developed an online exhibition in a specific web site along with YouTube channel including a 4K tour. A specific section of the website is dedicated to children where they can download and color some of his most famous paintings and also play a thematic game.



On the website of the museum visitors can also walk around it, look at the paintings and find out more information and videos about them. Application with augmented reality is also available. This last function is developed with Google Arts and Culture which in addition allows visitors to zoom in and explore the paintings themselves.



The creation of these online tours and materials requires a lot of investments in the filming and digitalization of the expositions along with the use of IT technologies for their incorporation in applications and partnership with Google for inclusion in their platform.



Atelier des Lumières

Going further into the modern practices for presenting and popularizing art it is interesting to present the product created by Atelier des Lumières in Paris. The l'Atelier des Lumieres, which opened in April 2018, focuses on digital art, covering all corners of the genre from work made for a digital audience to bringing more traditional works of art

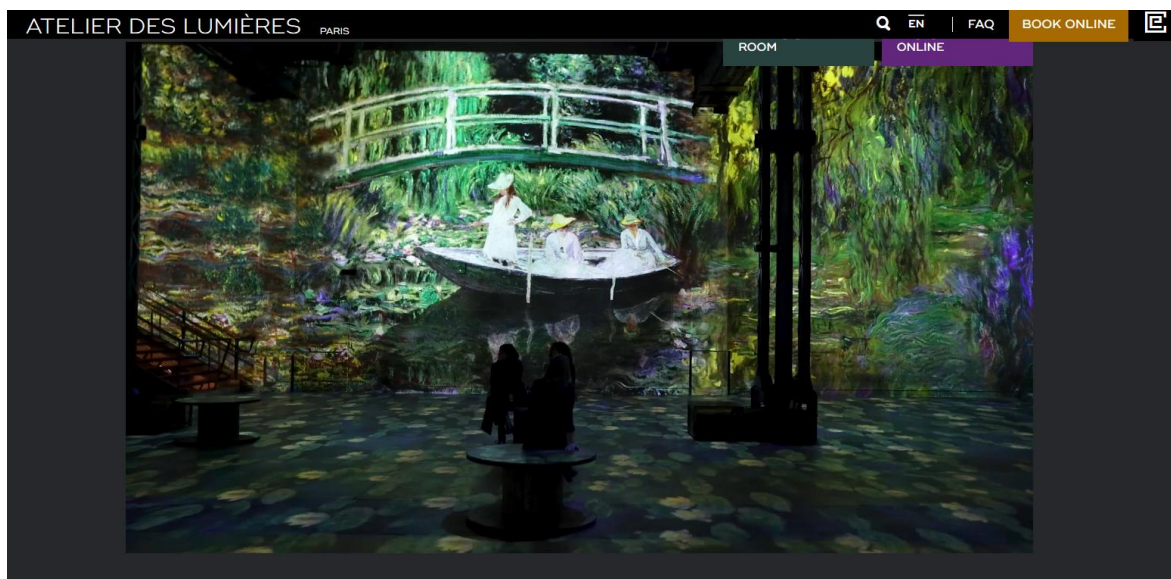


alive in a new medium. The museum organized an exhibition projecting 2,000 of Van Gogh's paintings onto a wall that matches with a carefully curated playlist, according to the Matador Network. So much of the beauty in Van Gogh's paintings comes from the unique brush strokes he used and the exhibit allows visitors to get up close and very personal with the work, observing each painting right down to the individual brush strokes. Works like *The Sunflowers*, *Starry Night*, and *The Bedroom* will be included in the new exhibit.



The museum also has an exhibition Monet, Renoir, and Chagall: Journeys around the Mediterranean’ which presents visitors with an itinerary that spans the period between Impressionism and modernism. After the exhibition devoted to Van Gogh, the new digital exhibition will highlight the link between artistic creativity and the Mediterranean shores, as the principal centres of the modernist movement. In seven sequences lasting forty minutes, visitors will be taken from one artistic movement to another: from Impressionism, with Monet and Renoir, to pointillism with Signac and Cross, and Fauvism with Camion, Derain, Vlaminck, Marquet and Matisse. The immersive exhibition will also retrace the fascination of Bonnard and Dufy for the Mediterranean, and eventually focus on one of the greatest colorists of modern art—Chagall. The unique style of each painter will be illustrated: Matisse’s colors, Bonnard’s depth, Dufy’s insouciance, and Chagall’s modernism.

More than 500 works, which are now held in collections around the globe, will fill the Atelier des Lumières with their bright colors and highlight the variations in the works of these great artists on the Mediterranean shores, which inspired them to take their work to its finest expression.



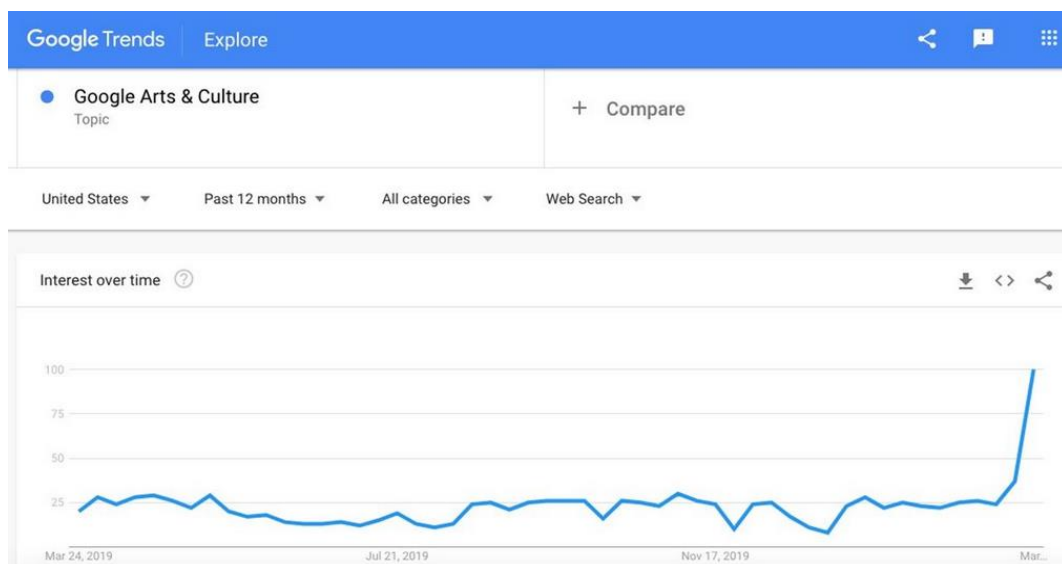
For organizing the exhibitions again specific technologies and investments are required. This type of exhibition cannot be fully presented to visitors through internet and application although the museum is offering an app with original anecdotes on 30 major works from the exhibition.



Google Arts and Culture

Google Arts & Culture is an online platform through which the public can view high-resolution images and videos of artworks and cultural artifacts from partner cultural organizations throughout the world. The digital platform utilizes high-resolution image technology that enables the public to virtually tour partner organization collections and galleries and explore the artworks' physical and contextual information. The platform includes advanced search capabilities and educational tools, and is available in 18 languages, including English, Japanese, Indonesian, French, Italian, Polish, and Portuguese

The project launched nearly a decade ago and has expanded exponentially. It now features thousands of high-resolution images from more than 1,200 museums globally, the interest to which has increased even more after the closing of many museums due to the measures taken against Covid-19.





Users can visit Google Arts & Culture as a website on their laptop or desktop, but the project is at its immersive best when engaged via the Google Arts & Culture app, which can be downloaded for free on smartphone or tablet.

The create the platform an indoor-version of the Google Street View 360-degree camera system to capture gallery images by pushing the camera 'trolley' through a museum was created and used. Professional panoramic heads Clauss Rodeon VR Head Hd and Clauss VR Head ST were also used to take high-resolution photos of the artworks within a gallery. This technology allowed the excellent attention to detail and the highest image resolution. Each partner museum selected one artwork to be captured at ultra-high resolution with approximately 1,000 times more detail than the average digital camera. The largest image, Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov's "The Apparition of Christ to the People", is over 12 gigapixels. To maximize image quality, the team coordinated with partner museums' lighting technicians and photography teams. For example, at the Tate Britain, they collaborated to capture a gigapixel image of "No Woman No Cry" in both natural light and in the dark. The Tate suggested this method to capture the painting's hidden phosphorescent image, which glows in the dark. Now, unlike at the Tate, from the site, one can view the painting in both light settings.

Once the images were captured, the team used Google Street View software and GPS data to seamlessly stitch the images and connect them to museum floor plans. Each image was mapped according to longitude and latitude, so that users can seamlessly transition to it from Google Maps, looking inside the partner museums' galleries. Street View was also integrated with Picasa, for a seamless transition from gallery view to microscope view.

The user interface lets site visitors virtually 'walk through' galleries with Google Street View, and look at artworks with Picasa, which provides the microscope view to zoom in to images for greater detail than is visible to the naked eye. Additionally, the microscope view of artworks incorporates other resources—including Google Scholar, Google Docs and YouTube—so users can link to external content to learn more about the work. Finally, the platform incorporates Google's URL shortener (Goo.gl), so that users can save and easily share their personal collections.

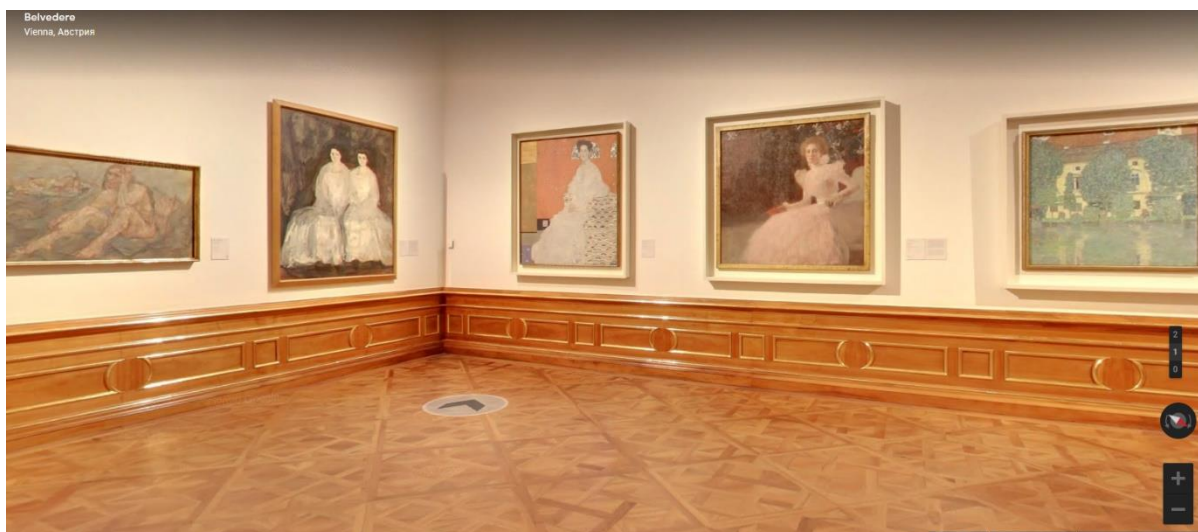


The platform has been integrated with the social media platform Google+ to enable users to share their personal collections with their networks. This integration also lets site visitors use Google+ Hangouts for more interactive purposes. These situations might include: a professor giving an online lecture to students, engaging in video and shared-screen discussions about a collection, or an expert leading a virtual tour of a distant museum to remote attendees.

The app can transport visitors into the textural world of a piece of art. Zoom in to brushstrokes, skate across oceans of colour or tap on the screen and explore the universe contained in the blue-green pigment of a single painted eye. Images are accompanied by explanatory text, and visitors can spend days diving into the collection of any given partner institution.

As presented above the exposition of the Van Gogh museum is one of the most famous in the applications, but it is also extensively used by other very famous museums in Europe such as The British Museum, Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, National Gallery in London, the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, Musée d'Orsay, Belvedere, Tate Britain, Kunsthistorisches Museum, The Munch Museum, the Eiffel Tower, Acropolis Museum, Palace of Versailles and many more.

Although initially it seems attractive to be able to visit for free the most famous museums sitting in your living room, soon after exploring the options of the platform the visitor sees that in most cases he cannot walk through the entire museum or stop easily to a spot of his choice. Also not all paintings and objects in the museums are presented and the real experience





of entering the marvelous old buildings of the museums, galleries and places and being close to the unique pieces of art cannot be reproduced through the internet site. Museums, galleries and other tourist destinations and sites can use Google Arts & Culture mainly for advertising their expositions and for attracting tourists in the future. This is a very useful marketing tool as it does not require high investments but can provide access to tourists worldwide.

[Berlin Philharmonic: Digital Concert Hall](#)

Now visitors have the opportunity to invite the Berliner Philharmoniker into their living room. On their TV, computer, tablet or smartphone. To enjoy great video streamed concerts in high definition and with excellent sound. Each season, around 40 concerts are broadcasted live and they can also be viewed at a later date in the concert archive. The archive already contains hundreds of recordings with all the great artists of classical music. There are also fascinating documentaries and bonus films.

Registration in the Digital Concert Hall is free of charge, and allows visitors to access numerous interviews, Education Programme films and a playlist with chief conductor Kirill Petrenko which lets them try out the Digital Concert Hall without any obligation. A ticket or subscription gives access to all live broadcasts and videos – as often as visitors like, on the device of their choice.

This is a very useful option for people to visit the concerts of the Philharmonic although here again they miss on the unique atmosphere and sound in the hall itself especially when they are using simple phones, tablets and TV to listen to the music instead of professional sound equipment. On the other hand the interested people can listen to the concerts at any time depending on their schedule and read more materials while listening.

[Marketing Platform “Creative Iceland”](#)

Visitors to Iceland who are interested in getting involved with the unique Icelandic culture are offered to book typical Icelandic activities, among them knitting and crochet workshops, letterpress workshops, cooking classes of Icelandic cuisine, photography walks, a

100




visit to a creative cluster, ceramic and pottery workshops, Icelandic language classes, or creative writing seminars. Artists and experts who wish to offer an activity can get support from Creative Iceland in order to create a web-based offer, and they are invited to market it through the

CreativeIceland

Experiences Activities Private Travel Hire A Private Chef How It Works [Cart](#)

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Creative And Food Experiences In Iceland**

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**Icelandic Language,
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**Cold Fire Northern Lights
Photography Tour**

Photography

The most unique and memorable Northern Lights photography tour. Come and join us, bring your camera to hunt the Northern Lights and get the shots of a lifetime!

[Learn more ↗](#)




Knitting Workshop

Arts & Crafts

This knitting workshop is designed for knitters of all levels. You will also learn about Icelandic wool and the knitting culture that has developed since the time of the settlement.

[Learn more ↗](#)



Letterpress Workshop

Graphic Design

Learn and experience the letterpress printing technique, its uniqueness and the artistic opportunities it offers. Design and make your own postcards with this authentic technique.

[Learn more ↗](#)

Creative Iceland website. Participants to the activities are then encouraged to share their experiences on the organization's Facebook page. Regular updates of their activities, newsletters, workshop dates, and ways for travelers to interact and participate in their many activities, are also available on their web site.

Inspired by Iceland



Post the 2010 eruptions of Eyjafjallajökull, Inspired by Iceland has come up with many great campaigns. The greatest was perhaps the first, with ‘Iceland Hour’ seeing the country’s shops, schools and administration shut down for an address from the President, who called for stories of positivity to be submitted through the Inspired by Iceland website. This led to a

Inspired by Iceland



GET INSPIRED

SHARE



GEOGRAPHY

RENEWABLE ENERGY



NATIONAL PARKS

VATNAJÖKULL



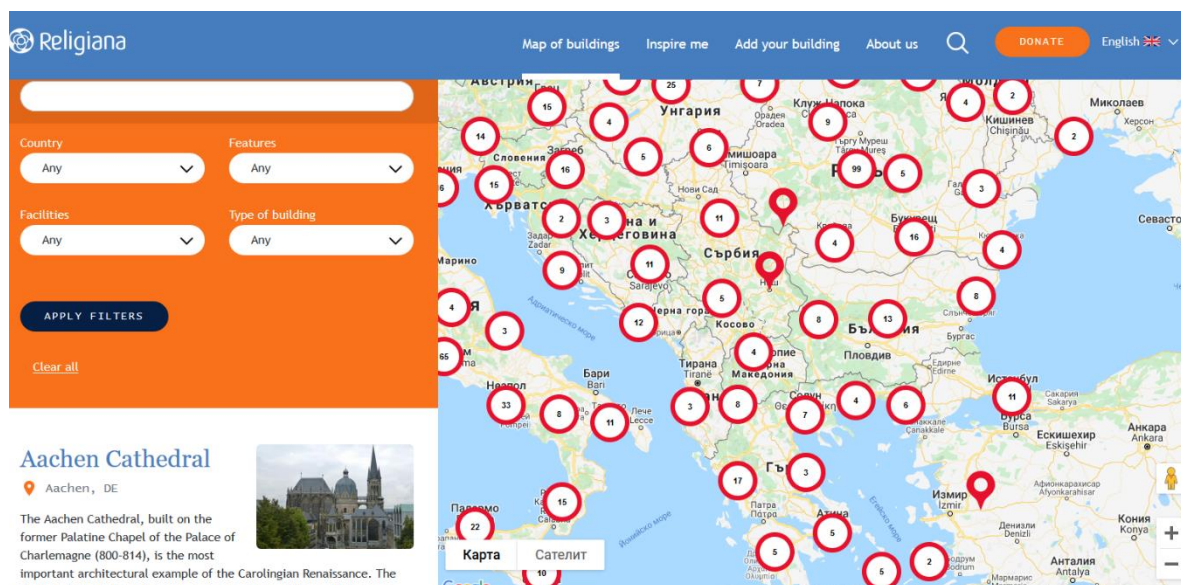
**SEASON OF CREATIVITY -
MUSIC**

reported 22 million testimonials after 10 weeks and transformed the narrative (and the search engine results) from national crisis to upbeat energy.

Now visitors to the website can explore the a-ö of journeys, tastes and living in Iceland, with rich features on the Northern Lights, ice climbing or birch syrup and many others.



Future for Religious Heritage



FRH is an independent, Brussels based, non-faith, not for profit organization that promotes the protection and use of religious buildings and their contents. FRH provides a forum for all concerned by the future of Europe's Religious Heritage to meet and to exchange ideas. The organization sets out to understand the challenges facing the sector, to identify positive vectors for change and to promote their implementation. It underlines the preeminent place of religious patrimony in Europe's cultural heritage and encourages the EU to develop a positive policy for its support. FRH works with its members to develop cross-border projects. It helps raise EU and other European funding for their realization. FRH is one of the 28 EU networks supported by the Creative Europe Network funding.

The organization has developed an application for religious tourism called Religiana. Religiana is a mobile technology service for religious heritage sites under the FRH Europe network, a network safeguarding and promoting the rich variety of religious heritage in Europe. It aims to provide guests and visitors to these heritage sites digital (multilingual) information about religious building, their history, architecture, details of events, pilgrimages, to build virtual communities as well as to receive online donations.



Visit Britain's GREAT campaign

The four-year, £100m campaign began in 2011 and focused on culture, heritage, sport, music, countryside, food and shopping, as well as tying in with the Bond movie, Skyfall. A pre- and post-2012 Olympics push was also key to the ongoing campaign. VisitBritain continues to build on its Olympian success, and in 2018 it launched its 'I Travel For...' campaign to "shine the spotlight on unexpected experiences and less-explored destinations in Britain, alongside its globally renowned and iconic landmarks and attractions."

The Swedish Number

An iconic marketing campaign from 2016. The 'Swedish Number' was a national phone number that anyone could call up and talk to a random Swede who had agreed to man the phones (with no training) and talk about anything that came up. The simplicity and absurdity of the campaign ensure lots of international media coverage, reportedly worth the equivalent of \$147 million.



Lille Metropole – Health charter to reassure tourists



Lille Metropole attractiveness agency, ‘Hello Lille’ and the Lille Pasteur Institute have developed a health charter to insure the safety of Lille as a tourist destination. The charter has already been signed by 200 major players of the culture and tourism industry. The signatories will display their commitment to the charter through a specific logo placed on their facades and in their communication tools.



This charter is based on 10 key commitments, including compliance with barrier gestures, social distancing, specific cleaning and disinfection of the premises, specific measures in the event of heat waves and others.

Bologna – Your neighbourhood, a cultural centre

Bologna will organise affordable initiatives throughout the summer investing every courtyard and every square. Citizens will be able to meet and stay together respecting security measures. ‘Bologna Estate’ will have a wide offer of screenings, performances and concerts in addition to traditional museums and tourist attractions, and to bring culture in every corner of the city, each neighbourhood will turn into a culture venue hosting small theatre performances, mobile storytellers, monologues and much more.

Camino Lebaniego Digital

The “Digital Lebaniego Pilgrim’s Project” allows for free WiFi connection along the so-called “Camino Lebaniego”, a part of the Way of Saint James in Cantabria, Northern Spain, and part of UNESCO World Heritage. It is the first “online” pilgrim’s route in the world, whose 15 access points along the Way run entirely on solar power, supported by the local energy company Viesgo. Thanks to the app’s innovative features, such as geolocation and calendar functions, pilgrims can also discover important events available in their respective area, find further interesting information, sites to visit, alternative routes, things to do or places to rest and eat. All access spots are conveniently located next to a church, pilgrim’s accommodation, or



public squares. Users of the “Camino Lebaniego Digital” can plan their pilgrimage route according to their personal tastes or events available along the Way.

Currently, one of the main fields of development is the so-called “Lebaniego Digital Credential”. The application will thereby allow for the possibility to stamp each stage along the way up to Santo Toribio's Monastery, and to earn the jubilee just by passing by the 15 access points of the network “Camino Lebaniego Digital”. This innovative digital solution may therefore be used instead of the traditional paper stamp – a world first in terms of innovative pilgrimage developments. Thanks to this connectivity, the eleven municipalities involved in the project have the opportunity to renew their management aspects of the local area artistic, historic, natural and ethnographic resources. This is a considerable help to promote the development of rural areas thanks to sustainability, and technological innovation.

Creative Tourism Austria

Creative Tourism Austria has been founded in 2011 as an association to promote and highlight the creative tourism offers across all of Austria's nine provinces. It works in close cooperation with the Austrian National Tourist Office, particularly with regards to Social Media Marketing, networking and cooperation.

Given its market focus on the German-speaking areas of Europe, an English translation has yet to be added. From the beginning, the association “Kreativ Reisen Österreich” has been innovative in managing a notable number of successful (Social Media) cooperation initiatives. Every week, several updates are published on the Facebook account of the organization, using the growing Facebook community to highlight members' offers and interesting national or international events. In addition, Pinterest, Twitter, Flickr and other Social Media channels are used, though Facebook does remain the primary channel for community building among Austrian, and German audiences. The latter is primarily interesting for SEO (Search Engine Optimization), as well as campaign building around prize draws, annual events, or member workshops.



Every year, at least once or twice, media conferences, press or blog trips are organized for journalists and digital influencers wishing to get experience in Creative Tourism in Austria. Funding is covered by participating institutions, as well as local and regional tourism boards, with the management team providing the expertise and contacts. These trips have been very successful over the years, and follow the hashtag #KreativReisen #CreativeTravel #inAustria (the latter also advocated by the Austrian National Tourism Board). Some of those results, including videos and storytelling done by the bloggers are published on all social media accounts of the organization.

Jorvik Viking Centre

The JORVIK Viking Centre is a ‘must-see’ for visitors to the city of York for ‘an authentic Viking encounter’. It is one of the most popular visitor attractions in the UK, welcoming over 18 million people in the past 30 years. Their successful ‘re-imagined experience’ marketing strategy won them Marketing Team of the Year 2018 at the annual CIM Marketing Excellence Awards.



Visitors are transported around reconstructed Viking age streets in state of the art time capsules, and enjoy a full sensory experience from the flora and fauna growing in the ground to the breeds of animals portrayed and even the splashes of natural dyes found in one of the backyards.

Alongside the remains of one thousand year old houses and artefacts from the archaeological excavation of the site, visitors can interact with costumed interpreters and can engage in ancient Viking crafts. The visitor experience is further enhanced pre and post visit through the use of social networks such as



Twitter and Facebook; animations can be downloaded together with an interactive map of the site and retail therapy is part of the offer via the actual or online shop.

Jorvik itself is undoubtedly a rich and unique experience, educational, entertaining and almost wholly immersive but it is much more than an experiential product or servicescape thanks to an experiential marketing approach that succeeds in integrating all stages of the visit through from planning ('take Hold of the Past') to visit (real or virtual thanks to the availability of Skype for education groups) to post visit evaluation ('Join Eric Bloodaxe's army on Facebook'). Through experiential marketing Jorvik becomes much more than a cultural tourism product in a city offering a plethora of museums, galleries, historic houses as well as an impressive castle, minster and thriving marketplace. It succeeds in accessing the heritage tourism market, and enables the visitor to co-create an individualised experience through a range of immersive appeals. Currently the Center is also providing the option to discover its exhibitions and history through digital resources.

[Access for disabled tourists](#)

Brighton - The beach in Brighton is a famous landmark and visitors in wheelchairs do not miss the chance to visit it. Brighton offers a special beach area for people with disabilities who can enjoy the pleasure of being on the beach. They can use the area for free and can make a reservation one week in advance or rent a wheelchair on the day of the visit.

In 1997, Valencia pioneered the introduction of the ambitious "beach for all" program. The aim of this project is to provide access to the coast and the sea to guests and visitors with different opportunities. The beaches of Malvarosa and Cabanal were subsequently certified universally accessible in 2008. Feel the Sun is a collaborative project between private operators and providers of tourism services and activities and provides opportunities for 6,000 people each year.



Valencia is also part of the program, a national initiative of Vodafone and the PREDIF agency for people with disabilities. The initiative provides a common platform for sharing information on accessibility in tourist destinations. Everyone can be useful by providing their opinion on different categories of sites such as hotels, restaurants, monuments and beaches. Experts review the information and users give their opinion and assessment of the services. Users can filter their search according to their requirements, such as audio information, sign language employees or access with guide dogs.

Helsinki helpers

Helsinki provides tourist information in various ways, one of which is through Helsinki helpers. They are active during the summer and have been providing tourists and residents with information on sights, events, restaurants and shopping for more than 20 years. They are young residents of the city, taken together they speak 14

languages and are present in places where tourists have to ask the most questions, such as around the main tourist attractions. Helsinki helpers wear green vests and work in pairs in the city center, or are Mobile helpers who ride bicycles with baskets full of brochures to serve as many tourists as possible. At the beginning, the Helsinki helpers receive a two-week training, during which they receive information about the history of Helsinki and tourist attractions. About 90% of the visitors who meet the Helsinki helpers are residents of other countries.







EU Strategies for sustainable development and responsible tourism





EU policy aims to maintain Europe's standing as a leading destination while maximising the industry's contribution to growth and employment and promoting cooperation between EU countries, particularly through the exchange of good practice. The EU's competence in the tourism is one of support and coordination to supplement the actions of member countries.

For the period 2010 – 2020 the EU had the following four priorities for action:

- ▶ To stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector;
- ▶ To promote the development of sustainable, responsible, and high-quality tourism;
- ▶ To consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations;
- ▶ To maximize the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism.

The competitiveness of the European tourism industry is closely linked to its sustainability and the European Commission works on a number of initiatives in this area. The competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism industry go hand-in-hand as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment, and their integration into the local community.

Long-term sustainability requires a balance between economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability. The need to reconcile economic growth and sustainable development also has an ethical dimension. The Commission Communication, 'Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism' proposes solutions to the challenges of sustainable tourism. These mainly include sustainable conservation and management of natural and cultural resources, minimizing resource use and pollution at tourism destinations including the production of waste, managing change in the interests of the wellbeing of the community, reducing the seasonality of demand, addressing the environmental impact of transport linked to tourism, making tourism experiences available to all without discrimination, and improving the quality of tourism jobs – also by addressing the issue of employment of illegally staying third country nationals in the framework of the Commission migration policy. Ensuring that tourists as well as the local communities where tourism services are offered are safe and secure is a further challenge and also a basic condition for a successful development of tourism.



Tackling the above mentioned challenges requires a coherent action which can be supported by appropriate public policies: sustainable management of destinations, integration of sustainability concerns by businesses and sustainability awareness by tourists.

Sustainable destination management is critical for tourism development, especially through effective spatial and land use planning and development control and through investment decisions on infrastructure and services. In ensuring that new tourism development is of a scale and type in keeping with the needs of the local community and environment, a sustainable management can reinforce the economic performance and competitive positioning of a destination in the long-term. It requires a supportive framework with the involvement of all regional and local stakeholders and

an efficient structure within which partnership and effective leadership are facilitated.

A primary requirement of businesses is to remain competitive. Actions taken in support of this should be seen as part of the process of delivering sustainability which is set to represent one of the most important competitive advantages. In order to ensure their long term competitiveness, viability and prosperity, businesses should therefore better than before integrate sustainability concerns fully into their decision-making and management practices and tools. In this process, business support services and associations have a major role to play.

Finally, in order to achieve a tangible progress, the demand side of both the leisure and the business market should show stronger and more consistent signals. Tourists need to be addressed in order to develop and strengthen their critical capacity to make choices in favour of sustainable development. Sustainability awareness and ethics can facilitate the creation of responsible individual attitudes and practices of tourists. The growing understanding of sustainability of consumers might vice versa influence businesses to demonstrate this concern and act accordingly.



To achieve a competitive and sustainable tourism the Commission invites all actors to respect the following principles:

- ▶ Take a holistic and integrated approach - All the various impacts of tourism should be taken into account in its planning and development. Furthermore, tourism should be well balanced and integrated with a whole range of activities that affect society and the environment.
- ▶ Plan for the long term - Sustainable development is about taking care of the needs of future generations as well as our own. Long term planning requires the ability to sustain actions over time.
- ▶ Achieve an appropriate pace and rhythm of development - The level, pace and shape of development should reflect and respect the character, resources and needs of host communities and destinations.
- ▶ Involve all stakeholders - A sustainable approach requires widespread and committed participation in decision making and practical implementation by all those implicated in the outcome.
- ▶ Use best available knowledge - Policies and actions should be informed by the latest and best knowledge available. Information on tourism trends and impacts, and skills and experience, should be shared across Europe.
- ▶ Minimise and manage risk (the precautionary principle) - Where there is uncertainty about outcomes, there should be full evaluation and preventative action should be taken to avoid damage to the environment or society.
- ▶ Reflect impacts in costs (user and polluter pays) - Prices should reflect the real costs to society of consumption and production activities. This has implications not simply for pollution but for charging for the use of facilities that have significant management costs attached to them.
- ▶ Set and respect limits, where appropriate - The carrying capacity of individual sites and wider areas should be recognised, with a readiness and ability to limit, where and when appropriate, the amount of tourism development and volume of tourist flows.



- ▶ Undertake continuous monitoring - Sustainability is all about understanding impacts and being alert to them all the time, so that the necessary changes and improvements can be made.

As part of its work in diversifying the tourism experiences on offer in the EU, the Commission co-funds sustainable transnational tourism products that can contribute to tourism growth. These are thematic products and services in areas such as environmentally friendly tourism including cycling routes, sports and wellbeing tourism, nature tourism, and cultural routes crossing Europe.



To diversify the EU tourism offer, the European Commission offers co-funding through the COSME programme to sustainable transnational tourism products.

These are thematic tourism products such as transnational itineraries, routes, trails focusing on different themes such as: environmentally friendly tourism, sports tourism, food and wine tourism, health and wellbeing tourism, nature tourism, or ‘slow tourism’ – travel which allows tourists to engage more fully with communities along their route.

Further to this, as tourist destinations are increasingly being called upon to tackle social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges. To help them measure their performance in relation to sustainability, which is essential, the European Commission has developed a ‘European Tourism Indicators System’ (ETIS). ETIS is a system of indicators suitable for all tourist destinations, encouraging them to adopt a more intelligent approach to tourism planning. It is:

- ▶ a management tool, supporting destinations who want to take a sustainable approach to destination management;
- ▶ a monitoring system, easy to use for collecting data and detailed information and to let destinations monitor their performance from one year to another;
- ▶ an information tool (not a certification scheme), useful for policy makers, tourism enterprises and other stakeholders.



According to the latest communication of the European Parliament in respect to the actions to be taken during the Codiv-19 pandemic the months to come should not be lost for the vibrant European tourism ecosystem. Hence, a set of measures for safe travel and holidays had been proposed including:

- ▶ Safely restoring unrestricted free movement and reopening internal borders - in line with the Joint European Roadmap, within the EU, restrictions on travel should first be lifted in areas with a comparable epidemiological situation and where sufficient capabilities are in place in terms of hospitals, testing, surveillance and contact tracing capacities. Furthermore, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), in cooperation with Member States and the Joint Research Centre, is developing and will maintain a map of the level of COVID-19 transmission including at sub-national level. Member States are invited to provide data to ensure that this map is complete, up to date and serves as a transparent tool to provide information at EU level to be used by authorities, transport operators and service providers, and travelers;
- ▶ Restoring safe transport - With the Communication “COVID-19: Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity”, the Commission is providing guidance based on a framework of principles and a common toolbox. This will help resume transport services of all kinds across the EU in a consistent and understandable way: taking coordinated and risk-based measures that are non-discriminatory and proportionate, limited in scope and duration to what is necessary to protect public health; taking targeted measures instead of general prohibitions; lifting restrictions on individualized transport; and ramping up safer collective transport options;
- ▶ Resuming tourism services with health risks minimized - With the Communication, “COVID-19: EU Guidance for the progressive resuming of tourism services and for health protocols in hospitality establishments”, the



Commission sets out principles to guide Member States when resuming tourism activities and developing COVID-related protocols for hospitality establishments that will minimize risks of infection for both guests and host personnel. This Guidance is based on the advice of ECDC and seeks to protect tourists and workforce, while respecting public health rules and physical distancing measures in place in the Member States. Such measures should be flexible, depending on the local health situation and allowing gradual reopening of tourism segments. The Guidance proposes a minimum set of principles, which at the same time meet rigorous health and safety requirements, and highlights the importance of updated and easily accessible information to travelers. What this will mean for people is that there will be clearly understandable and reasonable rules allowing them to safely stay at hotels, eat and drink at restaurants, go to beaches and other leisure outdoor areas;

- Use of digital technologies - Europeans are likely to choose domestic and European tourism destinations this summer and during the following months. To be sure that they can safely travel and spend their holidays, they will need easy access to real-time information on the situation on borders, travel restrictions, travel advice, public health and safety measures, where to go in case of health issues, available tourism services. The Commission will set up a dedicated website with an interactive map combining information from Member States and tourist and travel industry. Digital technologies and data have a valuable role to play in combating the pandemic. Mobile applications could bolster contact-tracing strategies and support public health authorities in monitoring and containing the spread of the virus. Artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics can also help monitoring physical distancing in line with data protection law or facilitating disinfection, especially in places with regular tourism flows. The Commission will deploy through the Digital Innovation Hubs dedicated support



for local tourism businesses to help them cope with the new realities of the tourism season (i.e. robots for disinfecting and cleaning, crowd management, smart booking systems etc.), including a dedicated hackathon on the use of digital technologies in tourism;

- Protecting the rights - People are not always reimbursed directly for money paid in advance for cancelled transport and travel services. In some cases, they may be faced with cancellation penalties for tourism services they were not in a position to use. It is therefore important that they have access to reliable information and efficient assistance and dispute resolution bodies. Consumers residing in the Union can rely on free of charge support from the network of the European Consumer Centres (ECC) when they book holidays in another EU country. Over the last months, ECCs assisting consumers with their cross border purchases have seen a surge in requests for information (over 5000 in the last week of April 2020). National dispute resolution bodies have also noticed an increase in tourism-related disputes. Transparency of travel booking procedures in the present context is particularly important to give incentives for future travelling and ensure fair commercial practices so that no operator seeks undue advantages from misleading claims such as falsely pretending that certain areas are in high demand. The Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network, coordinated by the Commission, is in a dialogue with online travel platforms and car rental companies on the transparency and fairness of online bookings and has already reached out to them on information needs in relation to travelling restrictions.



Legal framework and strategies on local, regional and national level





National legislation

Tourism is a priority sector in the economy of both Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia and the formulation of the legal principles of state regulation in this area is particularly important for the legal framework in which they operate and develop. They are fundamental norms of the legal regulation of tourism and criteria for legality of its norms, contracts and administrative acts.

The right to tourism guarantees the right to recreation, free movement and other travel rights as components of human rights. An important aspect with the legal regulation of the rights and protection of the tourist as a consumer of a specific type of products.

The main normative acts in the field of tourism are the Laws on Tourism. Their application is regulated by by-laws such as Ordinance for registration of tourist activities, Ordinance for categorization of tourist sites, National Tourist Register, Statute for the activity of the National Tourism Council.

The laws regulate the organization and management of tourism and their main purpose is to provide conditions for the development of tourism as a priority industry. At the same time, their goals are the realization of the regulatory functions of the state in the field of tourism, such as:

- ▶ introduction of uniform criteria for carrying out tourist activities;
- ▶ ensuring protection of consumers of the tourist product;
- ▶ determining the rights and obligations of persons related to tourism;
- ▶ regulation of the control over the tourist activities and the quality of the tourist product.

The subject of the Laws on Tourism are the uniform criteria in the hotel and restaurant industry as well as for some of the additional tourist services. They are provided by categorizing the tourist site, which covers: accommodation, catering and entertainment, places for tour operators, travel agency and information activities, beaches and ski slopes. The laws regulate the procedures for categorization of the sites, as well as the rights and obligations of the mayors of the municipalities and the respective minister for determining the categories.



The territorial aspects of tourism management are regulated by a number of laws in both countries such as the Law on Spatial Planning, the Law on Local Self-Government and Local Administration, the Law on Administrative and Territorial Organization, the Ordinance on Resort Resources and other laws and regulations.

The institutional management of tourism is carried out by the relevant state bodies and non-governmental organizations. Their goals are related to the creation of a suitable business environment for the successful operation of travel companies. State bodies for tourism management are:



- ▶ Ministry of Culture and Tourism/Ministry of Economy (or the relevant line ministry);
- ▶ tourism agency;
- ▶ district administrations;
- ▶ bodies of local self-government and local administration - municipal council and mayor.

The functions of the state governing bodies are related to the development and functioning of tourism and are realized at national, regional and local level.

The first group of functions is related to the development of tourism as a sector of the national economy with priority importance and is implemented through:

- ▶ creation of a normative base for the development of tourism, as well as standards and requirements for the tourist activities and sites, in accordance with the international legislation and the usual practice;
- ▶ development of strategy and programs for tourism development;
- ▶ conducting national marketing, promotion and advertising in the field of tourism;
- ▶ conducting a strategy for diversification of the tourist product;
- ▶ development of national strategies for the product structures of tourism;
- ▶ assistance, control and coordination of the construction of the infra- and super structure of tourism;



- ▶ development of the criteria for the control over the quality of the tourist product;
- ▶ participation in the management of finances and human resources in the field of tourism together with the competent authorities.
- ▶ implementation of international cooperation and representation of the state before international organizations in the field of tourism.

The functions of the state bodies for tourism management are primarily related to coordination and control. Of great importance for the efficiency of tourism is the successful coordination of the activities of the ministries and departments, concerning the various structural components and aspects of the management of tourism. These are:

- ▶ the identification, assessment and tourist interpretation of resources, as well as their protection and conservation,
- ▶ the arrangement of the tourist territories and the related spatial planning and construction of the tourist base and infrastructure;
- ▶ tourist access to the destination and relevant transport issues;
- ▶ the border crossing regime;
- ▶ passport and visa formalities;
- ▶ order, security and safety;
- ▶ the realization of the different types and forms of tourism, the pricing, the promotion, the advertising and the distribution of the tourist product;
- ▶ the sanitary-hygienic requirements, the qualification of the tourist staff, the organization of the commercial activity, the supply and others;
- ▶ other functions of the state bodies are those related to the control over the quality of the tourist product and activity.

The tourist associations support the activity of the state and local authorities for the implementation of the policy in the field of tourism and in the management and control over the quality of the tourist product. They partner with them through:

- ▶ participation in the development of strategies and programs for the development of tourism at national, regional and local level;



- ▶ participation in the registration of tourist activities and the categorization of tourist sites;
- ▶ assistance for the realization of the marketing activity, the promotion and advertising of the tourist product;
- ▶ assistance for raising the professional qualification of the staff in tourism;
- ▶ participation in the control activity and in the regulation of the professional ethics in tourism and the prevention of unfair competition.

National strategies

North Macedonia has a National Strategy for Tourism of Republic of Macedonia 2016 – 2021. According to this strategy in order to attract more foreign visitors, Macedonia needs to focus on urban, cultural and lake tourism. Regarding tourism, the future positioning of Macedonia is recommended to be based on 4 main pillars:

- ▶ Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, already offers numerous places of interest and sights for tourists and can already be described as an attractive holiday destination. Due to the growing number of low-budget carriers, the city can be easily and cheaply reached;
- ▶ Lake Ohrid is one of the tourist sights of Macedonia under the protection of UNESCO and an already developed tourist destination. 46% of all registered overnight stays in Macedonia are on Lake Ohrid (municipalities of Struga and Ohrid);
- ▶ Macedonian culture - Due to its history, Macedonia is rich in historical sights, but also in recent history and current lifestyle as an important part of Macedonian culture. This includes traditional Macedonian cuisine, typical products, Macedonian festivals, but also Macedonian wine;
- ▶ Experiences in nature - There is beautiful nature in Macedonia. Nature can be experienced in lakes, but also in the mountains or near springs with hot mineral water. Part of this experience are national parks, caves and waterfalls.



Eight key strategies have been defined to support Macedonia's professional tourism development:

- ▶ Raising awareness of Macedonia as an attractive tourist destination;



- ▶ Improving the attractiveness of Macedonia as a tourist destination;
- ▶ Improving the organizational structures in tourism;
- ▶ Improving the investment climate for Macedonian entrepreneurs in terms of developing additional accommodation facilities;
- ▶ Improving the quality and quantity of available tourism data;
- ▶ Improving the framework conditions for tourism development;
- ▶ Improving tourist knowledge and quality of services;
- ▶ Improving the awareness of the local population regarding tourism.

The action national strategy in Bulgaria is National strategy for sustainable tourism development in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2030. The main objective of this strategy is achieving a sustainable tourism development in Bulgaria. In 2030 the distinctive features of Bulgaria as a tourist destination will be:

- ▶ Tourist destination with distinctive national identity based on preserved, authentic and socialized natural and cultural landmarks;
- ▶ Tourist destination with a high quality tourist product, satisfying the target users, with a competitive ratio between quality and price;
- ▶ Popular tourist destination for travel in the four seasons, with a good image on the tourist market, recognizable and preferred by Bulgarian and foreign tourists to major competitors;



- Destination for sustainable tourism - tourism in Bulgaria will be among the leading (structure-determining) sectors of the national economy, which: effectively uses the country's resources to create a growing national income and well-paid employment; creates resources and conditions for protection and preservation of the environment and the cultural and historical heritage; creates resources and conditions for social well-being of local communities.

This vision is planned to be achieved through the following strategic objectives:

- Creating a favorable environment and business culture for the development of sustainable tourism;
- Development of a competitive tourist sector;
- Successful positioning of Bulgaria on the world tourist market;
- Balanced development of tourist regions.

The national strategies are reflecting the EU strategies and measures in view of achieving sustainability of the tourism, to develop the destinations and to achieve competitiveness.

Regional strategies

The strategy for development of Kyustendil region 2014 – 2020 is focused on reflecting in a specific way the priorities set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the national goals in this direction for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The vision reflects the desire to reach a certain level of development of Kyustendil region for the specific planning period 2014 - 2020, using local natural, social and economic potentials, by formulating a political and strategic framework to sustainably absorb these potentials and valorize the benefits of the area.

The main strategic goal for the period 2014-2020 is to achieve sustainable harmonious development of Kyustendil district, through improved living environment and continuous development of human capital, economic growth through the introduction of innovations and



increasing competitiveness, improved infrastructure, investment attractiveness, while maintaining natural and cultural heritage.

On this basis, the strategy for development of Kyustendil region 2014 – 2020 formulates the following strategic goals:

- ▶ Socio-economic development, based on sustainable economic growth, through the development of a competitive diversified regional economy based on a “knowledge economy” and the development of e-government and human capital. Application of modern social policies;
- ▶ Balanced territorial development by strengthening the city-centers, improving the technical infrastructure and connectivity in the field and the quality of the environment in the settlements;
- ▶ Development of European territorial cooperation in contribution to economic and social development and cohesion;
- ▶ Preservation and improvement of the quality of the environment through integration of the global ecological goals and development of the ecological infrastructure.

The strategy is not strictly focusing on any measures or objectives for developing tourism but its goals are for development of the economic growth a part of which can be generated from tourism and also enhancing the quality of the environment which also can reflect on achieving sustainable and ecological tourism in the region.

The Northeast region of North Macedonia has not published any regional strategy or other measures or documents focused on the development of the tourism or on the economic growth of the region in general. The region is following the objectives and measures set out in the applicable national strategies.

Local strategies



Kumanovo's Strategy for local economic development 2019 – 2024 has the vision for Kumanovo to be the most profitable business destination in the Republic of Northern Macedonia. The pillars of the local economic development include:

- ▶ Economic development and business environment;
- ▶ Crafts;
- ▶ Tourism and catering;
- ▶ Young;
- ▶ Rural development.

More particular, the specific strategic measures for tourism consist in:

- ▶ Strategic goal 7: To increase and improve accommodation and catering capacity by 20% by 2024 compared to December 2018:

- Program goal 7.1: To improve the infrastructure of at least 5 cultural sites by 2024;
- Program goal 7.2: To improve road infrastructure to at least 4 cultural landmarks by 2024;

- ▶ Strategic goal 8: To increase opportunities and improve conditions for accessibility to at least 5 cultural landmarks on the territory of the Municipality of Kumanovo and the region by 2024:

- Program goal 8.1: To increase the promotion of: anthropogenic, natural and cultural heritage for Kumanovo and the region by the end of 2024;
- Program goal 8.2: To increase the number of visitors by 30% of cultural events and manifestations in Kumanovo and the region by 2024;

- ▶ Strategic goal 9: To increase the number of tourists in Kumanovo and the region by 30% more by 2024 compared to December 2018:

- Program goal 9.1: To increase investments for improvement and increase of accommodation and catering capacities by 20% more by 2024.





The strategy is mostly focused on enhancing the infrastructure in order to attract more tourists but does not provide for any new and modern tourism products, diversification of the current products or other measures for popularizing the municipality as attractive and modern tourism destination.

The vision of the Development plan of Dupnitsa municipality for the period 2014 – 2020 is restoration of the role of Dupnitsa municipality as a traditional engine of the socio-economic development of the region. This vision is planned to be achieved by the following strategic objectives:

- ▶ Sustainable development and high quality of life in the town of Dupnitsa through the implementation of the measures and activities in the Integrated Plan for Urban Reconstruction and Development including:
 - Sustainability and development of the economic potential;
 - Sustainability and development of the human potential;
 - Enhanced, green and safe urban environment;
- ▶ Restoring the vitality and economic potential of the villages in the municipality of Dupnitsa by mobilizing the local communities and the available resources at local, national and community level including:
 - Establishing and mobilizing the potential for local community-led development of villages in the municipality of Dupnitsa;
 - Enhancement, connectivity and accessibility of the villages in the municipality;
 - Utilization and development of vital economic, human and natural and cultural resources in the villages of Dupnitsa municipality;
- ▶ Effective local self-government, active local communities and fruitful partnerships for sustainable local and regional development including:
 - Accessible and efficient local government;
 - Coordinated and effective institutions at the local level;
 - Partnerships for sustainable local and regional development.

The strategy is mostly focused on enhancing the general conditions of life, the economic development and the governance in the municipality. The cultural heritage is only mentioned



in one of the priorities and there are no strategies or goals focused on the development of the tourism, the touristic infrastructure, the promotion of the tourism or other measures for popularizing the municipality as attractive and modern tourism destination.



Identification of potential competitors on the market

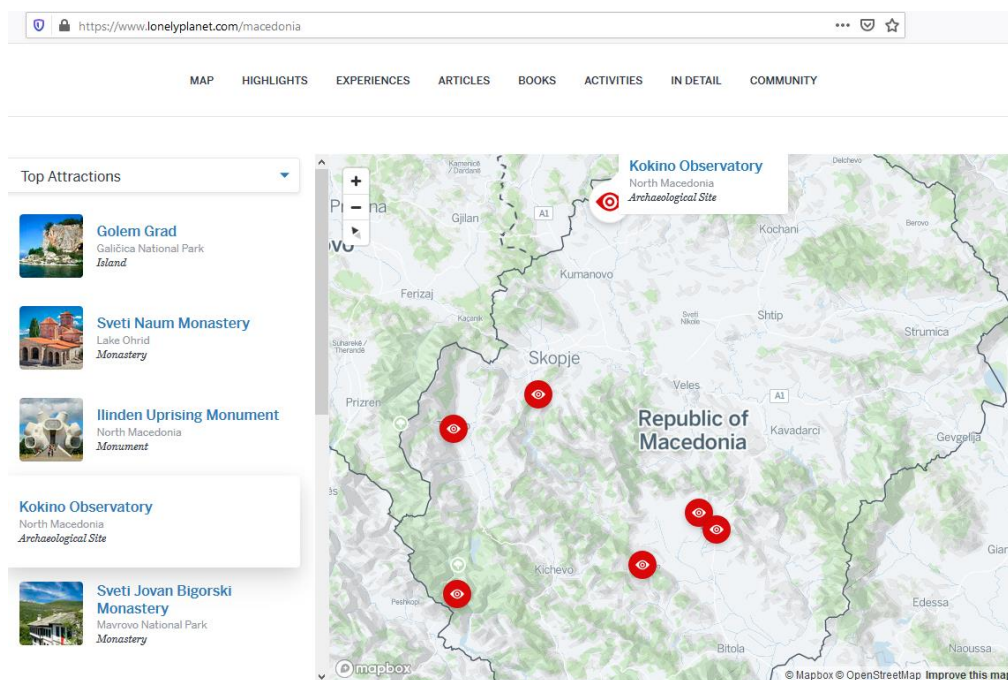




Potential competitors on the market in the context of marketing methods

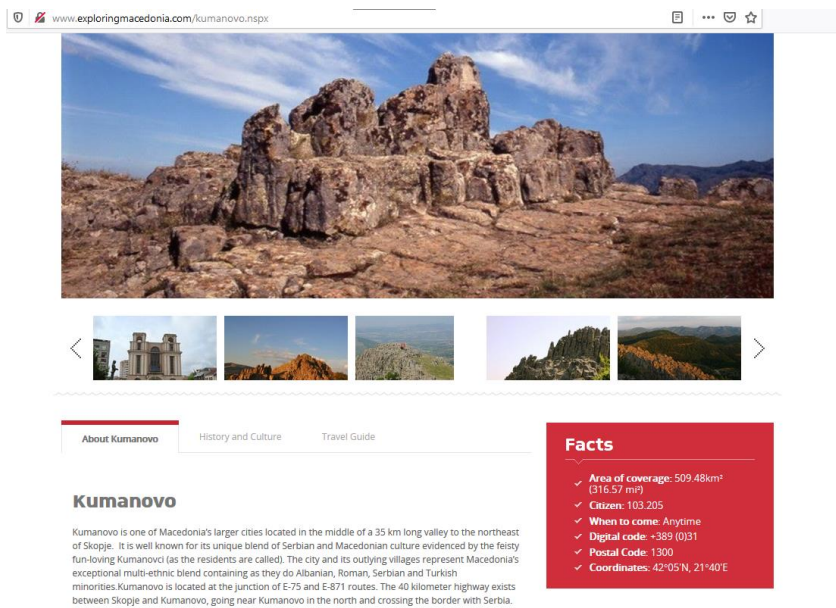
Currently the predominantly used marketing method from the Municipalities of Kumanovo and Dupnitsa and for the tourists and cultural sites in them is the use of web sites for informing potential tourists about the historic and natural resources, places to visit, places for accommodation, restaurants and the cultural calendar. In this aspect any other city and tourist destination with an attractive tourist information web site in the region or in close vicinity is a potential competitor of the tourism in Kumanovo and Dupnitsa.

For tourists who are visiting the countries of Bulgaria and North Macedonia one of the most important sources for making a decision about the places to visit is the information available online. There are some major tourist information web site popular worldwide for choosing the places to visit in a given country with descriptions and information from editors and from people who have already visited these places, these are mainly – <https://www.tripadvisor.com/> and <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/>. In Lonelyplanet for example the main cities which are advertised as Ohrid, Skopje and Bitola. Even on the map of top attractions none of the touristic sites of Kumanovo is enlisted. The information available in Tripadvisor also does not include Kumanovo at all, the destinations suggested there are Skopje, Ohrid, Struga, Bitola, Star Dojran, Mavrovo, Berovo and Tetovo. Kumanovo has to be





especially entered as a destination in order to find some information about it, which is not very rich and attractive. The same is valid for Dupnitsa, the information about Bulgaria in Tripadvisor suggests mostly the capital and the summer resorts by the Black Sea. Dupnitsa has to be specifically searched and the only information about it I related to “Rila” park. On Lonelyplanet the first highlight for Bulgaria is Rila Monastery which is very close to Dupnitsa but unfortunately there is no reference to the city as a place to visit while in the region.



The specially created tourism information web sites of the two countries are another place from which foreign tourist can gather information about the tourist destinations. In that aspect appearing in these web sites is very important for gaining competitive advantage. In the

<http://www.exploringmacedonia.com/> web site Kumanovo is enlisted as a city to go to but the information about it is very scarce and does not seem very attractive. The other cities which are main competitors of Kumanovo in this web site are Skopje, Ohrid, Struga, Bitola, Krusevo, Kavadarci, Strumitsa, Berovo, Prilep, Stip, Resev, Veles Gergelya and Kicevo. In the web site <http://visitmacedonia.com.mk/> there is a little bit more information about Kumanovo which includes 4 places to visit in the city. Here the same main cities appear as competitors as interesting cities to visit while in North Macedonia. Finally, the web site <https://macedonia-timeless.com/> contains more attractive information about the Northeast Region and Kumanovo in particular with photos and descriptions of the cultural and natural tourist sites. Nevertheless, when looking into the section about things to do in North Macedonia divide in different subjects and activities of interest or events calendar there is no information included about Kumanovo.



The web site <https://bulgariatravel.org/> is the main national tourism web site for Bulgaria. Unfortunately Dupnitsa is not indicated in the list of cities to visit. The closest city to Dupnitsa which is included in the web site is Sapareva Banya but there is again no reference to Dupnitsa as a close city to visit while in the region. Other major competitors which are on this web site are Chepelare, Devin, Belogradchik, Melnik, Kalofer, Kazanlank, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Tryavna, Veliko Tarnovo and Sofia. The web site <https://visitmybulgaria.com/> also does not include Dupnitsa as a tourism destination and puts focus on the Rose valley, Black sea, Danube region, Rhodope Mountains, the Thracian region and Sofia.

The information above shows that the municipalities of Kumanovo and Dupnitsa are facing a very competitive market at national level due to the main promotion of major popular cultural and historic sites in the two countries. The information about Kumanovo and Dupnitsa on the main tourist information web sites is either very scarce or is missing at all. In order to gain competitive advantage the municipalities should focus on finding tourism niche products which to diversify them from the most famous tourist destinations in the two countries and to be able to attract tourists who are looking for more different and modern activities and experiences. Additionally, Dupnitsa and Kumanovo can capitalize on the popularity of the most marketed tourism sites which are in their vicinity and make efforts to be included in the tourism offerings and tours while in the region – for example when visiting Skopje, the Rila monastery and the Rila lakes, or spa resorts.

Potential competitors on the market in terms of potential tourists' interest and recognizability

The presented current cultural and historic tourist sites related to the urban lifestyle from the 19th and 20th century of the Kumanovo and Dupnitsa can be summarized as churches, mosques, historic museums and art galleries. In this aspect the major competitors in terms of tourists' interest and recognizability are first and foremost the capital cities which are close to Kumanovo and Dupnitsa and offer rich cultural and historic sites related to this period. Sofia and Skopje are precisely marketing the churches, mosques and historic museums as their major tourism attractions. The cities are offering rich museum exhibitions and have the budgets to



develop active marketing campaigns. The capita cities have a very high competitive advantage which cannot be tackled but can be used thanks to the good road connections to Kumanovo and Dupnitsa and tourists visiting Sofia or Skopje or residents of the capital cities can be attracted to visits also Kumanovo and Dupnitsa as alternative tourism destinations.

If Kumanovo and Dupnitsa decide to use their churches and mosques as their main tourism attractions presenting the urban lifestyle from the 19th and the 20th century they can join the platform Religiana which as presented as an EU best practice and then as potential competitors could be indicated the monasteries and churches which are already presented in this platform. For North Macedonia these are:

- ▶ the St. John the Theologian Kaneo (the most famous church in North Macedonia), Ohrid;
- ▶ the church of St. Clement and Panteleimon, Ohrid;
- ▶ Ali Pasha Mosque, Ohrid;
- ▶ The Church of St. Sophia, Ohrid;
- ▶ Golem grad island churches, Lake Megali Prespa;
- ▶ Mustafa Pasha Mosque, Skopje;
- ▶ the Yeni Mosque or “New Mosque”, Bitola;
- ▶ the monastery of St. Andrew, Saraj;
- ▶ St. Naum Monastery;
- ▶ the monastery of St. Nicholas, Saraj.

For Bulgaria these are in total 33 objects out of which the closest to Dupnitsa are:

- ▶ Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Sofia;
- ▶ Saint Sofia Church, Sofia;
- ▶ the mosque Banya Bashi, Sofia;
- ▶ the Church of St Nicholas the Miracle-Maker, Sofia;
- ▶ the Cathedral of St. Louis, Plovdiv;
- ▶ the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God, Plovdiv;
- ▶ St Constantine and Helena church, Plovdiv;
- ▶ the Dormition of the Virgin Mary church, Pazardzhik;



- ▶ Dzhumaya Mosque, Plovdiv;
- ▶ the church "St. Ivan Rilski", also called the Miners' Church, Pernik.

In terms of museums, the most visited ones in North Macedonia per reviews in Tripadvisor are:

- ▶ Memorial house of Mother Teresa, Skopje;
- ▶ Bay of the Bones museum, Ohrid;
- ▶ Archeological museum of Macedonia, Skopje;
- ▶ National workshop for handmade paper, Ohrid;
- ▶ Holocaust memorial centre, Skopje;
- ▶ Museum of Macedonian struggle, Skopje;
- ▶ Bitola museum, Bitola;
- ▶ National Ohrid museum – Robevci house, Ohrid;
- ▶ Museum of illusions, Skopje.

By the same criteria potential competitors in Bulgaria are the following museums close to Dupnitsa:

- ▶ National institute of Archeology with museum, Sofia;
- ▶ National museums of military history, Sofia;
- ▶ National museum of history, Sofia;
- ▶ Muzeiko, Sofia;
- ▶ Museum of socialist art, Sofia;
- ▶ Sofia history museum;
- ▶ Ethnographic museum, Plovdiv;
- ▶ Regional archeological museum, Plovdiv;
- ▶ Open air ethnographic museum ETAR, Gabrovo;
- ▶ Regional natural history museum, Plovdiv;
- ▶ Plovdiv regional historical museum – Bulgarian national Revival exposition;
- ▶ Rila monastery museum;
- ▶ Underground mining museum, Pernik;
- ▶ Regional history museum, Kyustendil;



- ▶ Kordopulova house, Melnik;
- ▶ Rupite, Blagoevgra;
- ▶ Neofit Rilski museum, Bansko;
- ▶ Archeological museum, Sandanski.

Art galleries in North Macedonia, potential competitors for Kumanovo:

- ▶ Icon gallery, Ohrid;
- ▶ Acanthus gallery, Skopje;
- ▶ Woodcarving gallery, Ohrid;
- ▶ Nikola Martinoski gallery, Krusevo.

Art galleries in Bulgaria, potential competitors for Dupnitsa:

- ▶ National art gallery, Sofia;
- ▶ Sofia city art gallery;
- ▶ Alexander Nevsky crypt museum, Sofia;
- ▶ Art gallery Philippopolis, Plovdiv;
- ▶ Kyustendil Art Gallery "Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master".

Additionally, there are only few museums, galleries and exhibitions participating in Google Art and Culture, these are:

- ▶ National gallery of Bulgaria;
- ▶ Dagestan museum of fine arts, Ruse;
- ▶ Regional ethnographic museum, Plovdiv;
- ▶ Square 500, Sofia;
- ▶ Varna city art gallery;
- ▶ Regional museum of history, Plovdiv;
- ▶ St. Sophia Church, Ohrid.



Applicable modern marketing methods for popularization of the Old Urban Lifestyle heritage in the context of the specific characteristics of the region





The presented above EU best practices and modern marketing practices are all applicable to the specifics for Kumanovo and Dupnitsa for popularization of the Old Urban Lifestyle heritage.

The first and most easily applied methods are those related to enhancing the Internet presence of the two municipalities and their tourism sites. The web site of the municipalities can be redesigned, new and more attractive information with photos and videos can be included, clear directions to the tourist sites and links to their own web sites can also be included. The municipalities can cooperate with restaurants and hotels who can also present information about the places for tourism. The presentation of the municipalities in the national tourism web sites can also be enriched. The information in the international tourism web sites can also be edited especially by using references from visitors and stimulating the people to publish more information online about the places of interest in the municipalities. Finally, specific profiles in the social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and others) can also be created and maintained on a regular basis again cooperating with other more popular profiles and the so called public opinion makers, bloggers and others.

Another very popular at the moment marketing method in view of the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 is the use of Google Art and Culture. The exhibitions in the museums, houses, churches and galleries in Dupnitsa and Kumanovo can use this platform to popularize their Old Urban Lifestyle heritage and to create interest among tourists who would latter like to visits these places. Currently not many museums and galleries are using this platform, so appearing in it earlier than the potential competitors will bring advantage for Dupnitsa and Kumanovo.

The municipalities can also use the examples of the Van Gogh museum and Anne Frank museum in creating online experiences presenting the Old Urban Lifestyle through games for children, interactive walks, virtual reality and 3D exhibitions. In these can be included various aspects of the Old Urban Lifestyle among which:

- ▶ the iconography in the many churches in the municipalities many of which are not well preserved and difficult to reach;



- ▶ the changes in the architecture of the cities – how major squares and buildings looked in the 19th and 20th centuries and how they look now including information about their construction, history and meaning for the people in the past, providing a travel in time experience;
- ▶ the typical fashion for the region for 19th and 20th centuries again including photos, interactive videos and information;
- ▶ educational materials about the wars that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries and their effect on the urban lifestyle in the cities of Kumanovo and Dupnitsa;
- ▶ online courses for different crafts.

These modern and digital products and marketing methods can also provide access for many people with disabilities and also help Kumanovo and Dupnitsa to reach them as potential target groups.

As suggested above the municipalities can also make efforts to join the Religiana platform for religious heritage sites under the FRH Europe network or other platforms which organize pilgrimage routs, tours and experiences again by focusing on the rich cultural heritage which the municipalities have from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The galleries in the two municipalities can also use new digital means to present their exhibitions, including inviting modern guest exhibitions, 3D and interactive exhibitions, provide more space for modern artists to present their work, organize courses and classes for practicing different forms of art with teachers/instructors and also publish them online for attracting more visitors. As some of the best practices show, the initial part of the courses online can be provided for free and further classes and materials can be provided as paid contents.

The cities can also be using forms of modern marketing related to attracting the attention of tourists through untraditional means which also require their participation. These can be different types of competitions – photo competitions, written materials competition, competitions for visits and social media shares of informations, hiking or bike competitions and many others. Different forms of explorative games online or through applications can also be used for popularizing the historic and cultural heritage in Kumanovo and Dupnitsa.



The use of different niche events is another aspect of the possible applicable modern marketing methods for popularizing the urban lifestyle. These again can have very different forms including workshops and fairs for presenting the local crafts, music festivals with specific music which was typical for the 19th and 20th centuries, fairs entirely representing the urban lifestyle in the 19th and 20th centuries with the specific for the period clothes, technologies, games, with the use of actors and others.

The creation of a specific brand related to the urban lifestyle in the 19th and 20th centuries is also very important in order to make the two cities an easily recognizable destination. This could be done by creating not only logo and slogan of the brand, but also including restaurant, cafes, hotels, guest houses, museums, exhibitions and other products which provide a specific experience which makes tourists travel back in time and feel like they are in the 19th and/or 20th centuries. This can also be combined with the provision of eco-friendly or green tourism, products and services, which the use of eco products from eco farms and others.

The experience of the two municipalities in creating and participating in joint tourism products can also be used in order to create a more comprehensive offering for tourist. The cities can benefit from their easy road connection to the capitals and can attract tourists from there for 1 day or a weekend trip. They can also work together with other famous and visited destination or resorts and to organize common products. Or they can even capitalize on their common historical past and organize joint tours to the two cities, a joint brand and other products related to the popularization of the urban lifestyle in the 19th and 20th centuries

The lack of specific tourism information centers and adequate signs and information materials especially for foreign tourists can be tackled either by the use of online applications or by taking as example the Helsinki practice and using locals to help tourists or to organize free tourist trips across the cities.

Finally, again meeting the current requirements for protection against Covid-19 special labels for tourist sites, museums, galleries, restaurant and hotels applying all measures for health and safety as is the example of Lille can be used to attract tourists.

All presented modern marketing methods and EU best practices should be considered in detail and combined in a marketing strategy and plan in order to create the most applicable



and comprehensive combination of marketing methods which to be applied in the municipalities of Kumanovo and Dupnitsa.