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Project

**Improvement of intangible
cultural heritage in cross
border region**

Ref. No. CB007.1.11.118

CCI Number 2014TC16I5CB007-2015-1, PD-02-29-266, 22.11.2016

**COMMON
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PROMOTION
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Nis, January 2018.



The project is co-funded by EU through the Interreg-IPA
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Foreword

The City Municipality Mediana, City of Niš, and the Municipal Drama Theatre Dragomir Asenov - Montana jointly carry out the project "Improvement of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Cross-border Region" under the official number CB007.1.11.118, within the framework of Interreg-IPA Cross Border Cooperation Bulgaria-Serbia Programme, CCI Number 2014TC1615CB007-2015-1.

The project activities are primarily oriented towards the development of the partners' technical capacities, promotion of cultural heritage, and improvement of their tourism offer, i.e. attraction of both domestic and foreign tourists. A special emphasis is placed on the promotion that should use modern channels of communication with potential tourists, based on intensive use of the available Internet technologies. Taking into consideration insufficient use of tourism potentials, the Project Team envisaged the development of a specific tourism promotion strategy presented in this document.

The joint tourism promotion strategy was prepared in two phases. In the first phase, each partner prepared a study of tourism potentials of their own region, putting forward the most significant segments to be upheld, and proposing the directions for development, backed up with the examples of good practice that might serve as guidelines in preparing the action plan. The second phase included an analysis of the similarities and local specificities of each partner's tourism offer, as well as a review of their potentials for joint ventures, and recommendations for a joint tourism promotion strategy. This involved the estimates of both domestic and potential foreign tourists from the region and from all over the world.

The final document emphasises the types of tourism potentials of each partner, followed by the recommendations for their further development and promotion. A special emphasis is placed on the significance of the partners' joint undertakings aimed at creating recognisable tourism products and each partner's tourism brands as a basis for attaining recognisability of the region as an attractive tourism destination. The examples of good practice which have improved, each in its own specific manner, the tourism offer of a specific location, are presented as an inspiration for further innovations at the local level.

Instead of a conclusion, the study offers recommendations for the improvement of the partners' joint tourism offer, linking of all tourism chain participants, improvement of the tourism infrastructure, specialisation of secondary service suppliers, usage of contemporary media and communication channels, etc. In the end, a summary review of the activities to be undertaken is given. Thus, this document has fulfilled its original purpose to be of assistance to all the participants in the joint tourism offers of the region in analysing and planning their activities.

Introduction

„**A Joint Tourism Promotion Strategy**” has been developed in accordance with the project demands defined by the tender documentation CB007.1.11.118-LP-TD6. The key objective of the Strategy is to review the situation in the field and to highlight the perspectives of improving joint tourism promotion of the City of Niš and the City Municipality Mediana (Serbia), of the one part, and the region and municipality of Montana (Bulgaria), of the other part, as tourism destinations on both national and international tourism market. Tourism is a field with significant potentials for growth and development as well as for successful cross-border cooperation, and consequently, for more successful competitive positioning of those destinations at the national level and at the level of specific destinations and partial tourism products. A clearly defined joint promotion strategy is a prerequisite for a more efficient use of resources and abilities of various subjects and levels of management (state, region, city, municipality, product). A proper market orientation is a prerequisite for success of all the subjects and levels of tourism offer.

The analysis of the situation in tourism of the destinations encompassed by this Project makes it possible to identify the basic problems and chances for further development. One of the essential problems is that, despite the fact that tourism is recognised as an unused chance on both sides of the border, the holders of the tourism offer at different levels have not yet developed successful strategies, particularly regarding promotion, for more efficient exploitation of tourism potentials. The basic problem of the analysed municipalities regarding tourism lies in the fact that the central issue that could appropriately serve as the cornerstone of a market campaign and communication with the market has not yet been identified.

A proactive reaction implies development of an appropriate marketing programme (product, price, marketing channels, marketing communication). Starting from the defined research objectives of this project, the emphasis is on the development of a strategy of communication, i.e. promotion¹, regarding the tourism of the City of Niš and Mediana and Montana municipalities in particular, as a basis for the creation of a brand and image in the tourists' consciousness that would make them see the mentioned places as a desirable tourism destination because they offer specific tourism products compliant with the needs and demands of distinct segments of tourists.

The research results of the first phase of the Strategy implementation, applied simultaneously in Mediana and Montana municipalities, serve as a basis for the development of a joint strategy for the promotion of the selected destinations. Development of an appropriate strategy of integrated marketing communication is suggested involving: integration of communication forms and means with other marketing instruments (tourism product, price, marketing channels), as well as with various tourism offer holders. The recommendations given at the end of the Strategy

¹ In the contemporary literature in the field of marketing, particularly in the era of digital economy, the term *marketing communication* is more and more frequently used instead of the term *promotion*. Taking into account the terminology used in setting the task and the very title of the project, we shall use the sintagm *promotion strategy* as a synonym for *marketing communication strategy*.

are based on the implementation of joint goals and tasks with the key subjects that should be incorporated in its implementation.

Tourism promotion strategy, as a defined activity within the cross-border cooperation of Mediana and Montana municipalities, has been developed on the basis of the analysis and conclusions presented in two separate sub-projects, namely:

- "Development of Tourism Promotion Strategy in Serbia" with special reference to the City municipality of Mediana, City of Niš, Serbia and
- "Podobryvane na nematerialното kulturno nasledstvo v transgraničnija region"; with special reference to Montana municipality and district, Bulgaria.

Starting from the relevant theoretical and practical observations from the aspect of tourism marketing, it can be concluded that the relevant tourism products at issue can attract a large number of visitors to the cross-border region which can increase the demand on the tourism market of those municipalities.

Within the framework of communication strategy development, it is necessary to define the common values that can serve as a basis for the development of a partner relationship in the field of tourism between two attractive destinations like Mediana and Montana municipalities, both typical for insufficiently exploited tourism potentials. The analysis has revealed that the two municipalities have a number of similarities, as well as their own peculiarities regarding tourism potentials that have not been sufficiently exploited yet due to, inter alia, inadequate promotion of their offer of tourist attractions within partial and/or integrated tourism products. Insufficiently exploited potentials have been detected in the following fields in particular: cultural tourism, ecotourism, ethno-tourism, rural tourism, business tourism (MICE - Meetings, Incentives, Congress and Events), health tourism, spa and wellness, manifestation tourism, city breaks, thematic tours, special interests.

The objective of this Strategy is to define a set of recommendations for the development of a joint promotion strategy of cross-border tourism in the municipalities of Mediana (City of Niš, Serbia) and Montana (Bulgaria) by implementing integrated marketing communication which will serve as a substantial basis for the economic and social advancement of both municipalities, as well as of Serbia and Bulgaria in general.

In order to retain loyal visitors, attract new ones and create added value for the existing tourist attractions, the programme promotes *cooperation* instead of *competition*, acting in concert, and building of an integrated tourism offer of cross-border municipalities. The objective of the strategy is to create a reliable foundation for interconnecting the mentioned municipalities and their affirmation as tourism destinations with a manifold offer and diversified tourism products that will bring about a higher number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, as well as tourists' longer stays in those destinations.

A joint tourism promotion strategy of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana is conceived as a startup document with elements of operative approach, which is to identify the ways and means of promotion of tourism as an essential factor of economic and social development. One of the basic objectives of a joint promotion is to increase competitiveness of their tourism offer, which consequently contributes to tourists' increased loyalty and satisfaction, as well as to improved

quality of life of the local population. One of the goals is, also, better valorisation of the cultural-historical heritage, as well as preservation and enhancement of the living environment.

Under the present-day conditions of business conduct, the focus shifts from the single subject of a tourism offer to the tourism destination, i.e. to the creation of an integral destination product managed by the destination management involved in developing various partner relationships with miscellaneous stakeholders. This requires continuous enhancement of the existing and development of new marketing models, new organisation patterns, equipping systems as well as provision of integral quality of tourism offer. A joint promotion strategy should boost the development of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana as complementary destinations recognisable on account of all relevant elements, with a recognisable image that will provide conditions for their more efficient development. The ultimate objective is to provide for the development of the mentioned destinations in line with all the relevant globalisation requirements and trends. Also, they should be made recognisable on account of the peculiarities of their offer. The tourism products constituting their offer should be shaped starting from general and specific trends functioning as dominant on the global tourism market. That will contribute to a more efficient use of the resources and potentials of Mediana and Montana municipalities.

Mediana as a Tourism Destination

Identification of Key Potentials for the Development of Tourism

Development of a joint tourism promotion strategy required identification of the key potentials for the development of complementary tourism products of Mediana and Montana municipalities as tourism destinations. In this context, the key potentials for the development of tourism products and their joint promotion were identified relying on the tourism development strategies at the national and local levels regarding the mentioned destinations.

The City of Niš, just like the Mediana municipality, does not have a recognizable and unique identity as a tourism destination; hence, it is necessary to change tourists' perception of it. The basis for such a change of perception lies in the marketing activities targeting tourism destination branding that should involve not only the creation of visual brand identity, but also harmonisation of the identity of Mediana and Niš with the identity of Serbia. Development of tourism in the city of Niš and improvement of its competitiveness as a tourism destination stands in direct correlation with the number of tourists and the accomplished turnout of tourists.

Tourism Potentials of Mediana and Niš as Tourism Destinations on Domestic and Foreign Markets

Identification of the essentials for the positioning of the City of Niš starts from the potentials that have already served as the foundation for competitive differentiation of the South-East Serbia cluster where the city belongs. In the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, Niš and Niška Banja are identified as a unique tourism destination and its positioning is based on the following characteristics: cultural heritage, natural recourses and Niška Banja². Starting from the city's advantages and matter-of-fact potentials, it is necessary to ensure positioning of Niš as:

- a regional, economic and university centre;
- a meeting place of business people from the country and abroad;
- a centre with numerous events and manifestations for different target groups;
- a locality with mineral springs that, combined with the advantages in the traffic infrastructure, offers great potentials for the development of health tourism;
- a place with a considerable number of transit tourists;
- an area with rich cultural and spiritual heritage;
- a place of bohemians, entertainment, specific music and food;
- hospitable people who readily accept the guests from all over the world, warm-hearted and tolerant, as they are;

² Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2016. – 2025, p. 55.

- an interesting, safe and authentic place (as particularly important attributes for positioning on foreign markets);
- a place which is between modernity and tradition.

In this light, the identity of the city of Niš can be defined as a product, symbol and personality.

The city of Niš as a “product” stands for a city of gathering and zest, a movie and music venue, a place that can be enjoyed with all senses. The city of Niš as a “symbol” is unique on account of its jazz festival “Nisville”, its Fortress, Skull Tower, the festival of actors' achievements “Filmski susreti”, “Zona Zamfirova”, etc. The city of Niš as a “personality” is recognisable on account of the following traits: outgoing, different, imaginative, musical, full of life and the like.

Tourism Products of Mediana and Niš as Tourism Destinations

The analysis of the integral tourism offer of the city of Niš leads to the conclusion that, aside from some significant results regarding the scope of the tangible foundations of tourism, particularly in terms of tourist accommodation and provision of medical services, the situation is not yet satisfactory. The problems are connected with the inadequate structure and quality of accommodation facilities and catering services, insufficiently adjusted structure of sports and recreational facilities, structure of demand and possibilities for more efficient use of natural factors, insufficient entertaining contents, etc. For this reason, the marketing plan will pay particular attention to the need for revitalisation of the existing tourism offer and its adjustment to the specific demands of the market. The emphasis is on improving the quality contents of the tourism product, as well as on establishing modern management and marketing, as the most efficient way to overcome numerous developmental limitations.

Product differentiation is based on the research and identification of tourists' unique needs with regard to a specific tourism destination as a distinct geographical and social-cultural region. Being that tourists expect to be offered a complex product that includes local food and cultural attractions, certain investments should be made to boost the development of certain tourism products and to strengthen some areas as attractive tourism zones. In such a way, partial tourism products will gain in quality, become more demanded, contribute to the development of a unique image of the destination, make it more attractive for tourists, increase tourists' consumption and stimulate tourists to revisit it. In order to make use all the mentioned advantages, tourism of the city of Niš should be approached in a well planned manner and all partial products should be integrated into a tourism product of the destination.

A starting point in the development of the plan of Niš tourism products is geographical segmentation of the market serving as a basis for the identification of target market segments that specific products will target. In defining the key tourism products of Mediana and Niš, the initial documents were the portfolio of the products of Serbia as a tourism destination, the portfolio of the products of Mediana,

Niš and Niška Banja, as well as the peculiarities of the city tourism resources³. Namely, the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia sees Niš and Niška Banja as a tourism destination with potentials for the following tourism products: health tourism, spa & wellness, cultural thematic routes, manifestations, rural tourism and special interests. Hence, there is a prevailing opinion that the key products of Mediana and Niš as tourism destinations are:

1. Business tourism (MICE -Meetings, Incentives, Congresses and Events)
2. Health tourism, spa and wellness;
3. Manifestation tourism (events);
4. Cultural tourism;
5. City Break;
6. Thematic tours;
7. Special interests.

Business Tourism (MICE)

The starting point for the considerations regarding the role and significance of business tourism as a product of the tourism destination Mediana was the vision of the tourism of the city of Niš and the key bases for its positioning as a tourism destination. Under contemporary conditions, business tourism is the fastest growing and the most profitable tourism segment that the city of Niš could use. This type of tourism is particularly significant for the increase of prosperity of any local community, investments in infrastructure and quality of tourism offer. Thanks to its geographical position and the existing traffic infrastructure, Niš has potentials to develop its tourism offer and to be successfully positioned on the business tourism market and MICE. In order to achieve successful positioning on the international MICE market, the city should, aside from its geographical position, also use the following advantages: vicinity of foreign markets, existence of the city airport, as well as considerable educational and scientific potentials. We are of the opinion that the key differential advantage of Niš, as it compares to other Serbian towns (with the exception of Belgrade), is the fact that it has the airport "Konstantin the Great", which fact has not yet been sufficiently used in the positioning of Niš on the international market. Establishing links with low cost airlines should be the key incentive for winning foreign business tourists. However, this opportunity has not yet been used, although other destinations in the Republic of Serbia, have managed to do it⁴.

³ A comparative review of the key tourism products of the Republic of Serbia, the products of the South-East Serbia and Niš clusters are specified on pp 66-67 of the mentioned document. p. 47

⁴ According to the latest data published by the ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association), this is the sixth successive year that Serbia ranks among the first 50 destinations in the world. On the 2016 rank list, Serbia was ranked as 48th in the world, i.e. as 25th in Europe, with a total of 66 meetings of international associations. This success is particularly significant in the light of the fact that in 2007, when the Serbian Congress Bureau was set up, Serbia hosted only 11 international congresses. Belgrade, as the capital city, is ranked as 51st with the total of 50 meetings, at the same level as the cities like Dubai, Glasgow, Rotterdam, Glasgow, and Boston. Novi Sad, the second largest city and congress destination in Serbia, shared the 279 place

Target business tourism markets include: the countries of the region, EU countries, East European countries and domestic market. Potentially active market segments are: organized business guests (corporate business guests); individual business guests; representatives of professional organizations and associations; representatives of foreign countries; representatives of governmental organizations.

Specialized fair capacities of the city of Niš are limited and rely on the Čair sports hall and Niš Fairground. The sports hall covers 11,000 square meters and has 700 square meters of business premises. It underwent reconstruction in 2011. It has universal character, so that, aside from extreme sporting purposes, it can be used for fairs, exhibitions, concerts, film projections, theatre performances and various other cultural and entertainment programmes. The Hall's capacity for sporting events is 4,000⁵ (Radivoj Korać Cup, Davis Cup and the like), i.e. 6,500 for other kinds of programmes⁶. The most significant fairs traditionally held in the Čair sports hall are: the International Fair of Tourism and Outdoor Holiday "Tourism, Adventure & Nature", Hunting and Fishing Fair, Book Fair, Car Show.

The Niš Fairground in the city district of Duvanište occupies 2,306 square metres and has 98 exhibition cabins and 4 rooms, as well as a big parking lot in front of it⁷. This fairground hosts numerous exhibitions and fairs throughout the year, such as: the Economy and Crafts Fair, Pottery Fair, healthy food fairs. The mentioned fairs are particularly interesting for cross-border cooperation of entrepreneurs.

Congress tourism is also a type of business tourism which is a chance for Niš as an economic, university and cultural centre. Thanks to its geographical position and the existing traffic infrastructure, the city has a chance to develop its tourism offer and to position itself on the congress tourism market. The congress capacities of Niš are primarily determined by the capacities of the hotels located in the city.

The assessment is that successful placement of business tourism requires investments in the appropriate infrastructure and adjustments of hotel accommodation in the city. High competition on this market and the growing number of domestic and regional destinations have set high standards regarding this tourism product. All this set a very challenging assignment in front of the management of the city of Niš. It is vital that the city management gets involved in the projects of the Serbian Congress Bureau in charge of the management of congress and fair activities, active approach to the MICE market and promotion of this product. Being that business trips are often combined with entertainment, it is necessary to promote specific integrated product packages aimed at extending the duration of business trips and attracting tourists to use other tourism products.

Health Tourism, SPA and Wellness

in the world, i.e. 148th in Europe, together with several other destinations that hosted 9 meetings in 2016.

⁵ <http://sccair.rs/sajmovi>

⁶ According to the data of the World Tourism Organisation, the so-called non-tourist mobility including congress tourism constitute approximately 30% of international tourist mobility. According to the data of the World Tourism Council, total consumption on business trips is growing. Above average growth is pronouncedly present in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Hungary.

⁷ www.trznica.rs

Geothermal waters are the basic resource on which health tourism of Niš and Niška Banja is founded. Niš has a long tradition and experience of selling this tourism product, and it can be the product of the future on both domestic and international markets. Penetration into this market is connected with the promotional campaign of the Serbian spas envisaged by the Serbian Tourism Strategy. Such promotion should raise tourists' consciousness about spas as a product and ensure differentiated positioning of Niška Banja. Differentiation of Niš health tourism should be based on the specificities and healing properties of the waters of Niška Banja, as well as of Topilo Spa. Price should be an important basis for market positioning, being that Serbia is pricewise competitive on the European market regarding health treatments. Activation of secondary motives for going to a health resort (vacation, relaxation, recreation) is preconditioned by the development of recreational and revitalisation programmes. Marketing activities should not be solely directed towards the persons with health problems, but should also target healthy persons who want a vacation or spa and wellness treatments (Pictures 1 and 2).



Picture 1: Niška Banja

The hotels in the city also promote their own spa and relax centres, such as Tami Residence, Restaurant, Hotel and Vilin Spa (with a Finnish sauna, salt room, massage, etc.), Zen Hotel, etc (Picture 3).



Picture 3: Spa and relax centre (Tami Residence Hotel)

Dental tourism⁸ is considerably developed in Niš, as well as in other towns in the Republic of Serbia, primarily due to convenient prices, but also on account of the quality of the services provided by Niš dentists. The Ministry of Health promoted this type of tourism, announcing a call aimed at selecting privately owned dental and plastic surgery offices to be involved in health tourism and, as such, promoted by the Ministry of Health⁹. The dentists of Niš already provide such services to both domestic and foreign tourists, using this as an opportunity to recommend Niš as a tourism destination, i.e. as a destination where people can also have their vacation and entertain themselves. So, for example, one dental office from Niš has recently signed an agreement with Konstantin Veliki Airport and TON (Tourism Organisation of Niš) on promotion of dental tourism in many European countries¹⁰. The agreement implies organized visits of the tourists from various countries of Western Europe who show interest to the dental office. Numerous dental offices in Niš promote various dental tourism packages on their websites and social networks (Picture 4), providing detailed information on Niš and its tourist attractions (e.g. Lege Artis Dental Office¹¹, Premović Stomatology, “Moja Zubarka”¹², Dr. Nadica Vučić Dental Office, and various others¹³).

⁸ A type of tourism involving trips to different countries in order to get dental services at more convenient prices

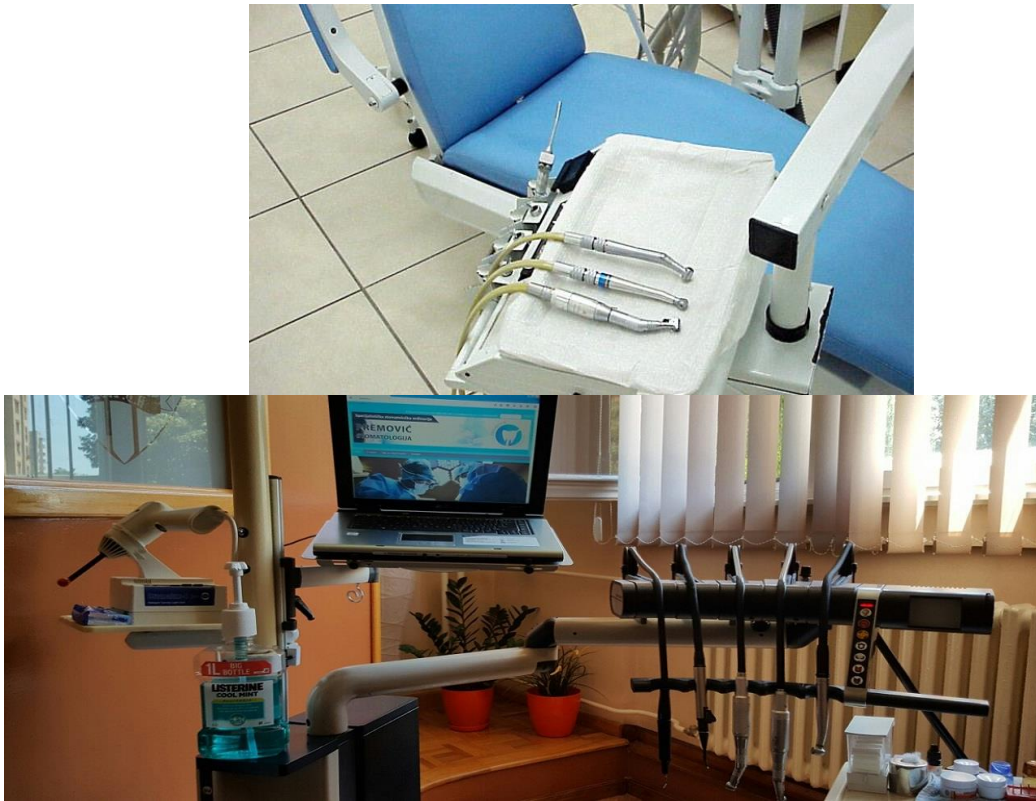
⁹<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/konkurs-za-ordinacije-koje-ce-se-baviti-zdravstvenim-turizmom/wzvf1hl>

¹⁰<http://edukaplus.com/vesti/nis-razvija-dentalni-turizam-stomatoloska-klinika-dogovorila-saradnju-sa-aerodromom-konstantin-veliki/>; *The Dental Clinic meets all the requirements for dental tourism. Source: <http://www.bizlife.rs/biznis/poslovne-vesti/72641-nis-se-sprema-za-zdravstveni-turizam>*

¹¹ <http://www.ordinacijalegeartis.com/dentalni-turizam/>

¹² <https://www.mojazubarka.co.rs/dentalni-turizam>

¹³ <http://na-dent.co.rs/dentalni-turizam/>



Picture 4: Attractive dental offices

Source: <http://www.bizlife.rs/biznis/poslovne-vesti/72641-nis-se-sprema-za-zdravstveni-turizam/>

Manifestations (events)

Niš is a host of a number of cultural, entertainment, music, and sporting events throughout the year. Some of them are internationally significant not only on account of the number of visitors, but also in the light of their image that makes them stand out from the competition (Nisville in the recent years). They provide opportunities to manage the demand during the year (increased demand in low level periods). The best-known manifestations are: Nisville, Nimus, Nisomnia, Choral Festival, Sts. Emperor Constantine and Empress Jelena Days, the festival of actors' achievements "Filmski susreti", Burek¹⁴ days, Nauk nije bauk (Learning is not a boggart).

A considerable number of festivals held in Niš are a part of the specific activities of the Student Cultural Centre and have been conceived in a different, more innovative manner with the aim to give the audience a chance to meet and communicate with various relevant artists. Such festivals are complemented with appropriate thematic programs. Each festival is a product of authentic ideas and,

¹⁴ A family of baked filled pastries made of a thin flaky dough of Anatolian origins and also found in the cuisines of the Balkans, Levant, Mediterranean, and other countries in Eastern Europe and Western Asia

for the most part, long-term activities in the given field. This refers to the following festivals: Trash-fest – a festival of underground literature, the International Student Folklore Festival, Urbanfest – the International Student Theatre Festival (Picture 5).



Picture 5: International Student Folklore Festival

One of the manifestations that has stood out on account of the number of visitors and its image is *Nisville*. *Nisville* has become the leading and best attended jazz festival of South-East Europe with the total attendance approximating 100,000 people for 4 days of the Festival. Aside from the traditional jazz forms, the concept of *Nisville* has from the very beginning been based on its fusion with ethno traditions of various parts of the world, particularly the ones from the Balkan. The most famous jazz magazine in the world, the American "Downbeat" came up with a sizable review of *Nisville*, assessing it as a festival that simultaneously and in the best possible way promotes jazz as a movement originating on the American continent and the music tradition of the Balkans as well as the fusion of these two styles, thus contributing to the presentation of the Balkan music as a new worldwide music phenomenon¹⁵. The performers who have appeared on the festival so far include: Billy Cobham, Roy Hargrove, Tom Harrell, Benny Golson, Solomon Burke, Stanley Jordan, Candy Dulfer, Miroslav Vitous, dr. Donald Byrd, Mingus Dynasty, Grace Kelly, Joe "Defunkt" Bowie, Incognito, The Brand New Heavies, Teodosi Spasov, Yildiz Ibrahimova, Dusko Gojković, Jamie Davis, Šaban Bajramović, Esmā Redžepova (Picture 6).

¹⁵ <http://www.visitnis.com/nisville---medjunarodni-dzez-festival-.html>



Picture 6: Nisville Jazz Festival

Nimus, Niš music festival with a 37-year-long tradition, organized in late October or early November, brings together symphony and chamber orchestras, as well as instrumental soloists and opera singers from the country and abroad.

Nisomnia is a music festival that offers special entertainment within the walls of the Fortress, with various music trends from electronic DJ music to rock sounds of domestic and foreign stars (Picture 7).



Picture 7: Nisomnia

“Filmski susreti” – a festival of Serbian actors' achievements, established in 1966, is held each August, and the occasion is traditionally marked by a symbolic handing over the city keys to the actors. As the best attended festival of this kind in Serbia held in an open-door cinema located in the amphitheatre of the Niš Fortress (Picture 8), this festival has attracted a lot of attention throughout its history, and the story about the visit of the famous actors couple - Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor is still alive.



Picture 8: Filmski susreti

Sts. Emperor Constantine and Empress Jelena Days are regularly held in June and last several days. The event is marked by various sporting, scientific and cultural events that celebrate one of the most outstanding Niš-born persons, the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great and his mother Empress Jelena.

Burek Days (Picture 9) are held in late August or early September at the open space next to the Nišava river. The people of Niš and tourists enjoy a rich offer of this exquisite specialty, from classical filled with cheese to various combinations with ham and bacon fill, making it hard to anyone to resist the smell of burek coming from numerous Niš bakeries in that period.



Picture 9: Burek Days in Niš

The International Choral Festival with a 44-year-long tradition, is traditionally held biannually in July, continually gathering an increasing number of domestic and foreign choirs. In the recent years, the manifestation is complemented with the Festival of Orthodox Music under the auspices of the Patriarch of Moscow and all the Rus' and the Serbian Patriarch.

Nauk nije bauk (Learning is not a boggart) has become one of the biggest and most significant festivals of science in South-East Serbia. The objective of the Festival is to promote science among the young people of South Serbia, to raise young people's consciousness about the necessity of education and professional advancement. The grammar school "Svetozar Marković" is the main organiser of the event for the seventh time in a row. By promoting science among the young people of the local community and by mobilising all available resources in order to achieve this goal, the event aims to be a part of the national strategy of scientific and technological development. In that context, the aim is to boost the development of the highest social and academic values at the local and regional levels, as well as to create, maintain and ensure quality of the Serbian intellectual potentials, including their affirmation in the region and on the international scene in general (Picture 10).



Picture 10: „Nauk nije bauk“ manifestation

Successful positioning of a certain event as a tourism product on the tourism market of Niš requires professionalization of management and setting up of PR (Public Relation) events aiming at their promotion and commercialisation. Many events of national significance have potentials for more intensive penetration into the regional market. They open opportunities to offer additional contents and tourism products (thematic tours, special interests, e.g. rafting on the Nišava river, etc.).

Sport manifestations – Developing products such as special interests requires clearer positioning of sports-recreational tourism of the city. Development of this particular segment of tourism offer requires a clearer orientation of the city towards using its existing potentials, as well as construction of new sport facilities and contents.

Čair Recreational Centre, with a sports hall, city stadium, a complex of indoor and outdoor olympic pools, numerous tennis courts, club stadiums, etc., offers opportunities to organise domestic and international sports events. *Davis Cup*,

Radivoj Korać Cup, Paragliding World Cup in Niška Banja/Sićevo, Mountain Bike Race „*Trophy Constatine*“ in Niška Banja, international Adventure Obstacle Race „*The Maze*“ held in Jelašnica Gorge.

Cultural Tourism

Niš has significant potentials for the development of cultural tourism which is becoming a significant segment on the market of tourism offers. Cultural attractions are the elements of offer that often have a decisive effect on the choice of destination. They are a very important motive for taking a trip and are often used in promotions and creation of a destination's prestige on the market. Cultural contents are given an increasing importance in tourism offers, so that regional differences become increasingly significant.

Niš is typical for a great number of representative archaeological sites, objects with monumental and artistic qualities, spatial cultural and historical wholes, auspicious sites and monuments, churches and monasteries. In that sense, thanks to the turbulent history of the Nišava region, Niš has become, in full sense of that word, a city – museum.

Mediana is a representative archaeological site. It represents a luxurious suburb of the ancient Naisus originating from the late 3rd and early 4th century. In the period when Emperor Constantine ruled the Roman Empire (306-337), Mediana reached its architectural peak. Starting from the 4th century, Naisus started losing its attractiveness for its wealthy inhabitants who moved to Mediana, adapting the old and building new villas. The villas were luxuriously constructed and decorated with mosaics, while the yards were embellished with fountains and sculptures of deities. Mediana becomes a luxurious suburb with well developed economy and agriculture, as the remnants of villas, silos, craft centre, and water supply system clearly reveal. The water tower that supplied Mediana with water was extremely complex and advanced for that period (Picture 11).



Picture 11: Mediana

The most notable cultural attractions of Niš are: the Fortress, Skull Tower, Kazandžijsko sokače (Coppersmiths' Alley), Bujanj Memorial Park, Čegar Monument, in the surroundings of the city.

The Fortress of Niš, located on the banks of the Nišava river in the downtown area, is one of the most beautiful and best preserved edifices of Turkish architecture in the middle Balkans. The Fortress was repeatedly destroyed and reconstructed on several occasions, by the Romans, Byzantines, Slavs, Bulgarians and Serbs, and got its final shape in 1723 when the Turks rebuilt it by the end of their rule in this area. Forty stonemasons from Constantinople and some 400 masons from Niš and its surroundings were engaged in its rebuilding. The stone was brought from the nearby villages, and by the end of its construction, mainly due to the haste that marked the entire process in order to secure this significant strategic position, the masons used everything else that could be found on the site as additional construction material, including tombstones, columns and various other architectural remnants of the Roman and Byzantine fortifications (Picture 12).



Picture 12: The Fortress of Niš

The Skull Tower is a unique monument in the world built after the battle of Čegar. According to the accounts of the "Serbian hajji from Niš" it was recorded that the Turks were preparing to build a tower of skulls. When Hurshid Pasha of Niš realised that, although the position at Čegar hill was taken and some 3,000 Serbs killed, the losses of the Turks in the battle were at least two times higher than the Serbian losses due to the explosion of the powder house, he passed an order to have all the heads of the dead Serbian soldiers collected, excoriated, filled with cotton and sent to Constantinople (Picture 13)



Picture 13: The Skull Tower

Kazandžijsko sokače (Coppersmiths' Alley), located in Kopitareva Street, is the only preserved part of the old downtown area of Niš. According to the town-planning scheme of Niš from 1878 that area was called "Sagr Cincar mahala", and judging by the fact that the Turkish word "sagr" means "craftsman", that area was actually a crafts district. Coppersmithing was the most developed craft at that time, so there are indications that after the liberation from the Turks, there were as many as 13 coppersmiths working in this "coppersmiths' alley". The last coppersmith's shop was closed in the 1990's. Nowadays this old and well preserved ambient houses many good restaurants and coffee places (Picture 14).



Picture 14: Kazandžijsko sokače (Coppersmiths' Alley)

The churches and monasteries in the city itself and its surroundings are a part of the cultural heritage of Niš. The churches in the city are: the Holy Trinity Church – the City Cathedral, St. Panteleimon Church, the Church of Sts. Emperor Constantine and Empress Jelica. The churches in the surroundings include: Gabrovac Monastery, the Latin Church – Gornji Matejevac, the Monastery of St. Petka Iverica in Sićevo, etc. (Picture 15).

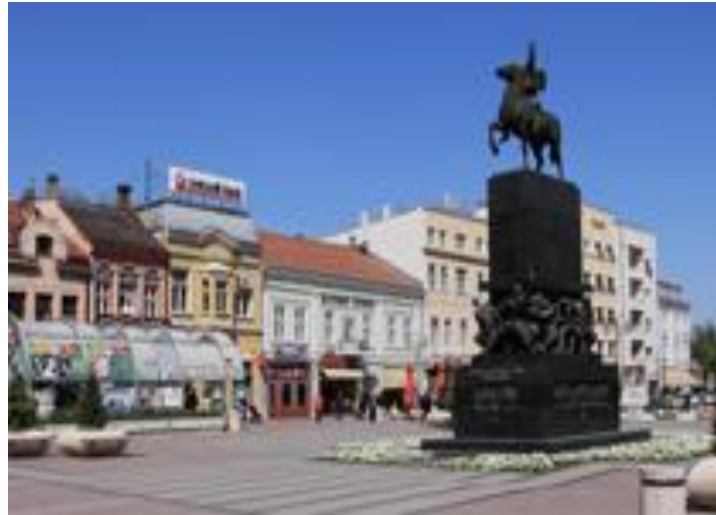




Picture 15: The Churches and Monasteries in Niš

There are also various cultural and historical monuments like: the Monument to the Liberators of Niš, the Memorial of St. Emperor Constantine, the Monument to Stevan Sremac and Kalča, the Monument to Šaban Bajramović, etc.

The Monument to the Liberators, located at the city core, at King Milan's Square, marks the period of liberation wars against the Turks, Bulgarians and Germans. The Monument bears record of four most significant years of the mentioned period: 1874 and 1877, as the years of fights for the liberation from the Turks, and 1915 and 1918, marking the beginning of the occupation and liberation of the city in the First World War. The Monument is made of black marble and rests on a wide stand with four reliefs with a bronze sculpture and a high pedestal with a contexture of figural compositions representing fighting warriors. The Monument is topped by a life-size sculpture of a horseman – a herald of freedom with the flag of liberty with four capital letters «SSSS» (Samo sloga Srbina spasava – Only unity saves the Serbs) (Picture 16).



Picture 16: The Monument to the Liberators of Niš, the Memorial of Emperor Constantine, the Monument to Stevan Sremac and Kalča

Great potentials for the further development of tourism rest on: the National Museum, Historical Archives, Contemporary Fine Arts Gallery, Niš Symphony Orchestra, National Library "Stevan Sremac". The Archaeological Room of the

National Museum offers numerous exhibits revealing in a picturesque way the story of the historical and civilisational development of Niš: from the several thousands of years old artefacts from the prehistoric period found on the archaeological sites on Bubanj Hill, Humska Čuka, Vrtište and Malča, to the exhibits from the period of Roman rule, such as the Roman coins (from the period I – V century), a military charter, statue, tombstones, remnants of the partition of the pagan temple from the Mediana site, and medieval jewellery, stone icons and crosses. The Museum also has exhibits of some singular sculptural artworks, including a copy of Emperor Constantine's portrait, the sculpture of enthroned Jupiter and a portrait of the Byzantium Empress Teodora/Euphemia. The Contemporary Fine Arts Gallery possesses rich artistic treasures exhibited in several galleries: „Serbia“, „Pavilion“ and „Salon 77“ in the Fortress (Picture 17).



Picture 17: The National Museum

City Breaks

The main prerequisites for boosting city breaks are: the position of Niš, availability of various traffic options, opportunities of connecting with low cost flights, medium hotels and hotels with higher categorisation, history, culture, gastronomy and entertainment, favourable value for money. Possibilities for the development of *transit tourism* have not been sufficiently used yet, as the transit offer is still meagre and low-quality (aside from the Nais motel, Sićevo and several other hospitality facilities). In this context, it is necessary to develop appropriate infrastructure – camps, resting places, parking lots/car parks, telephones and other pertaining elements (toilets, towing services). Also, it is necessary to intensify tourism signalization and billboards, including their linguistic adjustments, as well as construction of more tourist information centres, particularly at city entrances (pay tolls).

An offer with additional contents is supposed to keep tourists in the area and prolong their stay, but it requires opening of shopping malls, entertainment centres for kids, improved nightlife settings, etc. The efforts should be directed towards training professional and high quality tourist guides. It is important to keep track of the world trends and detect the consumers' wishes, to continuously invest into the offers of shopping centres in order to provide the people of Niš, as well as the people of the region, with opportunities to have a continuous access to modern and high quality clothes. Aside from the existing shopping centres (*Underground Gallery, Pobedina Street, "Kalča" Shopping Mall and Zona Shopping Centres*) Niš

gained in the last few years several new ones, such as: *Forum Shopping Centre* of 11,000 square metres, located in the main street, with 40 business premises and more than 80 clothing, shoe and technical brands, exchange office, kiosk, business space, big garage and a retail park for quick and practical shopping – *Stop Shop*. The mentioned shopping centres constitute the basis for the development of the so-called shopping tourism which is already established in Niš, particularly for the domestic tourists of South and South-East Serbia who come to Niš to shop, but who do not stay long (Picture 18).



Picture 18: Niš as a Shopping Centre

Thematic Routes

One of the key elements for the development of tourism of Niš could be the so-called thematic routes, also referred to as circle trips, because they give tourists opportunities to get familiar with the attractions of the targeted destination. Thematic routes are specially tailored itineraries (trip plans) based on a certain interesting topic¹⁶. They are designed so as to promote the specificities of a certain area, be it wineries, national cuisine, sacral objects, specific architecture, art movements, old crafts, outstanding persons or the like. The routes that follow the course of unusual lifestyles of local communities, their folklore, festivities, rites and cultural heritage in general¹⁷, become increasingly popular.

¹⁶ The first officially promoted route was St. James route taking tourists from various parts of Europe to Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain. The source is the church where his relics are kept, and the route includes visits of several locations connected, in one way or another, with this saint. Such pilgrimages were initiated more than 1,000 years ago by Christian pilgrims who used to travel on foot, on donkeys and horses for months. That is when a legend emerged that the Milky Way was actually made of the dust stirred by the scores of believers. Nowadays it is particularly popular to travel these paths by bikes, and the route got its trademark – a coat of arms with a shell motive.

¹⁷ <http://www.travelmagazine.rs/tematske-rute-spoj-putovanja-i-interesovanja/>

Thematic routes can last from several hours to several days and they can include visits to one or several countries, depending on the theme. They require building of visual identity, with convenient propaganda slogans and material. Each thematic route should have its visual identity, and should become a brand that would make the country or religion recognisable.

The geostrategic position of Niš offers exquisite opportunities for the development of thematic routes as a tourism product. Inclusion of appropriate tour programmes in Serbia (Serbian towns and the region, and connecting of the tours organized in the neighbouring countries can be used to position Niš in this segment of the tourism market. The vicinity of Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Romania open chances to organize this kind of tourism. Rich cultural heritage, characters from different artistic spheres (e.g. writers – *Stevan Sremac* and literary characters – *Zora Zamfirova*), give tourists a chance to get familiar with the local culture, cuisine, beverages (such as *slivovitz*, wine), local music (e.g. *Balkan music*) or with the lifestyle of ordinary people. The potentials of the so-called “old” Niš, provide opportunities for the development of this type of tourism (*Čair fountain*, *the building of the Mayor’s office*, *the building known as the Officers’ Club*, *the building of the University of Niš*, locally known as “*Banovina*”, *the so-called Stamboljski’s House*, *the house of merchant Andonović*) (Picture 19).



Picture 19: “Old Niš” buildings

Thematic tours as a tourism product provide a chance to engage the local population and to strengthen their motivation to get involved in tourism and foster tradition. Development of this tourism product requires adjustment of the existing and construction of new capacities and contents in order to get it integrated into other products of the city of Niš, e.g. city break, business tourism, special interests, gastronomy tourism.

The best-known thematic route organized by the Tourism Organization of Niš (TON) is the so-called *Wine Time Machine* in the *Wine Cellar in Malča* with a more than 110 year long tradition which provides its visitors with a pleasure of taking a “wine trip” through time. A sightseeing tour focuses on four completely different ways of wine cultivation, a journey through four “wine epochs” and a pleasure of tasting the wines typical for those periods. Degustation involves the pleasure of taking a “walking” lunch through four wine cellars, or a traditional or Roman meal in the restaurant called the Roman Houses (Picture 20).



Picture 20: Linking thematic routes with other products of one destination

Special Interests

Niš has some unused potentials for the commercialization of this product. Many forms of the special interests offer already exist (paragliding, rafting), but they are not integrated into the total tourism offer. Marketing efforts should be directed towards the development of a special interests package and its linking with other tourism products (business tourism, health tourism, city break), as well as with foreign professional organisations. Professionalization of the management of this product is

necessary at the level of the Tourism Organisation of Niš in order to provide appropriate conditions for a large-scale usage of the natural potentials in the city surroundings. In order to raise potential tourists' consciousness about this product it is necessary to provide information about it in various ways – through the Internet, catalogues, promotion packages, fairs.

Niš and its surroundings are typical for a number of vacationlands – Kamenički vis, Bojanine vode, lakes – Oblačina Lake, Krajkovac Lake, artificial lakes, gorges – Sićevo and Jelašnica Gorges), hot water springs – Niška Banja, wellsprings (Dušnik, Divljane wellsprings, etc.).

- *Kad klisura priča (When a Gorge Tells a Story)* – „A Small Adventure in Niš Surroundings” involves sightseeing of Jelašnica Gorge: Velika and Mala Crkvica and Gradac, Jelašnica Gorge, plus a hiking tour aimed at exploring the rocks, ravines, semi-caves, window-rocks and some of the most beautiful vantage points. This adventure ends with a rope descent down a rock using abseiling technique.
- *Nais Adventure* – „Tracing the Hidden Beauties of the South” – a three-day adventure that includes a thematic tour / visit of monasteries, Čegar Monument, as well as a hiking adventure Bojanine vode – Trem, paragliding over the Sićevo Gorge and degustation of traditional dishes in Jelašnica.
- *Porečje Canyon – Vučje* is a unique one-day adventure at the foot of Kukavica mountain in the nature of Porečje area; it includes rope descent down the waterfall, squeezing through the rocks and swimming in whirlpools. These potentials have not yet been sufficiently exploited for the development of outing tourism as a tourism product, because – among other reasons – these places have not been properly organised to be used for the mentioned purposes and due to the absence of transport infrastructure (Picture 21).



Picture 21: *When a Gorge Tells a Story* – „A Small Adventure in Niš Surroundings”

Niš has potentials for the development of both hunting and fishing tourism, as it was an important area where foreign hunters used to get together. Development of this tourism product requires more intense commitments of the city authorities regarding the maintenance of the existing game and breeding of some new kinds of game at specific locations, as well as developing of fish hatcheries as a basis for more intensive promotional activities in outband areas.

Montana as a Tourism Destination

Identification of Key Potentials for Tourism Development

Bulgaria, just as the region of Montana, has attractive destinations for the development of different tourism products. Based on a relevant strategic analysis of its tourism potentials, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the key tourism products constituting significant potentials for the development of the Municipality of Montana have been identified. The mentioned potentials are also significant for the development of joint tourism development strategies, and within that framework, a joint tourism promotion strategy within the cross-border cooperation with the Municipality of Mediana from Serbia. With no intention to underestimate the significance of other products, follows a review of the tourism products that have been recognised as having a significant profit potential within cross-border cooperation:

1. Cultural tourism
2. Ecotourism, and
3. Rural tourism.

Potentials for the Development of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is an integrated tourism product because it encompasses numerous partial tourism products: cultural monuments, historical background, natural resources, events and manifestations, etc.

The Municipality of Montana has a rich historical background; hence, there are more than 600 declared cultural monuments of national or local importance on its territory. The archaeological heritage of Montana has huge cultural and historical, as well as exhibition potentials.

The other municipalities of Montana region are typical for uneven "saturation" with cultural monuments in terms of their number and their characteristics. In some villages churches are the most significant cultural monuments.

Thanks to its rich history, the district of Montana can offer different cultural attractions of religious, historical or cultural profile. Among them, monasteries and churches have a significant place. With no intention to underestimate the significance of others, follows a review of several selected monasteries/churches:

- **Klisura Monastery** (also known as *Klisurski Monastery*), the fourth biggest monastery in Bulgaria, is located 9 km from the town of Berkovitsa. Many precious objects / old icons, books, accessories, etc. / are kept in the Monastery, but the most valuable ones are the saints' relics. Each year the Monastery, together with other Orthodox organisations, organises camps for the children from all over the country. The Monastery has the status of a monastic settlement (Picture 22).



Picture 22: Klisura Monastery

- **Lopushna Monastery** – The Monastery dates from 1850 and has the status of a national cultural monument. It is situated in the Balkan mountain range. The Monastery preserved one of the most beautiful icons in North Bulgaria. The Church of St. Nicholas in the village Dolna Verenitsa has been granted the status of a cultural monument of national significance on account of the icons from the 16th and 17th centuries (Picture 23).



Picture 23: Lopushna Monastery

- **Chiprovski monastery "Sv. Ivan Rilski"** The Monastery was founded at the time when Bulgaria adopted Christianity. It became the centre of Bulgarian education. Presently, the Chiprovski Monastery is a well-ordered complex with various contents attractive for visitors (Picture 24).



Picture 24: Chiprovski Monastery

- **The Monastery of the Holy Trinity** is situated in the village of Rasovo, some 30 km northwards from the Montana (Picture 25).



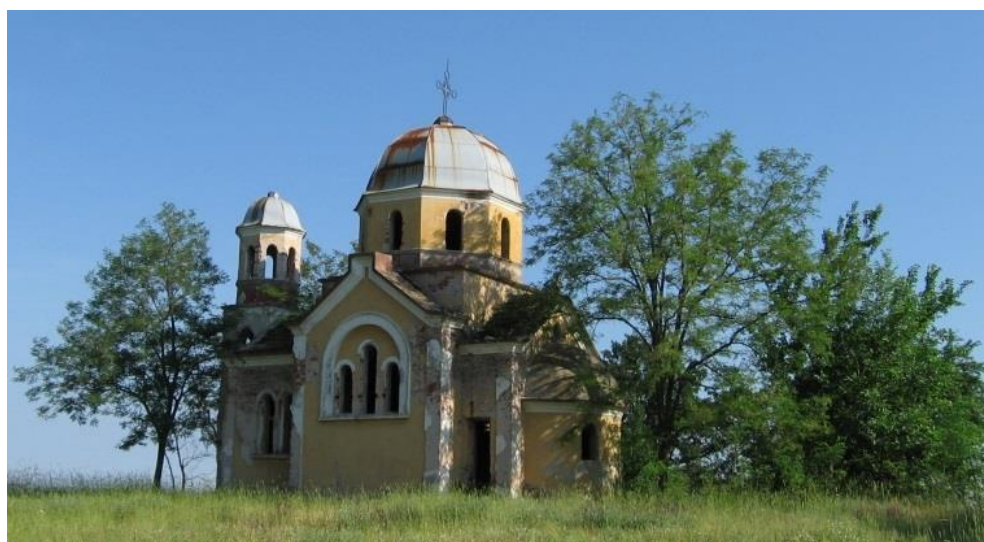
Picture 25: Holy Trinity Monastery

- **Dobri Dol Monastery of the Holy Trinity** is situated approximately 3 km southward from the village Dobri Dol, 22 km southwest from the town of Lom and 35 km southeast from Vidin. The Monastery is in a picturesque part of a deep dale, covered with thick and diversified vegetation and inhabited with rich fauna (Picture 26).



Picture 26: The Holy Trinity Monastery

- **"St. Archangel Michael" Monastery** is located on a hill near Brusartsi, on the right bank of the Nechinska Bara river (Picture 27);



Picture 27: St. Archangel Michael Monastery

Aside from the monasteries, Montana is an area rich in churches that are very attractive for tourists. Most of them have rich historical and cultural heritage which is still insufficiently used as a potential for the development of tourism (Picture 28).



Picture 28: St. Nicholas Church and Santa Maria Cathedral

The cultural heritage of the region of Montana is complemented with numerous historical museums in Montana, Lom, Chiprovtsi, as well as art museums and galleries, municipal museums, theatre, libraries, etc. (Picture 29).



Picture 29: Historical Museums in Lom and Chiprovtsi

Other significant institutions include the Ethnographic Museum in Berkovitsa – typical for this crafts region – pottery, copper, silk production, etc; the Museum “Mihailo’s House” which is actually an ethnographic exhibition “In the Grandma’s and Grandpa’s World”, and shows both urban and rural life of the late 19th and early 20th century (Picture 30).



Picture 30: The Ethnographic Museum in Berkovitsa

Particular significance for the development of religious tourism lies in the stone crosses in the town of Chiprovtsi. A singular part of the rituals are oaths, as an important part of the tradition which has been preserved. The oath motives are different and dependable on the needs and beliefs of the actual visitors.

Further potentials for the development of tourism lie in the Roman Bath and the medieval fortress “Kaleto” in Montana. The Fortress is situated in the southern part of the town, on the hill. It is an archaeological cultural monument of national significance (Picture 31).



Picture 31: The Medieval Fortress

Significant potentials for the development of this branch of tourism in the Municipality of Montana lie in the archaeological cultural monuments of national significance: the ancient pagan sanctuary and the early Christian basilica.

Aside from the mentioned values, the analysis has also identified some other elements of cultural and historical heritage, such as numerous old buildings in the town of Lom, 57 of which have been granted the status of cultural monuments, as well as various houses-museums where the eminent persons from the cultural, public and business world once lived (Picture 32).



Picture 32: Katarina's and Mihailova House

The cultural monuments in Montana are an important anthropogenic source for the development of cultural as well as other segments of tourism through the creation and development of integrated tourism products. Organising numerous events of international, national and local significance obviously contributes to this goal. The most important are: the International Folklore Festival "Montana", International Children's Art Festival "Patent Leather Shoes" held annually in Berkovitsa in early June, International Folk Fest "Ashiklar Sings and Dances" held annually in Berkovitsa in early July. The Folk Fair as one of the oldest in Bulgaria, with the status of a national event since 1994, has been included in the National Cultural Calendar. One of the most popular summer festivals is „Berkstock rook festival“ held annually in Berkovitsa in July. Also, the International Festival of Brass Orchestras "Diko Iliev" held in Montana is very popular. The list of cultural events of national significance also includes the national folklore competition "The Songs from the Northwest" and the National Biannual exhibition Teneza (Picture 33).



Picture 33: Folklore Festival

Thanks to its rich historical and cultural heritage, Montana has become an attractive destination for the development of cultural tourism. Potential tourists' needs, motives and preferences serve as the starting point in the creation of a tourism product. Yet, product placement is more realistic if cultural tourism is combined with other tourism segments. In the case of Montana, such segments are ecotourism and rural tourism, as there are very relevant potentials for their development.

Potentials for the Development of Ecotourism and Rural Tourism

The district of Montana covers the central part of North-West Bulgaria and spreads over an area of 3635 square kilometres, which constitutes 3.3% of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. The terrain in the area is diverse including lowlands and plains, hills, mountains and valleys. The relief of the region is very diversified. The northern part of the area is in the Danubian plain, while in the South the relief gradually becomes mountainous, encompassing a part of the Balkan mountain range. The Southern part which encompasses the territory of the largest part of Western Balkan mountain range is covered with deciduous and coniferous forests (Picture 34).



Picture 34: Montana Relief

The climate varies and depends on the relief forms which determine microclimatic functions. The area belongs to the temperate continental climatic region with cold winters and hot summers. It is rich in watercourses with limited quantities of water. The most important watercourses are the Ogosta, Tsibritsa and Lom rivers. Several dams have been built on the territory of the Municipality of Montana, like the dam on the Ogosta river, Sretchenska Bara' Dam, etc.

Mineral water springs are one of the most valuable natural treasures in this area. The springs of mineral water in the Municipality of Varshets and in the village of Spanchevtsi are recognised as springs of national significance because of their composition. Also, the area is rich in hot mineral water springs.

Thanks to its preserved nature and tradition, rich natural and cultural heritage, attractive landscapes, benign climate and geographical position, Bulgaria, and the Municipality of Montana as its constituent part, have considerable potentials for the development of ecotourism. Due to its well preserved natural heritage, protected territories and zones, it actively participates in the programmes that enable networking of the countries that ground sustainable development of destinations on preserved natural heritage. Ecotourism as a tourism product resting on a combination of biodiversities in protected areas and cultural and historical heritage is a good foundation for the economic and social development of the district of Montana. The area is rich in diverse landscapes with typical ancient deciduous and coniferous forests, colourful meadows, protected and rare plant species, clear springs and rivers, numerous habitats of various wild animals and birds, and as such attracts tourists and wildlife lovers throughout the year (Picture 35).

The protected area "Kopren – Ravno buche – Deyanitsa – Kalimanitsa" is a significant potential for the development of tourism. The zone spreads over an area of 536.4 hectares covered with forest. It encompasses four areas in Kopilovski Divide of the Western Stara planina mountains (Balkan

mountain range). The protected zone is well-known for its diverse vegetation, primarily deciduous and coniferous forests, slopes with numerous, various and rare plant species. The wealth of this protected area is further complemented by plentiful rock cliffs and crystal clear springs, brooks and rivers, making this scenery very attractive for potential tourists, wild-life lovers. The protected zone is also famous for its waterfalls Durshin and Voden Skok. In accordance with the current regulations and standards, the eco-trails have been built in the area.



Picture 35: Protected zone

In the area of Montana there are several protected zones, which are still insufficiently used as potentials for the development of tourism. Some of the significant ones include: in the area of Kopilovski Divide of the Western Stara planina (Balkan mountain range) Stone Crown, suitable for specialized tours and attractive for geologists, biologists, ecologists and ordinary tourists; the Chiprovski Waterfall, situated in the midst of beech forests in the Old River valley, with a very attractive 18-metre high waterfall; Mishin Kamyk Cave – a natural phenomenon in the oak forest next to the village Gorna Luka, well-known for its many white crystal formations and underground pools, etc. (Pictures 36 and 37).



Picture 36: Waterfall



Picture 37: Mishin Kamyk Cave

According to the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy of Bulgaria, one of the most prominent advantages of ecotourism lies in the fact that it attracts high-paying tourists throughout the year. Lapse of time brings forth strengthening of receptive tourism, and contributes to the improvement of international cooperation, and consequently of emitting tourism. The

improvements of the quality of ecotourism as a product create opportunities to establish and strengthen both regional and cross-border cooperation.

The district of Montana with its natural and other resources is one of the essential potentials for the development of tourism. Thanks to these potentials it is possible to come up with different thematic, educational-ecological routes dedicated to studying nature and learning how to protect it, which is already the case at the present moment. The most frequent tourism activities include: observation of nature, studying of significant ecosystems and habitats, vegetation studies, observation of birds and animals and participation in volunteers camps.

Due to the fact that ecotourism is a specific tourism product, it is necessary to permanently monitor the influence of different activities on the product quality and its sustainability in accordance with the generally accepted standards in the field of ecotourism.

Ecotourism is a specific tourism product and its exploitation requires appropriate behaviour of all tourism market participants. It is necessary to apply generally accepted standards of management, as well as to create an efficient system to inform all participants as a basis for successful promotion.

Just as it is the case with ecotourism, rural tourism, too, can be regarded as a special interest tourism product. It encompasses different activities characteristic for thematic tours as a tourism product. Some of special interest tourism activities include: hiking, hunting, fishing, etc., as distinct from the contents of the so-called mass tourism. Rural tourism, as a tourism product, particularly under the conditions of Internet development, is oriented towards smaller market segments, known as market niches, and more and more often, towards individual tourists, which requires a personalised approach in implementing almost all business activities. Creation and placement of this product often includes the activities that are mainly implemented in a specific environment (exotic, unusual, distant, wild) and requires tourist's personal involvement in the implementation of such activities. Tourists' expectations included in the process of the product's creation and delivery are connected with adventure, and their experiences are very important for attracting new tourists and keeping old ones.

The rural population of the district of Montana is the guardian of authenticity, durability and attractiveness of the countryside ambience, culture and customs, and acts as the main intangible tourism resource. They keep, maintain and teach the coming generations about the tangible wealth: architecture, cultural monuments, folk customs, etc. The benefits from the development of rural tourism are primarily reflected in improved conditions for better assessment and exploitation of local resources including natural, historical and architectural heritage. Additionally, it stimulates the local population to preserve and foster all types of resources - nature,

tradition and holidays - with more care. Rural development contributes to the decrease of regional differences in tourism.

The rural settlements of the district of Montana have good predispositions for the development of rural tourism. The contents of this offer are already present with some tourism offer holders. Their well preserved architectural and ethnographic wholes, as well as perpetuated customs and manifestations serve as a good basis for this type of tourism. The value of the villages as far as tourism is concerned also lies in their natural and environmental potentials, as well as in the countryside manifestations and festivals as an important segment of rural tourism. It can be generally concluded that rural tourism is still at an early stage of development. The weak points are the quality of accommodation, the population that lacks understanding of the business mechanisms of rural tourism and a rather low level of inclusion of the pertaining resources (e.g. cultural monuments, natural values, absence of thematic cultural trails).

Despite the detected advantages for the development of rural tourism in Bulgaria, there is a lack of a clear vision and strategy for its development. The detected obstacles for the development of this type of tourism in Bulgaria are low quality of services in rural tourism, insufficiently educated personnel that provides services and a lack of generally accepted standards for managing this product's development and adequate mechanisms for efficient, inexpensive and fast exchange of information.

Creation of Tourism Products

within cross-border cooperation of Mediana and Montana municipalities

Attracting and retaining tourists can be primarily accomplished by integrating attractive partial tourism products into a whole serving as an appropriate offer for tourists. For instance, it can mean connecting of a specific programme (seminar, business meeting, festival, sporting event) with visits of the historical and cultural heritage of that particular destination, or its connecting with the special interests of each tourist.

Starting from the identified strengths and advantages of Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations which have been presented in the sub-projects for each municipality, several suggestions regarding potentially attractive tourism products will be now presented with the elements grouped in such a way that appropriate tourism offer holders can jointly promote and contribute to their popularisation with larger numbers of domestic and foreign tourists. Such an approach works towards the accomplishment of several common objectives:

1. Increasing the number of arrivals of both domestic and foreign tourists to both destinations through the development of attractive tourism products compliant with tourists' needs and demands,
2. More efficient development of cultural tourism,
3. Using Internet marketing for the development and more efficient exploitation of the tourism potentials of both destinations,
4. Creating joint Internet platforms as a basis for a successful promotion and commercialisation of tourism products offered by Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations.

Increasing the Number of Arrivals of Domestic and Foreign Tourists through the Development of Complementary Tourism Products

Interconnecting of tourism offer holders is of great importance for the improvement and development of tourism in the municipalities of Mariana and Montana. It is expected that this networking will contribute to the creation of unique tourism products (packages) made up of different services. Duration of tourism products is not time-limited, and thanks to the specificities of a concrete destination it is possible to formulate competitive prices for various segments of tourists. It is important that, depending on the products contained in appropriate offers, it is possible to offer packages with different duration (one-day, weekend, or extended weekend) in line with the needs and demands of the specific segments.

The very essence of the process of creating tourism products is reflected in bringing together various elements into integral wholes. In the municipalities of

Mediana and Montana it is necessary to interconnect all stakeholders, especially the tourism offer holders **capable of delivering unique experience** (getting familiar with the cultural and historical heritage revolving around the same theme, gastronomic experience, experience from getting familiar with the people, customs, events and manifestations within the destination, which is specifically manifested in the form of special interests, etc.).

Successful realisation of joint tourism products on the basis of which it is possible to come up with value-added accomplishments for both tourists and tourism offer holders, presupposes timewise harmonisation and creation of a list of the most important, i.e. potentially most attractive events and manifestations as a basis for commercialisation of other partial tourism products. Taking into account the profile of events, a manifestation route of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana is being made and, as such, it can be offered as a tourism product. This can be the case with several most significant manifestations typical for high attendance (e.g. Nisville).

One of attractive tourism products than can be jointly promoted is creation of a package offer that integrates several partial tourism products, cultural tourism, business tourism, events and manifestations and the like, that can result in extended stays in Niš, Mediana Municipality, i.e. in Montana before and/or after a certain event. Cooperation between the organisers of events, agencies and hotels is of particular significance for the realisation of such tourism products. The economic and social development of Mediana and Montana municipalities contributes to the development of business tourism as a product with significant potentials for development.

Business tourism implies trips with the main motive to participate in business meetings, motivational / stimulating trips, conferences, business fairs and exhibitions. The necessary infrastructure implies congress capacities (conference halls with the pertaining equipment), well-known hotels and attractive destinations (contents of different profile). According to the adopted documents, Serbian and Bulgarian Tourism Development Strategies applicable to Niš, i.e. the Municipality of Mediana, and the Municipality of Montana, provide a solid basis for the promotion of that product.

The available capacities of the mentioned destinations with the existing accommodation facilities for business meetings and a history of good business practice on the Serbian and Bulgarian markets, are a chance for the development of business tourism with more efficient exploitation of the available resources.

Under the contemporary business conditions, there are numerous professional associations for meetings, congresses and events around the world. The Serbian Congress Bureau actively participates in some of them, which fact can be used for the development of business tourism in Mediana and Montana as well. Some examples of good practice show that activities should also be directed towards participating in thematic fairs from the segment of business tourism.

Meeting Professional International (MPI, www.mpiweb.org) is one of the most influential professional associations for meetings and events involving participation of companies, various associations, governmental and non-governmental organisations. This professional association organises annual conferences and monthly trainings, publishes a professional magazine "One+Magazine", establishes

business clubs at the local level, conducts periodical research (published in the annual Review and bimonthly editions published in the Barometer), and operates a comprehensive database available to each member. MPI members can be found in every industry, and they plan meetings and conferences on three continents. The membership in MPI provides additional training, research and networking of resources. MPI can also offer and work out discounts regarding conferences and publications. It can also provide opportunities of interconnecting with partners through local and online communities.

Successful development of business tourism, particularly within cross-border cooperation, can be significantly boosted through the participation in the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, www.iccaworld.com). ICCA is presently one of the most significant congress tourism associations in the world for international meetings. Its network brings together a large number of purchasers of international meetings and congresses, with membership from numerous countries. It provides top quality products and services regarding organisation of international meetings to all organisations, companies and other organisations. The membership in ICCA ensures selection of the venue, technical consulting, assistance regarding transportation, planning and *ad hoc* services. Experienced ICCA members and international planners of meetings prepare various articles, case studies, check-up lists and other useful materials on any aspect of the event, all published in a free-of-charge e-bulletin five times a year, specially tailored to provide help to international associations regarding event organising. The most significant segment of this Association is the statistics it provides which is published on annual basis, keeping track of the development of congress industry on the basis of the number of international congresses held in a particular destination and ranking various destinations on account of such records, thus providing elements for their evaluation. Taking into account the above mentioned, it is very important for the destinations trying to develop business tourism to appear on the list of this Association, either directly or through their national tourism organisation.

In the conditions of the digital economy, membership in relevant websites is also an important resource of business tourism. One of such websites is www.siteglobal.com. Its members are the participants of the global network of trips and events, i.e. professionals with excellent business results. The members of this website are given networking opportunities and are eligible to the benefits it offers. Its internationally recognised logotype is used on personal business cards, internet portals and letterheads. SITE is a global network of meetings and events of the professionals dedicated to attaining business results. It is a global authority for interconnecting motivational experiences with business results. It serves as a source of expertise, knowledge and personnel, research, trend analyses and education support programmes for stimulation and professional trips, i.e. building connections that can stimulate professional development, and promote the values of motivational experience on a world scale. Its mission is to strengthen the awareness and efficiency of motivational experience and stimulating trips, thus increasing global participation.

Presence on various specialised fairs is also significant for successful promotion of business tourism. One of such events is **IMEX** (www.imex-frankfurt.com). The fair offers opportunities to present various tourism products. Its visitors are mainly planners from agencies, various companies and associations, as well as marketing managers

in charge of event planning. IMEX has been a partner of Serbia as a congress destination in the past few years, which should be used for the development of business tourism in all destinations with appropriate resources, as it is the case with the Municipality of Mediana.

The analysis of tourism potentials of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana has shown that there are significant potentials for the development of thematic tours as tourism products that gain in attractiveness if they incorporate several different tourism products (rural tourism, ecotourism, business tourism, cultural tourism). It is also possible to successfully use visitors' special interests to improve cooperation in the field of cultural and manifestational tourism.

Cross-border Cooperation as a Factor of More Efficient Development of Cultural Tourism

Cultural and historical heritage serves as a valuable potential for the development of cultural tourism that can be observed as an integral product as it interconnects various partial tourism products into an integral service package. The municipalities of Mediana and Montana possess this resource (as detailed in the specific studies) which should be used as a basis for further improvement of competitiveness on the choosy tourism market. Accomplishing such an objective requires:

- Strengthening cultural diversity as one of the strengths of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana within cross-border cooperation. This can be accomplished by integrating and strengthening regional potentials through cooperation in the field of culture – organising joint cultural manifestations, programmes and festivals, reviving traditions connected with the cultural-historical heritage, joint organising of business events, thematic cooperation related to the traditional places in the destinations;
- Encouraging contacts and cooperation between the inhabitants of the mentioned municipalities in order to strengthen creativity and provide for a stimulating framework for innovations in the field of culture, and for further economic growth based on the proper use of their heritage and tradition, which can be successfully accomplished by establishing long-term relations among different participants of the tourism market;
- Developing cross-border municipalities as recognisable brands is an efficient way to succeed. It is necessary to pay particular attention to the improvement of the system of quality labelling in cross-border tourism of the said municipalities. Continuous improving of the total quality of tourism offer and striving towards high quality tourism are a sustainable source of competitive advantages of all tourism offer holders in the monitored destinations;

- Positioning of cross-border municipalities as significant tourism destinations in Serbia and Bulgaria, as well as in the wider region;
- Organising and holding annual manifestations alternatively at the locations in cross-border municipalities with different activities, branded according to thematic wholes;
- Promoting short weekend holidays for tourism and recreational purposes (as well as longer stays);
- Supporting and strengthening the quality of tourism products – strengthening the offer through a strategic approach based on the development of regional strategies of sustainable tourism; defining quality criteria and developing a system of eco-labelling as well as the schemes for certification and promotion of sustainable and wellness tourism;
- Creating a joint database on the activities and events in the field of culture as a basis for the improvement of cultural activities in the cross-border municipalities of Mediana and Montana by promoting exchanges in the fields of culture and art.

Examples of Good Practice

Successful promotion of tourism potentials and products depends on many factors, and most often, only a small number of combinations brings success, i.e. significant increase of the number of tourists. That is why it is always beneficial to learn from the examples of good practice from other countries. Several examples from previous studies are repeated here in order to emphasise creative planning and get the maximum from the existing potentials of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana.

Historical Centre and Mount Titan (Monte Titano, San Marino)¹⁸

San Marino Historic Centre and Mount Titano covers 55 ha, including Mount Titano and the historic centre of the city which dates back to the foundation of the republic as a city-state in the 13th century. The inscribed city centre includes fortification towers, walls, gates and bastions, as well as numerous buildings from different periods designed in the basilica style. This place represents a historical centre still inhabited and preserving all its institutional functions. Thanks to its position on top of Mount Titano, it was not affected by the urban transformations that have occurred from the advent of the industrial era until present time.

Joint projects are undertaken in order to improve information flow and promotion. One of them is the project of building a website in English and Italian, implemented by the town in cooperation with UNESCO in order to provide topical information on its cultural and historical heritage to the interested parties. The website offers updated information on the most significant cultural monuments. The ways of informing and promoting the destination are adjusted and constantly fine-tuned to the needs of various users. State-of-the-art information and communication technology enables personalised communication that significantly contributes to the destination's popularity. Also, the implementation of the project enables improvement of the systems of informing and promotion in other ways and with other means, including, for instance, external announcement devices such as unique panels made of jagged aluminium with a metal support.

The implementation of the project rests on the participation of various subjects. For example, the Library prepares texts about the monuments, while the National Museum provides information on archaeological sites. Video materials providing information important for tourists' choices are also very significant for attracting and retaining tourists.

The focus on informing and promotional activities in tourism product building offers a special value to tourists and constitutes a competitive advantage of a destination in comparison to others. This destination persists in differentiating itself from its competition using not only tangible, physical properties, but also intangible

¹⁸ Adapted on the basis of the text from the project iz "Подобряване на нематериалното културно наследство в трансграничния регион"; чрез Програмата за трансгранично сътрудничество

traits, primarily promotion. A system of multimedia totem is used in order to help tourists by offering them the needed information in the manner and at the time when they need it. The project also provides a web interface for communication, allowing for placing and sharing information on specific experiences which are, under the contemporary business conditions, at the focus of users' satisfaction.



Picture 38: Mount Titan

The implementation of the joint project relies on various means of destination product promotion. One of the examples is the editorial initiative "Protected Naturalistic Areas of the Republic of San Marino" illustrating the Detailed Plan of Protected Naturalistic Areas, established according to the provisions of Art. 31 of Law no. 7 of 29 January 1992, "General Town Planning Scheme and Relevant Implementing Rules." The protected areas are rich in biodiversity and represent a resource of outstanding value. The protection of nature is a duty, need and sign of civil maturity. Sustainable development requires responsible behaviour, where every activity should be carried out within the limits of tolerance of the various ecosystems. Protected areas contribute to this indispensable balance and represent an inestimable richness of our planet. This editorial initiative was supplemented by an important conference on landscape which took place in collaboration with Italian technical experts and authorities.

Ecotourism in Sweden¹⁹

Following the example of Australia, Sweden was the second country in the world to introduce the Ecotourism Charter. The tours "The Best of Nature", trips and active holidays are the best way to accountably enjoy the superb Swedish nature and use its natural wealth to get familiar with the local values: culture, lifestyle of the local population, local businesses... In order to fulfil such wishes one should book a trip through their certified tour operators. The offer of specific tourism products is very

¹⁹ Adapted on the basis of the text from the Project "Подобряване на нематериалното културно наследство в трансграничния регион"; чрез Програмата за трансгранично сътрудничество

diverse: diving in the Arctic Circle, rafting in Varland, „safari“ in West Sweden, using seafood as a special interest, kayaking etc. The best-known ecotourism attractions and services in Sweden are: *Biking Dalarna* (Dalarna - a province in central Sweden), Vasaloppet Marathon as a very exciting biking tour, as well as various other events involving skiing, mountaineering, long tours and recreation.

The Treehotel in Harads, close to Luleå, a town in South-East Sweden, is well-known for its unique rooms placed up among the tall pine trees. The rooms are labelled descriptively so as to reflect their actual shape: UFO, Bird's Nest, etc., and each offers a unique and amazing view on the spectacular nature in front and under them. Depending on the season, tourists can get involved in various activities, like fishing in the nearby Lule river, kayaking, or simply admiring the phenomenon of the Northern Lights.

Rafting in Varland is a singular event and attraction taking place on almost 500 km long Klarälven river, typical for many tributaries. Tourists are offered various opportunities for a unique experience on rafts made on the spot of logs and ropes, as the only available materials offered to tourists who are given options of staying under the tent on the raft or spreading the tent onto the river bank.



Picture 39: Rafting on the Klarälven River

Thematic Tourism Tour – Museum Pass²⁰

Another example of good practice is the project “Museum Pass” implemented in 2013 by Duna-Körös-Maros-Tisza (DKMT) Eurorégiós Fejlesztési Ügynökség Nonprofit Közhasznú Kft. and the Museum of Novi Sad, Serbia.

Lack of relevant information about the existing tourism potentials as a limiting factor in the development of tourism motivated the partners to try to contribute by a joint effort to the development of tourism in the Hungarian-Serbian cross-border region. The people inhabiting the region, as well as visitors from other parts of Europe and the world as potential users of the tourism products did not have enough information to rely on when choosing a destination. A logical consequence of such a situation was a limited number of tourists who would spend short time in the region

²⁰ Adapted on the basis of the materials from various websites

and miss to visit many notable tourist attractions. Furthermore, this resulted in unsatisfactory business performance of various tourism offer holders.

The key objective of the joint project was to improve competitiveness of tourism products being that the region is actually rich in cultural and natural treasures, historically important settlements and well preserved traditional customs.

Thematic tours were used as a model to link the two sides of the border sharing many cultural similarities. The partners established cooperation between the museums on both sides of the border, creating a network of 53 museums and a Museum Pass as a direct outcome of the project. The resulting information brochure and website in five languages attracted tourists who were also given the opportunity to use new info-terminals with touch-sensitive screens.

This project enhanced regional tourism, and contributed to better cross-border tolerance and multiculturalism. The implementation of the **Museum Pass** project stirred up interest for museums and similar contents in the region. It also helped the inhabitants of Hungarian – Serbian cross-border region to get more familiar with the history, culture and traditions of the other side upon seeing the offer of the museums and other institutions across the border.

Aside from an increased number of visitors of museums and similar organisations included in the **Museum Pass** network, and generally higher numbers of domestic and foreign tourists interested in culture and museums, the inhabitants of the Hungarian-Serbian cross-border region became more interested and willing to get familiar with the cultural life and tradition of the other side. Using the mentioned info-terminals, the visitors of any museum can learn about other museums in the neighbouring towns on both sides of the border, and get informed about the possibilities of extending their trips to include some other cultural contents in the region.

Numerous ideas about the possible ways of enhancing cooperation and directing users' preferences regarding this tourism product were gathered in discussions with many visitors during the project implementation. One of particularly significant suggestions is to introduce electronic QR-coded tickets or e-passports, so that tourists would not be obliged to get a paper museum pass. The prevalent idea behind this suggestion is to attract a greater number of young museum visitors.

Wine Routes in Spain²¹

Rural tourism is focused on the participation in rural life. It could be regarded as a variant of ecotourism. Each village can become a tourist attraction and many villagers are very hospitable. There is a segment of urban population willing to visit rural areas and learn about their way of life, not to mention that the number of tourists preferring rural tourism as a tourism product has been significantly increasing in the past few years. Thanks to this product, there is a rising trend involving integration of various partial tourism products and resulting in more efficient

²¹ Adapted on the basis of the texts from the Project "Подобряване на нематериалното културно наследство в трансграничния регион"; чрез Програмата за трансгранично сътрудничество

exploitation of tourism potentials. One of the examples of good practice is the development of the tourism product called **The Wine Routes in Spain**.

The Wine Routes in Spain is an innovative, thematic, cultural and gastronomic tourism product developed with support of the National Tourism Secretariat. It is based on integration of tourism resources and services relevant for the wine sector. This product is based on an integrated strategy for planning social and economic growth, public-private partnerships and valorisation of the identity and wine culture of each specific destination.



Picture 40: A Spanish vineyard

Winegrowing and wine production are in the focus of this thematic tour as a tourism product and that is what tourists see in all phases of their trips. This thematic tour is a tourism product that helps tourists get familiar with the potentials of distant destinations regarding their culture, tradition and historical heritage.

Organised visits to wineries help the visitors to get familiar with the lifestyle of the local population, particularly in rural areas, as well as to enjoy degustations of high quality wines, not to mention a chance to do some shopping in the area. It is also a chance for them to get familiar with the historical and cultural heritage of the settlements and towns included in this thematic route.

This is an extremely complex tourism product and its successful implementation requires development of a network of interrelations among different subjects and groups: public-private partnerships, companies from different fields...

Thessaloniki – A City of Opportunities, Rich Culture and Historical Heritage²²

Thessaloniki is a city of rich cultural and historical heritage and hospitable people. As a city occupying a favourable geostrategic position, it has always been a crossroads of civilisations, a crossing point where the East and the West meet. Thessaloniki is nowadays an educational, business and tourism centre. In 1977 it was designated European capital of culture. As the second largest city in Greece after

²² The presentation of Thessaloniki is based on the following sources:

<http://www.visitgreece.gr>, <http://www.greeka.com> <http://www.thessaloniki.travel/index.php/en/>

Athens as the capital city, it is the most significant centre of northern Greece. Built on the seacoast, with history dating back to ancient times, it is presently a modern metropolis bearing the marks of its stormy history and its cosmopolitan character,

The city has a rich offer of tourist attractions appealing to the tourists from all over Europe. It is interesting to tourists because of its many historical monuments, museums, concert halls, theatres, cinemas, bookshops, libraries, parks, promenades, children's playgrounds, sporting clubs and other contents.

Thessaloniki is an important educational centre of Greece with numerous schools, faculties and universities. Tourists are attracted by many fairs, specialised ones in particular, festivals and other cultural manifestations.

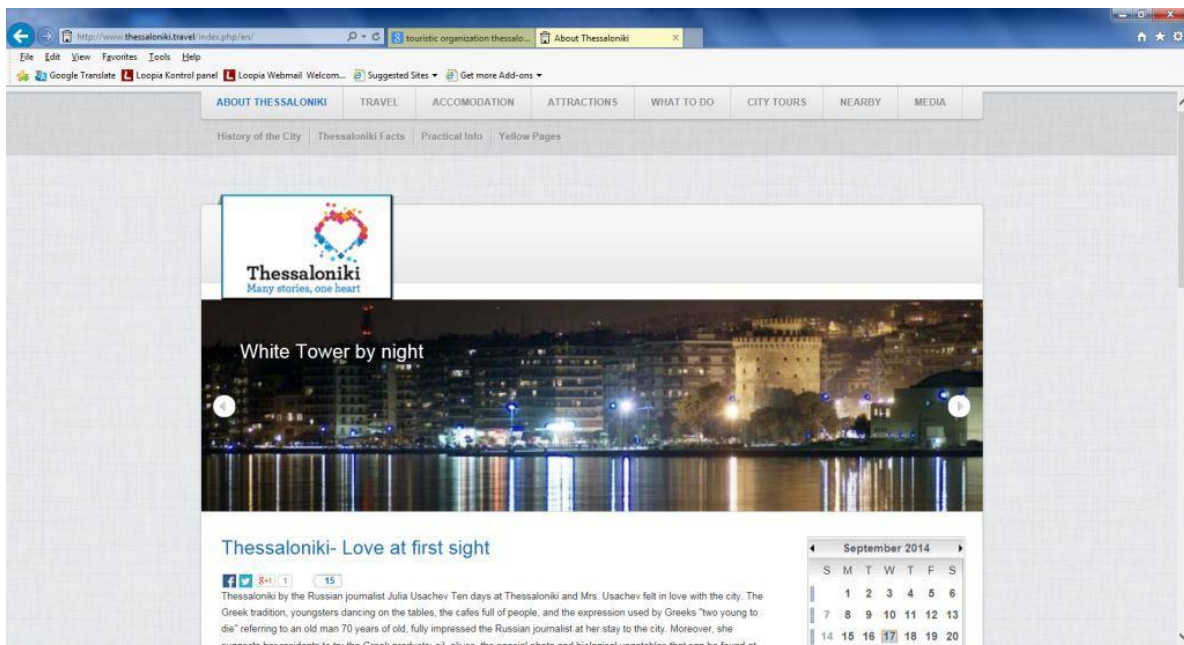
Starting from the available potentials, the competent organisations and institutions of Thessaloniki wanted to find a way to exploit the resources more efficiently and to enhance the image of the city as an attractive tourism destination. One of the efficient ways of accomplishing that goal was to develop an adequate communication strategy followed by its implementation together with a relevant promotional campaign. Up to 2007, the development of Thessaloniki as a tourism destination was managed by a special office of the Thessaloniki Prefecture, but rather than having organised character, the process was done in an elemental manner, without a firm plan and an adopted vision behind it. For this reason, in 2007 the Tourism and Marketing Organisation of Thessaloniki was established with an aim to attract more tourists. The competent institutions, in cooperation with all key institutions, departments and sectors in the field of tourism, adopted a strategic plan of development of Thessaloniki. The Strategy was, first of all, focused on the development of city, congress and business tourism. At the beginning of implementation of the Strategy, it failed to produce the expected results. A new campaign *Thessaloniki: Many stories, one heart* was adopted two years after that. It was backed up by a new marketing plan and a new city logo which replaced the old one in the shape of the former Ottoman jail in the White Tower. The campaign was based on the idea of presenting Thessaloniki as a city of diversified offer and rich history, as a city with many stories and experiences that can be lived and experienced, which is particularly significant for modern tourists. The logo presents the multicultural side of the city, as well as its hospitality and warm spirit. The emphasis is also placed on the business side of the city, because Thessaloniki annually hosts an important international trade fair. Also, the stress is on the city's cultural and historical heritage, and the events that traditionally attract a considerable number of tourists, like the International Film Festival traditionally held in Thessaloniki.

“Because this is Thessaloniki,
A heart full of stories
A heart that beats strongly
Listen to it.”

(Consortium Thessaloniki City Branding, the generator of the campaign, Picture 41).



Picture 41: Examples of Thessaloniki City Campaign



Picture 42: Thessaloniki website

The key focus was on the city promotion abroad in order to attract tourists and business people, using the services of several significant PR and marketing agencies from all over the world, as well as promotion in printed and electronic media, on fairs and exhibitions throughout the world, on the official website of the Tourism and Marketing Organisation of Thessaloniki, and through social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest), etc.

Joint/Common Tourism Promotion Strategy

The Role of Joint Promotion for Image Improvement

The key objective which was behind the idea to develop a joint tourism promotion strategy for Mediana and Montana destinations was to reverse the unfavourable situation and to improve their image. In order to do so it was necessary to make a survey of their actual and desired images. The perceptions of tourists and business circles are of the key importance for building a desired image and achieve competitiveness of a tourism destination, being that tourists' satisfaction is a result of unique perceptions of partial tourism products offered by a certain destination. Tourists' perception of a certain destination is actually a sum of their impressions essentially made up of the attributes of the resources, services and products that constitute a collection of professional and personal interests of all the people who live and work in it. In the process of creating tourists' satisfaction and loyalty as well as sustainable competitive advantages of a certain destination, the problems are particularly prominent regarding tourism demand management and creation of a singular image not only at the level of the tourism destination, but also at the level of individual tourism products and tourism companies.

Image is an important comparative ability of a destination. It is the very core of its value that the management has managed to use to attain a favourable market position. The result is actual and potential visitors' perception of the benefits and experiences offered by a destination in comparison to other competitive destinations. It also involves an array of attributes generated from previous activities, i.e. a set of tourists' expectations and perceptions regarding a destination. A respectable image and reputation generate tourists' satisfaction, encourage them to revisit a destination, enable spreading of tourists' positive attitudes to new products and marks on the existing and new markets, and open opportunities to attain premium prices. The degree of tourists' satisfaction, as the most important result of recognisability and singular image of a destination, is actually a subjective assessment of the total perceptual experience as it compares to the expectations and perceptions of its characteristics. The key characteristics of a destination include:

- **Attractions** – natural and acquired attractions important for tourists' motivation to visit a destination;
- **Accessibility** – applies to the development and maintenance of efficient traffic connections;
- **Amenities** - receptive capacities, accommodation facilities, trading services, entertainment contents, as well as other services, cosiness of domestic life, customs, modes of behaviour, comfort;
- **Available packages** – offered by tourism intermediaries;
- **Activities** – apply to all available activities and things that the consumer will do during his/her stay;

- **Ancillary services** – services offered by the banks, post office, taxis, health care facilities, etc.²³

Building a recognisable image that integrates all above mentioned elements is one of the key objectives of the joint tourism promotion of Mediana and Montana municipalities. In order to be a source of competitive advantage, image must be unique being that only as such it can exert a stable and powerful influence on tourists in the process of their purchase decision making. Tourists perceive each destination as a mark made up of numerous products and services. Their initial perceptions of a destination are formed on the basis of previous experience, verbal propaganda (information coming from other tourists) and commercial sources. Destination image consists of two interwoven components: **perceptual (cognitive) evaluation** that applies to the knowledge and beliefs of individuals (tourists) and **affective evaluation** that applies to individuals' feelings towards a concrete destination. The mentioned components together create the tourists' image which is the basis of future purchases and choices. Consumers' perceptions are formed depending on the identity of a destination and the marketing strategies of tourism offer holders. In order to identify the key premises for positioning and building a unique image of the targeted destinations, it is requisite to answer the following questions:

- What is the actual image, i.e. how do tourists perceive Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations?
- How do the tourism offer holders see those destinations?
- What markets should be served?
- What are the target markets?
- What tourism products should be seen as crucial?

The results of previous research show that there is a significant disharmony between the desired and actual image, which partially results from the lack of a clear vision, objectives and strategies of tourism development of the said destinations. For this reason, it becomes a necessity to build a tourism brand that should integrate the tourism values possessed by the targeted municipalities and the benefits demanded by the targeted markets and segments.

Marketing activities, and especially promotional ones, should be focused on making a favourable combination of elements – attractive, functional, material and organisational – usable for building a desired image on the market. Attractive elements are those that satisfy tourists' needs, such as natural factors (climate, flora, wildlife, relief) and anthropogenic factors (cultural-historical heritage, fairs, manifestations, festivals). Tourists' perceptions of Mediana and Montana are unclear and require relevant activities (e.g. most tourists recognise only Niš Fortress as natural and Nisville as anthropogenic factor).

Functional elements are developmental forms or forms of tourist flow (recreational, cultural and mountain tourism, excursions) that mirror socio-economic and spatial peculiarities of tourism. Material elements comprise various types of services in tourist flow that shape the material base of the turnout on which tourism of a destination is founded. Planning of material elements is connected with the functional elements of a destination. The type and quality of service facilities, as well as the structure and quality of various services in the mentioned destinations are not

²³ <http://www.times.edu.rs> Elementi-turističke-destinacije (November, 2011).

adequately adjusted with the planned tourism products. Organisational elements refer to the system of measures indispensable for optimum development and harmonisation of heterogeneous objectives of tourism in a destination (legal regulations, human resources, promotional activities). The standards for planned defining of organisational elements depend on the previous groups of elements and their interrelations.

The undertaken analyses and debates with different interest groups have led to the conclusion that positioning of Mediana and Montana must be based on the valorisation of their potentials and interpretation of the sum of their values and peculiarities (geostrategic position, culture, events and festivals, hospitality, zeal, entertainment, a meeting place of people, ideas, culture and traditions). Strategic positioning must be considered in the context of the degree of differentiation and similarity of the attractions of these two destinations in comparison to other tourism offer holders. Also, in competitive differentiation and positioning, it is necessary to consider the tourism characteristics of the Balkans. In this context, some major advantages have been defined that can be used for creating the core and complementary tourism products:

- Natural resources (wealth of mineral waters, caves, gorges, intact mountains);
- Cultural-historical heritage (ancient wealth, monuments);
- Numerous events and manifestations;
- People, with their spirit, hospitality, kindness.

Choice of Forms and Means for Implementation of Joint Promotion

In the promotion of tourism destinations, various forms of communications with consumers and others stakeholders have been developed. Various forms and means of promotion are used. A joint tourism promotion strategy requires an integrated approach that involves combining various forms, means and participants in the process of implementing promotional campaigns. A system of integrated marketing communications must provide consistency in communicating the basic brand elements, logotypes, symbols and slogans in order for the destination to be positioned on the market as successfully as possible.

Promotional activities are an important segment of marketing communication used in order to stimulate demand. Joint promotional activities significant for the promotion of the tourism offer of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana should be directed towards potentially attractive market segments starting from the identified potentials for the development of tourism products.

It is indisputable that all forms and various channels of promotion can be used for the conveyance of messages. With regard to the objectives defined by the global project, the identified potentials for the development of tourism products, the tendencies on the modern tourism market and the resources of the said destinations, a combination of massive and direct forms of communication is suggested using print and electronic media, particularly the Internet, to implement the joint tourism promotion strategy.

Using Options for Massive Promotion in Joint Campaigns

Advertising is an important form of promotion that should be used within the joint tourism promotion strategy of Mediana and Montana municipalities. Several media, from print to electronic, should be used for conveyance of messages, and the pertaining propaganda material should be made accordingly. Thanks to the development of information-communication technologies, present business conditions allow for integration of traditional and modern promotional media, with the final outcome being efficient promotion and rational use of available resources.

The messages used in promotional campaigns should clearly point out the significance of the local specificities of the destinations, their tourism products, identity and the objectives of communication with the targeted markets. When building tourism product identity it is crucial to use the product's tangible and intangible properties for creating value intended for potential tourists. Tourists use and perceive partial tourism products in their local environment, so their distinctive features should be highlighted. In the process of brand shaping, the ultimate identity of Serbia as tourism destination springs from the local identity of individual products, as well as from the identity stemming from local cultural and natural specificities.

Good practice examples show that creation and exchange of thematic brochures and promo materials can improve joint promotion. Promotional activities should be directed towards increasing tourism sales to the people who come to the destination led by different motives. The objective is to use each stay for the activities aimed to increase tourism products sales. For example, business people, or guests coming to visit their relatives and friends can be offered relevant information and promo materials on the attractions that should be seen, or unique events to be visited, and the like. It is hard to attract tourists, and even harder to turn them to loyal visitors. In order to attract new tourists it is important to extensively conduct demand stimulation activities that need to be clearly defined in the promotional plan. One of the ways to achieve that goal is to make a **general tourist guide** with programmes offered by both destinations.

A guide should be of general type and should contain separate presentations of the packages offered by agencies. Also, it is requisite to group the product elements which can help visitors to independently create a personalised product that will give them a unique experience. Good practice examples indicate that information on cultural and historical heritage should not be excluded at any cost and that a special emphasis should be on interesting details and stories. Modern tourists should be offered less statistics, and more short descriptions of the product's characteristics (must visit/see spots, things that should not be missed, indications about the objects recognised as typical for the destination, i.e. specific and different in comparison with other objects, etc.). There is growing evidence that modern consumers, tourists included, make purchase decisions on the basis of experience, either their own or coming from other tourists, so it becomes necessary that guides also include some short stories, attractive photographs showing the elements of the offered package (e.g. a restaurant, experience and the like). Other unavoidable contents of a guide include contact addresses and ways of communication of all relevant subjects included either directly or indirectly in the process of creating and

delivering the specific tourism product, as well as booking options, maps and/or tips aimed to facilitate tourists' orientation, the Internet portal, etc.

Guide design is very important for efficient presentation of a destination and effective communication with potential users. In this particular case and context, it is especially important to adjust the guide with the identity design of Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations. That would result in easier recognition of the products of the cross-border municipalities. The effect would be even more significant if the guide appears in three versions: in English, Serbian and Bulgarian.

Other desirable options of massive promotion, aside from advertising, include joint participation in fairs and public relations. Participation in fairs provides opportunities to different tourism offer holders to connect and present destination products to a wider audience. The main objective is to establish and develop relationships with the relevant actors on the tourism market (tour operators, agencies, tourists, local community, governmental and non-governmental organisations) that can significantly increase demand and improve the tourism offer.

Establishing relationships with all key stakeholders is of special significance for successful implementation of a joint promotional strategy.

Journalists and media are significant actors in tourism destination promotion. Provision of information through the media (articles about the destination and specific attractions, articles in specialised journals, reportages and TV programmes about the region, statements within informative programmes on the region or specific attractions, and the like) is particularly important for the tourism development of the cross-border municipalities of Mediana and Montana. Communication with different public segments can present a destination to a wider public. Provision of information by the media through articles and reportages is a very crucial communication activity and a salient instrument for launching new tourism destinations and products. The local tourism organisations of both destinations should establish good relations with journalists and should organise individual or group visits of journalists so that they can directly get on-the-spot information about the destination on the basis of which they can write appropriate texts. Journalists' visits should be planned and organised annually.

Communication with trip organisers and tourist agents based on personal sale as a form of direct promotion, and/or public relations, as a form of massive promotion, is very significant. The local tourism organisations should organise – periodically or continuously – multi-day visits for the representatives of trip organisers and other key stakeholders (promoters, representatives of companies, etc.) so that they could get familiar with the characteristics of their offer and tourism potentials of the region. The aim of such visits, that need to be prepared in advance, is stimulation of tourism sales.

A more intense promotion of the destinations in the media is desirable, with the emphasis on those media whose followers have affinities attuned with the offer of Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations. Also, success of any product greatly depends on the right choice of the time for the placement of messages. In this context, the campaign should be intensified during the period when potential tourists search for the information on each specific product.

Promotion activities should be directed towards story shaping and telling. A modern consumer is less interested in data and information on natural characteristics, achievements, influential historical or cultural events. In the modern world, the advantage is on the side of story-based and event communication, especially when stemming from the identity of a concrete tourism product, i.e. from its differentiating traits, as well as those that stir the interest of the tourists who are being addressed in such communication. It is particularly interesting that individual passengers and groups of any market or target group are much more interested in stories than in historical facts, so having in mind the quantity of information, but above all, the perception and experience they should take home, an effort should be made to embellish each package with a unique story and traits that make it stand out from the tourism products of other destinations.

The Internet as a Form and Means of Joint Promotion

Recent years have been marked by intensive development and use of Internet marketing in all spheres of business affairs of contemporary organisations. The Internet is extremely significant in promotion of all products and services, including tourism. The Internet gave its users almost unlimited opportunities for information gathering and decision making regarding purchasing. An immense number of potential tourists uses some social network or specialised travel websites to choose a travel destination. Such a choice is just the beginning, because a decision like that is followed by a chain of other decisions. Availability of numerous Internet pages makes it possible to undertake other activities on the Net as well, be it booking of accommodation of any category, buying airline, train or any other kind of tickets, etc.

Improvement of tourism in Mediana and Montana destinations requires, among other things, an increasing use of various Internet tools, being that more and more tourists use various platforms and social networks to gather information and share experience. Internet platform networking is of vital importance for all the actors in tourism of Mediana and Montana with the idea of exchanging information about all relevant elements of supply and demand and searching for tourism products offered.

Aside from the Internet pages used by individual tourism offer holders, it is necessary to create common platforms that would improve communication among different subjects and groups included in the creation of tourism offer and search for tourism products. That is an efficient way to make the topical and needed information about the destination and products available.

Development of a platform for tourism products promotion on social networks like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace will make promotion more efficient.

The undertaken research indicates that an increasing number of tourists exposed to aggressive propaganda campaigns have turned to the Internet search engines like Google as one of the most frequently used when in need of information.

For this reason it is necessary to initiate a Google campaign for the promotion of Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations, based on the keywords (related to packages) most frequently used on the targeted markets.

Facebook is the most visited social network with the constant increase of users on a worldwide scale. In comparison to other means of information, Facebook is a relatively cheap and efficient site for advertising and communicating. Taking into account rather limited financial resources on the one side and Facebook efficiency on the other side, the steps to be taken include: opening of a Facebook group on Mediana and Montana tours and packages; prompt and up-to-date administration of the group; continuous informing of actual and potential tourists about the benefits offered by the destinations within their product packages; engaging agencies to ensure massive membership of the groups, etc.

A high quality Internet (WEB) page is a basis for adequate Internet marketing. Although all the tourism offer holders in both destinations can have their own websites, it is important to redesign them in line with the requirements of modern marketing communication. In order to improve cross-border cooperation, it is also desirable to create a joint website of Mediana and Montana destinations. The process of redesigning the existing and creating a joint website, should:

- be based on modern internet design trends;
- provide for the presentation of the tourism offer of both destinations (cultural monuments, restaurants, events, natural beauties, ethno villages, etc.) including the information relevant for tourists (maps, photographs, locations, main events, contacts with service providers, booking instructions, options for online booking or inquiries regarding the use of certain services within different packages, etc.),
- allow for automatic sending of newsletters and other materials,
- include the option of downloading the maps and brochures,
- contain the links with all service providers included in the implementation of the packages offered by each destination,
- affirm with all the actors a possibility of online inquiry-based booking and online payment,
- create a multilingual webpage – English, Serbian and Bulgarian, including an option to have it translated to the languages spoken on the targeted market segments according to the defined priorities and attractiveness of specific tourism products,
- provide for optimisation of the webpage relative to the keywords used on the search engine,
- include the links of the national tourism organisations and other pages promoting their tourism potentials on the websites of both destinations. This option of website interlinking, the so-called affiliate marketing, is also necessary in the wider Internet space, meaning that the links sending you to the pages promoting the destinations should be placed, for instance, on the web pages dealing with health issues, extreme sports, culture, tradition, etc.

A more extensive use of the Internet potentials in the implementation of the marketing communication strategy is requisite, because it is extremely efficient and it pays off. Facebook promotion can be considered adequate, but other social networks should be used as well, e.g. Instagram for the presentation of visual, and Twitter for short, topical, textual contents. Using social media where users share,

present and browse the contents is even more important. YouTube is the most significant in this context, because video materials allow for exquisite presentation of tourism destinations. The local tourism organisations presently have their YouTube channels which are not promptly updated and do not always offer topical contents. It is recommended to create a joint YouTube channel of Mediana and Montana municipalities. Once created and filled up with appropriate contents, such a channel should be connected with the parties' joint website and Facebook page, as well as with the pages of other holders of their joint tourism offer. It is desirable that the contents are presented in English, Serbian and Bulgarian.

Various analyses of research results show that it is vital to have promotional activities, especially the ones realised through the Internet, directed towards the segment with rich potentials for growth, the co-called Millennials. Millennials' participation in the total number of tourists has been increasingly growing in the recent years. That particular segment of tourism market is growing very fast. According to the research results, Millennials, also known as Generation Y, will constitute 50% of the global workforce by 2020. Hence, they will have a significant share in the global tourist trips. Having in mind that Millennials spend more money on travel than Generation X and Baby-boomers, understanding their needs, wishes and behaviour is of vital significance for the future development of tourism destinations and creation of unforgettable tourist experiences that can be regarded as the basic tourism product. Millennials are a generation that is "born for technology". They have brought technology into the economic and cultural focus and cannot understand life without it. When they travel, they use their phones, iPods and tablets to register or check-in, buy tickets, exchange comments or advice, etc.

By the end of 2020, Millennials will constitute 20% of international tourists with the consumption of approximately 20 billion dollars a year. They will be spending more on their trips and will travel much more than Generation X and Baby-boomers. The reason for that lies in the fact that, in comparison to Generation X and Baby-boomers, there will be less and less married couples and small kids among them. Successful tourism destinations in future will have to understand Millennials' unique travel expectations: acquiring experience, recognition and respect through money saving, income and learning during trips (Heller, 2016).

The research carried out by *Topdeck Travel* indicates that rather than seeking "party-animal" atmosphere, Millennials want to fully experience new cultures, local cuisines, etc. Approximately one half of Millennials assert that their choice of a tourism destination is shaped by their wish to experience a certain culture, 78% by their wish to learn something new during the trip, and 72% that they would spend more money on experience than on tangible goods. They want adapted experiences during their trips which enhance their individuality. Technology is an important part of their travel habits – 66% of Millennials would book their trip through smart phones, and 97% would publish posts on social networks in order to share their experience while travelling. Being that Generation Y becomes crucial for tourism development, it is very important to adjust your own communication and promotion patterns to their needs and wishes.

Recommendations for the Improvement of Joint Tourism Promotion Strategy

The municipalities of Mediana and Montana are not yet adequately recognisable as tourism destinations. Insufficient recognisability results from a weak demand for tourism products, with a countereffect reflected in rather low interest of the actors on the supply side. One of the efficient ways to overcome the current situation calls for elaboration and implementation of a promotional plan. Relying on an analysis of the current status of promotion activities at the national level, as well as at the level of local destinations, i.e. currently used forms and means of marketing communication, some recommendations have been defined for further improvement.

Define the roles of different tourism offer holders and harmonise them with the system of destination-related and emotion-based impressions about the tourism products, based on local peculiarities – One of the basic problems for more efficient exploitation of tourism potentials of a destination is a large number of interested subjects included in the realisation of tourism products. This leads to the division of competences, and consequently of liabilities, as well as aggravated communication and coordination of the activities related to tourism potentials valorisation. For this reason it is necessary to define and establish an integral model of destination management, and then to define the common interests of cross-border municipalities. Improved communication within and between destinations (and among all relevant stakeholders) is a prerequisite for success.

Focus promotional activities on tourism products that are more superior than the products of the competition and offer more benefits to tourists – A very interesting assumption underlying successful promotional strategies and successful placement of the tourism offer of Serbia, Niš and Mediana as well as of Bulgaria and Montana is clearly determined by the contents of their concrete tourism products and advantages, quality and essential elements of differentiation, that can make them competitive on the increasingly demanding international tourism market. The analyses presented in the sub-projects regarding Serbia, i.e. Bulgaria have showed that it is possible to create products that meet the specific demands of the targeted segments (for instance, cultural tourism, urban tourism, gastronomy, events and manifestations, ecotourism, rural tourism).

Use the joint tourism promotion strategy for the creation of a brand of Serbia and of Bulgaria as recognisable tourism destinations – Development,

communication and management of a brand of all tourism products is a reliable basis for efficient development of tourism, economy and society as a whole. Brands are placed at the very core of all business operations and promotional and other marketing activities, and consequently, of all local tourism organisations and other tourism offer holders. Promotional strategy is fundamental for successful building of mark recognisability and tourism products identity. Recognisability of the municipality of Mediana as, above all, a destination adequate for city break tourism, and of the municipality of Montana as suitable for ecotourism and rural tourism, can be built through integrated marketing communications (relying on an efficient selection of ways and means of communication) and by focusing on attractive markets.

Clearer identification of target groups, all the way down to individuals, and promotion of the elements of tourism offer to each of them is requisite. It is recommended to adjust the promotional materials to the people of various lifestyles and affinities. Personalised communication and product promotion can be achieved by promotional campaigns of tourism products with significant developmental potentials thanks to the opportunities offered by the Internet. Classic forms of massive communication are desirable, but insufficient to achieve the effects based on all, rather than only major tourism products on account of which a destination is already recognisable to a considerable number of tourists. Personalised communication enables more efficient use of all available resources and tourism potentials.

Offer adventures and experiences as a basis for the stimulation and development of products and promotions directed to better positioning of Serbia and Bulgaria, as well as of the municipalities of Mediana and Montana as destinations. – Nowadays it is not enough for a destination to develop its competitive advantages on the basis of functional values; an increasing attention is paid to the development and presentation of experiences, emotions, feelings, events, etc.

Define the main actors of destination promotion – Successful development of tourism in any destination, as well as efficient cross-border cooperation based, inter alia, on tourism development, requires identification of the main actors of the promotional activities, in this case of Mediana and Montana as tourism destinations. Networking of various stakeholders brings forth strengthening of competition in the region involved in cross-border cooperation, increased visibility and establishing of a clear destination identity and image. Currently there are several organisations that present the destinations in various ways (from national to local tourism organisations, volunteering services and individual agencies). Also, there is a pronouncedly large number of presentations on the social media (YouTube) and networks (Facebook) with contents whose creators are independent subjects. Those presentations need to be harmonised. Otherwise, they can cause confusion of potential tourists. As for the material published on the Internet, it is necessary to apply SEO (Search Engine

Optimisation), so that the visitors are, after every search, redirected to the site of the responsible organisation, e.g. the National Tourism Organisation, and the joint website of Mediana and Montana, once it is created. All other materials and presentations should also be interlinked.

Successful improvement of a tourism offer in modern business conditions, typical for interconnecting and networking at different levels and among various destinations, presses the need to develop the so-called **relationship marketing** as a new approach in establishing relations among main stakeholders. A need to develop long-term marketing relationships, as theory and practice show, is particularly essential on the tourism market. Development of cross-border cooperation, particularly in the field of creation, promotion and commercialisation of tourism products is a permanent task of all the actors.

Direct promotional activities, primarily through public relations, towards **improved informing and training of the local population** regarding their inclusion in the development of tourism. Good practice examples indicate that the behaviour of the locals, as one of the key stakeholders included in the value chain in tourism is very significant for the placement of tourism products, particularly of integrated ones.

Follow-up of the effects of promotion by measuring tourists' degree of satisfaction – Tourists' satisfaction is vital for acceptance of tourism products. Users' satisfaction during and after "consummation" is vital for successful development and commercialisation of tourism products, regardless of the differences and specificities among them on the one hand, and of tourists' motives and behaviour on the other hand, which is particularly important having in mind the significance of tourists' experience and perceptions for future purchases. During the trip, such satisfaction is mirrored in the appropriate accommodation, food, visits of natural and cultural-historical attractions, cultural-entertainment and sporting events, professional meetings and other people's experiences, getting familiar with new places, people and customs, etc. The value of spiritual satisfaction acquired on the basis of using a certain tourism product, as well as of the satisfaction acquired by the users while restoring their health, physical and psychic stability using all natural and other amenities offered by a specific tourism product is priceless.

For this reason it is very important to continuously evaluate satisfaction/dissatisfaction level and to identify the factors conditioning it. That is one of the key activities that is not adequately taken into account by tourism offer holders. Hence, it is recommended to create a joint database which would be available to all interested parties in both destinations. On the basis of such information, each subject would be able to pass more rational decisions within their competences and contribute to the improvement of the quality of the tourism offer in the destination.

Activities for the Realisation of the Joint Tourism Promotion Strategy

No.	Activity	Responsible party	Time Framework
1.	Setting up a body for the development of the joint tourism promotion strategy	Mediana and Montana Municipalities - persons in charge of tourism	September 2018
2.	Creating and updating of a database on tourism products to be jointly promoted by cross-border municipalities	Mediana and Montana Municipalities - persons in charge of tourism; local tourism organisations	From July 2018 onwards - continuous activity
3.	Developing a network of relationships among the key stakeholders with the aim to implement tourism promotion activities	Mediana and Montana municipalities - local tourism organisations, tourism offer holders from the municipal territories	From July 2018 onwards - continuous activity
4.	Focusing on key products offered by destinations (thematic tours, special interests) for which joint promotion is desirable (cultural tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, etc.)	Mediana and Montana Municipalities, local tourism organisations	From September 2018 onwards

5.	Creating joint propaganda campaigns for targeted markets	Persons in charge of tourism development in municipalities, local tourism organisations, organisations operating in tourism sector	Implementation of activities initiated– Continuous task
6.	Creating a joint website and various platforms/ applications for tourism products promotion	Organisations and institutions engaged by those responsible for tourism development in Mediana and Montana municipalities	Continuous task
7.	Planning and implementing informing and training programmes intended for the key subjects and groups relevant for the development of tourism	Educational institutions and consulting organisations	From September 2018 onwards
8.	Preparation of joint projects, networking of partners for using the resources from EU funds	Managements of Mediana and Montana municipalities	Timeframe compliant with the terms of the calls for joint projects
9.	Follow-up of the effects of joint promotion based on evaluation of key stakeholders', particularly tourists' satisfaction	Organisations, institutions qualified for the implementation of such activities	From January 2019 onwards

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