

DESTINATION MARKETING PLAN

D4.4.1

WP 4 - SMART STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR
INNOVATIVE ADRIATIC TOURISM DESTINATION,
PRODUCTS & SERVICES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Destination marketing plan is based on a clearly defined strategic framework with elaborated goals of market positioning, communication, and promotion of the Adriatic region as a go-to destination for slow tourism. Envisioned goals aim to create preconditions for attracting desired target groups and strengthening the green concepts of the tourist offer of the Adriatic. Furthermore, the organisation of clear communication channels with market positioning and promotion through a recognisable brand includes cooperation and association of material and intangible aspects of all parts of the Adriatic region that make up its unique identity. Likewise, creating a quality destination marketing plan can indirectly contribute to the region's sustainable development. For this reason, the drafting of this document has been recognised as one of the essential components of the *TAKE IT SLOW – Smart and Slow Tourism Supporting Adriatic Heritage for Tomorrow* project (hereinafter: TAKE IT SLOW), within which it is being drafted. The project aims to combine innovation, smart specialisation, and local heritage to improve the current tourist offer through redefined or new and innovative tourist products.

The prerequisite for developing a quality destination marketing plan is to identify the balance between the type and quality of the tourist offer, the market trends, and the existing resources. As the current offer affects the possibility of positioning and promoting in the market, a quality destination marketing plan with a clear communication strategy, positioning and promotion create preconditions for strengthening the mentioned offer. Moreover, it develops the means of attracting desired target groups and controlling the type and intensity of tourism in the observed area.

Accordingly, this document presents the strategic goals and guidelines for positioning, communication, and promotion of the Adriatic region, i.e., its natural and cultural heritage, on the chosen emitting markets in correlation with the specific goal of the project – make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development.

2. STRATEGIC GOALS

Based on the available resources and potentials identified and analysed in the Assessment of natural and cultural heritage, three main strategic goals have been defined. They were elaborated with the vision and mission to present the Adriatic region as a sustainable, innovative, and ecologically aware multicultural Mediterranean area with rich natural and cultural heritage that is best to be explored and experienced through the concept of slow tourism. Moreover, envisioned strategy is elaborated through operational goals with defined activities and desired results.

Strategic goals of the destination marketing plan for the Adriatic region are as follows:

2.1. Strategic goal 1 – Embrace, intertwined yet diverse heritage as the identity of the Adriatic

Operative goal	Activity	Results
2.1.1. Valorisation of natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic	2.1.1.1. Developing and/or adapting interpretative centres and walking/cycling route networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improved presentation, preservation, and accessibility of different aspects of natural and cultural heritage - enhanced tourist offer and increased number of desired target groups.
	2.1.1.2. Utilising heritage through cross-sectoral cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete valorisation of heritage through participatory approach and in collaboration with different industries enabling a holistic experience of the destination - strengthened tourist offer and increased the number of desired target groups.
	2.1.1.3. Natural and cultural heritage as a resource for marketing storytelling and place branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhanced interpretation of the heritage - acquainting with the heritage on a personal level

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating emotional connections between the Adriatic and desired target groups - increase WOMM and visibility of the destination - strengthened tourist offer and increased number of desired target groups
	<p>2.1.1.4. Using new technologies in interpreting and promoting heritage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhanced presentation and accessibility of natural and cultural heritage - strengthened tourist offer and increased number of desired target groups
<p>2.1.2. Sensitising local communities</p>	<p>2.1.2.1. Organising local round tables on common features that connect different cultures and nations on the Adriatic and value of their local heritage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engaged local community in preservation and presentation of the local heritage - creating a common Adriatic identity - enhanced international cooperation and promotion of the Adriatic
	<p>2.1.2.2. Place branding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating opportunities for social innovation

2.2. Strategic goal 2 – The Pace, Adriatic as the go-to slow tourism destination

Operative goal	Activity	Results
2.2.1. Promoting slow tourism	2.2.1.1. Promoting the Adriatic region as the centre of slow tourism and relaxation	- increased visibility and higher number of tourists from the target groups and markets
	2.2.1.2. Developing online and offline promotional content	
	2.2.1.3. Highlighting green aspects of slow tourism and its benefits for the environment as well as more comprehensive experience of the destination	- the increased use of green concepts of mobility - contribution to reducing pressure on the environment
2.2.2. Familiarising local stakeholders and communities with the slow tourism concept	2.2.2.1. Organising educational workshops on slow tourism	- developed and competent human resources in the niche
	2.2.2.2. Stimulating cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation	- strengthened cooperation among relevant actors - increased competitiveness of the Adriatic on the tourist market - improved value chain
2.2.3. Promoting a slow-paced, relaxed lifestyle of the Adriatic region	2.2.3.1. Online and offline promotion of Adriatic "slow-going" culture	- greater visibility and higher number of tourists from the target groups and markets
	2.2.3.2. Encouraging collaboration with social media content creators and travel bloggers	

2.3. Strategic goal 3 – Adriatic experience, slow and smart tourism offer as a driver for sustainable development

Operative goal	Activity	Results
2.3.1. Promoting richness of the Adriatic heritage	2.3.1.1. Utilising natural and cultural heritage as tourist products of slow tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - valorised heritage - enhanced and more sustainable tourist offer - creating an emotional connection between local communities and heritage
	2.3.1.2. Enhancing and promoting the eno-gastro offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased visibility of Adriatic specifics of the protected Mediterranean diet - strengthened tourist offer and increased number of the desired target group - contributing to place branding
	2.3.1.3. Creating integrated tourist products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthened tourist products offering a holistic experience of the destination in line with slow tourism concepts - increased competitiveness of the Adriatic on the tourist market - contributing to economic growth
2.3.2. Advertising slow tourism as a leverage	2.3.2.1. Organising round tables on positive socio-economic impacts of slow tourism	- favourable conditions for developing slow tourism in pursuance of territorial development
	2.3.2.2. Encouraging smart specialisation in slow tourism	- increased competitiveness, tourist offer and value chain

3. TARGET MARKETING STRATEGY

3.1. Geographic segmentation

To achieve the above-said strategic and operational goals, it is first necessary to define appropriate target markets in which the Adriatic will be promoted and marketed. Since the Adriatic region encompasses several different countries, even the area's internal marketing is set on an international level. Therefore, to achieve communication and promotion on a wider scale, it is necessary to develop cross-border cooperation between all relevant stakeholders from all countries involved in the project (and beyond). Thus, the first marketing communication area is defined within a 550 km driving radius from the pilot projects. Defined mileage includes most capitals, large cities, and regions in the Adriatic area, allowing transnational marketing positioning, communication, and destination promotion in different emitting markets. **(Pogreška! Izvor reference nije pronađen.)** Moreover, the aforementioned range compiles all countries on the Adriatic, i.e. Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania, and enables positioning of the area on the local market, in accordance with the vision of the destination marketing plan for Adriatic, to promote the Adriatic as a multicultural, diverse rural, sustainable, smart and ecologically aware Mediterranean area, oriented to slow tourism. Likewise, the emitting reach of 550km furthers the promotion of the Adriatic to the tourist markets of several surrounding countries and their capitals, such as Serbia, Austria, and Switzerland. Key messages to promote among desired target groups in this marketing communications area should address proximity of the destination and attract travellers to explore the unknown surroundings and discover the relations of the common heritage they share with their closest neighbours. In view of the sea as the medial element that connects the examined area, sea travel along the emitting market should be considered as well. This is foremost directed towards larger port cities and towns in Italy and Croatia.

Secondly, considering a wider international and transnational market, the communication and promotion strategy ought to be oriented towards larger emitting European countries, especially those in the hinterland and on the Northern coast of the continent. Adriatic region can position itself on these markets as a relaxing area in the south, offering a holistic experience of the desired vacation. Apart from the car, other European countries are likewise connected to the Adriatic region by the railway network (Fig. 2). Therefore, travelling towards the chosen Adriatic destination can be achieved by greener concepts of mobility, which is at the same time in accordance with the slow tourism concept and general sustainable development goals, and should be promoted as such.

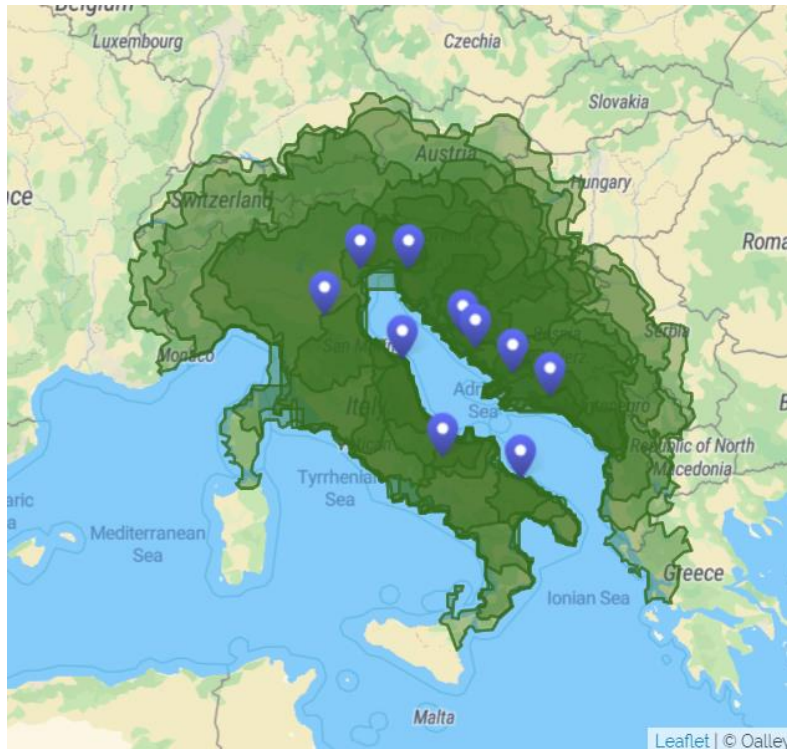


Fig. 1. Target market in the 550km driving radius from the pilot projects
 Source: Oalley, Driving-radius map application, 2021 (<https://www.oalley.net/app/map/2r4m3>)



Fig. 2. European railway network system
 Source: EurailMap, 2021 (<https://www.eurail.com/content/dam/pdfs/eurail/Eurail-Map-2021.pdf>)

Lastly, this destination plan is likewise set to position the Adriatic on a global tourist market to attract desired target groups in America, Australia, and Asia. Those markets relate to the Adriatic by various means of travel, primarily air travel and cruises. Key messages to these remote areas should highlight the long tradition and richness of the cultural heritage and the beauty and biodiversity of the intact natural landscapes; all offered to be explored in a relaxing, holistic, and green manner.

Therefore, three emitting levels for the promotion of the Adriatic have been defined in this destination marketing plan. Characteristics of the said target areas are described in the table below:

Target area	Reach	Communication	Key messages
Primary (countries within the Adriatic region and in closest surroundings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emitting reach of 550km driving radius from the pilot projects - reaching around 1 million people - bike, car, or sea travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online and offline communication on local, regional, national, and transnational level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity - common cultural and natural heritage - explore the unknown surroundings in a sustainable way
Secondary (Europe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - primarily train travel - reaching around 600 million people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online communication on a transnational and international level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relax in the south - fully experience the Adriatic at a slow pace - travel greener
Tertiary (America, Australia, Asia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - primarily air travel and cruises - reaching remote large emitting markets such as the USA, Canada, Australia, China, India etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online communication on a global level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unwind in an ancient region in the south of Europe, rich with an intriguing history and intact alluring landscapes - feel, taste, and get into the Adriatic's lifestyle

3.2. Psychographic segmentation

3.2.1. Target groups

The idea of slow tourism is to attract travellers interested in discovering the destination's natural and cultural heritage by immersing in the local lifestyle. "Slow" tourist is willing to gain the whole experience and learn about different aspects of the chosen destination. Therefore, desired target groups should not only be seen as customers but as guests. Furthermore, since slow tourism can be set as an umbrella term under which a variety of activities and features can be ascribed, communication and promotion are oriented towards all age groups – the young, middle-aged, and elderly, i.e., to anyone who wishes to spend their vacation according to slow tourism postulates. Therefore, in line with the above-said strategic goals and considering the tourist offer in the pilot projects, defined target groups for the Adriatic region are as follows:

- cultural tourists
- travellers interested in enogastronomy (foodies)
- nature lovers
- cyclotourists and other sports tourists
- travellers interested in an active vacation
- environmentalists
- pilgrims and religious tourists
- school excursions
- business travellers

In addition to communicating outwards, it is necessary to present the Adriatic region to its inhabitants. The local population should, through marketing communication, be encouraged to strive to achieve envisioned strategic goals. That said, promotional content needs to raise awareness among the locals about the positive socio-economic impact that slow and smart tourism could have on their region, as well as on their overall wellbeing. Likewise, promoting the need for new social models can create opportunities for developing a stable, inclusive, and satisfied society.

3.2.2. Report on traveller types

Profiling target groups contributes to developing adequate marketing communication, strengthens competitiveness and helps position Adriatic on the desired target markets. Attracting diverse target groups with different inclinations is likewise beneficial to reducing seasonality.

Target groups can be categorised according to age, where each age group (with approximate year span) has its specifics regarding needs, preferences, and available budget. Hence, different age groups likewise outline distinct emitting areas and help define adequate communication canals for the desired target groups. All the above-said aspects create the profile of the target groups, i.e., of the traveller types:

Age group	Characteristics	Communication	Target group
Young people (15-25 yrs.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keen on an adventurous and active vacation - visiting specialised manifestations and places - school trips that involve sightseeing local natural and cultural attractions - mainly informed over the internet - have a small spending budget - travel over weekends, holidays, semester breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online information services, specialised portals, social media - primary and secondary emitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - foodies - nature lovers - cyclotourists and other sports tourists - travellers interested in an active vacation - environmentalists - pilgrims and religious tourists - school excursions
DINKs (>18 yrs.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prone to trying out local gastronomy and exploring natural and cultural attractions - mainly informed over the internet (usually self-informed), but use traditional marketing canals as well - larger spending budget - travelling often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online information services, specialised portals, social media, info centres at the destination - all emitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - foodies - nature lovers - cyclotourists and other sports tourists - environmentalists - pilgrims and religious tourists

<p>DEWKs (25-45 yrs.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - means of travel and consumption of tourist products are subordinated to children needs - informed by both traditional and digital canals - have sensitive, but larger, spending budget - mainly travel during summer and school breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WOMM, info centres at the destination, online information services, specialised portals - primary and secondary emitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - nature lovers - travellers interested in an active vacation - pilgrims and religious tourists
<p>Empty nesters (45-65 yrs.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - looking for the holistic experience of the destination - informed mainly by traditional marketing canals, but use online media as well (self-informed) - large spending budget - travelling often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WOMM, info centres at the destination, promotional pamphlets, specialised portals - all emitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - foodies - nature lovers - environmentalists - pilgrims and religious tourists
<p>Elderly (> 65 yrs.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keen on a particular activity and holistically approaching the visit - informed by traditional canals - sensitive spending budget - travelling all year round 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WOMM, info centres at the destination, promotional pamphlets - primary emitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - foodies - nature lovers - environmentalists
<p>Working population (18 – 65 yrs.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - looking for relaxation - business trip that involves sightseeing local natural and cultural attractions - defined, usually smaller, spending budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specialised portals - primary and secondary emitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - business travellers

Considering the possible types of travellers and the strategic goals of the destination marketing plan, it is possible to sketch the profile of an ideal traveller to the Adriatic region. The idea is to present an example of the potential guest in line with the target marketing strategy to help the project partners to position their pilot project on the most suitable markets. Therefore, the "ideal" traveller for the Adriatic region as the go-to destination for smart and slow tourism is as follows:

Example	1	2	3
Name	Lukács	Sabine	Min
Age	21 yrs.	43 yrs.	67 yrs.
Country	Hungary	Belgium	China
Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - loves hiking, cycling and scuba diving - looking for adventure and to explore unknown and preserved natural landscapes - will use tourist apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wants to spend time relaxing at the beach - keen on learning about the local history, especially in terms of religious art and architecture - will participate in thematic tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keen on trying out local gastronomy and learning about the Mediterranean diet - interested in cultural manifestations and folklore - will participate in thematic workshops
Travelling characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - informed over social media - travelling with friends - will stay for 2-3 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-informed about the destination after a recommendation from a friend - travels with family - will stay for 7 days in a central location while exploring the surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - informed over specialised portals - travels with a partner - will stay for 14 days in a central location and explore a wider area

4. MARKET POSITIONING STRATEGY

The goal of the destination marketing plan is to promote the slow tourism experience of the Adriatic region. The key message is to emit the idea of slowing down the pace to fully appreciate the natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic's. To enable desired target groups to do so, the content of the tourist offer must be made in all respects accessible to every social group, especially to the elderly and people with disabilities. This includes adapting and building visiting infrastructure that caters to the needs of people with disabilities and developing digital content to help present the natural and cultural heritage and interpret it innovatively.

Picturesque historic settlements, impressive architecture, and a thousand-year tradition are invaluable assets of the Adriatic region. Therefore, one of the key objectives of this destination marketing plan is to properly valorise, utilise and present the cultural heritage of the Adriatic. Improving accessibility, building interpretative and creative centres, and enhancing visibility through signalisation and marking will significantly strengthen the tourist offer and attract the desired target groups. Furthermore, adequate infrastructure and innovative presentation with accompanying marketing communication will not only increase the number of cultural tourists from all emitting markets but will attract more school excursions from the region and therefore indirectly contribute to educating the local community about the value of cultural heritage and its protection preservation.

Adequately valorising, utilising, and promoting the ecclesiastical heritage of the Adriatic that includes churches, monastery complexes and hermitages from various periods will enhance religious tourism and attract pilgrims from all desired target markets. Likewise, including ancient religious sites and sacral building into the routes and learning about religions prior to Christianity will enrich and extend the offer and attract pilgrims and religious tourists eager to be introduced to various beliefs and religions.

Another vital feature of the Adriatic is its culinary tradition. The Mediterranean diet is recognised and protected by UNESCO as the world's intangible heritage, and Adriatic dishes make a large part of this diet. Therefore, this plan likewise focuses on promoting culinary traditions, skills, and authentic products of the Adriatic to travellers interested in enogastronomy (foodies). The prerequisite for achieving that is to invest in smart specialisation in relevant sectors and establish concrete cooperation between local producers and the tourist sector, respectively, value chains. Said collaborations would enable presenting high quality fresh, authentic, and organic products to tourists in line with contemporary trends on the tourism market. Supporting local farmers and

sustainable concepts of the economy will have long-term positive effects for the Adriatic region and contribute to territorial development as well as to achieving UNs sustainable development goals

Slow tourism should not solely be seen as the concept of slowing down the pace, and, for example, it can include aspects of adventure tourism. Adriatic region is abundant with breath-taking natural landscapes and attractions where travellers interested in active vacation and sport tourist can engage in hiking, free-climbing, mountain biking, cross country, sky diving, scuba diving etc. Moreover, a variety of islets, especially on the eastern Adriatic coast, and forests, mountains, and isolated valleys are ideal for Robinson tourism.

Another form of active vacation is cyclotourism. Offering cycling through themed routes along both cultural and natural attractions while following itineraries and maps on mobile applications simultaneously attract travellers interested in the nature and culture of the destination as well as travellers looking for an active vacation. In addition, cycling is an excellent example of a green and sustainable concept of mobility that contributes to reducing the pressure on the environment. Therefore, tourist offer oriented towards green and eco-friendly content will attract environmentalists and help raise awareness about the environment.

As stated, the natural heritage of the Adriatic region is an important resource for creating opportunities to promote the area diversely and position it in various branches of the tourism market. Thus, a smart, sustainable approach to valorising the natural heritage and its protection is set as one of the main objectives in the presented strategic goals. Preservation of the natural heritage will benefit the tourism and economy and the overall wellbeing of the ecosystem and the community.

Aside from addressing mentioned target groups, the Adriatic region can position itself on the market as a slow-paced destination for relaxing team buildings and other MICE activities, ideal for companies coming from large urban areas and looking to unwind from their hectic lifestyle. Analogous messages can be conveyed towards digital nomads as well.

To achieve the above-said objectives of the marketing posing strategy, all relevant stakeholders should be engaged in intersectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation, while competent bodies managing natural and cultural heritage should have a concise vision and elaborated plans for valorisation and socio-economic integration of the heritage.

5. TOURISM PRODUCT PORTFOLIO STRATEGY

The structure of the tourism product portfolio is in line with the branding concept of the Adriatic region. It valorises the existing resources and creates opportunities to reduce the seasonality of the tourist offer in the pilot projects on the Adriatic. In doing so, the designed tourist products result from the necessary cross-border cooperation and networking of all tangible and intangible aspects that make up the tourist offer of the Adriatic. The development process and the promotion of tourism products are the responsibility of a wide range of relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including small family providers, caterers, farmers, company management, and cultural workers. For the tourism product portfolio to completely reflect the tangible and intangible culture and the region's designed brand, it is necessary to involve the local community in developing and promoting tourist products. The manner and level of communication, support, cooperation, and networking among these actors will ultimately affect the level of competitiveness of the tourist offer of the Adriatic region on the market. Therefore, in certain aspects of strategic goals, the emphasis is on educating the local community and relevant stakeholders.

Tourism product portfolio strategy is envisioned as follows:

Cultural tourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sightseeing and exploring cultural heritage (archaeological sites, buildings, fortifications, and old historic city centres) of the Adriatic region following an itinerary provided on a mobile application - visiting museum and visitor centres interpreting local cultural history and natural landscapes - storytelling tours along the cultural routes presenting common Adriatic heritage connected since the Greco-Roman period; telling tales of Greek colonisation, Roman Empire, Medieval castles, and maritime trading routes of Venetian and Ragusa Republics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - nature lovers - travellers interested in an active vacation - all age groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participating in cultural manifestations and learning about local intangible heritage 	
Eno-gastro tourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -trying local Adriatic gastronomy, eating organic and slow-cooked authentic and local traditional dishes, characteristic of the Mediterranean diet - tasting various wines and exploring wine roads across the Adriatic - educative workshops of preparing Roman dishes following authentic recipes from preserved cookbooks - exploring dishes where salt is the key ingredient, learning about salt processing, historic salt routes and its socio-economic importance - participating in local eno-gastro festivals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - foodies - travellers interested in an active vacation - all age groups
Cyclotourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exploring local natural (natural landscapes, protected areas) and cultural attractions (archaeological sites, villas, castles etc.) along planned thematic bike itineraries presented in the mobile application - reward package with local souvenirs for reached mileage in the destination that the app has set - bike routes following ancient trading routes along the Adriatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - nature lovers - cyclotourists and other sports tourists - travellers interested in an active vacation - young and middle-aged groups
Rural and eco-tourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experiencing slow-moving rural life and learning about living heritage on local farms - "live for a day as a local" themed workshops about everyday life at the Adriatic in various periods; learning about cultural history and ethnology of the area - partaking in planned thematic walking tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourists - nature lovers - environmentalists - travellers interested in an active vacation - all age groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exploring local natural attractions by green concepts of mobility - animal watching 	
Adventure tourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hiking, free-climbing, mountain biking, cross country, sky diving, scuba diving etc. in natural landscapes of the Adriatic - Robinson tourism in isolated places (remote islands, lighthouses, forests, valleys, and mountains) in intact nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cyclotourists and other sports tourists - travellers interested in an active vacation - young and middle-aged groups
Religious tourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sightseeing and pilgrimaging ecclesiastical heritage (churches, monasteries, hermitages, sacred sites) of the Adriatic region - educative routes connecting ancient sacral sites and temples; learning about the religions before Christianity - participating in local processions; learning about local tradition and interconnections of various nations of the Adriatic through religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pilgrims and religious tourists - all age groups
Business tourism	
Product	Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - team building and other MICE activities that involve sightseeing local natural and cultural attractions and interpretative centres - educational school trips that include learning about the local natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - school excursions - business travellers

6. COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION STRATEGY

The PR slogan of the TAKE IT SLOW project is "*Embrace the pace of Adriatic heritage experience.*" Thus, marketing communication and promotion strategy is oriented towards advertising unique aspects of tangible and intangible heritage that can be seen and explored in the Adriatic region, highlighting an easy-going lifestyle. The focus is set on promoting to slow down and embrace the slow tourism concept to comprehensively feel, taste, explore and experience the Adriatic lifestyle and appreciate its natural and cultural heritage. The idea is to entice the feeling among the travellers as if they are guests invited to partake in the community's everyday life and not just customers of local tourist products.

6.1. Marketing and promotional content

6.1.1. Online and offline promotional activities

Creating content for online and offline marketing communication and promotion has a key role in conveying the aforementioned message towards desired target groups in all emitting areas.

Predominantly, communication and promotion of the Adriatic ought to be implemented through digital channels, which has become an indispensable means of communicating with the market in modern destination marketing. Digital technology enables positioning and promoting the destination globally and provides desired target groups with quality and up to date information fast. To achieve quality communication and attract the target groups, it is necessary to optimise existing and develop new Internet resources, make them heterogeneous and equipped with an adequate number of service information. Accordingly, it is crucial to have well developed official web pages of the Tourist Boards on all levels. National and regional Tourist Boards are central points of the Adriatic region's digital visibility. Their synergy and international cooperation are a prerequisite for effective and efficient promotion on the market. Apart from promoting local, regional, or national specifics, Tourist Boards, with the support of other actors, should strive to promote the whole Adriatic region as an epitome of different cultures and nations it encompasses, each unique in its way yet intertwined.

Furthermore, developing additional websites, social media profiles and collaborations with social media content creators will attain wider digital visibility, whereas investing in mobile applications

will strengthen tourist offer and help promote and interpret natural and cultural heritage in a new and innovative way.

Result indicators for the above-said communication strategy will be the number of:

- recorded visits to the websites,
- followers and their engagement in social media profiles, and
- users of the developed applications.

On the other hand, the performance indicator will be an increased number of arrivals of target groups to the destination, i.e., the Adriatic region.

Offline communication with the market and promotion of specific segments of the Adriatic should take place mainly in the framework of educational workshops and through promotional materials, for instance, pamphlets, posters, and banners disseminated at info centres and during organised events. According to the set strategic goals, result indicators will be the number of participants in the mentioned workshops and the number of accompanying media releases. Furthermore, parallel to online promotion, the success of these activities will be reflected in the number of arrivals of desired target groups, especially from the primary emitting market.

Aside from self-promotion, satisfying customers/guests by providing quality tourist products and a positive travelling experience will contribute to WOMM (word-of-mouth marketing), respectively costless promotion of the destination among the target groups.

6.1.2. Internal marketing

Since the Adriatic region comprises several countries, its internal marketing has international and transnational dimensions, requiring quality cooperation of numerous stakeholders from multiple relevant sectors.

The general purpose of internal marketing is to raise awareness among the actors within the Adriatic on the importance and significance of cooperation and synergy in the realisation of strategic goals. Internal marketing aims to motivate all relevant actors to be oriented towards the development of smart and sustainable slow tourism products. Likewise, they should strive to creating satisfied and loyal customers/guests from the desired target groups and content the local community. In accordance with the mission and vision of the destination marketing plan defined through strategic goals, the aim is to create an emotional connection between the local population of the Adriatic with its brand that presents it as a slow-paced, sustainable, innovative, and

environmentally conscious multicultural Mediterranean area, rich with natural and cultural heritage waiting to be fully experienced.

Activities to achieve internal marketing goals include:

- creating educational workshops for engaged actors and local community on the positive socio-economic impact of slow tourism and smart specialisation
- sensitise the local community about the common Adriatic identity and how their local natural and cultural heritage relates to the surroundings
- promoting good practices in slow tourism, cross-sectoral cooperation, and realisation of set strategic goals
- organising study visits

6.1.3. Example of marketing content per target market and heritage type

The table below showcases several examples of which tourist product, elaborated earlier in the text, can be marketed to which target market according to the type of heritage. Certain products combine both natural and cultural heritage. Therefore, a third column gives example of mixed products that integrate natural and cultural heritage.

		Product		
		Natural heritage	Cultural heritage	Mixed heritage
Target market	Primary	- hiking, free-climbing, mountain biking, cross country, sky diving, scuba diving etc. in natural landscapes of the Adriatic	- storytelling tours along the cultural routes presenting common Adriatic heritage	- educational school trips that include learning about the local natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic - team building and other MICE activities that involve sightseeing local natural and cultural attractions and interpretative centres

	Secondary	- exploring local natural attractions by green concepts of mobility (walking, cycling)	- sightseeing and exploring archaeological sites, buildings, fortifications, old historic city centres etc. of the Adriatic region following an itinerary provided on a mobile application	- sightseeing and pilgrimaging ecclesiastical heritage (churches, monasteries, hermitages, sacred sites) of the Adriatic region
	Tertiary	- Robinson tourism in isolated places (remote islands, lighthouses, forests, valleys, and mountains) in intact nature - animal watching	- trying local Adriatic gastronomy, eating organic and slow-cooked authentic and local traditional dishes, characteristic of the Mediterranean diet	- tasting various wines and exploring wine roads across the Adriatic - bike routes following ancient trading routes along the Adriatic

6.1.4. Suggestions for creating promotional content

To communicate with the target groups effectively and efficiently, it is important to apply integrated marketing communication that includes various forms of online and offline communication mentioned earlier in the text. In addition, it is proposed to create and include promotional materials, press releases, statements, press conferences, PR articles, events, newsletter campaigns etc. that will emit the identity of the Adriatic brand as a go-to destination for a smart and slow tourism oriented towards natural and cultural heritage. Suggested promotional content that can contribute to better marketing positioning, visibility and place branding of the Adriatic region is listed below:

- flyers, brochures, posters, photos presenting natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic
- handcrafted souvenirs presenting authentic Mediterranean produce and folklore
- themed journey diaries (pilgrimage, medieval castles, salt routes etc.)
- branded cycling amenities made from recycled material (bottle holders, caps, gloves, key chains etc.)

- branded business binders and pens
- specific hashtag for social media in line the brand (e.g. *#adriaticexperience*)

Likewise, creating a common Adriatic mascot could strengthen its visual identity and enhance its online and offline marketing communication. Above-said examples are applicable to the whole macro-region. However, according to specific pilot projects, local promotional content can be oriented as follows:

Location	Promotional content
Town of Ston and Pelješac peninsula	- cooking brochures and books about local gastronomy and “slow-food”
Blaca Hermitage on Brač Island	- various souvenirs with Glagolitic alphabet
Murter island	- replicas of Roman ceramics, jewellery and swords with inscribed Colentum
Ravni kotari	- local wine in boxes decorated in preromanesque motives and local ethnographic ornaments
Momjan	- medieval inspired cycling and hiking itineraries
Friuli Venezia Giulia region	- hiking kits with recycled multipurpose utensils and a map with local attractions
The Brenta River	- mobile adventure clue game app including Venetian villas
Emilia Romagna region	- bottle with a bottle holder that opens into the cycling itinerary along the Via Romagna
Marche region – Monastery of Fonte Avellana	- brochures and books on recycled paper about sustainable land and forest management, handcrafted wooden products and educational games for children to discover the human-nature relation.
Trabocchi coast	- dinning in the reconstructed traditional fishing machine on piles
Via Francigena del Sud	- diaries for self-reflection with pilgrimage itinerary along the Via Francigena

6.2. Promotion of cultural and natural heritage

The TAKE IT SLOW project aims to make natural and cultural heritage assets for sustainable and more balanced territorial development through smart and slow tourism. To convey this idea, it is necessary to analyse the tourist offer's content and elaborate guidelines for interpretation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage on the desired target markets in line with the strategic goals. The analysis is based on data collected from questionnaires filled in by the project partners.

6.2.1. Natural and cultural resources

Pilot locations participating in the project represent what can be experienced in the Adriatic under slow tourism principles. The following table showcases the content (existing and to be developed within the project) and accessibility of the pilot projects, as well as their offer regarding slow tourism and cultural connection to the macro-region, i.e., the Adriatic.

Location	Content and accessibility	Offer	Connections
Town of Ston and Pelješac peninsula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gastronomy-related heritage of the Pelješac peninsula - interpretation centre in Rector's palace in Ston - location is well connected to its surroundings but should be more accessible in terms of providing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "slow food" products with an emphasis on wine, oysters, and olives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - history of the relationship between Republic of Ragusa and Venetians
Blaca Hermitage on Brač Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ecclesiastical heritage (hermitages and caves) from the 15th and 16th century situated in a protected natural landscape - Eco-Museum - location is currently lacking logistics to be sufficiently accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - integrated presentation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Blaca valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - religious connections, history of relations with religious representatives from Rome and Vatican

Murter island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of archaeological heritage together with local gastronomy - Archaeological park <i>Colentum</i> - location is accessible by car, bike or on foot and advertised by the local tourist board and NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cycling within the archaeological park - local gastronomy offer inspired by Antiquity and local history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Antique amber route that spread from western to eastern coasts of Adriatic - the city of <i>Colentum</i> was an important station on the route
Ravni kotari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -tangible and intangible heritage related to traditional gastronomy and recipes (e.g., <i>prisnac</i>) - the area is very well connected with its surroundings and acceptably accessible in terms of providing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experiencing local autochthonous living, produce and gastronomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - military history, architecture, and technology - fortification system was first built as a defence against Venetians and later for the joint protection against Ottomans - Benkovac Heritage Museum exhibits a cannon designed by Leonardo da Vinci
Momjan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of architectural heritage from the medieval period together with natural heritage and local gastronomy - virtual museum and creative centre House of Istrian castles - location is accessible by car, bike or bus and is already a well-known destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - holistic experience of the architectural heritage of medieval Istrian castles, cultural and natural heritage through cycling and hiking routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - art history - sacral art, especially frescoes

<p>Friuli Venezia Giulia region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hiking routes along the region's natural and cultural attractions - routes are accessible and promoted on the specialised portals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - itineraries with hiking routes to fully experience the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural history - Roman Empire
<p>The Brenta River</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of Venetian villas along the Riviera del Brenta through cycling and hiking routes - accessibility should be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - integrated presentation of natural and cultural heritage through slow and smart cycling and hiking routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maritime trading routes
<p>Emilia Romagna region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cycling route along the Via Romagna - location is well connected to its surroundings and accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presenting natural and cultural heritage and gastronomy through cycling itineraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the sea that brings together two similar territories from a historical and natural point of view, but different in uses, customs and gastronomy
<p>Marche region – Monastery of Fonte Avellana</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the location is promoted on specialised portals but should be improved in terms of logistics and providing information - the accessibility of the intangible cultural heritage of the Forest Codex of Camaldoli should be improved in terms of providing information and digital innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - synergic and sustainable tourist offer with cultural history and religious dimension - integrated presentation of local natural and cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - religious network - spiritual and meditation approach in cultural heritage site to act as booster of sustainable tourism in the region
<p>Trabocchi coast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cycling route through the Trabocchi coast - the route is not completely accessible and should be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cycling and leisure activities combined with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mediterranean diet

		trying local gastronomy	
Via Francigena del Sud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exploring local religious history from paganism to Christianity and natural landscapes - accessibility should be improved in terms of providing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - slow and smart walking route along Via Francigena and other 0 KM products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural heritage and related intangible heritage - karst landscapes and stonework

Comparison of the analysed pilot projects reveals which segments of natural and cultural heritage utilisation have possibilities for improvement and their future development orientation. Ameliorating accessibility of the locations is underlined as one of the prerequisites for better promotion of the heritage. Likewise, analysis displays a common perception of a long tradition of relationships among different cultures on the Adriatic and their intertwined heritage. This is a great asset for building place branding and cooperation and networking of different stakeholders, which is highly beneficial for promoting the natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic.

6.2.2. Guidelines for interpretation and promotion of CB cultural and natural heritage

Main objective of interpretation of heritage is to explain the meaning of natural and cultural heritage, while its promotion contributes to its visibility. Thus, both activities contribute to enhancing understanding, appreciation and protection of the natural and cultural sites. To define key points of focus in interpretation and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage, project partners should identify:

- local specifics and how they relate to the Adriatic,
- accessibility of the heritage they want to present,
- relevant stakeholders and possible value chains,
- ways to integrate the heritage into slow and smart tourist products, and
- target markets and groups

This will provide orientation, answer key questions (What?, Where?, How? To whom?) and enable defining course and means of interpretation and promotion based on local characteristics,

considering more extensive macro-area, i.e., the Adriatic. Identified key points together with the data provided in the Assessment of cultural and natural heritage are the basis for establishing a target of interpretation and promotion of local heritage. In defining the outright target, there are several aspects to be identified:

- Is it achievable?,
- What are short-term effects?,
- What are long-term effects?, and
- Can it be applicable beyond the project?.

Interpretation helps visitors develop a sensitivity to their surroundings and realize the importance of history and the environment. It enriches visitors' impressions, raises awareness and stimulates appropriate models of behavior towards heritage. One of the most important aspects of interpretation of natural and cultural heritage is the way it is visually presented. Visual interpretation should comprehensively and clearly convey the message to the viewer. There are various means to visually transmit the message through on-site info panels, signalisation, or QR codes. Likewise, introducing new technologies in visual representation offers numerous possibilities to interpret the heritage in a new and innovative way, as well as to make it more approachable to people with disabilities and reduced mobility. Moreover, interpretative centres and museum enable comprehensive interpretation of natural and cultural heritage through their exhibitions, while organised thematic tours or workshops offer more creative and personal approach.

Means of visual interpretation are summarised in the table below:

Natural heritage	Cultural heritage
- viewing platforms (panoramas)	- on-site info panels
- on-site info panels	- signalisation
- signalisation	- guided tours
- guided tours	- new technologies (AR,VR,MR)
- thematic trails	- mobile apps
- audio-visual tools	- handcrafted souvenirs
- handcrafted souvenirs	- re-enactment festivals
- workshops	- living history
- interpretative centres	- museums

Involving actors from different sectors and industries, especially cultural and creative industries, will contribute to achieving quality and innovative visual material. Therefore, a participative approach is highly desired in defining visual interpretation. In terms of content in the pilot projects, visual interpretation of local heritage should present the subject and highlight its relation to the Adriatic region. To connect the local natural and cultural heritage with the Adriatic as a whole, a developed common Adriatic visual identity should be used on the pilot projects in visual interpretation and promotion.

Furthermore, interpretation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage are best through storytelling. Heritage is an inexhaustible source of interesting stories that illustrate past relationships and events that shaped today's local way of life. Interpreting heritage through storytelling creates an emotional connection between local community and heritage and helps foreign travellers familiarise themselves with the destination. Thus, such an approach corresponds to slow tourism postulates and contributes to a holistic experience. Moreover, since heritage connects all pilot projects, storytelling will likewise strengthen their common Adriatic identity and help promote the region.

General promotional instruments and channels to approach the desired market have been presented earlier in the document. The exact means of arriving at the target market apply to the micro-region, i.e., the pilot projects. How and to whom will heritage be promoted depends on mentioned key points and the aim that is to be set on a local level. Considering the aim of the TAKE IT SLOW project, and the international (cross-border) element, promotion ought to be oriented towards online communication. It should be underlined that cooperation among all relevant stakeholders and local communities is highly desired in implementing quality promotional activities.

Lastly, smart specialisation in certain cultural and creative industries segments will enhance the prospects of achieving quality and adequate interpretation and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage and contribute to achieving strategic goals elaborated in this destination marketing plan.