TAKE IT SLOW

Smart and Slow Tourism Supporting Adriatic Heritage for Tomorrow

MARKETING AND

PROMOTIONAL CONTENT

Public Institution Development Agency of Šibenik-Knin County

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1. INTRODUCTION

Document *Marketing and promotional content* defines promotional content more precisely, with the main emphasis on digital marketing tools to promote the goals of the project TAKE IT SLOW - *Smart and Slow Tourism Supporting Adriatic Heritage for Tomorrow* project (hereinafter: "TAKE IT SLOW"). The TAKE IT SLOW project aims to establish and promote the Adriatic region as a smart, integrated, sustainable, accessible, year-round, green, and slow tourist destination of the Mediterranean, which is recognizable according to the unique intangible and tangible heritage, as well as the natural heritage of the islands, coast, inland and rural part of the Adriatic (TAKE IT SLOW, 2023). Promotional activities aim to promote the described cultural and natural values under the slogan of the project *"Embrace the pace of Adriatic heritage experience"* to strengthen the position of the Adriatic region on the market and achieve an integrated understanding of the area among visitors. The focus is therefore to create authentic experiences, so that visitors can experience the locations defined as pilots, not as visitors, but as local residents. The definition of marketing strategy in relation to promotional content is based on previous documents (*Destination marketing Plan, Pilot matchmaking actions, Programmes for specific traveller types, Influencer Programmes*). Since the Destination marketing plan is a key component of the project, it is important to point out that this document was developed in accordance with the following operational goals:

- *2.1.1. Valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic,*
- *2.2.1. Promoting slow tourism,*
- *2.2.3. Promoting a slow-paced, relaxed lifestyle of the Adriatic region,*
- *2.3.1. Promoting the richness of the Adriatic heritage.*

2. MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL CONTENT

The marketing strategy is aimed at promoting the Adriatic region as an entity characterised by the Mediterranean way of life, the richness of tangible and intangible heritage that is embedded in the tradition of the Adriatic and picturesque landscapes as an element of natural heritage. Implementation of successful marketing strategy means the use of traditional and digital tools, i.e. online and offline content intended for specific visitor target groups for the Adriatic region. In addition to the PR slogan of the project *("Embrace the pace of Adriatic heritage experience")*, key messages that these types of content tend to convey are that the Adriatic region is an area where visitors can move away from the dynamic everyday of urban life, slow down and seize the moment while creating unique experiences related to cultural and natural heritage, as well as a lifestyle specific to the Mediterranean. The goals are to increase the number of visitors in selected pilot locations of each partner, provide conditions for year-round tourism and achieve an integrated understanding of the Italian and Croatian coast of the Adriatic that shares common features. The Destination marketing plan proposes content that can be distributed *offline* such as brochures, posters, photographs presenting cultural and natural heritage, handmade souvenirs representing authentic Mediterranean products and folklore, thematic travel journals, bicycle accessories and branded business folders and pencils. In addition to the aforementioned, it is proposed to make branded cloth bags and backpacks and auxiliary equipment for cycling. It is recommended to involve local artists, designers and craftsmen in the design and production of promotional materials and products to give the products added value and authenticity.

Digital tools, namely, distribution of online content is related to digital marketing (or internet marketing) which implies any kind of marketing content distributed through digital tools in online space. It is therefore about promoting a brand/product to connect with potential customers using the Internet and other forms of digital communication. The digital marketing strategy may include several different platforms or focus only on one, depending on the pursued impact. It is also important to point out that digital marketing has lower starting costs compared to traditional marketing, and at the same time significant effects of its application are evident. In the context of the TAKE IT SLOW project, emphasis is placed on social networks as a form of promotion through influencer marketing strategy, which in accordance with the above, can be enriched by other digital marketing tools. It is proposed to use the SEO optimization tool, as an organic type of digital marketing, in relation to paid marketing content described in the next chapter.

The advantages of organic marketing in relation to paid marketing are organic development of an online community, communication, and inclusion of followers in a long term, the possibility of expanding one's reach and managing the brand image online for "free". SEO optimization (*search engine optimization*) literally means optimization of web search engines, but in practice it refers to optimization of web sites. Optimization is a long and continuous process that yields result over time, i.e. achieving better positioning of the website in the search engine. The positioning of the website is based on Google algorithms that assess the extent to which the search engine user's queries are satisfied. The first step of SEO optimization is to analyse the potential keywords that should be used in the creating content process, for which specialized programs are commonly used. It is crucial to choose words that have a certain scope of the search but are not competitors to that extent so that the site can be positioned in the created interspace. It is also proposed to consider phrases composed of multiple words (*longtail words*) as they are adapted to the user search mode. The content should then be shared further on social networks, which will lead the Google algorithm identify the page as relevant, which will positively influence the assessment of its positioning in the search engine.

SEO optimization is proposed on the website of project partners (Dubrovnik Neretva Region, Public institution RERA SD for Coordination and Development of Split Dalmatia County, Molise Region, Apulian Public Theatre - Regional Consortium Arts and Culture, Public Institution Development Agency of Šibenik-Knin County, University of Zadar, Region of Istria, PromoTurismoFVG, Veneto Region - Tourism department, Emilia-Romagna Region - Directorate General for Knowledge, Labour and Enterprise Economy - Tourism Trade Sport Unit, SVEM - Sviluppo Europa Marche Srl, Abruzzo Region, Apulia Region - Department of Tourism, Culture and Valorisation of Territory) or other related websites or online platforms. It is proposed to promote products of cultural, eno-gastronomic, cycling, adventure, religious and business tourism that have been recognized as stimulating or whose potential has yet to be fulfilled in the context of achieving the goals of the TAKE IT SLOW project.

3. INFLUENCER MARKETING

One form of digital marketing is influencer marketing, which is based on choosing a person who can be considered an influencer and whose content on social media is in accordance with values of the brand/product to be promoted. Despite the common opinion that every social media user can have an impact, if not by publishing their own content, then by publishing comments and reactions, in this context, users who have their loyal audience (bring together a community based on trust) and have experience of designing and distributing content in accordance with the brand values or values that the product seeks to promote are chosen. The goal of influencer marketing is to bring the brand/product closer to the target groups, position it on the market with the development of a new "audience" and strengthen the credibility of existing online content. Influencer marketing tools are mostly paid ads and giveaways to achieve the stated goals. It is important to point out that these tools engage the audience on a personal level, by creating specific relations. It is therefore a marketing technique involving social networks and content such as: photography, video, blog posts, podcasts, etc. Influencers from Italy and Croatia were selected for spreading the visibility of the TAKE IT SLOW project according to the number of followers, their engagement and the influencer's reach, as well as the reactions of the followers. The influencer marketing strategy within the project will most rely on paid content, considering ADV marketing (*Advanced content marketing*) related to strategic distribution, i.e., time dispersion of planned content. It is recommended, depending on the analytics and results of each influencer, to identify a brand ambassador that will represent the TAKE IT SLOW project.

The Destination marketing plan defines profiles of the ideal type of travellers to the Adriatic region, which are the basis for proposing marketing strategy and promotional content. Promotional content is proposed for different target groups described within ideal types. Specific itineraries for each ideal type have also been previously identified, so that within this chapter itineraries and ideal types are joined with *influencers* to clearly identify which influencer will promote which locations and which parameters should be considered in creating content (Tab. 1). In doing so, influencers from Italy will promote locations in Italy and influencers from Croatia locations in the Croatian part of the Adriatic.

Ideal types, Lukács, Sabine and Min represent certain age groups to facilitate the targeting of promotional activities.

Lukács represents young people (15-25), couples without children living together (*DINKs*, >18) who are eager to have an active, adventurous, and authentic vacation experience. Young people (15-25) have a smaller budget and travel for shorter periods, while both young people and DINKs are primarily informed via the Internet.

Sabine represents a household with double income and kids (DEWKs, 25-45) whose holidays are characterized by the needs of their children. They travel most often travel during school holidays, have slightly larger budgets, and are informed through traditional and digital channels.

Ideal type **Min** represents empty nesters (45-65) and people over 65 years old. Empty nesters have considerable budgets, travel more frequently, and while traveling they are oriented towards holistic experiences. On the other hand, people over 65 have smaller budgets, also travel frequently, and like empty nesters, they are mostly informed through traditional, although they also use digital tools. This chapter defines which social networks are adequate to attract each of the ideal types, i.e. target groups, according to age criteria (Tab. 2). This is systematized under the assumption that younger target groups mostly use Tik-tok or Instagram as a way of informing and older age groups use Facebook. The focus was placed on the primary and secondary markets due to influencers reach, although this do not exclude the possibility of extending their reach and distribute content to followers from tertiary markets, as of consequence of network society.

Considering the goals of the TAKE IT SLOW project (promoting the Adriatic region as an entity which is characterized by the specific rhythm of life, the richness of natural and cultural heritage, the possibility of experiencing an authentic tourist experience) itineraries for each ideal type based on these values (cultural heritage, nature and recreation) are defined in previous documents. Thus, the cultural heritage itinerary is defined for the ideal type of Sabine and Min, for which interest in tangible and intangible heritage, traditional skills and crafts and various landscapes offered by the Adriatic is presumed. The itinerary for Lukács is based on the presumption that young people and DINKs are interested in adventure tourism, cycling, hiking and other forms of active vacation in nature.

These itineraries thus served as the basis for defining the main topics for content creation process, which are defined for each influencer. The topics include a proposal for promotional content from the Destination marketing plan, mainly related to the promotion of products for each of the locations. Therefore, content such as photographs or videos showing the location itself or specific educational tours planned to be developed for each location can be considered as direct promotion, while the products themselves can be incorporated within other posts indirectly. For example, products characteristic for Ston and the Pelješac peninsula are brochures and books on local gastronomy which influencers can indirectly promote through content related to cooking to promote the Mediterranean diet, protected by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage. On the

other hand, wooden products and educational games for children that represent Marche region can be promoted through any children's game, in which the focus would be child development, while wooden product or educational game can be included in more subtle ways. In addition to the post's topic and the location being promoted, it is defined which social network should be used and what kind of content should be posted (photo or video). The category "giveaway" is included, and it implies tickets to interesting facilities, vouchers for gastronomic experiences, thematic workshops for transferring traditional knowledge; depending on various offers in different locations. In this way, the aim is to share knowledge about slow tourism in the Adriatic area, related to exceptional cultural and natural values through sharing the original posts. Within every post, it is recommended to use hashtags - the following formulation*s* are proposed: #feeltheadriatic, #rythmofadriatic and #takeitslow.

Tab. 1. Locations for promotion via social networks, according to influencer and ideal traveller type

Influencer	Ideal traveller type	Locations
Isabella Talone	Sabine	The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Manuela Vitulli	Sabine	The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Sara Melotti	Lukács	Friuli Venezia Giulia region, The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region
Angela Isai	Lukács	Friuli Venezia Giulia region, The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region
	Min	Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Valentina Raso	Min	Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Luca and Alessandro	Lukács	Friuli Venezia Giulia region, The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region

Giovanni Arena	Lukács	Friuli Venezia Giulia region, The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region
	Min	Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Nicolo Balini	Lukács	Friuli Venezia Giulia region, The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region
Giulia and Fabio	Sabine	The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
The Pozzolis family	Sabine	The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Federica Piersimoni	Sabine	The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Molise region, Via Francigena del Sud
Kacie Rose	Sabine	The Brenta River, Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Molise region, via Via Francigena del Sud
	Min	Emilia Romagna region, Marche region, Trabocchi coast, Molise region
Kristijan Iličić	Lukács	Blaca Hermitage on Brač Island, Momjan
Davor Gerbus	Sabine	Murter island, Momjan
Andrea Trgovčević Iličić	Sabine	Murter island, Momjan
Ivan Vuković	Lukács	Blaca Hermitage on Brač Island, Momjan
	Sabine	Murter island, Momjan
Vanna Bojović	Sabine	Murter island, Momjan
Saša Vukić (Sašina kuhinja)	Min	Town of Ston and Pelješac peninsula, Murter island, Ravni Kotar, Momjan
Goran Jović	Lukács	Blaca Hermitage on Brač Island, Momjan
David Skoko	Min	Town of Ston and Pelješac peninsula, Murter island, Ravni Kotar, Momjan
Ivan Pažanin	Min	Town of Ston and Pelješac peninsula, Murter island, Ravni Kotar, Momjan, Blaca

Tab. 2. Content for social networks by locations

Locations	Network	Content Type	Posts topics
Friuli Venezia Giulia region	Tik-tok, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Natural and cultural heritage, hiking route itineraries, hiking kits with recycled multipurpose utensils and a map with local attractions
The Brenta River	Tik-tok, Facebook, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Venetian villas, hiking and cycling trails, mobile adventure clue game app including Venetian villas
Emilia Romagna region	Tik-tok, Facebook, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Natural and cultural heritage, gastronomy, cycling itineraries, bottle with a bottle holder that opens into the cycling itinerary along the Via Romagna
Marche region	Facebook, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Intangible cultural heritage of the Camaldoli Forest Code, spirituality and meditation, 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	Tik-tok, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Cycling and recreation, gastronomy, dinning in the reconstructed traditional fishing machine on piles
Via Francigena del Sud	Facebook, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Natural and cultural heritage, pedestrian itineraries, diaries for self-reflection with pilgrimage itinerary along the Via Francigena
Molise region	Instagram, Facebook, Tik-tok	Photo and video, giveaway	Cultural and natural heritage, slow trail "Cammino delle 7 Chiese", Croatian linguistic minority areas, enogastronomy

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Town of Ston and Pelješac peninsula	Facebook	Photo and video, giveaway	The island's natural and cultural heritage, interpretation centre in the Rector's Palace in Ston, gastronomy (wine, oysters, olives), cooking brochures and books about local gastronomy and "slow-food"
Blaca Hermitage on Brač Island	Tik-tok, Instagram Facebook	Photo and video, giveaway	Natural and cultural heritage of the island, Ecomuseum, various souvenirs with Glagolitic alphabet, stone, olives and olive trees. Gastronomy (related to agriculture and livestock, which are the traditional activities of Brač: sheep farming, beekeeping, olive growing, stone carving)
Murter Island	Instagram, Facebook	Photo and video, giveaway	Archaeological heritage (*Colentum* Archaeological Park), local gastronomy, cycling, replicas of Roman ceramics, jewellery, and swords with inscribed Colentum
Ravni kotari	Facebook	Photo, giveaway	Intangible heritage (traditional gastronomy), domestic wine in boxes decorated with pre-Romanesque motifs and local ethnographic ornaments, fortification heritage, Benkovac Museum
Momjan	Tik-tok, Facebook, Instagram	Photo and video, giveaway	Cultural and natural heritage, fortification heritage, houses of Istrian castles, gastronomy, cycling (cycling and pedestrian itineraries inspired by the Middle Ages), frescoes

To monitor the efficacy of influencer marketing, it is necessary to clearly define the parameters before launching campaigns to adjust or improve promotion of TAKE IT SLOW project goals. Even

though in the observed period influencers will create content for other paid advertisement engagements, the success of campaigns can also be measured by an increased number of followers on selected social networks. To be precise, it is recommended to monitor number of followers before and after publishing the content related to the TAKE IT SLOW project. In addition, it is necessary to monitor the reach of the announcements, the number of reactions and to categorise the reactions as positive or negative, to monitor the number of comments individually, but also in relation to other posts, as well as to monitor the frequency of use of proposed hashtags. The indicator of campaign success is certainly an increased number of arrivals of visitors, although it is necessary to consider other ways of informing, which do not only relate to digital marketing, but also traditional channels such "word-of-mouth marketing", which could have been a significant pull factor for visitors.