

# EXPERIENCE, DISCOVER & VALORISE HIDDEN TREASURE TOWNS AND SITES OF THE ADRIATIC AREA

## POSITIONING STRATEGY PAPER

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### EXCOVER

EXPERIENCE, DISCOVER &  
VALORISE HIDDEN TREASURE  
TOWNS AND SITES OF THE  
ADRIATIC AREA



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## 1. AIM OF THE POSITIONING STRATEGY IN TOURISM

Positioning has become one of the key components in modern marketing management, both from the academic and the practical or business point of view. The concept was introduced to the advertising community as a marketing strategy in 1969<sup>1</sup>, and has been defined as “establishing and maintaining a distinctive place in the market for an organisation and/or its individual product offerings”<sup>2</sup>.

Positioning strategy aims at “creating, communicating and maintaining distinctive differences that will be noticed and valued by costumers”<sup>3</sup>. We move from the idea that people do not buy just products, but experiences and perceptions. So, we need to link our products or services to a perception of uniqueness: in other words, the idea that our destination is absolutely unique and different.

The positioning strategy is the process that precedes the promotion and communication plan and the two are necessarily coordinated.

It’s usually not realistic for a destination to try to appeal to all potential tourists in a market. Positioning strategy is concerned with creating (and then communicating) distinctive differences that will be noticed and valued by those tourists with whom we would most like to develop a *long-term relationship*.

For a successful positioning, we need to understand our target customers’ (i.e. excursionists and tourists) preferences, their conception of value and the characteristics of their competitors’ offerings.

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<sup>1</sup> Trout, J., & Ries, A. (1979). Positioning: ten years later. *Industrial Marketing*, 64(7), 32-42.

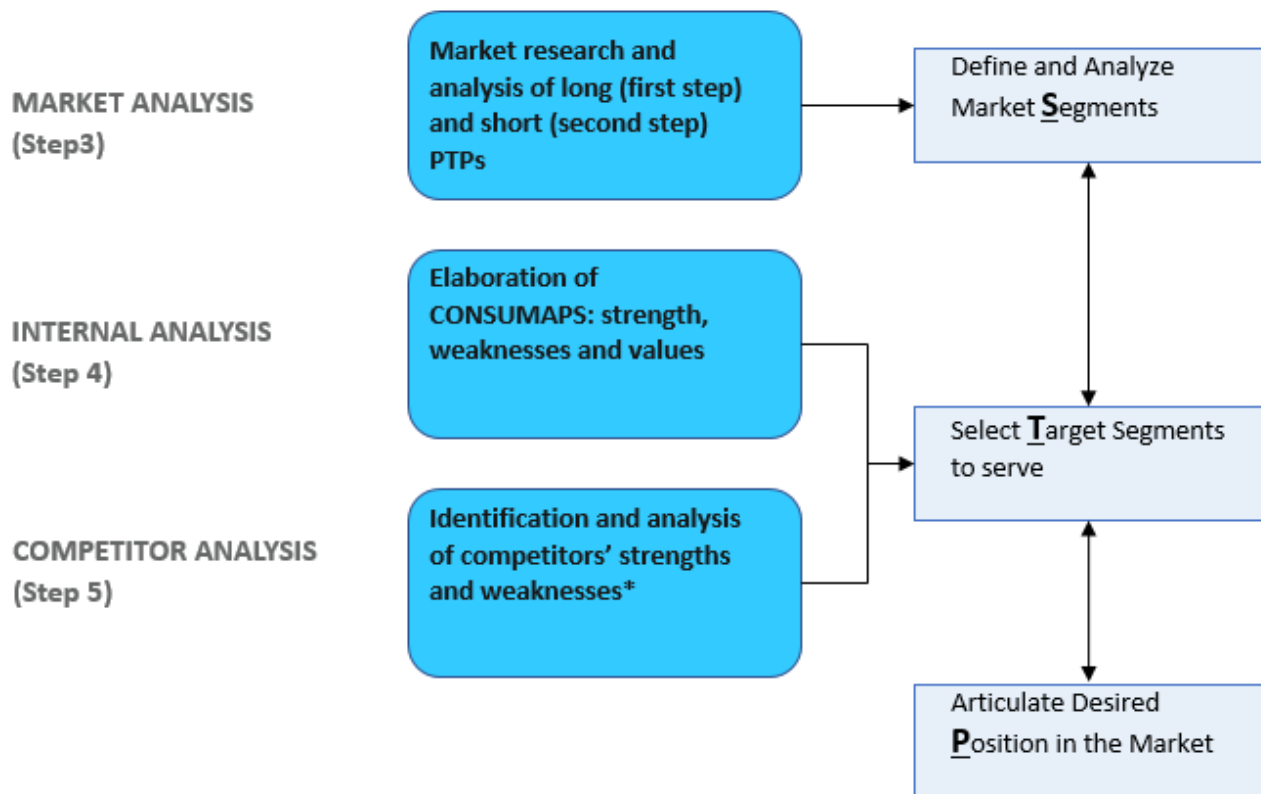
Al Ries, Jack Trout (2001). *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, McGraw Hill.

<sup>2</sup> Lovelock, C. (1991). *Services marketing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 110

<sup>3</sup> Wirtz, J. (2018). *Positioning Services in Competitive Markets*. *Winning in Service Markets Series*. Vol 2. [https://jochenwirtz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Winning-in-Service-Markets-Series-Vol.-2\\_Positioning-Services-in-Competitive-Markets.pdf](https://jochenwirtz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Winning-in-Service-Markets-Series-Vol.-2_Positioning-Services-in-Competitive-Markets.pdf)

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Adapting Lovelock and Wirtz scheme to Excover project, we have suggested that the Positioning strategy moves from a background analysis of the market, of the characteristics of each territory and of the potential/actual competitors (Fig. 1).



\*We must differentiate from the competitors  
 Figure 1 – Adapted from Lovelock, Wirtz, *Service Marketing*.

The positioning strategy moves from the market analysis and the internal analysis and includes the competitors' analysis. What results is the **segmentation, targeting, positioning** steps for the positioning strategy, whereas:

1. Segmentation refers to distinguish the groups of costumers
2. Targeting refers to focus on one (or more) specific segment
3. Positioning refers to the place that the destinations have in the “minds” of the tourists.

This process is common to a wide variety of products and services: first comes the analysis of the situation, then determine target groups, then define the targets and develop the strategies<sup>4</sup>

To sum up:

1. The segmentation decision implies the assessment of **strengths and weaknesses of the destination and its competitors**; only after the assessment, that should be realistic and based on data, the decision can be made which market segments should be target and with which products and services.
2. Image: the objective of positioning is to create a singular (and special) place in the mind of potential tourists and visitors. This evocative image is central in the process of differentiation of the destination from the competitors.
3. Selection of destination’s features that will become the core of the positioning.

The main issues explored throughout the PS are:

1. The image of the destination in the minds of current and potential visitors
2. The actual and the potential visitors
3. The targeted market segments
4. The difference with the PPs’ competitors

The PPs were required to propose a **Positioning Statement**<sup>5</sup>, that is a brief paragraph, which encompasses the destination and sets the mood for marketing tools (and represents the basis for the Communication Plan - WP5).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.europetour.tips/results/training-modules/english/>

<sup>5</sup> The statement should be short, honest and emotive, memorable, motivating, focused. It should provide a clear, distinctive and meaningful picture of the institution and the product, that differentiates it from the competitors.

### 3. AN OVERVIEW ON THE POSITIONING STRATEGIES PAPERS OF THE PPS: MAIN FINDINGS

In presenting the main findings of the Positioning Strategy, it might be useful to start from the different Positioning Statements referred to the PPs tourist products (source: Positioning Strategy and Excover Website) (table 1.). Those are able to give a first hint into the common concepts shared by all the Project Partners:

- the historical heritage, usually unknown to the large public;
- the natural environment, to be discovered through a slow tourism, that favours relax, peace, tranquility;
- opportunities for special interest tourists to be involved in unique experiences, together with the locals;
- opportunity to taste local produced food, beer, wine.

*Table 1 – The Positioning Statements*

PP No.	Project Partner Name	Positioning Statements
LP	Development Agency of Lika-Senj County	The Route of Nikola Tesla Bike in Lika!
PP2	Primorje-Gorski Kotar County	On the streets of the Seignory of Grobnička A mountain of enjoyment of play, laughter, recreation or just peace and relaxation Get to know the beauties of Kvarner from the air and relax in new adrenaline adventures
PP3	Development Agency of Karlovac County	Experience the history and culture of Karlovac County! Karlovac County - Relax, drink beer, learn and have fun! Karlovac County - naturally perfect!
PP4	Union of Municipalities Of Carnia	Carnia, musical events to discover it Excover textile hidden gems in Carnia
PP7	Municipality of Rive D'Arcano	Rural Village Arcano Inferiore
PP8	Gal Delta 2000	The Renaissance in the Po Delta Park Oh Partisan, take me away The waterways: from the Vena dei Gessi Park to... Mosaics, culture and food in Romagna
PP9	Municipality of Campobasso	Campobasso Città Giardino, an unexpected experience Campobasso, the City of Mysteries. An unexpected emotion

PP10	Interregional Park Authority Sasso Simone e Simoncello	Arnaldo Pomodoro Museum
PP12	Municipality of Predappio	Predappio, historic cellars by bike Predappio, among fortresses, cellars and legends
PP13	Gal Montefeltro	Nel lago di Mercatale, stregato dalla luna e dalle stelle Sulle tracce di San Francesco e della civetta perduta nel Montefeltro Montefeltro: alla scoperta di una terra dalla storia gloriosa

### *3.1 Positioning Strategy: the image of the destination in the minds of current and potential visitors*

Generally speaking, most of the territories involved in the project are still not perceived as a tourist destinations. However, there are certain attractions that are well known both by people living in neighbouring regions and by tourists (both in Croatia and in Italy). The general public mostly associates these locations with beautiful nature and active tourism or with the historical hidden heritage.

One of the problems highlighted is the (real or perceived) lack of tourism facilities, which can include many different elements, from not enough accommodation facilities to lack of preferable restaurants. A complete list has been made by UTI Carnia: lack of/poor local public transportation, street network not always well maintained, lack of cultural offer especially in winter, lack of events capable of renewing themselves/personalized experiences, lack of shopping opportunities. But also insufficient and uneven traffic and tourist signalization, a limited offer of accompanying services.

This list highlights the persisting problem of strong seasonality, that translates into a poor appeal during the winter season (highlighted for example by Delta 2000 Lag).

Concerning the emotional appeal, the emotions that are attached to those destinations (as for the natural environment is concerned) are: relaxation, quietness and tranquillity, distance from from the crowded and busy cities. At the same time, sport experiences might be linked to excitement, active life.

Also culture represents an important asset (although in some territories more than in others: Campobasso for example), as well as food experience (which appeal is widespread).

### *3.2 Positioning Strategy: the actual and the potential visitors*

As for the actual and potential visitors, obviously those change in relation to the type of tourist product offered. Generally speaking the most frequently mentioned tourists (both actual and potential) are:

4. high school students,
5. active elderly,
6. people interested in gastronomy,
7. professional and recreational athletes (also adventurous tourists),
8. families with children,
9. groups of friends.

### *3.3 Positioning Strategy: the difference with the PPs' competitors*

In terms of natural attractions, the tourist offers do not differ from the ones at other similar competing places: for example, the whole area of Croatia is rich in bicycle trails, but only a few agencies offer organized multi-day bike tours (most of them are in Dalmatia).

As for the cultural heritage, there is a higher possibility to differentiate: the Tesla museum is a unique experience, and such are the cultural experiences offered by Campobasso (*i Misteri*), Carnia (with the musical legacy of *La Mozartina*), Predappio and Alfonsine and Ostellato (with their cultural events).