

BLUTOURSYSTEM

Package of advanced support services for blue tourism innovation

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Abstract

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1. Introduction

As stated by Alpeza and Oberman (2018), in Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts for the 2017- 2019, improvement of entrepreneurial skills is emphasized as one of the key areas for increasing competitiveness of the small and medium enterprise sector. Strategy for Development of Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia 2013-2020 emphasizes improvement of entrepreneurial skills as one of the five strategic goals, and this goal principally relates to strengthening management of small enterprises, increasing the number of highly qualified employees, and supporting employee lifelong learning. In the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, entrepreneurial education and training to support growth and business creation is one of the three main areas of activity, which is in line with the goals of policies that the European Union has been proposing and implementing for many years.

With regard to the country's strategic orientation in entrepreneurship enhancement, Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism from the University of Split¹ (FEBTS), has developed a range of regular, i.e. Formal study programmes in the three abovementioned fields as well as a number of lifelong educational programmes through its Centre for lifelong learning, organised as Informal Lifelong Learning. This is an organized learning process through a non-verifiable educational program focused on professional adult training, different social activities and personal development. Upon completion of the program, a Participant Certificate is issued to the Participant.

The informal education program can be **in-house** or **open-type**. In-house programs are informal educational program whose design and execution are tailored to the specific needs of a well-known client service provider, most often the company, and serves professional training and improvement in accordance with the developer's needs. The purpose of the in-house program is to develop the human resources of the customer service so that it is organizationally more efficient and more competitive in the market. Open seminars are informal educational program focused and tailored to citizens in the wider

¹ Information collected from the Faculty's web site: <https://www.efst.unist.hr/studiranje/cjelozivotno-obrazovanje/centar-za-cjelozivotno-obrazovanje>, Accessed June 15, 2019

sense of the word, i.e. to an unknown client, and serves professional training and improvement, and personal growth and development.

Lifelong entrepreneurial education offered by the Faculty is given in the following areas:

- Business organization and management,
- Business Finance,
- Production Management,
- Human Resource Management,
- Accounting,
- Information technologies,
- Tourism and catering,
- Foreign trade,
- European Integration,
- Business languages,
- Other areas of economics and related areas.

Each one of the above areas represents a framework within which there is the space for defining the spectrum of educational programs, i.e. "program lines", that can be branched horizontally and vertically, and integrating different areas, according to needs and agreement with the interested entrepreneurs.

Apart from education in different programmes, the FEBTS offers counselling, project expertise and advisory services that may be given by more than 80 experts from different areas and fields of expertise.

With regard to the needs of the tourism entrepreneurs, services that may be offered fit not only to the specific tourism related expertise but also to a number of other interrelated disciplines (such as, information technology usage in tourism and hospitality, business planning in tourism related firms, etc.) that may be delivered by the Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism' members. In case the information or service can't be delivered by the Faculty's staff for any possible reason, those who are interested in it will be advised where they can find requested information.

Information about some of the most important tourism related services that could be offered by the FEBTS, will be delivered through the ADVICE BLUE POINT (ABP) and are listed below:

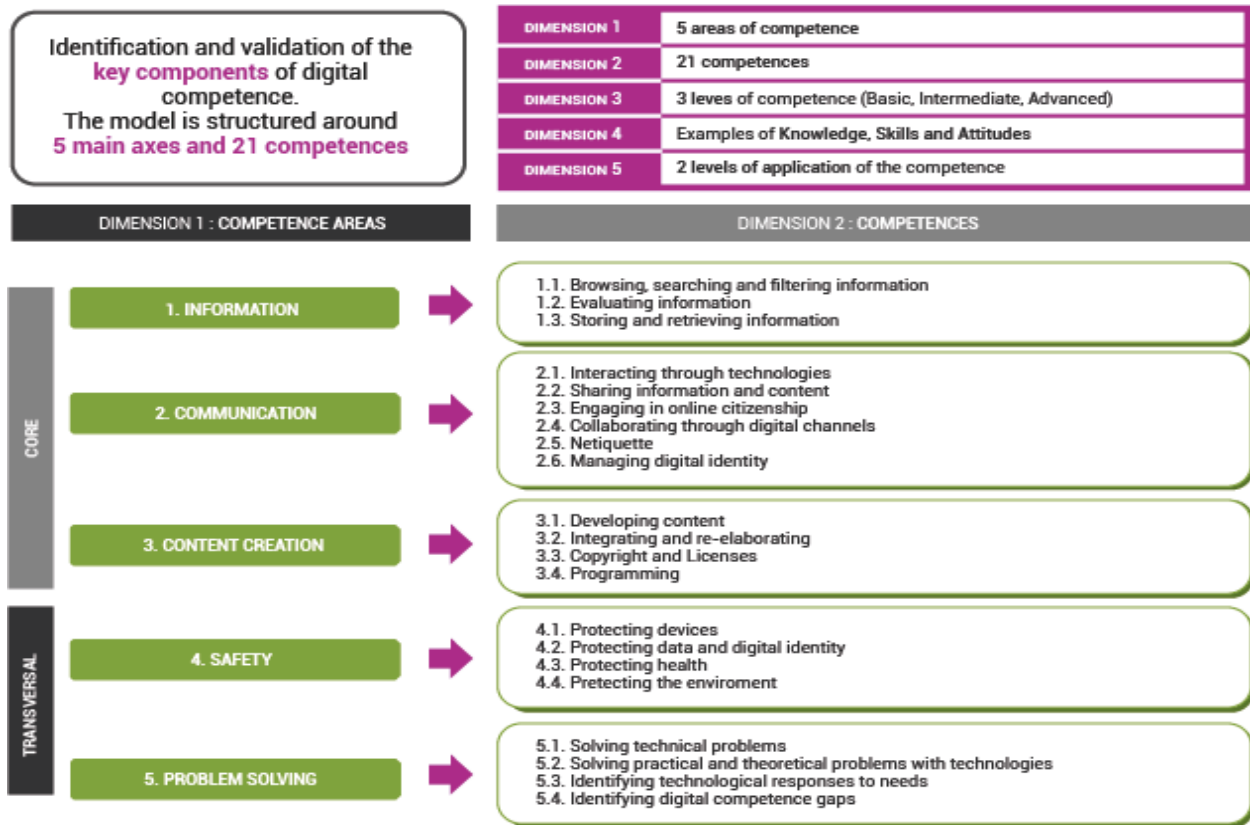
- Digital competences: Social media use; Website implementation; E-commerce
- Market intelligence /tourist market research
- Service/product design
- Business planning
- Event management
- Eco standardisation in hospitality and tourism
- Strategic destination planning
- Tourism (destination and business) marketing planning
- Integrated Quality Management of a destination

2. Report on relevant services to offer to SMEs to help innovation

2.1. Digital competences

Digital competence is the general term used to describe or explain the ability to use information technology (IT) in a specific context. The synonyms for this are also: digital skills, e-competences or e-skills. The European framework of digital competences has been developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission on the basis of the DIGCOMP project, which is oriented towards the identification and validation of the key components of Digital competence at a European level. The model is in line with the strategic guidelines defined in the European Digital Agenda and identifies the key components of digital competence in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in order to be digitally competent. The DIGCOMP European framework establishes 5 dimensions and 21 competences, as seen in the figure 1.

Figure 1. Digital competence dimensions and components



Source: Carretero, S., Vuorikari, R., Punie, Y. (2017), The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens With eight proficiency levels and examples of use, EU, 2019.
[http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC106281/web-digcomp2.1pdf_\(online\).pdf](http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC106281/web-digcomp2.1pdf_(online).pdf),
 Accessed June 11, 2019.

Services/advices offered to tourism SMEs regarding digital competences are mostly referring to two dimensions, i.e. information and communication and partially to content creation. Hence, the most often asked information refer to: Social media use in tourism promotion; E-commerce.

- **Social media use**

Social media, as one of most powerful online networking tools is the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, exchange and comment contents among themselves in virtual communities and network. It includes social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, consumer review sites, content community sites, wikis, internet forums and location based social media. Social media has emerged as the new way in which people connect socially, by integrating information and communication technology (such as mobile and web-based technologies), social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. The social media plays an increasingly important role in many aspects of tourism, especially in information search and decision-making behaviours and tourism promotion, focusing on best practices for interacting with consumers via social media channels (social sharing of holiday experiences).(Zeng, 2013)

- **E-commerce**

E - commerce is the activity of buying or selling of products on online services or over the Internet. Electronic commerce draws on technologies such as mobile commerce, electronic funds transfer, supply chain management, Internet marketing, online transaction processing, electronic data interchange (EDI), inventory management systems, and automated data collection systems.

Modern electronic commerce typically uses the World Wide Web for at least one part of the transaction's life cycle although it may also use other technologies such as e-mail.

The basic core components are:

- Products catalogue,
- Pricing and tax calculation engines,
- Marketing / brochure content,
- Search optimisation & advertising,
- Payment and currency transfer/exchange mechanisms.²

² <https://www.quora.com/What-is-e-commerce-and-its-components>, Accessed June 11, 2019.

2.2. Market intelligence /tourism market research

Market intelligence (market research) is the information relevant to a company's market, about trends, competitor and customer monitoring, gathered and analysed specifically for the purpose of accurate and confident decision-making in determining strategy in areas such as market opportunity, market penetration strategy, and market development. This information can be used by businesses in a number of ways including: growing their presence in an existing market, entering a new market, minimizing the risk of an investment decision, establishing a stronger (or new) brand, developing a new product.³

Market intelligence includes the process of gathering data from the firm's external environment like online sources - news websites, company websites, secondary data sources, social media, RSS feeds, etc, whereas the Business intelligence process, primarily is based on internal recorded events – such as sales, shipments, and purchases. The purpose of incorporating Market Information or intelligence into the Business Intelligence process is to provide decision-makers with a more “complete picture” of ongoing corporate performance in a set of given market conditions.

Effective market intelligence needs accurate market information that is gathered with specific tools and methods. To gather information companies can conduct surveys, interviews, visit and monitor competitors outlets or gather and buy data from different sources.

As more and more markets are digitalized the market intelligence space has seen a lot of new digital tools that companies can use. There are tools such as Google Consumer Survey that enable companies to ask web users a question through Google network of online publishers.⁴

³ <https://blog.globalwebindex.com/marketing/market-intelligence/> Accessed June 11, 2019

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Market_intelligence, Accessed June 11, 2019.

2.3. Service (product) design

Service design is concerned with the design of services and making them better suit the needs of the service's users and customers. It examines all activities, infrastructure, communication, people, and material components involved in the service to improve both quality of service and interactions between the provider of the service and its customers.

The objective of service design is to formulate both front office and back office strategies that meet the customers' needs in the most relevant way whilst remaining economic (or sustainable) for the service provider. Ideal services are considered to be user-friendly and competitive within their market.

There are many different disciplines that comprise service design. The most common are ethnography, information and management sciences, interaction design and process design. Service design is used both to create new services and to improve the performance of existing services.

As far as tourism is concerned, the service design may refer not just to a particular business entity services, but also to design a destination's product or product lines.

2.4. Business planning

A business plan is a formal written document containing business goals, the methods on how these goals can be attained, and the time frame within which these goals need to be achieved. It also describes the nature of the business, background information on the organization, the organization's financial projections, and the strategies it intends to implement to achieve the stated targets. In its entirety, this document serves as a road map that provides direction to the business.

The key elements/phases of a business plan are:

- cover page and table of contents
- executive summary
- mission statement
- business description
- business environment analysis
- SWOT analysis
- industry background

- competitor analysis
- market analysis
- marketing plan
- operations plan
- management summary
- financial plan
- attachments and milestones.⁵

2.5. Event management/planning

Event management is the application of project management to the creation and development of events such as festivals, conferences, ceremonies, weddings, formal parties, concerts, or conventions. It involves studying the brand, identifying its target audience, devising the event concept, and coordinating the technical aspects before actually launching the event.

The process of planning and coordinating the event is usually referred to as *event planning*, that includes budgeting, scheduling, site selection, acquiring necessary permits, coordinating transportation and parking, arranging for speakers or entertainers, arranging decor, event security, catering, coordinating with third party vendors, and emergency plans. Each event is different in its nature so process of planning & execution of each event differs on basis of type of event.⁶

2.6. Eco-standardisation in hospitality and tourism

Education in eco standardisation refers to dissemination of a set of information and know-how on what eco standards are, specifically in tourism industry, what they mean with regard to the market requirements, what areas of business they may refer to and how to get eco certificate and which one is the most suitable to their business. Certification within the tourism industry refers to a procedure of

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_plan, Accessed June 19, 2019

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Event_management, Accessed June 19, 2019

auditing and giving assurance that a facility, a product, service or management system, destination meets specific standards. A logo or a seal is then given to the applicant who meets the required standards (Haaland and Haas, 2010). Eco certificates may be given only by an authorised body and therefore are not the object of services offered by the FEBTS; however, as stated before, information and education about them may be given through Advice Blue Point.

2.7. Strategic destination planning

The development of a strategic tourism plan for a destination is an articulation of the strategic priorities and direction that have been identified by stakeholders for the planning, development, management and marketing of a region. Strategic plans for destinations have been called Destination Management Plans, Tourism Action Plans or Sustainable Tourism Plans in different regions across the world. A strategic plan for destination management is essential for the long-term success and sustainability of a destination.

A successful strategic plan should:

- Be developed based on an **assessment of the situation analysis phase of planning**, including consideration of visitor markets, operating environment, resource capacity, existing products and experiences and statutory and planning environment.
- Be developed as a **collaborative process**, engaging a wide range of stakeholders who provide input into the developing the strategic direction for a destination;
- Ensure alignment with the **vision of the destination**, the destination's image and the values of stakeholders;
- Identify and **prioritise key strategies and actions** for future destination management, development and marketing;
- Identify **clear stakeholder responsibilities and timelines** for the implementation of strategies and actions;
- Establish clear **goals and measures** for achieving the vision of the destination;
- Establish a **regular review and monitoring program** to assess the implementation of the strategy;
- Be developed as a **'living' document** that can be adapted and updated as the operating environment changes.⁷

⁷ <https://sustain.pata.org/sustainable-tourism-online/destinations-and-communities/destination-planning/planning-process/strategic-plan/>, Accessed June 19, 2019

2.8. Tourism (destination and business) marketing planning

The goal of tourism marketing is to increase the number of visitors at a destination and to maximize the utilized capacity of touristic businesses. This goal is reached by consistently following a tourism marketing plan which takes into account the basic features of a tourism product. A tourism marketing plan outlines the advertising and overall marketing approach that will be used to promote a destination. Marketing plans create a customized action statement that the entire tourism board can follow and use to measure the effectiveness of each campaign involved in the effort. The process of writing a tourism marketing plan involves serious research. The contents of the plan should include⁸:

- A **background analysis** – identify and describe marketplace and customers. It may include a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis that may help define a business's or a destination's capabilities in the market.
- **Marketing objectives** – set achievable goals by using the SMART acronym: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.
- **Marketing tactics** – outline the method to achieve the goals. Chosen tactics should focus on the seven factors that address the needs and wants of customers: product, place, price, promotion, people, process and physical environment.
- **Action plans and budget** – the action plan contains what is needed do to implement the plan. For that purpose it is necessary to list the specific steps to deliver each tactic. For example, what is the timeframe and which team member is responsible for actioning it. The budget needs to be adjusted to the plan.
- **Evaluation** – formal methods of evaluation and monitoring help evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing plan and return on investment. By setting measurable goals, it is possible to evaluate the progress of a plan.
- **A summary** – key components of the marketing plan that can be used as a quick reference to keep the goals on track.

⁸ <http://www.tourismnt.com.au/en/industry-toolkit/a-z-of-tourism/marketing-plan> , Accessed June 19, 2019

2.9. Integrated Quality Management of a destination

Integrated quality management (IQM) is a relatively new concept in the management of a tourist destination developed in the 1990s as a response to competitive pressures on both the supply and the demand side. The approach to integrated quality management (IQM) recommended for tourist destinations includes:

- a comprehensive plan supported by a leader who is capable of influencing and coordinating all the partners within the destination;
- an access to the draft strategy and policy that requires an integrated management (human resources, natural resources, quality of life, cultural heritage, etc.) which can also be expressed in a formal form by the partners involved, under the supervision of the authority;
- the foundations for the implementation of measures by the various public and private service providers are laid at this stage;
- the partners involved and the principal authority measure the effectiveness of approaches with the help of various indicators to track the satisfaction of various target groups, the integration into the community and the conservation of resources from the perspective of sustainable development;
- in this interactive process the authority that leads the plan ensures that the results are analyzed and that findings are deduced from them in order that corrections and additions which are considered important could be inserted at every level of a chain to ensure the proper functioning of the chain as a whole.

One of the modern tools that allow the measurement, monitoring and comparing of the elements of the quality system in a tourist destination with its competitors is Qualitest. It ensures different types of information according to the needs of a destination's management. It provides supervision of the achieved phase of quality at different hierarchical levels in a tourist destination. (Rudančić-Lugarić, NY).

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