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COMMUNICATION PLAN

For Promotion of Tourism in the Blagoevgrad–Delcevo Region











РЦЗ ДЕЛЧЕВО

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly competitive tourism landscape, where traveler expectations and behaviors are constantly evolving, communication has become one of the most critical factors for destination success. Today's travelers are not simply looking for places to visit they seek authentic experiences, emotional connections, and meaningful stories they can relate to. As a result, the way a destination presents itself and communicates with its audience has a direct impact on its attractiveness and competitiveness.

In this context, the Blagoevgrad–Delchevo region represents a destination with considerable yet still underutilized tourism potential. The analysis conducted within the Tourism Identity Marketing Strategy (2026–2032) highlights the region's rich natural resources, strong potential for active tourism development, and a distinctive cultural offering shaped by its cross-border character. At the same time, it identifies several challenges, including limited international visibility, underdeveloped digital communication, and the absence of an integrated approach to promoting the region as a single, unified destination.

Moreover, contemporary tourism trends such as the growing demand for sustainable travel, outdoor experiences, and short but intensive trips present a valuable opportunity for positioning the region in the market. These trends align closely with the region's existing offer, underscoring the need for a clear and strategically guided communication approach that connects market demand with local resources.

In such circumstances, a communication strategy becomes an essential tool for transforming potential into tangible tourism value. It goes beyond simply selecting channels and messages, it represents a systematic process of defining how the region will tell its story, position itself in the minds of travelers, and build long-term relationships with its audiences.

The primary objective of this communication strategy is to establish a coherent and consistent communication framework, fully aligned with the vision, mission, and strategic goals defined in the broader marketing strategy. The strategy is grounded in clearly defined target audiences, their needs and motivations, as well as the region's identified strengths and weaknesses.

A key component of the strategy is the integration of the cross-border identity, communicated through the unique value proposition: **"Two regions, one adventure."**

This concept enables differentiation in the market and helps build a recognizable and authentic tourism narrative.

In addition, the strategy emphasizes the importance of digital communication, visual storytelling, and experience-based promotion as key tools for attracting and retaining the attention of modern travelers. At the same time, it highlights the importance of coordination among all stakeholders to ensure a unified and consistent approach to communication.

Through this integrated framework, the communication strategy aims not only to increase the visibility of the region but also to contribute to its long-term positioning as an attractive, authentic, and sustainable tourism destination at both regional and international levels.

The communication strategy is an integral part of the overall marketing strategy and represents its logical extension, ensuring a systematic, consistent, and effective approach to engaging target audiences. In the case of the Blagoevgrad–Delchevo cross-border region characterized by strong tourism potential but limited visibility and fragmented promotion the strategy plays a crucial role in building a recognizable brand and positioning the destination both regionally and internationally.

2. Vision, Mission, and Values in Communication

Vision and mission form the foundation upon which the entire communication strategy is built, as they define the direction, purpose, and identity of the tourism brand. In the case of the Blagoevgrad–Delcevo region, they not only reflect long-term development goals but also guide how the destination is perceived by its target audiences.

Vision

The vision is to position the region as a recognizable cross-border tourism destination in Southeast Europe, offering a unique combination of nature, adventure, and cultural heritage. This vision implies the long-term development of a strong and competitive tourism brand, distinguished by its authenticity and integrated character.

From a communication perspective, the vision serves not merely as a declarative statement, but as a guiding principle for all communication activities. It requires consistent and strategic delivery of messages that shape the perception of the region as:

- A destination for active and outdoor tourism
- A space for authentic local experiences
- A model of successful cross-border cooperation

This means communication must be long-term oriented, focusing on building recognition, trust, and emotional connection with the audience. Rather than short-term promotional efforts, the emphasis is on developing a stable and sustainable brand image.

Mission

The mission defines the core purpose of communication and how the vision will be implemented in practice. In this case, the mission is to communicate the region as a unified and integrated tourism destination that connects natural, cultural, and adventure-based resources from both sides of the border.

Through communication, this mission is achieved by:

- Promoting a unified tourism experience instead of fragmented offerings
- Highlighting the diversity of activities (hiking, cycling, cultural experiences)
- Positioning the region as an accessible and attractive destination

An especially important aspect of the mission is its role in addressing existing weaknesses, such as insufficient coordination and inconsistent communication among stakeholders. By establishing a clear communication direction, the mission contributes to a unified and coherent regional presence.

The Role of Values in Communication

Values represent the core principles that shape communication and define the "personality" of the brand. Within this strategy, they play a key role in creating authentic and credible communication:

- **Sustainability** – communicated through responsible use of natural resources and promotion of eco-tourism
- **Authenticity** – reflected through the presentation of local culture, traditions, and real experiences
- **Togetherness (cross-border cooperation)** – emphasizing the unique interconnectedness of the region and its "two destinations in one" concept
- **Adventure** – conveyed through dynamic content showcasing activities and exploration opportunities
- **Accessibility** – positioning the destination as welcoming, easy to reach, and open to different types of travelers

The integration of these values ensures consistent, recognizable communication that not only informs but also builds trust and emotional engagement.

3. Communication Objectives

The communication objectives are aligned with the overall marketing goals and are designed to support the gradual development of recognition, trust, and long-term engagement.

In the short term, the primary focus is on increasing the visibility of the region. Given its currently limited presence across digital platforms, communication efforts should aim to create a strong first impression and establish a clear and recognizable visual and verbal identity.

In the medium term, the objective is to stimulate interest and increase the number of visitors. This is achieved through clearer communication of the tourism offer, strengthening credibility, and developing consistent campaigns that reinforce the destination's value.

In the long term, the strategy aims to build loyalty and position the region as a leading destination for active and sustainable tourism. This requires continuous communication and the development of an emotional connection with visitors.

Short-term objectives:

- Increase brand awareness
- Establish a recognizable visual identity
- Improve digital presence

These are essential as the region currently has low visibility and must first establish its presence in the market.

Mid-term objectives:

- Increase the number of visitors
- Build trust among tourists
- Encourage cross-border travel

At this stage, communication shifts from informing to persuading.

Long-term objectives:

- Position the region as a leading outdoor destination
- Build loyalty and encourage repeat visits

Here, communication focuses on creating a lasting emotional connection with the audience.

4. Target Audiences and Their Importance

One of the most critical aspects of the communication strategy is the clear definition of target audiences. In this case, they are divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary groups.

The **primary audience** consists of active travelers and short-break visitors seeking adventure and outdoor experiences. This group is particularly important as it aligns most closely with the region's offer and has strong potential for repeat visits.

The **secondary audience** includes families and tourists interested in relaxation and wellness. While their needs differ—focusing more on comfort and safety they contribute to diversifying the tourism offer.

The **tertiary audience**, such as influencers, media, and partners, plays a key role in amplifying messages and extending communication reach. They are essential for building credibility and visibility.

Effective communication depends on properly defined audiences:

Primary audience:

- Active tourists (hiking, cycling, adventure)
- Weekend travelers

Secondary audience:

- Families
- Wellness tourists
- Nature enthusiasts

Tertiary audience:

- Influencers and bloggers
- Media
- Tourism partners

It is important to note that these audiences are not homogeneous. Each group consists of segments with specific needs, motivations, and behaviors. Therefore, the communication strategy must remain flexible, allowing for tailored messages and channels.

For example, active travelers are motivated by adventure and discovery, requiring dynamic, visually engaging, and inspiring content. In contrast, families and leisure tourists value safety, comfort, and organization, which calls for a more informative and reassuring

communication approach. Tertiary audiences, such as influencers and media, act as intermediaries and require authentic, relevant, and shareable content.

This differentiated approach enables more effective targeting and increases engagement and interest in the destination.

5. Key Communication Messages

Key messages represent the core of the communication strategy. The central message is the project's slogan: "Two regions, one adventure", which captures the essence of the tourism offer and its unique cross-border experience.

In addition to the main message, supporting messages emphasize authenticity, nature, culture, and accessibility. These messages should be adapted to different channels and audiences while remaining consistent with the overall brand identity.

Their purpose is not only to inform but also to inspire and create an emotional connection with potential visitors.

Main message:

- "Two regions, one adventure"

Supporting messages:

- "Explore two cultures in one journey"
- "Nature and adventure without the crowds"
- "Authentic local experiences"
- "Active holidays close to you"

These messages are designed to reflect the unique value proposition and integrate the main content pillars adventure, nature, culture, and cross-border experience. They should be simple, clear, memorable, and adaptable, while remaining inspiring enough to generate interest and motivation to visit.

Consistent use of these messages across all communication activities helps build a strong and coherent brand identity for the region.

6. Tone and Style of Communication

The tone of communication is carefully defined to reflect the core values of the brand. It should be inspirational to encourage people to explore and visit the region while remaining authentic and grounded in the real character of the destination.

A friendly and approachable tone helps create a sense of welcome, while an informative approach ensures that visitors receive practical and useful information for planning their trip.

The communication style is based on storytelling. Rather than relying on traditional promotional language, it focuses on narratives that connect visitors with the region's nature, culture, and people.

Tone and style must remain consistent across all communication channels and formats from social media and websites to printed materials. At the same time, they should be adaptable to different audience segments. For example, communication targeting active travelers should be more dynamic and visually engaging, while communication aimed at families and leisure tourists should be more informative, structured, and focused on comfort and safety.

Tone:

- Inspirational – encourages travel and exploration
- Authentic – reflects the real experience of the destination
- Friendly – creates a welcoming atmosphere
- Informative – provides practical and relevant information

Style:

- Storytelling-oriented
- Visually rich (photo and video content)
- Clear, simple, and easy to understand

Through this approach, communication becomes both emotionally engaging and functionally useful, strengthening the connection between the destination and its audience.

7. Communication Channels

The selection of communication channels is crucial for effectively reaching target audiences. Digital channels play a leading role, with the website serving as the central hub for information.

Social media platforms are used for visual presentation and interaction with audiences, while email marketing helps maintain ongoing relationships with both potential and returning visitors.

Offline channels, such as events and PR activities, provide opportunities for direct engagement and trust-building. Partnerships further enhance reach and credibility through collaboration.

Digital channels:

- Website (central information hub)
- Social media (Instagram, Facebook)
- Email marketing
- SEO and Google search

These channels are essential, as most travelers make decisions online.

Offline channels:

- Events and tourism fairs
- PR activities
- Printed materials

These channels strengthen credibility and enable direct contact with audiences.

Partnerships:

- Local businesses
- Tourism organizations
- Influencers

Partnerships help expand reach and build trust.

Influencer and Partner Networks

Beyond standard social media use, collaboration with influencers, bloggers, and local partners is key to increasing both reach and credibility. Influencers can communicate the authenticity of the region through personal experiences, while local partners—such as hotels, travel agencies, and outdoor activity providers support campaign visibility and implementation.

Multi-channel Integration

Channels should not operate in isolation. Instead, they must be integrated to create a seamless communication experience. For example, social media content can direct users to more detailed information on the website, while email campaigns can reinforce seasonal

promotions. This integrated approach increases both effectiveness and audience engagement.

Interactive and Innovative Channels

In addition to traditional channels, innovative formats should be explored, such as:

- Virtual tours and 360° videos for online exploration
- Mobile applications or interactive digital guides for visitors
- AR/VR content to showcase activities and cultural sites

Strategic Role of Offline Activities

Printed materials, events, fairs, and local activations should be used strategically to build trust and enable direct interaction. These channels are especially important for storytelling and highlighting the authenticity and cross-border identity of the region.

8. Communication Activities and Campaigns

Communication activities are implemented through a range of campaigns designed to attract attention, generate interest, and encourage visits.

Awareness campaigns focus on introducing the region to audiences, while seasonal campaigns highlight specific offers and experiences throughout the year. Cross-border campaigns emphasize the region's uniqueness and its dual cultural and geographical identity.

These campaigns rely on diverse formats videos, photography, and storytelling to create engaging and dynamic communication.

Communication campaigns are the main tool for implementing the strategy and maintaining continuous engagement with audiences. They are designed to adapt to different target segments and stages of the customer journey.

Types of Campaigns

Awareness campaigns – introducing the region

Focused on creating a strong first impression and building brand recognition. They rely on visually appealing content, storytelling videos, photos, and short-form social media posts.

Seasonal campaigns – promoting experiences by season

Highlight activities specific to different times of the year, such as hiking and cycling in spring and summer, cultural festivals in autumn and winter activities. These campaigns are aligned with seasonal interests and use storytelling to present vivid and inspiring experiences.

Event campaigns – linked to events

Promote local festivals, sports activities, and cultural events, encouraging direct interaction and a sense of community. Content may include interviews, behind-the-scenes material, and interactive formats.

Cross-border campaigns – emphasizing uniqueness

Highlight the region's identity as "Two regions, one adventure." These campaigns integrate content from both sides of the border and often involve partnerships with businesses, tourism organizations, and influencers.

Additional Elements for Effectiveness

- **Audience-specific campaigns:** tailored content for different segments
- **Storytelling and interactivity:** including user-generated content
- **Measurement and optimization:** tracking KPIs such as reach, engagement, and conversions
- **Channel integration:** combining digital, offline, and partnership-based communication

9. Communication across customer journeys

Communication with visitors is not a one-time effort, it is a continuous process that evolves across the different stages of the customer journey. Each stage requires a specific approach, tailored content and appropriate channels to deliver a complete and positive experience.

Awareness – social media and video content

At this stage, the focus is on attracting attention and introducing the region to potential visitors. Communication relies on short, visually engaging content across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. This includes adventure videos, nature photography, and storytelling-driven posts that convey the unique narrative of "Two regions, one adventure." The goal is to build awareness and spark initial interest.

Consideration – blogs, guides, and itineraries

Once interest is established, potential visitors seek more detailed information. At this stage, communication includes blog articles, digital travel guides, curated itineraries, and informative content that present the diversity of activities, cultural experiences, and outdoor opportunities. These materials help build trust and support trip planning based on individual preferences and needs.

Decision – website and offers

During the decision-making phase, the website plays a central role. Content should focus on practical information such as booking options, detailed activity descriptions, travel tips, maps, and ready-made packages. Clear navigation, transparent information, and strong calls-to-action are essential for converting interest into actual visits.

Experience – on site communication

During the visit itself, communication continues at the destination through local signage, tour guides, mobile applications, and interactive information points. The objective is to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience, highlight the region's authenticity, and encourage visitors to explore more activities and locations.

Loyalty – email communication and communities

After the visit, communication shifts toward maintaining relationships and building loyalty. This includes email campaigns, newsletters, social media groups, and online communities where visitors can share experiences. The goal is to encourage repeat visits, recommendations, and user-generated content, further strengthening the destination's visibility and credibility.

Integration and consistency

All stages are interconnected and should be fully integrated, ensuring that content and channels support each other. From the first point of contact in the awareness phase to post-visit engagement and loyalty, communication should remain consistent, inspiring, and tailored to the needs of different audience segments. This integrated approach creates a seamless experience that builds trust, emotional connection, and long-term value for the region.

10. Measurement and Evaluation

To effectively assess the success of the communication strategy, it is necessary to systematically and continuously monitor a set of indicators that reflect visibility, engagement, conversion, and overall impact on visitors. These indicators enable timely adjustments, campaign optimization, and alignment with long term objectives.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- **Reach and impressions** – tracking the number of people exposed to content and how often it is displayed, providing insight into visibility and the effectiveness of initial awareness efforts
- **Engagement** – measuring audience interactions such as likes, comments, shares, and clicks, indicating the level of interest and relevance of the content
- **Website traffic** – analyzing the number of visits, time spent on the site, and most visited pages, helping evaluate user interest and the performance of digital communication
- **Conversions** – tracking actions that lead to tangible outcomes, such as bookings, newsletter subscriptions, or guide downloads, demonstrating the ability to turn interest into action
- **Number of visitors** – monitoring actual tourist arrivals and repeat visits as a key indicator of the strategy's real-world impact

Additional evaluation aspects:

- **Customer journey analysis:** performance can be assessed across each stage—awareness, consideration, decision, experience, and loyalty—to identify which channels and activities are most effective
- **Qualitative analysis:** collecting feedback through surveys, comments, and reviews to better understand perception, satisfaction, and emotional connection with the brand
- **Benchmarking against objectives:** comparing KPI results with short-, mid-, and long-term goals to evaluate whether the strategy is on track
- **Optimization and adaptation:** using insights from the data to continuously refine content, channels, campaigns, and messaging for improved effectiveness

11. Risks and Management

Communication activities may face a range of challenges that can reduce effectiveness and threaten brand consistency. The most common risks include:

- **Inconsistent messaging** – different stakeholders or channels may communicate conflicting information, leading to confusion and reduced trust among audiences
- **Weak coordination among stakeholders** – insufficient collaboration between tourism organizations, local businesses, municipalities, and media can result in fragmented communication
- **Limited resources** – financial and human resource constraints may limit campaign implementation and content quality

- **Lack of digital expertise** – insufficient knowledge of modern digital tools and platforms can reduce reach and campaign effectiveness
- **Unpredictable external factors** – natural conditions, economic shifts, or health crises can significantly impact tourism activity

Risk mitigation strategies:

- **Clear communication guidelines** – defining tone, style, key messages, and procedures for all stakeholders and channels
- **Centralized coordination and management** – establishing a responsible team or structure to oversee communication, ensure consistency, and manage content
- **Continuous training and capacity building** – improving team skills in digital tools, storytelling, and audience engagement
- **Strategic resource planning** – allocating budget and human resources effectively, focusing on the most impactful activities and channels
- **Crisis communication planning** – developing protocols for rapid response to unexpected situations, ensuring timely, clear, and coordinated communication

These measures provide a proactive and structured approach to minimizing risks and ensuring continuity in brand development.

12. Budget

The communication budget is a critical component for the successful implementation of all planned activities and campaigns. It should be aligned with communication objectives, selected channels, and the overall timeline.

Given the strong emphasis on digital communication, a significant portion of the budget should be allocated to:

- Website development and maintenance
- Production of high-quality visual and video content
- Social media management
- SEO and paid digital campaigns

Additional resources should be allocated for offline activities, including participation in tourism fairs, PR events, printed promotional materials, and on-site signage, ensuring an integrated communication approach.

Budget allocation should prioritize activities with the highest potential impact, particularly those targeting primary audiences. This strategic approach enables efficient use of resources, sustained visibility, and long-term effectiveness.

Activity / Campaign	2026-2027	2027	2028-2029	2030-2032	Responsible Team	Estimated Budget (€)	Channels / Notes
Awareness Campaigns	1	1	0	0	Marketing team, social media agencies	10000	Social media, video
Seasonal Campaigns	1	1	1	1	Marketing team, local tourism organizations	8000 / season	Promotion according to season
Event Campaigns	0	1	1	1	Tourism offices, PR team	5000 / event	Local events, festivals
Cross-border Campaigns	0	0	1	1	Marketing team, partner organizations	12000	Highlighting 'Two regions, one adventure'
Website and Digital Optimization	1	1	0	0	IT team, digital marketing	6000	SEO, booking system, usability
Storytelling and Content (photo/video)	1	1	1	1	Content team, freelancers	7000	Photo and video for all channels
Email Marketing and Loyalty	0	1	1	1	CRM team, marketing team	3000	Newsletters, follow-up
Training and Team Development	1	1	1	1	HR and marketing team	2500	Digital tools, storytelling
Monitoring and Evaluation	1	1	1	1	Marketing team, analysts	1500 / year	KPI tracking, optimization

13. Conclusion

The communication strategy provides a solid foundation for building a strong and recognizable tourism brand. It enables coordinated and effective communication that connects stakeholders and communicates the region's unique value.

With proper implementation, the strategy will increase visibility, attract more visitors, and support the long-term positioning of the Blagoevgrad–Delchevo region as an attractive and distinctive cross-border destination.

At the same time, acknowledging and managing potential risks—such as inconsistent messaging, limited coordination, and external uncertainties—is essential. Through clear guidelines, strong coordination, continuous capacity development, and strategic planning, these challenges can be effectively addressed.

This approach ensures continuity, strengthens the brand, and contributes to sustainable tourism development in the region.

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