



AMAZON OF EUROPE BIKE TRAIL

Output 3.4 AoE Bike Trail
Strategic marketing plan

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ABSTRACT

Amazon of Europe Bike Trail (hereafter also “AoE Bike Trail”) is a long-distance bookable cycling trail in the future 5-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, focusing on sustainable tourism, that returns share of income for co-financing nature conservation programmes in the region. It will offer a full-package comfortable cycling holidays and connect local tourism offer of regions, located along Mura, Drava and Danube rivers in five countries: Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia. Our tailor-made packages will include personalized cycling itinerary, accommodation, mobility services, special experiences and AoE Bike Trail Booking center services. There will be an option to book cycling holidays directly through the online reservation system or with the assistance of the experienced team of the booking center from November 2020 on, on the website aorebiketrial.com.

The **vision**: The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is the most well-known long-distance bookable cycling trail in Europe, offering responsible travel to discover unique river landscapes along the Mura, Drava and Danube.

Our **mission** is, based on the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, to open with the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail new perspectives for sustainable development in the river landscape of the area, by connecting responsible tourism with the preservation of nature:

- combining lifetime cycling experiences with well-defined contributions for nature conservation within the Cycle for nature programme
- pioneering environmental, economical, and social sustainable development
- involving and empowering local communities to cherish and commit to the preservation of their environment and to partner with them for the sustainable tourism business model
- championing the unique river landscape of the area and contributing, on the long-term, to its protection.

The AoE Bike Trail is going to be a newly established brand entering the sustainable tourism market and therefore, a lot of efforts will be put into marketing in order to attract potential visitors. The main marketing objectives are to raise awareness about the brand and to motivate people to purchase the cycling holidays and visit the AoE Bike Trail. To reach our marketing goals we defined the key target market that consists of cycling enthusiasts from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and specified the following target groups: 46+ baby boomers/best-agers and 30+ modern escapists. Moreover, we developed the brand of the AoE Bike Trail with its story, values, visual identity and personality, as well as prepared marketing plan of activities including responsibilities of partners and overview of available budget for marketing activities.

Planned marketing strategies and activities are divided into three main groups:

- **Digital marketing**: official product promotional on-line platform and social media marketing.
- **Promotional publications**: AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure.
- **Promotional events**: conferences and events (International Biking Festival), community marketing in 5 countries (Opening days of the AoE Bike Trail), promotion at tourism fairs in the sections of responsible travel (on international, EU and national level), explorer/promo tours for different target groups.

INTRODUCTION

The AoE Bike Trail Strategic marketing plan is based on work package 2: Communication activities and the allocated funds for promotional activities, as well as on the activity 3.4: Development of Online Trail Management-, Information- and Booking System and booking infrastructure as part of the WP3: Product development. The Strategic marketing plan defines the product, market analysis and opportunities, marketing objectives, target markets and groups, brand, visual identity guidelines for marketing, marketing strategies and activities, responsibilities of partners and resources for marketing.

The document is divided into **8 key chapters**:

1. The product: Amazon of Europe Bike Trail
2. External and internal analysis
3. Marketing objectives
4. Market segmentation
5. The brand
6. Marketing strategies and activities
7. Marketing budget
8. Evaluation.

Due to the nature of project requirements the AoE Bike Trail marketing activities are split into two phases:

- **1st Phase**: from June 2018 to May 2021 (duration of the Project AoE Bike Trail)
- **2nd Phase**: 3 years after launching the product on international tourism market (from June 2021 to June 2023). Because of the nature of the tourism industry, it is expected to take at least 3 years to establish the brand of Amazon of Europe Bike Trail as the flagship tourism product in the region of the future 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura–Drava–Danube.

The AoE Bike Trail is going to be a newly established brand entering the sustainable tourism market. Since the brand does not have recognizability on the market or its own market share yet, a key focus of the marketing strategy in the 1st phase will be building awareness, expanding reach and getting more people familiar with the brand. The core of the 1st phase of the strategy is going to be a digital marketing strategy, as the first contact with the potential customers is most likely going to happen online. In the 2nd phase of the strategy, marketing activities will focus even more on online communication, media relations and promotion on tourism fairs.

In this document, the 1st marketing phase is explained in detail and the baseline for the 2nd marketing phase set. However, the strategies, activities and budget for the 2nd phase will have to be further defined in the future.

1 THE PRODUCT: AMAZON OF EUROPE BIKE TRAIL

Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is going to be a bookable sustainable tourism product in the future 5-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, focusing on cycling tourism, that enables co-financing of nature conservation programmes in the region. It will offer full-package comfortable cycling holidays and connect local tourism offer of regions, located close to these three rivers in five countries: Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia. The AoE Bike Trail will offer a sustainable way to experience the area of highly valuable natural and cultural landscapes and feel the warm hospitality of local people along the way – a perfect setting for a cycling adventure.

Customers will have the options to book cycling holidays directly through the AoE Bike Trail online reservation system or with the assistance of the experienced team of the AoE Bike Trail Booking center. Visitors will be able to book a customized cycling holiday including personalized cycling itinerary, accommodation, mobility services (optional), special experiences (optional) and AoE Bike Trail Booking center services providing support in each step of the process (before the trip, on spot and after the trip).

The first season of the AoE Bike Trail is going to be from 15th April 2021 until 31st October 2021. Our cycling product will be available on market from November 2020 on when the booking system will be launched and bookings for the first season possible.

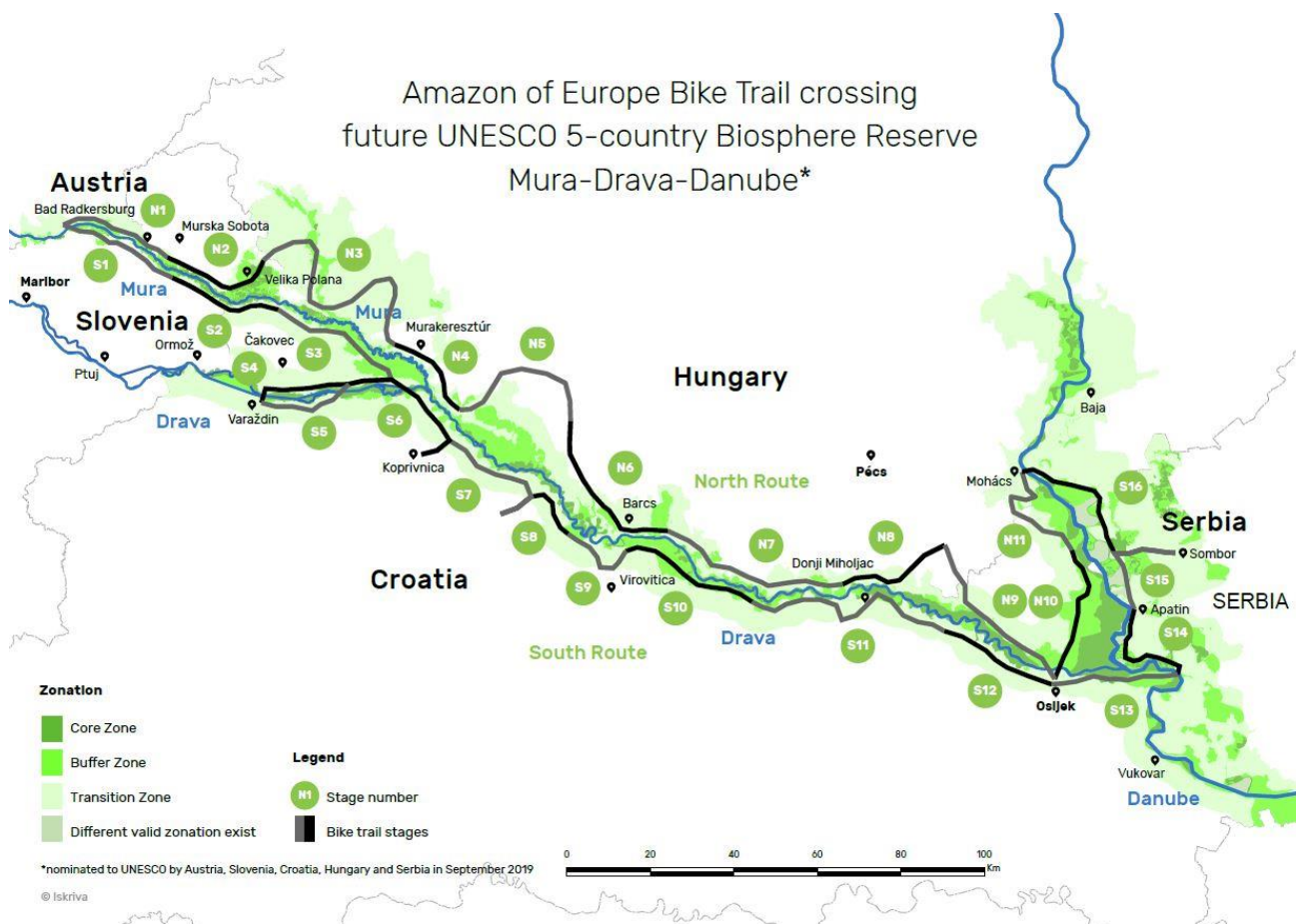
In the following subchapters the main elements of the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail product are presented more in detail:

- Bike Trail,
- Bookable stage,
- Stakeholder inclusion,
- Valorisation programme Cycle for nature,
- Pricing,
- Point of contact and sales.

1.1 Bike Trail

The main route of Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is the backbone of our sustainable tourism product and is in total over 1.250 km long. It runs close to the rivers Mura, Drava and Danube and is split into two separate routes: Northern (550 km) and Southern (700 km), with several additional routes which are run to the main tourism attractions and river experiences. Each line of the main route is further divided into daily stages – there are 11 stages on the North Route and 16 on the South Route, 27 in total. Primarily, the route is meant to be cycled downstream (from Austria to Serbia) and will be bookable in this direction. The start point of the Bike Trail is in Mureck, Austria (close to Graz) and the end point in Mohacs, Hungary (close to Pecs). The map of the AoE Bike Trail is shown in the Figure 1.

Figure 1: The map of the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail crossing future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube



The route connects already existing cycling trails with different characteristics (public road, stabilized gravel road, cycling lanes, etc.) that follow the three rivers. The route was assigned according to three main principles:

- **nature-related offer** (the most important element) and cultural heritage sites (such as river view points, bird watching towers, must-see points, etc.),
- **safety and comfort of cyclists** (for example, the route avoids frequent and high-traffic public roads),
- **quality and quantity of tourism services** (available restaurants, accommodation, bike repair shops, etc.).

By following these key principles, we will ensure that every daily stage of the bike trail will offer an extraordinary and most importantly safe cycling experience, with accompanying services available along the way. On some stages, there will be possibilities to cross the rivers and country borders. Moreover, the route will have good connections with already existing Drava Bike and Mura-Drava Bike trails enabling visitors cycling from other trails to continue their ride on the AoE bike Trail.

Within the framework of the project timeline, the whole route will be equipped with commonly designed resting places, signposts and info boards. Each stage will have:

- a resting area with AoE BT branded infrastructure,
- a detour to river experience area (“Discover Mura, Drava or Danube),
- 6 highest ranked tourism attractions (“Must sees”).

1.2 Bookable stage

The product development of the AoE Bike Trail is based on the product model of the “Bookable Stage”. The “Bookable Stage” is mirroring the actual trail-market’s requirements: combining the individual freedom with the service and safety of a modern destination and online-bookability. Therefore, the AoE Bike Trail will have its own Booking center and on-online reservation system offering customized cycling experience with almost limitless range of choices for cycling holidays.

The advantages of booking through the official AoE Bike Trail booking channels are:

- Cycle when you want: bookable daily.
- Cycle where you want: start possible at any point.
- Cycle for as long as you want: anything from one to 27 stages.
- Cycle alone or with whomever you like.
- Cycle as you want: with your desired flexible service.

The bookable stage represents all the components of the AoE Bike Trail product described in the Table 1 below. Potential visitors will be able to decide on all the details regarding their holiday online on their computer and in the comfort of their home.

Table 1: AoE Bike Trail Bookable Stage

PERSONS	TRIP
<p>Number:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from one person on - minimal age is 12 years old <p>Room choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - double room - single room - family room (2+1) 	<p>Arrival:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opening season of the trail is from 15th April to 31st October (it will be closed in winter due to weather conditions) - daily <p>Start stage: individually customized Last stage: individually customized</p> <p>Rest days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in between - extension days <p>Hop stages: possibility to “hop” from one stage to another in case the cyclist would like to skip one stage (or more)</p>
ACCOMMODATIONS	TRAIL SERVICES
<p>Different categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comfort: 4-star hotels - Classic: 2/3-star hotels - Basic: Pensions/private accommodations <p>Food services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hotel with half board - bed & breakfast with voucher for lunch/dinner in a nearby restaurant - option for regional half board - option for special requirements (vegetarian, vegan, allergies and intolerances) 	<p>Mobility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrival shuttle from the railway station or the airport - Luggage transport from accommodation to accommodation - Return transfer to the starting point - Individual shuttle services in between (stage “hopping” in case of bad weather, sickness, etc.) <p>AoE Bike Trail Booking center services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Starter kit - Hotline 12/7 - Comprehensive travel information - Trail app - free download: current information about trail maintenance, accommodation, restaurants, events, special

	<p>experiences, trail tracking, etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project sponsorship – Cycle for nature: certain % of the revenues from each booking will be dedicated to nature conservation projects
INDIVIDUAL SERVICES	Guiding
	OPTIONS FOR BOOKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's not possible to book cycling holidays with pets <p>Ticketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual guided tours: bookable along the whole length of the route - Nature experience programmes: bird watching, horse riding, etc. - Culture experience programmes: visiting cultural attractions, guided walks and festivals in historic towns and villages, etc. - Culinary experience programmes: tasting authentic local dishes such as goulash, fish stew, gibanica or bregi pie, wine tasting, etc. - River experience programmes: canoeing, rafting, swimming, visiting Rivers' cools (outdoor learning centres by the rivers), etc. - Relaxation in numerous spas 	<p>Dynamic packaging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Booking pre-prepared packages - Seasonal: e.g. spring, autumn - Regional: e.g. special region - Thematic: e.g. vegetarian, arrival by train, nature experience, culinary experience, river experience, connected to special dates and events - Guided Group Tours <p>Direct booking via AoE Bike Trail on-line reservation system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Live check availability - Enhanced individual travel planning - Real time booking <p>Individual inquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual travel planning - Linked with AoE Bike Trail Booking center support - Fast reaction on individual offers (Back end System)

1.3 Stakeholder inclusion

Stakeholder collaboration builds up relationships, increases trust and establishes a common ground, which provides a fruitful ground for innovation (Grabher, 2004). Therefore, the exchange of resources and ideas, as well as the sharing of risks and benefits, is necessary to achieve best possible results (Sørensen and Torfing, 2012).

The AoE Bike Trail partnership work approach in developing a joint integrated solution for sustainable biking tourism in the Amazon of Europe is strongly based on stakeholder inclusion. We believe that only that way, we can assure fair distribution of benefits for the locals, visitors and nature. Key stakeholders included in the AoE Bike Trail development are regional development agencies, tourism boards and organisations, local tourism and cycling service providers and associations, municipalities, counties, protected areas, etc. We are constantly informing relevant stakeholders about the project and how it is proceeding and involving them in our working process through implementation of consultation workshops and trainings, preparation of outputs, and by offering them a possibility to take part in long-term cooperation under the AoE Bike Trail brand.

Apart from the benefits for the development of our tourism product, stakeholder inclusion also enhances cooperation between regions and protected areas within the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, contributing to its overall success. Once established, the AoE Bike Trail will generate new jobs and create new transboundary connections, ensuring a way to support sustainable regional development of the area.

1.4 Valorisation programme Cycle for nature

Our way of giving back to the beautiful region of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube and maintaining the extraordinary ecosystems of the planned biosphere reserve is the Cycle for nature valorisation programme. The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail Destination Management Organisation will be established, in which a certain percentage of contribution from each purchased cycling holiday will be used to finance nature conservation projects in the region. The main aim of the valorisation scheme will define a framework for returning share of the tourism income to the conservation of protected areas, ecosystems and habitats. We believe that our valorisation programme brings innovative added value to our business strategy and therefore, represents one of our unique selling propositions. The valorisation scheme is currently under development by WWF Adria.

1.5 Pricing

The basis for the AoE Bike Trail pricing strategy will be “great service for a slightly higher price”. Our target groups are willing to pay more for good services and we will not charge low prices.

The main elements of our product price are:

FINAL PRICE = price of cycling holiday + booking center fee + valorisation fee

Price of cycling holiday will be designed based on the costs of accommodation, food, mobility service and other experiences. Booking center fee will be designed based on the costs of booking center services. The valorisation fee will represent a certain percentage of the total price. The valorisation fee will be used to fund nature conservation activities in the area of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (WWF Adria is preparing a valorisation scheme).

After a few years on the market we plan to implement customer loyalty programmes offering special deals for returning visitors.

1.6 Point of contact and sales

There are two crucial points of sales booking, where our potential customers can get all the information they require about our tourism product, in order to decide to book their holiday with us. These two points are:

- Online experience (product website, booking website, social media channels, etc.),
- Official Amazon of Europe Bike Trail booking centre (official booking office located in the area of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube).

Additional points of contact with our product are:

- Employees in the booking centre,
- 12/7 AoE BT hotline,

- Product partners (accommodations, restaurants, service providers, etc.)
- Members of the AoE BT Destination Management Organisation
- Promoters on tourism fairs
- Promotional materials (brochures, flyers, map, cycling equipment, starter kit, etc.)
- AoE BT Infrastructure (info boards, signposts, etc.)
- Press releases
- Articles in specialized cycling and travel media
- Newsletters and blog posts.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ANALYSIS

At the moment, many different tourism products are offered in Europe, as well as in the area of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, but none are similar to AoE Bike Trail. In order to plan our marketing activities, it is crucial to first understand the current situation (market and competitor analysis) and to find the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that a new product in the tourism market is going to face (SWOT analysis).

1.7 Market analysis

The key target markets of the AoE Bike Trail are cycling enthusiast from: Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg.

To better understand our potential customers, we are presenting the statistics and trends of German cycling enthusiasts – one of our core markets – according to the 2019 ADFC (German Cyclists' Federation) Travelbike Bicycle Travel Analysis in the following subchapter.

1.7.1 Statistics and trends of German cycling enthusiasts

Age

On average, cyclists are 52 years old. The 45–64 years age group is most strongly represented (49%), followed by the 25–44 years age group with 34%. 22% are 65+ years.

Motives

Experiencing nature (86%), exploring unfamiliar regions (65%) and cycling a specific route (50%) are among the most popular reasons for a cycling trip.

Preparation for the trip

Around 50% of cyclists decided on their final destination approx. two months before the start of their trip. About 22% knew where they were heading three months beforehand. Approx. 75% of cyclists researched for max. two weeks before they had collected all of the information they needed for their planned trip. Longer preparation times of up to approx. one month were extremely rare.

Trip duration

Cycling holidays comprise an average of eight overnight stays – this has remained relatively constant. Most cycling holidays are shorter trips of up to seven nights (70%). About 25% are short trips with up to three overnight stays.

Travel period

Most cycling trips take place in early summer: May and June (both 22%) were the most popular months for cycling trips in 2018. The cycling season ends in October – there were very few trips between October and March.

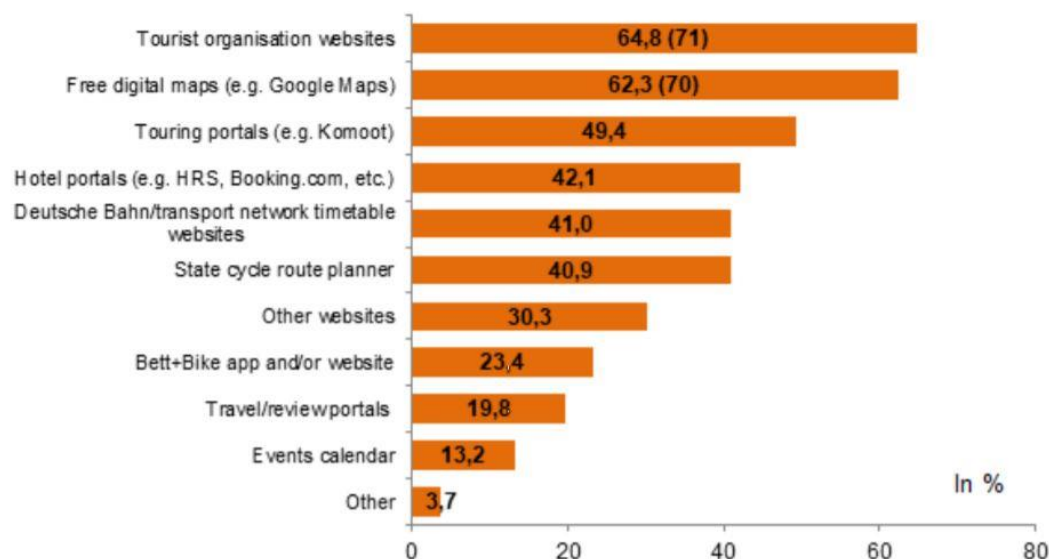
Information – before the trip

When preparing for cycling holidays, the internet remains the most important information source for cycling trips (83%), followed by printed maps (47%) and personal recommendations (46%). Printed cycling trip guides are also of great importance to approx. 37% of respondents.

65% of internet users obtain information from tourist organizations and 62% from free maps such as Google Maps. Touring portals like Komoot and Outdooractive are used by every second person (49%). Hotel portals such as HRS (42%), the Deutsche Bahn website (41%) and the route planners offered by individual federal states (41%) are somewhat less popular. Approximately 23% of internet users refer to the Bett+Bike app or website. Details are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Which internet sources do you use to plan your cycling holidays?

(cycle tourists only; n=2,839)/compared to 2017 (where asked))



Source: ADFC, 2019.

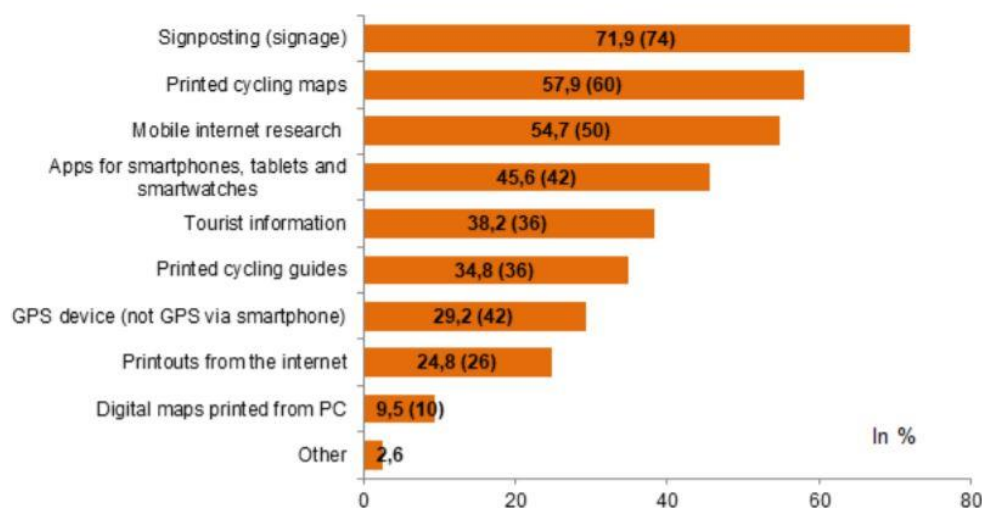
Information – during the trip

On the go, cycle tourists obtain information most frequently from signposting (72%), cycling maps (58%) and internet research (55%). Apps for smartphones and tablets play a major role with around 46% using these. Komoot (32%) and Google Maps (30%) are also the most popular apps here. Komoot has gained in importance compared to the previous year (28%). The weather is researched, distances calculated, and

accommodation sought online. The waning popularity of GPS devices is worth mentioning here. Details are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Which information sources and media do you use during cycling holidays, e.g. for orientation?

(Cycle tourists only; n=3,367)/compared to 2017 (where asked)



Source: ADFC, 2019.

Feedback

After their holiday, cycle tourists most frequently report back about their trip during discussions with friends, family and acquaintances (88%). Social media, travel forums and blogs play a far lesser role.

Main/additional holiday

For 64% of respondents, the cycling trip was an additional holiday. For 36%, it was their main holiday. If the cycling trip was the main holiday, it comprised an average of eleven overnight stays. If it was an additional holiday, then just five.

Trip organisation

88% of cycling holidays were organised individually – a slight increase compared to the previous year. 12% went on a package holiday, whereby roughly the same number of trips were organised entirely or partly by a tour operator.

Type of cycling holiday

28% of cycling holidays in the region were from a fixed base (“circular tour”) and 72% were along a cycle route with changing accommodation (“point-to-point tour”).

Average daily distance covered and trip duration

Point-to-point cycle tourists cover an average of 69 km – the daily distance covered has therefore increased slightly compared to 2017. Point-to-point tours have an average of six stages. With an average of eight overnight stays, these trips are primarily devoted to cycling. Circular tours usually consist of six overnight stays, with 46% of cyclists cycling max. three days and 90% cycling max. seven days.

Travel companion

Cycle tourists are mainly accompanied by their partner (52%) or friends (31%). 21% travel alone and 19% of cycling trips are completed in a small group of up to five people.

Overnight stays

59% of cycle tourists prefer to stay in a hotel, 47% spend the night in a B&B, 19% camp, 15% book a holiday home and 11% take advantage of private accommodation such as Airbnb offers. When selecting their accommodation, cycle tourists appreciate value for money (73%) and a good location and access (70%). The facilities offered are important for 32% of cycle tourists and 24% give preference to Bett+Bike accommodation.

Travel to/from the cycling destination

As many cycle tourists opted to travel to their destination by train as by car (36% and 37% respectively). That being said, the train is more popular for the journey home (39%). From 2017 to 2018 the long-distance rail travel increased for 4% (DB Fernverkehr AG) and long-distance bus travel for 14% (FlixBus).

Bicycle travel

The majority of cycle tourists use a touring or trekking bike (70%). 16% use a mountain bike, around 9% a city bike and 5% a road bike. Overall, 23% of travellers use an ebike – a notable increase compared to the previous year (2017: 18%). The proportion of hire bikes dropped from 8% to 5%.

Quality of offers

The quality of the German regions and long-distance cycle routes is considered positive in all respects. Compared to 2017, the number of cycle tourists agreeing with the statement “Cycle routes had little car traffic” has increased (+4%), as has the assessment of the quality of digital data. The only aspect for which the assessment was less positive was arrival/departure at the destination using public transport. In many cases, this was not possible without problems.

Complementary activities

Besides cycling, the other most popular activities during trips are visiting cultural sights (63%), sampling regional specialities (51%) and visiting natural attractions (39%).

Most popular bicycle travel regions

The most popular bicycle travel region abroad remains the Netherlands. South Tyrol retains its second place. The other places are occupied by the Alps, Austria, France, Denmark, Italy, Majorca, Tuscany, Tyrol, Lake Garda, Alsace and Switzerland.

1.8 COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

AoE Bike Trail is a long-distance cycling trail crossing future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube. It is spanning through five countries (Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia), 11 NUTS3 regions and is connecting 10 protected areas. The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail bookable product offers

comfortable full-package cycling holidays along Mura, Drava and Danube in one of the most beautiful and pristine riverine landscapes in Europe.

The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is the first cycling trail Europe with its own booking center offering full-package cycling holidays. However, there are many other tour operators offering cycling holidays in Europe, as well as other popular long-distance cycling trails attracting our potential visitors. Therefore, main competitors of the Amazon of Europe Bike trail can be divided into two groups:

- already existing long-distance cycling trails in Europe,
- tour operators offering cycling holidays in Europe.

Popular long-distance cycling trails in Europe:

- **Danube Cycle Path** – cycling route from Passau, Germany to Vienna, Austria (ADFC, 2019; TheGuardian, 2018; Matadornetwork, 2020; AFAR 2019),
- **Via Claudia Augusta** - cycling route on an ancient Roman road that runs across the Alps through southern Germany, Austria and Italy (ADFC, 2019),
- **Lake Constance Cycle Route** - a cross-border-cycle through Germany, Austria and Switzerland around the entire lake (ADFC, 2019),
- **Via Francigena** - the pilgrim route from Canterbury to Rome (TheGuardian, 2018; Matadornetwork, 2020),
- Iron Curtain Trail (AFAR, 2019),
- **Cornish Coastal Way** – Cornwall, England (TourRadar, 2018),
- **Adige Cycle Path** - Northern Italy, from Innsbruck to Bolzano (TourRadar, 2018),
- **Baltic Coast Cycle Path** - Along the Baltic Sea, starting in Flensburg and ending in Usedom (TourRadar, 2018).

Long-distance river cycling trails in Europe:

- Danube Cycle Path,
- Elbe Cycle Path,
- Drauradweg – Drava Cycle Route,
- River Mur Cycling Trail.

Tour operators offering cycling holidays:

- Wheel2Wheel Holidays: Cycling Holidays in Europe and beyond ([LINK](#)),
- EuroVelo – the European cycle route network ([LINK](#)),
- Eurobike Cycling Holidays | Cycling fun in Europe ([LINK](#)),
- BSpoke | Cycling Holidays | Solo & Group Tours Available ([LINK](#)),
- Cycling For Softies® | Cycling Tours In Europe ([LINK](#)),
- Flexitreks | River Cycling Holidays in Europe ([LINK](#)).

One of the competitors, Drava Cycle Route, is presented more in detail below.

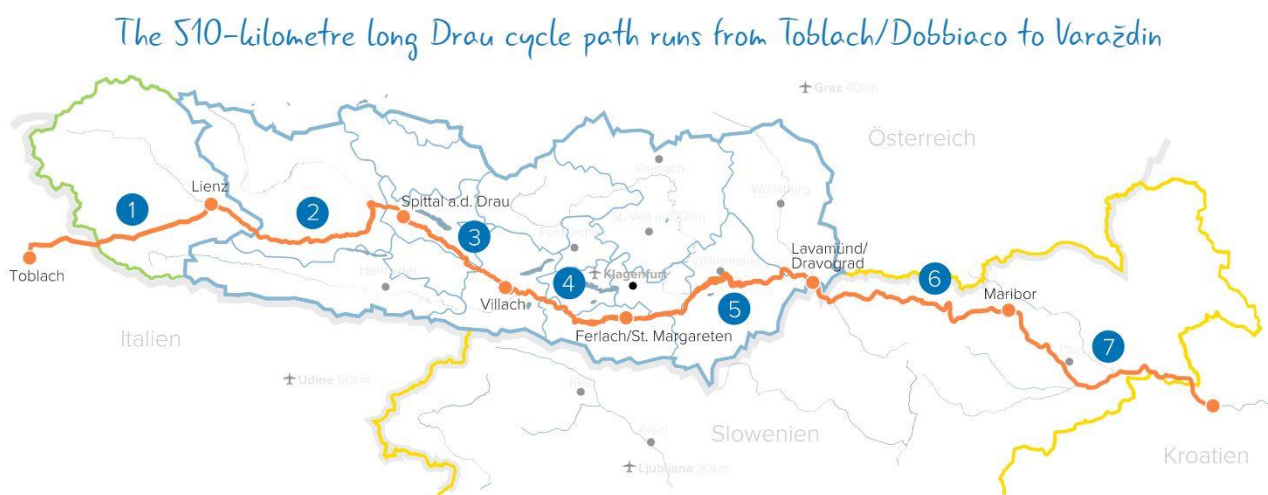
1.8.1 DRAURADWEG – Drava Cycle Route

The Drava Cycle Route stretches from the Dolomites to the Pannonian Plains on the south side of the Alps. It runs from the source of the Drau River in Toblach Field, Italy’s South Tirol, for 510 km along the eponymous river, through the Austrian Provinces of East Tirol and Carinthia, through Maribor in Slovenia until it reaches Varaždin in Croatia. From Varaždin onwards, the Drava cycle path in Croatia overlaps with the Amazon of Europe South Route.

The Drava cycle path leads through natural areas of international importance and guarantees optimal mobility, as it lies alongside the railway line. It connects warm, alpine bathing lakes with rugged mountain formations, lively towns with sleepy villages, diversity with beauty and quality. The Drava cycle path was the first eBike cycle path in Europe to be awarded 5 stars (Drauradweg, 2020).

The map and the stages of the Drava Cycle Route are showed in the Figure 4.

Figure 4: The map of the Drava Cycle Route



Source: <https://www.drauradweg.com/en/>

Main information and visitor statistics of the Drava Cycle Route in Austria are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4.

Table 2: Overview of the Drava Cycle Route in Austria in numbers

	Distance	Number of cyclists/year	Average revenues/year	Average spending/cyclists/day (including accommodation)	Average spending/cyclists/day (without accommodation)
Austria	510 km	200.000	6.000.000 €	80,00 €	20,00 €

Table 3: Percentage of visitors of Drava Cycle Route in Austria by the duration of their stay

Duration of stay (days)	Cyclists (%)
2-4	30
5-7	30
8-14	32
15 +	8
Total	100

Table 4: Percentage of visitors of Drava Cycle Route in Austria by type of accommodation

Type of accommodation	Average	Range
Hotel	40%	30 - 60%
Pension	45%	30 - 60%
Camp	15%	10 - 20%
Hostel	7%	5 - 13%
Private rooms	11%	5 - 15%

1.9 SWOT analysis

This chapter includes SWOT analysis for the AoE Bike Trail marketing strategy that will help us understand internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors of our product/brand important for the development of an effective marketing strategy and efficient use of our resources. The SWOT analysis is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: SWOT analysis of Amazon of Europe Bike Trail

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bike trail is going through the first future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, the area with pristine nature, well-preserved landscape and the rich wildlife, - bike trail crosses five countries, - bike trail goes along the rivers, - the product offers a wide range of complementary activities (natural and cultural sights, reach local cuisine, festivals, possibilities for bird watching, horse riding, water sports, fishing, guided tours wellness & spa), - it is a first bookable cycling product of that kind, - it includes a unique valorisation programme supporting nature protection projects, - it offers completely personalized cycling holiday and all-time support to the customer that correspond to the needs of the demand for safe and comfortable travel, - it has as informative website, on-line reservation system and mobile app that offer good digital support to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the AoE Bike Trail is a new product that is not yet established at the market, - poor overall marketing of the area of future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, - limited budget for marketing activities, - low accessibility of some parts of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube area - lack of public transport, especially public transport offering bike transport services, - lack of tourism and cycling infrastructure or underdeveloped infrastructure in some parts, - lack of accommodations and restaurants in some areas, - some parts of the trail are not very attractive or safe (bad maintenance, high traffic, etc.) - inadequate internet coverage and poor signalling of mobile networks in some places along the trail, - lack of bike guides, - lack of skills and knowledge between tourism workers

product	and other stakeholders, - language barriers
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - underdeveloped tourism destination with a great potential for tourism development, - long distance bike trails are gaining popularity in the past years, - EU Policy actions are promoting sustainable tourism and sustainable mobility, - many on-going tourism and cycling related projects in the respective regions are raising awareness about the opportunities and benefits of cycling, - a growing trend of tourists that want to create something meaningful while traveling – the opportunity for the valorisation programme Cycle for nature, - increasing number of tourists seeking for comfortable adventures and peaceful undiscovered places, - collaboration with relevant stakeholders – opportunity for using their channels for promotion, - many social media influencers are active in the field of cycling, responsible travel, etc. – possibility for promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - competition of other already existing bike trails and tour operators offering cycling holidays, - local population is not always open minded and well-motivated, the same partially applies in case of local service providers, - current low awareness about significance of cycling tourism in some regions of the Amazon of Europe, - challenges of working in 5 countries: different legislation, administrative barriers, language barriers

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

1.10 Short-term marketing objectives

In the first phase, the main objectives are:

- **Raise awareness about the brand** and tourism product locally, regionally, nationally and in the end also internationally, with the focus on our target markets,
- **Motivate people to purchase the product** and visit the AoE Bike Trail.

In the Socio-economic analysis of tourism potentials of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube area we prepared projections of revenues for the AoE Bike Trail for the following three years (realistic, optimistic, pessimistic scenario). We have decided to follow the optimistic scenario and have set our marketing goals accordingly (see Table 6). For details on the assumptions, please see the Socio-economic analysis. Moreover, the projections were prepared before the Covid-19 crisis and will need to be adapted when the consequences of the epidemic and conditions for implementing tourism activities in the future will be clearer.

Table 6: Projections of revenues and planned marketing objectives in the optimistic scenario

Year	OPTIMISTIC scenario				
	Number of cyclists	Number of bookings	Estimated AoE BT Booking Center Revenue	Marketing objective: People reached*	Marketing objective: Overall sales
2021	1000	400	45.000€	40.000	400
2022	1200	480	54.000€	48.000	480
2023	1440	576	64.800€	57.500	576

The most important marketing objective is to motivate 1000 cyclist enthusiasts within our set target groups to purchase our product. All strategic marketing activities will be planned, implemented and evaluated by utilizing available marketing budget in the most efficient way, to reach this goal and ensure the future life of the product.

*This number is based on following calculation:

50% of the extrapolation of the standard conversion rate (0,5%) referring to all bookings

1.11 Long-term marketing objectives

In the long term, marketing activities will focus on:

- brand image and equity,
- relationship marketing, to obtain regular, returning visitors,
- building strong relationships with the media (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally),
- building strong relationships with local inhabitants and tourism providers,
- strong online presence,
- creative marketing campaigns,
- valorisation programme.

MARKET SEGMENTATION

1.12 Target market

Defining a target market is the foundation of all elements of a marketing strategy that will help us to choose the right marketing channels for promotion.

According to our estimation future visitors of the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail could be divided into three main groups (see Figure 5):

- international tourists coming for longer cycling vacations,
- domestic tourists coming for shorter cycling vacations,
- locals using the bike trail for recreational purposes.

Figure 5: Three main groups of expected future AoE Bike Trail visitors



Source: Trail Angels, 2019.

Our prognosis is that the international tourists will mostly book via official booking center while the domestic tourists and locals will mostly cycle self-organized. Based on the following assumptions we chose the group of international tourists as our main target market that we narrowed down by analysing visitor trends of similar existing bike trails (e.g. Drava Cycle Route in Austria) to **cycling enthusiasts from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.**

1.13 Target groups

In the first phase, after launching the product in 2020, the AoE Bike Trail product target market will be further divided into two specific target groups structured by age/profile:

- **46+ baby boomers/ Best-agers:** typical booking centre cyclists; they don't expect the unexpected, they require access to convenience and services
- **Modern escapists 30+:** they are more self-organized, they want to escape the pressures of modern society.

1.13.1 46+ baby boomers/ Best-agers profile

"I want adventure with comfort and services."



- Age: 46+

- Location: Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, etc.
- Highly educated, higher income or retired
- Travel solo, in pairs or in groups
- Value nature, culture, heritage, local food and drinks, genuine hospitality, events, folklore, etc.
- Use electric bikes (50 km range)
- Environmentally conscious
- Typically book online or in booking centres
- Active in daily life
- Influential in their home environment.

1.13.2 Modern escapists 30+ profile

“I want adventure to escape my daily routine. “



- Age: 30+
- Location: Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, etc.
- Highly educated, higher income, young professionals
- Environmentally conscious
- High achievers
- Active on social media, they are influenced by others and they influence others
- Want adventure, but also value comfort and convenience
- Travel solo, in pairs or in groups.
- Value nature, culture, heritage, local food and drinks, events, festivals, etc.
- Like to discover something new, that no one has visited yet.

In the second phase, after 3 years on the market, when our product will already be more established, we plan to add another target group:

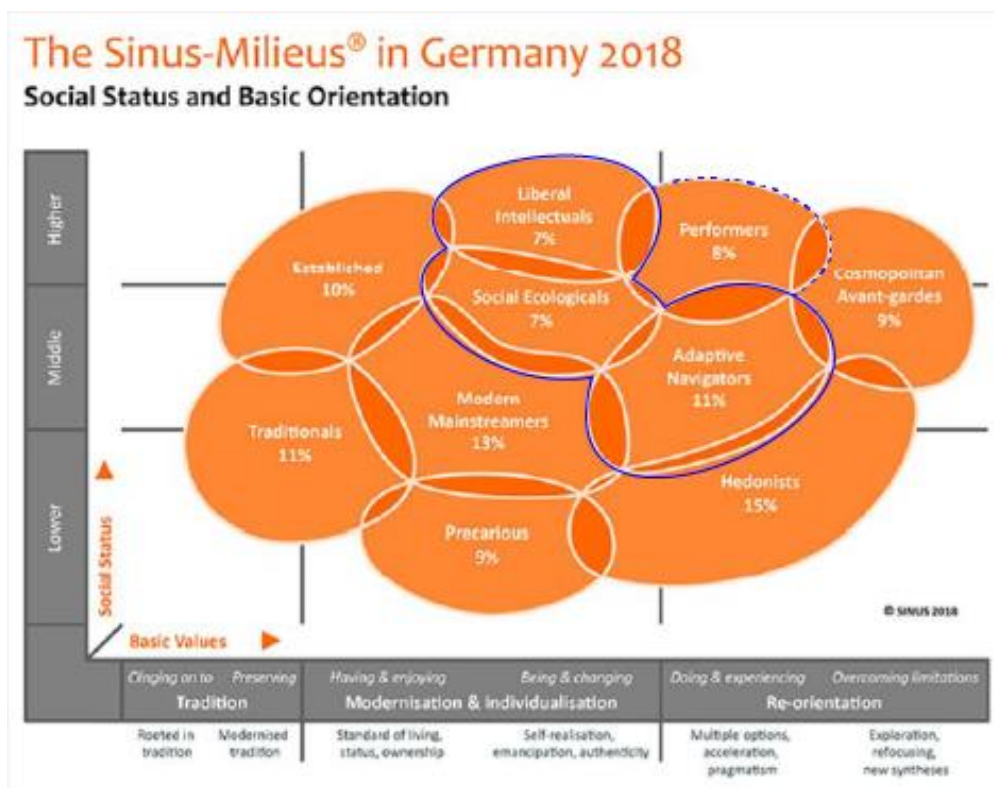
- Families with kids 12+: typical booking centre cyclists; they require access to convenience and services.

1.14 Sinus Milieus Target groups

The Sinus-Milieus model offers a true-to-life image of the sociocultural diversity of the modern world, providing accurate descriptions of people’s attitudes and orientations, values, lifestyles and life goals, and social backgrounds and positions.

Sinus-Milieus identify groups of like-minded people that can be visualized along two dimensions: social situation (status/class) and basic normative orientation. The areas of overlap among the bubbles on the milieu chart indicate that transitions between milieus are fluid. The Figure 6 presents the Sinus-Milieus in Germany in the year 2018 (Sinus-Milieus - Sinus-Institut, 2018).

Figure 6: The Sinus-Milieus in Germany 2018



Source: Sinus-Milieus - Sinus-Institut, 2018

According to the Sinus Milieus model, the AoE Bike Trail main target groups are:

- Liberal intellectuals (7%)
- Social ecologicals (7%)
- Adaptive navigators (11%)
- (Performers (8 %) – only in the beginning of the 1st phase to help us raise awareness about the product)

1.14.1 Liberal intellectuals

The enlightened educational elite (upper class): discerning view of the world, a fundamentally liberal outlook and postmaterial roots; desire for self-determination and personal development.

1.14.2 Social ecologicals

Socially engaged and socio - critical milieu with normative notions of the ‘right’ way to live (middle class): a pronounced ecological and social conscience; globalization sceptics, upholders of political correctness and diversity (multi-culti).

1.14.3 Adaptive navigators

The modern young center of society with a markedly pragmatic outlook on life and sense of expedience (middle class): motivated and prepared to adapt, but also keen to have fun and be entertained; ambitious, flexible, cosmopolitan – at the same time a strong need for social ties and a sense of belonging.

1.14.4 Performers

Additionally, there is another group that we plan to target in the first phase mainly from marketing perspective to raise awareness and spread the word about our product among wider public: the multi-optional, efficiency-oriented top performers (upper class): a global economic mindset; self - image as avantgarde when it comes to consumption and style; very technically and IT minded; establishment tendencies, erosion of visionary verve.

THE BRAND

The brand of the international sustainable tourism product of Amazon of Europe Bike Trail has its story, values, visual identity, personality (tone of communication) and standards for tourism service providers.

In tourism, a brand is a promise of the experience a visitor is going to have, when he or she visits the chosen destination. The experience as a whole consists of all the interactions a visitor has while getting to the destination, whilst on holiday and also after returning home. This is why, it is very important that every interaction a visitor has with the brand itself and local partners is positive and clearly communicates brand values.

1.14.5 Vision and Mission

The **vision**:

The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is the most well-known long-distance bookable cycling trail in Europe, offering responsible travel to discover unique river landscapes along the Mura, Drava and Danube.

Our **mission** is, based on the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, to open with the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail new perspectives for sustainable development in the river landscape of the area, by connecting responsible tourism with the preservation of nature:

- combining lifetime cycling experiences with well-defined contributions for nature conservation within the Cycle for nature programme
- pioneering environmental, economical, and social sustainable development
- involving and empowering local communities to cherish and commit to the preservation of their environment and to partner with them for the sustainable tourism business model

- championing the unique river landscape of the area and contributing, on the long-term, to its protection.

1.14.6 Brand Values

Brand values are leaning on the following immanent values of the area of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube where we are establishing a tourism destination called the “Amazon of Europe”:

- Intactness of the river landscape
- Wilderness
- Fragility
- Natural richness and vitality
- Source of inspiration and mindfulness
- Source of life and abundance

The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail Value Diamond includes the following values that must be embodied by everyone involved in the tourism product:

- Sustainability (ecological, economic, social)
- Collaboration (cooperation, inclusion, transformation)
- Integrity (transparency, honesty, ethics)
- Commitment (passion, competence, pioneering)

1.14.7 The Story of Amazon of Europe Bike Trail

The story of Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is based on:

- name of the product,
- logo (visual representation of the brand),
- slogan (also called claim), that embodies the character and values of the product,
- teaser, a slightly longer description of the experience the product is promising.

The brand story is also a promise to our visitors. The brand promises cycling holidays in pristine nature, along the rivers and protected natural areas. This is a region where time slows down, there is less traffic and less noise, while the nature is beautiful, culture is rich and the hospitality of local people is genuine. Although this might be an unknown area for many visitors, it is safe and all the services are available.

SLOGAN/CLAIM: “Cycle for nature”

TEASER: “Discover Amazon of Europe by cycling along Mura, Drava and Danube.”

The key words are “discover”, “experience” and “cycle for nature”.

DISCOVER: Amazon of Europe Bike Trail is a long-distance cycling trail offering you unique opportunity for cycling holidays, following the pristine meanders of the rivers Mura, Drava and Danube for over 1.250 km. The cycling tour leads you along both sides of the rivers, on North and South Route. Cycle through natural riverine landscapes of five countries where nature knows no borders.

EXPERIENCE: Cycle along three rivers on 27 stages where the route takes you through deep shades of mysterious forests and refreshing blue colours of the ancient rivers. Enrich your cycling holidays with canoeing or birdwatching. At the end of the day, enjoy authentic hospitality of the locals, relax in a spa and taste the unforgettably delicious local cuisine.

CYCLE FOR NATURE: By booking your next cycling holidays with us, you will support nature conservation programmes for endangered species of the area. On your cycling adventure the route will lead you through world-famous protected areas, where you can spot charismatic white-tailed eagle or extremely rare black stork, you might even meet turtles and otters.

1.15 USP – Unique Selling Proposition

The most unique characteristics, important for the story which represent the competitive advantages of AoE Bike Trail, are:

- Future 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura – Drava Danube (TBR MDD).
- 5 countries – 3 rivers – 1 biosphere reserve (rivers connect).
- Valorisation programme Cycle for nature.
- Design of the route (nature & river experience).
- Unique travel experiences (TOP 6 must-see activities at each stage of the route; these are natural, cultural or outdoor experiences).
- Online bookable product (online accessibility, safety in booking a holiday in advance).
- Safety and comfort.

These are the most important competitive advantages, compared to other cycling routes in the area.

1.16 Standards and criteria for using the Brand

The brand will be owned by the AoE Bike Trail Destination Management Organization. Only the contracted tourism providers (or other partners) will be allowed to use the brand, under set standards and criteria.

Standards and criteria will be developed specifically for:

- The official AoE Bike Booking center (licence contract)
- AoE Bike Trail Booking center Partners (contractors such as accommodations, mobility services, tour operators, other service providers)
- Other partners (e.g. corporate marketing, tourism boards).

1.17 Logo

The AoE Bike Trail project logo has been designed and provided by the Danube Transnational programme and is going to be used throughout the duration of the project. The logo has to be used according to the DTP Visual identity guidelines at all times.

Figure 7: The official AoE Bike Trail project logo from DTP



Because the AoE Bike Trail aims to become a flagship tourism product of this area, there is a need to present the product as a stand-alone brand. The product has to stand out among its competition, which is why a proposal for a new logo has been prepared, based on its story, USP, values, vision and mission. Additionally, different thematic categories will be added, such as:

- Partner, Info point,
- Must see,
- Discover Mura/Drava/Danube

Figure 8: Official AoE Bike Trail product logo



The logo includes the name of the product and **key visual elements**:

- The outer circle represents the 1 biosphere reserve connecting 5 countries,
- The three rivers represent Mura, Drava and Danube,
- The light green colour inside represents rich biodiversity of the biosphere reserve, wetlands/meadows,
- The kingfisher represents:
 - peace and prosperity,
 - rich fauna and endangered species endangered species as the main treasure of the area,
 - Valorisation programme Cycle for nature
- The colours are harmonised with the Amazon of Europe Mura Drava Danube logo to keep the connection.
- Circular shape also represents all cyclic movement, bike wheel, used to explore this beautiful landscape, totality and timelessness.

The **colours** used are green and blue, each representing natural elements:

- Green: nature, forests, eco-friendly, health, biodiversity.
- Blue: rivers, water, trust, security, reliability.

Both colours are also known for having calming effects on its spectators, which is in line with the story of the product.

1.18 Photos and other visual materials

All visuals should embody the brand vision, values, story, USP, colours and messages, as well as pictured target groups (e.g. nature, riverine landscape, cyclists).

Suitable photos are the following:

- Photos of nature, riverine landscape, animals, attractions.
- Photos of the AoE Bike Trail infrastructure (info boards, resting area, etc.)
- Photos of cyclists:
 - All cyclist in the photos must have proper cycling equipment (trekking/hybrid bikes, sneakers/sport shoes, cycling trousers, cycling T-shirt, cycling gloves, helmet, sunglasses).
 - Photos of cyclists by the river in visitor areas – the best is that the infrastructure for visitors is visible (e.g. benches, tables, bird watching towers, etc.).
 - Photos of cyclists cycling on the bike trail with the river, fields or forest in the background.
 - Photos of cyclists near/using the AoE Bike Trail infrastructure (info boards, resting area, etc.).
- Photos showing nature-oriented activities: birdwatching, swimming (where it is allowed), etc.
- People in the photos must agree that the photo of them is used for promotional purposes.
- Photos must have copyrights – approval for publishing from the author of the photos.

Examples of inappropriate photos:

- Photos of bikes on the gravel in the unspoiled nature where there is no existing infrastructure for visitors.
- Photos of cyclists cycling off road: on grass, gravel, etc.
- Photos of badly maintained trail.
- Photos showing scenes and activities inconsistent with our brand values.

MARKETING STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

In the following chapters planned marketing strategies and activities are presented. They are divided into three main groups by types: digital marketing, promotional publications, promotional events. Detailed plan of marketing activities including information about location, time plan, responsibility and available budget (only external costs) of each activity is described in the *Annex 1: AoE Bike Trail_Plan of marketing activities*. Moreover, the timeline of the marketing activities is graphically presented in the *Annex 2: Timeline of*

marketing activities. The AoE Bike Trail_Plan of marketing activities and Timeline of marketing activities is also presented in Figure 11 at the end of chapter 6.

1.19 Digital marketing

The online experience is a very crucial part of the marketing plan, as both the booking and marketing activities are going to be taking place online. The AoE BT Steering committee will own the brand and online communication, so it is crucial to utilize them as best as possible.

1.19.1 Official product promotional on-line platform

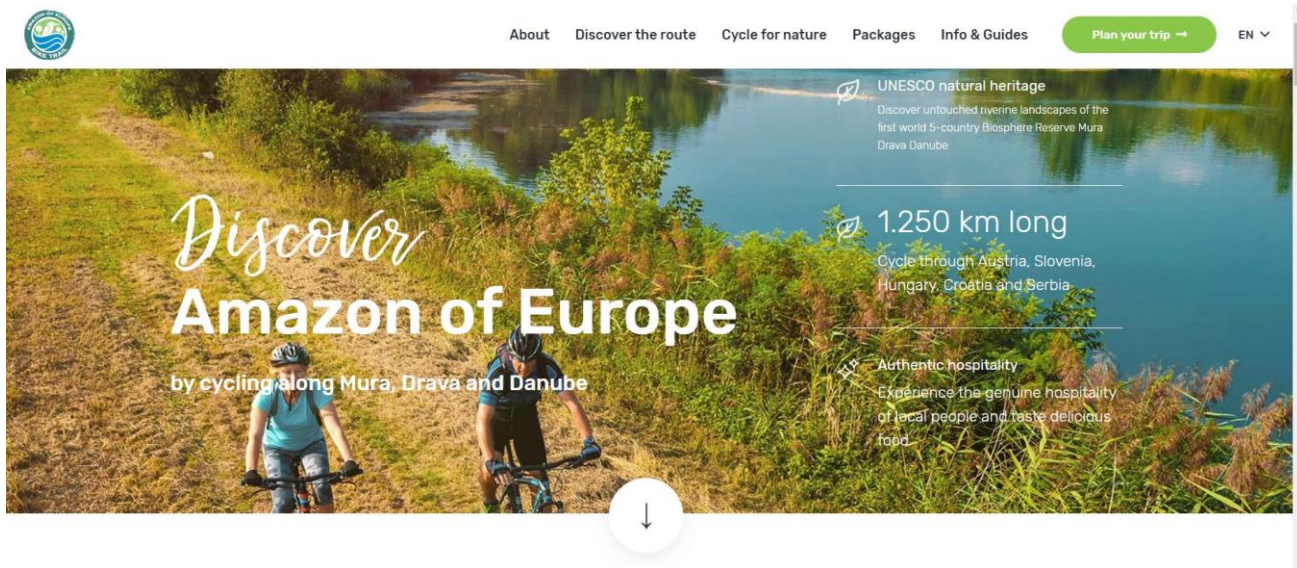
The main access to the market is going to be through the official product promotional on-line platform, so it has to be handled as an online tourism destination (presented at the state of art website). Potential guests' online experience of our website will affect their decision making whether to buy our product or not and therefore, all the contents must be informative, accurate, clear and attractive and the on-line platform simple, logical, and easy to use.

The selected domain name of the product on-line platform is **aoebiketrial.com (.eu/etc.)**.

Contents of the website:

- **Landing page** with main information about the AoE Bike Trail.
- **About:** presentation of key facts, experiences and services, biosphere reserves, AoE Bike Trail DMO, all the partners and main cooperating regional and national authorities from the field of tourism.
- **Discover the route:** descriptions of all stages.
- **Cycle for nature:** presentation of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD), included protected areas and valorisation scheme.
- **Packages:** presentation of thematic pre-prepared bookable packages for cycling holidays.
- **Info & Guides:** a subpage where different brochures, maps and guidebooks for cyclists will be available.
- **Plan your trip:** presentation of the AoE Bike Trail booking center and the option to book cycling holidays directly through the AoE Bike Trail online booking system or send the request without obligation to the AoE Bike Trail booking center team.
- **Link to** download the AoE Bike trail **Mobile-App** for navigation on the trail.
- **Links to social media channels.**
- Professional **photo and video materials.**

Figure 9: Landing page header layout



A successful website does three things (Powered by search, 2020):

- It gets people to the website.
- It gets people to stick around after the first glance or two.
- It gets people to convert or perform the action(s) you want them to while on the website.

1. GETTING TRAFFIC TO THE AOE BIKE TRAIL ON-LINE PLATFORM:

- **Backlinking and referrals:** links to our on-line platform from other websites such as websites of National/Regional/Local tourism organizations, AoE Bike Trail DMO partners and booking center partners, cycling organizations, etc., as well as from the e-mails, social media accounts, etc.
- **Keyword optimization (SEO):** frequent use of the keywords Amazon of Europe Bike Trail, cycling holidays, cycle tour, river bike trail, best bike trails, nature travel cycling.
- **Citations on different review websites:** e.g. TripAdvisor, Expedia, Foursquare, Viator, etc.
- New content on a regular basis.
- Social media integration: Facebook, Instagram.
- A mobile-compatible version of the website.

2. GETTING PEOPLE TO STAY AT THE AOE BIKE TRAIL ON-LINE PLATFORM:

- **Simple layout and aesthetics:** clear and intuitive navigation menu, avoiding clutters of elements (text, photos), using complementary colours and good colour contrast for better readability, etc.
- **Content quality:** informative, clear and accurate texts and catchy headers.

3. GETTING HIGH CONVERSION RATE:

- **Effective calls to action:** they can be found on different website subpages, the text is convincing but not aggressive, the design is pleasant to the eye.
- Security in money and information.
- **An “About” page and contact information** that will help establish the brand as a real and legitimate business.

In the 1st phase we will work especially cost free or low-cost digital marketing actions listed above. If needed, we will add some paid ads and paid search to our strategy.

In order to measure the success of our digital marketing activities we will use the **Google analytics tool** to track and analyse the AoE Bike Trail on-line platform traffic. Regular monitoring of events on our site will help us plan and implement future digital actions in more time- and cost-efficient manner, as well as to generate better results.

1.19.2 Social media

We plan to carry out our marketing activities in the following social media:

– **Facebook:**

- KPIs: growing the audience and engagement; content reach and engagement by content type; response rate and quality; negative comments; referral traffic to the AoE Bike Trail on-line platform; conversion rate.
- Strategy: regular posts and campaigns, FB events, tagging and backlinking, engaging with the audience by responding to their messages and comments, audience profiling and targeted ads, use of Facebook analytics.

– **Instagram:**

- KPIs: audience growth and engagement per follower; content reach; most engaged hashtags; comments received; referral traffic to the AoE Bike Trail on-line platform; conversion rate.
- Strategy: regular posts, stories and campaigns, use of hashtags and backlinks, audience profiling and targeted ads.

– **Youtube channel:**

- KPIs: total amount of video views; total watch time; video engagement; viewer retention; number of subscribers; subscribers' demographics; referral traffic to the AoE Bike Trail on-line platform; conversion rate.
- Strategy: regular posts of videos, tagging and backlinking, engaging with the audience by responding to their comments.

1.20 Promotional publications

Even though the importance of digital marketing is highly important in today's digitally driven world, it turns out that promotional publications are still indispensable and useful marketing tool. Promotional publications are budget-friendly tools for marketing that can reach the audience in many ways. A well-made brochure design conveys the values and message of a business impeccably while emphasizing its offerings. The statistics from Bentley University give an overview of their importance (Carton, 2019):

- 7 out of 10 tourists, as well as visitors, tend to pick up brochures,
- 95% visitors that obtain brochures become aware of a business,
- 80% of people consider visiting the business they saw in brochures.

Promotional publications including brochures and other media related texts and materials planned for the promotion of the AoE Bike Trail are:

- **AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure:** described in detail in the subchapter 10.2.1,
- **press releases:** they will be prepared aside bigger achievements and events and shared with local media in all five countries in their national languages,
- **articles and travel reports** in biking magazines and specialized guides, editorials, etc., attracting the specific target groups interested in new biking products,
- **promotional cycling material:** common concept for promotional materials will be developed (e.g. cycling T-shirts, water bottles, backpacks),
- **newsletters on the AoE Bike Trail DTP website:** two will be prepared every half of the year (each reporting period).

1.20.1 AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure

AoE Bike Trail route map

The route map will serve as a product promotional brochure and will include the map of the whole AoE Bike Trail, information about the trail and key information about 27 stages including one must-see per stage.

AoE Bike Trail brochure

The brochure will be designed as a guidebook of the AoE Bike Trail. Detailed maps and route descriptions for all 27 stages of the route will be included, with a clear breakdown of time, distance and the profile of each stage. Additionally, accommodation details for each stage and information on local public transport, culture, food and language will be presented, as well as the must-see attractions and experiences on the way. It will be published in a small, handy-sized format which is easy to pack and carry around on a cycling holiday. The brochure will be available in six languages: English, German, Slovenian, Croatian, Hungarian and Serbian. It will be issued in the pdf and printed form.

Two versions of the route maps and brochures will be prepared:

- **Initial AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure:**
 - ready until the end of July 2020,
 - will not yet include the accommodations and other service providers offering complementary activities,
 - 2.000 copies of each publication will be printed in the 6 languages of the AoE Bike Trail.
- **Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure:**
 - ready until the end of April 2021,
 - will include all updated information and maps, including accommodations and other service providers,
 - 8.000 copies of each publication will be printed in the 6 languages of the AoE Bike Trail.

1.21 Promotional events

Different types of promotional events are crucial to get in personal contact with target groups and present them the AoE Bike Trail and project achievements. The following types of events will be organized:

- interim and final conference,
- international and cross-border promo events,
- community marketing in 5 countries,
- promotion at specialized tourism fairs in and outside DTP region,
- explorer/promotion tours will be organized for specified target groups: specialized agents, biking guides and experts, journalists, test users. They will have the opportunity to test the Bike Trail and its services and will be asked to provide assessment so that we can evaluate the standards and improve services where necessary.

1.21.1 Interim and final conference

Interim and final conference will be organized to promote the AoE Bike Trail, sustainable tourism in biosphere reserves and development opportunities on a broader scale.

Interim conference

Interim conference - **the 1st Amazon of Europe Bike Trail networking event** will be organized between 8-10 June 2020 in Apatin, Serbia. The plan for this event is to become an annual event.

Main aims of the event are:

- official Amazon of Europe Bike Trail DMO (destination management organization) establishment and celebration,
- official route opening,
- networking between all AoE BT regions,
- raising awareness and sharing good practices of cycling and eco-tourism.

The event is going to be organized for the following target groups: tourism boards (national, regional, local), regional authorities, municipalities, protected areas, service providers and other stakeholders, related to cycling and ecotourism. Preliminary agenda is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Preliminary agenda of the AoE Bike Trail interim conference in Apatin

Monday (8.6.2020)	Tuesday (9.6.2020)	Wednesday (10.6.2020)
9:30 – 16:00 Amazon of Europe Bike Trail 6th SCOM meeting	9:00 – 14:00 Amazon of Europe Bike Trail conference	9:30 – 14:00 Study visit - cycling along the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail, - boat ride along Danube and exploring the Bačko Podunavlje/Gornje Podunavlje nature reserve, - lunch at charda (fish stew, beach,
19:00 AoE BT DMO kick-off official celebration	15:00 - 1st Amazon of Europe Bike Trail international networking event and	

	tourism fair	possible swimming in Danube river)
	19:00 Dinner & Party	

Final conference

Final conference will be organized in May 2021 in Velika Polana, Slovenia. The concept of the event will be developed later on in the project.

1.21.2 International and cross-border promo events

In the scope of the international and cross-border promo events the International Biking festival is going to take place in 11 participating regions in 5 countries, giving the opportunity to the locals and national visitors to get to know better the Amazon of Europe. The International Amazon of Europe Biking festival aims to become a traditional international cycling festival. Altogether, there are 11 cycling events, taking place in summer or beginning of autumn every year.

Concept: separate local cycling events are joined into a festival with common promotion and common story. The goal is to promote cycling tourism and establish a positive connection between people and nature, while simultaneously promoting safe cycling culture.

Figure 10: 1st International Biking Festival promotional banner



In the scope of the AoE Bike Trail project a 2nd International Amazon of Europe Biking festival is going to be organized between August – October 2020. 11 cycling events are going to take place in all regions of the Amazon of Europe: Eastern Styria (AT), Pomurska region (SI), Medimurje County, Osijek-Baranja County, Koprivnica-Križevci County, Virovitica-Podravina County (HR), Zala, Somogy and Baranya County (HU) and West Bačka District (SR). Detailed concept will be development later on in the project.

1.21.3 Community marketing in 5 countries

Community marketing in 5 countries involves organisation of targeted local events and publications in the local media with the aim to increase awareness of the project achievements, joint international biking product

and brand. In the scope of community marketing events, opening days of the AoE Bike Trail are planned in all regions in summer 2020 after the infrastructure and equipment will be installed.

1.21.4 Promotion at tourism fairs

Tourism fairs are a very powerful marketing medium because they bring together large number of international buyers and sellers in one place in a short space of time and provide a comprehensive overview of the entire market and industry.

Main aims:

- Assessing the overall industry situation and competition.
- Increasing brand awareness – AoE Bike Trail as a flagship sustainable tourism product.
- Promotion of the business model at the specialized sections for responsible/sustainable travel.
- Testing market reactions to the newly introduced AoE Bike Trail product.
- Forging successful partnerships, especially with outbound tour operators from our main target markets (Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg).
- Networking and generating new business contacts – trade fairs provide a unique venue for people with common interests to connect with one another.

We are planning to attend the following **specialized tourism fairs in and outside DTP region:**

- **International Tourism Fairs**
 - BTEexpo, Brussels, October 2020
 - WTM London, November 2020 - awarding for category Responsible travel
 - Vakantiebeurs Utrecht Tourism and Leisure Fair, January 2021
 - ITB Berlin, March 2021 – presenting at the Responsible Travel Hall
- **Outdoor Tourism Fairs on EU Markets**
 - Eurobike Friedrichshafen, September 2020
 - TourNatour Düsseldorf, September 2020
- **National Tourism Fairs** in Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia, May 2020 - May 2021.

Later in the project, a special strategy will be prepared for a trade show marketing with the focus on enhancing our recognizability especially in the segment of responsible travel/eco-tourism/sustainable tourism.

1.21.5 Explorer/promo tours for different target groups

Explorer/promotion tours will be organized for specified target groups: specialized agents, biking guides and experts, journalists, test users and social media influencers. They will have the opportunity to test the Bike Trail and its services and will be asked to promote our Bike Trail to broader public, as well as to provide assessment so that we can evaluate the standards and improve services where necessary. The explorer tours of the AoE Bike Trail are going to take place after summer 2020.

1.22 Responsibilities of partners

The AoE Bike Trail partnership includes the regional and topical partners. Since the marketing tasks of partners are closely connected to their role in the project, we are using this division to present the responsibilities of partners.

1.22.1 Topical partners

Topical partners in the AoE Bike Trail project are **LP Iskriva, WWF Austria, Trail Angels, WWF Adria and Westpannon**. The marketing activities for each topical partner are presented further below.

LP Iskriva

Digital marketing:

- Development and maintenance of the AoE Bike Trail on-line promotional platform and Mobile app for cyclists.
- Social media marketing: managing AoE Bike Trail accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on their website and social media.

Promotional publications:

- Giving support to WWF Adria in the Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure preparation.
- Giving support to WWF Adria in the Newsletters' and Press releases' preparation.

Promotional events:

- Organization of Interim conference in Apatin (11.-12. 6. 2020) in cooperation with MOA.
- Organization of Final conference in Velika Polana (May 2021) in cooperation with Velika Polana.
- Preparation of the concept for the 2nd International Biking Festival that will be held between August-October 2020.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the International Tourism Fairs in cooperation with Trail Angels: BTE expo, Brussels, WTM London, Vakantiebeurs Utrecht Tourism and Leisure Fair, ITB Berlin.

WWF Austria

- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on their website and social media.
- Providing input for on-line platform, promotional publications and social media campaigns: content and photos.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail through the WWF database of clients and other channels, as well as cooperation with the WWF Travel Club.

Trail Angels

- Preparation of articles and promotion on travel blogs.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on their website and social media.
- Providing input for on-line platform, promotional publications and social media campaigns: content and photos.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the International Tourism Fairs in cooperation with Iskriva: BTE expo, Brussels, WTM London, Vakantiebeurs Utrecht Tourism and Leisure Fair, ITB Berlin.

- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the Outdoor Tourism Fairs on EU Markets: Eurobike Friedrichshafen, TourNatour Düsseldorf and other similar fairs.
- Organization of Explorer/promotion tours for different target groups in Summer 2020.

WWF Adria

- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on their website and social media.
- Providing input for on-line platform, promotional publications and social media campaigns: content and photos.
- Translating the content of the on-line platform to Croatian.
- Preparation of the Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure.
- Translating Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure and printing it in English and Croatian.
- Preparation of Newsletters and Press releases.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail through the WWF database of clients and other channels, as well as cooperation with the WWF Travel Club.

Westpannon

- See the common tasks of regional coordinators.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the National Tourism Fairs.

1.22.2 Regional coordinators

Regional coordinators in the AoE Bike Trail project are **Velika Polana, TVRBR, TZMZ, PIVPC, KKZ, BfNPI, SMVKA, COS** and **MOA**.

The activities same for all regional coordinators are:

- Organizing professional photo and video shoot along the trail in their regions to provide photos for promotional publications and on-line promotional platform (photos showing cyclists, nature, AoE Bike Trail and infrastructure, beautiful photos for stage headers and photos of must-see attractions).
- Cooperating with local/regional/national tourism boards, service providers or other relevant stakeholders and promoting the AoE Bike Trail through their channels (e.g. their websites and promo materials, as well as common campaigns on Tourism Fairs).

Digital marketing:

- Providing input for the on-line platform and social media campaigns: content and photos.
- Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the websites and social media of their organizations.

Promotional publications:

- Providing input for the promotional publications: content and photos.
- Translations of Press releases into national languages and to local media.
- Other publications about the AoE Bike Trail in sending them local media.

Promotional events:

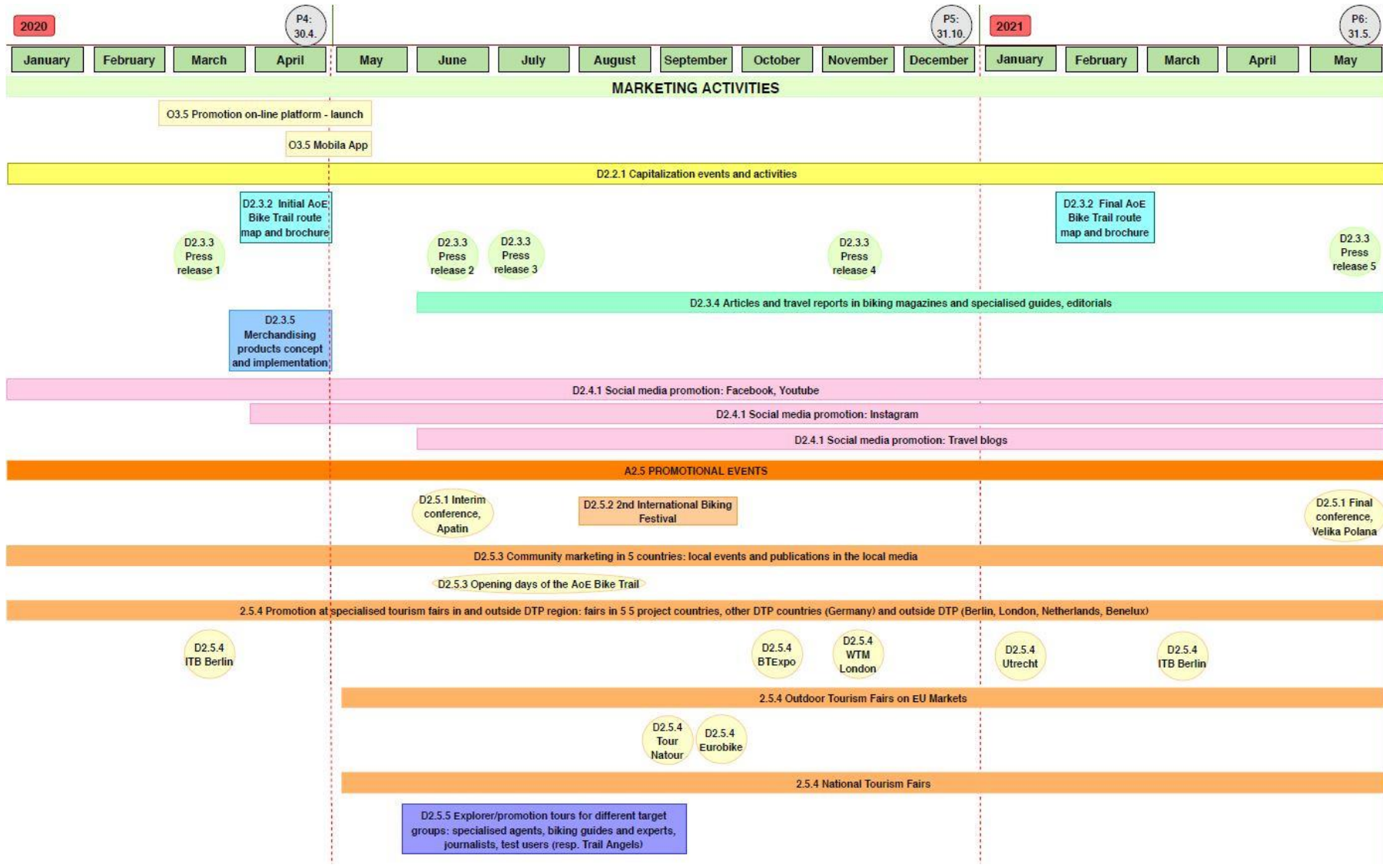
- Organization of regional events in the scope of the 2nd International Biking Festival that will be held between August-October 2020.

- Community marketing in 5 countries: organization of local events - Opening days of the AoE Bike Trail after the infrastructure and equipment will be installed in Summer 2020.
- Supporting Trail Angels in organization of Explorer/promotion tours for different target groups in Summer 2020.
- Participating on local/regional/national events connected to similar topics (e.g. sustainable tourism, cycling, biosphere reserves, etc.) and promoting AoE Bike Trail there.

Additional activities specific for the following regional coordinators are:

- **Velika Polana:**
 - Translating the content of the on-line platform to Slovenian.
 - Translating Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure to Slovenian and printing.
 - Organization of Final conference in Velika Polana (May 2021) in cooperation with Iskriva.
 - Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the National Tourism Fairs.
- **TVRBR:**
 - Translating the content of the on-line platform to German.
 - Translating Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure to Croatian and printing.
 - Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the National Tourism Fairs.
- **CDA OBC:**
 - Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the National Tourism Fairs.
- **BfNPI:**
 - Promotion of the AoE Bike Trail on the National Tourism Fairs.
- **SMVKA:**
 - Translating the content of the on-line platform to Hungarian.
 - Translating Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure to Hungarian and printing.
- **MOA:**
 - Translating the content of the on-line platform to Serbian.
 - Translating Initial and Final AoE Bike Trail route map and brochure to Serbian and printing.
 - Organization of Interim conference in Apatin (11.-12. 6. 2020) in cooperation with Iskriva.

Figure 11: Timeline of marketing activities



MARKETING BUDGET

Marketing budget is prepared based on the planned budget for marketing activities in the AoE Bike Trail project Application form and includes the budget of WP2 and partially of WP3. The overview of budget is presented in the tables below (Table 9 and 10), however, the detailed budget per activity per partner can be found in the *Annex 3: AoE Bike Trail_Financial plan for marketing*.

Table 8: Overview of marketing budget per activity

ACTIVITIES	AVAILABLE BUDGET (€)
WP3 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	
3.4 Development of promotional online platform and mobile app for cyclists	23.800,00
WP2 COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES	
2.1 Communication strategy	448,50
2.2 Capitalization activities	8.096,00
2.3 Promotional publications	159.009,60
2.4 On-line promotion – Digital marketing	12.650,00
2.5 Promotional events	235.746,15
TOTAL	439.750,25

Table 9: Overview of marketing budget per partner

PARTNERS	AVAILABLE BUDGET (€)
LP Iskriva	62.373,94
ERDF PP1 Velika Polana	53.854,93
ERDF PP2 WWF Austria	18.894,63
ERDF PP3 Trail Angels	56.058,20
ERDF PP4 TVRBR	41.697,85
ERDF PP5 TZMZ	21.000,00
ERDF PP6 PIVPC	12.947,32
ERDF PP8 KKZ	12.459,41
ERDF PP9 WWF Adria	36.360,76
ERDF PP10 Westpannon	17.432,19
ERDF PP11 BfNPI	27.492,32
ERDF PP12 SMVKA	22.754,05
ERDF PP13 CDA OBC	13.456,68
IPA PP1 COS	15.208,76
IPA PP2 MOA	27.759,81
TOTAL	439.750,25

EVALUATION

Because the marketing strategy is going to be based mostly on online activities, there will be a need for **constant evaluation of the results** (analytics) and adapting the strategies and tactics to reach set goals. Digital marketing is a very dynamic process and it is going to be crucial to regularly monitor new trends in tourism marketing.

Evaluation methods:

- all media materials will be recorded in a form of press clippings,
- reviews on Trip advisor or similar websites,
- number of followers and comments on social media,
- interviews with AoE Bike Trail partners (tourism providers),
- comments from local inhabitants,
- reviews in the media,
- the most important result: number of bookings.

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