MUNICIPALITY OF PROSOTSANI

Deliverable 4.2.2

**Branding of the Cross-Border Palaeontological Cultural Product of
The Municipality of Prosotsani and the Municipality of Chepelare**

1. Introduction

The "Brand Strategy Plan for the Cross-Border Palaeontological Cultural Product in the Prosotsani and Chepelare Regions", hereafter referred to as BSP (Brand Strategy Plan for Paleontological Cultural Product), was elaborated in the framework of the effort of the Municipalities of Prosotsani and Chepelare for the sustainable exploitation of cultural, and human resources.

The project is being developed under the Service Contract entitled "**Publicity and Communication Services in the framework of the project titled "Integrated Tourism Approach for the development of cultural and natural sites in Chepelare, Bg and Prosotsani, Gr ", shortly " INTEGRA_TOUR** "; in the 4.2.2 Deliverable: Branding the Cross-Border Paleontological Cultural Product.

The project "Integrated Tourism Approach for the development of cultural and natural sites in Chepelare, Bg and Prosotsani, Gr - INTEGRA_TOUR) has been included in the European Cooperation Program "GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020". This project identifies the great natural and cultural heritage found in the cross-border area. There are important palaeontological data in the municipalities of Prosotsani and Chepelare that have either not been preserved and protected or not been highlighted in the best possible way.

At the same time, academic institutions, non-government organizations, amateur groups, are not sufficiently networked to exchange information and knowledge and eventually contribute to the study of paleontology and the natural heritage of the wider cross-border area. In addition, people and children have limited access to natural heritage resources and opportunities to acquire knowledge in palaeontology.

The main objective of the approved project is to create a sustainable infrastructure that will allow the creation, development and promotion of the palaeontological identity of the cross-border area. The Municipality of Prosotsani is responsible for the development of information and publicity actions. Also, the Municipality is responsible for delivering deliverables for the creation of a palaeontological theme park. Similarly, the Municipality of Chepelare will modernize the Cave Museum.

For the implementation of the project, a partnership has been formed between the above entities by the signing of a Partnership Agreement. The total budget of the project under implementation, following the revisions of the Joint Secretariat, amounts to €1,186,116.11, of which €646,821.85 concerns the budget of the municipality of Prosotsani. The project will be co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund by 85% and by the National Fund by 15%.

The development of the BSP coincides with the fact that several tourist and cultural infrastructures, such as museums, routes, archaeological sites, wineries, agrotourism units, hotels, etc. have already been developed to a certain extent in the municipality of Prosotsani. At the same time, projects to be implemented, such as cross-border cooperation projects entitled "Fauna conservation to safeguard biodiversity in cross – border mountainous areas of Bulgaria and Greece: Innovative approaches to classify monitor and protect biodiversity in local ecosystems – (BIO-INNOVATE)", and "Modernization, promotion and conservation of caves as touristic destinations" shortly: "My Caves". The Municipality of Chepelare has already organized tourist facilities such as the Pamporovo Ski Resort, caves, astronomical observatory, museums and a rich natural environment.

All of the above, have already created the right conditions for increasing tourist traffic, which translates into more visitors, a longer stay and of course an increase in local income. Despite the sufficiency of remarkable and sufficient resources to stimulate tourist demand, relatively low mobility is observed. It is clear and without much effort that the main reasons are:

- Absence of a distinct destination brand that incorporates the experiences that one can have in the cross-border area, taking into account the supply and demand prospects
- A small degree of interconnection and integration of tourism resources into the tourist product
- Absence of arranging of the tourist product into grouped modules (packages - experiences) aiming at their promotion in the tourist market
- Complete lack of organizational structure for managing a tourist product (destination management organization)
- The absence of a clear and boundary strategic direction leading to a vision clearly defined and commonly accepted
- Very low participation of the local community in shaping the supply of the tourist product.
- Unrelated and unsynchronized tourist promotion of the tourist identity of the Municipality
- The lack of a marketing plan and strategy drastically reduces the performance of τηεε promotional activities implemented
- There are no organized procedures for monitoring the development of the tourist product

From the above we conclude that there is now a need for the two municipalities to redesign the Tourist Product they offer, taking into account the new data and characteristics of the internal and external environment, which have a bi-directional relationship with the tourism development. The main objective of the above effort is for the operators to take advantage of the existing situation which shapes their bearing tourist capacity and to ensure increased traffic and integration of their tourist product. One of the final results will be the unification and networking of all existing scattered infrastructures, creating a single coherent image and identity to the tourist market.

This effort must be accompanied by the coordination and orientation of all the social partners and emphasizing the creation of added value for both visitors and local residents. The communication strategy proposed requires consistency and absolute relevance to the tourist identity of the two regions.

The main goal and vision of the whole effort is for the cross-border region to capitalize on its competitive advantages, to take advantage of any opportunity and crew to become a **self-sustaining and sustainable tourist destination**.

2. A strategy for sustainable tourism development

2.1 Factors of success

In order to achieve the desired tourism development, a systematic and comprehensive effort is needed to improve all the basic ingredients of the tourist product:

Attractiveness
The highly aesthetic and valuable natural environment, the rich cultural reserve, the authenticity of the people and their lifestyle and many additional features of the cross-border area create a high degree of attractiveness

Accessibility
The accessibility of a site makes it more efficient to offer services to visitors, facilitating the approach of the tourist product.

Services
The tourist services provided focus on the operation of mainly supporting structures, such as information centers, etc., as well as all the necessary infrastructure (hotels, restaurarnts, etc.) with clear terms of quality through high standards of comfort, reliability, behavior and constant improvement of the final result. The provision of high-quality services is perhaps the best advertising medium for each region, as well as a requirement for a repeat visit.

Activities
The activities (tours, skills, sports, experiential experiences, etc.) that a visitor can develop in an area are an integral part of their total tourist product. Their diversity and complementarity make a decisive contribution to both attracting visitors and extending their stay and consequently to increasing their relative expenditure. Besides, the extension of the tourist season throughout the year is a key issue.

Accommodation
The accommodation properties as well as the specifications that characterize them (architecture, layout, comforts offered) contribute decisively to the formation of a visual image of the anthropogenic - structured environment of each region. At the same time, they greatly determine the profile of the "buyer audience" to which they are addressed, attributing the above characteristics through their pricing policy. At the same time the capacity of accommodation in the case of the cross-border area drastically reduces the tourist capacity as the number of all the available beds is very small.

Promotion in absolute synchronization with the tourist brand
The degree of performance of the systematic promotion of the tourist product by appropriately choosing communication channels and target groups depends on the degree of integration and interconnection of tourist resources with the tourist brand of the cross-border area. Tourist promotion actions must be synchronized with the tourist brand.

Environment
The preservation of the environment and local resources is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of the cross-border area. This is achieved by setting up a framework for programming, monitoring and controlling all tourism development actions and activities ensuring that tourist capacity is not exceeded.

Acceptance of the local community

A very important success factor is the degree of involvement of the local community in order to ensure the viability of the tourist product under design. The local community must actively participate in shaping the supply of the tourist product either through the appropriate adaptation of the culture or by doing business. An inalienable rule for the development of tourism and the satisfaction of visitors is that all local businesses, residents, operators etc. work together to create an **Overall Experience** for the visitor.

The actions and tactics that will follow to achieve the strategic objectives of sustainable development of the cross-border area should serve the following model:
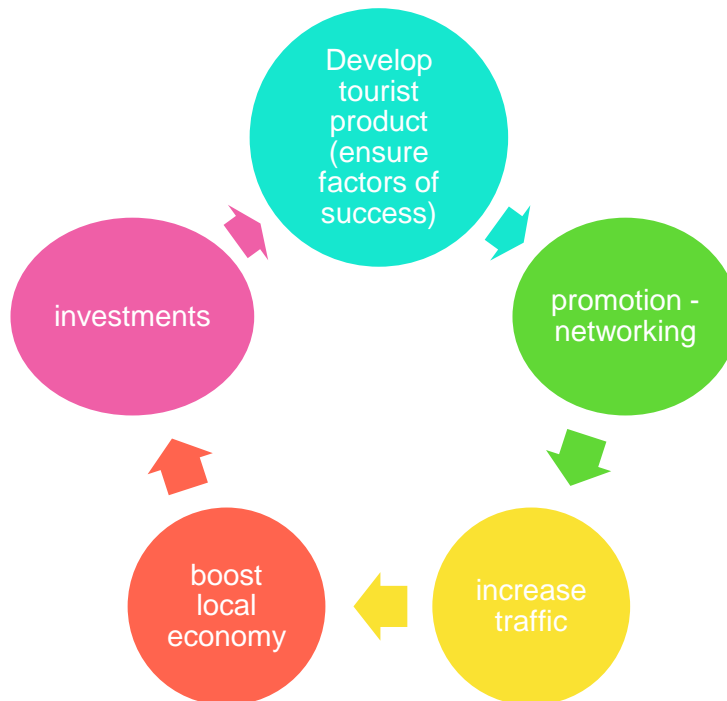
A model of sustainable and mild tourist product development

2.2 Strategic objectives and vision for tourism development

The attempt of the cross-border region to develop its tourist product coincides with the modern trends of the global tourist market, which lead to the departure from the "sun and sea" model. The modern tourist is shifting from the homogenized tourist product of the 1950s to the 80s, in the modern reality of individual desires and attitudes but also in the search for experiences rather than just pictures or attractions. This shift is speeding up exponentially due to increased consumer penetration into the internet and in particular social media. This translates directly into a large target market that chooses based on the brand it has created for each tourist product.
In addition, an ever-increasing percentage of tourists choose to design and plan their own holidays, with the online tools they have in their disposal. The process of branding the tourist product for the tourist is most affected by social media rather than by the tourist agent. This new reality is

important to be integrated into the strategic objectives and vision of the cross-border area for tourism development.

As has already been said, the tourism development strategy of the cross-border area will follow the new tourism development model, whose key feature will be sustainable development. The fact that we are currently in the first stages of development can, with the appropriate planning, make our design sustainable and motivated. This means that tourism can not only be addressed sectorally, but as part of a complex system inextricably linked to national and local economy and production, the functioning of natural ecosystems, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, respect for the perceptions and habits of the local community. The essential difference with previous perceptions of tourism development lies in the fact that, with the modern perspective, the development of tourism should respect and keep pace with the national and local social, cultural, economic and environmental specificities and conditions.

The parameters that contribute to achieving sustainable tourism development are the following:
- Special planning of tourism development, aiming at a balanced development between society, economy and the environment
- Strengthening of all measures (research, education, marketing, etc.) that contribute to development feedback processes
- Establishment of a specific institutional framework for the promotion of sustainable tourism development processes and local participation - initiative
- Promotion of measures and policies that help protect and enhance the local natural and built environment
- Use of special and alternative forms of tourism as a key axis for local tourism development

In essence, the ultimate goal is sustainable tourism development. The concepts of sustainability and sustainable development have been integrated into the planning and development of tourist activity, thus leading to sustainable tourism development. Sustainability is in harmony with the natural, cultural and socio-economic structures of the region so as to achieve maximum economic impact while simultaneously protecting / promoting natural and cultural resources.

Sustainable tourism development in the economy is expected to have a positive impact on the economic development of the local community due to the maximization of the performance of tourism and other similar and complementary businesses, the extension of their period of operation, the improvement of the viability of the individual tourist units, the reduction of unemployment in the winter months and the parallel preservation of jobs in the peak tourist season and, last but not least, the improvement of the average occupancy of accommodation. In relation to local society, economic growth and the improvement and maintenance of overall commercial and social activity are expected to have a positive impact on the quality of life of all residents and on all areas of their social and cultural activities. Also, the more balanced distribution of tourism during the calendar year is expected to lead to a more rational allocation and use of the region's resources, reduce the stress to the natural environment and improve sustainability indicators, contributing to the decongestion of coastal areas.

Therefore, the proposed strategy should incorporate proposals aimed at:

- Expanding and optimizing the working time period and occupancy rates of hotels and tourist accommodation.
- Upgrading the aesthetics of the built environment especially in the key areas of cleanliness, sanitation and upgrading of the environment.
- Promoting professionalism among providers of tourist services through the constant betterment of knowledge, skills and capabilities of the human resources employed in tourism

- Cultivating and promoting tourist awareness and hospitality among the entire population of the cross-border area

The vision for tourism development is the formulation of a future desirable image that will be achieved by meeting the strategic development objectives as set out below. The design of the tourist brand in the cross-border area will embody the vision for tourism development. The wording of the vision was based on the following data:

- the particular characteristics of the natural, cultural and social environment of the cross-border area, as shaped by the recording and evaluation of tourist and cultural resources
- the competitive advantages in terms of infrastructure and know-how in the internal environment of the two Municipalities
- trends and prospects for tourism demand growth in the Greek, Bulgarian and European markets
- the degree of feasibility of achieving the vision on the basis of the potential of the cross-border area
- the highest possible return to the local community, with the conditions for sustainable development being a prerequisite

The **vision for the promotion of the cross-border palaeontological and cultural products** is:

"The cross-border area of the Prosotsani and Chepelare municipalities to become an independent cultural destination for short-term experiences, maximizing the benefits for the local community while having the minimal impact on the natural and cultural environment"

The **final objectives of the Strategic Development of the cultural and palaeontological product** of the cross-border area are:

- The improvement of the cultural sector contribution to the local economy by increasing the accumulated income from tourism
- The careful tourist utilization of both its natural and cultural heritage while at the same time preserving the natural and cultural resources and respecting the perceptions and habits of the local community
- The improvement of the procedures for the organization and management of existing infrastructures as well as the introduction of new tourism activities with the ultimate goal of extending the tourist season and reducing the seasonality of demand.
- The substantial strengthening of the tourist product by supporting an organized network of multiple alternative tourism products of high competitiveness.
- The qualitative upgrading of the tourism services provided through the cultivation of tourist awareness as well as through the betterment of knowledge and skills of the human resources employed in tourism
- The strengthening of the synergy between the primary and secondary production sectors and tourism
- The holistic configuration of the tourist product, where experiences will play the leading role, enhancing the preservation of values such as authenticity, tradition, hospitality.
- Ensuring the integration of new and existing infrastructures that contribute to the viability of the cross-border paleontological tourist product through the branding strategy

3. Branding

3.1 Necessity to design a brand for the cross-border area

According to Kotler, "A brand is a name, a term, an indication, a symbol or design, or a combination of those that aim at identifying the goods or services of a company or group of companies and differentiating them from competition." Kotler, Philip . (2000). Marketing Management: The Millennium Edition. Prentice-Hall, p. 404.

The brand is the total response of a customer (old, existing or future) to the "placement" that states:

• who we are or what we offer

• what differentiates us from our competitors

Destination brand design has become an urgent need for the promotion of destinations, recognizing in practice the fact that superiority of the product itself and regular promotion can not guarantee success.

The image of the destination brand is not just the name of the destination or its logo but

• how the destination is perceived by visitors at the current time

• how the destination strategy planners want to place the destination in the minds of visitors

The cross-border area has so far not formed a coherent, distinct and clear brand that is holistically linked to the objectives and vision of cultural and tourism development. Existing resources have not been linked to this unified brand of a palaeontological and cultural product which should be the compass of all private or public tourism-related efforts. What has been done is design of printed material at times, which, although pursuing a single orientation towards the emergence of cultural wealth, can not form a coherent image of a desirable destination, which also differentiates it from competition satisfying the needs of the visitor. In fact, it made the most common mistake of most similar destinations, displaying all these wonderful sights, natural and cultural wealth, and waiting for the visitors to come and enjoy them. In fact, however, the visitor can find equally beautiful areas in other parts of Greece, Bulgaria, Europe.

What was missing was a uniquely defined tourist brand that is directly linked to the vision of tourism development and answers the question: "Why should I come to Prosotsani and Chepelare? What's different? What does it have to offer me?"

The key design parameter of the new brand of the cross-border area is the new reality that characterizes people today and especially the developed societies of Western Europe, and is related to the Maslow hierarchy. People today have covered their primary needs for survival and security, and seek higher goals and deeper meaning in their life. This observation is reinforced by the psychosomatic symptoms they experience due to the very fast pace of life, which may mean a lack of good nutrition, athletics and a general balance in everyday life. So people are now looking to experience intense, unforgettable experiences that can lead to each person's personal fulfillment. **Many see these experiences as an opportunity to discover themselves, to learn how to live and to generally gain something for themselves upon leaving each destination.**

This new dynamic is developing very quickly due to social media and the Internet in general. The experiences are transformed into stories narrated by the visitor into their social environment, satisfying their self-esteem needs, and also constituting a very powerful means of displaying the brand through "word of mouth". In this context, they seek genuine experiences, with action and participation (unforgettable moments), in which they participate spiritually and physically. **The main goal is to shape the image that Prosotsani and Chepelare are places where one can live a**

series of unique experiences that are capable of positively altering the visitor's personality in a shocking and meaningful way, leading to their growth.

3.2 Image of the cross-border area's communication entity

Image Essence: a colorful place full of authentic experiences, relaxation, ecstasy and adventure, that will makes you and your family feel alive and discover a lot

Visitor images: spontaneous images of people of all ages with a strong presence of children, involved in different situations during their visit and living 100% of every experience (explorer in the cave, older man on a hike, young people in a waterfall, children in environmental and paleontology lessons, scientist - student

Images of Experiences: experiences in which the visitor is part of the action. An authentic experience that will make you go back a different person. Feel free to live the adventure and the peace of nature and the caves

*E*motional Values: family, security, self-improvement, peace of mind - eliminating anxiety, health assurance, personal fulfillment, feeling that you are a local

Benefits for the Visitor: relaxation, renewal of the relationship with nature and oneself, inspiration, discovery, training, escape from daily routine, freedom, balance of mind and spirit, adventure, expansion of knowledge

Destination Properties: unparalleled natural beauty, hospitable, serene, adventurous, mountainous, rich in culture, for all seasons, full of variety and contrasts, primitive, authentic, virgin, diverse, properties elimination: modest accommodation, no organization, no entertainment for children

Topics: (MATURE: Paleontological, Geotourism, Hiking - Walking, Ecotourism, Cultural, Educational, Religious, Athletic, Adventure, Wine tourism, Agrotourism)

Tourist Resources: Museums, Caves, Restaurants, Trails - Routes, Adventure Activities, Waterfalls - Marine areas, Local Product Stores, Archaeological Sites - Historic Sites, Hotels, Events, Religious Sites, Natural Beauty Areas, Traditional Settlements, NGOs, Traditional Jobs

Hiking Walking

Letting the morning breeze clear your thoughts, you discover the fascinating paths of Meniki and Pamporovo. You watch the

Succumb to the serenity and peace of nature, with a pick nick in magnificent locations in the woods. A real psychotherapy

Go beyond the limits of your imagination by swimming in one of the many waterfalls

Ecotourism

Wake up in the morning and smell the flowers and feel alive

Visit the Milopotamos aquarium and find out about the biodiversity in the area

Visit Falakro Mountain in the spring and marvel at the beautiful colors of the wild flowers

Photograph the unique natural rocky bridges on the Chepelare "ecological path"

Take a closer look at the imposing Koten Kamak rock

Cultural

Live unique moments in unique concerts in Petroussa Gorge and ergostasio festival

Feel the cross-cult worship and ecstasy in one of the acts in Babiden, Babujera etc.

Dress in traditional costumes, dance in a festival, feel like you're a local

Experience local culture in Chepelare at one of the events such as the international music competition, the Spring Festival.

Educational

Unlocking the secrets of the universe on an astronomical observation night at the Rozhen Astronomical Observatory

Explore the caves of Maraa and Chepelare, learn about the geological formations

Travel thousands of years ago and discover paleontological sites in Prosotsani Paleontological Park and Rhodope Karst Museum
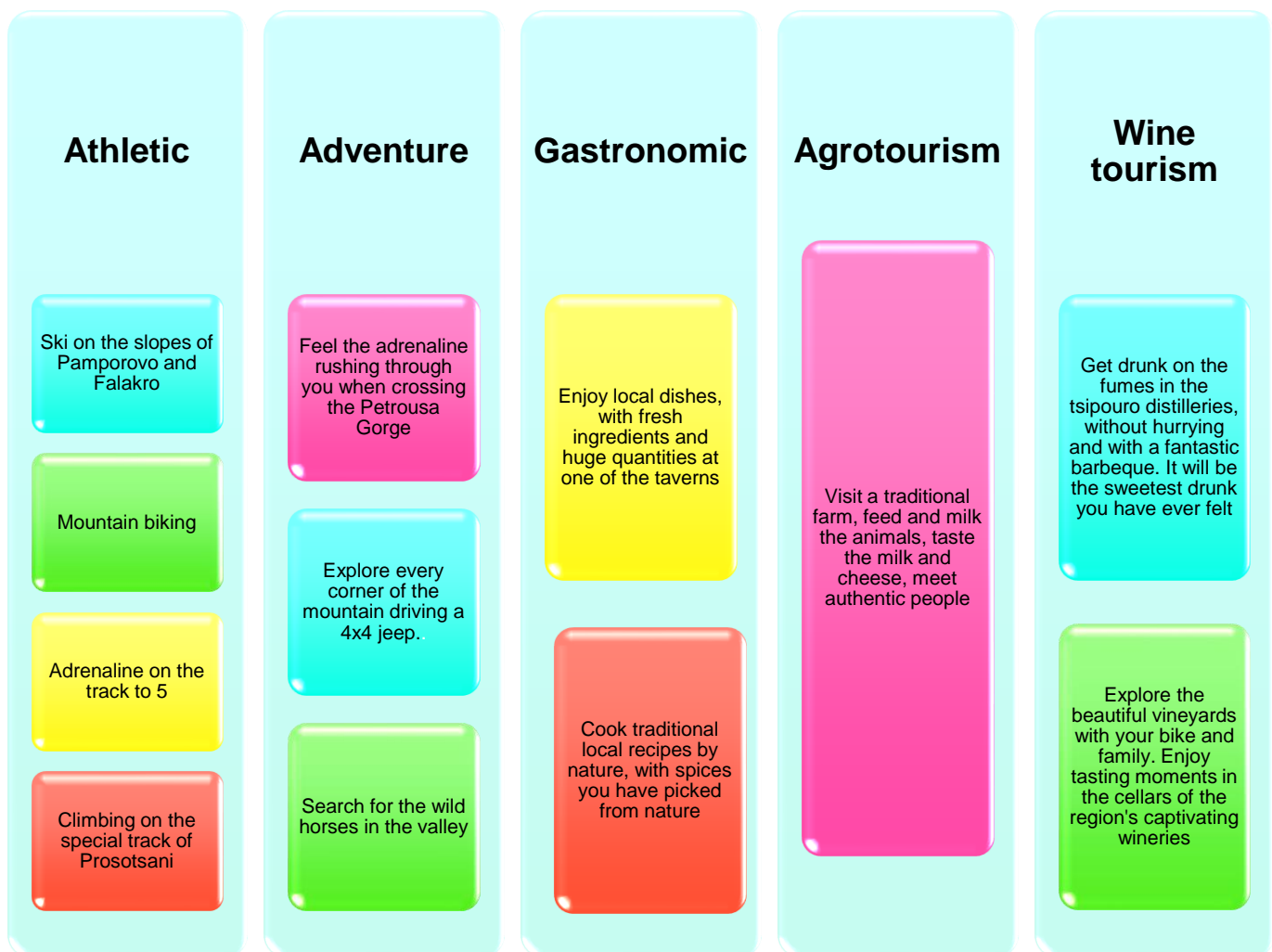
Explore the ski museum and the fortifications of Chepelare

Religious

Live the religion along with the locals at one of the events such as "God's Day"

Experience the important ritual of Greek Orthodoxy, Easter, celebrating the midnight joy of the Resurrection with the locals and enjoying subliminal delicacies the next morning

Get to know the litany trails by hiking between the chapels of Prosotsani and admire the architecture of the numerous churches of Chepelare

Athletic

Ski on the slopes of Pamporovo and Falakro

Mountain biking

Adrenaline on the track to 5

Climbing on the special track of Prosotsani

Adventure

Feel the adrenaline rushing through you when crossing the Petrousa Gorge

Explore every corner of the mountain driving a 4x4 jeep.

Search for the wild horses in the valley

Gastronomic

Enjoy local dishes, with fresh ingredients and huge quantities at one of the taverns

Cook traditional local recipes by nature, with spices you have picked from nature

Agrotourism

Visit a traditional farm, feed and milk the animals, taste the milk and cheese, meet authentic people

Wine tourism

Get drunk on the fumes in the tsipouro distilleries, without hurrying and with a fantastic barbeque. It will be the sweetest drunk you have ever felt

Explore the beautiful vineyards with your bike and family. Enjoy tasting moments in the cellars of the region's captivating wineries

It is particularly important for the local population to accept and assimilate the new tourist brand of the cross-border area. The best supporters of the brand are the local people. To do this, we need to ensure that citizens understand in simple terms its values and key features. The leading personalities of the area can be the catalyst in this endeavor.

3.3 Brand identity features development

The development of a branding strategy to promote the cross-border palaeontological and cultural product should ensure the integration of new and existing infrastructures that contribute to its sustainability. This strategy must also contribute to creating a coherent, distinct and clear identity that is holistically linked to the vision of tourism development. The fact that a single identity is envisaged, which includes the municipalities of Prosotsani and Chepelare, will undoubtedly help to promote the cross-border character of the new identity.

The two organizations, having already developed two parallel studies of research and development for the tourist product, the profile of each area regarding its existing resources was recorded while the resources were grouped into modules that can compose specific forms of tourism. From this record it is clear that an important unity is the palaeontological - geological reserve of the cross-border area, such as:

- the two large caves of Aggitis and Alistratis
- the paleontological finds of the excavations (rock paintings, fossils, animal bones, etc.)
- the Rodhope Karst Museum in Chepelare
- the new Prosotsani Palaeontological Park
- the geological formations and the caves in Chepelare

Nevertheless, the design of an identity focused on the above section should not be cut off from all the possibilities of the region but be a basic subunit. The final mix of the tourist product has to be formulated taking into account the capacities of the cross-border area and the demand from both nearby and distant areas, e.g. Greece, Bulgaria, Western Europe. This product must then be "packaged" and placed on the target market.

This will achieve an identity linking the two areas as "year-round destinations". **Therefore, as a continuation of the current brand design study of the palaeontological and cultural product, it is imperative for both areas to design a branding process appropriately and in a holistic way so as to create 2 identifiable destination images, that will at least have a distinct common point, that of Palaeontological, Speleological and Geological Tourism.**

Basic Branding Principles Used:

For the branding development, a key parameter is the new reality of the markets: people for the first time have so little time to absorb so much information. Every year, 26,000 new products penetrate the market. It has been reported that up to 50,000,000 twitter messages have been posted in one day, while Google recently had 293,000,000 searches in a 24-hour period. Therefore, the self-evident questions arise, how can we distinguish ourselves, how will they notice us and how will the customer remember us when it is time to choose. Taking this need into account, the branding of the cross-border area has been based on the following parameters:

1. Search for features that can be considered "moderate and regular with corresponding tourist products", "expected", "that almost all other destinations have them" and eliminate them.
2. Find a feature of the area that, if developed, can grow to be something remarkable for visitors
3. Design a message that the potential visitor can not ignore.
4. Guests want to know the differences between our tourist product and the rest. If they do not find them, their criteria will be the price.
5. Visitors will come to Prosotsani and Chepelare because they have something to give to them, not just because they are beautiful areas

The selection of elements that will compose the overall picture of the palaeontological and cultural brand of the cross-border area is fully correlated with the image of the communication entity as described above (tourist resources, destination properties, benefits for the visitor, emotional values, images of experiences and image substance). This image must be distinct and follow all means of communication to be used. It is also important to have an implementation horizon of at least ten years in order to gain brand value.

In particular, the choice of the motto as part of the brand design. In no case can the motto be considered as a brand by itself. Having initially defined a brand position, the motto attempts to express the essence of the brand. When choosing the right motto we came to the following:

«Nature in inspiring moments»

This motto also serves the main points of uniqueness of the cross-border area, the natural ecosystem and how it evolved through the geological formations, peaking with the caves. By following one of Branding's key principles, which is the necessity to focus on a vision and an image that differentiates us, the recipient of the message "nature in inspiring moments" may feel that **this destination has a uniqueness in relation to what nature can do**, like that of speleogenesis. Its common use by the two municipalities is the connecting link between the brands of Prosotsani and Chepelare, highlighting the common elements among them: caves, palaeontology, natural wealth.

The choice of this strategy serves to differentiate the brand by taking into account the combination of different alternative forms of tourism, which make for a desirable diversity. This design is based on a very important rule governing human behavior:

"People will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel."
Maya Angelou

As we can see, planning the vision, strategy and brand of the cross-border area will enable visitors to experience unique feelings and experiences, so they can tell their acquaintances, increasing the likelihood of them in turn coming.

Brand Architecture of a Cross-border Palaeontological Cultural Product

brand name	PROSOTSANI - CHEPELARE
brand symbol	**Outline of a cave containing the motto and the words Prosotsani and Tsepelare**
brand motto	**«Nature in inspiring moments - Η φύση σε στιγμές έμπνευσης»**
brand values	**Mysterious, Adventure, Discovery, Authentic, Unique**
brand promise	**Discover the mystery of the caves' place – Ανακάλυψε το μυστήριο του τόπου των σπηλαίων**
brand essence	**a place full of color and mystery, full of adventure experiences that you'll never get bored of** **Προσοτσάνη, Τσεπελάρε = Όμορφες στιγμές γεμάτες μυστήριο** **Prosotsani, Chepelare = beautiful moments full of mystery**
brand experiences	**discover, feel alive, ecstasy, adventure, culture, learn**
on-line brands	https://www.visit.prosotsani.gr/index.php?lang=el, http://chepelare.org

At this point, it should be stressed that any person who directly or indirectly participates in the cross-border cultural product (residents, enterprises, service agents, elected, other bodies, etc.) must help in shaping the feelings and experiences of the visitors and therefore in the image they have formed for the (brand). The brand is not just a function of marketing but one of the organization itself, and in this case the environment of the two Municipalities. The brand will never gain value unless all of the above understand and embrace it.
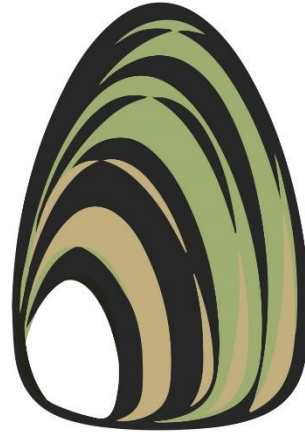
nature
in inspiring moments
PROSOTSANI | TSEPELARE

The above process of adopting and accepting the new brand of the cross-border area is only the beginning of the branding process. This means that a continuous and comprehensive effort begins at all levels and by everyone in order for the destinations to embody the new brand. Indicatively, let us mention the following elements that should be fully oriented towards the new brand:

- Business
- Transport infrastructure
- Cultural and sports venues
- Business plan
- Associations and NGOs
- Cultural and other associations
- Schools
- Institutions (eg CCI, Management Agency, etc.)
- Other services
- Elected
- Residents
- Events
- etc.

By adopting the 9 Conrad criteria, we ensure that the brand we have designed has a unique intangible character that differentiates it from competition, according to the perception of the visitors. This is also confirmed by the following 9 essentials of brand essence:

1. **Uniqueness**: In the cross-border area you can have experiences that will make you feel more alive. This is a basic reason for someone choosing to visit the area.
2. **Intangible character**: The brand essence that is defined is intangible
3. **One-dimensional**: The brand essence is defined in a couple od words: Beautiful moments full of mystery
4. **Experiential**: The brand essence captures what the visitor feels when coming in touch with the brand: experiences through which you learn, you live an adventure
5. **Essential**: The brand essence is associated with the public, with the visitor and it makes sense for him. Living a unique experience of adventure and culture, away from the problems and stress of everyday life, is definitely something of interest to all of us.
6. **Systematically offered**: Visitors will experience the brand essence systematically every time they come across the cross-border area
7. **Authentic**: The brand essence has to be naturally developed in the tourist product and above all be trustworthy. This is confirmed by the fact that the visitor will believe that the destination can give them what the brand essence describes.
8. **Sustainable**: Thee brand essence should never change.
9. **Extendable**: The brand essence can cover the development of the brand for the simple reason that the way it was selected is linked to the rest of the region

If the new brand of the cross-border area is implemented correctly and visitors experience what they are promised, it will then lead to the fundamental goal of branding, which is consumer credit. A loyal customer - visitor, is constantly looking to relive what the brand has offered them and recommends it to others. Let's not forget that loyal customers are often willing to pay about 20% more to buy the brand of their choice.

All local businesses and institutions must embrace the new brand and integrate it into the marketing of their business. Only this way will the visitor perceive a unified and clear image.

4. Strategy and Marketing Plan

It is a fact that during the last 12 years there has been a lot of effort for the tourism promotion of the two regions, mainly in the form of publications, websites, events, etc. This effort has been somewhat worthwhile, but in any case the return of investment was not what it should be (ROI - Return Of Investment). This is confirmed by the low traffic which is mainly reflected in the occupancy statistics of the hotel accommodation and also by the total capacity of the area itself in beds that does not exceed 75 beds in the Prosotsani area. In the Municipality of Chepelare, while there is a great number of visitors and potential beds, visits are almost entirely related to the ski resort and not to the other sights of the Municipality, while in the months outside the winter season the traffic levels are very low.

The main reason for this low performance is due to the absence of distinct and well-defined branding that is embedded in all tourism promotion actions and is passionately adopted by residents and local agencies unanimously. Furthermore, the tourist resources of the cross-border area are to a large extent unrelated to each other and, moreover, to a well-defined tourist brand. It is reasonable, therefore, that uncoordinated tourist resources, a turbulent tourist brand that doesn't motivate visitors and tourism promotion activities that do not follow a single strategy perfectly harmonized with the tourist brand lead to low performance.

The communication strategy to be proposed requires - consistency and absolute relevance with the new cross-border brand but also with the destination brand of each Municipality.

4.1 Identifying groups and profiles of potential visitors - Market segmentation

Taking into account the resulting tourist units, we need to identify the profiles and groups of visitors that the communication tactics should target. This will create potential groups of visitors. The following matrix identifies the relationships between the various groups of visitors and the tourism module, each of which hides a range of tourism resources behind it. This analysis is particularly useful in selecting the means of communication that will be used to implement advertising tactics and actions. It also serves to better adapt the tourist product to the needs and particular requirements of the targeted target groups.

TOURISM TOPIC	Travelers	Nature Lovers	Scientists	Athletes	Students	Families	Amateur Photographers	Young Couples	Elderly	Student	Experience Explorers
Hiking - Walking	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Ecotourism	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cultural	X		X			X	X		X		X
Educational		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	
Religious	X					X			X		
Athletic				X				X			
Adventure	X			X				X		X	X
Gastronomic	X					X		X	X		
Agrotourism	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X
Wine tourism						X		X			
Congress			X								
Wellness - Therapeutic						X		X	X		
Geotourism		X	X		X		X			X	X
Palaeontological		X	X		X	X	X			X	X

The following table describes the characteristics of the target groups that the cross - border cultural - tourist product should target.

TARGET GROUP	AGE RANGE	INCOME LEVEL	BOOKING WAY	PACKAGE TYPE
Tourists	28-60	Medium	Internet	Room only
Nature lovers	30 – 70	Medium	Internet	Room only
Scientists	28 – 70	Medium	Internet	Room only
Athletes	25 – 45	Medium	Participation in events	All inclusive
Students	> 18	Low	Organized trips	Room only
Families	28 – 50	Medium	Tour. Agent	Room only or Half Board
Amateur Photographers	24 – 70	Medium	Internet	Room only

Young Couples	25 – 35	Low	Internet	Room only
Elderly	60	High	Tour. Agent	All inclusive
Students	18 – 25	Low	Internet	Room only
Experience explorers	20 - 40	Low	Internet	Room only

A second useful analysis is the one related to the profile of the visitors that could be targeted by the communication strategy of the cross-border area. These profiles represent the most common groups of people in modern Western societies.

VISITORS PROFILE	CHARACTERISTICS
UPPER CLASS	conservative qualitative selective
POSTMODERN	wide range of interests open minded is constantly seeking experiences cultured
AMBITIOUS	has fun spending money career priority seeks adventure constantly seeks experiences
MAINSTREAM	family oriented has fun spending money culturally uncultured
TRADITIONAL	family oriented traditional conservative

Taking into account the characteristics of the tourist product and the branding strategy of the cross-border area, we can come up with the following priorities regarding the target groups and profiles of potential visitors. This process is especially important in choosing the segments that the strategic marketing strategies and tactics will target to be effective.

According to the new brand of the cross-border area, the area reveals some secrets to visitors, such as those of the caves, palaeontology and experiences. At the same time it gives the visitor the choice of a variety of cultural and natural experiences and activities.

The profile of the visitor to be targeted by the marketing communication strategy is initially that of the **Postmodern and Ambitious**. The reason is because both categories are constantly looking for new experiences, they have the income level to support their different choices and can easily understand the benefits they have to gain from what the cross-border area has to offer them. It is expected that the above target will later expand, to a large or small extent, to the rest of the groups when the tourist infrastructure and organizational level allow it. For example, the construction of

high class (5*) hotel infrastructure with rich and luxurious infrastructure can attract the **High Income** category, especially in Prosotsani.

Lastly, there is a strong tendency in people for healthier lifestyles, changing eating habits, away from mutant and industrialized products. It is therefore expected that people in the **mainstream** category, who are the majority and simply follow fashion, will shortly be the next objective of the communication effort that the cross-border area will make in the development of the tourist product. Finally, the **Traditional** category should not belong to the target groups because the cultural product of the cross-border area, although valuable, does not show the degree of differentiation necessary to support the central communication strategy, but simply complements its tourist product.

For target groups, we first select the following profile groups:

• **Scientists, students**
• **Travellers, Experiences Explorers, Nature lovers**
• **Families**

The communication strategy and communication tactics should target these three groups - visitor profiles for the first 3 years. By trying to connect in a simple way each group with the basic characteristics of the tourist product of the cross-border area, we can distinguish the following:

• **Scientists, students**: The actions and more generally the packages of experiences that will be offered will have an intensely educational character in an experiential manner, which in combination with the rich natural environment is ideal for learning and exploration

• **Travellers, Experiences Explorers, Nature lovers**: Endless paths of varying degrees of difficulty, nature adventure activities, a natural environment with intense biodiversity, and the experiential experiences offered in the packages of experiences create the targeting conditions for those groups that have many common points between them. Hiking and walking tourism is already developed in Western Europe while experience tourism is growing rapidly.

• **Families**: This visitor group - profile is more closely related to cultural and gastronomic tourism. The cross-border area can support both forms of tourism.

Because the common denominator of all the branding of the cross-border area is experiences, we specifically analyze the Experiences Explorer:

'Wants' of the Experiences Explorer

✦ Contact with the locals
✦ Authentic personal experiences
✦ Experience something different to their everyday life
✦ Understanding of different cultures and lifestyles
✦ Participation in the local everyday life and not just observation
✦ Changing themselves, physically, emotionally and spiritually
✦ Discovering areas and spots that are not part of an ordinary tourist route
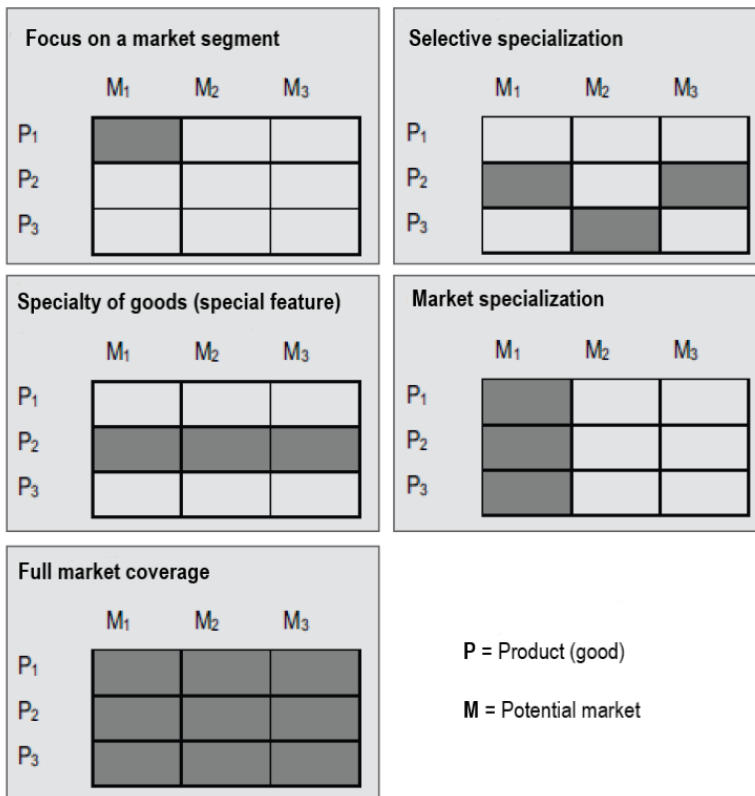✦ Search of adventure and adrenaline

The typical Experience Explorer is usually:
✦ Backpacker
✦ Open-minded
✦ Selective to the media he/she uses
✦ Educated

✦ Travel is an important part of their lives

4.1.1 Geographic Markets

Borrowing the target market selection models from the business world (Kotler 2000: 506):

Focus on a market segment

	M$_1$	M$_2$	M$_3$
P$_1$	■		
P$_2$			
P$_3$			

Selective specialization

	M$_1$	M$_2$	M$_3$
P$_1$			
P$_2$	■		■
P$_3$		■	

Specialty of goods (special feature)

	M$_1$	M$_2$	M$_3$
P$_1$			
P$_2$	■	■	■
P$_3$			

Market specialization

	M$_1$	M$_2$	M$_3$
P$_1$	■		
P$_2$	■		
P$_3$	■		

Full market coverage

	M$_1$	M$_2$	M$_3$
P$_1$	■	■	■
P$_2$	■	■	■
P$_3$	■	■	■

P = Product (good)

M = Potential market

In the cross-border area, we choose the model of selective specialization, according to which the image of the city is targeted at specialized markets with specific interests with the objective to meet their needs. More specifically, the cross-border area is specialized in mainly attracting the target markets

• **Scientists, students**
• **Travellers, Experiences Explorers, Nature Lovers**
• **Families**
utilizing and promoting its corresponding resources.

In the context of market segmentation, high priority geographical areas that the communication strategy will focus on shall be selected.

These are the following countries in order of priority:

1. Greece - Bulgaria
2. Balkans
3. Turkey
4. United Kingdom

5. Germany
6. Italy

In Italy, Germany and Britain there is a great demand for hiking holidays. At the same time, these countries have plenty of NGOs and clubs associated with hiking, photography, yoga, environmental protection, nature, wild herb and plant observers, etc. The public has the necessary purchasing power, and in countries like England goes on holidays more often for shorter period intervals. In particular, the French are not looking for coastal holidays like their North European neighbors, but their holidays are more cultural and exploratory.

All three appreciate Greek traditional cuisine and while they have some knowledge of quality wines they do not know the Greek and Bulgarian ones. The paces of life in these countries create increased needs for rest and relaxation while they are also hoping for experiences that could improve them personally.

4.2 Defining Marketing Strategies

In this phase, strategies will be defined which will ensure the achievement of the objectives and diversify the tourist product while at the same time selecting the appropriate means of communication. Each strategy alone may serve to achieve a specific or general objective and many specific objectives. In formulating the appropriate strategies, Porter (1980) proposed two general strategies that can be applied in the case of Local Marketing. These strategies are:

a) The differentiation strategy and
b) the focus strategy.

In the case of the first strategy, the comparative advantages and uniqueness of the destination emerge, while in the second one there is a focus on a specific target market to which we are called upon to meet particular needs. Deffner and Metaxas also suggest two other forms of strategy: penetration strategy, and co-operative marketing. In the penetration strategy, we are called to enter a new target market with our existing assets, supporting the whole effort, while the strategy of co-operative marketing requires the joint formulation and implementation of promotional actions, through the representation of common interests by the teams of each Municipality. The following table presents these strategies.

The tactics relate to the steps to be planned, the action plans to be developed in order to implement the strategies. The tactics are directly intertwined, like the strategies, with the objectives to be achieved and follow the path set out based on the strategies chosen. The development of alternative scenarios is imperative since it is desirable to develop the methodology effectively. Alternative scenarios, whether strategic or tactical, must exist and be designed in such a way as to indicate the alternative steps or actions as well as the expected results from their possible application.

Due to the innovative features of the cross-border tourist product related to organizing packages of experiences, we believe that we follow the **Differentiation** strategy on existing target markets.

It is very important that the link between the brand of the cross-border area and the marketing strategy that follows focuses on and leads to the chosen tourism development vision: **"The cross-border area of the Prosotsani and Chepelare municipalities to become an independent cultural destination for short-term experiences, maximizing the benefits for the local community while having the minimal impact on the natural and cultural environment"**

Strategies	Conditions of Application	Objectives
1st penetration	-Detecting a new target market -Determining approach -Selecting media and action group **-Positioning** the tourist product -Collecting of reaction / impression data	- Developing, promoting and supporting a new target market
2nd focus	- Orientation to and approaching a specific target market that is of interest and already in place - Clearly determining its special characteristics - Connecting it with the expected benefits for the area	-Developing, promoting and supporting an existing target market
3rd differentiation	- Penetrating existing and potential target markets with something new, different (eg alternative forms of tourism)	- Meeting a new consumer need - Reinforcing and supporting this uniqueness
4th Collaborative Marketing	- Selecting cooperation agencies in the internal, direct external and indirect external environment - Approaching the agencies - Shaping the benefits of collaboration - Securing reinforcement and support - Assigning and defining roles and duties - Defining decision-making, information and action procedures - Determining common vision and goals	-Improving cooperation between local development agencies - Enhancing the competitiveness of the region - introducing the study area on the Social Web with active strategically planned actions

Source: Promotion Methodology Report, National Marine Park of Northern Sporades, Interreg IIc **(2001)**

Destination Marketing Types