Branding Strategy for the Alpine Region

Analysis and Recommendations

ROUTES4U

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PREFACE

Welcome to the Branding Studies for the Alpine Region, a study carried out by Routes4U, a joint programme of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO).

This study spotlights the Alpine Region's distinct aesthetic elements of nature and culture, inviting travellers to experience its beautiful landscapes and traditions. The report shows the region's main strengths of heritage, mountains, hospitality and sports, inviting travellers to further explore its diverse culture.

There are more than a dozen Certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe traversing the region and many more well under development. The research highlights the opportunities for the Alpine Region, as well as openings for co-operation between countries and local authorities that can further strengthen this wonderful cultural destination.

Anyone interested in the process of branding in the Alpine Region is sure to find this study useful. The recommendations of this study are published in the Tourism Catalogue of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in the EU macro-regions.

Stefano Dominioni

Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, Council of Europe

Director, European Institute of Cultural Routes

The Routes4U project's essence lays in its capacity to make the link between the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region and its cultural identity throughout the Cultural routes. Therefore, the following branding strategy will give some hints on the cultural identity of the Alpine Region, promoting its unique natural beauty but also its diversity of landscape as mountains, plains and valleys.

I am confident that this study would provide important insight and contribution to enhance the cultural capacity of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region by encouraging all of the stakeholders to define the perception of this unique natural beauty. The data and information collected on cultural tourism in the macro-region countries and the branding strategy will contribute to make the region even more attractive for investments and tourism activities. The European Territorial Cooperation plays a significant role in enhancing synergies amongst territorial actors in the Alpine Region and it will continue to encourage the promotion towards European citizens.

Marc Lemaître
Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG REGIO, European Commission

INTRODUCTION

The present study on the development of a branding strategy for the Alpine Region was developed within the Routes4U framework. Routes4U is a Joint Programme of the Council of Europe (Directorate General of Democracy – EPA on Cultural Routes) and the European Union (European Commission – DG REGIO) that aims to foster regional development in the four EU macro-regions through the Cultural Routes. This mission is in line with the objectives of the EU macro-regional strategies in the Adriatic and Ionian, the Alpine, the Baltic Sea and the Danube regions (EUSAIR, EUSALP, EUSBSR and EUSDR, respectively). The macro-regional strategies can contribute to the work of the Cultural Routes, and vice versa, as both tackle common issues, make use of shared opportunities and develop activities at a transnational level.

Cultural Routes act as a driver of economic development, social cohesion and transnational co-operation in line with the objectives of the four EU macro-regional strategies (EUSAIR, EUSALP, EUSBSR and EUSDR[1]). This is why three objectives of Routes4U have been identified:

> ► Fostering cultural co-operation;

> ►strengthening social cohesion;

> ►contributing to regional development.

One of the main fields of action is the development of new Cultural Routes and the extension of certified Cultural Routes in the Adriatic and Ionian, the Alpine, the Baltic Sea and the Danube regions. Several priority themes were identified, such as the development of a Cultural Route on the theme of the Iron Age in the Danube, the theme of Alvar Aalto in the Baltic Sea, the theme of Via Claudia Augusta in the Alpine Region and the extension of the Routes of the Olive Tree in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. Routes4U also provides support to certified Cultural Routes to strengthen their presence in the Adriatic and Ionian, the Alpine, the Baltic Sea and the Danube regions.

It is in this context that the present set of studies on creating a branding and marketing strategy in the four macro-regions through Council of Europe Cultural Routes have been developed. Their purpose is to analyse the current image of Cultural Routes, while identifying needs, gaps and challenges, as well as formulating recommendations for the creation of a Cultural Routes brand in the macro-regions. This work can be seen in line with other actions that complement these studies, such as the awarding of mini-grants to ensure the production of tourism products and services, the

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[1] EUSAIR – EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, EUSALP – EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, EUSBSR – EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EUSDR – EU Strategy for the Danube Region

development of a tourism catalogue, the launch of a Cultural Routes Card, the creation of a trip-planner and the finalisation of an e-learning course including five modules with an extensive pool of data and information on Cultural Routes and macro-regional strategies.

Cultural Routes

The first Cultural Route of the Council of Europe was the Santiago de Compostela Route. Cultural Routes embody the core values of the Council of Europe, democracy and human rights as prerequisites for cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual respect: "to travel along these routes in order to build a society founded on tolerance, respect for others, freedom and solidarity".[2] By definition, a Cultural Route is

> "a cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values.[3]

For Cultural Routes, the following main fields of actions are implemented at local, national and international level:

1.   Co-operation in research and development: projects must play a unifying role around major European themes, showing how these themes are representative of European shared values.

2.   Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage: projects must enhance tangible and intangible heritage, especially in remote areas, and explain their historical significance throughout Europe.

3.   Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans: projects must organise activities with young people in order to promote the concept of European citizenship.

4.   Contemporary cultural and artistic practice: projects must encourage activities and artistic practice which explore the links between their European theme and contemporary culture.

5.   Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development: project must promote dialogue between urban and rural cultures, developed and disadvantaged regions, and between majority and

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[2] Council of Europe (1987), Santiago de Compostela Declaration.
[3] Council of Europe, Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 confirming the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA).

minority. They must seek partnerships with tourism organisations to draw attention on their European heritage and be part of the sustainable territorial development.

EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

In December 2013, the Council of the European Union invited the European Commission to elaborate an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The Commission, in co-operation with member states, prepared this strategy, taking into account the experience from the previous EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region was launched in the form of a communication and an Action Plan as a result of an extensive online public consultation conducted between July and October 2014, as well as the closing conclusions of the high-level Stakeholder Conference on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region in Milan on 1 and 2 December 2014.[4]On 27 November 2015, the Council of the European Union endorsed the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region. It is thus the "youngest" macro-regional strategy of the European Union. As it is still in its initial phase, the implementation has to be further developed with regards to thematic topics. The strategy aims at the economic and social prosperity of the Alpine Region through an intensified co-operation on key opportunities and challenges.

The focus lies on complementarity of actions and structures rather than duplication of existing actions and structures. Areas that require transnational cooperation are identified in relation to economic globalisation, demographic trends, climate change or energy challenges, and due consideration is given to their specific geographical position as a transit region. Within the framework of EUSALP, three interdependent objectives have been identified that contain nine concrete actions. **Objective 1 – Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the region**

- Action 1: to develop an effective research and innovation ecosystem;
- Action 2: to increase the economic potential of strategic sectors;
- Action 3: to improve the adequacy of the labour market, education and training in these strategic sectors.

Objective 2 – Sustainable internal and external accessibility for all

- Action 4: to promote intermodality and interoperability in freight and passenger transport;
- Acton 5: to connect people electronically and promote accessibility to public services.

Objective 3 – A more inclusive environmental framework for all and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future

- Action 6: to preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources;

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[4] European Commission (2014), EUSALP Public consultation – Governance, available at
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ sources/conferences/alpine_region/doc/public_consultation_ governance.pdf, accessed 29 July 2019

- Action 7: to develop ecological connectivity in the EUSALP territory;
- Action 8: to improve risk management and to better manage climate change including major natural risk prevention;
- Action 9: to make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy

The concept of place branding

In the context of growing competition between destinations, it is crucial now for destination managers to understand how to distinguish a place among others and increase benefits for communities and territories. In this sense, the creation and dissemination of an attractive image of destination, branding, among different interested groups, from investors to qualified specialists and tourists, is becoming a powerful tool for regional development.

Although place branding seems closely related to product branding, place branding is not only commercial-oriented. Back in 1969, researchers Philip Kotler and Sidney J. Levy emphasized the need of an application of marketing mechanisms to non-business sectors.[5] In this sense place branding should be aimed at implementing long-term development strategies and contribute not only to the economic, but also social well-being of communities. The brand's goal is not only to give an impetus to the economic development of the city, but also to address existing social problems and build a "harmonious city" for everyone who is somehow involved in land use and management.[6]

Place branding is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that involves many actors with a variety of interests. Place branding should not be associated only with a visual embodiment of products' or services' features, although visual identity plays an important role in branding. Visual elements of a brand with their specific significance indeed can reflect brand's values and convey a message to an audience, thereby increasing the visibility and recognition of the territory. However, it is only part of the process of branding.[7]

"Rather than advertising per se, place promotion has sought to rebuild and re-construct the image of the city, allied to which has been a strategy of targeting specific types of activity which both reflect and bolster the image."[8]

Although there is no generally accepted definition of brand and branding, many researchers have attempted to contribute to the discussion about concepts. In particular, one of the pioneers in branding research Simon Anholt claims that "brand image is the set of beliefs or associations relating to that name or sign in the mind of the consumer", while a brand "is being within the domain of the product and consequently under the control of the producer".[9] He makes a distinction between these two concepts, trying to emphasise the dual nature of branding. On the one hand, the branding

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[5] Kotler P. and Levy S. J. (1969), Broadening the concept of marketing, *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 10-15.

[6] Paddison P. (1993), City marketing, image reconstruction and urban regeneration, *Urban Studies,* Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 340.

[7] Anholt S. (2010), Definitions of place branding – Working towards a resolution, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* Vol. 6, pp. 1-10, available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/pb.2010.3, accessed 21 April 2020.

[8] Paddison P. (1993), City marketing, image reconstruction and urban regeneration, *Urban Studies,* Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 340.

[9] Anholt S. (2010), Definitions of place branding – Working towards a resolution, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* Vol. 6, pp. 1-10, available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/pb.2010.3, accessed 21 April 2020.

process starts with self-identification and the articulation of the identity of the place. Branding should thus reflect a set of values that are relevant to local stakeholders and respond to their needs, expectations and concerns. On the other hand, brand image reflects the perception of a destination by target audiences. However, unlike the articulation of a brand, this takes place in a different external dimension.

The aim of place branding is thus to achieve a desired brand image thought defining brand identity. And if there is a gap between identity of the place and its image, branding will not achieve expected goals. In order to set up a link between brand image and identity, brand positioning is necessary. Brand positioning covers 4P aspects (price, product, promotion and place), which are also called marketing mix and which relate to activities and initiatives that companies (or destinations) implement in order to "determine their position in the consumer's mind".[10]

It is important that advertising does not prevail in brand positioning. Real changes and improvements in products and services are needed. Regarding place branding, it can be infrastructural projects, for example, the creation of green spaces and bicycle lanes in areas that promote themselves as eco-destinations, or events organisation in those places that want to be recognised as festival destinations. Without positioning activities that support a brand message a brand will be not convincing. Moreover, the gap between the promoted image of the territory and reality may cause a negative experience for both visitors and residents themselves. The undermining of trust between stakeholders is one of the main reasons for the failure of brand strategies.

It is also important to understand that place brand is dynamic and cannot be created once and for all. Numerous place identities expressed in the brand go through constant rethinking and reinterpretation. Place is a product of co-existence and co-operation of many communities. Each group has its practices related to land-use and a vision of territory's past, present and future and these interactions cannot be neglected. Since branding is a process of the narrative creation, all ideas about the place should be reflected in a brand; otherwise a brand will not represent all the characteristics of the place and due to that will likely to fail. *Consistency between the reality and a brand message is crucial for the whole branding process.*

Involvement of stakeholders in the branding process plays a significant role. To build a successful branding strategy, stakeholders should work together to provide mechanisms for inclusive discussion about the sense of the space. Maheshwari V., Lodorfos G. and Vandewalle I. (2014) agree that different stakeholders may have conflicting interests that "have seen to erode unity of purpose

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[10] Chaves E. (2017), Identity, positioning, brand image and brand equity comparison: a vision about quality in brand management, *Independent Journal of Management & Production,* Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 1249, www.researchgate.net/publication/321441454_Identity_Positioning_Brand_Image_and_Brand_Equity_Comparison, accessed 21 April 2020.

and decision-making", which could impede the development of a strong brand.[11] If a promoted image does not reflect the full range of existing place identities, it will not be relevant for some actors and will not reach the maximum audience.

Regarding the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, the Cultural Routes aim at "raising awareness of the shared European heritage as a cornerstone of European citizenship, a means of improving the quality of life and a source of social, economic and cultural development" (CM/Res(2013)66).[12] Branding, as noted above, is recognized as a powerful tool for regional development, and in the context of the EU macro-regional strategies, the rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage represented in particular by the Cultural Routes can serve as a strong basis for the formation of unifying macro-regional brands and increase visibility of macro-regions as a single space.

On the example of the Alpine Region, what ideas can the region put at the core of its branding strategy to become relevant to wider audiences all over the world and contribute to the macro-regional strategy's objectives and local communities development?

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[11] Maheshwari V., Lodorfos G. and Vandewalle I. (2014), Exploring the role of stakeholders in place branding: a case analysis of the "City of Liverpool", *International Journal of Business and Globalisation,* Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 105, www.researchgate.net/publication/264812860_Exploring_the_role_of_stakeholders_in_place_branding_-_A_case_analysis_of_the_%27City_of_Liverpool%27

[12] Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 confirming the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Alpine Region (referred to here as ALP) is the largest preserved natural mountain range in Europe, with unique geographical and natural features. The protection of the ecosystem and the preservation of natural resources, as well as the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, is an important task for all countries of the Alpine Region. This includes mitigation of the negative effects of climate change, such as loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of the living conditions of the population.

The region includes seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland) and two of them are non-EU members – Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Despite the fact that the countries are members of the macro-region, the whole territory in each country is not necessarily part of it. The main feature is the connection to the Alps. There are 48 regions in the Alpine Region including:

► Austria – Burgenland, Kärnten, Niederösterreich, Oberösterreich, Salzburg, Steiermark, Tirol, Vorarlberg, Wien

► France – Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

► Germany – Baden-Württemberg, Bayern

► Italy – Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Valle d'Aosta, Veneto

► Liechtenstein

► Slovenia

► Switzerland – Aargau, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Basel-Landschaft, Basel-Stadt, Bern, Fribourg, Genève, Glarus, Graubünden/Grisons, Jura, Luzern, Neuchâtel, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schaffhausen, Schwyz, Solothurn, St. Gallen, Thurgau, Ticino, Uri, Valais, Vaud, Zug, Zürich.

The mountain area of the ALP has two main issues: it is characterised by low population density and, at the same time, this population is declining and ageing. This results in a loss of economic attractiveness and, therefore, development. The region is also characterised by a lack of infrastructure that further contributes to the abandonment of these areas, affecting their biodiversity conservation and protection of the tangible and intangible heritage. However, the ALP contains some of the most dynamic economic areas in the European Union.

The macro-region is a popular travel destination and is traditionally recognised for recreational tourism. This tourism has a positive impact on economic development, but needs to be sustainably managed to avoid negative impacts on the environment. Due to the high diversity of cultural resources, cultural tourism represents a potential that can be further used to have a positive impact on the creation of new jobs and on economic growth. The Cultural Routes (CRs) of the Council of Europe might contribute to this.

The Cultural Routes are grass-roots networks promoting the principles which underlie all the work and values of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity, mutual understanding and exchanges across boundaries. They are considered as a bridge between cultures and promote citizens' awareness of the heritage that unites them as Europeans, regardless of geographical distances or cultural differences. They aim to create a link between citizens and heritage, demonstrating that the cultural diversity of the different countries of Europe contributes to creating a common living culture. Twenty-eight of the 38 Cultural Routes pass through the ALP and they have around 400 members.

The current report is focused on the Cultural Routes of the Alpine Region (ALP) with the aim to achieve a deeper understanding of the existing ALP Cultural Routes potential for the macro-region and its seven countries, with a focus on transnational products. The study will review the challenges that will be faced in the creation of an ALP brand identity and its implementation alongside the existing brands and identities that are already present across potential participant countries, and look at the solutions and approaches needed for further success.

Any destination branding process starts by assessing what the macro-region's assets are and focuses on how best to present these to each customer group or market segment. This was done by undertaking a destination audit and presenting the main points of the implemented methodology for the brand audit studies. It was followed by the creation of an ALP brand strategy, based on the results of the audit phase. The third section discusses how the brand should be implemented. It is intended that, based on the results of this study, the next stage will be the creation of an ALP brand handbook to guide interested parties in the future.

Brand audit

Based on the comparison between the key players of the Alpine macro-region (CR members, ALP stakeholders and ALP visitors), there are some common elements regarding their perception about the ALP brand.

All the participants of the research were asked to think about the word "ALP" and write down the first three words which come to their minds in order of ranking. According to all parties, ALP is associated primarily with the mountains, fresh air, sky and, secondly, with nature, culture, history and tourism.

The parties were asked to think that ALP is a person and describe him/her by giving five different characteristics that they feel are best suited to describe ALP. Members, stakeholders and visitors agreed on ALP being nice, elegant, interesting, cultural, good-looking, sexy, natural, unique and

authentic. Moreover, all participants agreed on the top personality traits of ALP as a person, which are being natural, authentic and unique.

According to the results, the top three Cultural Routes that all participants associate with the ALP are:

▶ the Via Francigena;

▶ the Via Habsburg; and

▶ the European Route of Jewish Heritage.

In conclusion, the research has shown clearly that the current perception of the ALP Cultural Routes is focused on two main elements:

▶ a mixture of lands with both common and diverse cultures, customs and people;

▶ connected by the mountains, fresh air, sky (elements of the nature), sports and culture.

The results present a clear indication of the perceived characteristics of the ALP Cultural Routes amongst the participants of the online survey. They provide a baseline for considering how to develop the identity of the ALP brand. From the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative, from the respondents, one of the strongest assets of the ALP is the fact that it is a pleasant destination, has a rich cultural heritage and is the destination where tourists can take part in sports and feel good.

The results indicate that while the current perception of the ALP Cultural Routes is low there is a high interest and willingness to make greater use of the ALP Cultural Routes with appropriate support and guidance.

In order to better understand the ALP brand, a SWOT analysis was carried out separately with the three different participants of the research (CRs members, CRs stakeholders and ALP visitors).

The compilation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats gathered from the questionnaire, focus groups, interviews and national SWOT analyses, indicates that there are distinct advantages, but also certain difficulties and limitations, to the ALP brand, based on concern regarding the capacity to co-ordinate effective brand implementation.

In particular, the main strengths of ALP are culture and heritage, mountains, hospitality and sports, while the common weaknesses are lack of involvement of managers, authorities and municipalities, different cultures, poor infrastructure and communication, high cost of living and lack of information.

The three groups agreed on nature, culture and history, and mountain and health tourism to be the opportunities for the Alpine Region, as well as on the lack of co-operation between countries and local authorities, instability, poor infrastructure and competition from other destinations to be the common threats.

Moreover, the top three strengths all participants see as key aspects of developing the ALP as a tourism brand are mountain sports, culture and heritage, and coherent marketing actions (co-ordination).

In terms of the visibility activities that need to be performed, all participants agree on starting a partnership with tour operators and tourist agents and creating a unique visual design (logo, graphic design of publications, website information and content).

Brand strategy development

There are some key factors or pillars that are common for the creation of a successful brand and should be considered in the context of the ALP brand. These are:

- *brand values*
- *uniqueness and differentiation*
- *attributes*
- *rational attributes*
- *emotional benefits*
- *brand personality.*

The destination brand values represent what the brand stands for. The ALP destination must count upon these three brand values that will guide and appear in all marketing and other activities within the destination: **authentic, natural, unique.**

The brand essence together with the brand values make up the "DNA" of the ALP brand. Brand essence is the answer to the question: "What is the essential nature and character of a destination?".

In accordance with the three main brand values given above, the following key points can be considered the brand essence of the ALP:

> ►The Alpine Region is here and now!
>
> ►Explore it further!
>
> ►Experience the different elements of nature, culture and experiential emotions that uniquely connect the world.

The Brand Pyramid below (Figure I) visualises the components above.

Figure I. The Brand Pyramid of the Alpine Region

Source: UNWTO/ETC (2009), *Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding*, p. 45.

Brand implementation

The results of the survey led to the notion of the four elements of nature combined with culture and positive emotions (aesthetic or affective), as most responses about the ALP image were about:

- the four elements of nature (the original elements of the universe and life): earth (beautiful landscapes, mountains and attractions/heritage), air (sky), water (lakes) and fire (friendliness);
- all combined by culture; and
- positive experiences and emotions.

The conclusion is: "The Alpine Region is here and now! Explore it further!"

This section discusses how the brand should be implemented. The brand values (Figure II) and the brand essence, which are the strategic message of the ALP, should appear in all marketing communications. They should be reflected in all imagery and publications that describe the destination (for example, in websites, brochures, etc.) and be followed by all ALP stakeholders and institutions.

Most of all, the Cultural Routes should do the following:

- they should understand an entire customer journey;

- they should intervene at each stage during the entire customer journey;

- they should reach diverse audiences.
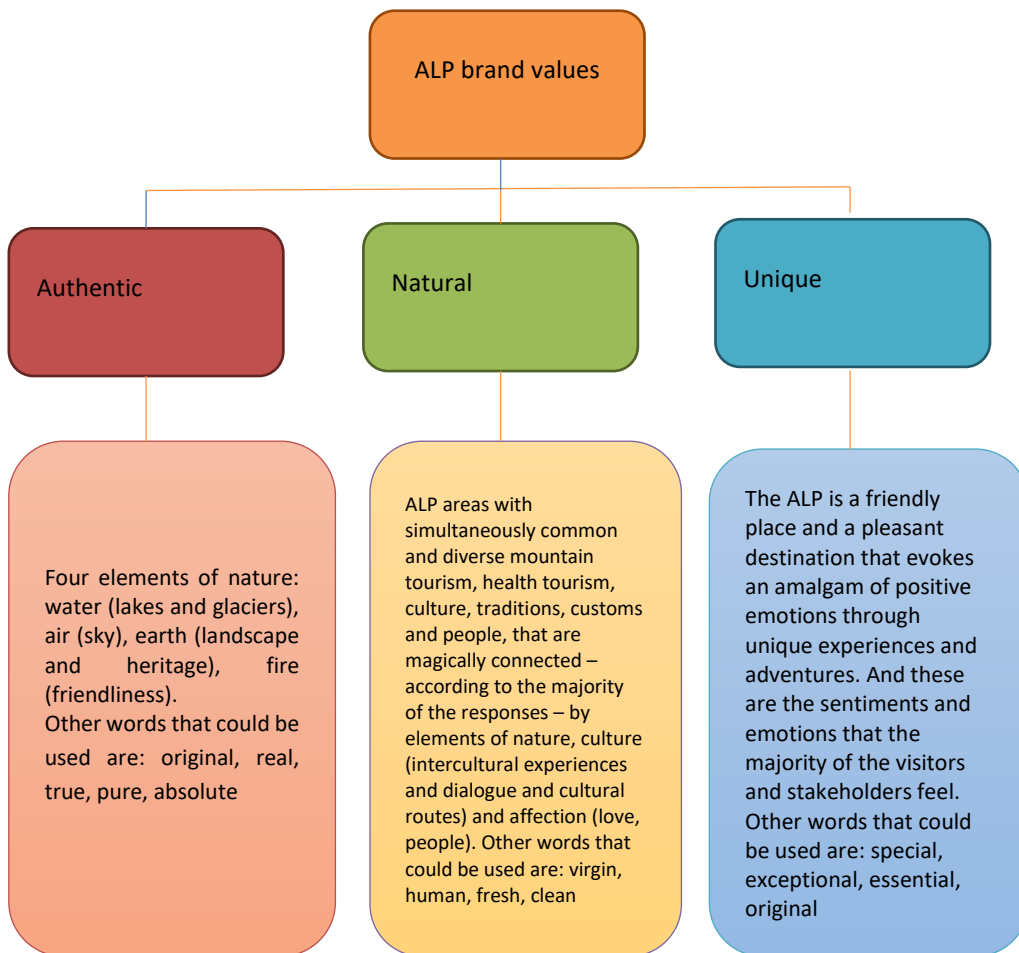
Figure II. The ALP brand values

These brand values and essence points which are the strategic message of the ALP should appear in all marketing communications (UNWTO/ETC (2009), *Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding*). They should be reflected in all imagery and tone that describe the destination (for example, in websites, brochures, etc.) and be followed by all ALP stakeholders and institutions.

The ALP value proposition (Figure III) is the statement of the functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand which provide value to the target market: (i) a benefit based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the customer; (ii) a benefit that adds emotional richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand; and (iii) a benefit through which the brand helps fulfil the need for self-expression (Aaker,1996).
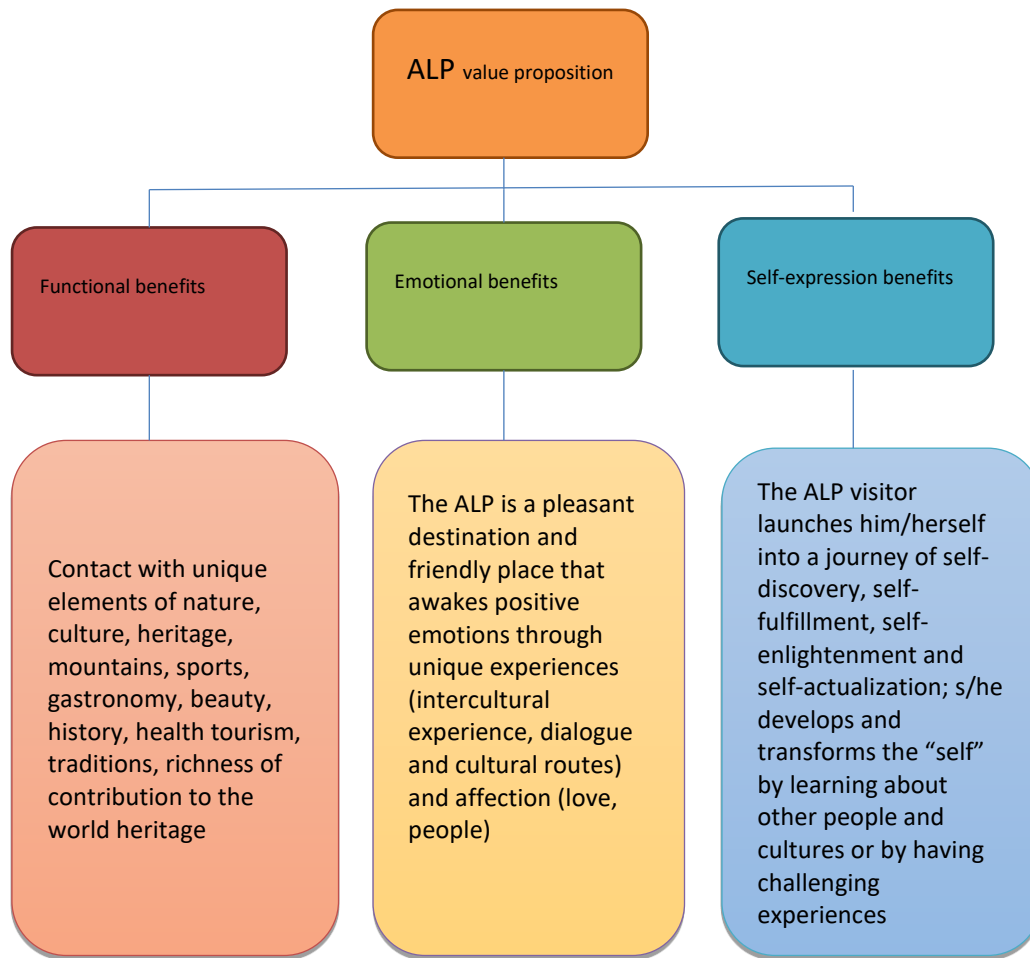
Figure III. ALP value proposition

The analysis aimed to show the essence of the ALP brand that should be capable of working in harmony with the existing brands that are used by the Cultural Routes and the macro-region. This strengthens the argument that the development of the ALP brand handbook will be a critical step. Undoubtedly, it is important to create a usable toolkit to guide tourist destinations in the use of the ALP brand identity and explain to all stakeholders how to use the ALP brand in their marketing communications. The brand handbook/toolkit should contain clear guidelines on two main subjects:

1. Brand personality guidelines – specifications on how to integrate the ALP brand values into destination or product marketing communications. This will ensure a consistency of approach among all the stakeholders who make use of the brand.

2. Technical design guidelines – specifications on how to use a logo, visual imagery and a colour palette in all materials. It should give clear design instructions on consistent logo positioning, its application in different formats, a specific font and an approved colour palette. It should assist both in aligning the brand identity alongside already existing identities, avoiding a conflict of interests, and in using it in its entirety where appropriate.

The visual identity of a future successful brand should consider the following key components:

- *logo*
- *slogan*
- *fonts and colours*
- *images*
- *tone of voice.*

Once the ALP brand identity and product portfolio is created, the next step will be to promote it so that it becomes recognisable. This process means launching the brand to the consumer market as well as to all key destinations and stakeholders to ensure their understanding and support.

Based on the ALP brand research, results have shown that for successful visibility the ALP brand should use social network and digital marketing, new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation, followed by being a presence and visibility at travel trade industry events to meet and talk to tour operators.

The elements and values can be communicated through the visual technical design guidelines, which were mentioned before. Therefore, the logo, slogan, fonts/colours and images should follow the guidelines and communicate the elements and values in all brand communication activities.

Content is key. Forms of content could include the following:

- *video*
- *printed publications and branded material*
- *websites*
- *social media*
- *events*
- *other initiatives.*

In conclusion, what is proposed in the report is to plan the branding strategy for the Alpine macro-region, with a view to the creation of a macro-regional brand through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The branding strategy aims to bring together the brands of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in the Alpine macro-region, within the framework of the region, to create a new "umbrella" brand merging the identity of the two (Cultural Routes on one hand and macro-region on the other hand). The strategy will also increase the visibility of the Cultural Routes as well as of the Alpine macro-region as cultural tourism destinations. Thus, the heritage which the Cultural Routes promote is a key resource for building the macro-regional brand.

The current report has provided an overview of the brand audit, strategy development and implementation through an extensive literature review and primary surveys undertaken in the Alpine macro-region. However, to ensure the success of the ALP brand a further participative approach and involvement of stakeholders is needed. It is advised that the brand values and essence should be further reviewed and finalised by the Working Group in conjunction with the designer developing the visual identity. It is important for long-term success that the ALP brand develops with stakeholder ownership and the support of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

1.INTRODUCTION

A **(air, art, amazing, adrenalin, Alps)**

L **(life, love, live, landmarks, learning, landscapes, location)**

P **(power, people, places)**

I **(intercultural dialogue, integration)**

N **(national, network)**

E **(economic, eligible, Europe, European dimension)**

1.1. Background and overview of the Alpine Region

The Alpine Region (referred to here as the ALP – see Figure 1) is the largest preserved natural mountain range in Europe with unique geographical and natural features. The protection of the ecosystem and the preservation of natural resources, as well as the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, is an important task for all countries of the ALP. This includes mitigation of the negative effects of climate change, such as loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of the living conditions of the population.
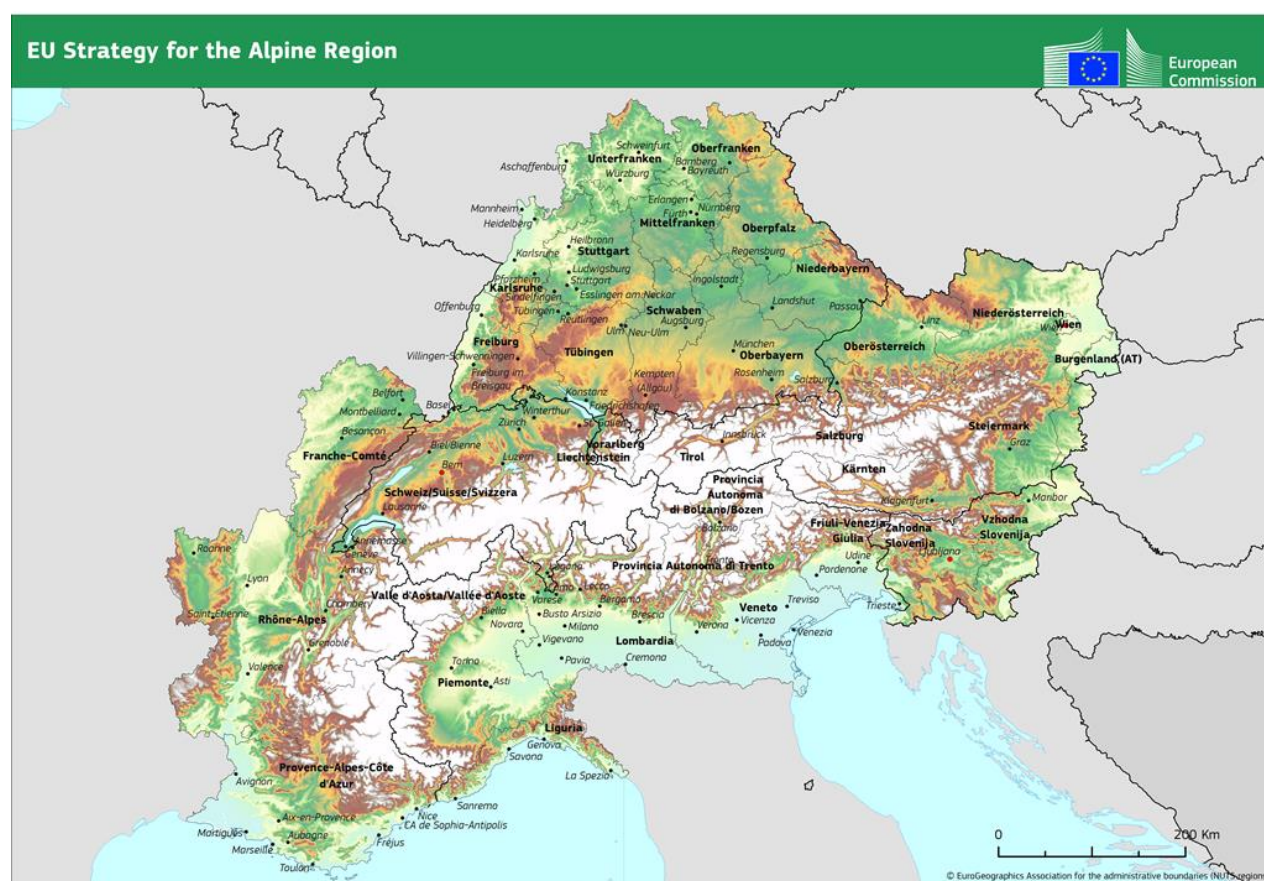

Figure 1. Map of the Alpine Region

The Alpine Region is made up of regions in seven countries: five are EU member states (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and two are non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland). These countries differ in terms of their economic, demographic and social development. Within

these seven countries there are 48 regions in the ALP: Austria (Burgenland, Kärnten, Niederösterreich, Oberösterreich, Salzburg, Steiermark, Tirol, Vorarlberg, Wien), France (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur), Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bayern), Italy (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Valle d'Aosta, Veneto), Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland (Aargau, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Basel-Landschaft, Basel-Stadt, Bern, Fribourg, Genève, Glarus, Graubünden/Grisons, Jura, Luzern, Neuchâtel, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schaffhausen, Schwyz, Solothurn, St. Gallen, Thurgau, Ticino, Uri, Valais, Vaud, Zug, Zürich).

The mountain area of the ALP has two main issues: it is characterised by low population density and, at the same time, this population is ageing and declining. This results in a loss of economic attractiveness and, therefore, development. The region also suffers from a lack of infrastructure that further contributes to the abandonment of these areas, affecting their biodiversity conservation and protection of the tangible and intangible heritage. With regard to economic development, however, the ALP contains some of the economically most dynamic areas of the European Union. "The Alpine Region is one of the richest areas in the world and among the most economically dynamic, innovative and competitive areas in Europe. However, significant economic differences still exist within the territories, requiring a common response" (European Commission 2015: 4). The Alpine Region is a popular travel destination and is traditionally recognised for recreational tourism. This tourism has a positive impact on economic development, but needs to be sustainably managed to avoid negative impacts on the environment. Due to the high diversity of cultural resources, cultural tourism represents a potential that can be further used with a positive impact on the creation of new jobs and on economic growth.

Culture and tourism are topics that are not addressed through a dedicated action group as part of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), but as subthemes of existing action groups. Action Group 2, "To increase the economic potential of strategic sectors", and Action Group 6, "To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources", deal with topics related to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. Action Group 2 addresses health tourism as a thematic priority (co-ordinated by the region of Salzburg, Austria). Action Group 6 aims to initiate activities for the promotion and marketing of sustainably produced food and forest products as a way to maintain cultural and ecosystem services.

1.2. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

The Cultural Routes are grass-roots networks promoting the principles which underlie all the work and values of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity, mutual understanding and exchanges across boundaries.

This European dimension of the Cultural Routes is defined as a set of natural and anthropic heritage elements, social and political phenomena that marked the history of Europe over time, interconnecting places – landmarks of the cultural itinerary (Cultural Routes) – and the common cultural and historical heritage of Europe, from different perspectives.

These European dimensions consist of the following:

The **architectural styles** of buildings in different countries may have similar appearance because they were built in the same Renaissance or Baroque period, in classic or art nouveau style.

The **urban landscape** in the Alpine Region is represented, for instance, by site entry gates, fortifications, public markets, local or regional government buildings, bridges, castles and country parks. Each one looks different, but each has the same purpose, and often the same style, having been designed by architects specialising in the field who mostly came from other countries but travelled throughout Europe, renowned for their talent and skill.

The term **"people"** may refer to minorities, bringing their own culture (customs and traditions) with them to their new home. It can also refer to very wealthy citizens who sponsored and continue to support art and culture, who built important buildings to receive their own foreign guests and whose architecture and building methods were inspired by the travels they have undertaken. It is worthy of note that the very wealthy families, in particular, were very well connected to each other over time within the European space.

Art and culture have historical and contemporary connotations. This refers to different artistic and cultural styles and more popular philosophical trends throughout Europe, and also to various artistic movements, international film festivals, concerts and plays organised in conventional and unconventional spaces.

Religion is a cultural element where Europe has many values in common, for instance Christian churches and monasteries, and Jewish communities with their synagogues.

Scientific life is an area that cannot exist without contacts between people from different countries, universities and other organisations. Links based on exchanges of international experience are often used for the benefit of science. A current example is the exchanges of international students and teachers through the Erasmus programme, who follow a custom used since the Middle Ages – the Grand Tour – a journey made by students from rich families across Europe to study and gain life experience.

Economic issues are probably the most common elements of the European dimension in European cities. Not every city hosts a multinational company headquarters, but their investments are seen everywhere, and, if we visit major commercial centres, it is noticeable that they are almost identical in every city in Europe.

The Cultural Routes are considered as a bridge between cultures, promote citizens' awareness of the heritage that unites them as Europeans, regardless of geographical distances or cultural differences. It aims to create a link between citizens and heritage, demonstrating that the cultural diversity of the different countries of Europe contributes to creating a common living culture

Twenty-eight of the 38 Cultural Routes pass through the Alpine macro-region. Figures 5 and 6 provide an overview of the itineraries represented there.
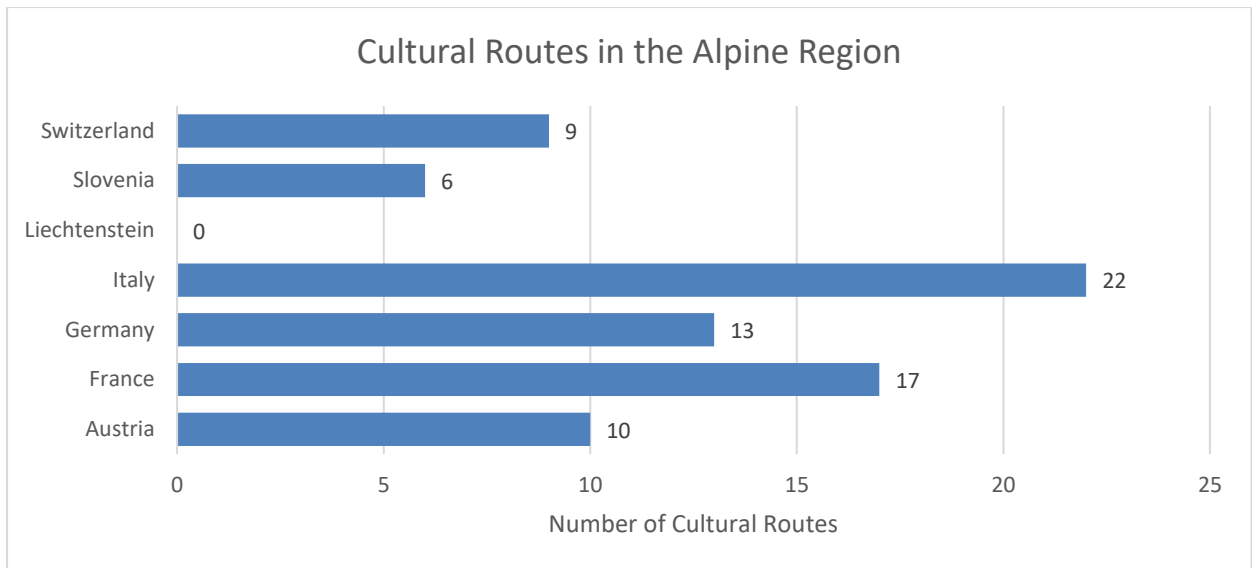
Figure 2. Cultural Routes in the Alpine Region, January 2020
Source: Routes4U
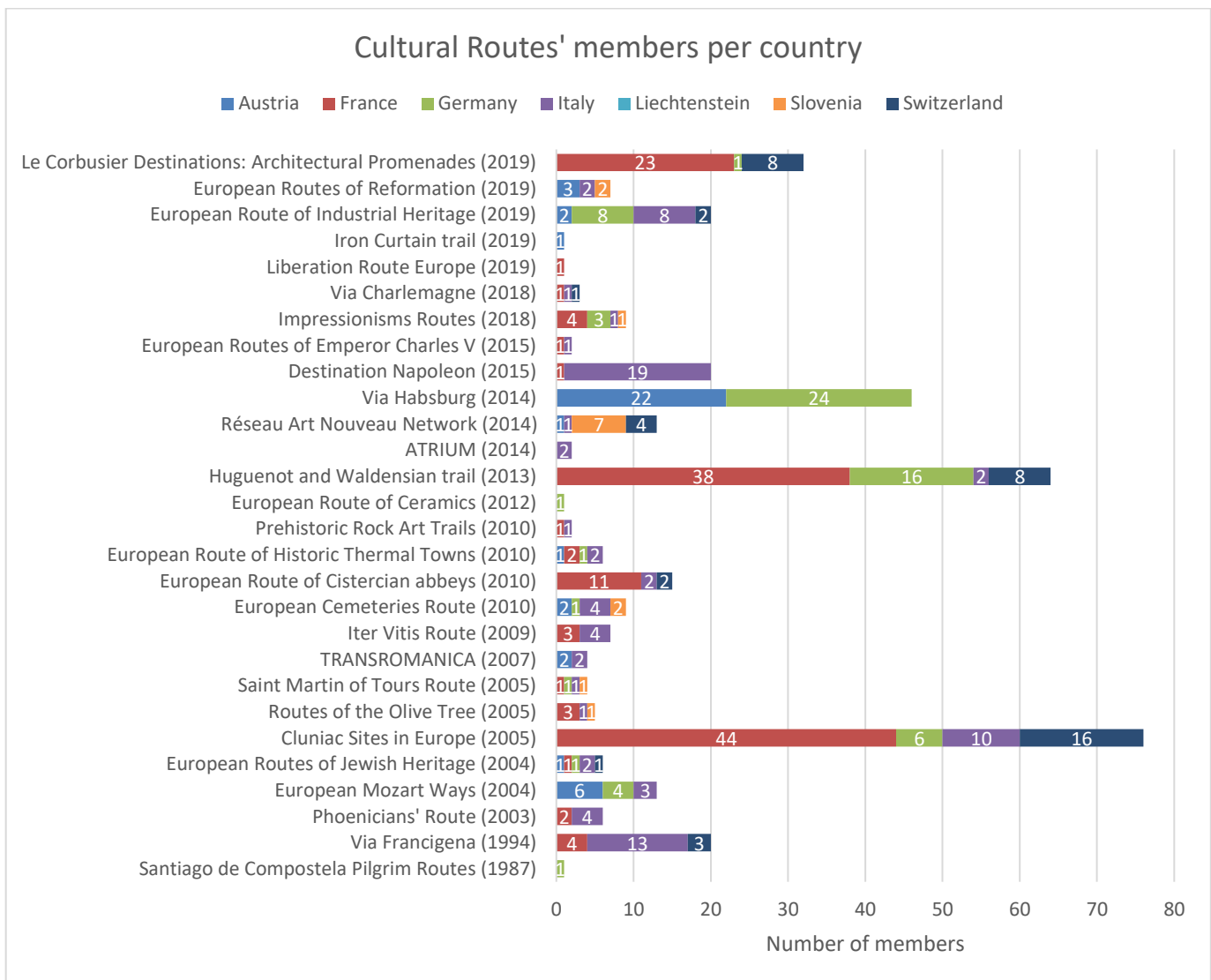
Figure 3. Distribution of members per country, January 2020
Source: Routes4U

The European Routes of Jewish Heritage is the most "international", with partners in five countries, followed by seven routes which are represented in four countries each: European Route of Industrial Heritage, Impressionisms Routes, Réseau Art Nouveau Network, Huguenot and Waldensian Trail, European Route of Historic Thermal Towns, European Cemeteries Route, Saint Martin of Tours Route and Cluniac Sites in Europe. There are three Cultural Routes that present potential for extension since they have members exclusively in one country that is part of the Alpine macro-region: Iron Curtain Trail (Austria), Liberation Route Europe (France), ATRIUM (Italy), European Route of Ceramics (Germany) and Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes (Germany).

1.3. Aims and objectives of the study

The aim of this report is to achieve a deeper understanding of the existing potential of the ALP Cultural Routes for the macro-region at large and the seven countries, with a focus on transnational products. It is intended that, based on the results of this study, the next stage will be the creation of an ALP brand handbook to guide interested parties in the future. The study will review the challenges that will be faced in the creation of an ALP brand identity and its implementation alongside the existing brands and identities that are already present across potential participant countries and look at the solutions and approaches needed for further success.

What is proposed in this report is to plan the branding strategy for the Alpine macro-region, with a view to the creation of a macro-regional brand through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The branding strategy aims to bring together the brands of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in the Alpine macro-region, within the framework of the region, to create a new "umbrella" brand merging the identity of the two (Cultural Routes on the one hand and macro-region on the other). The strategy also aims to increase the visibility of both the Cultural Routes and the Alpine macro-region as cultural tourism destinations. The heritage which the Cultural Routes promote is a key resource, representing the culture of the region concerned, and the Cultural Routes are hence a key resource in building the macro-regional brand. The branding strategy will entail concrete recommendations on the development of a "Cultural Routes card" (a card to encourage travel in the specific macro-region, exploring its cultural heritage by visiting the Cultural Routes destinations and sites). The strategy will include a list of local products related to or produced by organisations linked to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. These should be products selected as authentic European products, made by small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), local producers, craftsmen and artists linked to the Cultural Routes in the macro-region and exemplary in terms of quality.

The branding strategy will focus on the following objectives:

- the promotion of tourism through co-operation between the ALP and the Cultural Routes;
- increasing the visibility of the Cultural Routes and the Alpine macro-region as cultural tourism destinations and co-ordinating the marketing of both the ALP and Cultural Routes;
- improving the competitiveness of the ALP along the Cultural Routes in the European and global tourism marketplace.

The first part of the study makes reference to the brand audit of the ALP brand (Part 1). The next part is based on the results of the brand audit, leading to the creation and development of an ALP brand strategy (Part 2). Part 3 discusses how the brand should be implemented.

Freiburg, Germany. ©Pixabay

PART 1 - BRAND AUDIT OF THE ALPINE REGION

1. OVERVIEW OF THE BRAND AUDIT PHASE

Any destination branding process starts by assessing what the macro-region's assets are and focuses on how best to present these to each customer group or market segment. This was done by undertaking a destination audit and presenting the main points of the implemented methodology for the brand audit studies. It was followed by the creation of an ALP brand strategy development, based on the results of the audit phase. The analysis aimed to show the essence of the ALP brand that should be capable of working in harmony with the existing brands that are used by the Cultural Routes and the macro-region.

The first part of the project consists of the brand audit of the ALP brand. The goals of the brand audit phase were to identify the current awareness regarding the ALP Cultural Routes, their tourism potential and attitudes towards the creation of a new ALP brand, leading to the following research objectives:

- to assess the current ALP Cultural Routes;
- to assess the Cultural Routes in general (this applies to the CR members);
- to assess the current ALP brand and its elements;
- to make proposals and recommendations for a new ALP brand;
- to identify the profile of the respondents.

The key stakeholders of a destination are people who have an interest in the way in which the destination presents itself. Stakeholders are individuals, groups of individuals or organisations that have interests or concerns related to local development. These may or may not be affected by actions and strategies related to territorial marketing. Stakeholders are vital to the sustainable development of a region. In order to develop an appropriate marketing strategy, these stakeholders need to be identified, interviewed and understood so as to integrate their perspective into the strategy. The marketing strategy developed in this way focuses not only on the objectives of the organisation for which it is developed, but also conceives a value proposition that will meet the expectations of the main stakeholders, at least.

In the case of a territorial marketing strategy, stakeholders are numerous, officially established organisations and individuals. Here is a non-exhaustive list: local communities, non-governmental associations, representatives of public administration, companies, property owners, tour operators, builders and real estate agents.

There are three main groups of stakeholders for the ALP Cultural Routes:

- Cultural Routes members are considered to be very important in developing the ALP brand and this meant all the main ALP Cultural Routes members of the 48 regions in the seven countries. They were contacted to participate in the first study (namely, CR presidents, managers, members and other types of employees).
- ALP stakeholders include businesses of the macro-region, and national, regional and local authorities and organisations, such as conservation, arts, cultural and heritage bodies.
- Visitors to the seven ALP countries were also surveyed.

In the next section, the main points of the methodology for the brand audit are presented – a structured process for evaluating the potential for a new ALP brand in a participative manner.

1.1. Methodology of the ALP brand audit

The methodology of the ALP brand audit is a multi-method approach. The data collection methods were both quantitative and qualitative including online surveys and semi-structured interviews. The contacted participants were selected regarding their relevance to ALP Cultural Routes tourism. Considering the unique characteristics of each ALP key group (CR members, ALP stakeholders, ALP visitors), a multi-method approach was considered appropriate.

Other methods used for interviewing were direct mailing, and interviews by phone, Skype, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Other materials and methods used included exploratory research using secondary data (statistical and published studies), other promotional materials and extensive website analysis.

Based on the unique characteristics of the study and the lack of secondary data available, it was decided that primary research would consist of three surveys:

- a survey for CR members;
- a survey for ALP stakeholders;
- a survey for ALP visitors.

The survey included questions to discover how the ALP Cultural Routes can use experiential branding to differentiate their brand from competitors. Some questions related to socio-demographics and aspects of the respondents' travel behaviours. The three questionnaires aimed to collect mainly quantitative data, but some open-ended questions were introduced to provide the option to collect personalised responses from participants.

The data collection period started in July 2019 and ended in August 2019. The survey lasted two months (1 July to 31 August 2019). The questionnaires were distributed online to selected participants and visitors (actual and potential) of the Cultural Routes. Through an online survey, the research team decided to focus on strategically selected participants and not to publicly distribute the questionnaire. This resulted in 84 valid and completed responses from current ALP Cultural Routes members, stakeholders and visitors.

In addition to the online surveys, participants could request a telephone or Skype semi-structured interview with the researcher. The sample used is a random one, constituted ad hoc, that consists of 100 interviewed visitors who stayed during the above-mentioned period in tourist accommodation in the Alpine macro-region. The average interview lasted for 20 minutes and the topics discussed, apart from the ones described above, included issues regarding each individual case.

The justification for conducting the primary research among the population using two different methods of applying the questionnaire related to the different nature of the samples involved. Thus, the participants in the working groups were mainly decision makers in public institutions and NGOs in the country, while the respondents to the online questionnaire were mostly employed in the private sector or were students.

The purpose of this survey was to discover how ALP Cultural Routes can use experiential branding to differentiate their brand from competitors, and this section will look into theories concerning experiential branding.

The survey included questions related to socio-demographics and aspects of the respondents' travel behaviours. The present material is oriented towards the following main components:

►The analysis and evaluation of cultural tourism in the Alpine macro-region by domestic and foreign tourists used a sociological survey as a research method and the questionnaire as an analysis tool. It was applied to 100 visitors to the Alpine macro-region who stayed in the accommodation structures.

►Analysis of the main types of European Cultural Routes and identification of itineraries of this kind used a qualitative analysis of specialised documents, case studies and strategic documents, such as "Impact of European Cultural Routes on SMEs innovation and competitiveness" (Council of Europe/European Commission 2011).

The scientific method used in this part of the paper included a sociological survey applied to tourists on the basis of a questionnaire. This included a sample of 100 tourists, with a response rate of 84% (completed questionnaires), and 120 members and managers from the Alpine Region and from other countries. Of the 84 valid questionnaires 58 were completed offline and 26 online.

Questionnaire design principles

Questionnaire design is the most important parts of the market research process. The following seven steps will help when designing a questionnaire (Hague, 1988):

Step 1: Decide what information is required

Step 2: Make a rough listing of the questions

Step 3: Refine the question phrasing

Step 4: Develop the response format

Step 5: Put the questionnaires into an appropriate sequence

Step 6: Finalise the layout of the questionnaire

Step 7: Pretest and revise.

Questionnaire design is a planned, thoughtful process based on systematic principles and involves the simultaneous integration of four layers:

- questions
- objectives
- words
- layout or format.

The respondent defines what you can do, the types of questions you can ask, the types of words you can use, the concepts you can explore and the methodology you can use.

Regarding the research methodology, the questionnaire design set out to identify the current participants' awareness regarding the ALP Cultural Routes, their tourism potential and attitudes towards the creation of an ALP brand. Aiming to maximise effectiveness, the questionnaire was divided into sections according the research objectives.

The first questionnaire for the Cultural Routes members contains six sections:

Section 1 – ALP thematic routes: questions 1-7

Section 2 – Feedback about the Cultural Routes: questions 8-52

Section 3 – Marketing actions assessment of a Cultural Route: questions 53-78

Section 4 – Current ALP brand: questions 79-108

Section 5 – Creating an ALP brand: questions 109-114

Section 6 – Demographic profile of the responders: question 115.

The second questionnaire for the Cultural Routes stakeholders contains four sections:

Section 1 – Current ALP brand: questions 1-29

Section 2 – Creating an ALP brand: questions 30-38

Section 3 – ALP thematic routes: questions 39-44

Section 4 – Demographic profile: questions 45-51.

The third questionnaire for the ALP visitors contains the same four sections as the one for the Cultural Routes stakeholders. However, questions in the sections differ:

Section 1 – Current ALP brand: questions 1-29

Section 2 – Creating an ALP brand: questions 30-36

Section 3 – ALP thematic routes: questions 37-42

Section 4 – Demographic profile: questions 43-46.

Regarding the questionnaire-based research, the questionnaires were sent out using the following links:

Link for members and managers:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScmRTNAJjQv00h3IcVQ2M9f-GtI5K9vKeOCHGiWkDslYGjVfw/viewform?usp=sf_link

Link for stakeholders:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdEyQIyzJGbWA0GQMggROuiN29ZeIgF_XCPSfvtcPtOhiH1Dg/viewform?fbzx=-5756354173226271337

Link for visitors:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSciccf-1WzHetAOUsxJnX-X2MERY0q5WTeRlOjGXewh77X2fg/viewform

Questionnaire collection

The data collection period started in July 2019 and ended in August 2019. The survey lasted two months (1 July to 31 August 2019). The questionnaires were distributed online to participants and

visitors of the Cultural Routes under investigation. Eighty-four valid and completed responses were received from ALP Cultural Routes members, stakeholders and visitors.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. The participants requested Skype semi-structured interviews.

The sample includes 100 interviewed visitors who stayed during the above-mentioned period in the tourist accommodation structures in the Alpine macro-region. The average interview lasted for 20 minutes for each participant.

Other methodological details

- Using the comparative analysis method of qualitative and quantitative data, official statistical data for the regions were analysed (regional statistics from, for instance, hoteliers associations, tour operators, travel agencies and local authorities).

- The research method involved establishing the hypothesis, the aim of the research and the research objectives, drawing up the questionnaires, and organising and conducting the research. The questionnaires aimed to identify the main strategic directions and branding elements.

- For the database and graphics, ACCESS and EXCEL have been used.

- Direct quality research was carried out into macro-regional branding and macro-regional areas and interviews were carried out with the people involved in branding the area or in other relevant activities (e.g. councillors, NGOs, local authorities).

- An interview guide was drawn up for identifying respondents' opinions.

- There was analysis of international media sites, radio channels, television, news bulletins, festivals, exhibitions and cultural events.

- An online user impact analysis was carried out, based on Google search functions.

- The online environment was assessed including social media, direct mailing, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+.

- Tourist flows in the chosen destinations have been analysed.

- Other work tools used in cultural research highlight the importance of tourism activities in the sustainable development of a tourist destination, through practising specific forms of tourism based on cultural and historical values.

- The tourist potential of the regions was assessed, highlighting the problems related to the average duration of stay. This led to the identification of a possible solution using regional branding and a proposal for thematic travel packages.

- A programme was considered which presented tourist offers for the destinations, for instance regarding their main tourist attractions and cultural events organised in the regions. This analysis was based on data provided by travel agencies.

- This paper also aims to contribute to the development of a partnership between regions based on comparable medieval and cultural resources and proposes an exchange of know-how on destination management and added value.

2. SURVEY RESULTS

2.1. Cultural Routes questionnaire

The following research objectives were adopted:

- to assess the current ALP thematic routes in general;
- to assess the current ALP brand and its elements;
- to make proposals for a new ALP brand;
- to investigate the profile of the respondents.

Section 1 – ALP thematic routes

Q1. What does the ALP mean to you?

In the first question the members were asked to think about the word "ALP" and write down the first three words which came to mind in order of ranking. The findings show that the ALP is seen as: mountains, landscapes, authentic, Alps, Alpine landscapes, nature, culture, snow, green, fresh air, skiing, tradition, authentic, life and rich.

The findings show that ALP is seen as an area that is rich in a number of heritage resources (4.27) and is perceived as beautiful (4.27).

Most tourists (65.2%) said that the heritage resources in relation to the routes' theme are well represented in the Alpine Region.

Q2. ALP Cultural Routes' degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals

The members were asked to rate the ALP Cultural Routes in general according to the degree of achievement of the theme interpretation goals and the categories were: i. skills and competences development (3.10), ii. new cultural values, and iii. the development of cultural sensibility and exchange.

The members consider the ALP Cultural Routes degree of achievement of the theme interpretation goals to be just above the medium, that is between 2.6 to 3 points out of 5, therefore at a moderate level. Skills and competences development, new cultural values and the development of cultural sensibility and exchange are above the medium.

Q3. ALP Cultural Routes' quality interpretation of theme

The respondents were asked to rate how much the ALP Cultural Routes, in general, have achieved several quality interpretations. The participants answered that the ALP Cultural Routes have mostly achieved their historic and cultural function (3.10).

Q4. How successful are the ALP Cultural Routes in general?

Regarding how successful the ALP Cultural Routes are in general, CR Members responded that they are successful in terms of relations between the partners: transboundary co-operation and collaborative destination marketing (3.5).

Q5. The top three Cultural Routes associated with the ALP

1. Via Francigena

2. Via Habsburg

3. European Mozart Ways.

Regarding the top three Cultural Routes associated with the ALP, The Via Francigena is the top Cultural Route, the Via Habsburg is in second place and the European Mozart Ways in third place.

Q6. Motivations for the ALP traveller

ALP travellers seek to enjoy the ALP culture (museums, music, monuments, dances, festivals, skiing, paragliding, sport, climbing) (4.20) as their main motivation to visit the routes.

Q7. How would CR Members see the ALP visitor as different from in other macro-regions?

The CR members see that the ALP visitors are seekers of authenticity and experiences, looking for culture, nature, mountain sport and Alpine Region traditions.

The answers received that characterise the ALP visitor are as follows:

- *nice*
- *individual traveller*
- *interested in classical music*
- *likes nature*
- *looks for originality and unusual destinations*
- *likes Alpine culture*
- *likes mountains*
- *curious*
- *kind*
- *likes traditions*
- *wants a combination of culture and tourism*
- *wants to know about Mozart*
- *desires authenticity*
- *intellectual*
- *loves adrenalin*
- *attractive*
- *patient*
- *nature person*
- *loves simplicity*
- *values sharing*
- *loves sport.*

Section 2 – Feedback about the Cultural Route(s)

Q8 What local products are produced by and/or promoted through the Cultural Route, related to the success of the ALP Cultural Routes in general or to a specific theme of a Cultural Route?

As a first question in this section, CR members were asked to describe the local products produced by and/or promoted through the Cultural Route, related to the specific theme of the Cultural Route. These products can be made, for example, by SMEs, local producers, craftspeople or artists. List these products specifying the producer (name, address), the place where they are distributed/sold and the entity in charge of this (name, address) so that they can be catalogued. In five questions (8-12), CR members provided the local products produced by and/or promoted through the Cultural Route which, according to their answers, are the following:

Name of the product	Description of the product	Information on the producer (name and address)	Places of distribution and name of the entity in charge of distribution
Food/beverages , food and grocery		Salzburg, Austria	Very local products
Culinary specialities		Canton du Jura (Switzerland), Pays d'Ajoie	Local products
Culinary specialities: cooked goose		Germany and Austria	Local products
Jambon de Bosses		Italy	Local products
Cheese	Local cheese	Italy, Austria, Slovenia	
Honey	Local honey	Slovenia	Local products
Crafts		Jesenice, Slovenia	Local products
Wine		Italy, Germany, Switzerland	Local products
A piece of jewellery from a pear wood tradition of the Gorjuse pipes	Local product	Bohinj, Slovenia	Local product
Alpine valerian, herbs, medicinal plants, grasses, flowering plants	Local product	Nockberge, Slovenia	Local product
Bovec cheese	Local product	Idrija, Slovenia	Local product
Wood handicrafts		Germany, Austria, Slovenia	Local product

Q9. More local products produced by and/or promoted through the Cultural Route

CR members mentioned in their answers: wood handicrafts and other souvenirs as additional local products produced by and/or promoted through their Cultural Route.

Q10. Cultural Routes' main assets in terms of its visitor appeal

Findings show that the main assets of the Cultural Routes are culture, traditions, festivals, gastronomy and their ecology, landscape and natural assets.

Q11. How powerful are these assets of your Cultural Route compared to other Cultural Routes?

The main assets of the Cultural Routes of culture, traditions, festivals, gastronomy and their ecology, landscape and natural assets are found to be equally important in the following percentages: slightly (8.3%), very (54.2%), extremely (4.2%) and moderately (33.3%).

Q12. Evaluate the Cultural Route(s) in terms of quality standards in the next series of questions in this section

CR members were asked to evaluate their Cultural Route in terms of the quality standards of certain aspects, by rating 1 = poor quality, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = good and 5 = excellent. According to their answers (see table below), cultural values and the safety of the surroundings ranked at the top:

Evaluation of Cultural Route	Rating
Tangible and intangible heritage – cultural content	4.20
Number of heritage resources in relation to the route theme (focusing on key resources)	3.58
Importance/uniqueness of resource/significance level – competitiveness	3.57
Spatial distribution, ambience and setting	3.00
The ability to group cultural or heritage resources	3.00
Physical condition of the resources: preservation, restoration	3.20
Preservation of resource integrity	3.50
Cultural values being evoked	4.29
Attractiveness – familiarity of the thematic route outside the region	3.30
Robustness	3.00
Resource size, capacity	3.27
Ability to control visitor flow	2.00
Appeal and aesthetics of the surroundings	4.00
Safety of the surroundings	4.29

Market position of the destination (importance of cultural content in such a position)	3.86
International project co-operation	4.00
Thematic tourism products	3.50

Q13. The image of the ALP brand

CR members believe that beautiful landscapes, mountains and sun, along with gastronomy, are what mostly characterises the image of the ALP. CR members had to choose a number from 1 to 7, where 1=low/poor, 7=high/good.

Cultural Routes 3.47	Quality accommodation 5.00	Beautiful landscapes 5.63	Culturally interesting 5.19
Good value for money 4.61	Selection of gastronomy 5.31	Variety of fauna and flora 7.00	Interesting local customs 6.20
Safe place 6.00	Quality of service 5.20	Mountains and sun 6.86	Entertainment 4.69
Relaxing place 6.50	Peaceful place 6.10	Place to rest 6.30	Ease of getting around 5.20
Sports facilities 5.10	Pleasant destination 6.20	Arousing destination 5.60	Exciting destination 5.83

Q16. Usefulness of the potential for the creation of ALP

The creation of the ALP brand for strengthening the macro-region's competitiveness was indicated to be extremely useful by the CR members (100.00%).

Q17. The top three positive strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

CR members were asked to give the top three positive features (strengths) they see as key aspects of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the CR members, culture and heritage, coherent actions (co-ordination) and a new model of economy empowerment and promotion, are the top three positive features.

According to the results, the most important strengths related to developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

1st strengths:

- *pleasant destination*
- *cultural heritage*
- *nature*

- *traditions*
- *nice people*
- *culture*
- *cultural heritage*
- *cuisine*
- *mountains*
- *diversity of landscapes.*

The second most important strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

2nd strengths:

- *brand awareness as a destination*
- *authentic local cuisine*
- *something new to discover*
- *improves the image*
- *climate*
- *services*
- *mountains*
- *competitiveness*
- *cultural*
- *increased tourism (economic growth of the region)*
- *more job opportunities*
- *mountain tourism*
- *new tourists*
- *reduction of harmful competition from other countries.*

The third most important strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

3rd strengths:

- *new business opportunities*
- *not just beaches*
- *authentic*
- *increases income*
- *self-motivation*
- *climate*
- *food destination*
- *new opportunities*
- *interregional cultural programmes.*

Q18. The three key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

CR members were asked to give the three key negative aspects (weaknesses) of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the CR members, the different cultures between the countries, mass tourism, difficult access and bad connections (borders and transportation connectivity), low marketing activity (e.g., information, communication, collaboration) and pollution are the main key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. The most important weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity according to the CR members are the following:

1st weaknesses:

- *poor promotion*
- *poor dissemination*
- *lacking identity*
- *poor infrastructure*
- *poor transport connectivity*
- *accommodation*
- *environmental hazards*
- *different cultures*
- *transport connections.*

The second most important weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

2nd weaknesses:

- *too many tourists, overpricing, overcrowding*
- *too much difference between the countries involved*
- *infrastructure*
- *no involvement of municipalities*
- *tourism information, lack of dissemination of information*
- *mass tourism*
- *different landscapes and climate conditions*
- *low visibility*
- *languages are different.*

The third most important weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

3rd weaknesses:

- *lack of a common identity*
- *language*
- *lack of infrastructure*
- *poor co-operation*
- *traffic*
- *fewer opportunities for local differentiation.*

Q19. The three key opportunities of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, CR members were asked to give the three key opportunities they see in developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

According to the CR members, diversified tourism and cultural products can enrich the ALP brand, although the national differences, nature and gastronomy, and common marketing and branding strategies are considered the top positive opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

From the results, the most important opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity according to the CR members are:

1st opportunities:

- *mountains*
- *to grow the economy*
- *nature*
- *culture and history*
- *skiing*
- *diversified tourism products*
- *creative features.*

The second most important opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

2nd opportunities:

- *nature*
- *to diversify the local economy away from just tourism*
- *mountains*
- *attractive places*
- *gastronomy*
- *lakes and glaciers*
- *cultural places*
- *social cohesion*
- *photography.*

The third most important opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

3rd opportunities:

- *amazing places*
- *food*
- *best spots in the ALP*
- *low prices*
- *history*
-
- *increases in the overall income*
- *environment and food*
- *know-how*
- *more visitors to lesser known countries.*

Q20. The three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, CR members were asked to give the three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the CR members, countries' policies, poor co-operation and a lack of funding are considered the three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. From the results, the main obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1st obstacles:

- *lack of involvement of the local authorities*

- *poor communication*
- *weaknesses regarding the marketing strategy*
- *politics*
- *people currently do not see it as a region*
- *poor co-operation between countries.*

The second most important obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are:

2nd obstacles:

- *tourism professionals must be prepared accordingly*
- *corruption*
- *different languages of the countries*
- *borders*
- *different cultures*
- *authenticity.*

Q21. Visibility activities that should been performed in common

CR members were asked to rate visibility activities that should, in their opinion, have been performed in common (e.g., information, interpretation signboards, uniform information centres or stands, etc.). According to the results, the top main visibility activity that should be performed in common, according to the CR members, is the partnership with tour operators and tourist agents (4.50).

The top ranked visibility activities to be performed in common are the following, according to the CR members:

- *partnership with tour operators and tourist agents (4.50)*
- *information about routes (4.15).*

Q22. Rate activities in terms of their importance to the CR in terms of marketing

, CR members were asked to rate several activities in terms of their importance to CR in terms of marketing. According to the results, the most important marketing activities according to the CR members are social media (4.67), apps and geolocation maps (4.27).

Q23. Evaluation of the new ALP brand's marketing activities in terms of requirements for successful visibility

In this question the CR members were asked to evaluate the new ALP brand's marketing activities in terms of requirements for successful visibility. According to the CR members, for successful visibility the new ALP brand should use social networks and digital marketing (4.70), followed by being present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators and cruise operators (4.57), and work in terms of communities of interest. The organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme should be successfully identified (4.37).

Q24. Evaluate the Cultural Route(s) in terms of the service content

In the next series of questions in this section, CR members were asked to evaluate their Cultural Route in terms of service content of certain aspects, by rating as 1 = poor quality, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = excellent. According to their answers (see table), tourists surroundings

ranked at the top of those aspects, followed by the type of hospitability facilities and the type of accommodation facilities.

Evaluation of service content	Rating
Number of hospitality facilities included in the route	3.50
Type of included hospitality facilities (traditional, authentic restaurants, and similar)	4.26
Thematically related hospitality facilities	3.50
Number of accommodation facilities included in the route	3.78
Type of accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels, camps, rural traditional accommodation)	4.20
Number of traditional crafts/workshops included in the Cultural Route	3.20
Other tourism services in the vicinity (thermal baths, swimming pools, wellness centres, tennis courts, golf courts and similar)	3.43
Souvenir shops, shops with traditional and thematic products	3.28
Accessibility (types and frequency of public transport)	3.28
Number and type of tourist events along the route during the year	3.27
Tourist surroundings (active tourism destinations in the vicinity)	4.30
Suitability for bus groups	3.20
Suitability for specific tourist offer (for young people, families, women)	3.37
Experience value	4.10
Organisation	3.57
Events and activities that support the theme	3.12
Traditional crafts	3.5

Q25. Main motivations for the Cultural Route traveller

The gastronomy of ALP destinations is the most influential motivation for Cultural Route travellers.

Q26. How would CR members see a visitor to their Cultural Route as different from the other Cultural Routes' travellers

CR visitors are curious about history and places, kind, adventurous, nice, value sharing highly and are highly educated.

The 1st most common phrases that characterise an ALP visitor are the following:

- *curious about history and places*
- *adventurous*
- *value sharing*
- *curious*
- *highly educated.*

The 2nd most common phrases that characterise the CR visitor are:

- *looking for untouched nature*
- *like to do sports*
- *walking*
- *modern history amateur.*

The 3rd most common phrases that characterise the CR visitor are:

- *experiential tourism*
- *ecologist*
- *meeting people*
- *like sports.*

Q27. Any additional comments about their Cultural Route

As a last question in this section, CR members were asked to provide any comments about their Cultural Route. Comments were made about:

- *the consciousness of cultural roots*
- *to have souvenirs or crafts following the theme, often very poorly known even in the areas where the heritage is located.*

Section 3 – Marketing actions assessment of a Cultural Route

Q28. Rate activities in terms of their importance to CR in terms of marketing

As a first question in this section, CR members were asked to rate several activities in terms of their importance to the CR in terms of marketing. According to their answers, these marketing activities were ranked top in terms of their importance for their CR:

- *apps, geolocation maps (4.20)*
- *public relations (4.20)*
- *public relations in particular with schools.*

Q29. Rate activities in terms of their performance for your CR's marketing

In the first question in this section, CR members were asked to rate several activities in terms of their importance to the CRs in terms of marketing. The second question asked the CR members to rate these activities in terms of their performance in their CR's marketing. CR members rated their marketing activities' performance as 1 = poor quality, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 =

excellent. According to their answers, these marketing activities were ranked in top position in terms of their performance for their CR:

- *events (3.43)*
- *public relations (3.43)*
- *absence of geolocation maps or apps.*

Q30. Evaluation of Cultural Route's importance in terms of requirements for successful visibility

In the next question in this section, CR members were asked to evaluate their Cultural Route's importance in terms of requirements for successful visibility. According to their answers (see table below), for successful visibility a Cultural Route should use new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation:

For successful visibility a Cultural Route should:	Rating
Be present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators, cruise operators and other professionals	3.60
Work with the media, using the existing resources of the project's partners	3.70
Work in terms of communities of interest: successfully identify the organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme	4.00
Take advantage of high-speed networks and digital tools e.g. Google Translate to strengthen communication with customers, and build trade and media relations	3.20
Use new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation	4.67
Use augmented reality and virtual reality to help the visitor understand the links between attractions and assets, across frontiers	3.60
Make full use of social networks and digital marketing	3.60

Q31. Evaluate your Cultural Route's performance in terms of requirements for successful visibility

In relation to the previous question in this section, where CR members were asked to evaluate their Cultural Route's importance in terms of requirements for successful visibility, this question asked the CR members to evaluate their Cultural Route's performance in terms of requirements for successful visibility.

According to their answers (see table below), for their Cultural Route's performance in terms of requirements for successful visibility, they should work in terms of communities of interest: successfully identify the organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme.

For successful visibility, a Cultural Route should:	Rating
Be present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators, cruise operators, and other professionals	2.60
Work with the media, using the existing resources of the project's partners	3.20
Work in terms of communities of interest: successfully identify the organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme	3.16
Take advantage of high-speed networks and digital tools e.g. Google Translate to strengthen communication with customers, and build trade and media relations	3.00
Use new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation	3.00
Use augmented reality and virtual reality to help the visitor understand the links between attractions and assets, across frontiers	2.90
Make full use of social networks and digital marketing	2.80

Q32. Percentage of digital marketing in the overall marketing activity for the CR

In this question, CR members were asked to state what percentage of their overall marketing activity for their business is digital. According to the majority of the CR members a percentage of between 51% and 70**%** of their overall marketing activity for their business is digital.

Q33. Rating CR's online presence in terms of their performance

CR members rated content reach (3.57) as top when rating their CR's online presence in terms of their performance, according to several criteria (e.g., sales, audience growth, leads, etc.).

Q34. Overall satisfaction with communications in their CR

When CR members were asked to state their overall satisfaction with communications in their CR, the majority of them admitted that they are moderately satisfied (57.4%).

Q35. Additional comments for marketing and communications

The last question of this section gave space for CR members to freely make any additional comments on marketing and communications matters. Their answers all concerned funding needs, as follows:

- *communication support and funding sources needed to improve necessary actions*
- *facilitation of the use of online tools.*

Section 4 – Current ALP brand

Q36. Current ALP brand associations

In the first question in this section, CR members were asked to think about the word "ALP" and write down the first three words which came to their mind in order of ranking. So, according to the CR members, ALP is associated with mountains, the sky and snow (the blue element and the white element), and other common elements and intangible ideas such as dialogue, intercultural exchange, heritage, skiing.

The most common phrases that characterise the ALP brand are:

- *mountains*
- *dialogue*
- *sky and snow.*

The next most common phrases that characterise the ALP brand are:

- *intercultural exchange*
- *common elements*
- *nature*
- *the white of snow.*

The third most common phrases that characterise the ALP brand are:

- *heritage*
- *forest*
- *wind.*

Q37. Describe ALP is a person

In the second question in this section, CR members were asked to think of ALP as a person and describe him/her, by giving five different characteristics that they feel are best suited to describe ALP.

So, according to the CR members, ALP would be an attractive, authentic, curious and tall person, smiling, happy, familiar and cheerful. He/she is also described as well educated, different and open minded with an interesting personality.

In detail, the human traits that characterise ALP, according to the CM members are the following:

1st:	2nd:	3rd:	4th:	5th:
authentic looking	beautiful	simple	proud	good
curious	well-educated	smiling	open-minded	smart
tall, good looking, smiling, happy	different	beautiful	interesting	familiar
			cheerful	open-minded

Q38. ALP personality traits

Following on from the previous question, Q81 requires the CR members to keep thinking of ALP as a person and to describe his/her personality traits. According to their responses the top personality traits of ALP as a person are:

- *natural* (53.67% "extremely descriptive")
- *authentic* (54.67% "extremely descriptive").

The ALP of CR members is a natural and lively person!

Q39. ALP character

Following the previous series of questions, Q82 requires the CR members to keep thinking of ALP as a person and to give their opinion about the four kinds of experiences (as proposed by Brakus et al. 2009) that ALP provides according to them: authentic, intellectual, affective and behavioural aspects.

According to the CR members, ALP is mainly a unique area (3.83)!

Q40. ALP uniqueness

The next question is about what makes the ALP unique and almost all respondents recognise it is mostly its contribution to world heritage (4.20).

Q41. ALP in the eyes of the average tourist in the ALP

According to the CR members the average tourist in the ALP believes that:

- *the culture here is interesting (4.10)*
- *the people here are hospitable (4.10).*

Q42. How strong is the ALP brand currently?

Half of the CR members currently consider the ALP brand to be slightly strong. By "strong" we mean easily recognisable and that generates feelings of confidence for ALP branded tourism products.

Q43. The image of the ALP brand

CR members believe that beautiful landscapes and local customs along with a pleasant destination is what mostly characterise the image of ALP.

CR members had to choose a number from 1 to 7, where 1 = low/poor, 7 = high/good)

Cultural Routes	4.00	Quality accommodation	4.86	Beautiful landscapes	6.43	Culturally interesting	6.43
Good value for money	5.50	Selection of gastronomy	5.20	Variety of fauna and flora	6.10	Interesting local customs	6.10
Safe place	5.80	Quality of service	5.40	Mountains and sun	6.50	Entertainment	5.16
Relaxing place	6.00	Peaceful place	5.57	Place to rest	6.27	Ease of getting around	4.20
Sports facilities	5.50	Pleasant destination	6.20	Arousing destination	6.00	Exciting destination	6.20

Q44. The three main competitors of the ALP brand

In this question, CR members were asked to name the three main competitors of the ALP. These could be other macro-regions or destinations.

In detail, the main ALP competitors according to the CR members are the following:

Most important:

- *Spain*
- *Denmark*
- *Mediterranean Region*
- *Danube*
- *France.*

2nd most important:

- *France*
- *Black Sea*
- *Adriatic Sea*
- *Portugal*
- *Spain.*

3rd most important:

- *Mediterranean Sea*
- *Portugal*
- *Norway*
- *Spain.*

Q45. Where does the ALP brand sit in relation to its three main competitors?

This question about ranking the ALP brand in relation to its three main competitors in terms of the brand's strength (place 1 = the strongest brand, 2 = the 2nd strongest brand, etc.) was answered by four CR members and only one respondent (respondent No. 2) placed ALP as the strongest brand in relation to its competitors. In detail, each respondent had a different view about the strength of the ALP brand in relation to competitors.

Rank	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
1	Spain	ALP	France	Portugal
2	ALP	Danube	Portugal	Sweden
3	Portugal	Black Sea	Baltic Sea Region	Spain
4	France		Norway	ALP

Q46. If the ALP brand and its main competitors mentioned above were persons, which of the following personality traits would describe these persons best? Please check the most appropriate brand box for each personality trait, for example if you think that ALP is the most successful brand then put a tick in the ALP box in this personality trait.

The personality traits where the ALP shares first place with one of its competitors are: natural, authentic and unique (80%).

The table below presents a detailed overview of the answers that were provided.

	ALP		Competitor 1		Competitor 2		Competitor 3		Total
Up-to-date	0%	0	80%	4	60%	3	20%	1	5
Successful	0%	0	80%	2	60%	1	20%	2	5
Trendy	40%	0	40%	2	40%	3	30%	1	5
Cool	0%	0	80%	4	80%	3	20%	1	3
Honest	0%	0	80%	4	60%	3	20%	3	5
Unique	**80%**	0	60.%	2	40%	3	0%	2	5
Family-oriented	0%	0	80%	4	40%	3	20%	1	
Sincere	0%	0	80%	4	60%	3	20%	1	5
Down-to earth	0%	0	80%	4	60%	3	20%	1	4
Refreshing	0%	0	80%	4	60%	2	20%	1	5
Cultural	0%	0	80%	3	60%	3	20%	1	5
Humane	0%	0	40%	4	40%	3	20%	3	4
Authentic	**80%**	0	40%	4	60%	2	0%	2	5
Natural	**80%**	0	40%	3	40%	3	0%	1	5
Comfortable	0%	0	80%	4	40%	2	20%	3	5
Dynamic	0%	0	80%	2	60%	0	20%	1	5
Experiential	0%	0	80%	4	60%	2	20%	2	5
Inquiring	0%	0	80%	4	60%	3	20%	1	5
Lively	0%	0	80%	4	60%	3	20%	1	5

Q47. What is the ALP brand's story according to you?

The last question in this section asks CR members to describe what the ALP brand's story is according to them. People connect with stories. Studies have long proven that by weaving information into a story, people have an easier time recalling that information in the future. Crafting a unique and powerful narrative to tie to a brand is a great way to not only connect and resonate with the audience, but it also enables us to embed our brand into our audience's long-term memory. If a story

is powerful enough, our consumers will empathise and clearly remember the brand. According to the CR members, the ALP is a land of civilisations that connects people and cultures over the centuries.

Section 5 – Creating an ALP brand

Q48. Usefulness of the potential for the creation of the ALP brand

CR members find the potential for the creation of the ALP brand for strengthening the macro-region's competitiveness extremely useful (52.4%).

Q49. The three key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, CR members were asked to give the three key negative aspects (weaknesses) of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the CR members, different stages of development of the countries, lack of promotion/information, difficult access and bad connections, and geographical difficulties are the main key weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

The detail is as follows:

1st weaknesses:

- *no promotion of the products of the CR*
- *poor infrastructure*
- *difficult communication*
- *geographical difficulty*
- *bad connections.*

2nd weaknesses:

- *poor promotion of the farms*
- *poor information*
- *lack of involvement of the municipalities*
- *low quality of services.*

3rd weaknesses:

- *poor dissemination of the information regarding the Cultural Route*
- *weak networking*
- *local products not promoted well*
- *poor accessibility of sites.*

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis of the main aspects/considerations of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity according to the CR members follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mountains Sports Cultural heritage Diversity of landscapes Hospitality The local products Quality of services	Lack of involvement of managers, authorities, municipalities Poor infrastructure Poor communication Insufficient information High cost of living Fragmentation of the tourism offer
Opportunities	**Threats**
Nature Culture and history Mountain tourism Health tourism A strong branding strategy	Lack of co-operation between countries and local authorities Instability Poor infrastructure

Q50. Visibility activities that should have been performed in common

In the last question in this section, CR members were asked to rate visibility activities that should have in their opinion been performed in common (e.g., information, interpretation signboard, uniform information centres or stands, etc.). The top ranked visibility activities that should be performed in common are the following according to CR members:

- *partnership with tour operators and tourist agents (4.33)*
- *unique visual design: logo, graphic design of publications, etc. (4.33).*

Section 6 – Demographic profile of the respondents

Q51. Profile of the respondents

The final question of the CR members' questionnaire asks about the role of the respondent in their Cultural Route. The majority of the respondents to the CR members' questionnaire were managers of the Cultural Route (27.3%) or members (27.3 %), followed by president, director and secretary (equally at 13.6%).
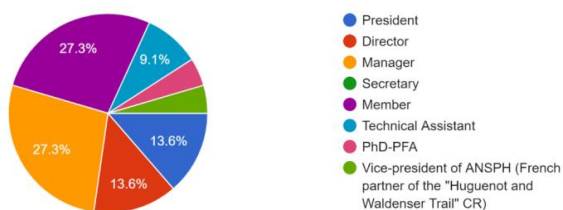
2.2. Culture and tourism stakeholders' questionnaire

The goals of the primary research for the ALP stakeholders were to identify the current participants' awareness regarding the ALP Cultural Routes, their tourism potential and attitudes towards the creation of an ALP brand, forming the following research objectives:

- to assess the current ALP brand and its elements (**Section1);**
- to make proposals for a new ALP brand (**Section 2);**
- to assess the current ALP thematic routes (**Section 3);**
- to investigate the demo-socioeconomic profile of the respondents (**Section 4).**

The results of the survey are presented in sections, according to the above research objectives.

Section 1 – Current ALP brand

Q1. Current ALP brand associations

In the first question in this section, ALP stakeholders were asked to think about the word "ALP" and write down the first three words which came to mind in order of ranking. So, according to the ALP stakeholders, ALP is associated with the mountains, the sky and the snow (the blue element and the white element), and other common elements and intangible ideas such as dialogue, intercultural exchange and heritage.

The findings show the following results:

1st words:

- *mountain*
- *air*
- *sky.*

2nd words:

- *skiing*
- *sport*
- *culture.*

3rd words:

- *beauty*
- *forest*
- *mountains.*

Q2. Describe ALP is a person

In the second question in this section, ALP stakeholders were asked to think of ALP as a person and describe him/her, by giving five different characteristics that they feel best describe ALP.

In detail, the human traits that characterise ALP according to the ALP stakeholders are the following:

1st: 2nd: 3rd: 4th: 5th:

- *kind, nice, natural, attractive, honest;*
- *beautiful, attractive, relaxed, calm, sexy;*
- *sexy, beautiful, kind, nice, good-looking;*

- *mature, intelligent, traditionalist, calm, wise;*
- *kind, nice, beautiful, good-looking, sexy;*
- *handsome, kind, polite, positive, communicative;*
- *beautiful, nice, attractive, nice, mature.*

Q3. ALP personality traits

Following on from the previous question, Q3 requires the ALP stakeholders to keep thinking of ALP as a person and describe its personality traits. According to their responses the top personality traits of ALP as a person are:

- *very successful* (50% *"*Very extremely descriptive")

- *unique* (50.25% "extremely descriptive")

- *sincere* (30.25% "extremely descriptive")

- *cultural* (20.25% "extremely descriptive"*)*

- *natural* (50.25% "extremely descriptive"*)*

- *passionate* (50% "extremely descriptive"*).*

The ALP according to ALP stakeholders is a very successful, unique, sincere, cultural, natural and passionate person!

Q4. ALP character

Following the previous series of questions, Q4 requires the ALP stakeholders to keep thinking of ALP as a person and give their opinion about the four kinds of experiences (as proposed by Brakus et al., 2009) that ALP provides: sensory, intellectual, affective and behavioural aspects.

According to the ALP stakeholders, ALP is mostly an affective (4.50) area!

Q5. ALP uniqueness

The next question is about what makes ALP unique and almost all respondents recognise mostly its monuments/heritage (4.50) and its festivals (4.20).

Q6. ALP in the eyes of the average ALP tourist

According to the ALP stakeholders, the average ALP tourist believes that:

- *they would recommend their friends/relatives to visit ALP because it is a pleasant destination (4.30);*

- *this region has a rich history, monuments (4.50);*

- *the people here are hospitable (4.20);*

- *they enjoy visiting ALP to do sports (4.50);*

The average ALP tourist would recommend to their friends/relatives to visit ALP (4.30).

Q7. How strong is the ALP brand currently?

ALP stakeholders currently consider the ALP brand to be rather strong (66.70%). By strong we mean it is easily recognisable and generates feelings of confidence for ALP branded tourism products.

Q8-Q27. The image of the ALP brand

ALP stakeholders believe that beautiful landscapes, mountains and sun, along with a variety of fauna and flora, and cultural interest are what mostly characterise the image of ALP.

ALP stakeholders had to choose a number from 1 to 7, where 1 = low/poor, 7 = high/good):

Cultural Routes 4.47	Quality accommodation 5.06	Beautiful landscapes 6.73	Culturally interesting 6.19
Good value for money 5.81	Selection of gastronomy 6.31	Variety of fauna and flora 6.07	Interesting local customs 6.13
Safe place 6.13	Quality of service 5.00	Mountains and sun 6.56	Entertainment 5.69
Relaxing place 6.13	Peaceful place 6.06	Place to rest 6.06	Ease of getting around 5.19
Sports facilities 5.06	Pleasant destination 6.13	Arousing destination 5.81	Exciting destination 5.63

Q28. The three main competitors of the ALP brand

ALP stakeholders were asked to name the three main competitors of the ALP. These could be other macro-regions or destinations. According to the ALP stakeholders, Spain, Portugal, the Danube, the Black Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Baltic Sea Nordic regions, the Baltic Sea and the Scandinavian mountains are the main competitors of ALP.

The main ALP competitors according to the ALP stakeholders are the following:

1st most important competitors:

- *Black Sea*
- *Baltic Sea*
- *Spain.*

2nd most important competitors:

- *Scandinavian mountains*
- *Nordic regions*
- *France.*

3rd most important competitors:

- *Portugal*
- *Danube*
- *Spain.*

Q14. The three main competitors of the ALP brand

In this question, CR members were asked to name the three main competitors of the ALP. These could be other macro-regions or destinations.

The main ALP competitors according to the CR members are as follows:

1st competitors:

- *Black Sea*
- *Portugal*
- *Spain.*

2nd competitors:

- *Adriatic Sea*
- *Black Sea*
- *Portugal.*

3rd competitors:

- *Greece*
- *Norway*
- *Ionian Sea.*

Q15. Where does the ALP brand sit in relation to its three main competitors?

This question concerns the ranking of the ALP brand in relation to its three main competitors in terms of brand's strength (place 1 = the strongest brand, 2 = the 2nd strongest brand, etc.) was answered by 15 ALP stakeholders and six respondents place the ALP as the strongest brand in relation to its competitors. Two respondents consider the ALP as the 2nd strongest brand, three stakeholders consider ALP as the 3rd, and two as the 4th strongest brand in relation to its competitors.

Finally, two respondents did not place the ALP among the four strongest brands.

Responses	1 (strongest)	2	3	4 (least strong)
1	ALP	Mediterranean	Spain	France
2	ALP	Adriatic and Ionian Region	Danube Region	Baltic Sea Region
3	Greece	Spain	Baltic Region	ALP
4	ALP	Spain	Denmark	Portugal
5	ALP	Carpathians	Tatra	Pyrenees
6	Spain	Denmark	France	Danube
7	Spain	Portugal	ALP	Danube
8	ALP	Denmark	Portugal	Romania
9	Danube	ALP	Spain	Norway
10	Black Sea	Apennines	ALP	Scandinavia
11	Spain	Balkans	Italy	ALP

12	Portugal	Provence	Alsace	Cyprus
13	ALP	Poland	Sweden	Greece
14	France	ALP	Norway	Denmark
15	Norway	Hungary	ALP	Spain

Section 2 – Creating an ALP brand

Q16. Usefulness of the potential for the creation of the ALP brand

The creation of the ALP brand for strengthening the macro-region's competitiveness is considered extremely useful by the stakeholders (100%).

Q17. The top three positive strengths for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, ALP stakeholders were asked to give the top three positive strengths they see for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP stakeholders, culture and heritage, nature and traditions are the top three positive strengths they see for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

According to the results, the top strengths for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1st strengths:

- *cultural heritage*
- *traditions*
- *nature*
- *pleasant destination*
- *culture*
- *communication*
- *cultural heritage*
- *nice people*
- *awareness of the natural history of the ALP*
- *diversity of landscapes*
- *development of tourist packages.*

The second strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd strengths:

- *climate*
- *services*
- *mountains*
- *competitiveness*
- *culture*
- *increased mountain tourism and health tourism.*

The third strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd strengths:

- *new business opportunities*
- *mountain sports*
- *self-motivation*
- *climate*
- *food destination*
- *new opportunities*
- *interregional cultural programmes.*

Q18. The three key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, ALP stakeholders were asked to give the three key negative aspects (weaknesses) of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP stakeholders, poor communication, poor infrastructure, poor dissemination of information regarding tourism, difficult access, bad connections (borders and transportation connectivity) and low marketing activities (e.g., information, communication, collaboration) are the main key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

In detail, the three key weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1st weaknesses:

- *poor communication*
- *poor infrastructure*
- *poor transport connectivity*
- *lack of understanding between the provinces*
- *accommodation*
- *environmental hazards*
- *different cultures and history.*

The second negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd weaknesses:

- *poor promotion of the destinations of the Alpine Region*
- *too many differences between the countries involved*
- *poor infrastructure*
- *lack of tourism information*
- *mass tourism*
- *different landscapes and climate conditions*
- *low visibility.*

The third negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd weaknesses:

- *poor infrastructure*
- *lack of collaboration*
- *language*
- *poor communication*

- *low co-operation*
- *some villages in this region have been traditionally small, perhaps not equipped for more tourism potential*
- *traffic*
- *fewer opportunities for local differentiation.*

Q19. The three key opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, ALP stakeholders were asked to give the three key opportunities they see for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP stakeholders, diversified tourism and cultural products can enrich the ALP brand although the national differences, nature and gastronomy, and common marketing and branding strategies are considered the top positive opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. As shown from the results, the top opportunities are the following:

1st opportunities:

- *culture*
- *growth of the economy*
- *nature*
- *culture and history*
- *networking*
- *logo*
- *increase in employment*
- *diversified tourism products*
- *creative features*
- *unity*
- *national differences that might lead to dead ends, but also enriching strategies*
- *activities*
- *use of name "Alpine Region".*

The second opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd opportunities:

- *nature*
- *health tourism*
- *mountains*
- *attractive places*
- *gastronomy*
- *benefits for related sectors*
- *cultural places.*

The third opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd opportunities:

- *amazing places, mountains*
- *food*
- *history*
- *style guide*
- *increases in the overall income*

- *environment and food*
- *more visitors to lesser known countries.*

Q20. The three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

Finally, in this question, ALP stakeholders were asked to give the three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP stakeholders, countries' policies, lack of co-operation and the poor involvement of the local and regional authorities are the three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. As shown from the results, the top obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1st obstacles:

- *local authorities*
- *poor infrastructure*
- *countries' relationships*
- *competitiveness*
- *instability in the region*
- *lack of co-operation between countries*
- *lack of funding.*

The second obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd obstacles*:*

- *tourism professionals must be prepared accordingly*
- *different languages of the countries*
- *different culture*
- *authenticity*
- *terrorism*
- *economic difficulties.*

The third obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd obstacles:

- *effective international communication can be difficult*
- *presence of other competitors*
- *over exploitation of the resources*
- *low participation of private sector.*

Q21. Visibility activities that should been performed in common

Stakeholders were asked to rate visibility activities that should in their opinion have been performed in common (e.g., information, interpretation signboards, uniform information centres or stands, etc.). According to the results, the top visibility activity that should be performed in common according to the stakeholders, is the partnership with tour operators and tourist agents (4.53).

The top ranked visibility activities to be performed in common are the following according to ALP stakeholders:

- *partnership with tour operators and tourist agents (4.53)*
- *information, interpretation of the route (4.47).*

Q22. Rate activities in terms of their importance to the CR in terms of marketing

ALP stakeholders were asked to rate several activities in terms of their importance to the CR in terms of marketing. According to the results, the most important marketing activities according to the stakeholders are social media (4.73) and apps, geolocation maps (4.73).

Q23. Evaluation of the new ALP brand's marketing activities in terms of requirements for successful visibility.

In this question the ALP stakeholders were asked to evaluate the new ALP brand's marketing activities in terms of requirements for successful visibility. According to stakeholders, for successful visibility the new ALP brand should use social networks and digital marketing (4.73), followed by being present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators, cruise operators (4.67), and work in terms of communities of interest. It should:

- *successfully identify the organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme(4.67);*
- *be present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators, cruise operators, and other professionals (4.67);*
- *work with the media, using the existing resources of the project's partners (4.53);*
- *work in terms of communities of interest and successfully identify the organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme (4.67);*
- *take advantage of high-speed networks and digital tools, e.g. Google Translate, to strengthen communication with customers and build trade and media relations (4.27);*
- *use new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation (4.33);*
- *use augmented reality and virtual reality to help the visitor understand the links between attractions and assets, across frontiers (4.00);*
- *fully use social networks and digital marketing (4.73).*

Q24. What is the ALP brand's story according to you?

This question in the section asks ALP stakeholders to describe what the ALP brand's story is, according to them. People connect with stories. Studies have long proven that by weaving information into a story, people have an easier time recalling that information in the future. Crafting a unique and powerful narrative to tie to a brand is a great way to not only connect and resonate with the audience, but it also enables us to bury our brand in our audience's long-term memory. If a story is impactful enough, our consumers will empathise and keep it at the top of their mind.

For the stakeholders, ALP brand means something different, as shown below:

- *it is a place where I can take part in sport and feel good;*
- *it is a pleasant destination, rich in history and nature.*

Section 3 – ALP thematic routes

Q25. Opinions about ALP cultural tourism

In this question, participants were asked to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement (on the five-point Likert scale) with some statements about ALP cultural tourism.

As presented, respondents believe that ALP nature is beautiful (4.00), ALP has a unique atmosphere (3.5) and ALP is an exciting region for cultural tourists (4.00).

It is important, however, to notice that all statements received were above the positive mean, reaching more than 3 points out of 5. This indicates that the ALP macro-region is also considered to have an exciting, rich cultural heritage, with beautiful nature and many attractions and routes.

Q26. Have you been involved with any CR of the ALP?

According to the results, the majority of stakeholders (70.71%) have not visited any Cultural Route of the ALP. Only three out of 12 stakeholders have visited one Cultural Route of the ALP.

For those who are not involved with any CR, the questionnaire asked them to continue to Section 4. The answers to questions Q41-44 therefore apply only to the stakeholders that are involved with a CR.

Q27. Name the Cultural Route(s) you have been involved with

Two of them have been involved with the Via Francigena (66.67%) and one has been involved with the Via Habsburg (33.33%).

Q28. The ALP Cultural Routes' degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals

Participants were asked to rate the ALP Cultural Routes in general according to the degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals. According to the stakeholders, the ALP Cultural Routes have made significant progress as regards creating positive attitudes (4.20), being inspirational (4.00) and experiential (3.50), and developing cultural sensibility and exchange (3.50).

Participants consider the ALP Cultural Routes' degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals to be **slightly positive**. This indicates that the ALP Cultural Routes are at a slightly positive level according to the degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals, with the exception of some aspects (skills and competences development, new cultural values, and developing cultural sensibility and exchange) that exceed – but not by much – a moderate assessment.

Q29. How successful are ALP Cultural Routes in general?

According to the stakeholders, ALP Cultural Routes are successful in terms of customer orientation (aspirational, shared stories, experiences that people can relate to) (3.70) and in terms of relations between the partners (transboundary co-operation and collaborative destination marketing) (3.75).

Q30. The top three Cultural Routes associated with the ALP

According to the results, the top three Cultural Routes that stakeholders associate with the ALP are the Via Charlemagne, European Route of Jewish Heritage and Via Francigena.

1st Cultural Route:

- Via Charlemagne

2nd Cultural Route:

- European Route of Jewish Heritage

3rd Cultural Route:

- Via Francigena.

Section 4 – Demographic profile

The final questions in the stakeholders' questionnaire ask about the profile of the respondents.

Q31. Country of origin
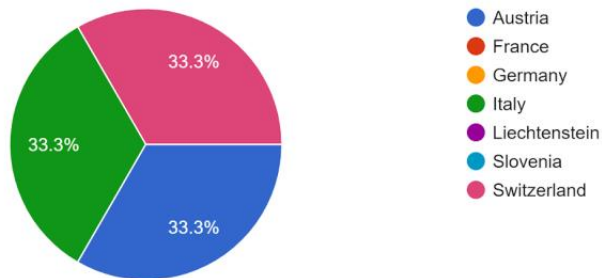
Q32. Gender of the respondents

Two thirds of the stakeholders that participated in this research were male (66.7%) and the other third were female (33.3%).
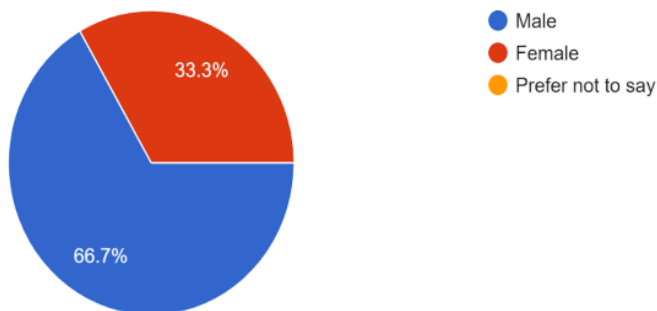
Q33. Age of the respondents

Regarding the age of respondents, the majority of the stakeholders (66.7%) are between 40 and 49 years old.

Q34. Education level

Regarding the education level, the majority (66.7 %) of the stakeholders have a Bachelor's degree.

Q35. Type of organisation/company

- Attraction
- Accommodation
- Catering
- Transport
- Tourism retail/trade
- Public Sector
- Academia
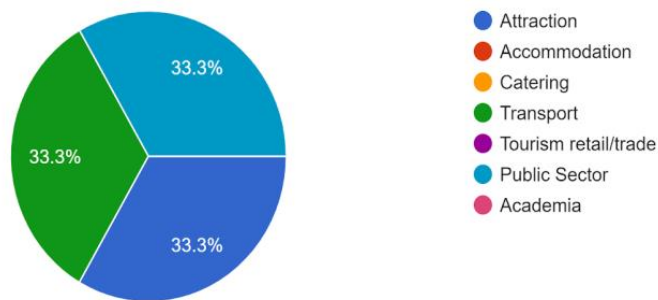
Q36. Position in the organisation

Regarding their position in the organisation, most of the stakeholders work as employees (66.7%).

Q37. Country of operation

The majority of the stakeholders (60.5%) that participated in this research are based in Austria in terms of their work.

A SWOT analysis of the main aspects/considerations concerning the development of the ALP as a tourism brand and identity, according to the stakeholders, follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mountains	Poor transport connectivity
Sports – skiing	Different cultures and history
Development of health tourism	Lack of involvement of managers, authorities, municipalities
Cultural heritage	Poor infrastructure
Diversity of landscapes	Poor communication
Hospitality	Lack of information
Local products	High cost of living
Quality of services	Fragmentation of the tourism offer
Development of entrepreneurship	
Opportunities	**Threats**
Nature	Lack of co-operation between countries and local authorities
Culture and history	Instability
Mountain tourism	Poor infrastructure
Health tourism	
A strong branding strategy	

2.3. ALP visitors' questionnaire

The goals of the primary research for ALP visitors were to identify the current participants' awareness regarding the ALP Cultural Routes, their tourism potential and attitudes towards the creation of an ALP brand, forming the following research objectives:

- to assess the current ALP brand and its elements (**Section 1**)
- to make proposals for a new ALP brand (**Section 2**)
- to assess the current ALP thematic routes (**Section 3**)
- to investigate the demo-socioeconomic profile of the respondents (**Section 4).**

The results of the survey are presented in sections, according to the above research objectives.

Section 1 – Current ALP brand

Q1. Current ALP brand associations

In the first question in this section, ALP visitors were asked to think about the word "ALP" and write down the first three words which came to their mind in order of ranking.

According to the ALP visitors, ALP is associated with the mountains, fresh air, the sky (the blue element, the white element), tourism and skiing.

These are the top 10 responses by the visitors:

1. mountain fresh air

2. mountain peak air

3. mountains, sports, freedom

4. mountains and sun

5. cultural heritage, history, leisure time

6. fresh

7. nature

8. clear

9. oxygen

10. history.

Analytically, the findings show that the first words that come to the mind of visitors are the following:

1st words:

- *mountains*
- *air*
- *fresh*
- *blue and white*
- *history.*

The findings show that the second words that come to the mind of visitors are the following:

2nd words:

- *sky*
- *sun*
- *wind*
- *cultural heritage*.

The findings show that the third words that come to the mind of visitors are the following:

3rd words:

- *alpine*
- *live*
- *power*
- *fresh air.*

Q2. Let's suppose ALP is a person. How would you describe it as a person? For example: beautiful/sexy/good-looking. Please give five different characteristics that you feel are best suited to describe ALP.

In this question, ALP visitors were asked to think of ALP as a person and describe him/her, by giving five different characteristics that they feel are best suited to describe ALP.

According to the ALP visitors, ALP would be a beautiful, good looking and attractive person, who is nice, calm, classic and elegant. He/she is also described as a friendly, sexy and unique person!

The top ten human traits that characterise ALP according to the ALP visitors are the following:

1. beautiful

2. good looking

3. attractive

4. nice

5. calm

6. classic

7. elegant

8. friendly

9. sexy

10. unique.

The findings show that the first characteristics that are best suited to describe ALP according to visitors are the following:

1st characteristics:

- *beautiful*
- *fresh*
- *amazing*
- *attractive*
- *calm*
- *classic, elegant.*

The second characteristics that are best suited to describe ALP according to visitors are the following:

2nd characteristics:

- *good looking*
- *adventurous*
- *natural*
- *nice*
- *relaxed*
- *kind*
- *smart.*

The third characteristics that are best suited to describe ALP according to visitors are the following:

3rd characteristics:

- *passionate*
- *cultural*
- *humour*
- *positive*
- *strong.*

The findings show that the fourth characteristics that are best suited to describe ALP according to visitors are the following:

4th characteristics:

- *unique*
- *calm*
- *happy*
- *clever*
- *intellectual*
- *nice.*

The fifth characteristics that best describe ALP according to visitors are the following:

5th characteristics:

- *friendly*
- *funny*
- *natural*
- *sexy*
- *smiley.*

Q3. ALP personality traits

Following the previous question, Q3 requires the ALP visitors to keep thinking of ALP as a person, and to describe its personality traits. According to their responses the top personality traits of ALP as a person are:

- *natural (*51.06% "extremely descriptive"*)*
- *authentic (*45.83% "extremely descriptive"*)*
- *unique (*42.86% "extremely descriptive"*)*
- *passionate* (42.55% "extremely descriptive"*)*.

The ALP of ALP visitors is a natural, authentic, unique, and passionate person!

Q4. ALP character

Following the previous series of questions, Q4 requires the ALP visitors to keep thinking of ALP as a person and give their opinion between the four kinds of experiences (as proposed by Brakus et al. 2009) that ALP provides according to them: sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual aspects.

According to the ALP visitors, the ALP is a "sensory entertainment (3.75) area" mostly!

Q5. ALP uniqueness

According to the results, the ALP is unique because of its Cultural Routes (4.30), followed by its traditions (4.01) and its entertainment (4.00).

Q6. ALP in the eyes of tourists in the ALP

According to the visitors, the ALP region has a personality (4.25), a rich history (4.10) and they enjoy visiting the ALP (4.00).

Q7. How strong is the ALP brand currently?

ALP visitors currently consider the ALP brand to be rather strong (15%). By strong we mean easily recognisable and that generates feelings of confidence for ALP branded tourism products.

Q8. The image of the ALP brand

ALP visitors believe that mountains and sun (7.00) the variety of fauna and flora (6.80) are what mostly characterise the image of the ALP. ALP visitors had to choose a number between 1 and 7, where 1 = low/poor and 7 = high/good).

Cultural Routes 3.40	Quality accommodation 5.00	Beautiful landscapes 5.63	Culturally interesting 5.20
Good value for money 4.00	Selection of gastronomy 5.00	Variety of fauna and flora 6.80	Interesting local customs 6.10
Safe place 6.00	Quality of service 5.10	Mountains and sun 7.00	Entertainment 4.60
Relaxing place 6.10	Peaceful place 6.20	Place to rest 6.30	Ease of getting around 5.10
Sports facilities 5.20	Pleasant destination 6.10	Arousing destination 5.00	Exciting destination 5.80

Q9. The three main competitors of the ALP brand

In this question, ALP visitors were asked to name the three main competitors of the ALP. These could be other macro-regions or destinations.

According to the ALP visitors, the main competitors of the ALP are the following:

1st competitors:

- *Carpathian mountains*
- *Appalachians*
- *Himalayas*
- *Spain*
- *Black Sea.*

Moreover, the second competitors of ALP brand are the following:

2nd competitors:

- *Balkan mountains*
- *Scandinavian mountains*
- *Apennine mountains*
- *Italy.*

The third competitors of ALP brand are the following:

3rd competitors:

- *French Rivera*
- *Algarve*
- *Black Forest*
- *North America.*

Q10. Where does the ALP brand sit in relation to its three main competitors?

This question of ranking the ALP brand in relation to its three main competitors in terms of the brand's strength (place 1 = the strongest brand, 2 = the 2nd strongest brand, etc.) was answered by 37 ALP visitors and only 2 respondents placed the ALP as the strongest brand in relation to their competitors. In detail, 13 respondents consider the ALP as the 2nd strongest brand, ten consider the ALP as the 3rd and eight as the 4th strongest brand in relation to competitors.

Finally, four of the respondents did not place the ALP in the four strongest brands.

According to the responses of the visitors, the ALP is mostly the second strongest brand in comparison to other competitors.

Section 2 – Creating an ALP brand

Q11. Usefulness of the potential for the creation of the ALP brand

The creation of the ALP brand for strengthening the macro-region's competitiveness is shown to be very useful by 50% of visitors.
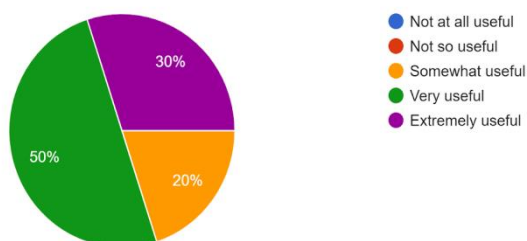
Q12. The top three strengths for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, ALP visitors were asked to give the top three positive attributes (strengths) they see as key aspects for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP visitors, culture and heritage, entertainment and sports/outdoor activities are the top three strengths they see as key aspects for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

The top 12

> *1. culture*
>
> *2. entertainment*
>
> *3. sports*
>
> *4. mountains and sun*
>
> *5. gastronomy/food*
>
> *6. nice places*
>
> *7. clean environment*
>
> *8. summer and winter activities*
>
> *9. fresh air*
>
> *10. attractions/facilities*
>
> *11. nature*
>
> *12. local culture and traditions.*

According to the results, the first strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1ststrengths:

- *culture*
- *traditions*
- *attraction*
- *nice destinations*
- *mountains and sun.*

The second strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd strengths:

- *gastronomy*
- *awareness*
- *local culture and traditions*
- *entertainment*
- *the countries share many cultural similarities.*

Finally, the third strengths of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd strengths:

- *mountains*
- *air*

- *hospitality of people*
- *monuments*
- *farms*
- *sports*
- *natural beauty.*

Q13. The three key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, ALP visitors were asked to give the three key negative aspects (weaknesses) of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP visitors, the differences between countries (e.g. hard to distinguish each country separately, each country has different tourism policy), the lack of local focus and identity (e.g. danger of losing authenticity and local traditions, should keep their diversities and identities), difficult access, bad connections and lack of infrastructure (borders and transportation connectivity), pollution and too much tourism are the main key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

Overall, the top ten weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1. different countries and cultures

2. lack of promotion

3. lack of infrastructure

4. no promotion for SMEs

3. small, separated destinations

4. competition

5. not integrated

6. overpriced

7. lack of synergies/marketing

8. not enough entertainment attractions

9. competition

10. lack of tourism culture.

According to the results, the first weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1st weaknesses:

- *different countries and cultures*
- *competition*
- *lack of infrastructure*
- *lack of promotion of products.*

The second weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd weaknesses:

- *lack of synergies/marketing*

- *prices/cost.*

The third weaknesses of developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd weaknesses:

- *competition*
- *lack of tourism culture*
- *lack of brand strategy for the region, poor management.*

Q14. The three key opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

In this question, ALP visitors were asked to give the three key opportunities they see for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. According to the ALP visitors, shared branding and marketing efforts which can enrich the ALP brand, culture, nature and geography, and growth opportunities (e.g., developing new destinations, more jobs, better economic conditions) are considered the top opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity. Overall, the top 10 opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1. branding and marketing opportunities

2. culture

3. traditions

4. nature and geographical attributes (mountains, lakes, etc.)

5. sports

6. mountains and sun

7. gastronomy

8. new destinations

9. improved identity

10. tourists.

As shown from the results, the top opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity according to the ALP visitors are the following:

1st opportunities:

- *branding and marketing opportunities*
- *culture*
- *sports*
- *nature and geographical attributes (mountains, lakes, etc.)*
- *alternative tourism/health tourism.*

The second opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd opportunities:

- *mountains and sun*
- *gastronomy*

- *nice destinations*
- *creating synergies (collaboration)*
- *countries.*

The third opportunities for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd opportunities:

- *fun*
- *attractive prices*
- *less competition*
- *tourists stay within the ALP region.*

Q15. The three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity

Finally, in this question, ALP visitors were asked to give the three key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

According to the ALP visitors, the language barrier, accessibility, transport, competition from cheaper destinations, difficulty to meet expectations and to educate operators, multilingualism, bad management and marketing are considered the key obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity.

Overall, the top 10 obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1. competition from cheaper destinations

2. multilingualism

3. bad management and marketing

4. different cultures

5. infrastructure

6. poor advertising

7. competitiveness among participating nations

8. poor involvement of the municipalities

9. poor promotion of the products

10. poor involvement of authorities

As shown from the results, the first obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

1st obstacles:

- *competition from cheaper destinations*
- *bad management and marketing*
- *different cultures*
- *multilingualism.*

Moreover, the second obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

2nd obstacles:

- *difficulty in synergy*
- *the poor involvement of authorities, municipalities.*

Finally, the third obstacles or threats towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are the following:

3rd obstacles:

- *poor promotion of local products*
- *transport*
- *weather in winter.*

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis of the main aspects/considerations towards developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity according to the ALP visitors follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mountains and sun	Different countries and cultures
Fresh air	Lack of promotion
Hospitality of people	Cultural tourism
Monuments	SMEs
Farms	Broad range of smaller destinations
Sports	Difficulty in getting between regions
Natural beauty	Lack of integration
Gastronomy	Overpriced
	Lack of synergies/marketing
	Not enough entertainment attractions
	Competition
	Lack of tourism culture
Opportunities	**Threats**
Branding and marketing opportunities	Competition from other destinations
Culture	Prices
Sports	
Nature and geographical attributes (mountains, lakes, etc.)	
Alternative tourism/health tourism	

Q16. Visibility activities that should have been performed in common

ALP visitors were asked to rate visibility activities that should have, in their opinion, been performed in common (e.g., information, interpretation signboards, uniform information centres or stands, etc.). According to the results, the top visibility activities that should have been performed in common according to the visitors are:

- *partnership with tour operators and tourist agents (4.20)*
- *common website (4.10).*

Q17. "What is the ALP brand's story according to you?"

People connect with stories. Studies have long proven that by weaving information into a story, people have an easier time recalling that information in the future. Crafting a unique and powerful narrative to tie to your brand is a great way to not only connect and resonate with your audience, but it also enables you to bury your brand into your audience's long-term memory. If your story is impactful enough, your consumers will empathise and keep you at the top of their mind.

For the visitors, ALP brand means something different, as shown below:

- *a pleasant destination, sports*
- *an interesting mixture of different cultures*
- *tastes, hospitality and mountains*
- *culture and history, museums*
- *holidays.*

Section 3 – ALP thematic routes

Q18. Opinion about ALP cultural tourism

In this question, participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement (5-point Likert scale) with some statements about ALP cultural tourism.

The findings show that ALP nature is perceived as beautiful (4.60) and it has a rich cultural heritage (4.35), according to the visitors.

It is important, however, to notice that all statements received above the positive mean, reaching more than four points out of five, except for the statement "ALP has exciting cultural routes" that received lower appreciation (3.89). This indicates that the ALP is also considered as an exciting macro-region with a rich cultural heritage, beautiful nature and many attractions.

Q19. Have you visited any of the Cultural Routes of the ALP?

According to the results, the majority of visitors (77.78%) have not visited any Cultural Routes of the ALP.

For those who have not visited any Cultural Route, the questionnaire asked them to continue to Section 4. The answers to questions 39-42 therefore apply only to visitors that have visited a Cultural Route.

Q20. Name the Cultural Route(s) you have visited

Only 11 visitors have actually visited one Cultural Route of the ALP, which is a very small ratio. Five of them have visited the Via Charlemagne (54.55%) and one has visited the following five routes:

- *European Mozart Ways*
- *Destination Napoleon*
- *Via Francigena*
- *Via Charlemagne*
- *Impressionisms Routes.*

Q21. ALP Cultural Routes' degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals

Participants were asked to rate the ALP Cultural Routes in general according to the degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals. According to the visitors, ALP Cultural Routes have achieved success as regards developing cultural sensibility and exchange (3.87) and an experiential element (3.73).

However, it is important to notice that findings reveal that, according to mean values, participants consider the ALP Cultural Routes degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals to be **slightly positive**. This indicates that the ALP Cultural Routes are at a slightly positive level according to the degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals, with the exception of some aspects (experiential element and developing cultural sensibility and exchange) that exceed – but not by much- the moderate assessment.

Q22. How successful are the ALP Cultural Routes in general?

According to visitors, the ALP Cultural Routes are successful in terms of sustainability (protect and promote the natural and cultural heritage – 3.67), followed by success in terms of the economy (longer visit stay, attracting a higher-yield visitor, etc.) and in terms of relations between the partners (transboundary co-operation and collaborative destination marketing), both at 3.47.

Q23. The top three Cultural Routes associated with the ALP

According to the results, the top Cultural Routes that visitors associate with the ALP are the European Route of Jewish Heritage, Huguenot and Waldensian Trail, European Route of Historic Thermal Towns, Phoenicians' Route, Via Francigena and Viking Routes.

1st Cultural Route:

- *European Route of Jewish Heritage*

2nd Cultural Route:

- *Huguenot and Waldensian trail*

3rd Cultural Route:

In third place the following routes received one vote:

- *European Route of Historic Thermal Towns*
- *Phoenicians' Route*
- *Via Francigena*
- *Viking Routes.*

Section 4 – Demographic profile

The final questions of the stakeholder's questionnaire ask about the profile of the respondents.

Q24. Country of origin

In this question, the highest proportion of the visitors are from Austria (17.6%) and Italy (17.6 %), with 11.8 % from Romania, 11.8 % from Slovenia, 11,8 % from France and 5.9 % from Liechtenstein.

- Austria
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Liechtenstein
- Slovenia
- Switzerland
- Romania

1/2
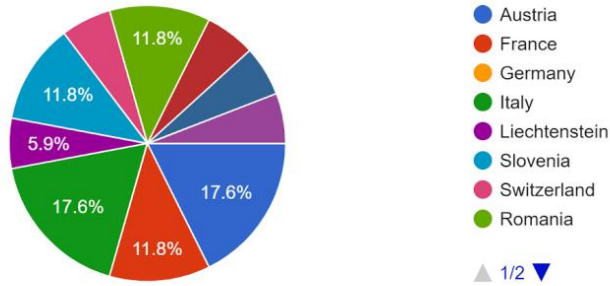
Q25. Gender of the respondents

Regarding the gender of respondents, they were equally divided between male and female.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Q26. Age of the respondents

- 15- 18 years old
- 19-29 years old
- 30-39 years old
- 40-49 years old
- 50-59 years old
- 60 years old +
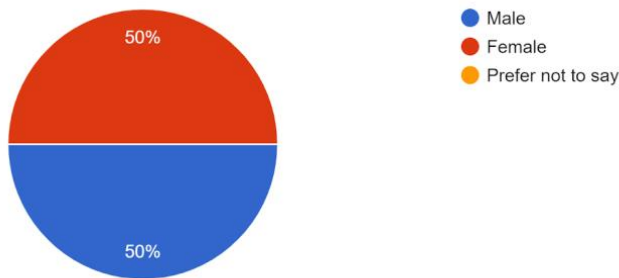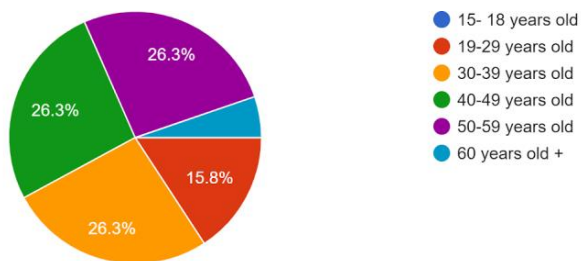
Q27. Education level

Regarding the education level, a significant proportion of the visitors (42.1%) have a Master's degree.

- High School/College Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Phd
- Prefer not to say
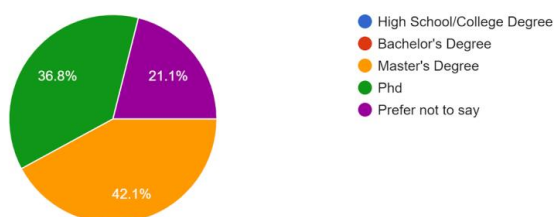
PART 2 - BRAND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALPINE REGION

1. INTRODUCTION

This part of the report has the following subsections:

1. Current perception of the ALP Brand – an interpretation of data gathered from the brand audit surveys of the ALP Cultural Routes.

2. Brand strategy development – the scientific methodologies from marketing and branding, the ROUTES4U feasibility study on the Alpine Region (Council of Europe and European Commission 2019) and the guidelines of CERTESS "European Cultural Routes – A practical guide" (Häfele 2013), are used to capture the personality of the brand and define a draft identity.

3. Brand implementation recommendations – final recommendations are made relating to the brand strategy development and moving to the implementation phase of this project.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT ALP BRAND

2.1. ALP brand creation and implementation

In this study the current brand position related to the tourism aspect of the Alpine macro-region was identified as well as future opportunities for developing a branding communication strategy to ensure a better global market position.

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Cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible – tells the story of a region, a country or a whole continent, creating identity for each individual.

The Cultural Routes are an important part of a European tourism strategy, especially as regards cultural tourism. To realise this goal, the European Commission has already initiated several activities.

Brand represents the connection that is made between a buyer and a brand. A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that a buyer or user perceives relevant, unique, sustainable added value which matches their needs most closely. Geographic locations, like products and people, can also be branded. In this case, the power of branding is in making people aware of the location and then linking desirable associations. Increasing mobility of both people and business and growth in the tourism industry have contributed to the rise of place marketing.

It is in the context of tourism that a geographic location is a destination brand. A destination brand is defined as a name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that identifies the destination. Furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. The ALP brand creation and implementation consists of two parts.

- Firstly there needs to be a brand audit of the ALP brand. Any destination branding process starts by assessing what the macro-region's assets are and focuses on how best to present these to each customer group or market segment.
- Secondly is the development of an ALP brand strategy, based on the results of the audit phase. The analysis aims to show the essence of the ALP brand.

2.2. Branding objectives

The brand objectives are the goals of a brand. A brand is a competitive identity: it makes a destination or product distinctive and different. A brand exists in the eyes of the beholder: it is a dynamic relationship between the product and how it is perceived by potential visitors. It is a fundamental building block from which all marketing communications and behaviour should flow.

The American Marketing Association defines a brand quite legalistically and statically as a "name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association 2020). John Spacey (2017) and the *Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding* (UNWTO/ETC 2009) define the objectives of branding as:

- to establish an identity for a brand in the market, measured with surveys that discover how a brand is viewed by the target market;
- to differentiate it from its competitors;
- to increase memorability of the destination over time amongst potential visitors;
- to create a positive image.

In accordance with UNWTO/ETC's *Handbook on Marketing Transnational Tourism Themes and Routes* (2017), the brand should respect the following principles:

- personality – how you wish to be perceived by your audience;
- clear formulation of the brand essence – the true character of the brand and what it represents, for whom and how;
- agreement by all key stakeholders on the values and key concepts;
- development of a brand strategy, including how the brand will be expressed within the partnership and to the outside world;
- progressive rollout of the brand, through documents, meetings and other events.

The aim of the new ALP brand strategy is to: develop a new "umbrella" brand for ALP tourism and especially cultural tourism, merging the identity of the Alpine Region on the one hand and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe on the other in order to increase the visibility of the two.

The branding objectives for the ALP are:

1. to improve the competitiveness of the ALP along with the Cultural Routes in the European and global tourism marketplace;

2. to establish a co-operation between the ALP and the Cultural Routes on tourism promotion;

3. to co-ordinate the marketing of both the ALP and the Cultural Routes, to make it more effective and increase its outreach.

Key concepts

A. Brand notion – levels of significance:

- Level 1 of significance – identifiers
- Level 2 of significance – descriptors
- Level 3 of significance – differentiators.

B. Integration of the territorial brand into a development strategy.

A. Brand notion – Levels of significance

In the following, we will theoretically analyse the territorial brand (even if most of those discussed apply to the brand of a manufacturer, product or nation).

Level 1 of significance – identifiers

In a primary sense, designating a brand identifier usually materialised in the form of a name (required) and a two-dimensional graphic symbol (optional). Over time, repeated association (intentional or not) and other elements can achieve the status of identifier, thus becoming part of the ALP brand.

Level 2 of significance – descriptors

On a higher level, the brand serves as a descriptor, the content of which consists of intangible aspects. The brand thus complements the list of functional, tangible and objective attributes of the territory. Among these intangible aspects, we mainly find:

- a set of values;
- a distinct personality.

Conceptualisation of values and personality can be done by transferring them from the population living in that territory (Alpine Region) or from its defining physical-geographical elements. In this sense, the territory acquires certain intangible characteristics, evaluated positive, neutral or negative, according to the following conceptual scheme (Figure 4):
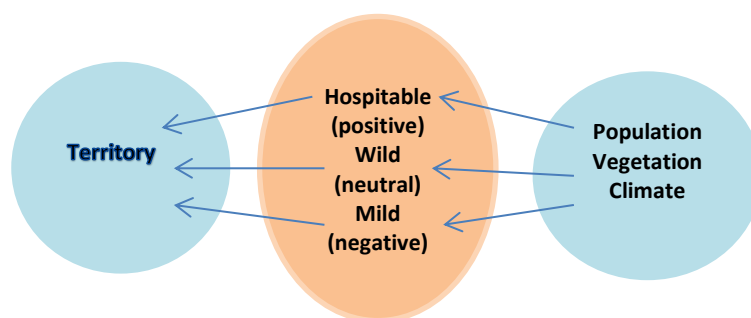

Figure 4. Brand as a descriptor

While functional features can be easily demonstrated using tangible figures and evidence (for example, fast access to information can be explained by the average internet connection speed), for intangible descriptors of the brand, proof can only be provided through a story or stories.

When the brand has several descriptors associated, it is essential that there is consistency between them. Consistency is ensured through a unitary concept or unitary brand idea that functions as a common denominator, linking all the strands of the stories to an easy-to-understand idea (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The brand promise

The potential campaign "Alpine Region – Explore the Alpine Region" offers an example of structuring all brand components in an easy to understand image. We can see how the central idea (concept), personality and brand values support its positioning.

On the other hand, the campaign that defines the Alpine Region by its "simply surprising" descriptor, although it was promoted in various mediums at spots presenting reference points, did not actually give examples through impact stories of how these attractions are "surprising" or what kind of surprises await the tourist at the destination. This has led to the transformation of a positive descriptor into a negative one and any dissatisfaction can be summarised as follows: What to do? That's the Alpine macro-region, always surprising.

The brand equates to a promise to be honoured at every point of contact with the consumer. For example, in an area that emphasises tradition, tourists expect to see the traditional in all its forms, from the architecture of the rural area to the normal clothing of the people in the street, from restaurant food to the music broadcast in the coach and so on. Any interference by the modern or kitsch will affect not only the perception of the brand, but also satisfaction with the destination.

Finally, the descriptors are important because they not only describe the territories, but also their "consumers": for them, choosing and associating with a well-defined territorial brand affirms

personal preferences in the public space. As such, the brand offers consumers the chance to symbolically claim a lifestyle, a distinct place in the public space and a position on the social scale.

In this sense, the other side of the coin is true – at the same time as acting as differentiators, the brands also have an integrative action. Thus, the brand allows not only the manifestation of distinct preferences, but also an external demonstration of personal affiliation, allowing the consumer to express her/his attachment to certain reference groups with which she/he wishes to be identified. That is why some authors include components and the (stereo)typical user in the brand – with which the user of the object will inevitably be associated.

Level 3 of significance – differentiators

On this level, the brand is a differentiator in the sense that it allows differentiation between territories with similar functional attributes. If positive, this differentiation is based on competitive advantages. On the other hand, differentiators may also incorporate negative aspects that characterise the territory.

Ideally, all identifiers and descriptors are also territorial differentiators. In reality, however, in the category of differentiators we will find a subset of elements from the first two categories. Some territories consciously promote the idea of a single differentiator, to ensure the easiest retention and a clearer positioning of the territory.

B. Integration of the territorial brand into a development strategy

The territorial branding policy must be directly related to the objectives of the development strategy. In this respect, the brand is an instrument through which the territory relates to six major categories of potential consumers:

- visitors
- purchasers (those who buy products made in the territory)
- residents
- those who work in the territory, but do not live there
- investors from outside the territory
- local economic agents.

Each of these segments can also be divided according to two other criteria:

- actual vs. potential: a strategy needs to have specific measures targeting both existing local economic agents (to be supported in the development of their work) and potential local investors (who must be stimulated to set up new companies);
- desirable vs. undesirable: the above-mentioned segments are not homogeneous and sub-segments can be identified in their structure, some of which are attractive to the territory concerned and others not.

It may seem unreasonable or even unethical to identify undesirable sub-segments, especially in the context where public authorities often find it difficult to find job-creating investors or tourists to bring capital into poor rural areas. However, if we look at the issue in detail, it is obvious that not every investor is welcome. For example, civic activists will not easily accept environmentally friendly factories or supermarkets that put small local trading units at risk.

2.3. Current perception of the ALP brand

Based on the comparison between the key players of the Alpine macro-region (CR members, stakeholders and visitors), there are some common elements regarding their perception about the ALP brand.

All the participants in the research were asked to think about the word "ALP" and write down the first three words which came to their mind in order of ranking.

ALP is associated primarily with the mountains, fresh air, the sky and secondarily with nature, culture, history and tourism (see Figure 6).
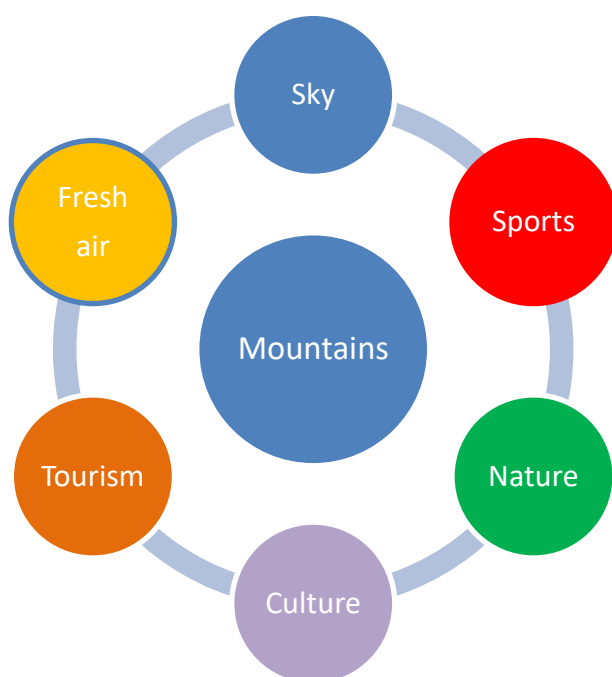
Figure 6. Top three words that come to mind

The parties were asked to think of the ALP as a person and describe him/her, by giving five different characteristics that they feel are best suited to describe the ALP.

The members, stakeholders and visitors agreed on the following characteristics (see Figure 7):

- *nice*
- *interesting*
- *elegant*
- *cultural*
- *good-looking*
- *sexy*
- *unique/authentic.*
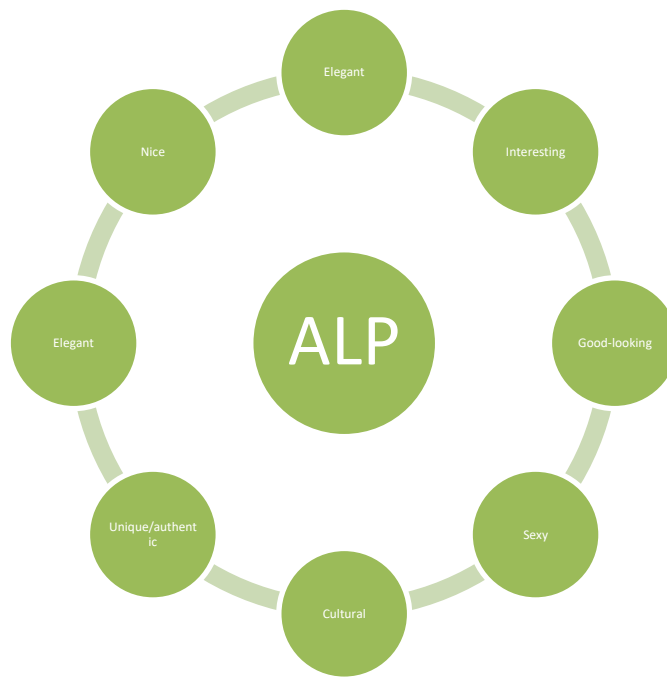
Figure 7. Top five different characteristics of the ALP

The participants agreed on the top personality traits of the ALP as a person, which are (see Figure 8):

- *natural*
- *authentic*
- *unique.*

Figure 8. Top personality traits of ALP

In terms of the character of ALP, ALP is characterised by all parties as a natural area.

Regarding ALP's uniqueness, its monuments, the mountains and its contribution to world heritage are what make it unique and different.

According to all participants, the average tourist in the ALP believes that the ALP region has a rich history and pleasant destinations and they enjoy visiting the ALP.

In terms of the strength of the ALP brand currently, it is shown to be quite strong by all participants in the research. What does "strong" mean? By strong we mean easily recognisable and which generates feelings of confidence for ALP-branded tourism products.

According to the image of the ALP, all parties agreed on the idea that ALP offers beautiful landscapes and opportunities for sports.

All participants described what the ALP brand story is according to them: ALP is a beautiful and pleasant destination with historical and cultural traditions where you can feel amazing and take part in sports.

Also, importance is given to the similarities – the similar customs, the scenery that looks the same and their connection through the mountain routes.

ALP is a pleasant destination that connects people, tourists and cultures.

The research has shown clearly that the current perception of the ALP Cultural Routes is focused on two main elements:

- the mixture of countries with both common and diverse cultures, customs and people;
- the connections through the mountains, fresh air and sky (elements of the nature), sports and culture.

The above results present a clear indication of the perceived characteristics of the ALP Cultural Routes amongst the participants of the online survey. They provide a baseline for considering how to develop the identity of the ALP brand.

2.4. Current perception of the ALP Cultural Routes brand

From the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative, amongst the respondents, one of the strongest assets of the ALP is the fact that the natural landscapes of the ALP are a pleasant destination, have a rich cultural heritage and represent a destination where the tourists can take part in sports, both skiing and other sports, and can feel good.

All participants were asked to rate the ALP Cultural Routes in general according to the degree of achievement of theme interpretation goals. ALP Cultural Routes have achieved success as regards developing sports sensibility, culture and exchange.

According to the results, the top three Cultural Routes that all participants associate with the ALP are the:

- *Via Francigena*
- *Via Habsburg*
- *European Route of Jewish Heritage.*

The results of all of the above indicate that while the current perception of the ALP Cultural Routes is low there is a high interest and willingness to make greater use of the ALP Cultural Routes.

Moreover, the assessment of the Cultural Routes by the CR members led to the following outcomes:

The first phrases that characterise an ALP visitor are the following:

- *nice person*
- *likes the mountains and sports*
- *likes nature*
- *looking for originality and unusual destinations*
- *likes European culture*
- *likes mountains and gastronomy*
- *curious*
- *highly educated.*

Findings show that the main assets of the Cultural Routes are culture, traditions, festivals, gastronomy (3.86) and their ecology, landscape and natural assets (3.86). According to the CR members, ALP visitors look for authenticity and experiences, culture, nature and traditions of the Alpine Region.

Cultural values and safety of the surroundings both have a score of 4.10. According to the results, experience value (4.14) ranked higher than these. The score for the type of accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels, camps, rural traditional accommodation) is 3.80, and tourist surroundings (active tourism destinations in the vicinity) score 4.00. The gastronomy of ALP destinations is a strong point for Cultural Route travellers.

According to their responses the top personality traits of the ALP as a person are:

- *natural (53.67% "extremely descriptive")*
- *lively (54.67 "extremely descriptive".)*

According to CR members, the ALP is a natural and lively person!

2.5. Existing ALP Cultural Routes brand positioning amongst competitors

According to the results received, the participants have proposed the same main competitors of ALP, which are the following (see Figure 9):

- *Spain*
- *Portugal*
- *Balkans*
- *Apennines*
- *Denmark*

Figure 9. Main competitors of the ALP

In terms of the position that the ALP has as regards the competitors, responders consider the ALP as the 2nd and the 3rd strongest brand.

The personality traits with which the ALP outperforms its competitors, according to all participants, are the following (Figure 10):

- *nice*
- *kind*
- *beautiful*
- *good looking*
- *attractive*
- *smart*
- *calm*
- *natural.*
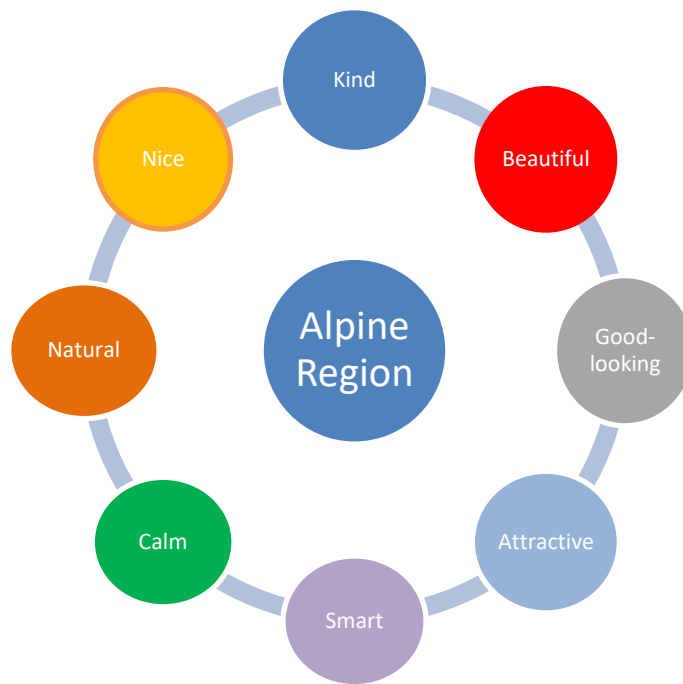
Figure 10. Personality traits with which the ALP outperforms competitors

2.6. The ALP brand – understanding the differences, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

The SWOT analysis was implemented for the three different participant categories in the research:

SWOT of CR members

After receiving the responses of the CR members (see Table 1 below), the strengths of the ALP are: mountains, sports, cultural heritage, diversity of landscapes, hospitality of people, the local products and quality of services. In terms of the opportunities observed by the CR members, the ALP offers many, such as the protection of nature, culture and history, and mountain- and health tourism. The weaknesses of the ALP are: lack of involvement of managers, authorities and municipalities, poor infrastructure, poor communication, insufficient information, high cost of living and fragmentation of the tourism offer.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mountains Sports Cultural heritage Diversity of landscapes Hospitality The local products Quality of services	Lack of involvement of managers, authorities and municipalities Poor infrastructure Poor communication Insufficient information High cost of living Fragmentation of the tourism offer
Opportunities	**Threats**
Nature Culture and history Mountain tourism Health tourism A strong branding strategy	Lack of co-operation between countries and local authorities Instability Poor infrastructure

Table 1. SWOT of CR members

SWOT of stakeholders

In Table 2, the strengths of the ALP include: mountain sports/skiing, development of health tourism, cultural heritage, diversity of landscapes, hospitality, local products, quality of services and development of entrepreneurship.

The weaknesses of the ALP are: poor transport connectivity, different cultures and history, lack of involvement of managers, authorities and municipalities, poor infrastructure, poor communication, insufficient information and high cost of living.

The opportunities for the ALP are: nature, culture and history, mountain tourism, health tourism and the development of a strong branding strategy.

The threats to the ALP are: lack of co-operation between countries and local authorities, instability and poor infrastructure.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mountains	Poor transport connectivity
Sports – skiing	Different cultures and history
Development of health tourism	Lack of involvement of managers, authorities and municipalities
Cultural heritage	
Diversity of landscapes	Poor infrastructure
Hospitality	Poor communication
Local products	Lack of information
Quality of services	High cost of living
Development of entrepreneurship	Fragmentation of the tourism offer
Opportunities	**Threats**
Nature	Lack of co-operation between countries and local authorities
Culture and history	
Mountain tourism	Instability
Health tourism	Poor infrastructure
A strong branding strategy	

Table 2. SWOT of stakeholders

SWOT of visitors

In Table 3, according to the responses of the visitors, the strengths of the ALP are: mountains and sun, fresh air, hospitality of people, monuments, farms, mountain sports, culture, natural beauty and gastronomy.

The weaknesses of the ALP are: different countries and cultures, the lack of promotion, cultural tourism, the SMEs, the broad range of smaller destinations, difficulty in getting between regions, overpriced, lack of synergies/marketing, not enough entertainment attractions, competition and lack of tourism culture.

In terms of the opportunities observed by the visitors, the ALP offers many, such as branding and marketing opportunities, culture, sports, nature and geographical attributes (mountains, lakes, etc.), and alternative tourism/health tourism.

As threats to the ALP, visitors identified the competition from other destinations and the prices.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mountains and sun	Different countries and cultures
Fresh air	Lack of promotion
Hospitality of people	Cultural tourism
Monuments	SMEs
Farms	Broad range of smaller destinations
Sports	Difficulty in getting between regions
Natural beauty	Lack of integration
Gastronomy	Overpriced
	Lack of synergies/marketing
	Not enough entertainment attractions
	Competition
	Lack of tourism culture
Opportunities	**Threats**
Branding and marketing opportunities	Competition from other destinations
Culture	Prices
Sports	Competitors of tourism companies
Nature and geographical attributes (mountains, lakes, etc.)	
Alternative tourism/health tourism	

Table 3. SWOT of visitors

2.7. Common elements from SWOT analyses

The SWOT compilation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the ALP from the questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and national SWOT analyses indicates the advantages but also certain difficulties and limitations of the ALP brand.

The main strengths of the ALP are:

- *culture*
- *mountains and sun*
- *nature*
- *sports*

- *gastronomy/food*
- *local culture and traditions*
- *pleasant destinations.*

The top three positive strengths that all participants see as key aspects for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are mountain sports, culture and heritage and marketing actions.

Ivrea, Italy. ©Pixabay.

The top positive strengths for developing the ALP as a tourism brand and identity are considered to be common branding and marketing efforts, and culture and growth opportunities. Regarding the visibility activities that need to be undertaken, all participants agree on starting a partnership with tour operators and tourist agents and creating a unique visual design (logo, graphic design of publications, etc., website, information, content).

The top three weaknesses all participants see are the different countries and cultures, the lack of promotion and the lack of tourism culture.

The top three opportunities are: branding and marketing opportunities, culture and sports.

The top three threats are: competition from other destinations, the prices, the competitors of tourism companies.

3. CREATING AN ALP BRAND – BRAND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Elements of Branding

The following are the elements of branding that you need to create in order to cultivate how your business is perceived by customers:

Mission statement and brand values

Your mission statement and brand values are the foundation for your branding. Think of your mission as the brains of the operation – a short and succinct statement that defines the present state and purpose of your organisation. Meanwhile, your company's vision is its heart, providing an inspirational and motivational snapshot of what you seek to achieve in the long term.

Brand guidelines

With the mission and vision statement set as the pillars of your organisation, your brand strategy comes to encompass everything in between. This will take the form of brand guidelines. These guidelines are contained in a tangible document that will reflect and support your business goals, differentiate you from competitors, resonate with customers, provide a template for decision-making and precipitate ideas for future marketing campaigns. It will also include all the stylistic elements of your branding, including your colour palette, fonts and an outline of your brand voice.

Logo

Your logo is the face of your company and designing your logo is arguably the single most important branding you will do for your business. During the design process, think about what you are as a brand and how you want to be perceived by your customers. Use that to drive your design strategy.

Additional assets

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to branding. Depending on your business and industry, you might need additional assets like business cards, product packaging or event flyers. Assess your business and your unique needs, and then develop additional branding assets accordingly.

In providing recommendations for the creation of an ALP tourism brand, the data collected by the study was utilised in combination with tourism marketing studies and UNWTO guidelines contained in the *Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding*.

According to all received answers from participants, the creation of the ALP brand for strengthening macro-regional competitiveness has proven extremely useful. The mean value reached 7.48 out of 10, indicating that all three groups of participants' opinions are favourable to the creation of the ALP brand.

A successful brand creation process will require further interaction with both CR members, tourism specialists and marketing professionals, as well as with actual and potential visitors.

3.2. Key factors to be considered in ALP brand development

A brand is a set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose your product over another – Seth Godin[13].

In the Council of Europe handbook on the management of Cultural Routes (Council of Europe 2015) and in the article is by "Prachi Juneja"[14] the key factors or pillars that are common for the creation of a successful brand were highlighted.

Brand values

The brands have their own value. The market leadership and profitability of a certain business is realised through the brand value. Growing the brand power and using the brand value as a driver to increase profitability as well as the market calls for expert management of branding. Maintaining the leadership of a brand calls for strategic planning in the long-term perspective. The brand values are the strengths and qualities of aspects of the brand. Brand values are closely tied to the concept of authenticity. The values become the foundation of communications internally and to the outside world. The values inform your product strategy and drive your service standards. They are at the core of everything that you do. It is worth being quite explicit as to what they are:

- Values lead to behaviours.
- Behaviours drive culture.
- Culture influences communications, service and product.

The defined brand values of the ALP brand are compatible with the destinations and attractions which wish to engage with the ALP brand.

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[13] https://seths.blog/2009/12/define-brand/
[14] https://www.managementstudyguide.com/what-is-brand.htm

Uniqueness and differentiation

Uniqueness is the term we use in our brand equity management approach. It is one of the best terms to be used in business because it is absolute. Differentiation implies that a business is different from a few other businesses, but does not enforce necessary rigour to verify this. In developing a successful ALP brand it will be crucial to create an identity that builds on the overall concept of the ALP Cultural Routes as the ultimate original place and present the concept of a new and unique experience.

Kärnten, Austria. ©Unsplash.

3.3. ALP brand strategy development – the ALP Brand Pyramid

Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004) introduced the five-level Brand Personality and the Benefit Pyramid as practical tools for defining the core values of a brand and understanding the relationship between the destination and the visitors.

The following list provides a simple overview of the brand's main elements.The Brand Pyramid can be defined as a framework or tool that answers the fundamental questions related to the brand and its operations in the market. The key multilayered elements requiring concise definition are:

Attributes: These refer to why, for example, a product or service is designed in a particular way. What does it do? Basically, it talks about the unique selling propositions and distinguishing characteristics of the brand and its offerings of products and services which give it a competitive advantage in the market. Another way of putting it might be: What are the tangible, real, objective, measurable characteristics of a destination?

Functional benefits: How is the customer going to the use the product? What benefits for the tourist result from the destination's features?

Emotional benefits: Every brand and product weaves a story in the minds of the customers creating an emotional connection with the brand that makes the customer loyal towards it, and this component refers to this factor. What emotional benefits do tourists receive by visiting the destination? How does the tourist feel?

Brand personality: This can be measured through three different approaches, two of them derived from Jennifer Aaker's (1997) scale, and the third derived from Geuens, Weijters and De Wulf's (2009) scale. Aaker's instrument has been extensively used in the brand context (e.g., Batra, Lenk and Wedel 2010) and validated in the human personality context (Aaker J. 1999). The same key items from Aaker's scale included the five items that correspond to Aaker's highest level dimensions: "sincere", "exciting", "competent", "sophisticated" and "rugged". The key traits and characteristics of the destination should be communicated by the brand. It is vital for the brand to get the human characteristics and personification so that it is able to create an emotional and psychological connection with the clients that will result in their long-lasting loyalty.

Brand values: What values does the destination instil?

Brand essence: What is the essential nature and character of the destination?

Based on the research outputs received from the first phase, the following ALP Brand Pyramid was developed:

Attributes: the tangible, real, objective, measurable characteristics. The key points which can be considered the main attributes of the ALP are:

- mountains, fresh air, sky, nature, culture, snow, marketing actions.

Rational attributes: the main tourism assets of the ALP brand, that is, what visitors want to see and do. The key points which can be considered rational attributes are:

- nature, cultural heritage, mountain and health tourism, traditions, gastronomy.

Emotional benefits: after assessing the rational attributes, the next step is to explore the "emotional take out", that is, what emotional reactions a visitor feels. These are:

- affective, pleasant destination, enjoyable to visit, refreshing, patient, beautiful, opportunities for sport.

Brand personality: this focuses on what is unique about the ALP brand compared to other competing brands. The components of the brand are:

- natural, kind, good-looking, unique, sexy, nice, smart.

Brand values: regarding the ALP destination the three brand values that will guide and appear in all marketing and other activities within the destination are:

- authentic (another word that could be used is "original"), natural (fresh), unique (special).

Brand essence: the brand essence together with brand values make up the "daily news and analysis" (DNA) of the ALP brand. Brand essence replies to the question: "What is the essential nature and character of the destination?"

In accordance with the three main brand values analysed above:

- **Authentic:** this brand value represents the significance of the Alpine Region to the world. Other words that could be used are: original, real, true, pure, absolute.
- **Natural**: this brand value represents the nature of all beautiful places. Other words that could be used are: fresh, virgin, human, clean.
- **Unique**: this brand value represents the emotional benefits that all visitors experience (the ALP brand induces positive feelings and emotions/sentiments). Other words that could be used are: special, exceptional, essential, original.

The key points which can be considered the brand essence of ALP:

- The Alpine Region is here and now!
- Explore the Alpine Region more!
- Experience the different elements of nature, culture and experiential emotions that uniquely connect the world.

Figure 11. ALP Brand Pyramid
Adapted from the World Tourism Organization's Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009, p. 45

3.4. Discussion on the proposed brand development

From all the surveys comes the notion of the four elements of nature, culture and positive emotions (aesthetic or affective), as most responses about the ALP image were about:

- the four elements of nature (the original elements of the universe and life):
- *earth (beautiful landscapes and attractions/heritage, mountains)*
- *water (lakes)*
- *air (sky)*
- *fire (friendly people)*
- all combined by culture and positive (aesthetic) experiences and emotions.

The conclusion is: The Alpine Region is here and now! Explore it further!

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATING THE BRAND INTO MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Logarska Dolina, Slovenia. ©Unsplash.

The aim of the new ALP brand strategy is to develop a new "umbrella" brand for ALP tourism and especially cultural tourism, merging the identity of the Alpine Region on the one hand and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe on the other in order to increase the visibility of the two.

The ALP stands for these three fundamental brand values:

- **authentic** (original)**:** this brand value represents the significance of the Alpine Region to the world. Other words that could be used are: original, real, true, pure, absolute.
- **natural** (fresh): this brand value represents the nature of all beautiful places. Other words that could be used are: virgin, human, fresh, clean.
- **unique** (special): this brand value represents the emotional sentiments of all visitors. Other words that could be used are: special, exceptional, essential, original.

The Brand Assets Template (Table 4) is a tool to help Cultural Routes members and other stakeholders to apply the brand values to their destinations, products and experiences.

ALP products and experiences	ALP brand values		
	Authentic	**Natural**	**Unique**
Products			
Experiences			

Table 4. The ALP Brand Assets Template

5. CONCLUSION

The Alpine Region is attractive. For a long time, the Alpine Region has been attracting international recognition, thanks to unique achievements such as beautiful landscapes and attractions/heritage, mountains, lakes, fresh air and friendly people, all linked by culture, positive experiences and emotions.

It is important that the ALP brand develops with stakeholder ownership and the support of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Tegernsee, Bavaria, Germany. ©Pixabay.

PART 3 - BRAND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALPINE REGION

1. ALP BRAND HANDBOOK

A number of objectives were set in the ALP brand handbook. It should:

- be practical, user-friendly and accessible;
- inspire the implementation or improvement of existing methods and uses of effective destination branding by destination managers;
- present objectives, approaches, techniques and data requirements of relevance for destination branding;
- empower staff with superior knowledge to enable them to initiate and oversee a successful destination branding strategy.

A brand is a competitive identity. It makes a destination or product distinctive and different.

It is important to have balanced guidelines. The guidelines that are presented in your brand handbook must be reflected by the book itself. The book should be visually attractive and not cluttered.

The brand handbook should be a clear toolkit and set of guidelines that explains to all stakeholders how to use the ALP brand in their marketing communications. The brand handbook/toolkit should contain clear guidelines on two main subjects:

1. **Brand personality guidelines** – Brand personality is used to bring the brand strategy to life, to put it into practice. Brand personality indicates the kind of relationship a customer has with the brand. It is a means by which a customer communicates his/her own identity. The specifications on how to integrate the ALP brand values into the destination or product marketing communications are very important.

2. **Technical design guidelines** – These specifications and design instructions are very important. They detail how to use the logo (colour, placement, variations, size and proportions, examples of logo misuse), visual imagery and colour palette (primary brand colours as well as secondary colours) in all materials, photography and typography (corporate fonts for headlines and body texts).

The following paragraphs give more detail on these two main subjects in the ALP brand handbook/toolkit.

2. BRAND PERSONALITY GUIDELINES

2.1. ALP brand story

The aim of the new ALP brand strategy is to develop a new "umbrella" brand for ALP tourism and especially cultural tourism, merging the identity of the Alpine Region on the one hand and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe on the other in order to increase the visibility of the two.

The strategy uses the four elements of nature. These are the original elements of the universe and life: earth (beautiful landscapes and attractions/heritage, mountains), water (lakes), air (sky) and fire (friendly people.)

2.2. ALP brand values and personality

The values and personality of the ALP have been summarized in the Brand pyramid (refer to page 97), which is part of the process of developing a marketing strategy.

These brand values (Figure 12) which are the strategic message of the ALP should appear in all marketing communications (UNWTO/ETC 2009).

ALP brand values

Authentic

Natural

Unique

Four elements of nature: water (lakes and glaciers), air (sky), earth (landscape and heritage), fire (friendliness).
Other words that could be used are: original, real, true, pure, absolute

ALP areas with simultaneously common and diverse mountain tourism, health tourism, culture, traditions, customs and people, that are magically connected – according to the majority of the responses – by elements of nature, culture (intercultural experiences and dialogue and cultural routes) and affection (love, people). Other words that could be used are: virgin, human, fresh, clean

The ALP is a friendly place and a pleasant destination that evokes an amalgam of positive emotions through unique experiences and adventures. And these are the sentiments and emotions that the majority of the visitors and stakeholders feel. Other words that could be used are: special, exceptional, essential, original

Figure 12. ALP brand values

2.3. ALP's brand promise and value proposition

A brand promise is one or two sentences, which internally communicate what the customer expects from all products and services under a brand. It aligns people's efforts and keeps the company from developing something that is out of scope for the brand. A brand promise is a statement that defines the scope of a brand in terms of product category, quality, price level and values.

A brand and a promise go hand in hand; you do not have a brand unless that brand promises a type of product and a level of service that customers can expect. "Far more than a name and logo," says David Aaker in his book *Aaker on Branding* (Aaker D., 2014: 1), "[a brand] is an organization's promise to a customer to deliver what the brand stands for not only in terms of functional benefits but also emotional, self-expressive, and social benefits."

The ALP brand reflects the core values and gives us a common base for clear, consistent, unified, credible and effective communication. We are focused on our nature, culture and emotions through people.

The ALP value proposition (Figure 13) is the statement of the functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand which provides value to the target market: (a) a benefit based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the customer, (b) a benefit that adds emotional richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand, and (c) a benefit through which the brand helps fulfil the need for self-expression.

```
                         ALP value proposition

    Functional benefits      Emotional benefits      Self-expression benefits
```

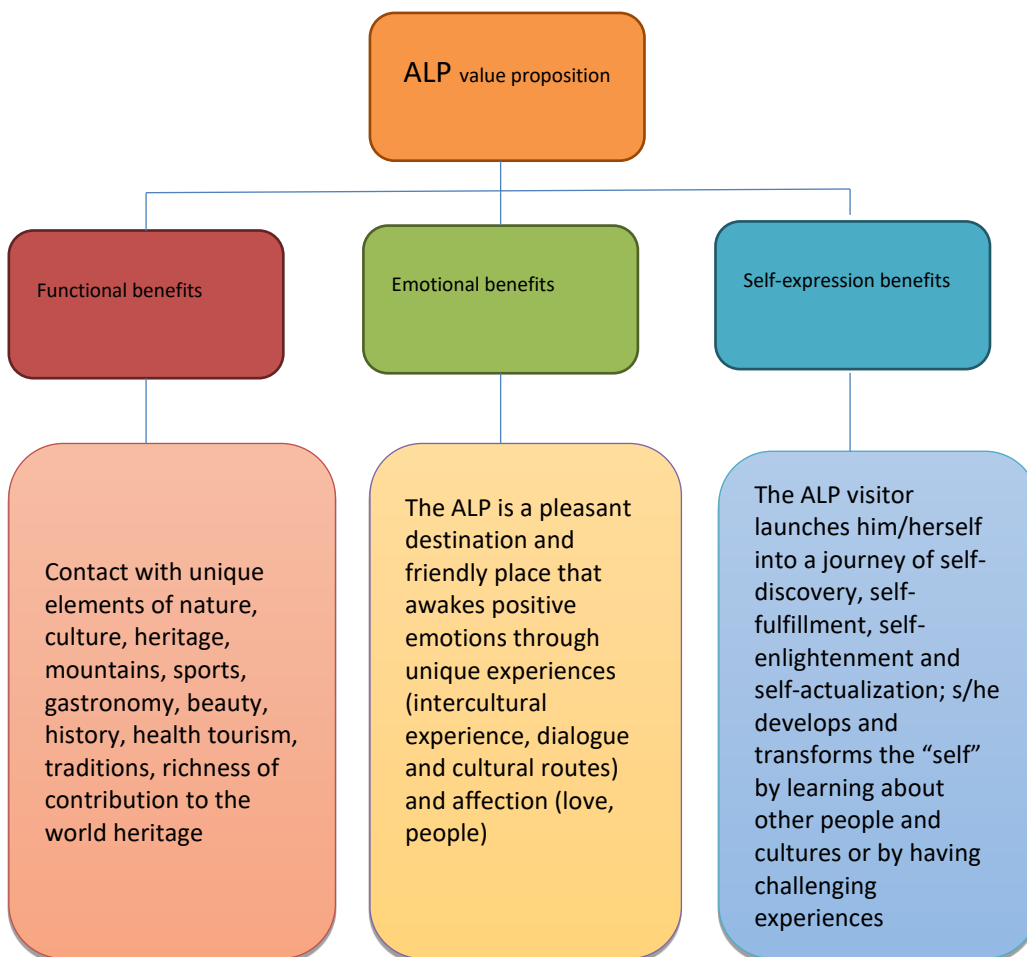| Functional benefits	Emotional benefits	Self-expression benefits
Contact with unique elements of nature, culture, heritage, mountains, sports, gastronomy, beauty, history, health tourism, traditions, richness of contribution to the world heritage	The ALP is a pleasant destination and friendly place that awakes positive emotions through unique experiences (intercultural experience, dialogue and cultural routes) and affection (love, people)	The ALP visitor launches him/herself into a journey of self-discovery, self-fulfillment, self-enlightenment and self-actualization; s/he develops and transforms the "self" by learning about other people and cultures or by having challenging experiences

Figure 13. ALP value proposition

3. VISUAL TECHNICAL DESIGN BRIEF GUIDELINES

It is proposed that the ALP brand should join the Council of Europe joint branding initiative to raise its visibility within the EU community and beyond.

3.1. Logo

The logo is part of a successful brand and, accordingly, has been strategically created with the same positioning, tone, visual appeal, messaging and story of the brand. Some of the elements used in logo design to communicate this positioning, message and tone are colours, font choice, customised typography or calligraphy, illustration style and shape, and historical reference, all of which come together to communicate.

The ALP's logo is a symbol that should be recognised widely as representing the ALP brand, and it would be an appropriate tool for differentiation, brand awareness and loyalty.

It is proposed that the ALP logo be created according to the following values and guidelines. It will be based on:

- the four elements of nature (the **original** elements of the universe and life): earth (beautiful landscapes and attractions/heritage, mountains), water (lakes), air (sky) and fire (friendliness),
- all combined (**fresh**) by culture and
- positive (**special**) experiences and emotions.

Guidelines for ALP logo creation

Inventory of existing brand components

1. Brand identifiers

- name as identifier
- graphic identifiers: coat of arms and flag
- graphic identifiers: logos
- graphic identifiers: logos as economic space (investment and production)
- graphic identifiers: logo – the Alpine Region as living space
- other identifiers.

2. Brand descriptors

3. Brand differentiators.

Brand identifiers

The name is both an identifier and a differentiator, positioning the Alpine Region distinctly in a international geographical context, from all three perspectives: as a tourist destination, as a living

space and as an economic space (investment and production). Hospitality is a concept that includes the essence of European values: interculturality, openness to the free exchange of ideas, traditions and knowledge, the harmonious integration of all groups and audiences in a generous and welcoming way. Hospitality proved to be, after a series of tests and surveys, the essential value quoted by both visitors and locals when they were asked to describe the Alpine Region and the surrounding region.

Brand descriptors

In this context, at the level of the existing descriptors (Figure 14), we can identify a binomial proposed in the vast majority of the versions of the brand (coherent and compatible with the existing identifiers).
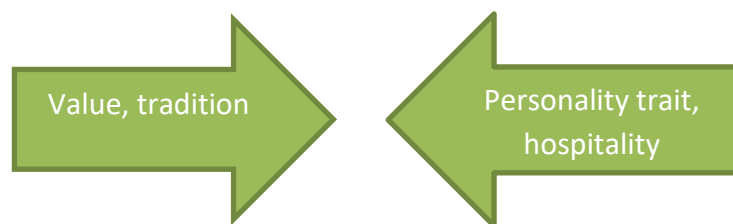

Figure 14. Current brand descriptors

The concept of a differentiator appears only in one of the aforementioned studies. Within the project of defining the cross-border brand, it is identified as elements of uniqueness in the Alpine Region.

There are seven top qualities for effective logo design:

- **simple** – the logo must be easily recognisable. The brand should have a strong impact and a complicated logo will not only make your logo difficult to reproduce and maintain, but you will also fail to engage your audience.

- **distinct** – the idea here is to be different from your competitors.

- **versatile** – a good logo has to work well on the web, on a letterhead, in print ads and in video. Graphics have to be versatile enough to be used in many different mediums.

- **appropriate** – does this logo communicate the right tone and style?

- **targeted** – "the important thing a logo needs to do is to speak to your target audience" (Christopher Wallace of Design Festival)[15].

- **memorable –** a great logo will remain memorable enough for a person who has only seen the logo once to still be able to recall it enough to describe the logo to someone else.

- **timeless –** will this logo still be relevant in a year? In five years?

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[15] https://www.sitepoint.com/logo-design-five-key-elements-for-reaching-your-target-audience/

The ALP brand logo can be adapted to the products of the CRs. The logo should adapt to different situations:

- at the top of the website
- on promotional and marketing materials
- in email signatures
- social platforms
- on exterior shop signage.

Branding within a wide range of applications (simulation)

The logo has to be positioned in a place which is visible, on websites, online and smartphone applications, social media and other digital platforms. The project logo has to be placed on the same surface as the other logos.

The logo of the ALP should be used by all ALP bodies in all the materials and events created/organised by the CRs, for example:

- visualisation of the brand within a wide range of applications (simulation)
- official headers, printed materials and business cards
- websites and mobile applications
- souvenirs, promotional materials, stationery, packaging and labels.

3.2. ALP slogan

Variants of the slogan

Explore further! The Alpine Region is here and now!
Try the taste of the Alps!
Explore!
Explore the Alpine Region!
Get high!
The mountains are calling and I must go!
With all our hearts!

The relevance of the slogan in relation to the Alpine tourist region

The concept is based on the most known symbols of the Alpine Region. The slogan: "Explore further! The Alpine Region is here and now!" encourages tourists to access the Alpine Region, a territory rich in cultural heritage, monuments, traditions and beautiful mountain landscapes.

The concept can be transformed into a quality label, implemented within a local quality scheme, for the economic agents that are active in tourism, agriculture and the food industry or cultural activities. In this way, the concept can provide an immediate way of directly involving economic agents in supporting and implementing the brand strategy. Adding the Alpine Region brand to the

product label or hotel frontispiece offers added value and increases the attractiveness of the products or services offered to the customer (Table 5).

It can become an interesting proposal for attracting new inhabitants (especially foreign tourists who visit the area and fall in love with these places).

Slogan: "EXPLORE! THE ALPINE REGION IS HERE AND NOW!"			
Target segment	Promise	Value	Personality
Travellers **who interact with locals, explore authentic experiences, discover a thousand-year history and enjoy local traditions and products** **The** buyers **of traditional products with local origins, authentic** Potential residents **looking for a traditional lifestyle**	The Alpine Region is a diverse territory with a unique identity, offering the guarantee of authentic travel experiences, exceptional local products and a way of being and living traditionally, in harmony with nature and with other people	History, treasure Pride, identity Discovery, tasting Sharing, learning	Hospitable, welcoming Rich Traditional, authentic Filled with spirituality, loaded with history Diverse, multicultural

Table 5. Brand concept – "Explore! The Alpine Region is here and now!"

3.3. Fonts and colours

Many distinctive brands are known for their colours and fonts. The most important points to consider when choosing the brand colours and fonts are to:

- build a system that works together harmoniously;
- deliver a message to the marketplace.

Colours can evoke powerful reactions. The colours and fonts enhance the core values and underlying personality, as opposed to working against them.

Colour is a powerful thing, and if you choose your brand colour palette based on preference alone ("I like purple, so let's have a purple logo"), you're missing out on a huge opportunity.

People have strong associations with colour and, when you understand those associations, you can use colour strategically to inspire specific thoughts, emotions and reactions in your audience.

Colour – perceived meanings

Red: exciting, hot, passionate, strong

Green: secure, calm, natural

Blue: authority, commands respect

Black: sophisticated, mystery, power

Yellow: warmth, novelty, caution.

The most relevant colours for the ALP brand are:

- blue
- black.

This complementary colour duo is a classic yet powerful pairing. Blue represents the air and sky element, found to be present in the responses of all survey participants, and the sense of freshness (awakening), while black represents the cultural element, power and mystery of the three brand values.

3.4. Images

Images of the four elements: water, fire, earth and air combined should be considered to be the most powerful tool in the communication of the ALP brand.

Munich, Germany. ©Pixabay.

The general guidelines for the images of the ALP are:

• Images must reflect the values: original, special, fresh, natural, emotional.
• The colours should be natural and fresh, showing the contrasts in the ALP's elements of nature.
• Colours can evoke powerful reactions. The colours and fonts enhance the core values and underlying personality, as opposed to working against them.

- Combine nature and culture with active situations and feature emotion and social interaction between people.
- Use images of local people or tourists as appropriate for the context.
- Use lots and lots of customs (e.g., food, local events) and other traditions in natural and social settings.

3.5. Tone of voice

This is especially important for the copywriting part of your messaging. Define the tone that you want to use for your brand. Do not be afraid to have fun with tone development exercises — it can help to compare your brand to different celebrities, songs, other companies, movies, cities and get more of a feel for the tone that would be most appropriate for your business.

"Tone of voice" is the collective way we communicate with others. It is as much about a feeling as anything else. Tone of voice is an essential aspect of a brand's identity, and should be as distinct as the rest of the brand.

The ALP brand should have a consistent, clear and true tone of voice in all communication:

- positive and engaging, interesting, relevant, surprising, useful
- fresh, original and emotional
- communication structured from the tourist perspective.

3.6. Brand guidelines summary

i. Font – clear, attractive typefaces

Typefaces have personality! The fonts should be clear, natural and elegant.

ii. Photography – moments of unique, original and high emotion

We should choose simple, spontaneous-looking shots of people in action, showing real emotion and delight. The images must reflect the values: original, fresh, emotional, integrating diverse elements.

iii. Colour – a diverse palette

The colour palette should reflect the spectrum of the ALP's diverse experiences. The colours should be clean and fresh, showing the contrasts in the ALP's four elements of nature. The most relevant colours of the ALP brand are blue and black.

iv. Logo

The ALP's logo is the embodiment of the ALP brand and unites all that we say and do. It can be a reminder to take a break and return to the origin of the universe, or even to refresh yourself as you move from one great experience to another.

v. The slogan

The concept is based on the most known symbols of the Alpine Region. The slogan: **EXPLORE FURTHER! THE ALPINE REGION IS HERE AND NOW!,** encourages tourists to access the Alpine Region, a territory rich in cultural heritage, monuments, traditions and beautiful mountain landscapes.

4. ALP BRAND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Prerequisites for product development

As defined by UNWTO (2011), a tourism product is "a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers"[16]. Examples of tourism products can be a package tour, sporting activities, a visit to a heritage site, an accommodation service, transportation service, guiding and shopping. Cultural tourism products can incorporate a variety of cultural forms, including museums, galleries, festivals, architecture, historic sites visits, guided tours and artistic performances.

But most of all, CRs should do the following:

i. Understand the entire customer journey

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[16] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (Ed.). (2011). Handbook on Tourism Product Development.

To create the customer journey map, the team got together to set the objectives and decided that the journey map had to:

- identify ways to get customers more engaged with the product from the beginning;
- uncover problems that might be turning customers away;
- increase the number of customers who move from using the free trial to purchasing a plan.

Journey maps tell the step-by-step story, usually in a visual way, of some aspect of your customer's experience. For example, travellers have to choose a destination, but may still be flexible about dates, hotels and activities; they will make reservations; they may share their adventures online, on websites, on tourism websites, hotels.

ii. Intervene at every stage during the entire customer journey

Cultural Routes must create "micro-moments" during the entire customer journey (Think with Google 2016).

There are 4 game-changing moments that really matter.

I-want-to-know moments:	I-want-to-go moments:	I-want-to-do moments:	I-want-to-buy moments:
When someone is exploring or researching, but is not necessarily in purchase mode.	When someone is looking for a local business or is considering buying a product at a nearby store.	When someone wants help completing a task or trying something new.	When someone is ready to make a purchase and may need help deciding what to buy or how to buy it.

In these moments, consumers want what they want, when they want it—and they're drawn to brands that **deliver on their needs**.

Google breaks it down into four "micro-moments":

Dreaming

During the initial phase, prospective visitors are open to all possibilities. They have not made a firm decision about where to go and what to do, and they are looking for ideas, mostly online and via digital sources.

Planning

At this stage, travellers have pinned down a destination, but they are still flexible about dates, hotels, and activities. Again, they use mostly online and digital sources.

Booking

Dates, flights and accommodation preferences are all confirmed. It is time for travellers to make reservations. Again, they use mostly online, digital and mobile sources.

Experiencing

Travellers are on their trip and sharing their adventures online. At this stage, they may still be searching for ad hoc activities and experience while in destination or onsite (in the case of a cultural attraction).

iii. Reach diverse audiences

It's important to understand the interests and desires of target visitors and also the communications channels that they prefer.

The visitors are:

Vienna, Austria.©Pixabay.

- *sport lovers (mountain sports, skiing)*
- *creatives*
- *families*
- *museum visitors*
- *cultural tourists*
- *gastronomy lovers.*

The Cultural Routes need to engage with and serve their visitors whether they are online or on the premises (physical or digital visitors) and whether they are actual or potential visitors.

In order to do this effectively, it is important to understand the interests and desires of target visitors and also the communication channels they prefer.

In relation to the above considerations, Cultural Routes products would need to be understood as ideas or offers capable of providing the Cultural Routes with a competitive edge via the development of unique and authentic themes and stories and products that could bring the identified propositions to life. Again, the main driver to succeed this is the embodiment of all products and experiences with the ALP brand values.

Thus, all cultural products and development of the ALP Cultural Routes should use a far more experiential and active rather than a passive approach by creating unique experiences and connectivity (socialisation) via traditional and new means of communication. ALP products should integrate knowledge-creating procedures and involve visitors so they have a more participative attitude. It is hugely important to focus the narratives not only on the heritage asset, but also on how it integrates into the life of the people and communities that coexist with it.

The right way of attaining the above ALP product development objectives is to train the Cultural Routes members and stakeholders to work as product and route interpreters. They are the true ambassadors of the Cultural Routes. They are the main contributors, otherwise a visitor will not obtain the level of knowledge or experience that the Cultural Route can offer.

4.2. Product development guidelines for the ALP brand

This is the main driver for success. It is the embodiment of all products and experiences of the ALP brand values, as identified:

i. **Authentic** – the place (the ALP is pleasant destination);

ii. **Natural** – the relationship with the place (the mountains, the lakes and the sky are the natural elements of the Alpine Region with both diverse and common cultures, experiences and routes);

iii. **Unique** – the visitor benefits (the ALP brand induces positive feelings and emotions/sentiments).

There are various considerations for the creation of new ALP products and experiences:

- It is important to create original/authentic experiences. Focus on why retailers and destinations should develop experiences (Foster & Mclelland 2015).
- Add value by building connectivity. Travel brands that connect consumers with people, especially non-tourism industry people in a destination, are opening up the experience to be more spontaneous and surprising.
- Social media is a conversation platform, so engagement is the key. Social media is much more than a marketing tool. It is a wholly integrated part of the travel experience, with infinite possibilities to engage consumers and locals, and create unexpected moments along the journey.
- Package travel and tour operators providing scheduled itineraries should build in time or a variety of activity options so travellers can customise their experience.
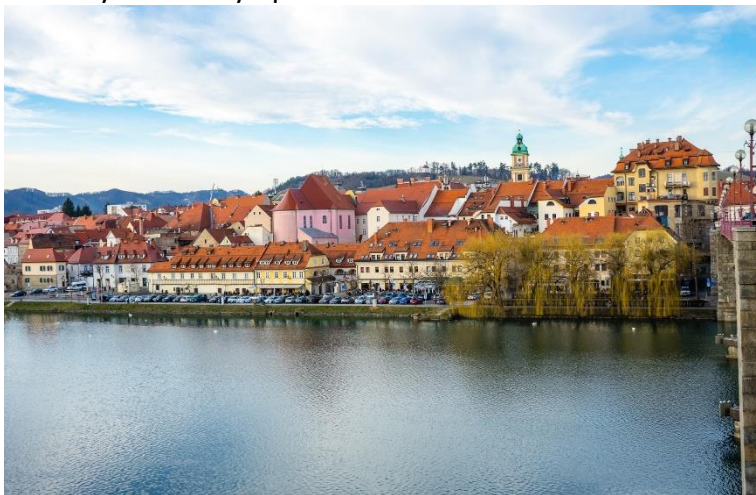
Maribor, Slovenia. ©Pixabay.

- The ALP products and services which promote the macro-regional identity must be in line with the EUSALP objectives to diversify tourism products and services in the region and to improve the quality and innovation of tourism offers in order to strengthen tourism capacities.
- Projects may include tourism products that are representative of the macro-regional heritage and thus contribute to the macro-regional cultural identity. These may be in the form of cultural or hand-made resources, and any other tourism product that contributes to the promotion of the heritage of the Alpine Region.
- The tourism products and the SMEs producing them must attain high and specific quality standards.
- The tourism product must be in line with the recommendations on the implementation of the branding strategy for EUSALP that has currently been developed in the framework of

Routes4U. The tourism products must comply with the visibility clauses and the requirements on the use of the logo "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" and the logo of EUSALP.

A city tourism product has a heterogeneous structure, where different elements like public transport, hotels, bars and restaurants, tourist offices, local attractions and events influence the final experience of tourists. Each of these elements is usually managed and produced by individual players that are most often competing with each other (Buhalis 2000). Moreover, tourists perceive a destination as a brand, or as an integrated product (Buhalis 2000). Consensus and co-operation among the involved stakeholders are therefore required in order to develop joint strategies.

The ALP can provide a visitor with unique, appealing and life-changing experiences, products and services. The aim of all products, services and experience (e.g., travel packages, cultural city tours, experiential activities, concerts, street fairs, art festivals, etc.) is to bring out the ALP brand essence and importance of historical and cultural heritage in modern and interactive ways and themes. The goal is to create cutting-edge products and experience to connect all kinds of people with civilisation's traditions, roots and heritage.

4.2.1 CULTURAL CARD DEVELOPMENT FOR THE ALP BRAND

A tourism product is something that can be offered to tourists when they visit a tourist destination. The products which satisfy leisure, pleasure, religious or business needs at places other than the normal place of residence are known as tourism products. Tourism products are offered in the market at a cost. They are the prime reason for a tourist to choose a particular destination.

Regarding city tours, tour operators have a varied offer of tourism packages that include visits within a specific city, as well as in several cities within a country or continent. In addition, expert tourist guides are available in cities with a large influx of tourists. Different activities are carried out by city tourists, including visits to buildings within a city, such as museums and art galleries, religious temples, skyscrapers, buildings with some

Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany. ©Unsplash.

historical interest, monuments and memorials. Other city tourism products include different elements such as public transport, hotels, bars and restaurants, tourist offices, local attractions and events. These influence the final experience of tourists and are managed and produced by individual players who are most often competing with each other (Buhalis 2000).

The possibility for destinations to market and manage their products as an integrated package is important. One possibility for destinations to market and manage their products as an integrated package is to set up a destination card (or city card or tourist pass) with the use of modern information and communication technology. The tourist card is defined as a destination marketing tool which integrates a variety of tourism services provided by several operators at a discounted inclusive price.

The main objective of the ALP tourist card will be to bundle the products and services available without the need for booking and buying them in advance and to foster higher participation in cultural activities and public transport usage.

The ALP card will give the holders a series of benefits and advantages in terms of time and cost savings, and it is also a very efficient information medium addressing tourist flows to minor sites and attractions.

ALP tourism card's possible benefits could include:

- free admission or discounts at the Cultural Routes, their attractions, sites, etc.;
- free use of public transportation;
- a guidebook with a map;
- discounts in accommodation, restaurants, shops, leisure parks, guided tours, events, car rental, bike rental, urban parking, etc.;
- time savings through the option "skip the line";
- additional discounts for special groups.

A tourist city pass or card usually includes unlimited access to the city's public transport system. It also includes discounts for numerous restaurants, museums, monuments and other venues, with additional discounts for special groups. This could be replicated by an ALP Cultural Card.

4.2.2. ALP PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT – THE VIA FRANCIGENA ROUTE CASE STUDY

The Swiss section of the Via Francigena has many interesting sights to offer, some of which are highlighted below. These sights serve as the basis from which to develop ALP products and experiences.

The Via Francigena – basic information
1994 – Certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe
2004 – Upgraded to a Major Cultural Route of the Council of Europe
Countries involved – France, Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom
Type of route It is currently conceived as a guided itinerary that links a network of historical routes leading to the same end point: Rome.
Objective To promote tourism and strengthen the cultural heritage of the Via Francigena Cultural Route.
In 990, Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, travelled to Rome on foot from England. He described the stops along the way in a diary. This description forms the basis of the Via Francigena, a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. It runs between Canterbury and Rome via France and Switzerland. The Romans laid down the road in the first century AD to connect Rome to their empire north of the Alps. With the spread and establishment of European Christianity, the road to Rome developed into an important pilgrimage route. The Swiss Via Francigena goes from Pontarlier in France to Aosta in Italy.

The Via Francigena in Switzerland covers a distance of 157 kilometres and is one of the most spectacular sections on the entire route to Rome. It combines high mountain trails, flat lakeside paths, medieval towns, world famous vineyards and an abundance of amazing art, architecture, history, culture and, of course, the spectacular scenery.

The walk starts in Lausanne and before you start your walk it is well worth taking some time to see the sights and take in the atmosphere. It is a student town but is also part of the "Swiss Riviera" so is well appointed with something for everybody. The city is known as the "San Francisco of Switzerland" due to the nature of the steep lakeside streets. While here you might like to visit Beaulieu Castle, Notre-Dame Cathedral or the Olympic Museum.

Lavaux terraced vineyards

As you leave Lausanne on your walk you will pass alongside the Lavaux vineyard terraces. The stunning vistas of the vineyards, which seemingly flow down into the lake, are only equalled by their historical and cultural importance. The vineyards have been classed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2009, when they were officially recognised for their outstanding universal value. The area is recognised for its importance in the history and continuation of cultural traditions in the area, as well as the long-term interaction between local people and their environment.

The Château de Chillon is an island castle which sits on the edge of Lake Geneva between Montreux and Villeneuve. Beginning life as a Roman outpost, the oldest parts of the current castle are believed to date from the start of the 11th century. After this the castle was used as a summer home by the Counts of Savoy. Nowadays the castle is open to the public and houses 14th century murals as well as recreations of what the rooms would have looked like while it was in use. However the real draw of this castle is the fairy-tale architecture combined with a stunning location set between the steep hillside and the shore of the lake. It is no wonder that it is one of the most visited sites in Switzerland.

Col du Grand Saint Bernard (Great Saint Bernard Pass)

The Great Saint Bernard Pass marks the point where the Via Francigena crosses the Alps from Switzerland into Italy. The pass has held significance for thousands of years as a crossing point and has seen the armies of Augustus and Napoleon march through. Nowadays the pass is perhaps best known as the home of the St Bernard dog.

They were bred at the Great St Bernard Hospice as mountain rescue dogs. They are legendary for having small casks of brandy around their necks in order to revive weary travellers, although it seems that this is more than likely just a myth. The views from the Great St Bernard Pass are stunning and signal a small victory as you summit the highest point between Canterbury and Rome on the Via Francigena.

Aosta

Aosta sits in a beautiful valley along the Dora Baltea River which is fed by melt waters and the glaciers of the high Alps. In early Roman times the town was of huge strategic importance as it stood on the edge of their empire. It continued to be an important place due to its geographic location even after the Romans moved into the rest of Western Europe. As a result it is home to some fantastic Roman ruins including the very well-preserved town walls, a variety of towers, a theatre and the Arch of Augustus. Over the centuries the town was also home to Burgundians, Ostrogoths, Byzantines and Franks who all left their mark on the town in one form or another. In the centre of the town the Piazza Emile Chanoux is a great place to unwind after your walk and take in the view of the mountains which are framed beautifully by the narrow streets.

Website: http://www.viefrancigene.org

Products for the Via Francigena

The aim of the products, services and experiences is to highlight the ALP brand essence and the importance of the historical and cultural heritage in modern and interactive ways and themes, through civilisation's traditions, roots and heritage.

The products, services and experiences of the Via Francigena could include (see also Table 7):

- the promotion of the Cultural Routes of the Alpine Region in other countries on other continents;
- the re-use of industrial buildings or designing of a new set of buildings with the following functions:
  - workshops
  - exhibition rooms (to be used together or separately)
  - tourism information centres
  - meeting/conference rooms
  - proper offices for the personnel working in the area
  - ensuring proper conditions for visitors (rest rooms, wardrobe, outdoor shelter).

Customer journey Phase	Cultural Route Products
Before visit	Collections online
	E-commerce
	Virtual tours
	Gaming
	Digital mapping of the CR
Physical products	Exhibition/cycle-carrying bus
	Exhibition centres
	Souvenirs (books, stationery, accessories, fashion, for children)

Services	Via Francigena days
Experiences	Local events (musical, artistic, wine, gastronomic, traditional dances, street-smart, etc.)
	Health tourism
	Thematic adventures
	Tour and guide services (e.g. guided visits and transportation
	Travel packages
	Experiential learning
	Recreation services
	Summer schools and specified educational tourism packages
	Alternative tourism tours (skiing, rafting, biking)
Digital products	Audio guide
	Interactive creative spaces
	Dedicated IT/Web/GIS applications
	Gaming
	Downloadable podcast
	Tablets/wearable rentals

Table 6. Customer journey phase and proposed products, services and experiences for the Via Francigena

Some examples of proposals for the Via Francigena:

►*Organising experiential tours*: these could be with experienced academics, artists and tour guides, who will become the visitors' mentors as they explore the pre-eminent archaeological sites, museums, historic monuments and cultural venues of the Via Francigena and the destinations involved.

►*Gastronomic events, music festivals*: these could be outdoor festivals dedicated to wine, gastronomy, culture, traditions and music. For 10 days, the potential festival proposes various activities designed to transform this event into the happiest time of the year. The audience will be invited to a unique event, dedicated to all age groups and preferences. The festival is for tasting international premium wines, as well as a rich choice of delicious culinary dishes from different cultures. It will be intensive and enjoyable for all guests, regardless of age. There will be a children's activities area, a relaxation area, a garden party and many other surprises. Increasing interest in viticulture and gastronomy in the past ten years indicates that the consumer is ready to discover, be educated and interact in a framework that will stimulate both passion and curiosity. The festival offers this framework, but it also offers culture and entertainment.

The festival will also have an ecological component, promoting the use of organic packaging, organic farming and viticulture, as well as healthy and balanced nutrition:

- blending in with the scenery/landscape (using the gentle slope of the land for underground space, limiting the number of trees to be cut down, further architectural landscaping, using a new visiting circuit design for the area);
- preserving/using the existing overall architectural style;
- using traditional materials (wood, stone, clay, brick) and a good choice of modern materials;
- environmentally friendly (waste, water management, low-energy buildings);
- integrated activities, such as hiking, mountain sports;
- co-operation with local authorities and organisations;
- guided tours.

► *Sports training and other educational products*: the ALP is a natural and pleasant destination, so it should provide intriguing thematic educational routes throughout the macro-region, combined with workshops, seminars and training.

The common themes which an educational programme could be linked to for the Via Francigena are:

► sports

► festivals

► visual arts.

The Via Francigena digital products

The **museums** are going through a very interesting phase, characterised by the transformation of their visitors from physical to virtual. The digital museum is dedicated exclusively to the display of digital art and digital technology in one of three ways: product, process or subject. This includes categories such as "web art" or "demo art".

The CR could innovate by being the first macro-region to upload **collections or exhibitions online**. Visitors at home could take in the beauty of the outdoors with its stunning online exhibition. Images from the exhibition can be viewed online, along with audio commentary on selected works and video interviews with artists.

The development of digital technologies makes **content and audio-visual production** possible.

The Via Francigena could use **augmented reality**, a new way to use technology that transforms how you work, learn, play and connect with almost everything around you. And this is just the beginning. Welcome to a new world.

Interactive creative spaces come in all different shapes and sizes and they are normally designed to encourage creative thinking. The visitors could participate in several activities which include:

► "web art" or "demo art" (to create contemporary art)

► virtual painting

► virtual training

► researching and learning about various featured artists and disciplines using both static and portable devices.

Immersive exhibitions using **virtual exhibitions and reality tours** can certainly make the whole experience more surprising for the visitor.

The use of **digital mapping**, often using a digital mapping guide, has become a popular method of navigation for walkers. It offers a flexible way of exploring the landscape providing accurate and detailed maps of your walking routes. This would give accurate representations of the areas of the Via Francigena, detailing major points of interest. This technology also allows the calculation of distances from one place to another.

There is also **downloadable material**, e.g. podcasts, on the Via Francigena which visitors can preload onto their personal iPods before bringing them onsite.

5. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES AND TOOLS

The ALP brand communication activities and tools will be important for promotional purposes, so it will become recognisable. In this section we will discuss the brand activities and tools necessary to implement the ALP brand strategy. Integrated marketing communication tools refer to the integration of various marketing tools such as advertising, online marketing, public relations activities, direct marketing and sales campaigns to promote brands, so that the same message reaches a wider audience.

5.1. Promoting the ALP brand according to the research

CR members were asked to evaluate their Cultural Route's importance in terms of requirements for successful visibility. According to their answers (see Part 1), for successful visibility a Cultural Route should use new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation. ALP stakeholders were asked to rate several activities in terms of their importance to the CRs in terms of marketing. The results showed that the most important marketing activities according to the stakeholders are social media (4.73), apps and geolocation maps (4.73).

Verdon Gorge, France. ©Unsplash.

The ALP stakeholders were asked to evaluate the new ALP brand's marketing activities in terms of requirements for successful visibility. According to the stakeholders, for successful visibility the most important activity would be the use of social networks and digital marketing (4.73), followed by being present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators and cruise operators (4.67), and working in terms of communities of interest. Examples given include:

▶ be present and visible at travel trade industry events, to meet and talk to tour operators, cruise operators and other professionals (4.67);

▶ work with the media, using the existing resources of the project's partners (4.53);

▶ work in terms of communities of interest – successfully identify the organisations, media, blogs and all those who will be naturally drawn to the theme (4.67);

▶ take advantage of high-speed networks and digital tools, e.g. Google Translate, to strengthen communication with customers, and build trade and media relations (4.27);

▶ use new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation (4.33);

▶ use augmented reality and virtual reality to help the visitor understand the links between attractions and assets, across frontiers (4.00);

▶ fully use social networks and digital marketing (4.73).

The stakeholders were asked to provide additional comments which would help us to improve their next marketing and communications project:

▶ communication support and funding sources to improve the necessary actions;

▶ facilitating and improving the use of online tools.

5.2. Current marketing strategy and actions of the Via Francigena

The aim of the promotion activities for the Via Francigena is the presentation of the products, cultural and sport events, and festivals.

The main objectives are:

▶ to attract the attention of new visitors throughout the year, with the aim to make them aware of the cultural heritage which is connected with local products, sustainability and unexplored areas;

▶ to promote and develop co-operation and dialogue;

▶ to encourage new entrepreneurial opportunities.

It is estimated that the most basic benefits of a Cultural Route for the regions are the following:

▶ local market knowledge and insight to make business more competitive and profitable

▶ diverse cultural perspectives to inspire creativity and drive innovation

▶ development of farms and agro-tourism

▶ increase in number of jobs

▶ increase in health tourism in every region

▶ utilisation of small production units.

Zurich, Switzerland.©Pixabay.

The most basic tools for the promotion of the proposed Cultural Route of the Via Francigena are:

▶Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Linkedin

▶website

▶newsletters

▶presence and active participation in global news.

5.3. General recommendations for communication activities and tools

The results and answers of CR participants show that for successful visibility the ALP brand should use social networks and digital marketing and other new technologies that increase opportunities for innovation, followed by being present and visible at travel industry trade events, to meet and talk to tour operators.

Table 7 contains the forms of communication for the implementation of the ALP brand.

Advertising	Events/experiences
Posters	Sports
Brochures and booklets	Entertainment
Print and broadcast ads	Festivals
	Art
Digital marketing	Guided tours
	Visit to museums
Sales promotion	**Public relations**
Trade shows	Publications
Coupons	Seminars
Games	Annual reports

Table 7. The main forms of branding communications for the ALP brand

The logo, slogan, fonts, colours and images should follow the guidelines and thus communicate the elements and brand values in all brand communication activities.

Bern, Switzerland. ©Pexels.

5.4. Digital marketing actions and tools

The best new digital marketing tools and techniques are:

►**Content marketing techniques**: these differ from traditional marketing tools in their resistance to overt calls-to-action or purely product- or service-based ads, and smart consumers have developed a nose for recognising quality content as opposed to slick advertising. Good content is original, dynamic and shareable. Truly effective content marketing uses an accessible voice to tell genuine stories that gain the trust of the consumer and build a positive reputation for the brand.

►**Tools for social networking**: a strong digital marketing strategy incorporates all social media forums appropriate to your organisation, including Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Google+, Pinterest, and Instagram. These tools have different purposes: Twitter has become a virtual telephone, a way for customers to lodge complaints or ask questions, whereas image-driven social media – such as Instagram and Pinterest – are a great way to get viral with visual storytelling.

►**Go mobile**: having a website that uses responsive design for various mobile formats – smartphones, tablets, etc. – gives your company a competitive edge.

►**Retargeting:** this is a simple, powerful way to keep your brand and product in the minds of potential customers.

►**Community building**: the common thread in these best new digital marketing techniques is the need for brands to cater to the desire of consumers to be seen as individuals, and not just as a number. Brands need to prove a genuine interest in the personalities of their dynamic customer base and to treat communication as a way to build an authentic, like-minded community.

The main guidelines for the digital marketing for the ALP brand and CRs are (adapted from UNWTO/ETC 2009):

► Develop an online version of the destination's brand toolkit and encourage partners to use it as well.

► Make sure the marketing strategies are consistent.

► Promote a changing pattern of broad themes, such as:

– tasting Europe
– the rhythm of Europe (music festivals)
– Europe's most romantic sites
– The Alps experience.

► Establish collaboration with different organisations at all levels.

► Use media to achieve a high-involvement experience for customers.

► Make two-way use of user-generated content.

► Control the domain names that affect the brand.

► Create online communities where target customers and partner organisations get involved in the composition of the brand story.

► Create immersive experiences through interactive television or web TV.

► Enter or create virtual worlds such as Second Life for the ALP region and CRs.

► Test the online performance of all brand language and visuals.

► Use videos created by visitors and testimonials.

► Apply digital marketing to the ALP brand and CR.

Content is key:

Video

Before you invest in video content for your brand, you are going to need a content marketing strategy. This gives your content purpose and focus allowing you to plan for success. The delivery of the original video content by the advertisers that focuses on building the brand awareness among the audiences is called branded video content. For the ALP, video should also play an all-important part in communicating those experiences to the would-be visitor.

► Using the emotional touch to grab the attention of audiences towards the brand is the main aim of the advertiser when releasing branded video content.

Lavadero, Italy. ©Pixabay.

► The ALP brand wants to create emotions, experiences, passion and self-fulfilment, so video marketing is the best way to show these emotions and improve the experience that tourists will have. Video is a key element to attract a demanding customer.

► Push the created video content on trending social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and

Twitter, etc., because these platforms will have continuous user engagement with the online response that your brand strategy is seeking.

Printed publications and branded material

▶ Find out how to plan and commission effective printed materials.

▶ Print has an important part to play in communicating core brand values and meeting specific marketing objectives.

A piece of great print starts with a clear brief. This should define your primary audience and set out your aims and objectives. From that point on, the creative development – design and copy – can begin.

Printed publications, branded material and implementation of content brand strategy:

▶ use of promotional materials – producing different materials to promote the project and its activities (i.e. leaflets, brochures, maps, etc.) translated into English;

▶ drafting of publications for specific audiences (industry, scientific) or generally for the wider public;

▶ development of promotional videos used to promote the project and to stimulate reflections and debates during the planned dissemination events;

▶ open access online deliverables;

▶ open content platform;

▶ press office and external relations – providing timely reports and audio-visual material, organising press conferences and meetings, gathering the press review and uploading it on the project website;

▶ corporate image – creation of a brand corporate image (i.e. logo, printed material layout, branded items, training for organisations on communication and visibility);

▶ good communication and accessible information programme deployed.

ALP website portal

Web design is a process of conceptualising, planning and building a collection of electronic files that determine the layout, colours, text styles, structure, graphics, images and use of interactive features that deliver pages to your site visitors. Professional web design helps to make your business appear credible online.

The three important brand values – authentic, natural and unique – should be visible on the website.

On the technical side the ALP website will be all about delivering the user experience better and

Velenje, Slovenia. ©Pixabay.

faster. The website should be easy to access, responsive and mobile friendly. As important as having a great domain name, a professional web design can help:

▶ satisfy customers: professional web design meets the needs of visitors, telling them quickly what they want to know without unnecessary and confusing design items;

▶ make sure the navigation on the website is predictable, consistent and easy to understand as this will help build a positive relationship with visitors – the website will not show up on the search engine results pages if it is not coded in a way that the search engines can read;

▶ avoid technical glitches: it does not take much to turn a customer away – lengthy loading times, broken links and dropped images are just a few of the web design issues that can be remedied by a professional web design service.

The ALP brand Web portal would consist of:

▶ the promotion of linked CRs and destinations and give an easier access to publicly accessible interpretation;

▶ development of promotional videos used to promote the ALP brand and to stimulate reflections and debates during the planned dissemination events;

▶ access to the powerful stories of the ALP brand;

▶ information about the destinations and cross links to national and local sites.

Use of social media

Social media (disseminating information and dedicated outputs through the social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) is a time-passing platform for most people, especially the younger population. The content on social media is so engaging that people even forget about the time and their sense of purpose and goals. Today, social media networking websites and apps create captivating content to make people excited and conversational, but this happens to such an extent that people find themselves being addicted to it.

Events and conferences

ALP should organise events, outdoor festivals dedicated to wine, gastronomy, culture, traditions and music.

Public relations

Regarding public relations, the following are important:

- organisation of regional and international mass-media activities to promote the ALP brand, conferences, regional and international fairs, events, exhibitions;
- creation of a corporate design which will be used on brochures and other publications;
- development of town and city twinning partnerships in the Alpine Region, partnership projects, European projects;
- improving internal communication/reporting between project partners;
- ensuring visibility of the project and making it easy for people to keep updated with the project activities;
- establishing collaborations with different organisations at all levels.

The dissemination strategy and plan will specify in detail the target audience and knowledge users in order to tailor the dissemination products to their specific needs. It also specifies forms and channels of communication to reach all members of the target audience, and also lays out the

range of appropriate electronic and printed informational and instructional material, as well as developing mechanisms for their effective dissemination.

Training sessions

Regarding training sessions, the ALP:

Vaduz, Liechtenstein. ©Pixabay.

▶ will organise targeted training sessions mainly addressed to beneficiaries of approved operations related to specific project cycle topics (e.g. project start-up, validation of expenditure, project implementation, etc.);

▶ webinars to ensure wider audience and optimise costs;

▶ online platforms.

Other strategies proposed for ALP brand awareness raising and capacity building are:

▶ inclusion of the ALP CRs in the tourism curricula of universities;

▶ training of new tour guides on practical skills and guiding techniques for countries.

Media coverage and use of external resources

Getting press coverage is hard work, so it is worth celebrating. But it is only the first step in getting your message out to your audience. It is important to make your coverage work as hard as possible by amplifying your content across a number of different channels. This way you can reach a more diverse audience over a greater period of time.

The powerful techniques to amplify media coverage include:

▶ promotion via social media, promotion of stories, programme news through thematic web portals or linked to the European institutions;

▶ share it on your company's social media pages on sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, take advantage of engagement and discovery features like Twitter hashtags or moments, to cite the journalist and/or publication you got coverage from; thanking journalists on social media is the easiest thing to do and they tend to appreciate it and may even respond by re-sharing your post;

▶ share internally and externally: one of the first things I do when I get coverage is share it internally with my colleagues, and even sometimes with my family and friends;

▶ when you see the logo of a credible brand on a website, it immediately makes the site look more reputable;

▶ design the media room so that one of the sections only features media coverage: some recommended names for this page may be "In the News", "Media Coverage", or "News Coverage";

▶ include coverage in your email newsletter;

▶ use digital PR such as Google Alerts to find the online coverage you have received.

The ALP should provide material to the National Contact Points in support of interviews or press conferences they intend to organise at national level.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion this section of the report has planned the branding strategy for the Alpine macro-region, following the creation of a macro-regional brand through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

Recommendations

▶ Promote the Cultural Routes of the Alpine Region in other countries on other continents.

▶ Re-use industrial buildings or design a new set of buildings with the following functions:

- workshops
- exhibition rooms (to be used together or separately)
- tourism information centres
- meeting/conference rooms
- proper offices for the personnel working in the area
- ensuring proper conditions for visitors (rest rooms, wardrobes, outdoor shelters)
- developing additional activities and increasing the attractiveness of the open-air museum.

▶ **The needs of visitors should be met, for example:**

- hands-on and creative activities
- spending quality time together with their families
- developing new skills linked to traditions
- being outdoors/enjoying nature.

▶ **The needs of communities should be met, for example:**

- Urban
- spending time outdoors, in nature
- increased need for new activities for each visit
- Rural
- redefine a system of traditional values
- re-use this heritage in lucrative activities and development.

▶ Promote cultural and creative tourism activities.

▶ Improve the use of wood, more specifically from Alpine forest resources in the building sector, an asset for the economy and ecological transition in the Alpine Region.

►Create new projects relating to Cultural Routes in the Alpine Region and consider a representative theme for the region to promote and protect its tangible and intangible heritage, local products and health tourism.

►Invest in natural heritage and culture, reducing environmental damage and providing infrastructure and new services, especially in the field of tourism.

►Improve the choice and marketing of regional products of superior quality coming from agriculture, forestry and crafts.

►Conserve and promote the identity of the mountains as well as the diversity and richness of their cultural heritage.

►Regarding health tourism, medical tourism is an opportunity. Travelling overseas for medical care has historical roots. Beforehand it was limited to elites from developing countries to developed ones, when health care was inadequate or unavailable at home. Now, nevertheless, the direction of medical travel is changing towards developing countries, and globalisation and increasing acceptance of health services as a market commodity have led to a new trend – organised medical tourism for fee-paying patients, regardless of citizenship, who shop for health services overseas using new information sources, new agents to connect them to providers and inexpensive air travel to reach their medical destination. The impact of medical tourism on health systems is as yet unknown due to a lack of data and empirical analysis of the phenomenon. Governments are noticeably playing a strong marketing and promotional role in the emerging medical tourism industry.

►Invite travellers to discover diverse cultural themes, covering a broad range of distinctive, cultural offers.

►Implement different activities offering a variety of cultural experiences to tourists.

►Offer a platform for co-operation and synergies between cultural, tourism and economic stakeholders due to their structural organisation.

►Encourage cultural networks.

►Create new projects.

►Develop a sound relationship with the community.

►Develop new tourist products related to cultural and creative tourism.

►Develop new tourist products related to sustainable tourism in industrial areas.

►Develop educational activities both for leisure and lifelong learning.

►Use the Cultural Routes to provide opportunities for enhanced co-operation and exchange of knowledge and skills between the members of the network.

►Acknowledge that religious themes are still important, whether by focusing on an important historic personality or by being dedicated to cultural and religious identity.


Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, France. ©Pixabay.

Themes that are central to a destination's identity become the heart of the brand. They serve to present and promote a range of tourist attractions and activities, including styles of accommodation, appropriate modes of travel, and food and drink. A theme offers the traveller an invitation to explore and appreciate what is important to a destination and its people – to engage in a journey of discovery. It helps travellers learn and understand what makes one place different to another, and what makes it different to home. It also helps them invest in the travel experience to gain the most from it.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, what is proposed is to plan the branding strategy for the Alpine macro-region, with a view to the creation of a macro-regional brand through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The branding strategy aims to bring together the brands of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in the Alpine macro-region, within the framework of the region, to create a new "umbrella" brand merging the identity of the two (Cultural Routes on one hand and macro-region on the other hand). The strategy will also increase the visibility of the Cultural Routes as well as of the Alpine macro-region as cultural tourism destinations. Thus, the heritage which the Cultural Routes promote is a key resource for building the macro-regional brand.

The current report has provided a basis for the brand audit, strategy development and implementation through an extensive literature review and primary surveys undertaken in the Alpine macro-region. However, to ensure the success of the ALP brand a further participative approach and involvement of stakeholders is needed. It is advised that the brand values and essence should be further reviewed and finalised by the Working Group in conjunction with the designer developing the visual identity. It is important for long-term success that the ALP brand develops with stakeholder ownership and the support of the Council of Europe and the European Union.
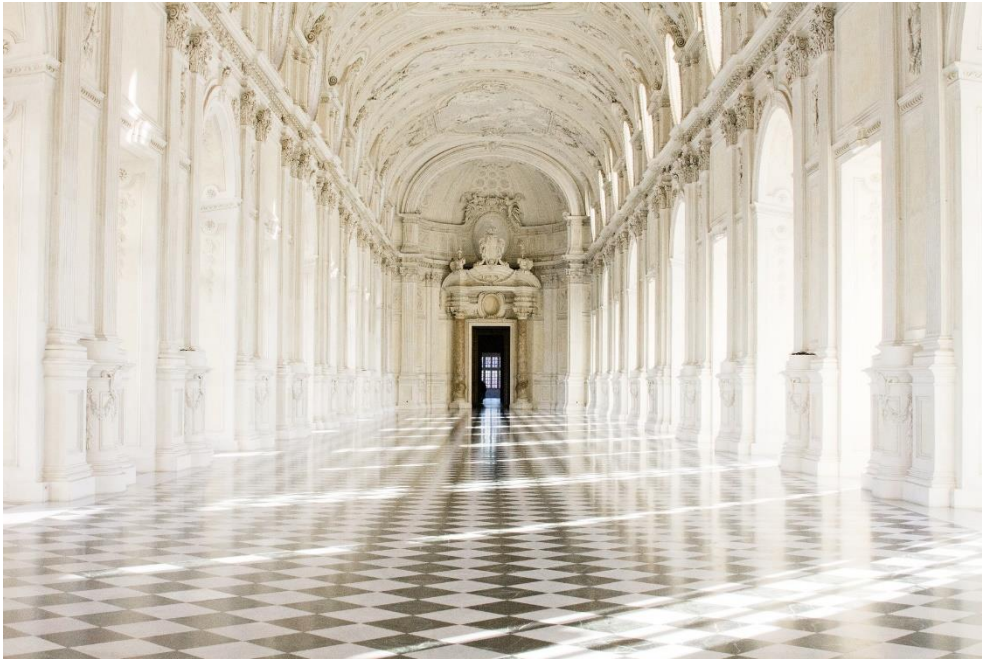
Torino, Italy.©Pixabay.

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List of abbreviations

CR	Cultural Route
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission
ETC	European Travel Commission
EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region
EUSALP	European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
EUSDR	European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
GIS	Geographic Information System
IT	Information Technology
PR	Public Relations
R4U	Routes4U
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their knowhow, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.