

HOP Project: Communicate Your City to Tourists

A Comparative Analysis of Ventspils & Bitola/Prilep's Tourism
Communication Strategies and Creative contributions for improvement

Courses: Communication Theories, Business Communications, Change Management

Institutions: Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, University of St. Kliment Ohridski -
Bitola

Partners from the local government helix: Municipality of Ventspils, Bitola and Prilep N.
Macedonia



European Alliance: COLOURS

Methodology: Hands On Project Internships (HOP), MultiCreation

Project Duration: 3 Weeks

Involved students: 45

Involved professors/lecturers: renata.petrevska@uklo.edu.mk and kristiana.balode@venta.lv

- The Moodle course is: <https://moodle.uklo.edu.mk/course/view.php?id=157>

- The student access is through the following login: username: coloursstudent, password:
Colours123#

Our Google Meet URL: <https://meet.google.com/zxa-ewws-jjw>

Project Introduction

Welcome to your "Hands-on Project" as part of the European Alliance "COLOURS"! This is a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project where you will work in international teams with students from the University of St. Kliment Ohridski in Bitola, North Macedonia and Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, Latvia.

The challenge is to step into the shoes of a communication consultant. Your team's mission is to analyze, compare, and evaluate how two unique European cities—Ventspils, Latvia, and Bitola and Prilep, North Macedonia—communicate their identity and offerings to potential tourists. By examining their strategies, you will apply concepts from communication theory to a real-world case, develop valuable intercultural communication skills, and produce actionable recommendations. The professors deploy a multi-stakeholder facilitation approach (MultiCreation) which enables positioning of the problem, devising solutions and addressing reality in co-creative manner among the involved parties and contexts.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this project, you will be able to:

- Analyze the multi-channel communication strategy of a municipality.
- Apply communication theories (e.g., media richness theory, semiotics, persuasion) to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism marketing materials.
- Collaborate effectively in a diverse, international team using online tools.
- Compare and contrast different cultural and strategic approaches to tourism communication.
- Create and apply the learned into tangible original contribution and recommendations
- Synthesize your findings into a clear, professional, and persuasive presentation.

Team Composition

You will be assigned to a mixed team, with members from universities. Each team member brings the invaluable perspective of being a local expert for their own city.

Project Timeline & Tasks (3 Weeks)

Week 1: Foundation & Discovery (Individual & Team Kick-off) (14 October) 10.00 CET

1. Team Icebreaker & Planning (Synchronous/Asynchronous)

- Meet your international teammates online.
- Icebreaker Activity: Each member shares one photo of their "favourite hidden gem" in their city and explains why a tourist should visit it. This is your first piece of comparative data!
- As a team, establish your communication norms: Which platform will you use for daily chats (e.g., WhatsApp, Discord)? How often will you have a video call (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet)?
- Assign initial roles (e.g., Project Coordinator, Tech Support, Research Lead). These can be rotated.

2. Individual Research - "Become the City Expert" (Asynchronous)

- Students from Ventspils will research Ventspils' tourism communication.
- Students from Bitola will research Bitola's tourism communication.
- You must investigate the city's strategy using the Guiding Questions for Analysis below. Collect examples, screenshots, links, and photos.

Week 2: Collaboration & Synthesis (Intensive Teamwork) (21 October)

3. Knowledge Sharing Session (Synchronous)

- Hold a team meeting where the "Ventspils experts" present their initial findings to the "Bitola/Prilep experts," and vice-versa.
- Use this session to ask clarifying questions and gain a deeper understanding of the other city's context.

4. Comparative Analysis (Asynchronous/Synchronous) - to be explained to the team and guided by the @VUAS students

- As a team, use a shared online document (e.g., Google Docs) or a whiteboard tool (e.g., Miro) to compare the two cities side-by-side based on the guiding questions.
- Identify key themes: What are the biggest similarities and differences?
- Target Audience Analysis: Who are the primary and secondary audiences being targeted? How effectively does the communication reach and resonate with them?
- Message Consistency Analysis: Is there a consistent brand identity, visual style, and message across all channels (Integrated Marketing Communications)?
- Conduct a SWOT Analysis: For each city's communication strategy, what are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats?
- Start outlining your final presentation. What is the core story you want to tell?

5. What can we do? Think of solutions – to be explained to the team and guided by the Business communication students @UKLO

- Contemplate at least 3 suggestions for improvement, which can be conveyed to the three municipalities
- Try to sketch out an interesting map which we can put online and in print (bigger format, postcard format, ...) of the most important sites/activities for tourists to visit, for the three cities

6. CIMO logic – to be explained to the team and guided by the Change management students @UKLO COLOURS

- Deploy the CIMO logic in your research and shape the output to describe the Context-Interventions-Mechanisms-Outputs

Week 3: Finalization & Presentation (28 October)

7. Create the Final Presentation/Video (Asynchronous)

- Develop your presentation slides (e.g., using Google Slides, Canva, or PowerPoint). Ensure a consistent and professional design. Use the COLOURS corporate branded templates (available on the Moodle portal)
- Divide the work for creating content for the slides. Every team member must contribute.

- The presentation should clearly present your analysis, comparison, and conclude with concrete recommendations for both municipalities.

8. Rehearse and Refine (Synchronous)

- Hold at least one full rehearsal of your presentation. Check timing (aim for 15 minutes), flow, and ensure smooth handovers between speakers.
- Provide constructive feedback to each other.

End of Week 3: Presentation (4 November)

9. Final Presentation & Submission

- Deliver your presentation to your lecturers and peers during the designated class time.
- Submit your final files via the course learning platform – in the Drive.

Guiding Questions for Analysis

1. Communication Channels:
 - Digital: What is the official tourism website? Which social media platforms are used (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube)? Is there a mobile app? Do they use travel bloggers or influencers?
 - Physical: What materials are available at Tourist Information Centres (brochures, maps)? Are there physical advertisements (posters, billboards)?
 - Partnerships: How do they partner with local hotels, restaurants, and museums to communicate with tourists?
2. Message & Tone (The "How"):
 - What is the central slogan or value proposition for the city? (e.g., "A family-friendly city," "A historical adventure," "The city of festivals").
 - What is the overall tone of voice? (e.g., formal, friendly, playful, adventurous).
 - What key visuals and symbols are used to represent the city? (e.g., specific landmarks, colours, logos).
3. Clarity & Accessibility:
 - How easy is it for a potential tourist to find essential information (e.g., accommodation, transport, opening hours)?

- In which languages is the information available? Does this match their target tourist demographics?
- Is the information clear and consistent across all channels?
- 4. Gaps & Opportunities (The "What's Missing?"):
 - Who is the primary target audience being addressed? Is any key demographic being ignored (e.g., solo travellers, budget backpackers, luxury tourists)?
 - Is there a story or unique aspect of the city that is being under-communicated?
 - What could City A learn from City B's strategy? What is one successful tactic from Ventspils that Bitola could adopt, and vice-versa?
- 5. Creative applications
 - What can we design that can be useful for the Municipalities immediately or with little rework and organization?

Final Deliverable

- A 15-minute team presentation delivered virtually.
 - Alternatively, a 5-minute video prerecorded by the team, which we can put on the portal and can be presented at the final conference
- Submission of the presentation slides.
- A one-pager Executive Summary (approximately 500 words) outlining the project's main findings and recommendations.
- Creative original contribution – a map, poster, infographic, post-card, ...
- The scrapbook document/folder with the research process and materials

Evaluation Criteria

Your project will be evaluated as a group based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Weight	Description of Excellence
Depth of Analysis	30%	The analysis goes beyond a simple description. It deeply investigates multiple channels, accurately identifies the core message, and uses concepts from the course to

critique the strategies. Evidence (screenshots, examples) is used effectively.

Comparative Synthesis & Recommendations	40%	The presentation skillfully synthesizes findings, drawing insightful comparisons between Ventspils and Bitola. The SWOT analysis is thoughtful. Recommendations are specific, creative, and directly linked to the identified weaknesses and opportunities. The CIMO logic is used properly and leads to good recommendations. The original creation has potential to be used by the municipalities.
Collaboration & Intercultural Engagement	20%	Evidence of seamless teamwork is clear in the final presentation. All members contribute meaningfully. The team demonstrates an appreciation for the different cultural contexts of the two cities in their analysis. (This can be supported by a brief peer evaluation form).
Presentation Quality & Clarity	10%	The presentation is well-structured, visually engaging, and professional. Speakers are clear, confident, and adhere to the time limit. The overall narrative is compelling and easy to follow.