

# Trends in the Development of Tourism Marketing Communications

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## Abstract

*Marketing communication has become an integral part of the city development. Coexistence of marketing communications is significantly different from traditional forms of communication used several years ago. Communication environment has become complex and complicated. In today's rising competitiveness in the tourism market it is no longer enough just to create an attractive offer; it needs to be particularly sold to a wide range of target segments through effective marketing communication methods. If the cities wants successfully promote and enforce the competition in the tourism market, they must meet demanding requirements and demonstrate strong creativity that characterizes targeted market segments.*

*For this purpose they are searching for creative and effective ways to inform target groups about attractions, sites and facilities they can offer. Attractiveness of the destination gives special attraction, which is different from other destinations, which makes the market competitive. This involves not only the product, but also marketing and institutional innovations. Responsibility for the development of the managed area lies in hands of municipal authorities that have purposefully communicate with entities in the area, but also beyond, in order to ensure the area prosperity. They must find out what is exceptional, what are their strengths and define they advantage compared to the others.*

*Specific tools used by the representatives of the towns and villages to distinguish them from the competitor's offers the marketing mix, which consists of interconnected tools to realize marketing goals. These tools operate complex as a single entity for each target segment. The basic marketing mix is in the classic marketing literature known as the four P: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Ongoing changes and innovations have requested the extension of basic communication marketing mix with new creative trends and tools. Appropriate communication mix elements setup can effectively push the offer to the target segments and be successful against direct or indirect competition.*

*The objective of this paper is to highlight, through the application of a diverse marketing communications mix activities, how it is possible to ensure the success of the city on the tourism market.*

**Key words:** Marketing communication, Marketing mix, Tourism, Product, Creative tools

**JEL Classification:** L83, M37, H79

## 1 Introduction

Marketing as an effective enforcement tool on the market and competitive environment has become in recent years as an essential part of the tourism. By suitable setting of the communication mix elements the tourism offer can be successfully enforced in the eyes of target segments and effective against direct or indirect competition. One of the main towns and cities actual objectives is to ensure their further development and make it to its advantage. Towns and cities are now becoming each other competitors who are trying to get new tourist visits from the

ranks of the public with the help of various marketing tools. Several authors agree with the fact that in this case the communication is particularly important tool through which cities get into people's awareness.

Through to the communication, they build and maintain relationships with its citizens, inform the public about its existence and offer wide range of tourism products. Cities have to communicate using channels where they have their actual target segment, which is now primarily online. With the combination of new online media a non-traditional communication mix can be achieved that provides complex effect on the visitor and transform it from potential to actual. Marketing communications is becoming an integral part of the development of the city and in the current information age plays an important role, therefore it can't be avoided by the local government, in our case the town Banská Bystrica. The aim of this paper is to show through the application of a varied marketing communications mix activities how it is possible to ensure the success of the city on the tourism market.

## 2 Theoretical Background

Marketing and Marketing Communication of the towns and villages is a recently discussed topic and pays significant attention. One of the most famous Marketing theorists Mr. Kotler (1991), who argued that the concept of marketing is necessary to continuously extend as far as possible. In the sixties of the last century Marketing began to be applied in tourism. Another important place is mainly attributed to Mr. Kolb (2006). Author revealed the potential of tourism in the area and shows how attractive the specific characteristics of the locations and build a package out of them, which attract many possible visitors. It may be overnight visitors, business travelers or tourists looking for adventure. Meaning of the marketing in cities with the relation of tourism development deals the Czech author pair Foret and Foretová (2001). One of the major Slovak authors who have dealt with the marketing of towns and villages include Gúčík (2004), according to whom tourism development can not be realized without active communication. This represents communication methods and means for the presentation of the area and its products to existing and potential customers. Key instrument for penetrating the market has become a marketing mix. The basic marketing mix in a classic marketing literature known as the Four P: Product, Price, Place, Promotion. Loreto (2014) marketing tourism expands by additional Four "P": People, Packages, Programming, Partnership. Their mission is to bring visitors to the destination and force him to buy products. Another author, Morrison (1995) also focused on this problematic and according to him the destination marketing mix consists of the following elements:



**Fig. 1 Destination marketing mix**

Source: A. M. Morrison: *Marketing pohostinství a cestovního ruchu*, Victoria Publishing, Praha, 1995

Marketing communications, also known as a communication mix, is formed by tools, which in combination, can produce the desired response of the target segments. The basic communication tools include advertising, public relations, personal communication, direct marketing and sales promotion. To communicate with the target groups the city can use a combination of marketing communication tools.

Kotler and Armstrong (2007) define the marketing communication mix as a "toolbox that consists of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations, which the company used to convince communication with customers and to meet marketing objectives." Communication policy is the first and important element of the marketing mix destination. For the target segment it is the primary stimulus for the selection of its visits (Novacká 2013). The essence of towns and villages marketing communications is to promote the city as a product on the market to target groups, to build the image of the location, improve relations between citizens and government, strengthen citizens' identification with the city to create a suitable platform for their participation in local development. The aim of the joint effort is to solve problems relating to the provision of services and products in collaboration with all development actors (Kutscherauer 2006).

Current functioning of marketing communications is significantly different from traditional forms of communication used several years ago. Communications environment has become a complex system. Ongoing changes and innovations have requested to extend the basic communication mix of new creative trends and tools. Suitable setting elements of effective communication mix can be successful in the eyes of the target segments offer and be successful against direct or indirect competition.

Since the essential prerequisites for success in the market includes orientation on the visitors, an effective communication with them is very important. Thus becomes a necessity to build relationships with visitors who need to adapt and differentiate all communication activities. Experts in marketing communications are searching for new ways to increase the effectiveness of these communication activities (Friánová 2011). It should be pointed out that in terms of tourism, the communication mix and its individual elements are tailored to the needs of specific market

places and territorial units.

Several authors (Damster 2005, Goldblatt 2007, Lorette 2013, Šindler 2003, Gúčík a kol. 2011) now due to the new marketing trends indicate a higher number of tools of communication mix. These essential tool of marketing communication can also assign the use of the Internet and event marketing. When using these tools is most important to recognize the need for action all the instruments toward the target group. Internet is the most powerful and the fastest growing medium in the context of use for the purpose of advertising, promotion and marketing communications. These characteristics have been reached after transformation of the so-called transaction medium to a social medium, which caused direct involvement of the customer to the marketing communications. (Leboff, 2011). Due to the high penetration of Internet (broadband and mobile) and the spread of tablets and smart phones, internet access is possible almost anywhere and anytime. It brought new forms and possibilities for interaction between destinations and client. The basis of success is to create a sufficient web presentation (web site, social media portals, etc.), follow-ups and traffic analysis. It is important to constantly improve individual components of the Internet presentation, which is based on the analysis. Equally significant is trending and flexible adaptation to market requirements. Strong competition in the Internet environment requires online destination presentation to be comprehensive, attractive, with relevant information. (Novacká et al. 2013). Researches shows that there are several principles that can help to achieve long-term effective online marketing communication: creativity and spontaneity, perseverance, originality. Important is the complexity, continuous analysis and optimization. It should not be underestimated that social networks like e.g. Facebook are no more just web sites with a limited number of visitors. In April 2013 there were almost 2.1 million registered users from Slovakia on Facebook, what is almost 1/2 of the Slovakian population.

One of the first steps for determination of marketing communication impact in terms of a particular destination is a detailed analysis of the elements of the city in order to understand its characteristics and the benefits it can offer to its visitors. Consequently, it is necessary to monitor the behavior of tourists and choose the segment of potential tourists to which it is possible to focus on. The ultimate goal is a decision on a marketing message, you may cast this segment of potential visitors and appropriately incorporate it into the marketing strategy of the city". (Kolb 2006).

### **3 Communication Mix Analysis of the Banská Bystrica City**

Information about the city and its current events provides the City office of Banská Bystrica through its Promotion department, the Banská Bystrica Information Center and the Agency "Visit BB". Slovak Tourist Board (SACR) is also involved in the city tourism promotion of Banská Bystrica through its Regional Branch Banská Bystrica and Regional Tourism Organization (OOCR) Central Slovakia. Mapping the current state of ongoing communication activities and tools, which the city uses to the promotion and development of tourism has been realized from secondary sources and through analysis of knowledge of the Promotion Department of Banská Bystrica and its departments Information Center BB (IC BB), Department of Tourism and Agencies "Visit BB". The survey was conducted during 2013 and early 2014. The results were

evaluated and used to the overall assessment of the state of the communication activities of the city.

Within the City office of Banská Bystrica a Promotion Department of the city is allocated, consisting of Information Center and three additional departments for: Tourism, Culture and Sport. Information Center was established under the name of Culture and Information Center (CIS) already in 1985. Services are provided by Tourist information office since 1992 and has actual 4 employees. The most important marketing communication activities of IC BB are marketing research, creation of complex tourism products and promotion of the city, public relations, trade fairs, exhibitions, organizing cultural and social events. In addition to working with various cultural institutions IC BB cooperates as well as with the city authorities (Department promotion center) and the Agency "Visit BB".

Department of Tourism is responsible for marketing, promotion, statistics and analysis in the field and creating good relationships between the public and city visitors. It consists of 3 university graduates employees. Promotion Department of the city analyzes and coordinates the development of culture and sport. His partner is Visit BB s. r. o. The Agency uses for city promotion various web portal tools, outdoor (billboards and city lights), stationery, mobile applications and social networking site Facebook. Visit BB does not deal with market research, sales promotion or social events. The biggest cooperation obstacle of all city tourism subjects is the lack of funds and their different interests. Despite to the fact that tourism is a major strategic line of local government, the city of Banská Bystrica hasn't prepared any general valid marketing strategy or any kind of strategies for tourism development. There are actual ongoing activities to build a Economic and social development program for 2014-2020. Act as a boarding center of tourism is the vision of Banská Bystrica.

Among important marketing activities of the city includes the usage of marketing communication tools. From the communication tools the most used tool is Advertising. Advertising and promotional materials are frequently placed at the City Office, IC BB Office and on the city website in PDF format. They are available for residents, visitors, investors and representatives of partnership cities. Traditional materials of the city includes catalogs and brochures, which are written in Slovak, English and German. In addition to the catalog they are three booklets made, which includes a site map and photos, an overview of free time activities and various events. On creation process of these promotional materials mainly the Agency "Visit BB" was involved in collaboration with IC BB. There are additionally various book publications in Slovak language - My Banská Bystrica (Sásová & Rudlová), Urbis Orbis, etc. In April 2012 the Department of Tourism together with IC BB issued Tourism guide trough the city of Banská Bystrica in the Slovak, English, German and Hungarian language. This guide contains comprehensive product packages, which will complete the range of products and services. IC BB also issued a two-sided full-color orienteering map of the city in A4 format. Produced in three languages (Slovak, English, German), and the addition of the mapping contains a text section where you can find basic information about the city, monuments, museums and galleries. The IC BB also provides additional various tourist and biking maps around the city area.

To increase awareness and promotion in addition to classic promotional materials city also uses the tools of outdoor advertising (stands, posters, billboards, city lights), where selected tourist attractions and tourism services are presented. They are mainly located in frequent streets or

public transport stations. City annually publishes a calendar of events where visitors and citizens are informed about planned events in the city. The city is also promoted through bi-weekly "News". The monthly newspaper City Hall has been suspended in July 2014 due to rejection of subsidies from the city budget. Additional principal city promotional materials belongs various souvenirs sold by the IC BB, such as jugs, badges, key chains, t-shirts, postcards, plaques of the city. From September 2012 runs a nationwide marketing campaign "This is also Banská Bystrica", which aims to raise awareness of Banská Bystrica as a attractive tourism destination. The campaign is organized by the Agency "Visit BB", which is financing it trough the sponsorship funds of tourism operators.

There are several various events during the year that helps to build the image of the city. Traditional events in Banská Bystrica are Radvanský market, Christmas and Easter markets, New Years Square party, City Day, City Wandering. Since 2011 one of the most important city events is the food festival Griliada (City Barbecue party). The city takes also participation on the Tourism World Day and On tour guides event through visiting most attractive sights of the city. Banská Bystrica has its own qualified local tour guides significantly involved in its development. There are several important sports competitions representing the city, one of the most known is the sport event Banská Bystrica Track. It is a traditional ski race, hosted by the sports association "Non-stop run" in cooperation with the city of Banská Bystrica and the surrounding villages. A new event on international level since 2012 is the Banská Bystrica Marathon with the slogan "Heart of the athlete beats in the heart of Slovakia". During the event several cultural events and concerts take place, marathon participants have free entry to the Museum of SNP and various sports facilities.

Public relation is focused on the general public and realized mainly through participation on various exhibitions and tourism fairs. City participates on ITF SLOVAKIATOUR in Bratislava. Only in the year 2012, the city did not participate during the traditional fair and even didn't respond to the offer. Change occurred in 2013, when the local city government joined together with Regional Tourism Organization of Central Slovakia (OOCR), which presented the city and its surroundings under the brand destinations "Visit BB". Since 2010, the city also attends fairs Utazas Budapest in Hungary and for the region Banská Bystrica (exhibition of regional development and tourism). Exhibitions are mainly intended to reinforce the existing contacts and providing wide range of tourism products for visitors.

Personal communication is regularly used by staff ICBB during contact with visitors, who use their services. The aim of personal communication is particularly cooperation in the promotion and provision of information about the city and tourism products. Partnerships are mainly formed on the cooperation basis and their main concern is the relationships development. The city is constantly trying to use various possibilities of cooperation with other cities. This makes the many years of friendship and exchange experiences with countries such as Italy (Alba, Ascoli Piceno), Poland (Radom), Hungary (Dabas), Bulgaria (Montante), Czech Republic (Hradec Králové). As the biggest obstacle of the city, the cooperation between the private and public sectors is considered.

Currently in the age of information technology, the major communication tool is the Internet. Electronic communication and searching for information's over the Internet in recent years become important mainly due to increasing internet connection availability. Official internet

website domain of Banská Bystrica has the name [www.banskabystrica.sk](http://www.banskabystrica.sk). Acts as a source of information for citizens and general public. Operated by the company WEBBY GROUP Ltd, site management ensures the IT Department of the City Office. Web site service is financed by the city of Banská Bystrica. In the main menu option "Visitor" the city map and photo gallery are available, further information's about the history, geography and demographics, promotions, events, offices and institutions. One of the web site positive aspects are keyword search, virtual city tours, promotional materials (brochures) direct download, links to other relevant websites ([www.icbb.sk](http://www.icbb.sk), [www.visitbanskabystrica.sk](http://www.visitbanskabystrica.sk)). One of the website negatives are that the web site is only translated to the English language. Website is for the city visitor unattractive, because of rare graphic elements and website is not exactly aimed at target groups. For users in the Slovak language, the official website of the city in the "Visitor" lacks important information on services like accommodation, catering, transport and others. All these information could be found just after several clicks through the page of Information Center. This page contains a discussion forum where visitors can send their questions, ideas and opinions over e-mail to the Department of Tourism and Information Center in Banská Bystrica. Based on our opinion the website is missing mainly the opportunity to book packages directly through it, what could help the city to sell more products and attract more visitors.

Web page of IC BB has only Slovak and English version. Website domain IC BB takes the name [www.icbb.sk](http://www.icbb.sk) and is operated by them self. Since it is part of Banská Bystrica local government it is financed from the city budget. Positive thing is that unlike to the official city website, this contains detailed information about the infrastructure of tourism at one place - road map, free internet public locations, tickets, accommodation and dining options. Suitable for the visitors are also the calendar and an overview of events, tips for trips, virtual tour, monuments, culture, transport, sport. Additionally to this the website provides online shop with souvenirs, promotional materials, publishing books and tourist maps and guides. Part about Sightseeing tours provides the information about guides, price list, but verification of client satisfaction questionnaire form is not working correctly. Web site domain [www.visitbanskabystrica.sk](http://www.visitbanskabystrica.sk) is marked by the slogan "Discover, experience and taste". This web page contains most attractive and most modern design from the graphic design perspective. Above the main website menu photos showing city attractions, sites, events and festivals are scrolling. On the website basic information about the town, culture, and free time activities, events, gastronomy, accommodation could be found. Its biggest lack is the missing translation to any international languages, as the website is provided only in Slovak language.

In addition to the official website, the city uses the social networks as a method of presentation and advertising. Enjoying the greatest popularity, most used is the Facebook. In terms of increasing promotion and closer contact to the visitors, the city decided to register its profile on this social network. For promotion, the public profile named "City Banská Bystrica FB" is used with more than 1,460 fans in July 2014. During the one year of its existence, the number of fans recorded a threefold increase. The advantage of this marketing communication tool is the ability to quickly and easily communicate with the potential visitors. Another advantage is the relatively high degree of direct targeting, because the fan site upgrades becomes only the person who is interested over its content. Unfortunately, at the present time, this profile is used mainly for notification of events and communication with local citizens who express their dissatisfaction via this profile. The public profile of the Visit BB agency called "Visit Banská Bystrica" could be also found on social media Facebook. Profile was followed by over 400 fans in July 2014. On

this profile the city news, information, photos mainly for tourists and the local population about the various upcoming events could be found (similar to the official city profile it contains almost the same information). However, photo gallery includes only few photos of historical monuments, attractive events in the city and additionally they are not systematically arranged. (<https://sk-sk.facebook.com/pages/Mesto-Banska-Bystrica-FB> [cit.18.06.2014]).

Actual information about Banská Bystrica, visitors and local citizens could also get through a new Android application "Visit Banská Bystrica". The application is a mobile guide for any visitor of the city. After its download to mobile phone, users can access everything they need regarding information about the city, catering, accommodation, sports, shopping, transportation, events calendar, map of the city. The application is modern and has a very attractive graphical design. It contains detailed information relevant to each visitor, but again lacking foreign language mutation. It contains information about past events, which is in our opinion not very useful type of information. The city map inside the application is in the form of a downloaded pictures, making it unreadable without the text part and related explanations. This lack is making the usage of the map tool useless not only for local citizens but also for tourists. The last tool used for internet communication are the cultural portals. Specifically, the websites [www.kamdomesta.sk](http://www.kamdomesta.sk), [www.podujatie.sk](http://www.podujatie.sk) and [www.festivaly.sk](http://www.festivaly.sk). These websites provide visitors basic information about the events, complex program and the performers. Among of these websites the most useful, which helps to promote the city, is the [www.festivaly.sk](http://www.festivaly.sk) that is placing related press releases concerning published events.

## 4 Summary of Findings

From the previous analysis we can choose a few facts. For increasing number of visitors to the city the greatest importance is referred to the marketing events, advertising through advertising and promotional materials and over the Internet. The city propagation via exhibitions, fairs and personal communication is used in a very rare form.

**Tab. 1 Marketing communication tools used by Banská Bystrica**

<b>Event marketing</b>	Radvan fair	Easter and Christmas markets	New Year's Eve on the Square	City Days, City Barbecue	City Wandering	BB track	BB marathon	World Day of Tourism and others
<b>Advertising and promotional materials</b>	Catalog "Welcome to Banská Bystrica"	Brochures	Book publications about the city	City map including neighborhood locations	Souvenirs	Event calendar		
<b>Outdoor advertising</b>	City stands	Banners	City lights	Billboards				
<b>Public relations</b>	Exhibitions and fairs	ITF Slovakia tour	Utazas Budapest	Pro Region BB				
<b>Information and</b>	City official	Social network	Android application					



<b>communication media</b>	website	Facebook	
<i>Personal communication</i>	Contact with the clients	Communication with the subjects of the city	Communication with partnership cities

Findings from our survey may partly contribute to find effective marketing tools and create meaningful and effective marketing mix of communication that can appeal to a wide range of target segments.

### Current situation:

### Solution proposal:

<p><b>Strategy, image, brand</b></p> <p>Even in 2011 the City office established private marketing company Visit BB, and Regional Tourism Organization of Central Slovakia, the Tourism Development Strategy for city of Banská Bystrica is still missing. City builds its brand by various marketing campaigns, representing itself as a family city and creating conditions for better and more intense life in the city. By this the city creates a brand image more for locals citizens than for tourism.</p>	<p>Development of a strategic document is a necessary step, which has to be followed up by all interested subject participating on the city tourism. Fulfillment of its objectives, strengthening the image of the city and operating under a common brand name can bring positive results in the development of tourism and attract more visitors. From the perspective of a visitor who comes to the destination, evaluates all the services offered as a complex unit under a common brand.</p>
<p><b>Public relations</b></p> <p>Forms of marketing, such as participation in exhibitions, tour information, workshops and events to promote domestic and foreign tourism are represented minimally.</p>	<p>The result of intensive activity in Public relations area is an increase in prestige, awareness improve achieving successful results, generally the creation of a positive city image.</p>
<p><b>Marketing research</b></p> <p>Marketing research of satisfaction, requirements and visitor proposals in Banská Bystrica, covered by Information center BB during summer season every two years is insufficient. Questionnaires are kept in printed form, and their results are used only for internal purposes. The questionnaire survey is also designed for local citizens - this is how the city tries to involve the local residents to support and promote the city.</p>	<p>Effective tourism marketing requires a deep knowledge of the target market group through marketing research, either in the quantitative form (numbers of visitors and their costs) or qualitative form (reasons for the visit, perception of the city, their observations, suggestions, recommendations, wishes). Marketing research has to be realized with higher frequency, at least twice a year, because the wishes, needs and expectations of visitors are now every moment rapidly changing. Based on the results it could be possible to finalize conclusions which may bring changes and</p>

	innovations for the future city development.
<p><b>Segmentation of potential visitors</b> Based on sociological survey it has been identified, that the Banská Bystrica city divided potential visitors into three target groups - young families with children, seniors and business travelers. This segmentation of the market is insufficient, due to the fact that there is no communication strategy for each segments.</p>	<p>The introduction of visitor segmentation process leads to more efficient marketing communication. Focus on segments: - by country of origin - according to lifestyle (handicapped, visitors to cultural events and historical monuments, tourists, cyclists, etc.), according to the number (single travelers, organized groups) etc.</p>
<p><b>Social network Facebook</b> On the official website of Banská Bystrica city a discussion forum for culture exists, which creates space for questions related to the city administration work. Profile was set up as a promotional tool to increase awareness of upcoming events and activities of the city. Therefore, they are not published comments under individual contributions of Banská Bystrica city.</p>	<p>Merge of public profiles "city of Banská Bystrica" and "Visit BB" on the social network Facebook into one, because the visitor perceives a given destination as a complex unit. Public profile should not only serve to promote upcoming events, but needs to identify what potential visitors actually prefer. Allow visitors to post on social network their own positive impressions and references (eg. blog posts, comments and recommendations on Facebook). Active communication with the fans may contribute to enhance the reputation and the credibility of the destination.</p>

## 5 Conclusions

Banská Bystrica has a rich 755 years old history as a mining town, which is represented by 263 historic buildings. It is a destination that has the potential tourist values, as well as lots of accommodation and catering possibilities including other services. Combining these services into a comprehensive product and ensuring proper city presentation is desirable to improve the communication with visitors and became an important center of tourism. The target of this contribution was based on varied marketing mix communication analysis activities to show the possibility how to ensure the success of the city on the tourism market. Based on the communication mix analysis tools used by Banská Bystrica tourism activities, we found both positive and negative impacts of marketing communication activities. As it turned out, for the better city publicizing and visitors attracting an effective marketing research focused on target segments could be very helpful, development of creative tourism products, unified presentation of branding destination through the redesign of the official website, removal of website lacks and usage of latest marketing communication tools. Due to actual information saturation is required to pay increased attention to the possibilities of the Internet as a communication channel and tool. Official city internet website presents a cost-effective and fast communication tool between the target groups and the local government. It should therefore be administered carefully to provide

information's in most effective, easiest and expressive way as possible. Several principles could help to achieve long-term effective online marketing communication: creativity and spontaneity, perseverance, originality. Important is the complexity, continuous analysis and optimization. However, it is necessary to use all the tools of marketing communication, because through the application of a varied marketing communication mix activities the success of the city on the tourism market can be determined.

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