

Regional umbrella identity
Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations

**MAIN POINTS OF THE
BRANDING STRATEGY**

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Contents

1. BRAND DEFINITION	3
1.1. Vision.....	3
1.2. Mission	4
1.3. Brand values	4
1.4. Brand promise.....	5
2. BRAND POSITIONING / DIFFERENTIATION	6
3. BRAND IDENTITY	7
3.1. Name of the brand	7
3.2. Brand personality & tone of voice.....	8

1. BRAND DEFINITION

This document defines the purpose, values and promises of the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations (WBCoC) regional umbrella identity brand. It answers the question how the brand will be positioned on the market and what are the main points of differentiation from similar products on the market. It defines the brand identity, which is expressed in the name of the brand and in the description of brand personality.

The WBCoC is more than just a common regional cultural heritage route that promotes the richness and diversity of the Western Balkans cultural heritage, left by several civilisations and empires that crossed the region over the last 3000 years. It speaks about an intertwining of different cultures and religions which creates unique multi-layered cultural heritage in one of the most unique Europe's region where the East meets the West. It is a synonym of authentic, high quality cultural tourism experiences in the WB6 economies region, which relies on knowledge and professional approach.

1.1. Vision

The vision of the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations regional umbrella identity is to become **a leading regional identity** that will promote the story of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the region through high quality, authentic cultural tourism itineraries, developed in close cooperation of the cultural, tourism and creative industry stakeholders from the WB6 economies.

Diversity and richness of the cultural heritage in combination with untapped nature and contemporary culture provides numerous possibilities for creation of high-quality tailor-made cultural tourism experiences of the WB region for different target groups of visitors.

Comprehensive offer of a high quality, authentic, tailor-made regional cultural tourism itineraries is the main differentiation point of the WBCoC regional umbrella identity from other similar cultural tourism products available on the market.

This will be ensured through the WBCoC brand labelling system.

Through established regional identity governance and management structure and efficient business model, which will encourage development of strong partnership and network of key stakeholders in the WB6 economies, it **will create a favourable environment** where new, creative regional cultural tourism itineraries will flourish, while allowing individual economies to continue developing own brands, sharing the umbrella identity.

1.2. Mission

The mission of the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations umbrella identity is to promote the common cultural and natural heritage through development of high quality, authentic cultural tourism products/itineraries and experiences that will increase **the visibility of the region and its rich cultural and natural heritage** in the Europe and worldwide and, thus, **attract more tourists to the region, contribute to economic development, growth and job creation.**

For visitors, we wish to offer unforgettable authentic cultural experience of the WB6 region.

For stakeholders, who will meet the brand labelling criteria and obtain the WBCoC brand label, we wish to create a favourable business environment that will contribute to their successful development and business performance.

For local communities and destinations, we wish to contribute to increasing their visibility in the cultural tourism market and contribute to the establishment of favourable environment, where SMEs and local people will be motivated to develop new, innovative and high quality services and products to be integrated in the WBCoC umbrella identity offer. This will contribute to the sustainable economic growth and job creation.

1.3. Brand values

WBCoC will become a synonym of high quality cultural tourism experiences in WB region.

Brand message is: “Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations, a reliable partner for your new high quality, authentic experience in one of Europe’s most unique cultural regions between the East and West”.

This message is convenient as it addresses potential individual visitors as well as potential business partners (tour operators, travel agents) from the target markets.

Reliability and Quality guarantee are the main messages that we want to communicate to the visitors (individual visitors and international business partners). This is the main differentiation from other cultural tourism products/itineraries, already present on the market.

Reliability and Quality guarantee stem from values such as:

- Knowledge, scientific, professional approach to storytelling and development of regional cultural tourism itineraries.
- Respect for historical data by interpretation and narration of the stories of the WB region as a crossroads of civilisations.
- Professional approach to creation and provision of high quality service of each stakeholder.

- Open and trusting partnership and cooperation among local cultural heritage, tourism and other products and service providers.

Other complementary values of the brand are:

- Respect for the different cultures in the region and commitment to be tolerant in their relations.
- Respect for social, environmental and economic sustainability.
- Safety of the visitors is always in the first place.
- Flexibility in meeting visitors' wishes, needs and expectations.
- Readiness to listen and learn.
- Friendliness.

1.4. Brand promise

Brand promise is the most important aspect of the brand. It is a statement made by an organisation to its customers stating what customers can expect from their product and services. It represents the uniqueness of the brand and this is what the customers remember. It is the means to differentiate one's product or service from its competitors and win over its customers. It builds expectations in the minds of the customers through the deliverables it promises and increases the desire for the product or service. These promises are conveyed through advertisements and other marketing campaigns. It is also called a tag line – a short phrase relevant to the organisation.

The core brand message (see 1.3. Values) encompasses the main brand promises, which are divided into three segments: functional, emotional and experiential promises. While the functional promise includes tangible deliverables which the visitors actually get, emotional and experiential promises include intangible, visitor's emotional benefits and experiences. The WBCoC brand promises are as follows:

Exhibit 1: WBCoC brand promises

FUNCTIONAL PROMISES	EMOTIONAL PROMISES	EXPERIENTIAL PROMISES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High quality - quality guarantee of products and services •Professional presentation of cultural complexity and diversity •Combination of cultural and natural heritage and contemporary culture of the region •Tailor made itineraries •Co-creation of the experience with the local providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pleasant excitement •Discovering of new cultures, environments, daily life styles and people •Entertainment and socializing with people with similar values •Relaxing mind •(Return to their family roots) for specific target group of visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Authenticity •Genuine hospitality / Sense of genuine welcome •Joy / Pleasure.

The main brand promise is provision of a high quality, authentic experience of the diverse and rich cultural heritage and nature of the WB region. Visitors will get professional presentation of cultural complexity and diversity of legacies present across the region through the mosaic of attractive stories, legends and myths, developed by various civilisation and empires for millennia. Cultural heritage sites/localities that in the best possible way present the intertwining of different cultures present in the region and have obtained WBCoC brand label will be selected. Suggested itineraries will combine the rich cultural and natural heritage, and contemporary culture of the region. Tailor-made itineraries for specific groups and specific interests of visitors will be provided. An active participation of visitors by creation of their cultural experience of the region together with the local providers will enable visitors to co-create their experience. While discovering new cultures, enjoying the wildness and pureness of the nature, experiencing a daily life-styles, and socialising with the people with similar values, the visitors will be pleasantly excited, which will help relax their mind and establish balance in their lives again. The visitors will experience authenticity, which in combination with the genuine hospitality of the local providers will increase the feeling of pleasure and joy.

While the functional promises are important in the first stage of travel planning, emotional and experiential promises are important in the stage of experiencing the cultural itinerary and in the stage of sharing them with friends, relatives and on social networks. If these promises are not fulfilled, this will have large negative effect on the image of the WBCoC brand. This needs to be considered carefully in the monitoring and evaluation model of the WBCoC brand.

2. BRAND POSITIONING / DIFFERENTIATION

The name Crossroads of Civilisations is often used for promotion and marketing of regions in different countries all over the world. The common characteristic of these regions is that they possess rich and diverse legacies of different civilisations present in the region, which they want to communicate to the potential visitors. The main promise of this name is experience of specific multi-layered or mixture of cultural heritage of the region, produced by the different civilisations.

The main difference between the regions using this name is their geographical position, which usually also determines different characteristics of the natural environment, social environment or daily life, contemporary culture of the region, political environment and the stage of economic development of the region.

While the geographic position of the region is already included in the brand name (Western Balkans), other specificities of the region should be included in the brand messages, which

will create a clear position of WBCoC on the market that will differ from other regions that use the corporate name Crossroads of Civilisations.

According to this, **WBCoC brand positions** itself as a reliable partner for provision of authentic, high-quality cultural experiences in the Western Balkans as a crossroads of various civilisations, cultures, three religions and four empires between the East and West. Unique mixture of various European cultures with a touch of Orient and local specifics, placed in the pure nature between Danube river, Dinaric Alps and the Adriatic Sea, makes Western Balkans one of Europe's most unique regions.

A pool of carefully selected cultural heritage sites, natural attractions and contemporary culture offer opportunities for creating unforgettable, "once in a lifetime" tailor-made experiences for everyone: for those who would like to learn about the specific historic period, for those who would like to learn about the diversity of cultural heritage and experience the intertwining of different cultures and empires in one place, and for those who would like to experience the tradition of the region (dance, food, drinks, crafts) and the daily life of the people living in the region.

The main points of differentiation from similar cultural tourism itineraries on the market are:

- A unique geographical position between the East and West.
- A relatively small region with rich and diverse cultural heritage, and pure/wild nature between Danube river, Dinaric Alps and the Adriatic Sea.
- Western Balkans, one of the Europe's most unique cultural regions.
- Numerous cultures, four empires, and three religions have met to create a distinct cultural identity, unique in Europe.
- A unique mixture of various European cultures with a touch of Orient and local specifics, all placed in a small region at the crossroads of civilisations.
- An authentic experience of the regional cultural heritage provided by the locals.

3. BRAND IDENTITY

3.1. Name of the brand

Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations

The main elements which should be included in brand identity:

- Crossroads of Civilisations.
- The bridge between West and East.
- Four of the most prominent empires in the world were present in this region (Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian).
- The meeting point of cultures and religions.

- The borders of 4 great empires.
- Rugged terrain, wild/pure nature.

Exhibit 2: WBCoC tag words



Source: Author

3.2. Brand personality & tone of voice

The WBCoC brand personality is expressed primarily with the word **CONVINCING**.

WBCoC is a teacher in a way, trying to inspire the visitors to care. We seek to engage the visitors by sharing information in an entertaining way. We tell them stories not the boring facts. We engage them to create their own experience.

The brand tone of voice is described as:

- Intelligent
- Creative
- Flexible
- Friendly
- Relaxed
- Witty
- Adventurous
- Generous



3.3. Guidelines for designing a visual identity of the WBCoC brand

Visual identity of the WBCoC must follow the content description and background of the idea of the »Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations«. It will be used for the production of promotional material, such as leaflets, publications, ads, maps, photo points (“selfie” points), souvenirs, digital templates, for digital websites and all digital web formats and will be used also for mobile applications.

By designing a visual identity, the architecture of the storytelling of the WBCoC brand must be fully respected. This means that the visual identity design should include graphical solutions for all three levels of storytelling, where:

- the story of the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations presents the primary brand typeface;
- the 5 main storylines present the secondary brand typeface. The secondary brand typeface should be designed in a manner that will allow simple adding new storylines.
- the individual service and products providers on the third level (cultural heritage sites, accommodation, restaurants, nature and other attractions) will use the corporate logo and typography, and correspondent storyline logo and typography (provided in the Book of Standards).

A special part of visual brand identity is a brand labelling system, which is an integral part of this Branding Strategy. WBCoC brand label will be granted to those individual products and service providers whose products and services will comply with the minimal standards, required by the WBCoC brand management in order to fulfil the main promise of the WBCoC brand – “high quality, authentic regional cultural itineraries”.

The brand label model includes three brand labels – **gold, silver and bronze**. The graphical design of these brand labels should be prepared. It should be fully in line with the visual WBCoC brand identity.

The main rules that need to be respected by visual identity designing are as follows:

The visual identity should be:

- ➔ **Distinctive:** It stands out among competitors and catches the visitor’s attention.
- ➔ **Memorable:** It makes a visual impact.
- ➔ **Scalable and flexible:** It can grow and evolve with the brand.
- ➔ **Cohesive:** Each piece complements the brand identity.

The main components of the visual brand identity are:

- Logo

- Colours
- Fonts and typography
- Hierarchy
- Photography
- Illustration
- Iconography
- Data visualisation
- Interactive elements
- Video and motion
- Web design.

Logo must match, complement and enhance the WBCoC brand. It needs to be clear and simple, and flexible enough to look great on a large billboard or as a tinny social media icon. It should be equally useful for black-white and white-black photocopying.

Colour palette should be clean and flexible.

Fonts & Typography should be influenced by the shape and style of the logo.

Hierarchy should consider the storytelling architecture and brand labelling model as described above.

For other components there are no special requirements. However, they need to be in line with the Branding Strategy.