

Entrepreneurial opportunities and possibilities for financing marketing activities using EU Funds

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ABSTRACT

The modern global market presents increasing challenges before entrepreneurs to find an effective set of marketing activities and communication channels. In today's conditions of high supply and demand, customers' activities connected with looking for bidders in the multitude of offers need to be timely and well targeted. Flexible offer creation and fast and innovative offer to potential customers are the key to a successful marketing activity. It is a special opportunity for micro and small businesses that possess significant flexibility in launching marketing activities as opposed to complex processes and multiple levels of management within large enterprises. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a significant step towards online commerce, online platforms and other forms of product and service promotion. Nowadays, it is possible to use EU funds to help entrepreneurs, since these tenders also include the financing of marketing activities. The paper analyses tenders announced so far, including the financing of marketing activities of the company, all for the purpose of promotion and greater visibility. In addition to promotion, funding through the funds also includes online activities such as online commerce, online promotion etc., which were of significant assistance to companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: EU funds, marketing, marketing activities

1. INTRODUCTION

According to preliminary research, almost 85% of small entrepreneurs have not up to now used the services of a marketing expert, and every sixth entrepreneur says the reason for this is that they have not dedicated themselves to marketing. Up to 44% of entrepreneurs stress that funds are the most important asset for achieving better marketing results. One of the most common reasons for the lack of collaboration between small entrepreneurs and marketing experts is the price of these services, and 82% of entrepreneurs believe that **there is room for improvement in their marketing activities** (<http://www.expertiva.hr/blog/marketing-malih-tvrtki-istravanje>). Micro and small enterprises' marketing activities are featured through the application of both traditional and innovative forms of marketing (digital marketing), in a limited form due to lack of funds. However, applying financial support from EU funds would enable a more significant use of marketing. The aim of the paper is to analyse the possibilities of financing marketing activities using Calls for Tenders issued within European Union programmes. The paper uses qualitative research by analysing sources of financing for entrepreneurs intended for promotion and marketing available in the EU funds' operating grants scheme.

The financing can be direct, through targeted tenders aimed for this purpose, and indirect, by applying the marketing activities as incidental and supporting activities to the main project within the Call for Tenders, including preparatory activities for the implementation (strategies, plans) and the marketing activities themselves. The analysis of the financing possibilities is provided through an overview of the Calls for Tenders from **European Structural and Investment Funds**, i.e., through the Calls from the 2014-2020 financial period (including implementation by 2023), specifically from the **European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

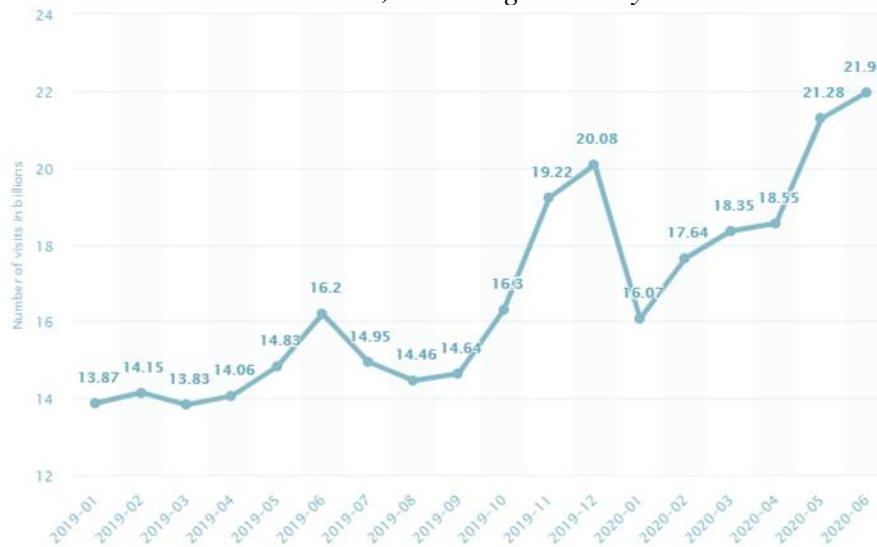
In their 2016 paper, Stanojević et al. explore the financing of entrepreneurship using EU funds. The paper provides an overview of the basic framework and possibilities of financing an entrepreneurship activity in the European Union. The paper also analyses and gives an overview of all the available funds from European funds that significantly contribute to financing entrepreneurship that creates new jobs, developing business competition and economic growth. In his 2016 research, Aralica reflects on the importance of financing innovation. The first part of the paper focuses on the research of the macro and micro levels of the determinants enabling the understanding of innovation financing, while the second part of the paper established the concept of innovation financing and its determinedness on the macro and micro level. Rončević, Gregorić and Horvat (2019) researched promotion as part of the marketing mix, and they offer the promotion of tourist destinations via virtual and augmented reality as an innovative solution. Final and graduate theses also feature the topic of financing entrepreneurship. In his graduate thesis, Dino Tepić analysed the influence of EU funds on entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia. The thesis provides an analysis of the activities and the successfulness of allocating financial means from the Funds and the possibilities and threats of future financing through EU funds. Furthermore, in her 2016 final thesis, Lega Barić also analysed EU funds financing, but her work is based on the analysis of the competence of the Republic of Croatia to efficiently use the financial aid funds at its disposal. The thesis defines the basic terms related to the Funds, analyses the principles of using the funds, the current period budget and the allocation of funds, the dynamics of contracting, paying, and receiving the funds. In this thesis “Utjecaj EU fondova na mala i srednja poduzeća” (Impact of EU Funds on Small and Middle-Sized Enterprises), Marko Gojević analysed aid programmes, including structural funds and European Union programmes HORIZON 2020 and COSME. It is visible that the topic of financing from EU funds appears both in final and graduate papers, as well as in researches. However, no research has yet focused on financing marketing activities from the Funds.

3. ENTREPRENEURS AND MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Commerce platforms have witnessed an unprecedented growth in global traffic between January 2019 and June 2020, exceeding even peak traffic seasons. In total, retail websites have achieved almost 22 billion visits in June 2020, compared to 16.07 billion of global visits in January 2020, which is one of the direct effects of the global coronavirus pandemics which has forced millions of people to the digital way of business and living.

Figure following on the next page

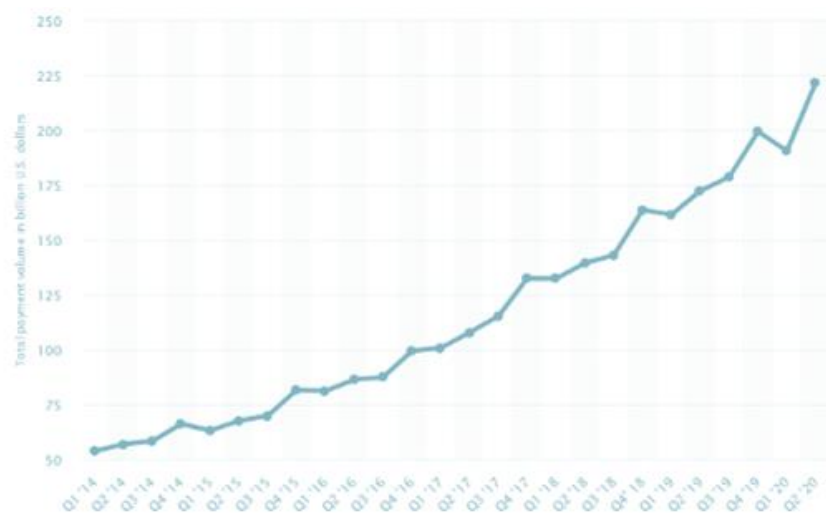
Figure 1: The influence of the coronavirus on the traffic of e-commerce retail websites in the world since June 2020, in average monthly visits



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1112595/covid-19-impact-retail-e-commerce-site-traffic-global/>

In the second quarter of 2020, the net amount of payments via PayPal amounted 221.7 billion dollars, which equals a 29-percent growth annually. This payment amount was generated through over 3.74 billion transaction PayPal processed in this period. In 2019, the annual volume of payment made by payment providers amounted 712 billion dollars.

Figure 2: Total amount of PayPal payments from Q1 2014 to Q2 2020 (in billions of dollars)



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/277841/paypals-total-payment-volume/>

Purchasing goods or services via electronic transactions enables faster realisation, widens the selection, enables greater availability of information on products, but also enables the comparison of various offers; and has the potential of reconfiguring the influence of consumption, i.e. by reducing prices in distant regions. The digital transition and the fast development of the digital society and digital platforms has influenced the traditional marketing patterns. This led to a necessary change in general marketing strategies and in the main elements of the marketing mix. Companies conduct business in various conditions, have various competences and, therefore, have various approaches to certain functions within the company. Marketing activities of small and middle-sized enterprises have for a long time been approached within the context of existing traditional models based on the

practices of large companies. It was considered that the marketing activities were instinctively and sporadically performed by the owner, and that the usage of marketing efforts was unplanned due to the manner of operation of the managers. Owners of small and middle-sized enterprises have reservations towards marketing terms and ideas and rarely employ marketing experts. The unique characteristics and limitations of small and middle-sized enterprises are the key reason preventing the application of the traditional approach to marketing. The need arose for developing new approaches that would be better suited to SMEs (Butigan, Mahnić, 2011). Small enterprises and craftsmen usually use simple promotional means and activities (business cards, flyers, small posters, etc.). Such advertising is conducted locally, on a very limited area. One of the strategies available to small enterprises in extremely limited financing conditions is guerrilla marketing, i.e. using innovative marketing tools, tactics and strategies of shaping marketing activities (viral marketing, buzz marketing, ambush marketing, sensation marketing, covert marketing and content marketing) that trigger reactions from the corresponding market segment (using humour, shocking messages, placing the promotional message on an unusual place or by presenting the message using an atypical medium). Since it primarily relies on good ideas and creativity, as well as thorough marketing plan preparation and market segmentation, such marketing is extremely suitable for companies that generally do not have large budgets for such activities (Gregorić, Marić, 2017). Competitive tracking of trends in contemporary business requires possessing the tools and resources required for e-business, i.e. for the realisation of digital marketing, primarily using technical infrastructure (telecommunication network, internet, and the necessary IT equipment), as well as by using e-marketing tools: e-mail, Skype, SMS, web domains, search engine optimisation. It is also important to use tools such as Google AdWords to achieve better ranking on search engines and find business partners, and ad display, the so-called visual promotional messages that appear on portals. However, in addition to all of this, it is necessary to hire a professional marketing expert, either internally or externally. The American Marketing Association states that “consumers who do not wish to spend” are an increasingly interesting target group that have become the object of marketing efforts. Attracting consumers on websites and web shops requires certain initial investment in marketing. In addition to traditional methods, the switch to new methods of promotion and distribution is becoming a necessity. However, due to resource limitation, many entrepreneurs are finding it increasingly challenging to keep up with the competition using marketing activities.

4. ANALYSIS OF CALLS FOR TENDERS AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF FINANCING PROMOTIONAL AND MARKETING ACTIVITIES VIA EU FUNDS

Using qualitative research, i.e., the desk method of collecting secondary data, the calls for tenders and the possibilities of financing promotional and marketing activities of small and middle-sized entrepreneurs in the financial period 2014 - 2020 were analysed. The sample used were the Calls arising from the Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion, the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources, the Rural Development Programme and the Operational Programme for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. In the 2014 - 2020 financial period, the Republic of Croatia had at its disposal a total of **EUR 10.731 billion** from the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, out of which **EUR 8.452 billion** was envisaged for cohesion policy objectives, **EUR 2.026 billion** for agriculture and rural development, and **EUR 253 million** for fisheries development. The means from the ESI Funds (Cohesion Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) are distributed towards achieving the goals identified within one strategic framework. At the national level, the Republic of Croatia has defined the strategic framework for the use of ESI Funds through the Partnership Agreement, operational programmes, Common national rules, and the Act on establishing institutional framework for the use of ESI Funds in the 2014-2020 period in the Republic of Croatia, as well as regulations prescribing the competences of individual bodies for each ESI instrument (<https://strukturnifondovi.hr/eu-fondovi/esi-fondovi-2014-2020/>).

The Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014-2020 (OPCC) is the main programme document for implementing EU’s Cohesion policy and contributing to the **Investment for growth and jobs** goal. It is directed towards increasing competitiveness on the national and regional levels, **inter alia**, by providing support in the development of entrepreneurship. Within the priority axis of the 3rd stated **Operational Programme**, the main financing priorities refer to the promotion of entrepreneurship, facilitating the economic utilization of new ideas, ensuring better access to financing for SMEs; enabling a favourable environment for establishing and developing enterprises; supporting SMEs’ capacities for growth on regional, national and international markets; enhancing SMEs’ development and growth, and increasing SMEs’ innovativeness. Some of the specific goals that featured tenders within the OPCC containing elements for financing marketing activity are 3a2 Enabling a favourable environment for establishing and developing enterprises, 3d1 Improved development and growth of small and middle-sized enterprises on local and foreign markets, 3d2 Improved innovativeness of small and middle-sized enterprises, and 9b1 Sustainable physical, social and economic regeneration of five deprived pilot-areas with the goal of reducing social inequality, exclusion and poverty (<https://esavjetovanja.gov.hr/Econ/MainScreen?entityId=16095>).

The following Table 1 analyses the supports for marketing activities within OPCC.

*Table 1 Supports for marketing activities within OPCC
(Table ends on next two pages)*

Internationalisation of SMEs’ business (Phase 1 and Phase 2)	The call is aimed at granting support with the goal of strengthening international SME competitiveness by making it easier to present their products/services to the international business community abroad and to introduce products to a new, foreign market and increase the possibilities of collaboration with foreign partners. Activities that are eligible for support include participation at international fairs outside of the Republic of Croatia, fees for participation at fairs, rental of exhibition space, presentation of SMEs within an international fair outside of the Republic of Croatia, foreign market research costs for the purpose of positioning products to a new market outside of the Republic of Croatia, creation of promotional material for participation at an international fair outside of the Republic of Croatia, participation at B2B business talks and/or meetings taking place withing international conferences/fairs outside of the Republic of Croatia; costs of external project management experts. The minimum amount of operative grants that can be awarded per entrepreneur is HRK 100,000.00 , and the maximum amount is HRK 1,000,000.00 .
WWW vouchers for SMEs	The call is aimed at granting support with the aim of encouraging SMEs to apply and improve their network solutions in the presentation and sales of their products and services, with the goal of strengthening the market position and increasing competitiveness of SMEs with the improved application of network marketing solutions with the aim of improving their market presence and the visibility of their products and services. Activities eligible for financing include the development and/or improvement of one or more domains, and refer to business websites, E-commerce and/or M-commerce. The minimum amount of operative grants that can be awarded per project is HRK 15,000.00, and the maximum amount per project is HRK 100,000.00.

<p>Innovation by newly-founded SMEs, reference call number: kk.03.2.2.01.</p>	<p>The call is aimed at granting support with the aim of fostering investment necessary for the commercialisation of research results, the development and innovation in business activities, and starting production based on applied solutions, with an emphasis on the commercialisation of products and services. Activities eligible for financing via this Call include the costs of marketing plans and the revision of business and marketing plans, as well as the operative marketing activity directly connected with the commercialisation of research results and the market launch of the product/service. Additional activities may include the engagement of a highly-qualified expert and other expert personnel.</p>
<p>Integrator KK.03.2.2.05</p>	<p>The call is aimed at granting support with the aim for supporting collaboration between SMEs, for them to establish supplier relations with Integrator enterprises and become part of their value chain in the targeted strategic segment, by creating new innovative products and services. In the implementation of the activity, the support includes covering the costs of external services such as market research and analysis, creating a marketing plan, product design, product/services promotion, etc.</p>
<p>E-impuls</p>	<p>The call is aimed at granting support with the aim of investment in the initial investment by micro and small entrepreneurs in connection with establishing a new business unit or expanding the capacity of an existing one in the production and production services sectors. Acceptable costs covered by the support include the costs of promoting the enterprise and the products.</p>
<p>Construction and equipping of SME production capacities</p>	<p>The call is aimed at granting support with the aim of improving the business development and technological readiness of SMEs that operate in identified acceptable activities, by fostering investment in the SME's capacities via initial investment in the construction and/or equipping of business units. Acceptable marketing activities refer to participation at fairs.</p>
<p>SME production capacities' construction and investment in equipment</p>	<p>The call is aimed at granting support with the aim of improving the business development and technological readiness of SMEs by fostering investment in the material and non-material property. The call envisaged supports for SMEs for their participation at fairs, and these can be granted exclusively under the condition that they are directly linked with the project for which the support is granted, whereby the intensity of the SME support for participation at fairs cannot exceed 50% of acceptable costs.</p>
<p>Investment in the SME's production technology</p>	<p>The call is aimed at improving the business development and technological readiness of SMEs by fostering investment in the material and non-material property, particularly via equipping of business units. The supports for SMEs include the possibility of financing participation at fairs, under the condition that they are directly linked with the project for which the support is granted, whereby the intensity of the SME support for participation at fairs cannot exceed 50% of acceptable costs.</p>
<p>SME competence and development</p>	<p>The call is aimed at granting support with the aim of improving the business development and technological readiness of SMEs by fostering investment in the SME's capacities, particularly through the construction and/or equipping of business units. The supports for SMEs for their participation at fairs can be granted exclusively under the condition that they are directly linked with the project for which the support is granted. The intensity of the SME support for participation at fairs cannot exceed 50% of acceptable costs.</p>

SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SMES IN TOURISM BY INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ADDITIONAL OFFER OF HOTELS	FOR OF THE BY THE AND OFFER	The aim of the call is to extend the tourist season and raise SME competitiveness in tourism, as well as the development of the tourist destination through the increase in quality and additional offer of hotels. Acceptable activities within this support to SMEs include costs for participation at fairs and presenting a new tourism product, if such is directly connected with the project for which the support is granted.
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Source: author's design per the *Operational Programme: "Competitiveness and Cohesion" 2014 - 2020, Call for project proposals*

The European Social Fund is one of the basic structural instruments of the European Union that provides support to member countries for investment in human capital and strengthening competitiveness of the European economy (<http://www.agrra.hr/esi-fondovi-2014-2020>). Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014 - 2020 aims at contributing to the increase in employment and strengthening social cohesion in Croatia. The thematic goal Promoting sustainable and quality employment and support to the mobility of workforce backs the supports aimed at the reduction of current unemployment, increase of employment, promotion of the reintegration of unemployed persons to the labour market through the implementation of active labour market policies measures, etc.

The following Table 2 analyses the supports for marketing activities within the European Social Fund.

Table 2 Supports for marketing activities within the European Social Fund

Self-employment support	The support is aimed at unemployed persons for covering the initial costs of business and operation of the business entity. The amount of the support is determined according to the future activity of the business entity and lasts 24 months. One of the acceptable costs within the support includes costs of website development and advertising.
Support for business expansion	The support is granted to business entities that have already received support for self-employment, whose contractual obligations regarding self-employment have expired, and that plan to expand their business. Business expansion can mean opening a new business unit or facility, development of new products or services, starting a new activity, etc. The maximum financial support is HRK 100,000 in a period of 12 months. The support includes covering of marketing costs and advertising (website development and maintenance, domain lease, web hosting, advertising material printing, designing of billboards and signboards, internet advertising, logo design, branding, vehicle painting) up to a maximum of 20% of the support amount.
Self-employment support within the EU project "Self-employment of Croatian veterans, children of killed or missing Croatian veterans, children of Homeland War volunteers and children of Croatian disabled Homeland War veterans"	The support stems from the Specific Goal 8.i.2. " <i>Increase in sustainable self-employment of unemployed persons, particularly women</i> ". The target group of the Call are unemployed Croatian Homeland War veterans, unemployed children of killed or missing Croatian Homeland War veterans, unemployed children of volunteers from the Homeland War and unemployed children of Croatian disabled Homeland War veterans registered as unemployed with the Croatian Employment Service. The support is aimed at opening new jobs for persons from the target group with the purpose of self-employment, and the costs covered by the support relate, inter alia, to promotion and advertising costs. The costs can be supported with a maximum amount of HRK 12,000.00.

Source: author's design per the tenders within the European Social Fund

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) represents one of the most significant areas of activity of EU institutions. Rural development, as the second CAP pillar, is financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The goal of the programme is to foster competitiveness of agriculture, ensure sustainable management of natural resources and climate change, and achieving a balanced territorial development of rural areas, including the creation and preservation of jobs. The Rural Development Programme defines 20 measures that have the goal of increasing competitiveness of Croatian agriculture, forestry and food processing industry, as well as improving the living and working conditions in rural areas (<https://strukturnifondovi.hr/en/eu-fondovi/esi-fondovi-2014-2020/program-ruralnog-razvoja-2014-2020>).

*Table 3 Analysis of supports for marketing activities within the Rural Development Programme
(Table ends on next two pages)*

<p>Measure 3 “quality systems for agricultural products and food”, sub-measure 3.2 “support for informing and promotional activities performed by groups of producers on the inner market”, 3.2.1. <i>“Support for informing and promotional activities”</i></p>	<p>The aim of the support is to increase consumer awareness on the existence and the specification of products produced within the system of protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications and the traditional specialties guaranteed system, as well as within the organic production scheme. The users of the measure are groups of producers, regardless of their legal form, primarily made up of producers or processors of the same product, which participate in the quality systems and associations of organic farmers whose members participated in the organic production programme.</p> <p>Acceptable costs refer to organising fairs, exhibitions, manifestations, and other dedicated promotional events for the promotion of products from the quality system and organic agricultural products, design of promotional materials, services of creation of promotional videos/films/photographs, recording and specialist IT services, website maintenance, rental of advertising space, setting up and removing billboards, informational and promotional activities via various communication channels.</p>
<p>Measure 4 “Investment in physical property”, submeasure 4.2. “Support for investment into processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products”, 4.2.1. <i>“Increasing the added value of agricultural products”</i></p>	<p>It is aimed at investment into the construction and/or equipping of facilities for sale and presentation of own agricultural products and investment in the purchase of mechanisation, utility vehicles, machines and equipment, purchase of land and objects for the realisation of the project. The users of the support are natural and legal persons who deal with or intend to deal with processing of products, and the support includes financing the introduction of a new and improved marketing tool.</p>
<p>Measure 6 “Development of farms and business”, submeasure 6.1 Supporting young farmers in starting a business”</p>	<p>Includes the financing of construction and/or equipping facilities for the sale and presentation of own products, including the costs of promoting own agricultural products. The users of the measure are young farmers categorised as micro or small entrepreneurs, between the ages of 18 and 40, who possess the required expertise and skills and who are for the first-time bearers of the farm, but have not been performing this role for longer than 24 months before submitting the Support request.</p>
<p>Measure 6 “Development of farms and business”, submeasure 6.2. <i>“Support for investment in starting non-agricultural activities in a rural area”</i></p>	<p>Acceptable activities include tourism activities in a rural area, traditional, art crafts, souvenirs crafts, services in rural areas, processing/marketing of products. The support is granted for promotional activities related to the diversified activity. The users of the measure are farms</p>

	that have been entered into the Farm Register as micro and small business operators; natural persons that are bearers or family members within a family farm who are starting a new non-agricultural activity in rural areas.
Measure 6 “Development of farms and business”, submeasure 6.3. “Support to the development of small farms”, 6.3.1. “ <i>Support to the development of small farms</i> ”.	Acceptable activities include the construction and/or equipping facilities for the sale and presentation of own products, including the costs of promoting own agricultural products. The users of the measure are small farms whose economic size is between EUR 2,000 and 7,999.
Measure 6 “Development of farms and business”, submeasure 6.4. “Investment in the development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas”, 6.4.1. “ <i>Development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas</i> ”	Acceptable costs include tourism activities in a rural area, traditional, art crafts, souvenirs crafts, services in rural areas; processing/marketing of products. <i>The measure includes the possibility of financing the constructions/reconstruction of facilities</i> , equipping, marketing, and direct sales of local products. The users are farms that have been entered into the Farm Register as micro and small business entities; natural persons that are bearers or family members within a family farm.
Measure 8 “Investments in the development of forest areas and improving forest sustainability”, submeasure 8.6 “Support for investments in forest technologies and the processing, mobilisation and marketing of forest products”, 8.6.3. “ <i>Marketing of wood and non-wood forest products</i> ”.	The measure includes investment in the promotion and informing on the wooden and non-wooden forest products, services and goods that make it easier for these products, services and goods to find their way to end-users. The users of the support are forest owners, associations of forest owners, micro, small and middle-sized enterprises. Acceptable costs include construction, reconstruction and/or equipping of a movable or immovable space/building for the presentation and sales of forest wooden and non-wooden products and forest services and for the promotion of forest public benefit functions, sustainable forest management and forestries sector, lease/rental of exhibit space for wooden and non-wooden forest products and forest services on specialised fairs and exhibitions, purchase and/or rental of multimedia devices and tools for the promotion of wooden and non-wooden forest products and forest services, creation and distribution of promotional materials on wooden and non-wooden forest products and advertising campaigns on wooden and non-wooden forest products and forest services.
Measure 9 “Establishing producer groups and organizations”, submeasure 9.1. “Establishing producer groups and organizations in the farming and forestries sectors”, 9.1.1. “ <i>Establishing producer groups and organizations</i> ”	The users of the measure are production organisations ranked as micro, small and middle-sized enterprises, and acceptable costs include the cost of joint placement of products on the market, costs of preparing the product for sales, concentration of supply, sales and supply for wholesale customers, purchase of information equipment and technology, cost of gross salaries of employees and/or costs of a joint venture.
Measure 16 “Collaboration”, submeasure 16.4 “Support for horizontal and vertical collaboration of participants in the supply chain for the establishing and development of short supply chains and local markets and for the promotion of activities in the local context, in relation to the development of short supply chains and local markets”. 16.4.1. “ <i>Short supply chains and local markets</i> ”.	The users of the measure are operational groups consisting of at least two partners, natural and legal persons entered in the Farm Register, producers’ groups and organisations, other natural and legal persons participating in short supply chains, who are not wholesale distributors or retail chains. The measure includes covering the costs of promotional activities, namely <i>current costs</i> (salaries’ costs) and <i>direct costs</i> , e.g. purchase/lease of kiosks, wooden houses, stands or other facilities for the sale of own agricultural products,

	equipment for retail sale, new utility vehicles for transporting load, development of a website for online sales of agricultural products of the operative group partner, costs of participation at local fairs/manifestations through the lease of exhibit spaces and stands, the cost of setting up and dismantling the stands; promotional activities in the form of logo design for the operative group, visual identity design of the operative group, design of posters, banner ads, etc.
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Source: author’s design per the tenders within the Rural Development Programme

As a full member of the EU, the Republic of Croatia is entitled to use the support from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFAF), the financial instrument of the European Union for helping in reaching the goals from the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund contributes to the promotion of competitive, environmentally and economically sustainable and socially responsible fisheries and aquaculture, encourages the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy, promotes a balanced and inclusive territorial development of fisheries areas and aquaculture areas and encourages the development and implementation of an integrated maritime policy in a manner that complements the cohesion policy and the Common Fisheries Policy. The Operational Programme for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Croatia for the programme period 2014 -2020 contains selected priorities and goals that should be achieved with the help of structural policy measures in fisheries, co-financed by the support from the EMFAF (<https://euribarstvo.hr/operativni-program-za-pomorstvo-i-ribarstvo-rh-za-programsko-razdoblje-2014-2020>).

*Table 4 Analysis of supports for marketing activities within the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
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Measure 4.1. “Production plans and market placement”	The support is aimed at the preparation and implementation of production plans and market placement of fisheries’ and aquaculture products, and it includes awarding operative grants for co-financing costs related to the preparation and implementation of production plans and market placement performed by producer organizations and associations of producer organizations - costs of market analysis and research, and the collection of data for the purpose of developing a Production and market placement plan, translation of documents (brochures, etc.), salaries (based on a labour contract) of the employees of the producers organization, purchasing of computers and office equipment, website development and maintenance. The user of the support is a producers’ organization or an association of producer organizations.
Measure 4.3. “Market placement of fisheries and aquaculture products”.	THE SUBJECT OF THE SUPPORT INCLUDES ACTIVITIES OF MARKET PLACEMENT OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE PRODUCTS WITH THE GOAL OF DISCOVERING NEW MARKETS AND IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS FOR MARKET PLACEMENT AND CONDUCTING COMMUNICATION AND

	PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS. THE USERS OF THE SUPPORT ARE SUBJECTS IN THE FIELD OF FISHERIES, ORGANIZATIONS OF SUBJECTS (FISHERMAN COOPERATIVES, ASSOCIATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, CLUSTERS AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSOCIATIONS IN FISHERIES, PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS.
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Source: author's design per the tenders within the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

5. CONCLUSION

Monitoring consumers' needs is a priority for successful business. In this context, it is necessary to apply marketing activities for the promotion of products and services. Investment in marketing is not an excess cost, but an investment in the future of business and a meticulously planned activity that requires an increasing amount of investment and seeking out innovative methods for reaching customers, with limited entrepreneurial resources (financial and related to personnel). The marketing challenges that small and middle-sized enterprises face are linked with their characteristics that include a limited customer base, limited marketing activity, knowledge and influence, dependency on the marketing abilities of the owner/manager, reactivity and poor knowledge of the possibilities and insufficient exploitation of available sources of financing. Operative grants from EU Funds are an opportunity for entrepreneurial investment in marketing activities and techniques and they include various traditional and contemporary digital forms of marketing activities, with the aim of strengthening entrepreneurial competitiveness and retaining existing and acquiring new customers on a dynamic market. The analysis of the possibilities of financing using operative grants from European Union Funds aimed at marketing activities (exclusive purpose or within other elements) using various types of Calls for Tenders casts a light on the width of possibilities in the types and manners of covering marketing costs (activities acceptable for financing), such as participation at fairs, organising fairs, promotional meetings, using advertisement space, decorating exhibit spaces, construction and equipping of presentation facilities, launching and developing websites and online shops, introducing contemporary digital platforms and tools, hiring personnel and external experts. With a quality selection and recognizing of potential activities, this can significantly contribute to the development of marketing business functions of the enterprise based on operating grants financed by EU Funds, all with the purpose of strengthening competitiveness.

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