

2nd Exchange event: Tourism in the times of COVID-19

“Good practices in Marketing, Communication & Sales during COVID-19”

Introduction

With the objective to have an exchange of tourism related projects in the West Balkans region on the topic, an online exchange event has been taken place on 16.07.2020.

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Proposed Agenda

- Opening remarks: **Short introduction by Katrin Ochsenbein, Swiss Embassy Pristina**
- Presentation: **Learning from examples outside the region: “Good practices in Marketing, Communication & Sales during COVID-19” – a 10 minutes presentation by Adrien Rebord**
- Round 1: **In your country – or in your project: What can you share as good practice examples about Marketing & Communication & Sales during COVID-19 from your country / your project?**
- Round 2: **Possibility to adapt in your country: From what you have heard (e.g. A) the input by Adrien or B) the good practice examples from other countries): What is possible to apply or to adapt in your country?**
- Feedback / How to continue?
- End of the event 11:15h

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Carsten Schulz
Moderator

Presentation: Learning from examples outside the region: “Good practices in Marketing, Communication & Sales during COVID-19”

Although up-to-date information and safety measures are important for travelers, values and emotions highly matter in marketing and are widely used by communication agencies as driving force adapted to the new consumer behaviour. Tourism actors have to ask themselves: [Where is our market now?](#) in order to attract domestic and international travellers.

Communication and marketing should support sales to save the summer season, but [hospitality is not a transaction](#). While providing a short-term response, stakeholders should not forget the long-term relationship, in particular with the diaspora which might come later in the year.

As examples of approaches focusing on domestic tourism, two Swiss cantons used [opposite strategies](#) to target local market based on their assets and resources. Valais developpe an [online marketing campaign](#) whereas Vaud developed [a sales strategy with discount](#) in partnership with the biggest

online sales platform of the Canton. Both use arguments for domestic tourism such as proximity, simplicity, sustainability, nature, supporting to local businesses, preserving jobs for youth or customer care by the ones who know you best.

Consumer behaviour is changing fast. [As a result, the usage of social media has increased](#) significantly to provide a quick adaptation and to provide direct up-to-date information. But travelling inspiration seems still to be link with acquaintances. Word of mouth, recommendations and [storytelling](#) are essential to make travel decisions. [Some destinations in Switzerland](#), who are also competing on domestic tourism, used this tool: [Jura](#) invited digital nomads to explore its nature and [Montreux-Vevey Tourisme & Convention Bureau](#) invited travel bloggers to experience outdoor activities in the region.

[Rules and regulations](#) for product development and tourism ventures [are available online](#). But, as there are [no international standards yet](#), the most pragmatic way to address it is to adapt these existing protocols to one's own business. For certification, each company should always think if it is worth the money to get audited. A small business might put higher priorities on communicating well and stimulating online recommendations from guests as for the cleanliness.

Summary on Round 1: Good practice examples about Marketing & Communication & Sales during COVID-19 in the Western Balkans

On google trends, people mainly look at which country is open, if the border is closed or if it is safe for tourism. Updated information on travel restrictions is key and projects in the Western Balkans are encouraging partners to link to national health websites while [sharing resources](#) with partners.

Tourism actors should be the source of reliable information for the guests, regularly updating website and social media, but also clearly mention that they are open [without signaling measures negatively](#). Many projects are supporting local partners to reposition on local market, use social media and target new segments or [the development of videos by training providers](#).

Destinations and businesses in the Western Balkans are also highlighting their outdoor activities and nature. This is the case in Kosovo for example with [the platform](#) that PPSE project in Kosovo co-financed, in Albania with the region of [Gjirokastra](#) and [the mountain area](#), North Macedonia which developed videos on adventure and outdoor tourism but also engaged a travel blogger from the lonely planet to train local businesses on how to communicate through storytelling, Bosnia which supported destination management and diversification of services and even Serbia that developed a [hiking and biking tourism guide](#).

Summary on Round 2: Possibility to adapt to the Western Balkan the examples and ideas presented.

Influencers and travel bloggers are definitely good tools to convince tourists that hesitate and can be used in Western Balkan countries. Another important learning is how to communicate health standards in a positive way while still showing concern about the situation.

International tourists and the diaspora have started to come, and we can see foreign cars driving around the countries. The goal is now to capture these travellers by responding to their needs. A partnership with the diaspora magazine and local media is a way to attract both, local and diaspora tourists. But reaching them would require new channels and innovative sales strategies.

Discounts can also be used and we can see some SMEs of a municipality joining together to provide travel vouchers for local tourists. This might be an idea to use the diaspora as a relay to distribute travel vouchers or to advocate for their own country as a nice tourism destination.