

## **BEST PRACTICE:**

SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION CAMPAIGN from March to May 2020

**APPLICATION CATEGORY:** Preparing for a smart and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery)

**FULFILMENT OF CONDITIONS:** Golden Slovenia Green destination, 4 accommodation providers carrying the label of sustainability (San Martin Hotel, Alma Vista, Breg Tourist Farm, Vita Villa) + 1 green attraction (Klet Brda)

## **PROBLEM IT ADDRESSES:**

The main problem, addressed by the local tourist board (Zavod za turizem, kulturo, mladino in šport Brda or the Brda Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport Board) was to maintain contact with the visitors and followers of Brda destination and to preserve a positive spirit among the Brda providers of services as well as to prepare the destination for the restart of tourism.

The government's prevention measures due to the epidemic began in March, i.e. in the time when the main season of enogastronomic events in Brda usually starts, when guests reserve and occupy the accommodation and hospitality capacities.

Those measures caused fear among services providers and the local tourist board, who thought that the entire season and annual income would be lost. In the case of Brda, this meant social catastrophe, because local tourism mostly depends on family-run farms and companies that manage tourist services.

## **THE CHALLENGES OVERCOMES:**

### **1<sup>st</sup> challenge: preservation and attracting interest of followers/visitors**

Since the destination bases on sustainable tourism pillars, i.e. the *beauty of the landscape and preservation of autochthonous features, enogastronomy, active vacation - eco mobility*, the promotion was, as of the first day of prevention measures introduced due to the spread of the epidemic, designed appropriately. A system of continued publications with a pre-defined order of categories was introduced immediately. We published photos with views, cultural and natural pearls and attractions in the destination. Recipes were also published to motivate followers to try and cook original Brda dishes in their own kitchens. By publishing all cycling and hiking trails stretching across the destination, we tried to show how the hills of Brda can be challenging for athletes and recreational sports people. We strived to send a message to our visitors that the destination is ready for a restart, that it is safe and that it is preserved in its genuineness and hospitality.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Challenge: to gain the trust of services providers and motivate them**

The main challenge with services providers was to preserve, as we have already mentioned, a positive spirit and to appropriately inform them about all recommendations, activities and steps towards the restart of tourism. We have introduced a section on the coronavirus on [www.brda.si](http://www.brda.si), where we informed services providers about all novelties in the field of state measures as well as about the situation in foreign markets. We constantly informed them about the events in tourism via continued letters sent by the tourist board. We

should also mention that many services providers have shown their ability to adapt and innovate, since they initiated their online sales or online guided presentations of their products.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Challenge: motivate the local population to collaborate and engage:**

Two moments were of key importance for the local community: to motivate them to engage in the support to promotional activities of the tourist board and to engage them to dedicate even more attention to the care for the Brda landscape, their homes and homesteads, to maintain the image of their estates and farms.

#### **SUCCESS ACHIEVED:**

1. From the aspect of followers/visitors, the campaign's success was visible in the exceptional number of visitors in Brda as of the gradual relaxation of protective measures in Slovenia. Visitation trend is increasing, i.e. with consideration of accommodation capacities and hospitality capacities, meaning that the loss of income among the services providers will be lower than envisaged. We have also achieved great success by diligently planning promotion during the entire duration of the epidemic, because we have managed to motivate our followers to visit the Brda region as the first destination of their travel after the epidemic period. Many of them visited our region for the first time.
2. It was also a great success for the team of the Brda Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport Board to gain the support and trust of services providers. Trust, given to promotion, was shown in the viral sharing of posts on social media, thus the promotion campaign spread the message that during the epidemic, our destination has become even more connected and ready for new beginnings.
3. From the aspect of the local population, the success was similarly shown among the services providers. They actively collaborated in the local tourist board's promotion activities, and they supported all promotion campaigns. The first and all other visitors were warmly welcome.

During the epidemic, sustainability in the Brda region has gained a lot in the connection of the entire cycle: visitors, services providers – stakeholders and the local population. The local community has also raised the awareness about autochthonous features (landscape, products) that make the destination so different from others and attractive for all visitors from Slovenia and abroad.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED:**

We have learned that visitors appreciate the genuineness, simplicity and the hospitality of the Brda destination. Meaning that we do not have to invent new products but offer our guests combinations of experiences, where they will feel free, alive and just like at home. They wish to experience the relaxed homeliness and inclusion, which has disappeared from the cities.

#### **PHOTOS:**

**Video:** tours over the Brda hills

**Photos:** Damijan Simčič – Zoso

**FB posts:** recipes, cultural heritage, natural heritage

**FB covers:** #ostanidoma, #brdavabijo, #zdajječās,...