

MARKETING AND TOURISM FUTURES

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ABSTRACT

Marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry has transformed with the development of digital marketing tools and the evolution of social culture. Recently, the advent of new technologies such as smartphones, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, robots, and new GIS systems has created more possibilities for marketing innovations. Advancements in information technology are leading to changes in business processes, service standards, and management mindsets. Meanwhile, consumers are also adapting to the new marketing paradigm. Researchers are interested in studying this newly-emerging and unpredictable business environment, customer decision making, new management tactics, and business analytic strategies.

Keywords: Tourism, Marketing, Policy, Strategy, Tourists.

Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis in the tourism economy, given the immediate and immense shock to the sector. Revised OECD estimates on the COVID-19 impact point to 60% decline in international tourism in 2020. This could rise to 80% if recovery is delayed until December. International tourism within specific geographic-regions (e.g. in the European Union) is expected to rebound first.

Domestic tourism, which accounts for around 75% of the tourism economy in OECD countries, is expected to recover more quickly. It offers the main chance for driving recovery, particularly in countries, regions and cities where the sector supports many jobs and businesses.

Travel and tourism marketing is different depending on where you are.

If you're in Asia, you might not realize that COVID-19 is still drastically affecting Americans. If you're in America, where all citizens became eligible for a vaccine on April 19th, you're in a different situation than someone in the United Kingdom. In the UK, there's a new reopening after another lockdown.

Marketers are working overtime to be able to reach audiences where they are, as everybody continues to experience the aftermath of COVID-19 differently. With engagement as the number one goal for marketers in 2021 (despite having smaller teams and resources than ever), meeting people where they are has become a crucial part of marketing.

Delta is the perfect example of meeting their customers where they are. Their tweet looks like a pre-COVID-29 message: "The cure for weekday blues = booking a trip to Iceland, probably." Alongside user-generated content from a traveler, they've done a great job of showing their Twitter audience what a trip to Iceland would look like.

The impact of the crisis is being felt throughout the entire tourism ecosystem, and reopening and rebuilding destinations will require a joined up approach. Tourism businesses and workers are benefiting from economy-wide stimulus packages, with many governments also introducing tourism specific measures. Governments and industry are focusing their efforts on:

Lifting travel restrictions and working with businesses to access liquidity supports, apply new health protocols for safe travel, and help to diversify their markets.

Restoring traveller confidence and stimulating demand with new safe and clean labels for the sector, information apps for visitors and domestic tourism promotion campaigns.

Preparing comprehensive tourism recovery plans, to rebuild destinations, encourage innovation and investment, and rethink the tourism sector.

These actions are essential, but to reopen the tourism economy successfully and get businesses up and running, more needs to be done in a coordinated way as tourism services are very interdependent. The travel and tourism industry and governments should continue to reinforce their coordination mechanisms to accompany the businesses, notably the smallest ones, and the workers. Particular attention should be given also to the most sensitive/vulnerable destinations in the recovery phase.

Looking ahead, the measures put in place today will shape tourism of tomorrow. Governments need to already consider the longer term implications of the crisis, while staying ahead of the digital curve, supporting the low carbon transition, and promoting the structural transformation needed to build a stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism economy. The crisis is an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future.

Tourism is a significant part of many national economies, and the immediate and immense shock to the tourism sector resulting from the coronavirus pandemic is affecting the wider economy. As governments around the world have introduced unprecedented measures to contain the virus, restrictions on travel, business operations and people-to-people interactions have brought the tourism economy to a standstill. Many countries are now entering a new phase in fighting the virus while at the same time managing the re-opening of the tourism economy. This is a complex and challenging task, and quantifying the impact on the tourism economy is difficult.

Five months into the crisis, the situation continues to evolve and the outlook remains uncertain. Recovery is now expected to start later and be slower than previously foreseen. Travel restrictions and containment measures are likely to be in place for longer, and are expected to be lifted only gradually, with the possibility of reversal should new waves occur. Even when tourism supply chains start to function again, new health protocols mean businesses will be operating at restricted capacity. Demand-side recovery will also take some time, given the interlinked consequences of the economic and health crises, and the progressive lifting of travel restrictions, while consumer confidence and travel behaviour will be more deeply impacted the longer the pandemic goes on. This will have knock-on implications for many national economies.

With a personalized approach, marketers (like those at Delta) can ideate marketing campaigns that make their travelers feel safe and comfortable. These campaigns can lean on the latest digital technology adoption to get more eyes on their products.

Oxford Street, an infamous shopping district in London, was able to get 93 million social impressions by sharing their annual Christmas Tree lighting online. Not only were their views through the roof, but they were able to display UGC on their website to bring viewers into the experience.

Just because vaccinations are rolling out, doesn't mean travelers don't want their airplane seat and tray wiped down or their hotel room not to comply with COVID-19 sanitization guidelines. It means they need more information than how much a flight, hotel, or travel experience costs.

Marketers will need to add COVID-19 safety and peace of mind alongside the benefits highlighted in their campaigns, as well as online experiences where possible. Target audience research needs a new category: How does our ideal customer feel about traveling in relation to COVID-19?

Are they really nervous?

Are they neutral about it?

Are they not worried about it?

Figuring out how the target audience feels about traveling in a post-COVID-19 world isn't an option for your 2021 campaigns. It's a necessity.

With consumers facing new emotions around travel, relieving their hesitations and objections is a priority of every campaign. Like Delta, finding a mix between your products and your commitment to customer safety is crucial. The personalization of that will be the cherry on top.

When it comes to adapting to travel and tourism marketing changes, brands need to start building the foundation of 3 main strategies.

User-generated content (UGC) and employee-generated content (EGC) get higher engagement than brand-created content. As marketers put together campaigns highlighting their attention to safety as they reopen the plane, hotel, and tourism doors using the customer's voice statistically works better. Specifically, for messages of safety. Instead of telling customers how clean and sanitized everything is—find the content being shared from customers and employees saying the same thing.

Despite recurring economic recessions, political disturbances, and environmental disasters, it seems inevitable that global tourist numbers will continue to increase and that tourists will assume the right to penetrate planet earth ever more comprehensively. Although tourist numbers from the Western world may level out, the rise of affluence levels in populous countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China is likely to generate another growth surge. It must be remembered, too, that many people prefer 'mass' tourism experiences, with the full range of comforts and facilities, and will continue to do so. Equally, business and conference travelers demand ever more expensive, resource-consuming facilities. There is also the question of whether alternative and more readily sustainable projects, generally low key and relatively small scale, can, by themselves, "survive in developing countries, or elsewhere, without having some other form of tourism to be an 'alternative' to." From this perspective, even though a project may be environmentally and ethically sound, it may not achieve a threshold of economic sustainability.

It may well be, therefore, that the most effective strategy for a country or region is to absorb the growth in demand through carefully located and planned developments using 'green' technology in large-scale destination enclaves. Such a strategy concentrates impacts and environmental modifications, while facilitating opportunities for monitoring and control, for example, a 'sacrifice zone.' The 'product consumption' takes place within the resort and is thus demand based, not resource based: local dance groups perform and craftspeople sell their artifacts in the hotels or in a 'cultural center.' The essential obstacle, all too often, is finding the investment capability within the country in order to maximize control. In parallel, dispersed alternative and niche tourism projects would be under less pressure and yet could well remain economically viable within the broader tourism of the destination region or nation. From the demand side, the tourism industry would be offering a diversified product of opportunities and experiences, from the synthetic to the authentic, or at least the staged authentic.

Oman, for example, has developed a cluster of large hotels in the capital of Muscat, with opportunities for 'adventure' excursions and tours to more remote camps and resorts.

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