

**“Smile! It Is Going to Get Better
Travel and Tourism in a Post-Covid-19 World”**



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A word of caution:

Please note that all information in this handout is good as of October 22, 2020. Because the situation is changing rapidly, please stay current and use multiple news sources

1. Where we are?
2. When has this occurred before?
3. How to handle our people at a distance: the good and bad of distance employment
4. Après la virus: what comes next?

Introduction

Tourism is based on the premise that we live in an interconnected world. The central driver is the increasingly interconnected world we live in. Even the most remote areas of the planet can now be reached in less than 48 hours.

The tourism specialist than needs to be aware of not only the facts but also the perception of the facts as presented in the media.

Medical realities

Three basic hopes

- 1) Rapid Testing
- 2) Therapeutics
- 3) Vaccine

Three basic weapons that have been used

- 1) Social Distancing
- 2) Use of masks or face coverings
- 3) Basic hygiene and handwashing
- 4) Lockdowns

What we know and what we do not know

1. Our knowledge is limited, lots of rumors and too little facts.
2. Virus can have another season. We are seeing a second wave in Europe and even in parts of Asia
3. We do know that Covid-19 is related to SARS, H1N1 and the common cold

Tourism and travel

- Airlines
- Buses
- Hotels
- Attractions
- Restaurants

We really do not have all the answers and as leaders in the tourism we should not be afraid to say: we do not know. Always be positive but being positive does not mean knowing everything. If the wind direction changes so you too must change direction. We will make mistakes, but better to do something than merely give up

We are fighting a three-front war with three theaters of battle:

- a. The medical war:
- b. The economic war
- c. The fear and perception war, egged on by the media: Are we promoting fear?
 - i. Mitigate fear
 - ii. Determine the key fears and confront them

They are interconnected issues but also separate issues.

Fear is no longer price driven.

- How much traffic do price reductions create?
- How many people trust government?
- To win back customers you have to defeat fear
 - i. Touch points
 - ii. Develop media relations
 - iii. New technology
 - iv. Renew your security
 - v. How do we create new insurance opportunities? If insurance does not cover a pandemic, then it is worthless
 - vi. Do we give refunds? How many people fear that they will never get a refund?
 - vii. Do we use escrow in travel?

Likewise, we have three battlefronts

- 1) for our customers

- 2) for our employees
- 3) for business liquidity

Pandemics and Pandemics

A pandemic is an outbreak of a communicable disease which is geographically wide-spread, and it affects significant proportions of affected populations.

Media coverage of Covid-19 has frequently magnified a legitimate health threat as a Pandemic.

What can cause a tourism panic?

- News Media in all forms.
- Web and blog sites.
- Lifestyle and travel Media including guidebooks.
- Trade press.
- Government Travel Advisories.

- Cruise Ship Operators
- Airlines and their routings.
- Word of mouth and family opinions.
- Major Tour Wholesalers.
- Travel agency chains.
- Belief that tourism industry in it only for profit.
 - How are we assuring our clients that we are well?
 - How are you going to convince me that I will not get sick from your sheets?

A look at the past

SARS

SARS was estimated to have cost the global economy more than \$30bn

The best estimate is only one-in-five cases cause severe symptoms, so instead of infected people turning up in hospital, you have to go out and find them.

- SARS in 2003. Asian Flu 2009

- Depicting a modest tourism downturn as a crisis.
 - “If it bleeds it leads”
- 1) The SARS so called “epidemic” became a media event and did a great deal of damage to both Hong Kong and Toronto, Canada.
 - 2) In the case of Toronto, there were many more traffic fatalities than there were deaths caused by SARS and no one outside of a hospital environment was stricken with the illness.
 - 3) The SARS panic caused far fewer deaths than did traffic accidents in the impacted places, but the panic that SARS caused created economic havoc.

Media were a major component in scaring the public; reality proved to be different than what was stated on television.

Tourism issues:

- Lack of public sanitation

- Recycled air on airplanes
- Issues of blankets
- Flight attendants needs to wash hands constantly
- Public restrooms
- Waiters and waitresses

Questions people have about sanitation.

Do hotels have access to medical personnel?

- Frontline tourism personnel: Bellboys, registration desk?
- Poorly washed out cups?
- Floors not vacuumed

Medical fears tend to

- Tap into our current cultural anxieties.
- The media has to "like" the scare.

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Hope for Recovery

- 1) The industry is talking and exploring
- 2) Medical help might be closer than we think
- 3) People are re-thinking bus tours in light of fear of flying
- 4) Travel bubbles
- 5) The Hawaii experience
- 6) Long history of Canada – US friendship

Things we all can do

-Be prepared to take care of sick visitors and employees and their families.

-Tourism personnel must be prepared to fight against a pandemic not only from the medical perspective but also from the marketing /information perspective.

-Have an information plan ready.

-Counter negative publicity with an action program. For example, in areas that have been impacted by a disease make sure to advise travelers to stay current with their vaccinations and create medical information sheets.

-A first aid kit at hotels and other places of lodging must always be up-to-date. Make sure that their employees use anti-bacterial hand wipes and encourage hotels to provide these for travelers.

_Tourism personnel must be prepared to work with

travel insurance companies.

_Work with the media. A pandemic is like any other tourism crisis and should be treated as such

_ Assure the public that you care!

Also....

- Be positive but forthright and honest
- Tourism is about hospitality and human relations and the digital era lacks human contact. Emphasize the need for small talk (schmoozing)
- Focus on connectivity; it is the basis of the hospitality industry
- Most people do not hear what you say: you have to repeat it and then repeat it and then repeat it
 - You must make it clear that you are loyal to your employees, they should be the last to go; never the first to be fired.

- Give clear objectives: make sure they understand what you want and not what they think you want: so, restate the goals in several ways and ask questions
- In the world of hospitality charisma plays a big part. In the digital world charisma has a small part. Most people do not care about how a machine looks, speaks or smiles. Hospitality is about human connections and the less we have the more challenged the tourism industry becomes.
- Remember that positional power and influential power are different
- Allow people to ask pointed questions and do not be afraid of questions especially in a teleconference
- Emails are becoming a burden for visitors and staff alike. Enough with the “how did we do surveys?” Find ways to communicate with your staff more rapidly, such as chat rooms

- If the website is too difficult, it will die! KISS!
- Communicate and then communicate some more.
Give your employees regular updates and meet at the beginning of each week. Make sure they hear policy from the leadership so as to prevent rumors.