

REPORT: #TourismTomorrow reveals the urgent need for digital transformation and industry ecosystem collaboration for the travel sector to emerge successfully from COVID-19

Industry experts from Google, Hotel Data Cloud, Global Village, VFS Global and Kandima Resort expound the positive steps towards economic recovery for the tourism industry

1st November 2020, Dubai, UAE

The inaugural insights session, produced by MSLGroup Middle East and moderated by Nanou Destination and ex-ATM's Nadege Noblet, brought together 6 voices from across the travel industry on Wednesday 28th October 2020. Inspired by the Boston Consulting Group and Google co-authored report, entitled "Actions For Destination Marketers to Navigate in a COVID-19 World", the objective was to gather perspectives and trends that may point the way to a more optimistic travel and tourism sector, one of the driving forces of the UAE and wider global economy. The report unearthed thoughts on what the 2021 recovery might look like and guided Destination Marketers through a "5 R Approach": Reassess, Reassure, Raise awareness, Remove barriers and Revive spending in the local economy.

MSL Access as a platform has been created to encourage cross-industry dialogue around relevant and timely themes. The platform's strength lies in the petri dish of insights and exchanges from the panelists providing a comprehensive response to the topic under discussion. Future sessions are likely to focus on key issues such as the economic impact of equality and technological drivers on various aspects of society, with bespoke sessions available for development upon request.

Key #TourismTomorrow insights from the session included:

Government

- PPP (Public Private Partnerships) must drive the recovery – from pre-departure testing, governments.
- Public Private Partnerships where industry and government collaborate to simplify the most effective way forward across the board.
 - Countries should agree on basic expectations to facilitate international travel
 - Domestic regulations should be understandable and feasible
- Governments working together with governments and the rest of the ecosystem to develop one clear global regime to facilitate tourism uplift.

Industry

- IATA revised 2021 projections to 46% revenue decreases for airline industry.

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- Importance of collaboration through the industry chain – airlines communicating with resorts and destination. Maldives resorts, for example, formed a cooperative group to support each other across the ecosystem.
- Timeline for recovery will be impacted by vaccine tests being approved and the speed of results coming through
- Novel ways of testing and getting results quickly will impact

Brands

- Exotic and remote locations need a different approach – welcoming and waving off guests are very different experiences. Looking to get resort-owned testing in place rather than rely on governments to encourage freeflowing safe travel.
- As across all aspects of life in 2020, a reassessment of the most important values for your brand and your customer, reflected with agility and purpose, will speed up any recovery
- Destination weddings on the rise – more manageable and controllable

Individuals

- Consumer behaviour as a crucial driver of supply and demand, and with markets reopening at varying speeds, DMOs must stay ahead in order to regain market share when the opportunity arises – know your customer better through increased digitalization of their brand experience
- Health, safety and wellbeing are now essential topics in the immediate customer conversation and continue to be necessary while trust is being rebuilt
- How has the traveler mindset changed and how do brands reach them to rebuild that trust? Bucketlists have moved and how brand experiences can become part of that.
- Reduced pollution of 2020 is likely to be immediately reversed once travel becomes more accessible, with environmental issues likely to be glossed over in a rush to feed the travel bug once more.
- 65% of people planning to travel in 6 months, half in next 3 months.
- Business travel may never recover but remains a status symbol.
- Shaking hands and face to face meetings will never lose their appeal, though efficiencies are likely.
- Business travel, with everyone glued to webinars, will potentially be penalized in the short term, taxed to compensate for overall reduced numbers. We can expect to see new cross-selling opportunities and co-branding in order to reduce costs.
- The social bubble has extended to travel - smaller groups of travelers from immediate surroundings, even without the children.
- “More than just Instagrammable” - unscripted moments to cherish, authentic experiences, are still sought after as human beings.

Technology

- “Netflixification” of travel powered by data, based on a machine learning and AI-powered recommendation engine
- Technology, including machine learning and artificial intelligence, and how digitally transforming both operations and communications will drive optimization across the board
- Technological uptake and digital transformation become a necessity rather than the initial opportunity most tech vendors were driving pre-COVID. Digital transformation as a multi-year process will outlast COVID-19 – technology partners will continue to be crucial to ongoing development.
- Technology should not be allowed to overpower customer experience and authenticity.

Reports referenced during the session:

[Actions for Destination Marketers to Navigate in a COVID-19 World](#) – Boston Consulting Group and Google

[2020 Summer Travel Report](#) - Expedia

With thanks for insights from the following experts:

Hotel Data Cloud
VFS Global
Kandima Resort

Global Village
Google

Gregor Amon, Founder and Managing Partner
Peter Brun, Chief Communications Officer
Neeraj Seth, Director of Marketing Communication and Public Relations
Jaki Ellenby, Executive Director
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#TourismTomorrow moderated by:

Nanou Destination

Nadege Noblet, Founder and Managing Director

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