



Source: Unsplash

5 tactics for tourism destinations to improve the guest experience that do not cost a lot of money

More and more people are vaccinated, their “freedom” is back. So many want to leave their home and see something else than the four walls of their confined home office. They are ready to have their senses touched by unfamiliar views, sounds, tastes, and scents... The question that remains is: “where are they going – and what are they looking for?”

Our theory is, that most people will stay close this summer because:

- People do not want to take risks on their vacation, they want to be sure they can go to the place they book.
- The rules in many destinations are constantly changing – and the risk of changed rules when coming home from somewhere is unpredictable
- A Corona infection during the vacation, possible hospitalization abroad or going into quarantine when back home is just too big of a risk
- The majority families have members who don't have their COVID19 vaccine yet
- The economic situation is not stable and many people are not willing to spend much for travel

With people staying close to home a second year in a row - What a great opportunity to remain top of mind for all the smaller destinations which were run over last summer with first time visitors!

There are risks to every opportunity. While last year was the year of forgiveness if a destination was not prepared for so many visitors. This year guests expect that destinations are prepared.

It is not the time now to think about changes in the positioning of a destination, it is the time to be aware of the strengths and the highlights – and it is the time to sensitive the local community to welcome the visitors and tourists.

If a destination has not changed the positioning, offering, and some products in the last 12 months, it is too late to something about it now. It is the moment to accept what the 'hardware' is and focus on the 'software'.

Here are 5 things a destination can still do today to prepare for a successful summer 2021 season.

1. Build trust: Keep your website up to date with available and open attractions

The website is the second place of information for visitors after friends and family.

Therefore, providing updated information is crucial:

Information about winter season timetables and COVID19-plans are outdated and make me leave the site immediately. Load the actual opening hours of the gondola, the chair lift, the public pool, the mini-golf and public tennis courses.

Communicate up to date COVID19 measures clearly and in simple words upfront. Be honest on what is possible and what is not possible. And advise by when you will update the information - keep that promise!

What to do:

- Assign content responsibility for each piece of information on the website
- Check if content on the website can be 'timed' and can go 'invisible' at certain expiry date
- Set a public incentive for reporting wrong or missing information – everyone in the destination should be sharing the responsibility

Your cost:

There is no direct cost

2. Be accessible: Have extended 'virtual opening hours' of your tourist information

Tourism information offices are often run at 9.00 – 11.00 and 14.00 - 16.30h opening hours. Potential visitors do their planning on weekends and in the evening. Win over peoples' heart by being available when they need you.

What to do:

- Integrate a 'call us now' button or a chatbot/live agent interaction on the website. People want to feel that they are special and information 'for everyone' are not making them feel that way. Be there when they need you. It is often outside the normal times.
- Change the shift plan in the office, have an early shift starting e.g. at 06.30h and a late shift working till 22h. Cover weekends from 9am to 5pm.

- Promise 6 hour guaranteed response to emails to email senders – if the message is sent before 4pm / 7 days a week.

Your cost:

- Integration of a chat-tool in the website
- Homeoffice access to chat and emails for your team
- Educate your team what their role is and make them part of the success. (No cost but priceless.)

3. Make people remember you: Write articles for newspapers

There are so many regional newspapers across the country, looking for meaningful content, looking for professional text. Tell the story of your destination, proud and humble, authentic and inviting. Have an incentive/surprise for readers who come to your destination

What to do:

- Find a good storyteller in your destination.
- Write short text (less than 5'000 words) and have at least 4 professional, high resolution pictures ready to share
- Close ever text with a 'call to action' – e.g. have a gift at the tourist office for people who stop by e.g. with a voucher from the article
- Make sure the articles get published

Your cost:

- Compensation for the texter
- Professional pictures

4. Keep your promise: Keep the streets tidy

Corona is a lot about cleanliness and hygiene. Used masks on streets, full trash bins, trash in parks, on parking lots or in pedestrian areas make a place look filthy.

What to do:

- Set-up hygiene stands with sanitizer in pedestrian areas / areas of higher concentration of visitor.
- Empty trash bins daily during high season
- Increase street cleaning service during high season

Your cost:

- The right number of robust outdoor hygiene stands
- Hygiene Liquid
- Maintenance cost (Labor)

5. Be the most welcoming destination: Every local is an ambassador

Start involving local people in care taking of guests and visitors. Simple tools like 'ribbon batches', 'hats' or even 't-shirts' saying 'I am from <destination> - ask me anything'. Visitors are invited to ask these people for anything in the destination. The promise by the people is that they feel responsible to make sure the issue or question gets resolved. Make sure you win over key opinion leaders in the destination to create followers. You might create momentum and real 'wow-moments'.

What to do:

- Develop a 'I am from <destination> - ask me anything' concept
- Sign-up key opinion leaders to support you
- Develop incentives to make people participate

Your cost:

- Communication to local people, meetings and instructions
- Batches, hats, t-shirts etc
- Incentive for locals to participate

There is much more you can do beyond these tips. These 5 tactics are solid start and make you already stand out from the crowd. Give it a try!

Call us for if you'd like to discuss!