Inspiring CONFIDENCE IN TOURISM

Undoubtedly the Covid-19 pandemic has affected many sectors, but tourism has been hit especially hard; 100% of all worldwide destinations introduced travel restrictions and more than 70% completely closed their borders to international tourism (UNWTO).

Understandably it is expected that tourist arrivals will be down by between 60% and 80% in 2020 when compared with 2019 figures (UNWTO). The global economic fallout has put around 100 to 120 million jobs at risk in the travel and tourism industry.

Around 90% of all tourism businesses are micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and the sector has been leading the way in providing employment and other opportunities for women, youth and rural communities. They have been very negatively impacted by the global health crisis, but ITC remains strongly committed to supporting them and the tourism industry in general.

ITC has adapted its offer and devised a set of activities that aim to support countries in this critical recovery phase, as they go about the vital task of restarting tourism in a responsible and sustainable manner. Let’s explore what ITC can do together in 4 decisive steps.

**STEP 1** Recovery assessment

Firstly, we will enable clarity and understanding of the country’s tourism sector situation:

*Tourism recovery plans* help governments develop country-specific road maps that will help regain lost ground by identifying how to mitigate the ongoing negative effects of the pandemic.

*Market research* to identify which markets will recover first, new markets or new segments and travel bubbles will ensure you know how to move forward.

**STEP 2** Value chain improvement

Secondly, ITC will look at how to empower tourism stakeholders to better handle the “new normal”:

*Support for MSMEs and small operators* (inbound tour operators, accommodation, tour organizers, guides) will focus on skills development for crisis management (HR and Finance management in times of crisis; re-orientation on regional and domestic market; revised marketing strategy including effective digital marketing; crisis communication and access to finance). This support can be provided remotely and is accompanied by crisis management material.
Adaptation to be “Covid Safe” will see ITC assist you in developing new tourism products and services that are apt and safe for the Covid era or modifying existing ones to adjust activities which could pose a threat. This is very relevant in the case of community-based tourism where many activities are normally interactive.

Development of brief guidelines for different set of stakeholders (tourists, tour operators, guides, CBT members) on how to safely run tours, including behaviours and precautions to follow according to the respective roles and responsibility during the tour.

Market access is vital to sustained success, and ITC, also under these unprecedented circumstances, can adapt its expertise and provide support for online trade fairs and events as well as remote B2Bs to raise awareness and boost the visibility of the destination’s offerings.

Institutions and the business environment

Next ITC will work alongside public and private tourism stakeholders to reinforce their responses to the challenges:

Capacity building in crisis communication comprises of assistance to tourism boards, associations and Ministry’s promotion departments on how to properly communicate with the tourist market during and after Covid-19. It can focus on social media campaigns to win trust and show how well the country is managing the virus, protecting citizens and working for the safety of future tourists.

STEP 3

Public-private partnership for tourism recovery will explore how we can all work together collaboratively to overcome the issues Covid-19 has revealed and take a seamless approach for the betterment of the business environment in tourism generally.

STEP 4

Destination marketing and branding

Finally, we will take all that we have learned and provide assistance on visibility:

Marketing & promotion strategy with a stronger focus on digital marketing can be devised. This will be guided by the market research from Step 1 but also the direction the country wishes to take. It will be important to develop a new branding strategy to target the relevant markets and clearly communicate the image of your destination as safe and ready for the “new normal” in order to build trust among tourists.

Repackaging the experience will require identifying what tourists want in the Covid era and redefining the key personas likely to be interested in your tourism offerings such as fun/adventure seekers, stress relievers, nature lovers, authenticity seekers etc. Driving the narrative and creating inspiring content will be more important than ever, as will re-evaluating your social media channels and segmentation. Informative, positive, relevant feedback in the form of online reviews, testimonials, surveys, blogs are vital ways to boost confidence in a destination so actively seeking these will be a top priority.

To find out more how ITC can help you overcome the tourism challenges and restart tourism please contact Giulia Macola at gmacola@intracen.org