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## "Travel & Communications under Lockdown" UK Insights & Research (March-July 2020)

Due to the challenges facing the travel and communications sectors with the arrival of Covid-19, indigoeight tuned into webinars, trend discussions, interviews and podcasts, while monitoring updates and opinion pieces in respected UK newspapers, websites, consumer and trade titles. Here, we share some key take outs that we found to be relevant to travel and sustainability throughout this period.

Other sources included: *Roxhill Media*, *The Global Wellness Summit*, *Travel Connection Group (Social with Media)*, *OutThere (The #Experimentalist Live)*, *LUTE*, *Globetrender*, *Skift*, *The Future of Travel (podcast)*, *Welltodo Global (& The Business of Wellness podcast)*.

### March 2020

#### 1) Update on UK Travel Sections

- Pages cut due to advertising but circulations going up. Digital / radio / social media thriving
- The Times / Sunday Times circulations up 30% as people seek trusted brands
- A Times survey shows 70% of consumers will be attracted to brands that have shown a sense of community

#### What does this mean for you?

- We are looking beyond the travel pages
- On-line and social media need more content
- Can we get recognition for your initiatives, particularly if you can show you're supporting people through this crisis?
- Radio listenership up by 50% - we want to factor this into our communications strategy – with a goal to getting you on our airwaves



## 2) Armchair Travel Dominates

- 'Virtual vacations' from your sofa and dreamy places to go when the bans are lifted
- From The Sun's 'Sofa Escapes' to the armchair traveller series on The Independent, new columns appear weekly
- Includes retrospective travel stories (e.g. celebrities/influencers pick their favourite spots)

### What does this mean for you?

- Opportunities around celebrity-led pieces. Consider former high-profile guests or celebs who wrote articles on you and may talk about their experiences
- Virtual travel - Lots of content is out there, but opportunities exist for great live streams: e.g. educating on conservation, chefs/bartenders teaching people to make local dishes/drinks, housekeeping and engineering depts. giving tips and advice for a housebound world etc

## 3) Forward Planning

- Think creatively about 2021, as consumers plan ahead (e.g. search results for 2021 Spain holidays have gone up by 1600% [\(Mailonline\)](#))
- Airlines are seeing a surge in interest for trips early next year (Telegraph)

### What does this mean for you?

- We want to create reasons why people should travel to you in 2021
- Use this time to review and update your marketing material - including photography and video footage
- Be sensitive to pricing, especially in the luxury market. Some also feel the middle market may struggle to recover



## April / May 2020

### 1) Mood of the Nation

- There's an increased demand for more positive news to ease anxiety (e.g. Country & Town House responded with a daily 'Good News' newsletter, with coverage of those helping others in the crisis, cleaner rivers, less pollution etc)
- The wellness industry has adapted well online but we're reaching saturation point with too much choice and content (e.g. endless online workouts, repetition of advice etc) - so we're seeing a lean towards trusted platforms and experts

#### What does this mean for you?

- Take this time to prepare for bigger conversations addressing current topics or looking beyond the lockdown
- Positive initiatives can still get traction so share these, however big or small

### 2) Travel Update

- No clarity over when we will be able to travel again - so the focus is on UK staycations, but also winter sun and 2021 (particularly for long haul)
- Renewed respect for travel as a luxury - it's anticipated we'll travel less but for longer, with a focus on experiences and green/sustainable travel
- Media more interested in 'post coronavirus' travel ideas and moving away from armchair travel, as some people have found this a bit distasteful (particularly overly promoting 'look what you're missing' on social media)
- Believe experiential travel will move to become more holistic (a more rounded experience, potentially with a holy/spiritual edge)

#### What does this mean for you?

- This period of time is magnifying nature's benefits of much reduced travel. Having a clear and transparent strategy on sustainability will be essential
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- Explore how your values and your offering are relevant to match future travellers needs or help drive a new type of travel
- We're brainstorming and pitching ideas, from places in nature to 'multi gen' reunited breaks, as well as solo breaks to escape the family after isolation!
- Encourage your clients to book for longer with value added incentives

### 3) Editors on the Industry

- Technology has allowed businesses to show agility and creativity
- Our former pace of life and work was unsustainable - a need to rethink
- An urgent need to buy better, choose quality and focus on sustainability
- Act to make impact - the gap must be narrowed between those who say and those who do - these businesses will be amplified
- Huge rise in social media use, especially Facebook (the go-to for maintaining friends and social networks) ([Guardian](#)) - so build loyalty by being authentic and honest.  
Listen to gauge the mood

#### What does this mean for you?

- Have clarity and focus in your message, aim for personalisation and originality
- Ensure your content is inspiring across your channels (ideally, helping others)
- Honesty is key - don't always worry about the outcome (sales etc)
- Review your own narrative (either to reinforce your view or change it)



## June / July 2020

As we started to slowly emerge from lockdown and some travel resumed, we continued our analysis of the industry. Here, we provide an update from the UK travel pages, an overview of key trends, and three key insights as to how we feel global travel (& marketing communications) has been changed as a result of Covid-19.

### Key Trends - What Will Travellers Want?

- Privacy and seclusion
- Reconnection to nature
- Life learning and opportunities to self-develop
- Multi generation family trips
- Dream-trip planning ( long haul 2021 onwards)
- Human-to-human service (but done with equality and humility)
- Mindful and purposeful travel - longer stays, making a positive difference to the location

### Update on UK Travel Sections

- Publications still suffering from low advertising, but the curve is flattening
- Paginations are rising and sections returning to former (larger) sizes
- Freelance budgets have been cut, with some freezes on new commissions
- 'Wistful armchair travel' content is ending, but it's a challenge to find copy that's suitable for post-Covid use. Travel pieces with no pandemic reference feel wrong...
- Increasing focus on trips which have easy social distancing, few tourists, off-grid location
- Demand for more positive news, innovative ways to approach new restrictions, experiences that reflect the discovery of new pastimes in lockdown, and more off the beaten track destinations
- Demand for hooks, stats, quotes and material for the bigger news and reports coverage
- Press trips are back on, especially in UK and Europe
- Long haul trips more likely from September, with a boom marked for 2021
- Opportunities with long lead magazines are at the front and back of the book (news)

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## 1) Covid-19's impact on (the conversation around) sustainability

- Covid-19 has not *changed* the conversation for destinations already investing in sustainability, but rather *intensified* it
- Provided an opportunity to reset and reimagine travel: travelling less, but more meaningfully, contributing to projects that matter and being selective with where we stay
- However, money will be an issue for some - favouring lower prices over eco credentials
- Climate change likely to drop down government priorities list (so it's up to the individual)
- Private jet usage likely to rocket - bad news for carbon emissions

### What does this mean for you?

- Better to focus on one or two things you really care about and can do well
- Look for ways to develop circular economies and better systems. E.g. local sourcing and working with communities, using traceable and ethical suppliers

## 2) Changed Tourism Experience / Priorities

- Travellers craving authentic experiences over material items
- Changing perception of luxury: beautifully-produced, local products over extravagance
- Luxury/boutique customer still want hotel experience, not a trip to an upmarket hospital
- 'Unnatural inhumanity' (less contact, stringent sanitation rules etc) is undesirable
- Demand for holidays that enhance health, with a focus on outdoors, nature and personalised spa treatments
- Travel will become more inclusive and democratic, with increased awareness of its local and social impact

### What this means for you

- Importance of cleanliness for confidence: hygiene is 'currency of the new normal'
- Absolute transparency & clear communication on hygiene policies across the board – website / reservations / emails / CRM / booking confirmations etc
- Focus on staff and mental health of employees after a difficult period
- A sense of trust is key. Guests need to know you've considered everything
- Promote your connection to local, the experiences etc - what makes you different. A chance to promote lesser-known nearby destinations and sites



### 3) Domestic Travel & Wilderness Seeking

- Staycations are top of the agenda (travel worries / restrictions, less disposable money)
- This summer is a great opportunity to rediscover, or discover new parts of, the UK
- The demand for nature, the great outdoors, and conservation is also on the rise
- Privacy and silence as the new luxury
- Private rentals, self-drives, charter yachts, human free locations and private islands will prosper, as people avoid crowds

#### What this means for you

- UK businesses have huge potential with new clients who wouldn't have previously considered holidaying there; a captive audience
- People remember how you make them feel, not what you say/do. Create special memories for those excited about getting away. Surprise them, help them to relax and celebrate things they've missed (human interactions, atmosphere, access)
- Sustainability - championing local will help cement this in our psyches. Help guests to learn what's special about your destination - create emotional impact
- Opportunity to leverage privacy products - communicate the ways in which you offer elements of privacy and exclusivity and/or access to wild spaces

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