



VISIT MORAY SPEYSIDE



MARKETING & BRAND BATTLE PLAN

Practical advice and techniques to promote
your brand post covid and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

As you will be well aware, worldwide travel and tourism is in the midst of a crisis, with large scale events, flights and countries going into and out of lockdown.

Tourists are already being put off travelling abroad, but for many this isn't out of fear of catching the virus (well not most, anyway), but because they fear losing money on booked flights, accommodation, tours and activities — and they're worried that travel bans will stop them getting back home or having to spend 14 days in quarantine.

I am one of these wary travellers. My family and I were looking to book a trip to Lisbon in May to see family I have over there but we are holding off until later in the year, or next, as we don't want to lose money if parts of our trip are cancelled.

What customers need right now is peace of mind.

I've spoken to a lot of accommodation providers and operators across the world and there is an obvious fear that 2020 will be a very harmful year for their business. For some, it could spell the end, but this should only happen if you did not have a contingency plan. In my opinion, you absolutely should work on a back-up plan, as things will probably get worse before they get better. I have even heard some say they may stop marketing altogether.

Looking at the current evolution of events, I believe that this crisis will impact the industry for at least 18–24 months (at time of writing), so you must create a plan of action... a battle plan to protect your business as much as possible going forward.

My company, the Tourism Marketing Agency are specialists in destination and marketing. We work with tourism brands across the world to improve their marketing, increase bookings and to help them make their businesses stronger and more resilient.

Now is the time for the tourism sector in Moray to work together, creating new partnerships and opportunities which make us stronger.

I am excited to be partnering with Visit Moray & Speyside, to help them, and you, deliver a brighter future for tourism in Moray Speyside.

Don't let this crisis define your business. Assess, adapt, survive... and you may find that your business comes out the other end stronger than ever.

Stay safe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Torres', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Torres
Director, Tourism Marketing Agency

**If we do not all pull together
then this crisis will only pull us all apart.**
#SaveTourism

SHOULD I STOP MARKETING?

I have heard people in the industry saying they will stop all marketing until this all blows over. Some people have made this decision because they want to protect their cash flow — which I completely understand — and some have made this decision because they simply ‘do not see the point’. During a [recent online webinar](#) with Arival, Yaron Burgin of Abraham Tours said when asked should you be marketing right now: “No. Travel is an emotional purchase. Everyone is worried about the pandemic”. During the same discussion Tom Jenkins of ETOA also added: “Right now, there’s nothing to sell”.

I hope both Yaron and Tom do not take offence to what I am about to say, but to me this is very bad advice for any tourism business. It’s simply not true that people working in the tours and activities service have “nothing to sell”, and I think this is an ill-thought-out and damaging statement to make. The advice in this document will hopefully highlight the many actions that you can take to sell online and market your business.

Someone might say something like, “Yeah, but you run a marketing agency so you would say that...” But anyone who says that obviously doesn’t know me. I’ve spent the last 3 years putting out free content to help tourism businesses. This document you’re currently reading will be in the hands of many tourism professionals I’ve never met as I want this industry to grow, prosper, and survive. We are all in this together.

Marketing your business is now more important than ever. If you decide to stop marketing your business, you may as well give up. A famous aphorism comes to mind: ‘Failing to plan is planning to fail’.

If you stop and plan to wait until the crisis is over, a competitor will only see this as an opportunity to gain ground in your niche market while you 'self isolate' your business. However, you must pick your battles on which marketing avenues will work best for your business.

I get it: it's a scary time for anyone in this industry just now, and you have to look after your business. You know your own business better than anyone, but I hope you're reading this because you accept that marketing could play a pivotal role for travel during the coronavirus crisis — even if you have no marketing budget.

Burying your head in the sand hoping it will all go away is not an effective solution. There are several things you can do to mitigate the losses from coronavirus and I hope this document helps you think outside the box while you safeguard your business going forward.

SHOULD I EVEN MENTION CORONAVIRUS IN MY MARKETING?

Again, some of you reading this may not wish to mention anything about coronavirus as they “do not wish to promote or highlight the virus” in fear that it will damage their business further. However, I’ll be blunt: the coronavirus is damaging your business whether you talk about it or not. Hitting the problem head on is the right approach to take. How you tackle it is the important part. Your marketing should focus on reassuring your customers and giving them peace of mind.

Context Travel put out a statement on social media:

“As a part of the global travel community, we’ve been following recent news of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) incredibly closely.

Most importantly, our thoughts are with all those affected, be it directly or indirectly. In particular, we’re working closely with our guides and local partners in Asia and Italy to minimise the disruption to their livelihoods.

We also recognise the increased uncertainty that COVID-19 may be causing in your own trip planning. To help you book with confidence, we are offering an exceptional cancellation policy: Until the situation has stabilised, we will be extending the option of a 100% refund on all new bookings made after March 2, 2020, for cancellations made more than 7 days prior to a tour.”

Context Travel has taken hold of the situation and created a positive from it. Let’s break down what this statement says:

“...We’re working closely with our guides and local partners in Asia and Italy to minimise the disruption to their livelihoods.” This highlights that they care about their own staff, guides and business partners.

“To help you book with confidence, we are offering an exceptional cancellation policy: Until the situation has stabilised, we will be extending the option of a 100% refund on all new bookings made after March 2, 2020, for cancellations made more than 7 days prior to a tour.” This highlights that they care about their customers and that they want to make sure they are covered as much as possible during this crisis.

One of our own clients, Vagabond Tours of Ireland, also [released a statement on their website](#) stating they will defer tours so their customers can still enjoy their destination when the crisis subsides. They even relaxed payment terms to help their customers.

What Vagabond and Context Travel have done is the right approach to build brand trust in existing and potential customers, and a similar approach MUST be taken by any accommodation, tour or activity business in the industry. If you ignore your customers’ concerns, then it highlights to them that you do not care, and this may cause more long-term damage to your business than COVID-19.

Ultimately your customers do not care*

*For the most part

Recent surveys by Phocuswire and many others show that ultimately, people want to travel. There is a lot of pent up demand and as we have seen in the UK alone as soon as restrictions are eased, the bookings sore.

The main fear for travellers is not the virus itself, for the most part, but it is the fear of losing money, their deposits, the cost of flights and hotels, and the possibility of suddenly being asked to quarantine.

So, it is fine to have a covid statement on your website but I would not go down the route of having all your marketing focusing on the virus itself. You should still focus on, and highlight, the experience someone can have... just a little bit different that before.

ONLINE TRAVEL AGENTS (OTA) VS DIRECT

Although OTAs are massive organisations, they are also not immune to what is happening in our industry. They make money from the commission they take from your bookings, which will be down across the world. Put simply, OTAs will be hit as hard as everyone else in the industry.

As some of you may already know, I have strong feelings about how you should utilise an OTA. They can be a huge benefit for your business but you must also have a direct marketing strategy. I suspect that at least one OTA will collapse if this crisis does not pass by quickly, with lots of people losing their jobs... and this is not something I wish to see happen.

In the next few pages, I offer my thoughts on OTAs and if and when you should use them.

OTA ADVICE

SHOULD YOU USE AN ONLINE TRAVEL AGENT?



I get asked about Online Travel Agents (OTAs) all the time and I usually say yes... if you are not at capacity and you treat it as nothing more than another marketing channel, then OTAs can be really useful. I would, however, say no to an OTA if you are already at, or close to, capacity through your own marketing channels.

For those who do not know what an OTA is, it is an online travel agent. Expedia and Booking.com are two of the best known OTAs, but there are countless others. They sell your products within their platform to a wide audience who know their brand more than they know yours.

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OTAs will reduce their own marketing budgets to compensate for the drop in bookings, so this may open up a few more opportunities for you to take advantage of. Putting time and effort into marketing at this time can help you jump ahead of some of the biggest OTAs — or at least catch up with and compete with them.

Another piece of advice I can give you is, you can't send your product descriptions to OTAs and forget about them. Just like marketing on Google Ads, you need to constantly monitor if the OTA 'marketing channel' is generating more revenue than you are spending (i. e. the amount of commission you pay them). I specifically mention profit margins as most business owners look at the turnover generated from OTAs and that means nothing if they are taking a large chunk of your profits.

By using an OTA, or multiple OTAs, it can help your business reach an audience that you may not be able to reach normally. This is especially important if you're just starting out. Customers are also more inclined to trust a brand like Get Your Guide or Expedia as they are large, established businesses. There is a flip side, however.

If your business's revenue is predominantly generated through an OTA, and many tourism businesses do rely heavily on them, then sorry to say. . .

YOU BASICALLY DO NOT CONTROL YOUR BUSINESS.

In a way, it could be said that you don't even have a business if all your revenue comes through an OTA. The OTA owns 'your' customers' data and it is their brand that is seen by the customers you serve, not yours.

For example, I know of one business who relied so much on TripAdvisor that when they changed their algorithm on how they display and

rank listings, that businesses sales dropped by 45%. Never build your business solely on an OTA. As I said, if you do, you don't truly own your business or the data, effectively working as an employee of that OTA.

However, if you make an OTA only 10-20% of your business and use it to help promote your business and/or to help fill spaces in your tour that may otherwise be empty, then you should be fine. The other 80% should be through your own website as this is the only way you will grow a sustainable brand.

OTAs also take a large chunk of commission from your bookings, which is normally 20% or higher, and these are likely to increase to help cover their operation costs as well as paying back the large investments these companies have received from backers.

You also get little to no brand visibility and exposure which will make it extremely hard for you to stand out on your own. Whatever happens, OTAs are here to stay and they will only get bigger as customers get more and more familiar with their brands.

Scale and capacity

Because of the many empty seats you have, especially during any low seasonality, an OTA can help scale your business, helping you reach full capacity, making you a small profit rather than a big loss. During Covid however this is a lot harder as they are mostly focused on international travellers to a destination.

I am also a believer that you can use tools like Facebook to effectively market to your local and domestic markets without the need of a OTA. They are on your doorstep after all!

When it comes to OTAs, I would even suggest that you create a product that is specific for those platforms. Something that is low cost to your customers but is high in profit for you. This could be a cut-down version of an existing product that can be given in less time while still giving the customer a great experience.

By creating a 'cheaper' product, one that takes you less time and resources to manage, you can increase your profits while also opening your brand to new customers. That way, when they come back, they go directly to you and not the OTA.

As I said at the start, treat an OTA as nothing more than a marketing channel, a resource to help build your brand.

A BATTLE PLAN

MARKETING DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS: A BATTLE PLAN



I shall now highlight some marketing strategies to take during the corona pandemic. I will split up the strategies into the easy-to-understand sections below.

1. Maintain brand awareness
2. Give peace of mind to your customers
3. Maintain cashflow
4. Plan for after the crisis

Act quickly: Ramp up customer service

Communicate! And do it early and often. Your customers expect to hear from you. Don't wait for them to contact you first. Be proactive, as waiting too long will have a negative effect on your brand's reputation as customers will think that you do not care or that you are not taking this crisis seriously.

Don't cancel... postpone!

#DontCancelPostpone #SaveTourism

Never use the word cancel if you can help it and try to persuade existing bookings to postpone indefinitely. If possible, give them an open-ended ticket that they can redeem at any time (if the dates they choose are available). Refunding should be a last resort.

Also, some businesses are adding extra value to existing bookings to persuade customers to postpone to another date. This could be an extra stop on your tour, a free lunch or an extra night if you're an accommodation provider. Think about what extra value you can add.

Don't fight against a cancellation

I know this may be hard for some businesses but if your customers insist that they wish to cancel, don't fight against them as it will only hurt your brand's reputation. Remember that your customers will be hit hard during this crisis too and have some empathy for them. If a full refund is impossible for some reason, you should refund most of the item price and keep a small proportion — this is far better than offering no refund at all.

To give you an example: when Arival Berlin was cancelled 2 days prior to the event, the event hotel insisted the hundreds of hotel guests had to pay 100% of their stay even though the German authorities stopped large gatherings and Arival was forced to cancel.

Let me be clear: I understand they are a business and I expected to lose my deposit, but because they would not be flexible in their 7-day cancellation policy, they took the complete payment from me and hundreds of other business owners. I suspect the Vienna House Andels in Berlin has damaged its reputation and lost many future customers. Even if they'd only taken 50% of the money from people's bookings, their reputation would have been salvaged.

Whatever you do, be compassionate and try to be as flexible as possible. Most customers will understand that they may lose a deposit — but don't take advantage of them.

Change your payment policy

If you are not the type of business to take immediate payment, allow your customers to pay 24–48 hours before they arrive or possibly pay on arrival. It may help you get fewer cancellations and some extra bookings.

Offer gift cards

If you do not do so already, sell gift cards for your products. This can be a great way to generate business throughout a crisis as it allows you to take in vital revenue now for customers to use later. This albeit smaller amount of revenue now may ensure your business survives until normal travel resumes. Don't put a time limit on the gift cards (especially during this crisis). Keep them open-ended at least until the pandemic subsides.

You may think that a gift card doesn't make sense for your business model. But any type of business can provide a gift card. Customers pay now (perhaps with a generous discount) and they can redeem the card at a later date to experience your tour or activity. All businesses should offer a gift card of some description, not just during a crisis.

Set up a Facebook group for your customers

This is not the time to hunker down but a time to communicate even more with your current and potential customers. One of the best ways to do this is to set up a Facebook group specifically for the Coronavirus Crisis. This allows you to provide up-to-date information for your customers as well as to publish Facebook live and other content to help answer your customers' questions and allay their fears.

If you already have a Facebook group, use this channel extensively and let your customers know that they can use this channel to ask questions. Remember: you must answer ALL enquiries and comments. Yes, this will take time but if you have tour guides sitting around because you have no tours running, get them to do this job for you. Remember: this is all about assessing, adapting, and surviving. Do what it takes.

Promote local travel and help your community

One option that is relevant to many businesses is to look closer to home and develop products that will cater for people who live in and around their destination. In my honest opinion, almost every tourism business should have a product that focuses on local and domestic tourism — even if it is far removed from their normal product offering. This generates extra revenue and gives you something to fall back on if another crisis comes along. Always have a disaster plan in your back pocket.

If your business relies on inbound tourists, then also don't completely stop marketing to this audience as we can't predict what will happen in the near future — and plenty of people will still want to risk travelling (if allowed). However, it may safeguard your business to create a product and use some of your marketing budget to focus on locals. Encourage locals to discover their own destination. Play on the fact that locals must unite and help local businesses survive this crisis. This approach worked very well in Australia, after their devastating fires. Consider what products you can create that locals can participate in.

Do what it takes to survive and market the hell out of your new local product(s) on Facebook as it is the best and cheapest form of paid marketing available today. Note: many people will be stuck at home,

self-isolating, and they will be bored. They will likely spend more time on social media than ever before, so it's a good time to make an impression with Facebook Ads.

One other aspect you need to consider, and why local products and marketing is important, is that this crisis will affect many airlines and unless we see huge government bailouts across the globe, you may find that there are fewer airlines bringing tourists to your destination in the near future.

Staycation will be key in 2020

Many travellers will think twice about travelling abroad — and many won't be able to due to travel bans. This means that we will likely see a huge rise in staycations once the initial panic and hardship has subsided. People will still want to get away from all of this and forget about their worries for a while, so expect to see a huge increase in consumers travelling and taking a holiday within their destination.

Guest houses, AirBNBs, and local activities will all be in demand and this is another reason why you should focus on the local market. Now, local does not necessarily mean your immediate destination. For example, I am based in Glasgow, Scotland, but would consider the whole of the UK as a staycation destination. In fact, my young family and I take many trips within the UK; we love sharing a cabin with family and friends.

Imagine the situation where you may be in self-isolation for 14 days or not being able to leave the house properly for weeks on end. People will be restless and eager to escape, so this is the best time to promote your domestic product.

Make meaningful partnerships with your ‘competitors’

Now, this may seem crazy to some but it’s a great idea to speak to others in your sector — even your biggest competitors. This is not the time to be insular. Create an event, meet for a coffee (or a beer), if it’s safe to do so, or meet online and discuss what you can all do to combat this crisis and create local experiences that could support all local tour and activities businesses. Share resources, buses, bikes, tour guides... whatever it takes to make sure you, and your local community survives.

Some of you may wish to see a competitor collapse but think about the broader effects this will have on your destination and local businesses as a whole.

Early-bird offers and focus for 2021

I hate discounting. I always advise that you should never compete on price, but on experience – unless you are a budget-focused business, of course. Plan ahead for 2021 to help generate revenue now by offering a discount or early-bird offer for your tours next year. Early-bird discount is often the only kind of discount that doesn’t diminish the value of a premium product, so this is the best discount model for anyone worried about cannibalising the value of their products by discounting too much.

Not only will this help your customers plan for a future holiday (remember, many are self-isolating so they will want a holiday once the crisis is over) it gives them confidence as it highlights and gives the perceived notion that you are a strong enough business that you will still be around next year.

Plan as if 2020 is dead in the water. If you get bookings during 2020 then it's a bonus. Focus your marketing on 2021 for now and re-evaluate 2020 in the coming weeks and months. With the help of early-bird discounts and other incentives that add value to your products, you can encourage people to buy for the following year, generating much-needed revenue in 2020, when you need it most.

Paid advertising: Google, Bing and Facebook Ads

If you rely heavily on paid advertising then you can look at this marketing channel in two ways.

1. Reduce your ad spend to focus on other areas but keep some awareness going.
2. Your competitors, as well as OTAs, will reduce their own marketing spend, so this may open up more opportunities for you.

Depending on how competitive your destination and sector is, keep a small part of your paid ad budget going. Even if it is just to protect your brand name. If you are following my advice to focus on getting bookings for 2021, then use paid ads to promote this.

If your budget is small, then focus only on Facebook Ads as it is the cheapest option. It is, also, arguably the most targeted option as it allows you to effectively target locals in your community with the new products and initiatives you create.

Another option would be Google Display ads. Unlike the standard Google search ads which are entirely text, the display network allows you to use much more engaging visual ads. The cost-per-click (CPC) of these ads is also 71% cheaper than Google Search ads, on average, with

the capability of millions of impressions for a much smaller cost. With the in-depth and flexible targeting options, you can generate brand awareness on sites where your future customers will be viewing content. At this moment in time, potential customers will most likely be reverting back to the research phase of the buying funnel and, as such, ensuring your brand is represented on third-party websites related to your product offering would be a great way of sustaining brand awareness at a low cost, ensuring you are front of mind when people are ready to travel back down the funnel towards purchase.

In essence, once this crisis comes to an end, customers will come back into the travel and tourism market and you will want to be in a position to target them the instant this interest returns. If you plan out hyper-focused pages with content that will appeal to these customers, you will reap the PPC benefits. This strategy ensures that the ads you set up to take advantage of this renewed interest are especially relevant; this will reduce your CPC, raise your quality score and will result in a high impression share — meaning that your ads will have a higher market share for a lower cost. Put even more simply: writing the right content now will allow you to dominate certain paid search niches later, beating competition while spending less money per click.

You could also use your ad budget to promote inspiring content and stories about how your guides and staff are coping during the Coronavirus Crisis. Take this opportunity to humanise your brand.

Again, you know your individual businesses and the cashflow you have, but if you can, keep some ads going.

SEO and content strategy

If you have to prioritise only one marketing practice during this period then it should be SEO and Content Marketing. Letting your customers know you exist is very important and it allows you to optimise your website and ranking position months down the line, giving you a stronger online presence. SEO takes a long time to take effect, and this means that you have to practice good SEO far in advance if you plan to take advantage of the sudden return of customers once the crisis is over. Doing so in advance will also help you stand out from your competitors at this key commercial time. This isn't just a plug of TMA's services, it's the best advice I can think of. Optimising your website now may also allow you to jump above one or two competitors (and OTAs) who pause all marketing activities. This could prove invaluable in the coming months when competition for returning customers will surely be extremely high.

This is the prime time to create blogs, travel guides, videos, and many other ideas that you can take forward. If you are lucky enough to use an agency like mine then we will be on hand to do this for you. If not or if you have no budget, then you can do this yourself. This could ensure that your business survives, so put out as much [high-quality] content as you can to keep your business relevant and in customers' minds.

Think about it: people are self-isolating or they've had their travel plans cancelled due to travel bans. Some people will be depressed and eager to get out and travel once the coronavirus has been contained. They will spend time at home, on their laptops and smart phones, fantasising about traveling. At this point, people are solely in the research phase of the buyer funnel, so it's vital to give them something to read or to

give them a video to watch. Inspire them, entertain them, and give them useful content that helps them plan their big post-pandemic trip.

Not sure how to create content or know which ideas to take forward?

Ideas are all around us. Sometimes we need to sit back and focus in order to bring these ideas to the fore, and sometimes we need to dive a little deeper. These tactics should help you and your team find the best content ideas for your brand.

Before we begin, I understand that this may be overwhelming for some — especially if you struggle with writing content or you believe you don't have a creative bone in your body. However, the tours and activities industry is inherently creative; if you've created or curated a tour, I'm sure you can devise some interesting and engaging content for your website. Be true to yourself and simply show others what your brand and your products are all about. What you create doesn't need to be perfect; it just needs to be authentic.

Your website

Now is also the right time to take a closer look at your website and see how you can improve the user purchase experience or, if required, give it a complete overhaul, planning for the future. This also does not need to be an expensive exercise as there are so many options available to many tourism businesses today. However, as every website is different, there's no point going through a range of possible website changes here. I'm happy to talk you through these and offer advice if you are unclear on what to do.

Should you use humour?

This can be a sensitive area. Humour can work very well during a crisis as it is cathartic and comforting to laugh. However, it can also backfire massively if not done right as people are understandably sensitive at the moment. If you do use humour, don't make fun of the coronavirus itself, and certainly don't make fun of people. Judge for yourself which jokes are tasteful and which aren't. Also remember that sense of humour changes drastically from country to country. Consider your target audience and if they are likely to have a similar sense of humour.

I have seen some heated debates online with people calling the crisis 'hype'. Remember: whether you feel the numbers are comparable to normal flu or not, many people have still died because of coronavirus. At time of writing, 1 in 13 who have contracted the virus in Italy have died, so be thoughtful and sensitive in your communications.

However, here's one piece of humorous marketing I've seen so far that I think is okay:



This was offering a toilet roll for \$3999 with a diamond ring.

This is in response to the supermarkets running out of toilet paper (I don't get why this is a thing!). I like this type of humour as it is poking fun and highlighting the craziness we are seeing right now, but it is not making light of the virus itself or of people's suffering.

Again, if you do use humour, approach with caution and consideration. I liked the humour of the post above, but others may find it offensive. Be very careful.

Potential focus on self-guided tours

For any day or multi-day companies who only provides guided tours, it may help to create self-guided tours and activities. These kinds of products require your travel and logistical connections and for you to plan out the trip for guests, offering help at every stage of the trip, but leaving the driving to your customers who may understandably be wary of travelling in groups during or after the worst stages of this pandemic. This type of tour limits the contact with other people and will appeal to particularly cautious travellers – even after the travel bans have lifted and social distancing has relaxed.

Macs Adventure in Scotland is the best example of a company that successfully sells this kind of self-guided tour. They create itineraries for their customers, organising all the travel, accommodation and ticketing to activities for their customers. This model of self-guided tour can do three things:

1. It can provide an extra revenue stream that requires fewer resources from your business

2. It makes good use of your tour guides' abilities by asking them to create bespoke itineraries for your customers
3. It can support the local businesses you use, maintaining any useful professional connections.

Even for day-tour businesses, this model of self-guided tour can be a great option. If you run tours to museums, walking tours through Rome, or food tours in San Francisco, think about how you can replicate this experience as a self-guided option.

An audio tour is also a good option to consider and Clio Muse is a fantastic platform that allows your guides to create audio tours for customers. I recently published an interview with Clio Muse on my Digital Tourism Show about Audio Tours: <https://youtu.be/B4-dztMO-ig>

The death of paper money?

One of the aspects many businesses really need to think about is, because of the spread of Covid, are we seeing the start of what could be the death of paper money and coins? Reason I bring this up is, many tourism businesses in Scotland still don't have an online booking facility. Covid may well just made this a necessity.

Online Booking

If you do not have this facility in place already, you must, even if it is just to take an initial deposit. It helps give your customers trust more so than providing details over a phone or email. There are many booking systems available (at least 150+), so you will find one that suits your needs. For the most part, it is easier to set up than you think.

A BATTLE PLAN

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS YOU SHOULD TARGET & BUYER PERSONAS



The following are some suggestions of key demographics you should consider targeting right now.

Over 60's

More and more of this age group have been creating Facebook accounts, conducting Zoom chats and buying their weekly shop online because, just like the rest of us, they had to. This means this age group will be more confident purchasing online but not only that, there will be more of them to target through platforms like Facebook!

Students

Students love to go out with their friends and colleagues to cafés, clubs, and bars but have not been able to for the last 5 months or so. What does this mean? Well, for the first time in their lives (probably), they are saving money so once restrictions are lifted fully they will want to meet up again. What products can you create to cater for this demographic?

Team-Building & Corporate

Employers and employees have all had to work from home like the rest of us so re-establishing those bonds will be important going forward. Think about the types of team-building products you could create for this market.

Families with Children

This one is close to my heart as I have a 10 year old and a 4 year old, the oldest of which has struggled at times with lock-down. The thought of not seeing her friends again made her upset at times and this is just

one of the reasons that many families will want their children to enjoy life again. Create products that have children in mind, that bring them together with their friends and allow them to be kids again. Create treasure hunts or other activities that keep them entertained.

Milestones

Just because Covid stopped the world, this does not mean people stopped celebrating a birthday, anniversary or even the birth of a child. The downside is they had to celebrate over a Zoom call... what is fun about that? You can target this demographic to celebrate properly by coming out on a food tour or staying at your accommodation and visiting the sights close by. This can easily be done on platforms like Facebook.

Front Line Staff

Without them we would all be worse off. They have put their lives at risk every day, and continue to do so. They also work long hours so target this demographic on Facebook to thank them and welcome them to your destination and entice them to take a break with you.

Adventure Seekers

Adventure Seekers want an active holiday where they can enjoy both outdoor and cultural activities. Digital-savvy travellers searching for exciting adventures and unique experiences away from their busy work schedule.

They will venture off the beaten track and will be engaged by trying new things and pushing their limits and experiences.

Curious Travellers

Curious Travellers like to live life to the full and enjoy traveling as a hobby. They have an overwhelming desire to explore new destinations and discover new things.

Mature and open-minded with high interest in culture, arts and history. Enjoy variety of holidays from seaside, lakes & mountains to spa & wellness to city breaks.

Mainly 50+, singles, couples and empty nesters that have time and are flexible travellers.

Engaged Sightseers

An older age group, typically over 45 and predominantly over 65. Mix main holidays and short breaks and enjoy touring and general sightseeing.

A love of holidays drives Engaged Sightseers to plan numerous breaks in a year. They enjoy general sightseeing and touring, taking in historical places as well as scenery and nature. They relish engaging with friendly locals and seeking out an authentic experience.

Food-Loving Culturalists

Food-Loving Culturalists will seek out a relaxing holiday experience where they can enjoy great food and drink and engaging cultural activities. They enjoy short breaks in the UK and will recommend quality experiences when their host has gone the 'extra mile.

Above-average holiday takers, favouring short breaks when holidaying in Scotland.

Typically 25-54 with a passion for food and drink.

Natural Advocates

Natural Advocates are passionate about Scotland as it offers everything they want from a holiday; breath-taking scenery, a connection with nature and the chance to get away from it all.

A holiday in Scotland will really help them to unwind, recharge and enjoy quiet time. Scotland is the main destination of choice for Natural Advocates, the majority of whom fall into the 35-54 age group.

CONCLUSIONS

Any conclusion here is temporary, as the situation is constantly evolving and the team at TMA is always working on strategies to help our clients deal with this crisis. No one can predict the future but we can plan in order to limit the damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It's like the quote earlier: 'Failing to plan is planning to fail'. By acting quickly and putting the right strategy in place, your business has a much better chance of surviving this challenging time.

I do not want you to be disillusioned by all of this. It will not be easy and what I highlight in this document will be hard work. If you still feel doing nothing is the right approach then feel free to take it, but from my experience, doing nothing means you will achieve nothing, and that's not the right approach when facing such a difficult challenge. It may sound harsh, I know, but I want you to know how serious this situation is. Fight for your business's right to survive and you will come out a stronger person (and business) in the end.

Having run a business for nearly 14 years, I have seen many ups and downs. At times, I felt like giving up, wondering if what I do makes any positive impact in our industry — which is something that is very important to me. I am a big believer in helping other tourism businesses as much as possible and this is why I put out so much free content.

To anyone who thinks they don't have time for so much content work, I'd say that it's important to put in the time. I could have had an easier life if I did not create all the books, videos, podcasts and blogs that I produce... and I really do write everything myself, as well as film and edit all my videos, design our brand elements as well as running and managing a

business and my team (not to mention juggling family life).

Don't get me wrong, my team is a massive support to me: they sometimes have to rein me in (having an over-active, creative mind means I have many ideas all the time, many of which never see the light of day), fix my grammar and spelling mistakes, making me sound better than I do through my crappy grasp of English. But this is the point I am trying to make to you: you have to work your ass off more than ever now, not ignore what is going on around you.

If tour operators or tourism businesses wish to work with me, they will come not because I have sold to them, but because I have shown my worth with my experience and expertise. This is the approach you must take with your customers. Focus your own marketing on storytelling and worthwhile content that humanises your brand. This is more important than ever during this coronavirus crisis.

Seek out your local Business Improvement District (BID) who will provide plenty of support and advice on how you can grow your business in the months and years to come.

I also offer lots of free advice through my audio and video podcast, [The Digital Tourism Show](#), as well as a free email marketing series that provides tips and helpful guides. You can sign up to these [using the form at the bottom of this page](#). I also offer a lot of free advice on my [Facebook Community](#).

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