

THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE

EPISODE 09

TRENDS ON LOCK (DOWN): THE COVID-INDUCED
IDEAS WITH STAYING POWER



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Predictions on how travel will look in a post-COVID world have been swirling since the dawn of the pandemic, but rather than speculate, we went straight to the source, and sat down with Mandy Saven and Claire Murray from trend intelligence business, Stylus, to get the scoop on which trends the world has taken to, and how consumer behaviour is shifting – likely for the long-term. Here are the lockdown trends with longevity – and the ones that will inform your future sales and marketing strategies.



1. Virtual experiences will enhance, rather than replace, physical travel.

“As a result of closed borders, brands are really having to innovate,” Mandy told us. “We’re seeing the exciting trend of virtual travel experiences coming through.” From VR game drives to immersive museum tours and remote wine tastings, this new breed of virtual tourism is enabling would-be travellers to interact and engage with hotels and destinations, irrespective of their location. And in a year where US spring break travel was predicted to rise by 24%, virtual vacations – like the live-streamed classes held by Puerto Rico’s tourism board – have served to sate wanderlust until border restrictions are lifted.

In the long-term, the virtual extension of the physical trip is an opportunity to extend your customer base beyond your physical site, whilst further engaging the guests who stay with you in-person. “I think the beauty of this virtual layer in travel will only add value to physical experiences going forward,” Mandy observed. “We will always crave the sensorial, visceral nature of physical experiences, but I think that ultimately, the two can live quite happily side by side.”

TREND TIP: *Incentivise your customers to become even more engaged with your brand by bringing them a robust hybrid offering – both virtual and physical. For example, offer your guests a discounted amenity or experience once they arrive on-site, if they tour your property virtually or complete a digital lesson on your local language prior to their trip.*

2.

Travel planning will become a multisensory, multistage experience.

Building on the virtual extension of the travel lifecycle, Stylus is seeing brands monetise the pre- and post-trip phases of their customer journeys in increasingly creative ways. “So much joy can be found in the anticipation of a trip – sometimes even more so than the trip itself,” notes Mandy. “(Pre-vacation) is a hugely untapped stage in the travel lifecycle.” Proving the appetiser can be as enjoyable as the main course, companies like Holiday in a Box are offering a tangible taste of a destination in a package of curios and activities; while Yorkshire-based agency, Travel Experience, is sending their clients scented candles designed to evoke

memories of the destination they’ve just returned from, to secure repeat business in the future.

TREND TIP: *Expand your offering with sensorial experiences that can be delivered to your guests before and after their stay with you. For instance, as guests look forward to a trip, they may be keen to purchase an at-home cooking kit that introduces them to your local flavours. Once your guests return home, find ways to help them relive their holiday memories at home.*

**For more on this trend, don't miss Stylus' new report, [Monetising the Full Travel Lifecycle](#).*

3.

Travel will be a ‘bigger ticket item’ for the foreseeable future.

The industry consensus is that moving forward, people will travel less often, but take longer trips, each more considered and meaningful than ever before. “I think travel will become more special and more coveted,” predicted Mandy. “We’ll see more people using travel to celebrate moments of achievement, milestones and key life transitions.” This will also drive ‘bucket list travel’ to the fore – “a global recession means that many will have less money to spend than they did before, so they’re going to want more bang for their buck in the few

big trips they do take,” noted Claire. This is all excellent news for travel agents and designers, who are likely to find their expertise and personal touch more in-demand than ever as concierge-style services become more popular.

TREND TIP: *Wherever they go, travellers will want – and expect – more from each trip they take. Consider how your hotel or agency can add value where possible, such as bespoke, intuitive offerings for parents-to-be or those travelling for family reunions.*

4. Travellers will look to tech for safety and reassurance.

During the pandemic, technology has become our lifeline – for work, play and everything in between. Travel is no exception, and both Mandy and Claire identified the opportunity for hospitality brands to provide guests the tools and information necessary for navigating our brave new world – from new visa requirements to rebooking processes. For cautious post-pandemic travellers, tech is vital to allay fears and provide key, up-to-the-minute information. And while the holiday humblebrag has become an Instagram mainstay, Stylus predicted a fall in travellers' social media use while on post-pandemic vacations, due to potential shaming – say hello to “socially private travel”.

TREND TIP: *Use tech to extend your usefulness to travellers however you can. Post-COVID, safety and sustainability concerns will be more important than ever – so use your expertise to advise travellers on new best practices and establish your brand as their go-to travel resource.*



5. Transport will experience the industry's biggest overhaul.

“Luxury travellers will be less influenced by post-pandemic economic downturns – but will drastically evolve how they go about travelling,” opined Claire. “Expect to see an uptick in private charters and less crowded modes of transport in the luxury sector.” As airlines operate reduced schedules and commercial flights are increasingly seen as a last resort, Claire pointed to the likely re-emergence of rail travel as a quieter – and more sustainable – alternative. While meaningful, immersive trips gain in popularity, uber-luxe sleeper trains are being touted as the ideal providers of ‘slow travel.’

TREND TIP: *Carefully consider your future collaborations. How can you play into this opportunity – perhaps choosing to partner with train operators instead of airlines? “There’s a whole ecosystem of products and services that can be built around these offers,” Claire affirmed.*