

2 July 2020

Earning Trust and Taking Clear Action are Central to Tourism's Rebuild



Steve Earl is Managing Director for APCO Worldwide's London office. He began his career as a journalist, and has worked on UK, European and global clients on corporate, digital, technology, healthcare and consumer assignments for nearly 25 years. He founded his own agency with a partner and grew it to be one of the UK's most-awarded progressive integrated communications agencies, before launching Edelman sister agency Zeno in Europe and developing it over six years to be an integral part of that global network. Steve has consistently been named for the past eight years to PRWeek's UK PowerBook of Top 150 Professionals and has co-written two books on corporate reputation and digital crisis management, "Brand Anarchy" and "#brandvandals," both published by Bloomsbury.

Governments and the travel industry will both need to earn trust through the actions that they take to revitalise tourism in the wake of COVID-19.

That was the central outtake of an APCO webinar in association with The Ambassador Partnership that examined the pressures, priorities, parameters and practicalities of enabling tourism to recover and making mass travel feasible again, with differing timelines and considerations for every country in determining the steps required and when they can be applied.

Trust was central to restoring a desire to travel, regardless of it being feasible, according to panellist James Watt, a former British Ambassador to Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. It could only be earned by action that saw the appropriate level of medical provision and quarantine rules in place, but governments would need to be agile in both supporting the travel sector in its economic rebound and adapting to future rises in infections or changing conditions.

He predicted that leisure travel would pick up again relatively quickly once it could resume practically, but that the trust was needed to nurture a "confidence of enjoyment" given it was a highly personal decision and people would look long and hard at each destination, its facilities and its risks before deciding to book. The insurance industry needs to take a fresh look at tourism and adapt their policies in ways which give travellers the confidence that if something Covid-related goes wrong, they will be covered.

Garvin Nicholas, a former Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and its former High Commissioner to the UK, said that the Caribbean was locked in a "delicate balancing act" of ensuring safety by careful management of borders – the death rate from COVID-19 has been relatively minor – and the need for smaller island economies that relied heavily on tourism to resume economic activity.

As part of sector recovery plans, there would need to be a clear focus on "redefining the tourism product", he said.

Access. Engagement. Resolution.

APCO senior advisor Ido Aharoni, a former member of Israel's Foreign Service, said that nations needed to consider their work to rebuild trust and confidence for visitors as a "brand promise". Country reputations were being challenged by COVID-19 like never before, and how governments behaved in tackling that challenge would shape travellers' perceptions for years to come. Security, hygiene, micro-targeting of tourists, flexibility and subsidies were the five factors they should build into their plans.

The US Presidential Election later this year would have global impact that would spill over into the travel sector, he predicted.

Our yearning to travel will only grow, but safety assurances must be provided and trust earned through appropriate action, across governments and the sector, in order to get mass tourism moving again. Clear communication of that action would remain central, the panellists agreed.

[For a recording of the session, please CLICK HERE](#)



APCO Worldwide is an advisory and advocacy communications consultancy helping leading public and private sector organizations navigate the challenges of today, act with agility, anticipate social risk, and build organizational reputations, relationships and solutions to succeed. APCO is an independent and majority women-owned business.

Access. Engagement. Resolution.

The Ambassador Partnership LLP is a **unique international** partnership of former Ambassadors with unrivalled networks of influence in almost 100 countries. We provide discreet services to resolve your international problems and to improve your capacity to operate effectively wherever you need to.

We are **dispute resolution** specialists and **political risk** experts.

To discuss how we can help you to manage your political risk please call:

Tracey Stewart

Partnership Secretary

+44 (0) 7950 944 010

tracey.stewart@ambassadorllp.com

www.ambassadorllp.com