

Emerging in the new tourism reality using technology and creativity

I am a graduating student from College Lasalle, emerging in the new tourism reality daily and realizing how quickly **technology became essential** over the last few months. We are adapting to the situation and have to be creative when facing new challenges.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a stress in everyone's daily life, new challenges arose, new ways of living and procedures were set in place along with some tough financial times. We saw and can still see a time of crisis, but let's see beyond this period, see the opportunity it can bring and explore how technology, innovation and creativity will assist in the recovery.

The tourism industry will recover because regardless of the hard times that we faced, people are still eager to travel and are already planning their next adventures, seeking for **freedom** and **outdoor adventures** after being at home for a long period of time. However, the customer's mind and their needs changed and their priorities are not the same.

Owners have to adapt and change their ways of doing business if they wish to remain successful after this pandemic. Even though the **opportunity** and growth are there, it is easier said than done. According to the McKinsey & Company, Innovation in a crisis survey, only 21% of the respondents agreed that they have the needed resources and expertise to face this challenge and **seize the opportunity**. It is so demanding that two third of the respondents feel that this pandemic will be the most difficult time of their career.



Different technological innovation tools can be used in order to seize this opportunity and help your business attracting and retaining its clientele, such as **going paperless**, which saves time and increases **sustainable practices**, along with implementing strict **safety measures** that would reassure the customer and will provide them with all the required information and documentation needed with the effortless touch of their fingers on their phones.

Using **robots** is an exciting trend that is always improving, as well as being helpful and loved by customers, it will also benefit in an ability to reduce direct human to human contact and grant a **peace of mind** to the customer.

Voice search is becoming more and more popular among customers and would therefore result in more **visibility and sales** if added to the design of your website.

Having a **virtual tour** of your products or services will also be beneficial as customers can now have a **pre-experience** of the destination, attractions, hotels, restaurants and more in the comfort of their living room, which influence their **purchasing decision**.

Being more and more popular, the **recognition technology** saves time and reduces human to human contact. This technology includes fingerprints recognition, facial recognition, retina scanning and more. Although it is mostly used in airports and some hotels, it is loved by the customer and would be a **great opportunity** for your company to stand out.

Customers enjoy **personalized trips**; therefore, it is recommended for a company to improve their data bank in order to be able to personalize each experience and gain loyalty. During a crisis, the **loyalty program** in place should be at its peak as you want to retain your customer's loyalty and leave the competition behind.

Being able to **order from a tablet** at a restaurant and having the possibility to visit a museum from home with the help of **digital streaming** is our future, this is why it is important to seize the technological opportunity in hope to gain **long-term advantages** before it's too late. It is time more than ever to be creative, to think outside the box and gain loyalty when the customers will be traveling again.

However, with all the technology that we have today, the business travel industry will be taking off slower than leisure travel as people are used to new technological ways to attend meetings and make business decisions, such as through the **zoom platform**. According to Fabrizio Orlando, the Senior Manager Industry Relations of TripAdvisor, the last ones to recover will be night clubs, all inclusive, spas, evening entertainment and big cities as people will prefer avoiding big crowds and opt for more space between each other. Nonetheless, this goes both ways as employers don't want to risk infecting their employees or having them surrounded by big crowds.

As the customer's priority is their safety, **domestic travel** will increase as they feel safer in their own country and while traveling abroad, they will be seeking safety towards the virus. This is why innovation will play an important role as it will help travellers feel safer and it also encourages one of their values, which is **promoting sustainability** and protecting the planet when travelling. Some destinations require testing before letting you in their country, those destinations are ahead and will benefit more and it increases the traveller's safety and peace of mind.

Unfortunately, if no safety measures are in place, the business will experience a massive decline and will lose their position in the customer's mind and might not survive this pandemic.

Learning more and more about technology and graduating in a few months, I'm looking forward to being part of this ever-changing wonderful industry. I know our industry can be creative and innovative and will therefore recover from this pandemic. At the end of the day, the key words to remember are **innovation, technology, personalization, creativity, safety** and **sustainability**. Regaining trust and loyalty will be the biggest challenge, with the **right values** and the **right marketing tool**, your business can become even more successful than it was as the demand is there, it is now time to seek the opportunity!

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