
COVID-19: Client and Stakeholder Briefing

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PURPOSE

This is the second briefing provided by davies tanner to assist our clients, partners and stakeholders in forward recovery planning from the COVID:19 pandemic. In particular, it is designed to help in determining when to implement time specific messages and activities for key markets and audiences. The first briefing was issued on 15th April.

Content has been provided by a number of client and partner organisations, and also includes individual research conducted with buyers and planners, along with key trade associations, both within the UK and internationally.

This briefing also supports the Business Events Recovery Sentiment Survey, the results of which were published last week.

Key points are highlighted on the following pages.

KEY POINTS

ORGANISED Events not MASS Gatherings

The term Mass Gatherings is something that has been quoted by politicians since the lockdown began. But, for those working within the business events sector, it could cause problems further down the road as the government consider easing the current lockdown restrictions. Mass Gatherings generally relate to large scale events, such as sporting events, performances parties or celebrations. In these cases, it is very difficult to implement an efficient procedure for social distancing, which will almost certainly continue to be a requirement, or to 'track and trace' through contact information. We have been working with The Business Visits and Events Partnership (BVEP) to advise the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to differentiate business events from the term Mass Gatherings. We are advocating that there should be a distinction between 'organised events', such as conferences, meetings, incentives and exhibitions from 'mass gatherings, as when lockdown restrictions are eased, the exact words used will matter, and impact how quickly the events industry will recover.

Planners finding it difficult to make contact

While 74% of planners report that they are still researching potential venues and destinations, with September continuing to be the projected peak month for recovery, almost 60% report difficulty in making contact with potential venues. This may be as a result of many hotels and venues being closed, and sales, marketing and conference staff being on furlough. This highlights the need for continued outbound marketing and communications from venues and destinations, and with the lockdown restrictions likely to be eased, increases the demand for more assertive 'open for business' messages and campaigns.

Domestic 'drive to' events will lead International

While our sentiment survey and others point to some strong growth towards the end of the year and into early next, it seems likely that this progress will be focused mainly on the domestic market. International will certainly lag as airlines gradually open routes and confidence takes time to rebuild. Locations which are easily accessible by car, avoiding the need for public transport, may be more attractive in the short term, especially those where physical distancing can be more easily maintained.

Liberty spending set to rocket

Liberty spending, in other words spending on luxury items or experiences post lockdown, still shows signs of soaring as restrictions are lifted. Despite furloughing and job losses, there is significant pent up demand in the market, and there will undoubtedly be huge need for a wide range of hospitality and leisure experiences, including incentives, once rules allow these to happen.

Show confidence in a crisis

Whether you a venue, destination or industry supplier, being seen as a confident brand, which shows leadership, is vital during any crisis. Telling a good and compelling story, with a reliable and assured tone helps to demonstrate that you are ready to do business, when the time is right. There may be a view that because most offices are closed, and many staff furloughed, that there is little use in crafting messages to your audiences. The reality is, that while most people are now at home, internet use, especially during the day, has more than doubled since lockdown began, and, as we highlight later, almost half of us are reading newspapers and magazines more than normal. Buyers will increasingly look to brands and advocates that they feel they can trust and believe in for information, so now has never been a better time to tell your story.

We are reading more news than ever before

In our last briefing, we highlighted that there had been a 28% increase in online news and features that are not COVID-19 related. Since then, the consumption of news, particularly in traditional newspapers and magazines, has increased by over 48%. In addition, internet use, especially during the day, has more than doubled, with much of the traffic coming from news sites. There is no doubt that there is shift away from COVID:19 stories, as a result of 'news fatigue' and this again provides our clients with a wealth of opportunities to begin to tell more aspirational and engaging stories, especially as we begin to enter the recovery period.

Safety, security and confidence

As planners begin to slowly consider rescheduling or booking events over the coming months, the issues of safety, security and confidence will be very much at the front of their minds. They will want to engage with brands and organisations that clearly have the best interests of their delegates and guests at heart, and have well thought through, credible and practical procedures in place that inspire a feeling of assurance. Here at davies tanner we have been working with clients over the past weeks to develop a series of plans and messages designed to provide confidence to the market. Creating the right messages at the right time continues to be extremely important, and the need for business as usual messages and optics is getting closer each day.

Recovery planning continues

Our teams have been working hard, and remotely, with our clients on recovery planning, including Open for Business Campaigns, Stakeholder and Industry Engagement, Content Development, Corporate and Public Affairs and Media Relations. These plans have been created using our years of experience and sector network. As we enter the second phase of our recovery period, it's important to get your recovery planning in place as soon as possible. If you would like some free independent advice on planning for recovery, please get in touch.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like any further information relating to any of the points outlined in this briefing document, wish to receive a free copy of our Business Events Recovery Sentiment Survey or need some advice, please contact:

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Or visit www.daviestanner.com to keep up to date with the latest information surrounding COVID-19, or follow us on twitter @daviestannerpr

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