



Every month we will be sending you the latest insights, research and thoughtful perspectives on the issues that matter most to tourism businesses and operators in RTO 9.

This month's newsletter delves into the ways SMEs can navigate changing consumer preferences and industry dynamics to support recovery.

If there are topics you want to read about in a future newsletter please email lmedeiros@region9tourism.com with your ideas.

State of Tourism

Monitoring the Impact of COVID-19

In addition to the resources on our [COVID-19 resource webpage on Tourism Talk](#), we have been monitoring trends in key areas to help you understand the trends and respond strategically.

Market Insights



Tourism Employment Insights

The tourism industry saw a further decline in employment levels during November 2020, with a total reduction of 34,400 jobs from the previous month.

- While overall totals show staffing losses, the November decrease comes mainly from food and beverage services, and recreation and entertainment industry groups. Meanwhile, transportation and travel service sectors both experienced overall job increases in November.
- Tourism has shed over 100,000 jobs since September and employed 431,000 fewer people in November 2020 vs. the same month 2019.

Following the end of summer last year, the pandemic was impacting employment rates and working hours for younger age groups. During

November, for the second month, overall staff levels in the 15-24-age range climbed. There was a significant shift amongst male employees, which grew by 7.7% and 10.4% in October and November, while female employees increased by 1.7% and decreased 0.2% over the same period.

Also in November, while the majority of income groups saw an overall drop, those within the earnings band of CAD \$50,000-80,000 per year saw total gains of 38,700 jobs.

Aside from some spikes over Labour Day and Thanksgiving, businesses across all areas of tourism have continued to see declines since amidst the ongoing impact of COVID-19, second wave case numbers, and the resulting mobility restrictions.

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Resident Sentiment

[Destination Canada's resident sentiment report](#) now reveals how safe residents of each province/region feel about travelling to different places in Canada. Here are the highlights for the week of December 8:

- Across the provinces, over 60% of Canadians said they feel safe to travel to communities near them, and more than 45% feel safe about visiting other communities around their province.
- When asked about travel to other provinces or territories, the response is more mixed across the country. Just over half of respondents from Alberta feel safe about travel outside their province, over 30% of those from Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan/Manitoba said the same, while about a fifth of those from BC and Atlantic Canada feel it's safe.
- The nation's responses around travel to the US or internationally remained fairly consistent, with the vast majority of Canadians saying they would not feel safe (83% - 97% of respondents, depending on region).

As residents continue to feel good about trips to the communities most near them, and similarly feel welcoming of visitors from the same, tourism brands can utilize this feedback to target hyper-local markets of potential customers who are open to engaging during this lead-up period to widespread vaccination and lockdown lifts.

ACCESS MORE REPORTS AROUND RESIDENT SENTIMENT



Hotel Performance Trends

Canada's hotel occupancy performance fell slightly for the week of December 13 – 19.

National levels came in at 23.5% (-44.3% vs. 2019), reaching short of the three prior weeks' numbers (from most recent, 24.6%, 24.7% and 25.7%). Canada's ADR was CAD106.54 (-22.5%), and RevPAR was CAD25.04 (-56.8%).

British Columbia had the week's highest provincial level of occupancy at 27.7%. Amongst the major markets, Vancouver's was highest at 26.4%, while Calgary saw the lowest reported at 14.3%.

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Travel Destination Attributes

New insight from Destination Analysts shows that the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine has begun to positively impact both public opinion and planning for 2021 travel. According to the survey data collected in late December, the

percentage of Americans avoiding international travel and conventions or conferences both hit 42-week lows (70.9% and 65%). Respondents also said they would be taking an average of 3 leisure trips in 2021, with May through August being the most popular period for expected trips, and 32.9% of people confirming they'd already started planning a trip (17.8% at booking stage).

There is also the desire across a large segment of Americans for the COVID-19 vaccination to be a pre-requisite for access to travel, with more than half of those surveyed supportive of this as a requirement for boarding of cruise ships or airplane flights (and close to half feeling this same policy should apply when checking into a hotel, or attending a conference/sporting event/play/music concert).

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Top Tips For Motivating Travellers In 2021

Expedia Group has released a travel behaviour and shopping research report, conducted by Northstar Research Partners, which engaged 11,000 people across 11 countries around the world.

The study revealed that 1 in 2 travelers feel “optimistic,” “comfortable,” or even “excited” about taking a trip in the coming 12 months. Below are 6 TOP TIPS from the report for SME’s and travel agencies to consider for attracting potential travellers:

1. Safety and booking flexibility is key - 75% surveyed said measures such as mask enforcement, reduced capacity, reservation adaptability (such as easy cancellation policies or refunds), and contactless service will inform where they will stay the next time they travel
2. Younger generations will be a driver in the return to travel - Generation Z and X respondents are 1.5x more likely to take a trip in Q1 than other generations
3. Rejuvenation and recharge appeal - With pandemic fatigue and pent-up desires for leisure trips prevalent, brands should aim to inspire potential travellers who are dreaming about or who may be ready to make plans with messaging around rest and relaxation
4. Mexico, Brazil, and China may travel first - Travellers from these countries scored highest in their likeliness to travel as early as January to March 2021
5. Helpful visuals and info to motivate - Pictures and informative messaging in travel advertising are 20% more influential than they were pre-pandemic, reflecting the shift in traveler priorities and the need for clear, supportive (and up-to-date) information upfront. Similarly, the use of travel agencies for trip planning is also up by 24%, and destination websites have seen a 20% increase in use as a planning tool

Customer reviews matter - More than half of respondents feel that reviews from experts, friends, or family will be influential when thinking about leisure travel in the coming 12 months (more than 10% higher than the pre-COVID influence of reviews).

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OTA Impact: The Road To SME Recovery

In collaboration with Twenty31, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has released new research outlining the critical role that Online Travel Agencies

(OTAs), traditional travel agencies, and governments will play in the revitalization of SME revenues globally.

Below are some key takeaways for SMEs to consider on the journey to post-COVID recovery and growth:

- Understanding OTAs current market share - Over 60% of global SME bookings are made via OTAs, and two-thirds of all OTA bookings globally are with small, privately owned hotels.
- Marketing budgets and reach – With far greater purchasing power, mass customer base reach, and high-tech promotional tools like personalization and hyper-specific consumer targeting, OTAs sophisticated marketing support can deliver beyond what typical SME time and budget resources can deliver on their own. This can be especially helpful in staying competitive against bigger budget brands.
- Powerful data and insight perks - OTAs have constant access to the most immediate travel and tourism data and trends, which SMEs typically do not have the same access to (but can via OTA partners)
- Access to new market sources – By working with OTAs, SMEs can gain greater exposure beyond local markets, enable multi-lingual marketing efforts, and move into new international markets more rapidly using their vast global audiences
- Diversification strategies and risk reduction – Thanks to stronger marketing might, tech and data, SMEs can work with OTAs to reduce their financial dependency on narrow peak season business, and collaborate to explore year-round tourism opportunities
- Traditional travel agencies continued influence – SMEs connections with traditional travel agencies also remain very central to rebuilding bookings. Research predicts that even with the growing, global popularity of OTAs, that direct travel agencies will maintain their overall market share of 26% by 2023, and hold particular strength in some niche markets like high-end customers, older demographics, and or less-tech savvy segments

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Workforce Development



Webinar: Managing Business Finances In 2021

Register now for this free webinar hosted by BDC, aimed at providing supportive financial advice for business owners struggling with revenue loss due to COVID-19. The January session will target a wide range of business types, including those who've been the hardest hit by the pandemic and are struggling to stay afloat, and features a powerful speaker panel of top financial experts from BDC.

Date January 18, 2021 at 12:00pm (EST)

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Media Spotlight



Around The Globe: Hotel Lets Guests Keep The Furniture

Design and content agency TypeO has launched the TypeO loft, a secluded, reimagined bed and breakfast concept in Sweden located on a farmstead from the 1800's. Designers Magnus Wiitbjør and Micha van Dinther explored what travellers in the COVID era might require, equipping the ultra-private destination with ready-made meal kits, designer furnishings, botanical essentials, and premium sound technology. The relaxation focused space doubles as a retail experience as guests may purchase and take home the interior pieces they come to love during their stay.

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Around The Globe: Airline Pop-Up Activations

Singapore Airlines has hosted a two-day restaurant event in a pair of grounded, Airbus A380 planes at Changi Airport. Socially distanced seats for the event completely sold out within 30 minutes of being released, and the company has since stated they plan to create a waitlist for future pop-ups.

Other airlines around the globe have similarly trialed unique experience offers to engage customers during times of reduced international travel, such as Qantas in Australia offering circular, sight-seeing flights that depart and return to the same airport. The seven-hour “flights to nowhere,” which travelled at significantly lower heights for best viewing over famous landmarks like the Great Barrier Reef, also sold out in 10 minutes.

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Virtual Reality: The Future Of Getaway Shopping?

“This technology allows for guests to be teleported to the hotel to check out everything they want to know and give them the confidence to book right away.”

- Vladimir Varnavskii, Founder and CEO, VResorts. Varnavskii believes that especially post-COVID, consumers are now researching and selecting their destinations incredibly carefully, and that the steady increase of VR gaming has brought with it a surge of opportunity for VR based travel retail.

VResorts runs its Virtual Reality Booking Platform globally, allowing users to research, book, and pre-experience vacations in the closest possible way to a real destination walk-through with a manager. The company aims to break beyond the common barriers of regular booking websites, overcoming things like poor quality or inaccurate pictures of a property, and a general lack of ‘try before you buy’ while still offering the same pricing deals as popular brands like Booking.com and Expedia.com.

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Opportunities



Uncover Canada's \$12 Billion Leisure Travel Opportunity

Inclusivity is not just the right thing to do, it is good business! Take advantage of free, interactive online programming to learn new skills to ensure you are ready to seize the \$12 billion leisure travel opportunity from welcoming LGBT+ travellers to your region.

Join Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Tourism HR Canada, for the digital Navigating LGBT+ Diversity and Inclusion in the Tourism Industry workshops, then the LGBT+ Market-Ready seminars. Afterwards, you could be eligible to participate in a Destination Audit and also a new Accreditation program to be publicly recognized for your important contributions!

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New Year, New Skills: Shopify Masterclasses

If you've always been curious about using Shopify for your business, this series of webinars is for you! We've teamed up with Shopify to teach South Eastern Ontario business owners what they need in order to create a successful e-commerce presence. From product selection to photography, branding to shipping, we've got you covered!

- **Offline to Online: Getting Started Online**
- **Driving Online Traffic And Email Marketing**
- **Turn Browsers Into Buyers: Optimizing Conversions**
- **Futureproofing Your Business With Shopify**

[WATCH THE WEBINARS](#)



Safe Travels Stamp: What Is It, And Do I Qualify?

Presented by: Beth Potter, President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario January 19th, 2021 at 11:00 am EST

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in conjunction with the industry, including Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), has created a self-certified Safe Travels Stamp. The Safe Travels Stamp program is based on the worldwide industry protocols the WTTC has put together for every aspect of the hospitality and tourism sector.

Join this webinar to learn more about the Safe Travels Stamp

[REGISTER](#)

#SAFETRAVELS



'Safe Travels' Stamp Application

The specially designed stamp will allow travellers and other Travel & Tourism stakeholders to recognise destination authorities and companies around the world that have implemented health and hygiene protocols that are aligned with WTTC's Global Safe Travels Protocols.

Below are all the resources you need to complete your application:

- [Download the Safe Travels Application Form](#)
- [Download the Safe Travels Guidelines](#)
- [Review the Safe Travels Terms and Conditions](#)
- [Review the Safe Travels Protocols](#)

LEARN MORE



Below, you'll find information and resources for businesses featured in Great Taste of Ontario passports and content to help you make the most of your participation in the program.

[VISIT THE BUSINESS PORTAL](#)



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Connect and engage with our industry brand '**RTO 9**' on social media.



Get Social With Us!

Connect and engage with our consumer brand '**South Eastern Ontario**' on social media.



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