

Destination Readiness and Innovation in a New Era Part 2

Interview with Luís Araújo



In this first blog, we will hear about the challenges Portugal has faced and overcome due to Covid-19 pandemic and some of the new measures in place.

travel or if they couldn't travel, what they could do in our country and how to behave.

That was our primary focus. The second focus was our citizens and how we could provide the certainty they need. You said something briefly about Bonailie being a force for good and we believe tourism is a force for good in countries, so we will also have to be that force for good again. The third focus we had was our companies, how we could help them preserve the job force, and survive during these months when we didn't know how many months that would be. We realised we would have to implement very effective financial measures to help them survive during this time.

I believe you were also one of the first European countries awarded with a safe travel stamp from the World Travel and Tourism Council. And you are one of the countries that conduct more tests in percentage to population?

Traditionally, Portugal has a very big tourism team; we're almost six hundred in the entire country, touching several points from promotion to product development. We help municipalities and other entities to develop their product from a tourism perspective. We have twelve tourism schools where we train four thousand people a year on technical education. We give assistance, and we also work as a bank; we give money to the companies and are reimbursed by them. So we have several activities.

People and companies were asking us what do they have to do to regain the trust of their customers. So we decided, together with the health authorities, to issue some regulations, in terms of what a hotel or restaurant or golf course had to do, to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus. These were very simple protocols, it was based on responsibility, and we've created a digital platform, Portugal Clean and Safe, which is still available.

They would just have to register on that platform and get all the stamps they could use. And we would audit these businesses in a second movement. So it wasn't first movement audits, this was very effective because people knew what they had to do, which was incredible. The second thing was we had to build trust because people wanted to know which restaurant they could go to or which hotel had the stamp, this was very effective.

And we built on that because two months later, we decided to bring tourists into our audits. So inside the platform, they have green, yellow, and red lights for evaluation. When you go to one of these tourist establishments, you can press the button; if you press red it is followed up immediately, if you press green, they get an email, congratulating them on a fantastic job of preventing the virus from spreading. The first safe travel seal was effective.

And most importantly, and I think this is the sign of the new era, is the collaboration. Many countries asked us, if we can please explain the system to them? We not only explained it, but we also gave the contacts from the people who built the electronic platform and advised that they can even use even the logos for other countries and other destinations.

“This is the time to work together, build trust and build confidence. This was very effective for us. And hopefully, we will keep up with it during the next year.”

That's an excellent initiative. And you have about 22,000 stamps from what I read?

Yes, more than 22,000 and we also gave online training for 25,000 people during four months on this subject, which was interesting, because we have found people and companies were very receptive we're still working on this.

We also conducted roughly four hundred audits, because we do random audits. Besides the ones that press the red button, we have only taken three stamps away. Two of them because the business had closed, reflecting the importance and the value that people give to this kind of situation right now.

And you also introduced a health passport and travel insurance for visitors. Can you tell us a bit more about those initiatives and how tourists can access those?

The health system in Portugal is one of the best health systems in Europe. And we have the public and the private sector. If you're a foreigner and you come to Portugal, you're entitled to the same public health system and care that I have. But people who have never been to Portugal may trust

more in the private sector than the public; it's a common opinion in the entire world.

So we set up a partnership with the health cluster that represents all the private hospitals in Portugal. And they created a digital platform called Portugal Health Passport; you just register, and you're entitled to as many discounts as I have in the private hospitals. It's the same as having health insurance in our country, but at a very low cost. And they include some add-ons relating to COVID such as testing. It's completely free and you just have to pay for the treatment if you need it.

Then the second thing we did was work with some of the insurance companies to put together an insurance policy because people wanted to travel, but they wanted to be sure that they could get repatriated back to their country if they needed to, or get a refund on their trip. You can also register on the platform for that option.

What we're doing now, is looking at what do people need? and then we try to find the solution. The digital technology helps a lot, both in terms of communication and with these platforms where they can register. It's useful, also for our companies, because it's another opportunity for businesses. It has been very effective, and we're building trust based on these initiatives.

In the next blog, Luís explains how they're innovating and marketing to rebuild and reshape tourism in Portugal.




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But, we just had to focus, so we decided that our job from that moment on would focus on giving the tourists all the information they needed. They wanted to know if they could