



World Tourism Forum Lucerne 2009

Where Global Leaders meet

„Facing Future Challenges in Mobility: Developments, Markets and Opportunities“

Final Summary

At the 1st World Tourism Forum Lucerne, more than 130 global leaders from 23 countries gathered to discuss their opinions, exchange ideas and evaluate options for the future of the tourism industry. Tourism professionals face the future optimistically. The current crisis was not their main interest, but the long-term perspectives for the industry. These perspectives lie in more sustainable products with a focus on the environment and a customer who demands rich personal experiences. According to an international study which was realised on behalf of the forum, the mobility of tourists will change substantially in the coming decades.

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard opened the 1st World Tourism Forum Lucerne on April 22 by requesting tourism professionals to break new ground and to think across industry lines. On the following two days, the participants proved that it was also their own intention to think laterally and look for new business ideas. This became clear in numerous and intensive conversations during panel discussions, workshops, the World Café, and the relaxed but lively atmosphere during the breaks.

It is crucial to know about the major trends in the business environment before starting a discussion on future opportunities and risks. The keynote speeches by various experts pointed out that great changes lie ahead in the next 20 years. The industry will have to deal with a transition of the main source and target markets to Asia, a growing seniors segment in Europe and North America, and technological innovations like mobile devices for navigation, information and bookings.

During the forum it became more and more apparent that the tourism industry needs to move towards sustainability. Tourism urgently requires the natural environment, the landscape and other resources like water, to be in an intact state. Therefore a sustainable model must be based on the protection of the natural resources. Tourism professionals called for more investments in green technology such as efficient air conditioning of hotels or more efficient aviation engines. Achieving a few improvements that are of relevance for the PR department will not be sufficient in the future. The sensitive clients of tomorrow will request a truly green product with a clear and detailed declaration of its environmental impact. However, this requires a standard rating system for the sustainability of all tourism products.

WORLD TOURISM FORUM LUCERNE

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Global leaders do not face the current crisis with fear, but with some optimism. Although the crisis is not passing the industry unnoticed, the past has proven that the tourism industry is able to recover quite quickly from difficult times. Furthermore clients cut other budgetary items before dropping their holidays. The opportunities for businesses in the current crisis lie in optimising the business processes, or in adapting or even changing the business model. Domestic tourism and low-cost products might even experience a moderate growth. Many of the participants assume that the tourism industry might be an attractive opportunity for investors, since conservative and long-term investments are becoming more attractive again.

The main topic of the 1st World Tourism Forum Lucerne was the future of mobility. For leisure and tourism mobility major changes are to be expected according to the study „The Future of Mobility and its Impact on Tourism“. This investigation was carried out by the Lucerne School of Business in connection with the forum. More than 1,600 experts participated in the survey. According to the experts, short and middle-haul flights will be replaced by high speed and maglev trains for the most part by 2030. Private as well as business trips will be more frequent, but shorter. Climate change, for example floods, mudslides or significant droughts, will have a major impact on travelling and on most means of transport.

The people who work in the tourism industry are another key criterion for future success. This became clear in two ways during the World Café. Firstly, only people who collaborate with others are able to generate new ideas and common strategies. Secondly, the recruitment of qualified personnel is still a great challenge for the industry. Tourism businesses must present excellent working conditions in order to be perceived as attractive employers. Some businesses might even profit from the crisis by taking over qualified people from other industries. Talented young professionals make up another key element of the future success of the industry. As a contribution to the fostering of talent, five young professionals from Hong Kong and Switzerland were invited to Lucerne. They had qualified for the participation by handing in outstanding papers on the main topics of the forum.

Finally, the leaders of the global tourism industry agree that tourism needs to renew itself continually in order to keep up with the changing customer expectations and the changing business environment. The 1st World Tourism Forum Lucerne indicated guidelines for future development. The world needs more individual, sustainable, climate friendly, socially responsible and meaningful tourism. We need a tourism that is not in the first place designed for profit, but for the future. It is now up to the industry's leaders to stimulate the necessary changes within the industry and to help foster the consciousness of future customers.

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