

Moving Forward, an Innovation Festival by World Tourism Forum Lucerne Andermatt, 15-16 November 2021

Take home message Martin Barth

My dear friends

The tourism industry faces huge challenges around the globe. The past two days have made this clear, and we are all very aware of the problems. We must look forward and find our opportunities in the crisis. How we deal with the challenges we face today will determine how successful we are in the future. We have all taken a first step in the right direction thanks to our "Moving Forward Innovation Festival". We have shared our views, listened to each other and motivated each other, but we still have a lot of work to do – both individually and together as a community. The future belongs to those who are proactive, dynamic and innovative. Let me therefore share at the end of "Moving Forward" four take home messages with you:

1. Stronger together than alone

You are all good in your particular field, with a professional approach and solid experience, but that alone is not enough to make you successful. None of us is an island. We can only get tourism back on track by finding clever ways to work together on bright ideas and future-proof services.

Alternative approaches and fresh perspectives are the only way to create something new that will appeal to our guests. Tourism works best when we enter into fruitful partnerships that bring benefits for everyone involved. Of course, partnerships require trust. Sadly, I have the impression that a certain unease, perhaps even a feeling of helplessness, is increasingly getting in the way of this trust.

We have forgotten how to cooperate. That needs to change! Let us join forces to add value for our guests. That means coming up with new ideas to meet the latest needs. More and more people are concerned about sustainability. Today's seniors are fitter. Many of them have both the money and the desire to seek out special experiences. Travel is becoming more tailored to the individual, and there is vast potential there. Let us develop experiences. There is so much we can do, especially when it comes to education and culture. Let us venture off the beaten track into new territory. This is the only way to add real value – not only for guests, but for the industry too.

We are stronger together! We can only turn things around if we pool our resources.

2. Blend old and new

Innovation is a great buzzword. Unfortunately, a lot of tourism operators do little more than pay lip service to it. It is important to come up with new ideas and offer new services. They do attract attention in the short term, but we need to think about how our industry will develop over the coming decades. What does it need to avoid getting left behind?

In this respect, we need to take a good look at ourselves. We have worked hard to build our industry, and we can be proud of what we have achieved. That is beyond doubt, but we cannot afford to become complacent. A new bike trail here, a themed path for children there or a new carpet in the breakfast room will not bring success in the long term.

What is needed are new business models, and it is intelligent start-ups that are leading the way here. When established companies are confronted with unconventional ideas for solving known problems, they are too quick to see them as a threat to their business. Let us take food waste as an example: we already have solutions and tools that work, but they are not widely used.

Instead of ignoring and being dismissive towards innovative start-ups, we would do well to join forces with them. This might well mean letting go of tried-and-tested methods or processes to make way for new ones. In an ideal scenario, however, we would blend these fresh concepts with traditions that still work. Digital tools make sense in some cases, especially where repetitive tasks are concerned, so we should embrace them.

Let us blend old and new to get the best of both!

3. Reliable employer for Young Talents

Lots of tourism and hospitality staff found alternative jobs during the pandemic, very few of them are likely to return to their old career. The lure of the more sociable working hours, higher pay and arguably better resilience to crises other employers can offer, is simply too strong.

This is a problem that will occupy us for a long time to come, since we need good staff to offer good services. We have a duty to restore the industry's appeal for young people. We need to show them that we are questioning our own ambitions and methods, operating sustainably and putting the guest at the centre of everything we do – all while taking care of our staff.

Young people need to feel that their ideas and their work are appreciated. They do not want to stand by and watch. They want a seat at the table, a share of the responsibility. So let us invite them in and offer them that seat. We need to be inclusive, not exclusive. We need to work together with confidence and trust. This is the only way to attract and retain new tourism staff.

We are a reliable employer for talented young workers, whose fresh ideas and new perspectives are invaluable to us.

4. Give more than we take

Many people in our industry focus only on short-term success and are mainly interested in maximising profits. To put it bluntly, we advertise the beautiful, natural landscapes of our Alpine paradise while building more and more reservoirs to generate artificial snow, hotel complexes and new cable cars. The pretence of sustainability is thus little more than a marketing tool. This cannot be a viable approach over the long term.

If we really want to get serious about sustainable development, there is no escaping the fact that we need to give more back to the Earth than we take from it. We have to take care of our planet. For our industry, this means addressing the issue earnestly from the ground up. We have to change the way we think and behave. Nothing is off-limits. We have to ask the right questions, however uncomfortable they may be. We can only succeed by pushing ahead with solutions that really work and combining the most effective tools with the most creative staff. If we do this, we can strike a meaningful balance between planet, people and profit.

The tourism industry faces huge challenges around the globe. If we stand together and cooperate to find the best solutions, seize the best opportunities and give innovative ideas room to grow, we can make this transformation happen. Each and every one of us – both here in this room and on screens all over the world – can play a part. It will be a long and difficult journey, but also an exciting one. Let us embark on it together with lots of energy, empathy and mutual respect.

Andermatt, 16 November 2021