

VIRTUAL TRAVEL - A TOOL TO KEEP TOURISTS ATTRACTED



The health crisis has accelerated the use of technology for many players. Many companies turn to virtual travel offer to maintain a link with the travelers' favorite destinations and heritage sites.

According to Sébastien Badault, Managing Director France of Alibaba, traveling was the first to be impacted by this health crisis. **Many companies tried to recreate the appetite among travelers and maintain their interest in foreign destinations such as France, despite travel restrictions.**

Through the company's subsidiary, Fliggy, the organization took the opportunity of using an already strong trend in China, namely the interest of Chinese consumers in the live stream. The company started with the first live stream last February promoting various destinations. Since then, Fliggy has implemented more than 36,000 live streams that have reached more than 520 million viewers.

"France, which is the leading European destination for Chinese tourists, was a logical choice for virtual travel," said Mr. Badault. "Our technology has enabled us to (re)introduce Chinese travelers to European heritage sites such as the Château de Versailles, the Prado Museum, the Louvre of Abu Dhabi and Paris. Over time, the sessions have gained in quality by offering more advanced experiences with the highlighting of the Venus de Milo, the crown jewels or the Mona Lisa."

The live stream organized at the Louvre in Paris brought together more than 500,000 live viewers, highlighting users' appetite for these new forms of events.

"At the moment, the trend in China is towards domestic travelling, with a strong rebound during the Golden Week, a period during which nearly 600 million Chinese travelled across the country. Generally speaking, this period is one of the key moments that Chinese tourists take advantage of to travel to Europe. When trips can be done normally, it will be interesting to use the technologies of virtual travel during an event to interact with the public on-site but also remotely," said Mr. Badault.

In Hangzhou, where the Alibaba group's headquarters are located, the company have opened a hotel which is in fact a laboratory. Check-in is fully automated, room service is robotized and thanks to facial recognition, the elevator automatically takes the guests to their floor and the room unlocks without a key. The hotel is a showcase for the group's technological know-how and how technology can be put to work for the hotel industry.

"The current health crisis has shown the interest and importance of technologies that enable us to streamline customer processes. And although this is a technology that has been widespread in China for a long time, the QR Code has not been democratized in the European market. The fact that restaurateurs have been using this support since the beginning of the health crisis will make it possible to realize how easy it is to use and how effective it is. All the technologies that contribute to making the experience more fluid are going to develop rapidly, as well as immersive technologies such as augmented and virtual reality to make places more attractive."

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