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Crisis Communications: Lessons Learned in a COVID era



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What is the crisis communication?

The tourism industry has long been recognized as one of the most vulnerable industries affected by crises or disasters (Biggs et al., [2012](#); Hall, [2010](#))

Thus, effective crisis communication is crucial for tourism to survive and recover from global crises.

Unfortunately, most crisis communication has been conducted in the recovery phase of the crisis.

We have learned during this pandemic that communication throughout the crisis is critical to build trust, support, and engagement which results in loyalty, awareness and engagement in personal protective behaviors.



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The definition is “**Crisis communication** is a sub-specialty of the [public relations](#) profession that is designed to protect and defend an individual, company, or organization facing a public challenge to its [reputation](#).^{[1][2]}

Crisis communication is aimed at raising awareness of a specific type of threat, the magnitude, outcomes, and specific behaviors to adopt to reduce the threat.”

Risk & Crisis Communication Definition



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Risk & Crisis Communication shaped by two components:

**HAZARD
(RISK)**

**OUTRAGE
(CRISIS)**

Malecki, K. M., Keating, J. A., & Safdar, N. (2021). Crisis communication and public perception of COVID-19 risk in the era of social media. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 72(4), 697-702.



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High Catastrophic
Potential

Familiarity

Understanding

Science behind
hazard



Voluntariness

Trust in institutions

Controllable

Media attention

Before COVID

Malecki, K. M., Keating, J. A., & Safdar, N. (2021). Crisis communication and public perception of COVID-19 risk in the era of social media. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 72(4), 697-702.



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Risk & Crisis communications



**Uncertainty
About the
science**

**Trust in
Institutions
and Media**

**Social and
cultural
factors**

**Uncertainty
of the threat
and event**

**Personal
Control to
keep you safe**

Table 1. Outrage Factors Influencing Public Perceptions of Risk and Acceptability of Risk Mitigation Strategies Over Time^a

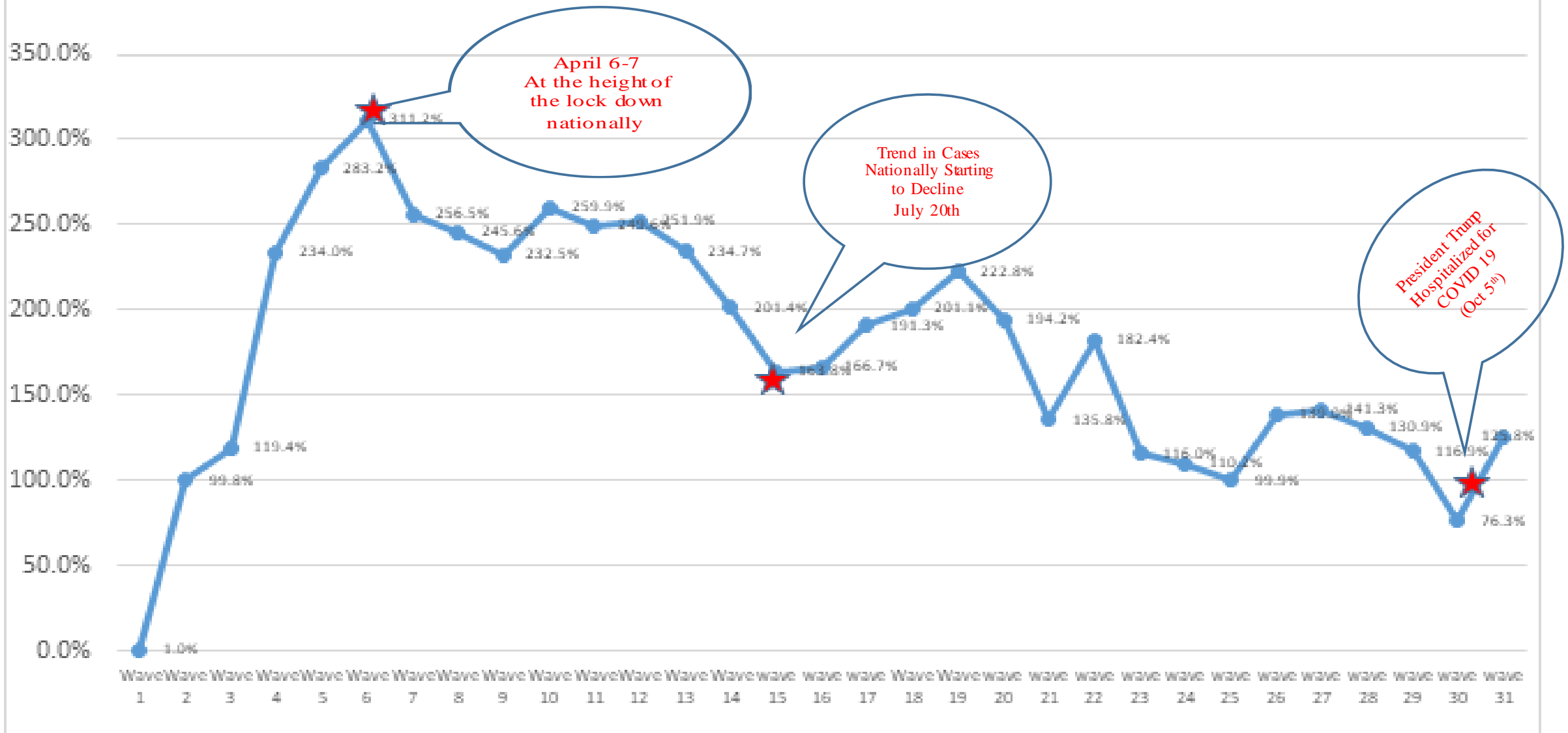
Factors Influencing Public Perceptions of Risks ^b	Directionality of Increased Risk Perception (Increased Outrage, Lower Acceptability of Risk)	Changing Public Risk Perception Over Time in the US Regarding COVID-19 Pandemic (December 2019- April 2020)		
		Prevention	Precrisis	Crisis
High catastrophic potential	Fatalities and injuries grouped in time and space rather than random and scattered	Low	Low/med	High
Familiarity	Unfamiliar	High	Med	Low
Understanding	Difficult to understand	High	High	High
Scientific uncertainty	High scientific uncertainty	High	High	High
Controllable	Lack of personal control and agency	High	High	High/low
Voluntariness	Involuntary vs voluntary	Low	High	Low
Trust in institutions ^b	Lack of trust	Low	High/Low	High/low
Media attention	High vs low media attention	Low	High	High

Abbreviation: COVID-19, coronavirus disease 2019.

^aAdapted from below from Appendix C— in Covello et al [3].

^bNote that the perception of risk can vary by context and cultural beliefs of the public audience.

TCMI TRAVEL ANXIETY INDEX





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10 best practices learned from public health and the COVID pandemic



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Address the Hazard

Address the Outrage

Engage the Audience

Readiness , Response and Recovery

1. Ensure you are hitting all message channels

4. Discuss personal protection behaviors

7. Train front line staff on crisis communications

2. Speak to each audience (type of tourists are different)

5. Share what the "expert" tourism leaders are doing (UNWTO, WTTC, CDC, WHO)

8. Engage the public and visitor as partners (solicit their engagement)

3. Provide facts

6. Acknowledge Lack of Awareness, Uncertainty and Fear

9. Provide signage everywhere!

10. Use the crisis to advocate for the industry

1. Ensure you are hitting all message channels



Message Channels
-social media
-news outlets
-press briefings
- personal communication





2. Speak to each audience so they engage and understand

Residents



Tourists

Domestic Tourists



International Tourists

USA Tourists



Chinese Tourists

- Who delivers the message
- What is said
- How it is said
- Where it is communicated



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3. Provide facts





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4. Discuss personal protection behaviors



SAFE TRAVEL Tips Everyone Should Know

What can I
do to stay
safe???






5. Share what the “expert” tourism leaders are doing (UNWTO, WTTC, CDC, WHO)




LEADING GLOBAL PROTOCOLS FOR THE NEW NORMAL HOSPITALITY




#SAFETRAVELS
MAY 2020



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A UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCY

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SUSTAINABILITY AS THE NEW NORMAL

To mark World Environment Day, the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme led by UNWTO announces its new vision for global tourism—growing better, stronger, and balancing the needs of people, planet and prosperity.



TOURISM RECOVERY

Governments have responded quickly and strongly with the level and coverage of measures steeping up over time. Most countries have adopted economy-wide stimulus packages (fiscal and monetary measures) along with job support measures.



RESTARTING TOURISM

At its fifth meeting, UNWTO changed the emphasis towards restarting tourism. The Committee endorsed UNWTO's Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism, an action plan focused on the Priorities for Tourism Recovery.




These are some of the tourism experts! I am on-board with their advice

These are content experts—we need their scientific expertise

6. Acknowledge Lack of Awareness, Uncertainty and Fear

COVID-19 RISK INDEX



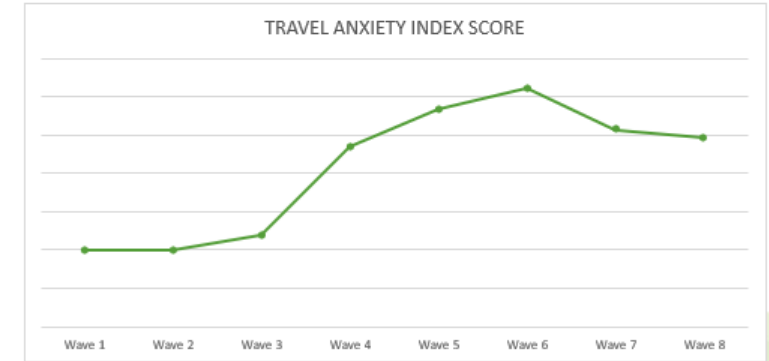
Risk Level	Activity	Why?
HIGH RISK	AIR TRAVEL & PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION	WHY? Enclosed space, prolonged close contact, potential clustering of people, high-touch surfaces
	PLAYING CONTACT SPORTS	WHY? Prolonged close contact, potential clustering of people, high respiratory rate, unable to wear a mask
	SPORTING EVENTS	WHY? Prolonged close contact, potential clustering of people, high-touch surfaces, yelling, projection of voice
	CONCERTS & RELIGIOUS SERVICES	WHY? Enclosed space, prolonged close contact, potential clustering of people, high-touch surfaces, projection of voice
MEDIUM / HIGH RISK	INDOOR RESTAURANT OR COFFEE SHOP	WHY? Indoor, prolonged close contact, potential clustering of people, difficult to wear a mask
	HAIR/NAIL SALON & BARBERSHOPS	WHY? Prolonged close contact, difficult to wear a mask
	EXERCISING AT A GYM	WHY? Indoor, close contact, potential clustering of people, high-touch surfaces, difficult to wear a mask, high respiratory rate
	WORKING IN AN OFFICE	WHY? Indoor, high-touch surfaces, prolonged close contact, potential clustering of people
MEDIUM RISK	OUTDOOR RESTAURANT DINING	WHY? Close contact, potential clustering of people, difficult to wear a mask
	TAKING A RIDE-SHARING SERVICE OR TAXI	WHY? Depending on frequency or clearing, duration of ride, and number of passengers
	VISITING HOSPITAL ER	WHY? Indoor, potential clustering of people
	MEDICAL & DENTAL OFFICE VISIT	WHY? Indoor, close contact, potential clustering of people, high-touch surfaces
LOW / MEDIUM RISK	GROCERY & RETAIL SHOPPING	WHY? Indoor, close contact, potential clustering of people, high-touch surfaces
	PLAYING "DISTANCED" SPORTS OUTSIDE	Like tennis or golf
LOW RISK	OUTDOOR PICNIC OR PORCH DINING	With non-household. People and social distancing, potential crowding and activity
	PICKING UP TAKEOUT, GROCERIES, COFFEE	WHY? Potential crowding
	RUNNING OR BIKING	Alone or with another person. Close contact or potential clustering of people
	STAYING AT HOME	Alone, or with members of your household

CC COLORADO COLLEGE Reduce the risk. Slow the spread. Care for CC.

Note: Ranking the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak on the CC campus will take a variety of factors into account. This is not an official risk rating and is not intended to be used for any other purpose. For more information, please contact the college's COVID-19 response team.

TCMI WEEKLY TRAVEL ANXIETY INDEX© Monday, April 20, 2020

Weekly Travel Index	Change Over Last Week	Week Over Year Change
+245.6%	-4.21%	145.6%
April 20 th (Monday)	vs. previous Monday	Weekly index vs. January 26 th



[COVID-19-Risk-Index-Poster v2.pdf \(coloradocollege.edu\)](https://coloradocollege.edu/COVID-19-Risk-Index-Poster_v2.pdf)

[Tourism Crisis Management Initiative](#)

Acknowledge fear and anxiety- link to credibility sources so tourists can do their own research

7. Train front line staff on crisis communications



Protocols, guidelines, code of conduct, be informed by WHO or CDC, monitoring of well-being

8. Engage the public and visitor as partners (solicit their engagement)

Your Hilton CleanStay Room



- 1 SWITCHES & ELECTRONIC CONTROLS**
Lights, lamps, switches and electronic controls.
- 2 HANDLES & KNOBS**
Doors, closets, drawers, furniture knobs and drapery pull handles.
- 3 MAJOR BATHROOM SURFACES**
Toilet handles and seats, splash walls, shower/tub controls and sink faucets.
- 4 CLIMATE CONTROL PANELS**
- 5 TELEPHONES, REMOTE CONTROLS AND CLOCKS**
Handsets, dial pads and function buttons.
- 6 BED & BEDDING**
All bed linens including duvet covers, pillowcases and sheets.
- 7 BATH AMENITIES**
Bulk dispensers, individual amenities, tissue boxes, soap dishes, amenity trays and hair dryer.
- 8 HARD SURFACES**
Tables, desks and nightstands.
- 9 CLOSET GOODS**
Iron, safe handle and keypad.
- 10 IN-ROOM FOOD & BEVERAGE**
Cutlery, glassware, ice buckets, mini bars, kettle and coffeemaker.

PARTNERSHIP



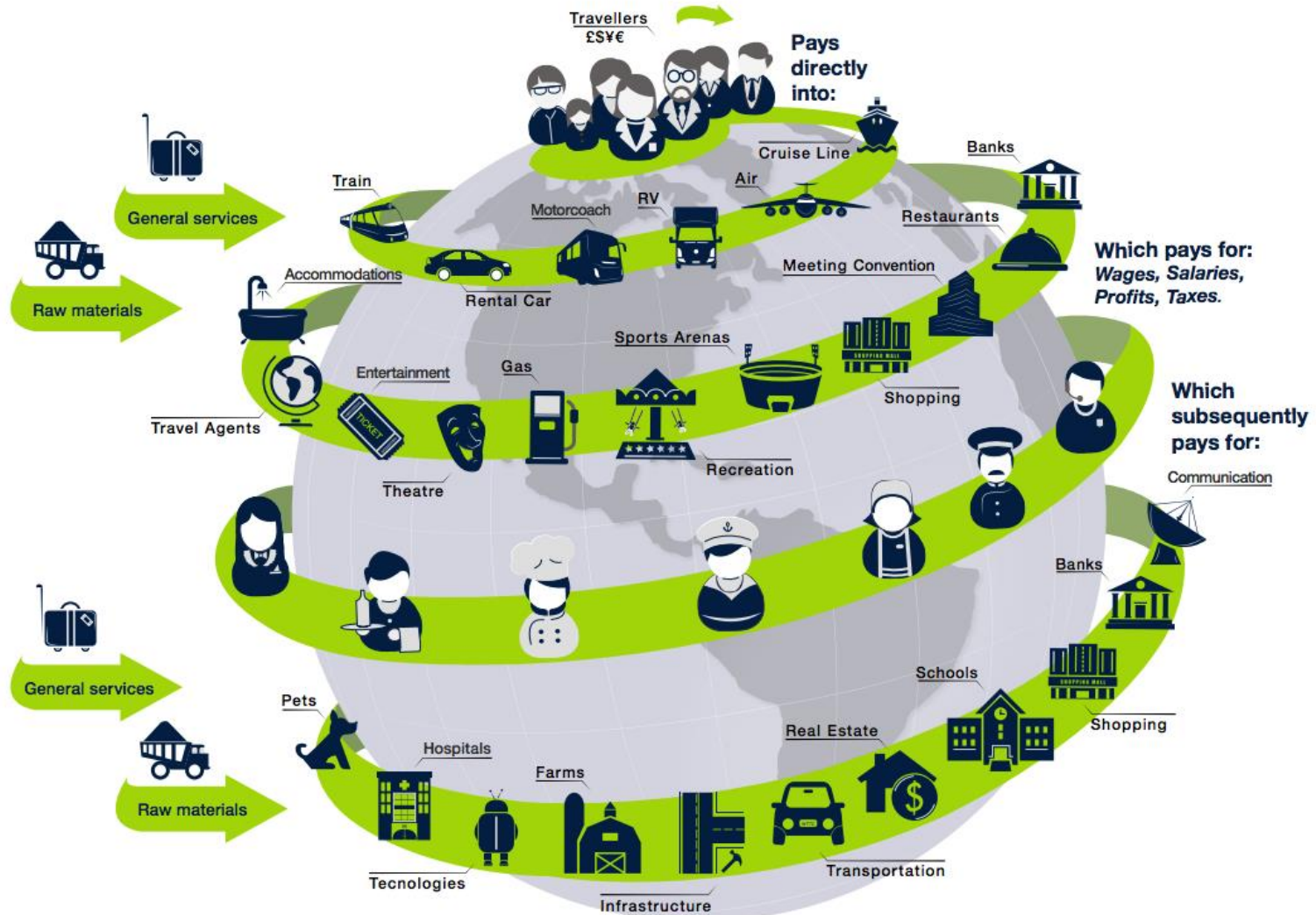
9. Provide signage in the destination EVERYWHERE!

Implement clear signage throughout the destination, including the hotel, airport, seaport, attractions, on the streets in tourist zones, in tax cabs

Inform guests of local laws, the enhanced protocols, physical distancing, and recommendations for safety

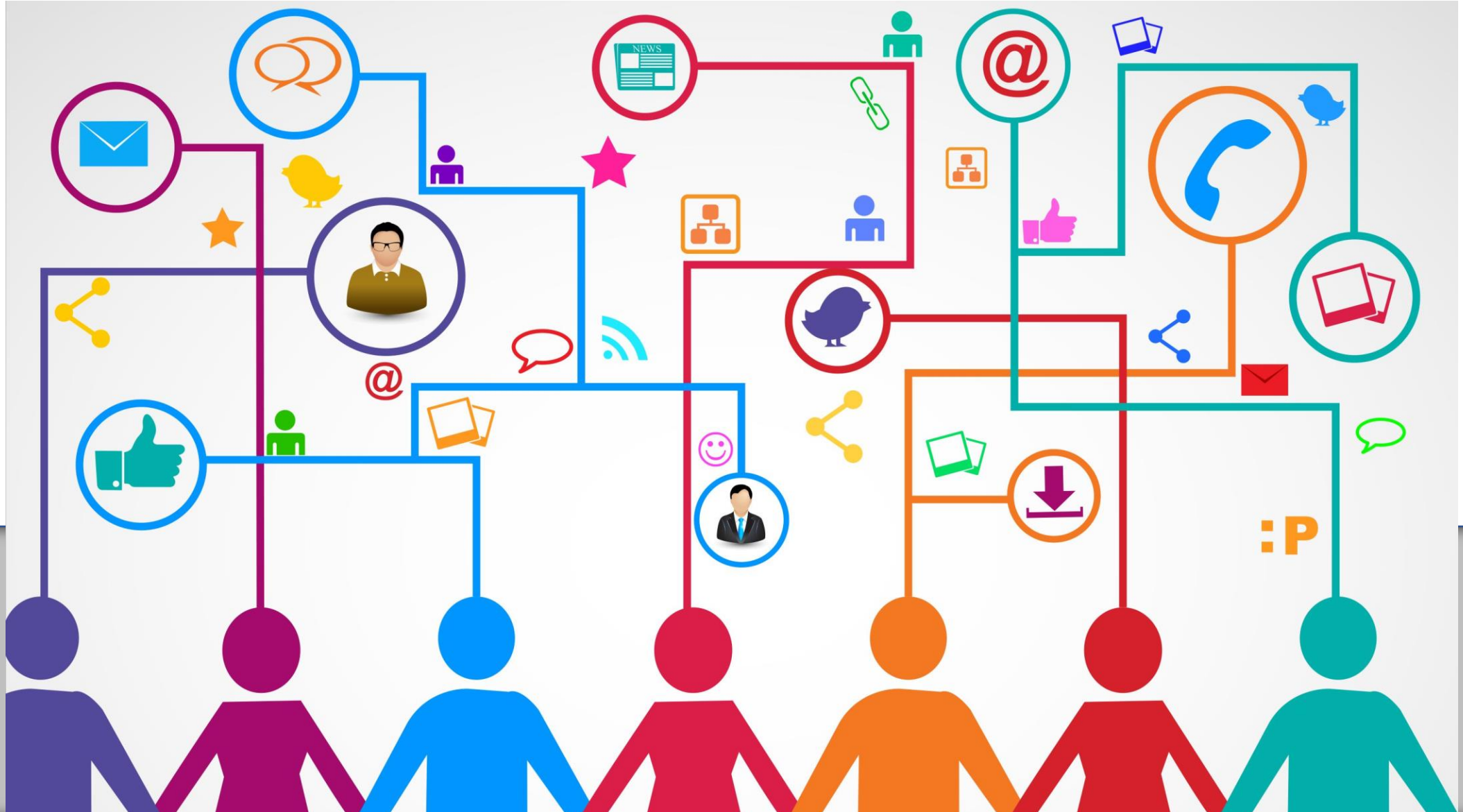


10. Use the crisis to advocate for the industry





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Thank you!

Questions?



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