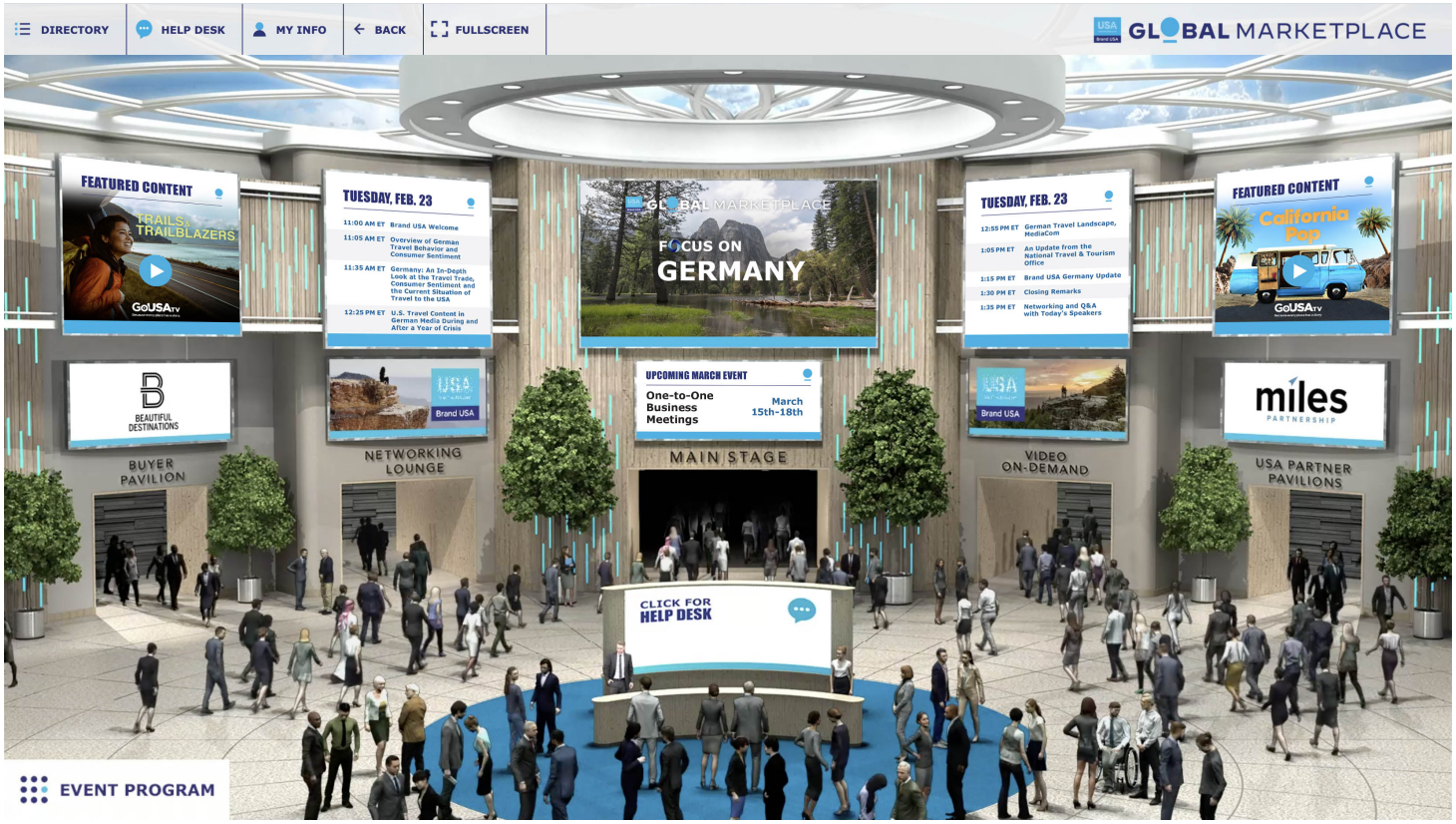
NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Hosts Focus On Germany, Presenting Meaningful Insights on the German Travel and Media Landscape

February 24, 2021



MUNICH (February 24, 2021)—Yesterday, Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States, hosted Focus On Germany on the Brand USA Global Marketplace platform. The event kicked off with a welcome from Christopher L. Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA. The event consisted of five segments hosted by category experts to provide U.S. partners with insights into German travel behavior, consumer sentiment, and the travel and media landscapes.

“It is critical to our recovery that we welcome German visitors back,” said Thompson in his opening remarks. “As we see vaccines rolling out, not only in our country but around the world, we have a glimmer of hope. [Today] we’re focused on the German travel landscape as we wait the 'all clear' and we know it’s safe to travel again.”

Overview of German travel behavior and consumer sentiment

During his keynote address, Ulf Sonntag, Project Head at Reiseanalyse, Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen e.V. (FUR) stated, “Even in pandemic times, Germans want to travel. As soon as we are allowed to travel, we will do so again.” Sonntag then presented the results of their 2019/2020 travel analysis based on research from more than 10,000 interviews which examined German consumer travel

and vacation behavior, and travel motives and interests. The study showed that, in general:

- In the next three years, 17 percent (representing 12 million people) of Germans are planning or considering a trip to the USA. Changes are, however, expected in regards to demographic target groups—more elderly people and possibly more family travel—and booking channels.
- Online bookings will increase significantly while face-to-face bookings will experience a slow decline. In regards to actual bookings, the most important concern is a money-back guarantee in case a trip can't take place.
- Sustainability will play a slightly more important role in the decision-making process, although it's not a priority. The decision-making process will depend on certain requirements such as high hygienic standards, figures of infection in the destination, and whether a quick return home is possible.
- One of the most significant changes related to the pandemic is information sourcing. While Germans once relied on destination websites and family and friends, they now look to the press, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the RKI (institute that publishes infection figures) first.

He concluded that while the outlook for travel to the U.S. is mixed near term, the U.S. is still a dream destination for many Germans. It is key for U.S. partners to continue communicating and to promote the U.S. since German tourists have many travel options.

Sonntag's update preceded a German trade panel introduced by Noel Irwin-Hentschel, CEO and co-founder of AmericanTours International (ATI) and moderated by Holger Jacobs, editor-in-chief North America at FVW. Jacobs brought Philipp Detmer, Director North America/DER Touristik, Tilo Krause-Dünow, President & CEO/CANUSA Touristik, and Pia Hambrock, Head of Product and Operations/CRD Touristik together to talk about the challenges tour operators are facing. The panelists emphasized that a strong message of "welcoming" is needed from the USA and that Germans will travel to the U.S. as soon as the restrictions are lifted.

Purposeful content and meaningful conversations, developing U.S. travel content for German media during and after a year of crisis

In the past year, the German media landscape has changed dramatically both in regards to media consumption habits and media outlets. Henry Barchet, radio journalist and producer of "Audiotravels" moderated this panel featuring Jennifer Latuperisa-Andresen, editor-in-chief/reisen EXCLUSIV, Dr. Elfi Vomberg, freelance travel writer, and Nadine Sieger, U.S. correspondent for the German ELLE and ELLE Decor magazines. The panelists brought to light several similarities between print and digital media in regards to content creation and storytelling as it related to U.S. travel content.

Overview of German travel landscape and digital media trends

Sandra Vondereck, Director Media Consulting, International/MediaCom Germany and Florian Ritt, Director Media Consulting/MediaCom Germany, provided an overview of the German travel landscape and digital media trends related to booking behavior. Although the economy shrunk by 5 percent, 85 percent of the population is still considering travel their highest priority for this year, with 60 percent willing to travel internationally looking for a beach, active, or city holiday. This is a good sign that Germans are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, as Germans are usually known for planning ahead and making their travel arrangements at the beginning of each year. Despite Germans traditionally booking via travel agents, the internet and digital media are playing an increasingly important role in the process of vacation planning as they are critical tools for research. However, since travel agents extend their digital presence as well, the traditional connection is continued.

An in-depth look at the travel trade and consumer sentiment

Julie Heizer, deputy director of industry relations for the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), presented 2019 statistics and an overview of COVID-19 relief legislation and federal mandates related to travel.

Brand USA Germany Update

Amanda Davis, manager, global markets at Brand USA, provided a brief overview of Brand USA's trade engagement in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands in 2020, including highlights from Travel Week Europe 2020—the first event to take place on Brand USA Global Marketplace. She emphasized the importance for Brand USA to engage with trade and media by continuously educating, entertaining, and inspiring the German and Dutch speaking travel trade communities via the USA Discovery Program, virtual Visit USA Germany Roadshow, and other Brand USA resources like GoUSA TV, the U.S. COVID-19 Travel Guidelines, and the newly launched COVID-19 Indicator Dashboard. The session ended with Cassady Bailey, senior director, partner engagement and planning for Brand USA, announcing that recovery campaigns are in development with German tour operators including DER Touristik and CANUSA Touristik.

Due to the strong interest in visiting the USA, Brand USA will continue training and engaging with the travel trade community as well as inspiring German consumers through storytelling. Even though the German traveler is moving from a more traditional research and booking behavior towards online tools, Garzilli underlined the importance of tour operators. He closed his session encouraging participants to attend in the upcoming One-to-One Business Meetings (March 15-18, 2021) hosted on Brand USA Global Marketplace.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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