

**PRESS RELEASE**

**The ACAVE Forum recovers the face-to-face format to debate the future of tourism after a summer where 50% of the sector recovered its pre-pandemic turnover**

- **More than 200 travel agencies and tourism professionals have participated in the XXII ACAVE Forum, which is being held today at the Palau de Pedralbes in Barcelona.**
- **The president of ACAVE, Jordi Martí, has presented to the media the results of a survey of travel agencies associated with ACAVE that confirm the success of the 2022 summer campaign but anticipate a slight slowdown for autumn.**

Barcelona, September 29, 2022. Big data, the metaverse and sustainable mobility have been the central themes of the XXII ACAVE Forum, the main debate meeting of the travel agency sector in Spain that is organized every autumn by Corporate Association of specialized travel agencies. This edition, which was held at the Palau de Pedralbes in Barcelona and which brought together more than 200 participants, has returned to the original 100% face-to-face format after two years of a hybrid modality, necessary due to the restrictions of the pandemic .

Jordi Martí, president of ACAVE, made a positive assessment of the day, stressing that: "Although we titled this forum talking about "future", the truth is that big data and sustainable tourism are the present for the tourism sector travel agencies. In today's global environment, travel agencies must take advantage of all the potential offered by technology to improve their commercial capacity and to better understand new traveler profiles, customers with new needs and concerns."

At the opening of the day, Albert Castellanos, Secretary of Business and Competitiveness of the Generalitat de Catalunya explained that "we are in a moment of disruptive transformation, in an accelerated digitalization process that is changing the way services are marketed in the travel agencies. In this digital age, the agency sector has a very important role".

The Forum, led in this edition by the journalist Cristina Riba, started with a first session in which the economist Santiago Niño Becerra analyzed the challenges and perspectives of the tourism industry in the face of the changing global macroeconomic situation. He commented that "we are facing a scenario of stagnation and even economic collapse, and for this reason, those destinations that attract more tourists with the ability to spend will have a better chance of facing this situation."

The second session focused on sustainable mobility for the evolution of tourism and sustainable destinations, counting for this analysis and debate with a panel formed by Teresa Parejo, Director of Sustainability at IBERIA, L.A.E.; Guillem Turner, IRYO Sales Director; and Marta Doménech, Director General of Tourism of the Generalitat de Catalunya. Parejo commented that "The challenge is immense and aviation is now in the spotlight. Aviation currently accounts for between 2 and 3% of total emissions. Compared to the rest of the sectors, the percentage is small, but that does not mean that the problem is not very big. Aviation is a very difficult decarbonisation sector, although companies like Iberia have this goal as a priority". For his part, Turner predicted that "the transport sector will transform. And there is room for all mediums. It is necessary to complement the different types of transport and to promote multimodality (it is essential that high-speed trains can reach the airports). Curbing mobility is not the solution. Mobility enriches. We have to correct many things, but the positive impact that Tourism has is enormous." For her part, Marta Doménech explained that the Generalitat de Catalunya is making "basic long-term strategies in 4 areas: de-seasonalize, because Catalonia can be visited from January 1 to December 31, diversify the offer, distribute visitors by the whole territory".

The third session analyzed the opportunities offered by Big Data for tourism management, facilitating at the same time more sustainable tourism, with the participation of Hector Coronel, director of Turisme Madrid Destino; Xavier Marcé, Councilor for Tourism and Creative Industries of Barcelona City Council; and Santi Camps, founder and CEO of MABRIAN. Coronel has commented that "Artificial intelligence through patterns teaches us to identify the purpose of travel of our visitors and show you the appropriate offer to get the visitor to extend their stay. Until now, the average stay was low." For Marcé, "When we talk about digitization and big data, it means transforming the entire management of a sector and using new analysis parameters. Digital development is already taking place in some areas such as culture. But the key is to offer integrated digitization."

The fourth session was also focused on the technological field. Roberto Romero Pérez, Accenture Song Metaverse Continuum Creative Technologist has exposed the potential of the Metaverse and the opportunities it offers to become a new world for the tourism industry. In his speech he commented that "Understanding the ecosystem to be able to take advantage of the opportunity is the key. Understand what's going on to start building your brand's community. The real value is not being the first but the first to do it right. For agencies, the metaverse has many possibilities: building community, brand visibility, product exposure, engagement, content strategy (personalize and deliver value)."

## **Summer Balance Survey and Fall 2022 Forecast.**

The survey was carried out among the 450 agencies that are part of ACAVE and that represent both the sending and receiving sectors at national level, both in the field of tour operators, retailers and cruise lines.

Issuing agency balance sheets and forecasts

27% of the broadcasting agencies surveyed claim to have matched the turnover of 2019, the last year of record before the pandemic. Another 24% answered that they had even exceeded the turnover of the last year before Covid. These good data confirm that this summer has indeed been one of recovery. However, there is still another 50% of agencies that answered that their turnover has improved compared to the previous two years but is still below 2019, among them 32% say that they closed the summer between 10 and 20% below in 2019.

In their comments, respondents stated that the highest booking levels for the summer were recorded between the months of May and June. 77% agreed noting that most bookings were made 1-3 months in advance, meaning pre-Covid advance booking is recovering. Among the national destinations most in demand by Spaniards, the two archipelagos (Balearic Islands and Canary Islands) stood out, followed at a considerable distance by Catalonia, Andalusia and the Atlantic Coast. Among the international destinations most in demand, the list is topped by the United States, which this year expedited the health procedures to access its borders, followed by the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean, the Near East and the Middle, and Africa, followed further by Cruises, South America and Asian countries still under health restrictions.

When asked about the forecasts for autumn 2022, 68% say that inflation has produced a slowdown in the rate of bookings which causes the customer to delay their decision to hire the trip. While another 5% have not noticed any impact, the remaining 27% are experiencing a total stop of bookings.

Compared to fall 2019, 52% of respondents expect to match or exceed turnover: 29% expect to match results, while 23% are confident of exceeding them.

In addition, the issuing agencies have been asked about the recruitment of new professionals. 66.7% confirmed that they are making new hires at the moment and, among those who answered affirmatively to this question, 71% also stated that they are having problems finding staff, which highlights the lack of professionals qualifications available in the tourism sector.

### **Balance and forecasts receptive agencies**

50% of receiving agencies have equaled or exceeded 2019 turnover (22% equaled it and 28% exceeded it). These data are in line with the responses of the issuing sector and confirm that the recovery of the travel agency sector is homogeneous.

When asked how far in advance reservations were made, 50% agreed that most reservations were made 1 to 3 months in advance, while another 22% said they were made more than 3 months with respect to the completion of the trip. Among the national destinations most in demand by international travelers, Catalonia stood out first, closely followed by Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, the Atlantic Coast (Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and Euskadi) and to a lesser extent inland destinations.

By source markets, the most important was France, followed in that order by Germany, the United Kingdom, Benelux, the United States (the biggest growth this season), the Nordic countries and Portugal. Among the key factors that motivated the purchase decision, the respondents affirm that the two factors that weighed the most in the decision were the value for money of the trips to Spain, and to a much lesser extent the perception of health security (a factor that has declined among travelers).

Asked about the forecasts for autumn 2022, 65% of the receiving agencies say that the increase in prices has slowed down the pace of bookings and that the client is waiting until the last moment to make the purchase. Another 6% have not noticed any impact, and 29% have experienced a total stoppage of travel contracting.

The receiving sector is not as optimistic as the issuing sector in terms of billing forecasts (with respect to autumn 2019). Only 39% of respondents expect to match or exceed turnover: 16% will match it and 23% expect to exceed it.

Likewise, the receiving agencies were asked about the recruitment of new professionals and 46.2% confirmed that they are doing so at the moment and, among those who answered affirmatively to this question, 71% affirmed that is having problems finding staff (a percentage identical to that of the issuing sector). These data show that the problem of finding staff is widespread and common to all sectors.

## **About ACAVE**

The Corporate Association of Specialized Travel Agencies (ACAVe) is the employers' association of state-level travel agencies based in Catalonia. ACAVe is the most representative Association in Spain with approximately 450 members and around 1,000 points of sale throughout Spain. Different types of agencies form part of the Association: holiday and corporate broadcasters, tour operators, coastal and city receptions, online and cruise agencies.

### **Para más información:**

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