

Did travel finally arrive in 2017? Destinations are no longer the only news

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Everyone knows that good news travel fast. But how fast does news in our sector travel? Rather ironically, travel news doesn't travel very fast. Beyond the trade media, our news normally comes in the form of a supplement in your weekend paper: full of fantasy photos of destinations no one will ever really visit.

This year the pace quickened noticeably: many travel & tourism industry stories made the front page globally. Why? For many years this has been the biggest industry in the world. But more recently one in which all of us have slowly become stakeholders, and suddenly everyone cares.

For example, this was the year in which 'overtourism' became an official word. The world, and in a few extreme cases some accosted tourists, woke up to the concept that not all tourism is welcome. This was especially the case in countries like Spain, which along with many other southern European destinations had the busiest year ever on record, despite such a high proportion of the nation's GDP coming from tourism.

This was also the year in which finally a travel industry executive achieved the same rock-star, magazine cover status as leaders of other industries. Daria Khosrowshahi beat off some real heavy weight business names to take over at Uber. The combination of travel and technology was simply too sexy to resist for both investors and journalists.

Sadly fame is often accompanied by infamy though, and this year saw front page news for all the wrong reasons. Most epically, the case of United Airlines violently ejecting an overbooked passenger from a flight, with the video going viral immediately. For those in the UK the Monarch collapse also saw widespread coverage of stranded passengers all over Europe; and in Germany the demise of Air Berlin doubtless caused some handwringing.

Our industry has also seen its fair share of high profile challenges that were not of its own making, but were nonetheless left to our industry to resolve. Terrorism attacks in tourist destinations have become all too common, with the Barcelona and Las Vegas cases leaving many asking what more our industry can do to protect our customers from harm. The Trump administration's ban on citizens of many Muslim countries entering the United States, followed by a surprise laptop ban on many Atlantic flights, caused significant headaches for many airlines and airports.

For a sector that generates 10% of world GDP and the same proportion of jobs, the business of tourism still remains under-represented in the media. Too many travel adverts, not enough actual travel news. But as this year has shown, travel news is slowly becoming about more than just destinations - travel is finally arriving.

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