

## Why GPS Multimedia Solutions in the Sightseeing Industry?

Today's sightseeing businesses want technology solutions that give them a distinctive edge in their market. As a result, we've seen a significant rise in the adoption of GPS automated commentary, from Gray Line Worldwide to City Sightseeing to independent operators around the globe. But is automation of tour narration right for your business? What factors should you consider before transforming your tours to audio over earbuds?

### Deployment

Why are companies moving into automated GPS solutions? Automation is advancing companies forward with business efficiency while simplifying lives. In a survey conducted by Gleanster Research, 77% of top performing companies indicate their most compelling reason for implementing automation is to increase revenue. Those who embrace automation have boosted ridership, cut costs, saved time and achieved greater consistency.

With the deployment of multi-language tours, results are immediate. Sightseeing operators are seeing results in their first season, increasing ridership with new services that offer unbeatable value for the travel trade and foreign-language travelers.

Vancouver-based WESTCOAST Sightseeing turned to GPS commentary solutions to address underserved foreign language markets:

"This was the best year the company has ever had! Without AudioConexus, we would have only been able to operate half the buses that we had on our tours," says Jason Bryant, Director of Sales and Marketing at WESTCOAST Sightseeing. "Finding drivers with the ability to provide high quality tour narration is rare and difficult to find in Vancouver. That's the number one thing with AudioConexus, they made it possible for us to provide a consistent commentary experience without the extra expense of having train drivers in lengthy commentary delivery."

### World-Class Tours

With international tour wholesalers and travelers alike looking for exceptional tourism experiences, it's more important than ever to service the needs and interests of foreign visitors. And yet, barriers to communication in both language and culture continue to impede growth for many tour operators.

While some people believe hiring linguists to tell stories in three or four languages sequentially is the answer, it's actually cause for frustration. Visitors don't want to listen to tour narration they don't understand. At the same time, operators find hiring foreign-language guides expensive and challenging to manage, especially during peak season.

Bad service costs organizations \$338.5 billion globally every year in lost business, and these numbers continue to rise. If you're not providing five-star multi-language tours, you're lagging behind. Worse, you're leaving instant profits on the table for your competitors. With insufficient foreign-language services ranking number one among complaints from international visitors, the opportunity to boost earnings is immediate. As demand for foreign-language experiences continues to grow, multilingual services means marketable competitive advantages for companies focused taking advantage of these opportunities with premium, compelling content.

Blue Boat Company, based in Amsterdam, wanted to improve the value proposition it offers visitors:

"Our staff and guests are very enthusiastic about the experiences we provide. Because of this installation, our

business is growing and expanding," says Vincent Geljon, Owner, Blue Boat Company.

"We've found that tour operators choose us first because of the high quality of our tours and the language options. Thankfully, no one has to listen to several tours over a PA system anymore."

## Business Analytics

For organizations using GPS commentary solutions for hop-on, hop-off and open-top applications, True Time Passenger Analytics allows all relevant data to be accessed in once central place.

These days, more and more sightseeing companies are realizing that data is the future. Successful businesses are seeking ways to collect, analyze and share data for better decision-making on customer and competitive issues. Industry leaders say this shift is a key factor in their expansion plans, with an overwhelming 74% saying they want to be "data-driven."

Thanks to advancements in cloud-based and mobile web services, collecting and presenting meaningful passenger data faster is now available. Companies that harness digital insights are expected to increase revenue from \$333 billion in 2015 to \$1.2 trillion by 2020.

Many operators believe they can track foreign-language ticket sales at point of purchase, however this is nearly impossible. Front-end staff aren't equipped to track demographics in the middle of a busy tour season.

Mariposa Cruises, a Toronto-based company, wanted a complete solution with measurable results. The cruise company got more than they asked for, reaping immediate benefits and growth for seasons to come.

"We didn't anticipate that there would be the initial response there was," says Cindi Vanden Heuvel, Vice President, Mariposa Cruises. "We've already seen a significant increase in ridership!"

It's a fact. Data-supported decisions outperform "guesstimate" thinking of the past. With True Time Passenger Analytics, GPS multi-language commentary solutions provide sightseeing companies with peace of mind when making sales and marketing decisions.

## Cloud

Today's businesses are moving into cloud platforms with 93% of organizations running applications, according to a survey conducted by RightScale Cloud Management. Research shows 82% of enterprises have a hybrid cloud strategy, up from 74%

in 2014.

Using cloud services centralizes secure social collaboration for route building and content management and enables operators to access to their information anytime, anywhere via the web, desktop and mobile devices. With cloud, companies can make better decisions and streamline operations by easily creating, moving and changing location-based delivery of content in seconds. Micromanaging technology is a thing of the past.

Employees can track their work and share ideas with each other when it's needed most. Cloud platforms offer a smoother, more flexible and more complete solution and are especially valuable for organizations managing more than one tour. With centralized information, staff members can share content across routes and manage several destinations using a single dashboard.

## Reducing Costs, Savings in Time

AudioConexus GPS Tour Solution customers always cite the need to reduce human resources and administrative requirements for managing step-on guides, drivers and captains. With automated narration as part of a GPS multimedia tour solution, there's no longer a need to hire people who are storytellers. There are no scripts to memorize. No narration training is required. No maintenance or software upgrades are necessary. Automating tour narration can be a great benefit for companies that want to focus on customer service while enhancing the quality of experience.

At Kingston 1000 Islands Cruises, moving to GPS commentary solutions has allowed captains to shift their focus back to where it belongs—navigating waters and overseeing the guest experience—and away from the distraction of live-guided narration:

"AudioConexus offers a very reliable, trouble-free system that allows us to start our tours in the morning and not think about narration for the rest of the day. This means I have much more time to focus on what matters, making sure every guest on board my ship is getting the very best experience," says Captain Stephen Steels.

## Consistency

With professional narration, management can eliminate bad day tours, inconsistent messages and off-color commentary.

Many sightseeing companies face these issues on an ongoing basis. They can't control what drivers say. What's more, hiring drivers who are natural-born storytellers is a challenge for even the biggest and best-run companies. The fact is,

most people can't memorize scripted tours word for word making it nearly impossible to guarantee consistent customer experiences every time out.

Search Google for "consistency is key to success" and you'll find hundreds of articles on the topic. Companies seeking an edge know that customers will wait longer and spend more for better service. Consistency is exceptionally powerful, especially when providing premium tours. Companies investing in consistency throughout the customer journey see a 35% bump in customer satisfaction ratings and a 15% gain in revenue on average.

North Shore Scenic Railroad wanted to grow its ridership with premium tour commentary that eliminated consistency issues:

"To me, narration is a very important component that attractions like us often undervalue. Every time our trains depart we have one chance to deliver information that either makes or breaks our patrons' experience and perception of us," says Josh Miller, North Shore Scenic Railroad's Station Manager. "By controlling our message and sharing the information we want to share, we ensure that the quality of experience is always great."

## Higher Satisfaction Ratings

Companies operating GPS commentary solutions with premium content are realizing the benefits of higher customer satisfaction ratings. They gain the advantage of exceptional storytelling without having to risk their hard-earned brand reputation.

Take TED Talks, influential videos from expert speakers as an example. Why do some speakers get more than a million views while others disappear into the depths of search obscurity?

Here's why. These speakers know how to tell good stories. Their tales are inspiring, captivating and forge strong emotional connections with audiences.

This is the power of storytelling.

Well told-stories immerse people in the experience. In the sightseeing industry, it's what inspires people to write great reviews on TripAdvisor. Or tell a friend how a company made them feel.

Dry, boring content doesn't inspire anyone. The best sightseeing brands understand this.

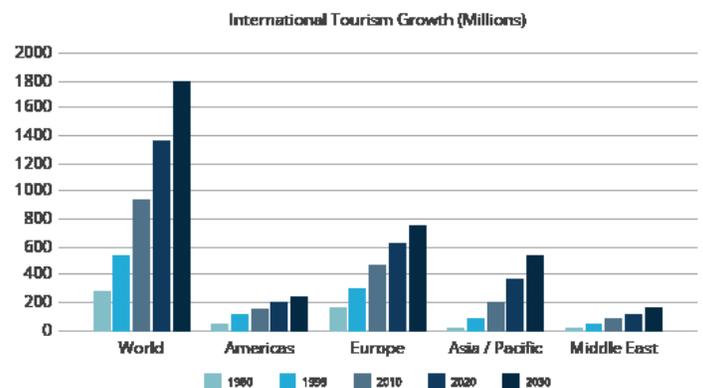
Using live guides, Skagway Street Car Company couldn't service the growing market of foreign-language travelers. Since the development of multi-language tours, the company increased ridership and received higher customer satisfaction ratings:

"The high level of translation and production quality that AudioConexus provides resulted in a powerful guest experience where we get the highest tour ratings and best customer reviews. The AudioConexus system is an answer to the eternal question of "what does the customer want?" says Steven Hites, President of Skagway Streetcar Company. "As a result, our cruise line partners have something new to sell to guests who would not have previously purchased anything. And the reliability of our program gives them the confidence to sell it."

## International Travel Growth

The Travel & Tourism industry is the largest industry in the world – representing enormous opportunities for companies seeking to expand markets in the global tourism sector.

For the sixth successive year, the growth of the Travel & Tourism sector in 2015 (4.6%) outpaced that of the global economy and many other major sectors such as manufacturing and retail.



International tourist arrivals have grown significantly, reaching nearly 1.2 billion international travelers globally and visitor spending more than matched that growth. By 2030, the World Travel & Tourism Council projects international travelers to reach 1.8 billion, with strong growth from the sector over the next decade.

Visitors from emerging economies now represent a 46% share of these international arrivals (up from 38% in 2000), proving the growth and increased opportunities for travel from new markets.

International tourist arrivals show record growth year over year while the biggest increase in the holiday trip market comes from city trips, growing 58% in the last 5 years, due to low cost flights and budget accommodation.

International travel now represents 7% of the world's exports and represents a significant opportunity to provide goods and services to foreign language travelers.

# Tourism For All - Accessibility

The celebration of World Tourism Day in 2016 raised accessibility awareness globally. Under the theme "Tourism For All," the UNWTO released a report offering some hard data, estimating that 15% of the global population — over 1 billion people — are living with some form of disability.

Forward-thinking destinations and regions are shaping new accessibility policies and forming strategic plans to meet the needs of people with disabilities, maximizing the quality and competitiveness of their tourism offerings.

With populations rapidly aging, important changes need to be made to improve "good access." An EU study, "Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Tourism in Europe" estimates that 27% of the total population in Europe and 12% of the tourism market needs better accessible environments and services. By providing more positive experiences for visitors and locals alike, tourism "can be enjoyed equally by everybody, regardless of one's abilities," the UNWTO indicated.

Breaking down language and accessibility barriers means committing to social inclusion. Organizations providing better access to products and services gain an edge.

"The accessible travel market tend to travel more frequently during the low season, usually accompanied or in groups, make more return visits and, in some parts of the world, they spend more than average on their trips," the UNWTO declared. "Facilitating travel for people with disabilities is therefore not only a human rights imperative but also an exceptional business opportunity," the report continued.

Enterprising sightseeing companies are breaking down barriers to accessible travel. "Tourism for All" sends a crucial message to their potential customers – these organizations believe in welcoming everybody, no matter what their impairment.

According to UN estimates, there are 650 million people with differing disabilities and 600 million older adults. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission, UNESCO, revenue generated by this market is a staggering \$13.6 billion in the United States alone. By providing unique, memorable tourism experiences that enhance people's lives, tour operators unlock opportunities to reach new markets.

*United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reported an estimated 650 million persons are living with disabilities in the world today. If one includes the members of their families, there are approximately 2 billion persons who are directly affected by disability, representing almost a third of the world's population.*

# Conclusion

Is automation of tour narration right for your business? GPS tour solutions have helped sightseeing operators transform their businesses by delivering more efficient, more consistent and more compelling customer experiences while opening the way to significant gains in foreign-language ticket sales. The results have been both dramatic and immediate. The proof is on TripAdvisor. Operators report increased ridership, reduced costs and higher customer satisfaction ratings.

## About AudioConexus

The only complete multilingual, multi-topical hardware, software and creative solution that offers adaptable, unique, five-star user experiences. AudioConexus works with ambitious, growth-oriented tour operators worldwide looking for a distinctive edge to increase bookings through compelling tourist experiences.