



## KATINA PAPADOMANOLAKIS

**segara: Summer season 2020 was a disaster for many hoteliers and many hotels remained completely closed. How did Phaea Resorts made it through summer?**

**Katina Papadomanolakis, Phaea Resorts:** We managed to open most of our hotels on July 1st. The day when the island officially reopened for tourists and air traffic in some European countries resumed again. As for everyone, it was a season that was comparable to a rollercoaster ride. There was low expectation, and, at the same time, we had to adapt to new circumstances every day that were beyond the control of the hotelier. For us, the season has turned positive which was certainly also due to the fact that Greece was generally strongly represented, and also that the weather was great. Therefore, we were able to achieve high booking rates even in October.

**How did you manage to open three hotels while so many others hotels remained closed?**

Differentiation. Many hotels either depend on a single tour operator or on one source market. For our part, we have been going in a different direc-

tion for many years. The right mixture is the key. That has also been proved this year. If a market or segment is not very successful, it is possible to stem that loss otherwise. Direct business is also a focus but an unpopular way with many hotels. At first, it is certainly more time-consuming and associated with higher costs, but, at the same time, it is a way that leads to more independence and allows to achieve an economically better result in the long run.

**Cretan Malia Park has been, for a long time, a hotel that was booked classically by the major Tour Operator with many repeating guests. With the complete design change and realignment you took risky measures that perhaps are not appreciated by all repeating guests. How did this still become such a success story with such high occupancy?**

As they say, no risk no fun? For sure, a little too simple to say. However, we have to continuously understand that we must not stop. Even if something goes well, it does not mean that this will be the case in the future. It is important to recognize

trends, and, if necessary, to include them. Losing our repeating guests is definitely not in our interest, but quite to the opposite, we want to offer them a new oasis of well-being. Because, even repeating guests have expectations. At the same time, however, it is also very important to address new target groups as COVID, in particular, has shown that repeating guests do not always travel. At the same time, you have to prepare for the future as the competitors never rest. Especially in Greece, much has happened during the past years. New hotels, new destinations. This also applies to us, even if we have recorded very good booking rates so far.

**Many predict a complete change in tourism. This also offers opportunities for hotel owners who can react quickly. Where do you see your opportunities?**

On the one hand, the size of our hotel group which allows to adapt quickly to a changed market situation. Another helpful aspect is for sure the flat hierarchies within the company. Decisions can be made very quickly as the owners are active too. On the other hand, the representation of the hotels. Each hotel is marketed individually. This very individual representation, even if you belong to a hotel group, allows to approach the market more specifically and in a more individual way. Entirely according to the needs of every single hotel.

**You are an expert in tourism who used to work at airtours and today at Phaea Resorts. In what kind of areas hoteliers need to change in order to address guests differently and, above all, in a modern way?**

We do not have to be afraid of innovation. Often, we stick to old things too long as we assume that our customers do not accept changes. The COVID season, in particular, has shown that this is not the case. You just have to take courage. Whether menu cards via QR Codes, Pre Check-In via Link or WhatsApp as a new form of communication. Many of these innovations also simplify certain matters of the hotels. Not only financial matters, but also in terms of our own eco-balance sheet.

**The German-speaking market was one of the most important markets for Greece this year and the season 2021 is just around the corner. What are your top 5 tips for hoteliers?**

Don't think the next season will be like 2020. Surely, other markets will be bookable again which is something we wish for our colleagues.

Therefore, the demand for Greece will eventually decline. This is why it is important to already establish a broad position and to look beyond the end of the own nose. Not only in terms of markets, but also in terms of segmentation. What does my group business look like? With PR for direct business or what does my destination has to offer, what can I incorporate into my marketing strategy in order to attract new customers?