

# COVID-19 HOTEL RECOVERY STRATEGY

<sup>NXG</sup>  
NEXTGUEST

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Introduction .....</u>	3
<u>COVID-19 Industry Outlook .....</u>	5
<u>Reassess Strategy .....</u>	11
<b><u>Phase I: Strategy While Travel is on Pause .....</u></b>	14
<u>Industry Recovery Trends .....</u>	31
<b><u>Phase II: Initial Rise in Travel Demand .....</u></b>	36
<u>Planning for Travel Demand Strengthening .....</u>	38
<b><u>Phase III: Travel Demand Strengthens .....</u></b>	49
<u>Key Takeaways .....</u>	62
<u>Conclusion .....</u>	63
<u>Appendix .....</u>	66

# INTRODUCTION

Crisis Management is a critical component of any successful digital strategy. During times of crisis, hotels need to thoughtfully and swiftly develop a prevention plan, communicate to employees and guests, and make critical shifts to revenue management and digital strategies to ensure success.

As Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to impact travel, it's important for hotels to have an action plan in place that addresses both the current state and the future when travel demand picks up again. Overall, your hotel should consider a three-phase approach:

**1 WHILE TRAVEL IS ON PAUSE**

**2 INITIAL RISE IN TRAVEL DEMAND**

**3 TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENS**



# COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

## THE JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

As you begin preparing your strategy for COVID-19 recovery, it's important to consider the right content and marketing as hotels navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare accordingly.

### WHILE TRAVEL IS ON PAUSE

#### **Strengthen Brand Relationship**

While people are not traveling and many hotels are closed, hotels should stay connected with past and future guests through social, email, and editorial content that entertains and adds value.

### INITIAL RISE IN TRAVEL DEMAND

#### **Ramp Up Marketing and Reach**

Ramp up marketing efforts with affordable CPCs and reach people beginning to daydream about rebooking and planning vacations. Ensure a flexible cancellation policy.

### TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENS

#### **Increase Marketing Efforts**

Continue marketing efforts focusing on intent as well as targeting the right demographics and feeder markets with the right messaging and packages.



## COVID-19 INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

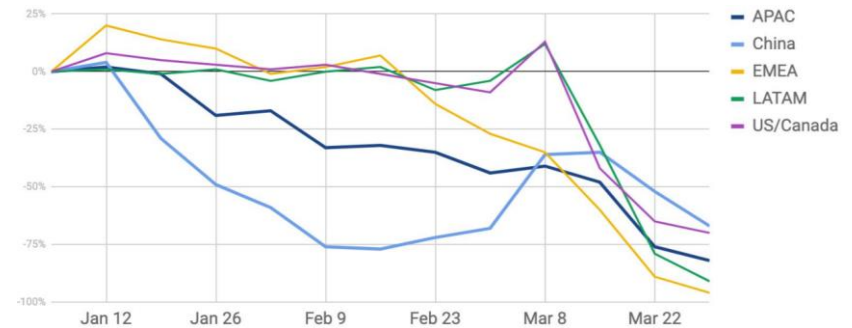
As the situation surrounding COVID-19 continues to evolve, it is important to observe industry forecasts and trends that will ultimately shape your recovery strategy.

# COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

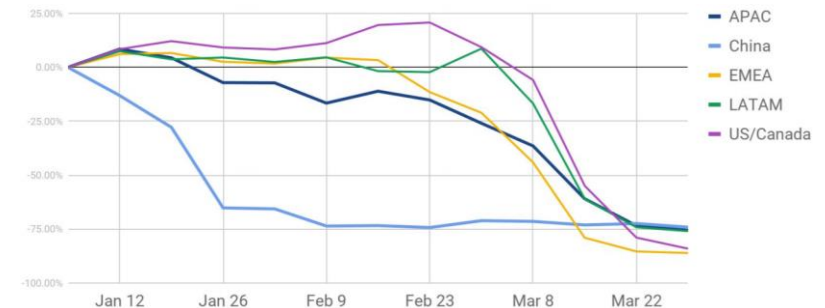
## GLOBAL TRAVEL IMPACT

Due to the spread of COVID-19, many countries have implemented travel restrictions further impacting global travel demand. According to Sojern travel data through April 5, 2020, there have been significant decreases in year over year flight searches correlating to the outbreak within each region. Around March 8, 2020, China lifted some of its travel restrictions which resulted in an increase in China flight searches around that time.

Similarly, global hotel bookings have been heavily impacted as a result of COVID-19. As of March 22, 2020, year over year hotel bookings were down by at least 75% across all regions. In general, the drop in hotel bookings has correlated with the drop in flight searches across all regions.



The drop in global flight searches correlates with the spread of COVID-19 across each region.



Hotel bookings across all regions have decreased by 75% or more as of March 22, 2020.

# COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY HOTEL INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

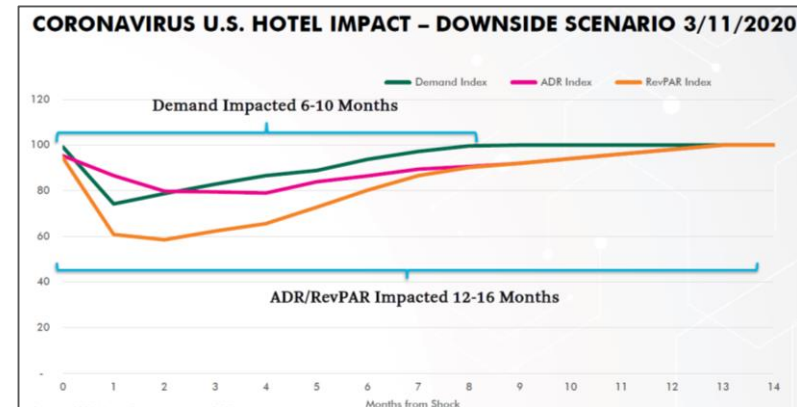
According to a special forecast from STR and Tourism Economics, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the hotel industry is projected to report significant declines across demand, occupancy, ADR, and revenue per available room (RevPAR) in 2020. While travel has come to a virtual standstill due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the market is expected to regain its footing in the latter part of the year and next year.

Based on research from CBRE, from the start of the US outbreak in January 2020, it is predicted that it will take approximately 6-10 months (June) for US hotel demand to recover, and 12-16 months (December) for ADR and RevPAR to recover. Therefore, hoteliers need to take the necessary steps to adequately prepare for recovery, while also setting proper expectations and KPIs.

Outlook		
	2020 Forecast	2021 Forecast
Supply	-14.9%	+15.6%
Demand	-51.2%	+81.8%
Occupancy	-42.6% (37.9%)	+57.3% (59.7%)
ADR	-13.9% (\$112.91)	+3.7% (\$117.05)
RevPAR	-50.6% (\$42.84)	+63.1% (\$69.86)

Source: STR/Tourism Economics

RevPar is projected to be down by 50.6% in 2020.

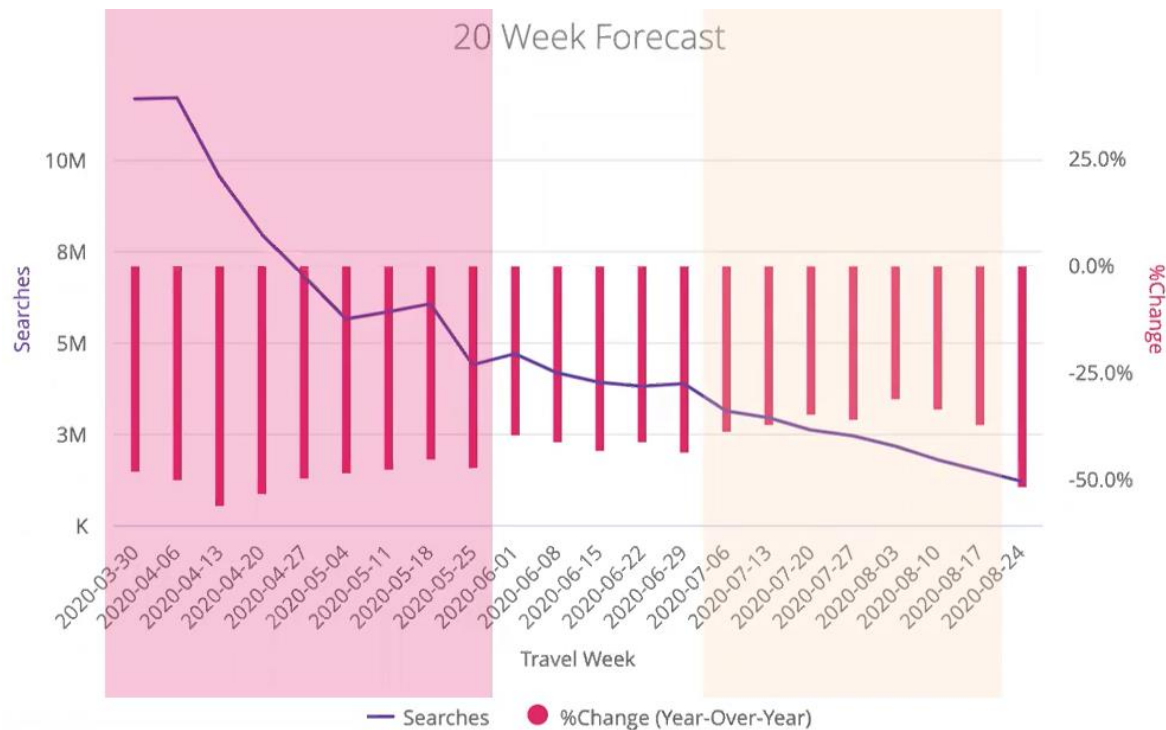


It is projected to take 6-10 months for US hotel demand to recover, and 12-16 months for ADR and RevPAR to recover.

# COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

## HOTEL INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

Based on ADARA travel intent data, there will be a 50% decline in year over year searches for US travel (domestic and international). Towards the end of Summer, from July through August, there will be a slight increase in travel demand. However, searches will still be down by 30% or more year over year. While travel demand is low, hotels need to focus on building brand awareness and engaging loyalty members/past guests in order to drive demand.



ADARA projects that there will be a slight increase in travel demand towards the end of Summer, but searches will still be down by 30% or more year over year.

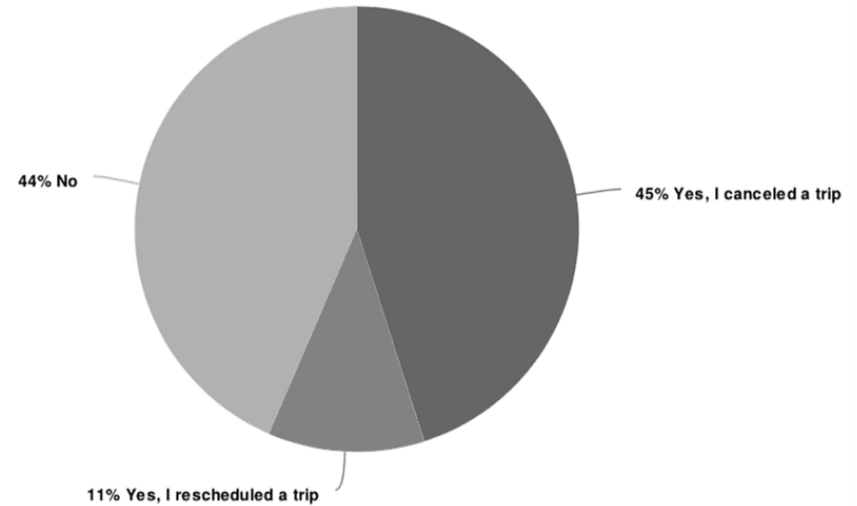


# COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

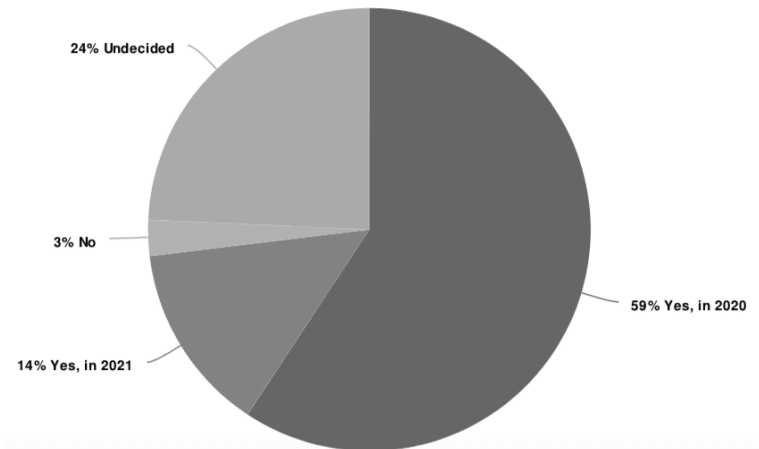
## TRAVEL CONSUMER SENTIMENT

According to a survey of North American leisure travelers conducted by Fuel Travel, 45% of travelers have cancelled a trip, and 11% of travelers have rescheduled a trip due to the Coronavirus outbreak. However, 59% of travelers still plan to take a vacation in 2020, and 14% of travelers are planning to take a vacation in 2021.

While many consumers have cancelled their trips, they have not lost their desire to travel. Hotels have an opportunity to capture future bookings by engaging guests that have cancelled. After COVID-19 subsides, people may also consider new destinations—opening the door for hotels to attract new audiences.



Forty-five percent of travelers have cancelled a trip.



Fifty-nine percent of travelers still plan to take a vacation in 2020.

## COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

# TOP 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

While it's important to have a comprehensive hotel recovery strategy, there are five key concepts and action items that should serve as a compass to success:

- 1 Align your marketing strategy with revenue management** on rate, offers, book direct perks, and flexible cancellations, as your revenue strategy will heavily influence your marketing strategy.
- 2 Implement a flexible cancellation policy.** This is crucial to providing consumers with the confidence to book as travel demand slowly ramps up.
- 3 Hone in on the right audience and customer personas** throughout your recovery strategy. This is important to ensure that you are reaching the most qualified audience with relevant messaging.
- 4 Market to guests and groups that have cancelled** with incentives to rebook (e.g. special offer, complimentary add-on), as they are most likely to book again.
- 5 Focus on the right offers and the right messaging** throughout all phases of recovery. Offers should be relevant to the target persona's booking behaviors (e.g. advanced booking, staycations), while messaging should be sensitive and relevant at all times.

## REASSESS STRATEGY

While travel demand is soft, take time to reassess your current digital strategy as well as your current state of business. This will set the foundation for an effective and comprehensive recovery strategy.

# COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

## DIGITAL STRATEGY REASSESSMENT

While travel is on pause, this is a great time to reassess your digital strategy and marketing assets, and take time to revamp initiatives and processes to set your hotel up for future success.

### Considerations to Revamp Your Strategy

#### Long-term:

- Audit marketing assets and what creative or templates should be revamped or redesigned
- Revisit or develop an online review and reputation management strategy
- Revisit website copy for relevancy, value, and brand voice
- Revisit website UX and design elements
- Develop an editorial calendar and communication plan for the next 60 days
- Audit digital tools and martech to reassess value, revisit internal processes for efficiencies, etc.



# COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

## ASSESS CURRENT STATE

Before you can develop a proactive strategy, it is important to understand your current state of business.

Providing context to data is critical in telling the right story and making informed decisions.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

How is your property pacing for revenue and occupancy year over year?

How do cancellations compare to your average daily and monthly cancellations?

What feeder markets are down year over year?

What customer segments are currently impacted? Conventions? Groups? Families?

Has ADR and LOS been negatively impacted year over year?

How much is tourism down for your destination overall? Drive-in? Fly-in?

If you are a multi-property brand, how does your business compare in different markets?

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR COVID-19

What is the current state for COVID-19 in your destination? What's the message in the media? Are cases stabilizing?

Have cases impacted your top feeder markets?

Are there any secondary feeder markets that haven't been impacted?

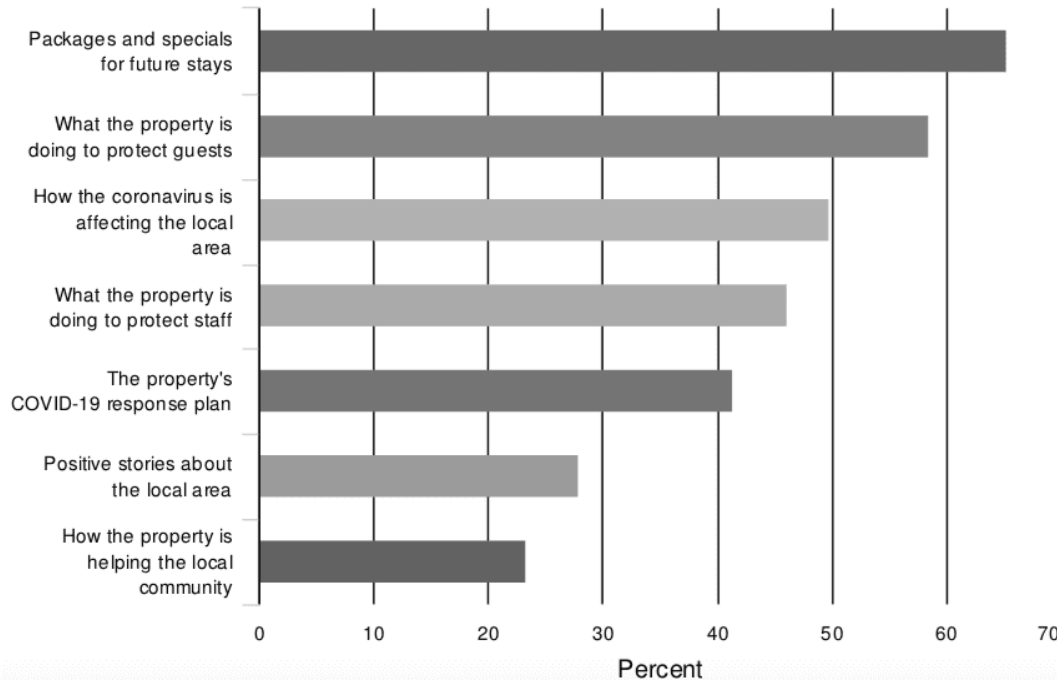
Identify historical macro trends of similar outbreaks (SARs, H1N1) analyzing impact on tourism and past business for your hotel.

Adjust forecasts and KPIs. Setting up your business for success in times of crisis often means redefining what success looks like.

## RECOVERY PHASE I: STRATEGY WHILE TRAVEL IS ON PAUSE

While people are not traveling and many hotels are closed, hotels should strengthen the brand relationship and stay connected with past and future guests through content that adds value.

## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR FROM HOTELS



According to a survey conducted by Fuel Travel, 75% of North American leisure travelers are open to receiving communications from hotels.

**The topics they are most interested in hearing about are:**

- Packages and specials for future stays
- What the property is doing to protect guests
- How the Coronavirus is affecting the local area
- What the property is doing to protect staff
- The property's COVID-19 response plan





## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

# HANDLING RESERVATIONS & CANCELLATIONS



While COVID-19 is still impacting travel demand, hotels need to have a clear action plan to address existing reservations and cancellations. Through proper communication with these guests, you can foster loyalty and encourage future bookings.

### **Existing Reservations (If Hotel is Open):**

- Communicate that a prevention plan is in place
- Consider a complimentary add-on to make their travels less stressful (on-property credit)
- Provide contact information and links to any useful information

### **Cancellations:**

- Implement a flexible cancellation policy and waive cancellation fees during COVID-19 impact
- Allow cancellations to book a future stay or purchase a gift card for the reservation amount with an added complimentary bonus to incentivize purchase

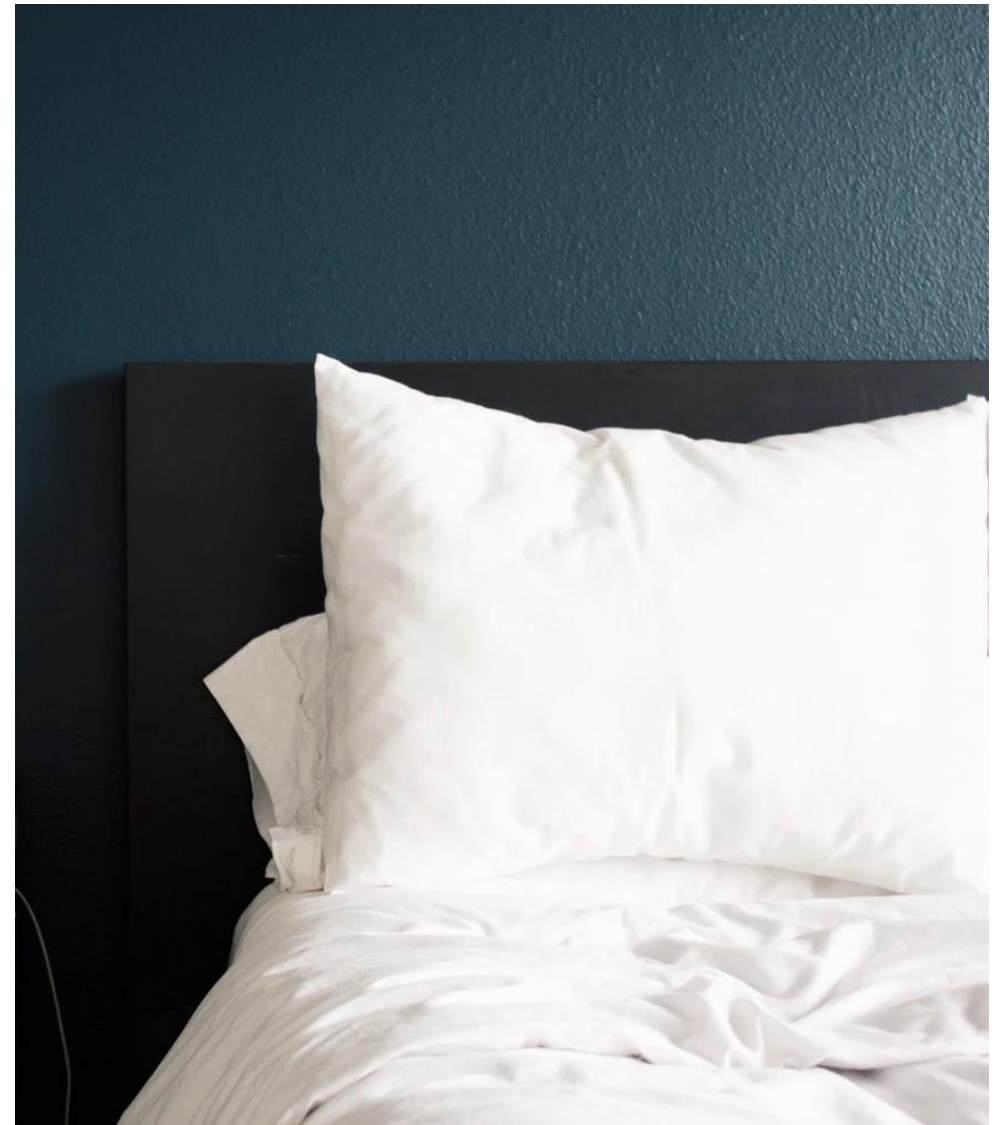


## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE WEBSITE CONTENT

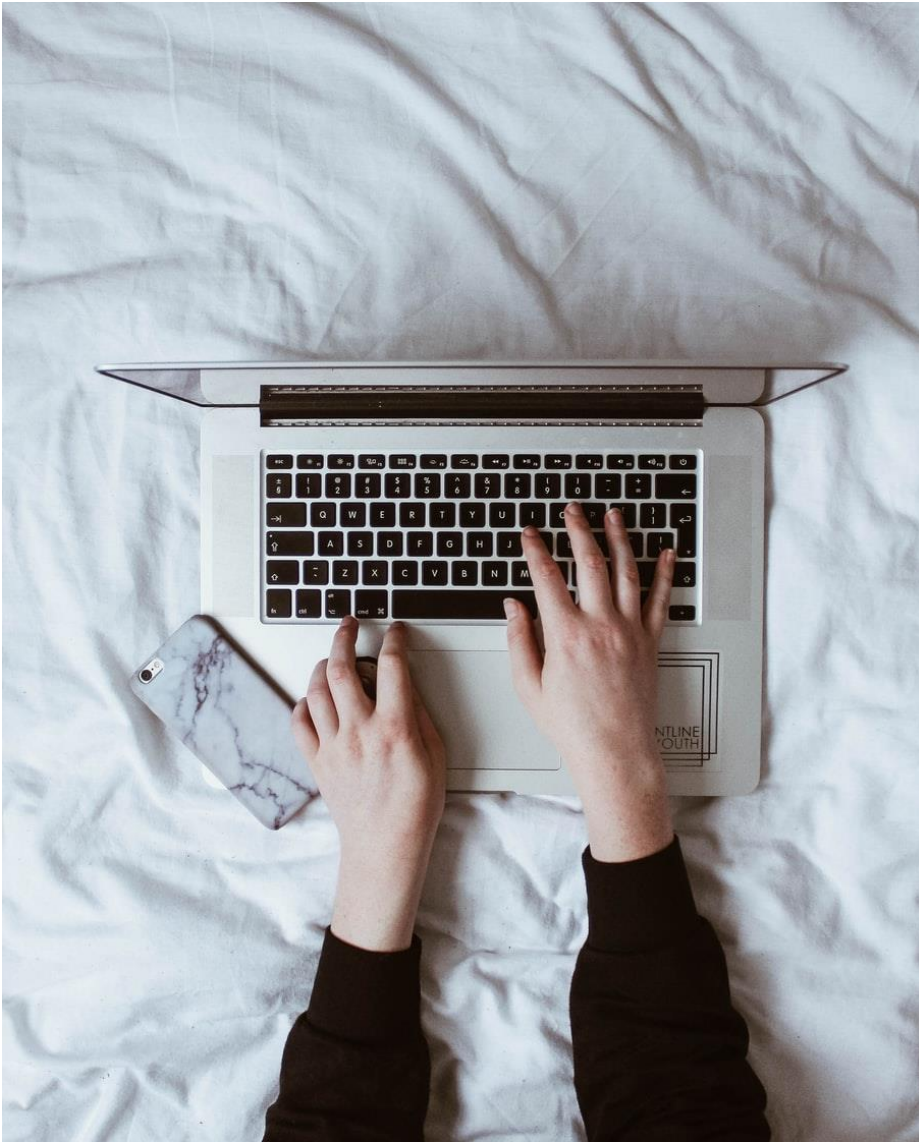
Your website should provide all the information guests need regarding COVID-19, whether or not they have a reservation.

**Ensure that the website communicates the following:**

- Prevention plan
- Cancellation policy (waiving of cancellation fees is recommended)
- Contact information if guests have any questions or concerns
- Frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19
- How the property is helping the community



## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE ADVANCED PURCHASE OFFERS



While travel is on pause and it remains unclear how long it will take for COVID-19 cases to subside, many people will be hesitant to book a trip or reschedule a cancelled trip in the near future. However, people may be more comfortable booking travel further in the future. To promote future stays, hotels should push advanced purchase offers.

### **Consider Promoting an Advanced Purchase Offer including:**

- Offer focused on 60-90 day booking window
- \$50 F&B credit
- Early check-in, late check-out

## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE GIVE BACK TO HEALTHCARE WORKERS



Consider offering an affordable rate for healthcare workers and first responders who are working around the clock and/or need to self-isolate from loved ones.

Some hotels are offering free rooms to the healthcare community through the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Hospitality for Hope initiative.

### **Consider the following ways to give back to the healthcare community:**

- Offer an affordable rate
- Offer complimentary rooms
- Donate food from the hotel restaurant to local hospitals
- Donate to COVID-19 relief and recovery funds



## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

# THE CUSTOMER PERSONA IS EVOLVING

As a result of the outbreak and social distancing guidelines, consumer behavior is evolving. These trends need to be taken into consideration when preparing your digital strategy for recovery.

- **Middle class consumers** are becoming more **value conscious**.
- **Luxury consumers** are becoming **more discerning** as they really want to make their travel choices count when it's safe to travel again.
- After COVID-19 subsides, many **consumers plan to make up for lost time** by not only taking trips but also **indulging to a greater extent**.
- As the world recovers, consumers are going to **expect brands to give more**, be more supportive, and give back more to the consumer and to the greater good.
- Consumers will **want to be put at ease** and want to know that brands are taking proper measures.



Consumers are searching for more **experiential packages and offers** because they were unable to dine out and get spa treatments while they had to stay at home.

**Selling too hard** will likely damage the brand.

Be prepared to **shift USPs that you're highlighting** with the changing needs and times.

Reiterate the hotel's **standards of cleanliness** such as daily housekeeping and other preventative measures.



## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

# HONING IN ON THE RIGHT AUDIENCE

While travel is on pause, some people may still book trips far in advance. During this time it will be even more important for hotels to hone in on the most qualified audience.

### **Targeting strategies while travel is on pause include:**

1. Leverage first-party travel intent data to hone in on audiences that have indicated intent to travel to your destination. Target travel planners with a 90-day booking window for advanced booking campaigns.
2. Exclude demographics that are less likely to travel, such as people age 65+, unemployed.
3. Target brand and destination keywords to reach audiences that are likely to be planning travel.
4. Exclude keywords related to Coronavirus and cancellations to avoid reaching audiences that are simply searching for information surrounding the pandemic, and reach more qualified users.

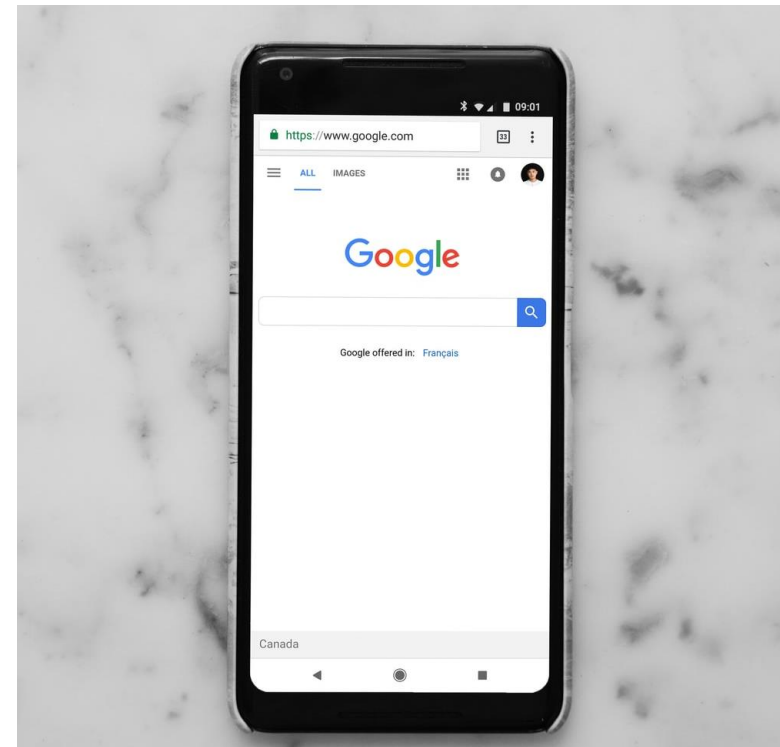


## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE SEM & GDN

If hotels have available budget, they can leverage light marketing initiatives focused on upper-funnel brand awareness and driving advanced bookings.

### Considerations for SEM and GDN:

- Hotels with available SEM budget should focus on brand awareness campaigns with sensitive messaging driving traffic to content that adds value for people at this time.
- Focus on covering branded and destination search terms. Exclude keywords related to the Coronavirus and cancellations.
- Any live, direct response campaigns should promote an advanced purchase offer targeting stays with a 90-day booking window.
- Continue GDN remarketing.



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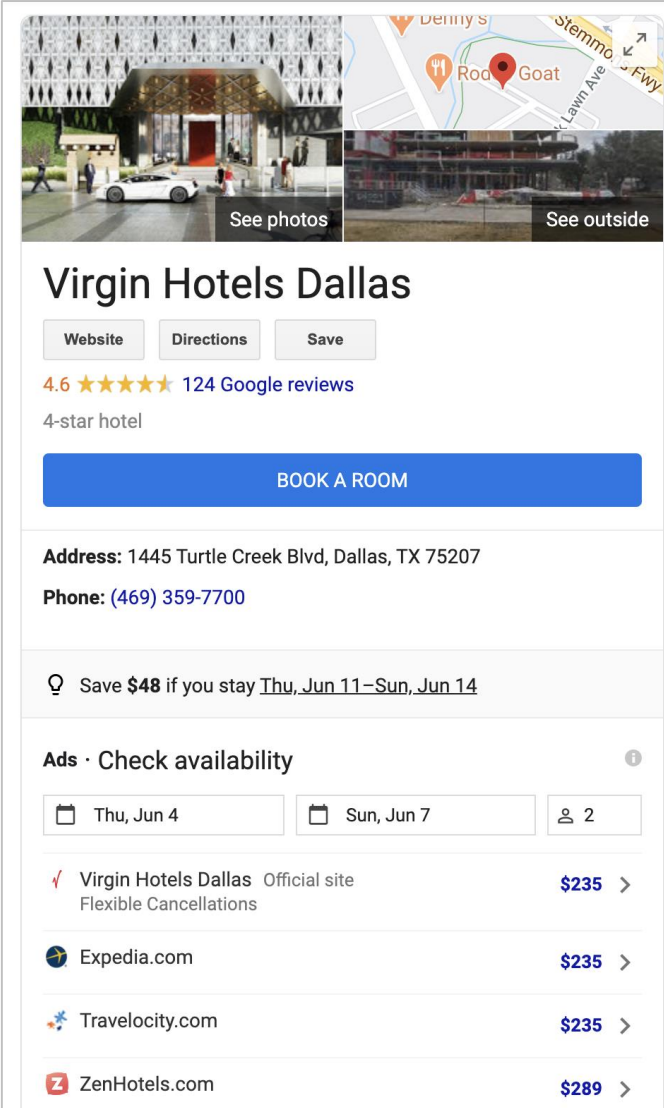
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# COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

## INTENT-DRIVEN DISPLAY & METASEARCH



**Virgin Hotels Dallas**

Website Directions Save

4.6 ★★★★★ 124 Google reviews

4-star hotel

[BOOK A ROOM](#)

**Address:** 1445 Turtle Creek Blvd, Dallas, TX 75207

**Phone:** (469) 359-7700

Save \$48 if you stay Thu, Jun 11–Sun, Jun 14

**Ads · Check availability**

Provider	Price
Virgin Hotels Dallas Official site Flexible Cancellations	\$235
Expedia.com	\$235
Travelocity.com	\$235
ZenHotels.com	\$289

### Considerations for Intent-Driven Display:

- Focus on promoting general brand messaging and advanced purchase offers (90-day booking window).
- Focus campaigns heavily on in-market intent data. Adjust targeting to hone in on viable markets that display intent.
- Hotels with display budget can launch upper-funnel native ads focused on engaging editorial content that highlights the destination.

### Considerations for Metasearch:

- Update metasearch callouts to highlight flexible cancellation policies.
- If budget allows, hotel brands can participate in metasearch platforms at lower rates and collect valuable data while driving traffic to the hotel website.
- Consider increasing bidding to increase impression share.
- Consider layering in signal intent to hone in on users that have shown higher intent to travel.

## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

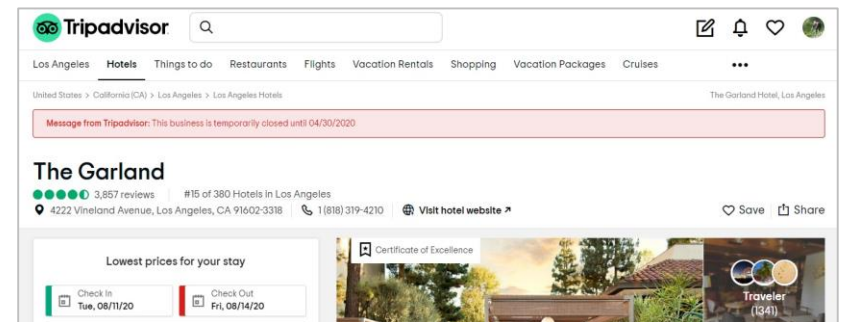
## SOCIAL MEDIA &amp; TRIPADVISOR BUSINESS LISTING

**Considerations for Social Media:**

- Focus paid social efforts on promoting general brand messaging and advanced purchase offers (90-day booking window).
- Leverage in-market intent data to hone in targeting on viable markets that display intent.
- Provide valuable and engaging content to stay connected with guests and keep the brand top of mind.

**Considerations for TripAdvisor Business Listings:**

- If the hotel is closed, update your business listing to indicate this.
- If the hotel is open, create an announcement that clearly states the hotel is open and accepting reservations.
- Highlight and link to an advanced purchase offer.





# COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE

## SEO & LOCAL LISTINGS

The image shows two screenshots. The top one is a desktop view of the Viceroy hotel website's 'TRAVEL INFORMATION' page for COVID-19. The page features a 'BOOK NOW' button and text stating: 'The wellbeing of our guests and colleagues is our utmost priority and we care deeply about our guests, colleagues and community's safety. We are closely monitoring the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization's statements regarding the coronavirus COVID-19 cases and will continue to follow the guidelines from these agencies and local health departments.' It also mentions a flexible cancellation policy and waived fees for group reservations through April 30, 2020.

The bottom screenshot is a mobile app listing for '1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge', which is marked as 'Temporarily closed'. The listing includes tabs for Overview, Prices, Menu, and Reviews, along with buttons for Directions, Start, Call, and Save. A price of \$507 is shown. Below the listing, there is an advertisement for Booking.com with a price of \$553 and check-in/out dates of Tue, Jun 23 and Sat, Jun 27.

### Considerations for SEO:

- Create a FAQ page to increase visibility in Google Quick Answers.
- Create optimized content for the website around the hotel's status and rich destination content to inspire future travel.
- Continue essential SEO maintenance tasks to ensure that the website is properly crawled and indexed to maintain visibility and rankings.

### Considerations for Local Listings:

- Ensure that all local listings are accurate. Update special hours by day (to show closed) or temporarily closed for the time being.
- For restaurants/bars, update the business description and create a post to clearly announce if it is closed or open only for take out and/or delivery.
- Add a link to an advanced purchase offer or FAQ page.
- Indicating that a business is closed will not impact search rankings.

## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE EDITORIAL CONTENT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA



### **“Travel the World” Social Post Series**

Multi-property brands can invite people to travel the world virtually by sharing first-person photos of each destination and something special about the destination.

### **"Our Destination, Your Favorites" Social Post Series**

Post a photo of your hotel's destination and ask people to share photos from past stays at your hotel and their favorite spots in that destination with a dedicated hashtag.

### **"Museum Tour Guide" Social Post Series**

Share a video of a virtual tour of a local museum (using the Google Arts & Culture collection) and ask people to share their favorite exhibits or pieces.

### **“At-Home Workout” Social Post Series**

If your hotel offers group activities or fitness classes, create workout or instructional videos guests can use to stay active at home.

### **Spotify Playlist Social Post Series**

Create and share Spotify playlists with themes related to the hotel brand or destination. Create playlists that people can use for different activities such as working out or cooking.



## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE EDITORIAL CONTENT FOR BLOG

### **"Cook With [Hotel]" Blog Post Series**

Share a recipe from the hotel restaurant's chef or an iconic dish from the destination. Get creative and share a complementary cocktail recipe or wine recommendation that is perfectly paired with the dish.

### **"DIY Spa Day" Blog Post Series**

Help people escape and indulge with at-home spa tips from your on-site spa.

### **"Travel Virtually" Blog Post Series**

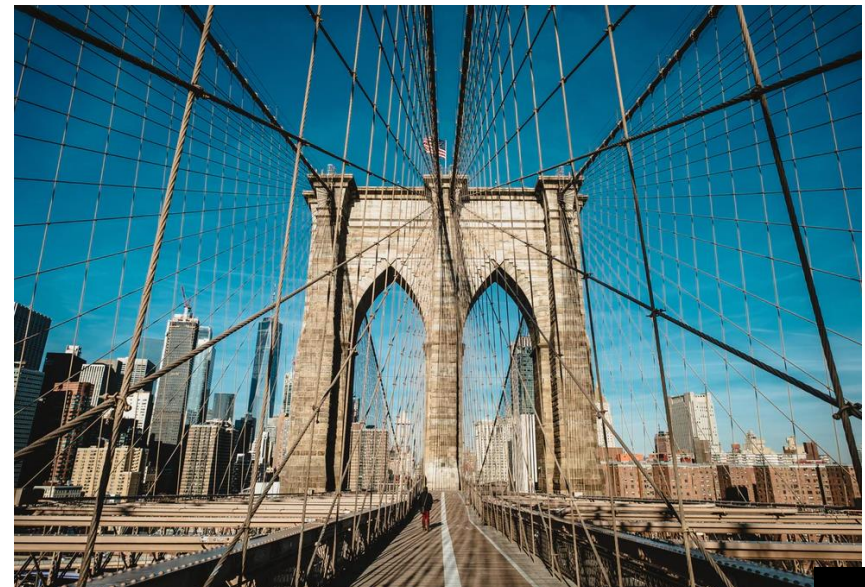
Share images of the property that people can download and use as their Zoom virtual background or as a desktop wallpaper.

### **"Kid-Friendly Scavenger Hunt" Blog Post**

Perfect for hotels with a large family travel segment, share top landmarks at the hotel's destination and provide printable cards for each location that parents can print and hide throughout their house as a scavenger hunt activity to do with their kids.

### **"Kid-Friendly Coloring Pages" Blog Post**

Share a fun fact about the destination and provide an image of the destination that people can print out and color with their kids.



## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE EDITORIAL CONTENT FOR EMAIL



### **Promote Blog Content**

Check in with email subscribers and promote blog content around activities they can do at home such as recipes, DIY spa treatments, workouts, etc.

### **“Turn Your Home Into Hotel” Email**

Provide tips that people can use to bring the hotel experience to their home. Examples include using similar bath products, bed linens, and creating a minibar.

### **“Loyalty Members Give Back” Email**

Choose a charity and invite loyalty members to donate and earn perks such as complimentary dining credit.

### **“Curate Your Stay at Home” Email**

Share content and activities that allow people to experience the destination and hotel from home such as Zoom backgrounds, music playlists, book recommendations, films based in the destination, etc.

## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE SNAPSHOT



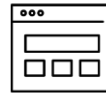
### TOP TIPS

- Reassess your digital strategy and marketing assets.
- Ensure that you have a flexible cancellation policy in place.
- Ensure your website is up to date and addresses the situation.
- Hone in on the right audience and persona with sensitive messaging.
- Strengthen the brand relationship with content that provides value.



### BOOKING WINDOW

90+ days



### MARKETING INITIATIVES

**SEM & GDN:** Focus on brand awareness campaigns and remarketing.

**Meta Search:** Take advantage of lower rates and increase bidding to increase impression share. Mention flexible cancellation policy in the meta callout.

**Intent-Driven Display:** Launch upper-funnel native ads and hone in on markets with intent.

**Paid Social:** Focus on brand awareness campaigns and advanced purchase offers.

**Organic Social:** Create valuable and engaging editorial content to stay connected with guests.

**SEO:** Create a FAQ page that addresses the situation and optimized website content.

**Local Listings:** Update all local listings to ensure they reflect current hours or closures.



### MESSAGING & PACKAGES

- Highlight the hotel USPs with general brand messaging.
- Promote advanced purchase offers with a minimum 90-day booking window.

## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE — ACTION PLAN FOR HOTELS

- Reassess your digital strategy, marketing assets, digital tools, and martech. Revamp as needed.
- Assess your current state of business including YOY occupancy, revenue, ADR, LOS, etc.
- Develop a clear action plan to address existing reservations and cancellations.
- Ensure that the website clearly communicates your prevention plan and cancellation policy.
- Consider ways to give back to the community such as affordable rates, free rooms, meals, and donations.
- Adjust audience and keyword targeting to hone in on audiences that are still likely to be planning travel.
- Leverage light marketing initiatives focused on driving brand awareness and advanced bookings.
- Update metasearch callouts to highlight flexible cancellation policies. Increase bidding if budget permits.
- Develop editorial content for social media, blog, and email to engage past and potential guests.
- Create optimized content for the website such as a FAQ page and rich destination content.
- Continue ongoing SEO maintenance tasks to maintain visibility and rankings.
- Update local listings to ensure that they reflect current hours/closings and link to relevant content.
- Update TripAdvisor Business Listings to reflect closings and link to an advanced purchase offer.
- Keep a pulse on COVID-19 developments in your market and adjust targeting and strategy as needed.

## INDUSTRY RECOVERY TRENDS

As COVID-19 begins to subside and travel demand starts to increase, it is important to observe trends across the industry and booking behaviors that will shape your recovery strategy.



# RECOVERY STRATEGY

## DATA TRENDS DURING COVID-19

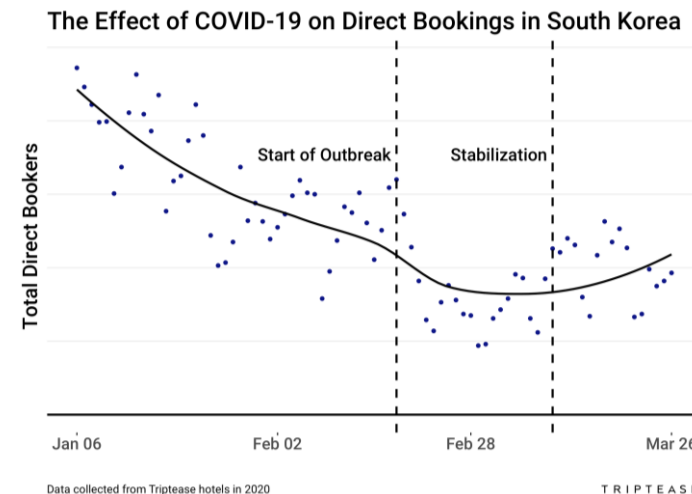
According to travel intent data collected by ADARA, unique searches for flights to China (both domestic and international inbound) increased by 29% for the week of March 8th when travel restrictions were lifted in China.

Based on travel data collected by Triptease, the number of cases in South Korea began to stabilize around March 10th, and direct bookings have steadily increased due to an increase in domestic travel.

This data suggests that travel demand in the US will increase after social distancing guidelines and travel restrictions are lifted. The initial lift in bookings will likely be largely attributed to domestic travel as people may be hesitant to travel on airplanes.



Travel demand for China increased by 29% when travel restrictions were lifted.



Direct bookings in South Korea steadily increased after the number of cases stabilized.



## RECOVERY STRATEGY

# INDICATORS THAT TRAVEL DEMAND IS PICKING UP

When determining if travel demand is picking up again, hoteliers can look for a number of indicators. It is important to note that benchmarks stated below will vary depending on external factors such as marketing being live, impact of COVID-19 on the destination, etc.

15-20% ↑ Increase in organic website traffic

10-15% ↑ Increase in bookings initiated

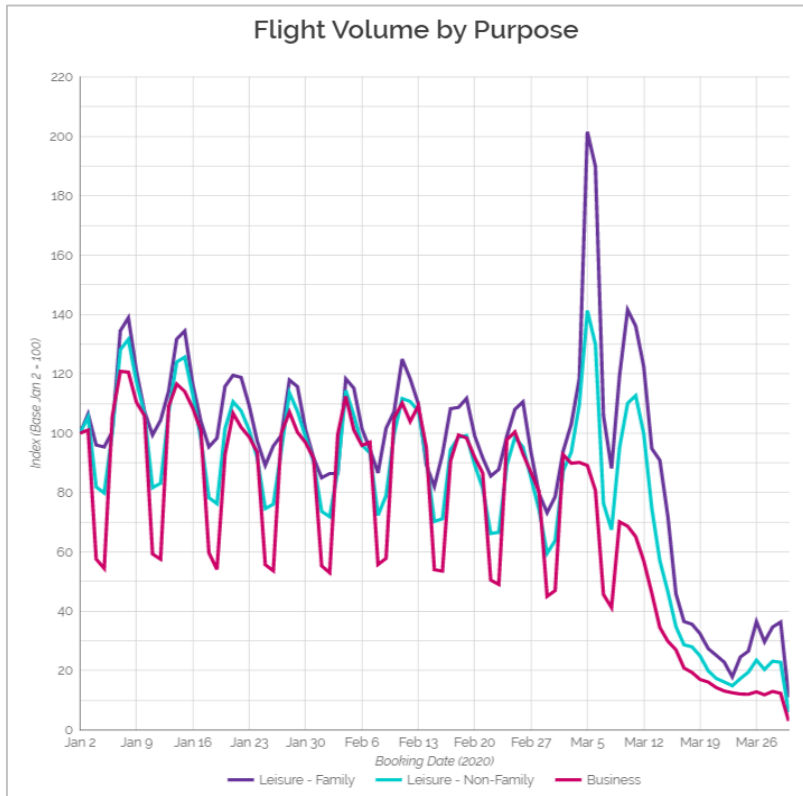
25-30% ↑ Increase in search volume for relevant keywords & Google Trends data for the destination

10-15% ↑ Increase in flight searches to the destination (indicated by first-party travel data)

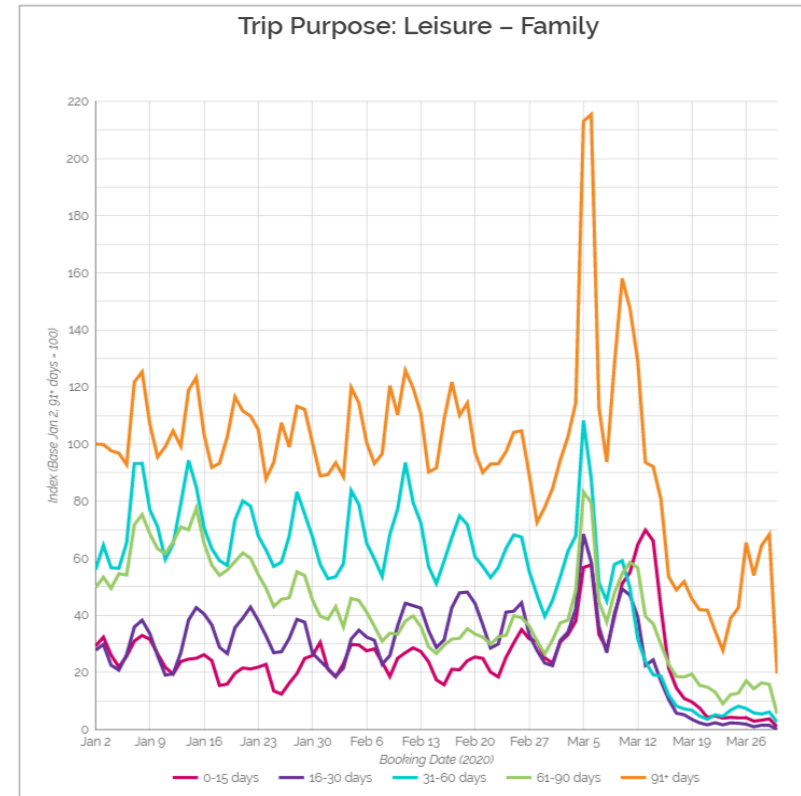


# RECOVERY STRATEGY

## BOOKING WINDOWS ARE EXPANDING



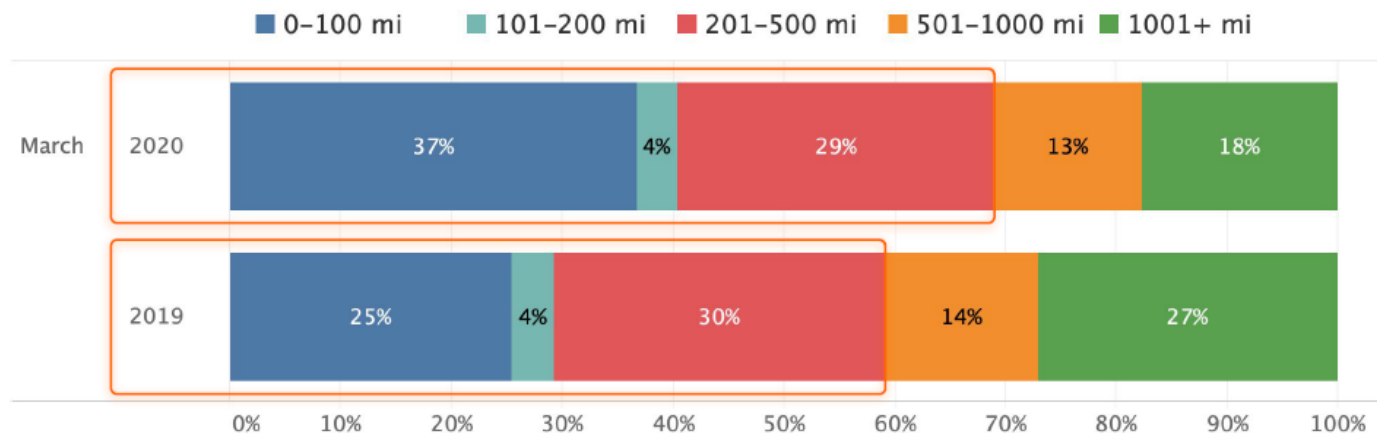
Based on travel intent data from ADARA, **when airlines announced a shift in change fee policies (March 1<sup>st</sup> - March 10<sup>th</sup>), there was a large spike in leisure traveler flight bookings.** Hotels need to keep their cancellation policies flexible to drive bookings when travel demand is just starting to pick up.



Additionally, data shows that **the majority of leisure traveler flight bookings are for trips 90+ days out.** Therefore, hotels should focus on capturing advanced bookings for June or later.

# RECOVERY STRATEGY INCREASE IN DRIVE MARKET

## U.S. Travel Destination Distance Year Over Year Comparison (Example: Anaheim/LA Metro Destination)



Source: Sojern Hotels/OTA/Meta Data,, Hotel searches Jan 12 to March 14, 2020 vs Jan 13 to March 16, 2019

According to data collected by Sojern, **70% of hotel searches are for destinations within a 500-mile radius**. This is a 11% increase from last year (59%).

Hotels should expect a rise in travelers from drive markets as people may initially be more comfortable taking short trips nearby and avoiding mass transportation.

## RECOVERY PHASE II: INITIAL RISE IN TRAVEL DEMAND

As travel demand starts to pick up, ramp up marketing efforts and reach people beginning to daydream about rebooking and planning vacations. Ensure there is a flexible cancellation policy in place.

# RECOVERY STRATEGY TIMELINE

MONTH 1  
INITIAL RISE IN  
TRAVEL DEMAND

TRAVEL DEMAND INCREASES  
/ HOTEL OPENS

MONTH 2  
TRAVEL DEMAND  
STRENGTHENS

MONTH 3  
TRAVEL DEMAND  
INCREASES

4-6 MONTHS  
TRAVEL DEMAND  
STARTS TO REBOUND

**Strategy Focus:**

- Generate brand awareness
- Focus on locals and drive-in markets
- Begin ramping up for fly-in markets
- Capture bookings with a 30-60 day lookback window

**Budget Allocation:**

80% upper-funnel/  
20% lower-funnel

**Strategy Focus:**

- Hone in on in-market audiences
- Continue retargeting website visitors as cookie pool grows
- Capture bookings with a 90-day lookback window

**Budget Allocation:**

60% upper-funnel/  
40% lower-funnel

**Strategy Focus:**

- Ramp up lower-funnel targeting and retargeting

**Budget Allocation:**

40% upper-funnel/  
60% lower-funnel

**Strategy Focus:**

- Adjust strategy due to evolving travel demand

**Budget Allocation:**

20% upper-funnel/  
80% lower-funnel

## PLANNING FOR TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENING

Once travel demand starts to build, it is important to prepare for travel demand strengthening. Align with revenue management, prepare your website, and determine a month-to-month marketing strategy.

## RECOVERY STRATEGY ALIGN WITH YOUR REVENUE MANAGER



When developing a marketing strategy to implement as travel demand rises, it is important to align with revenue management.

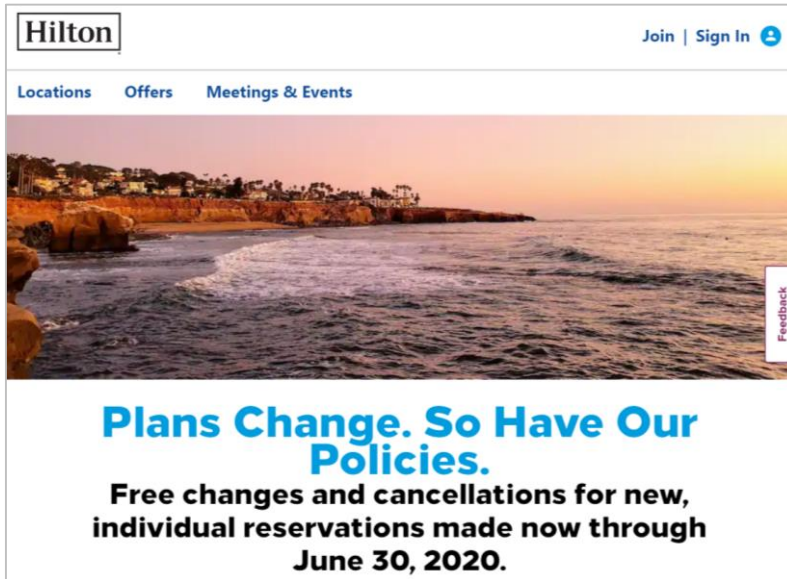
### **Key considerations for revenue management:**

- Align with the revenue management team on rate strategy and ensure this is reflected and integrated into the marketing plan.
- Discuss rate parity across channels.
- Discuss book direct perks and flexible cancellation policies offered through the direct channel.
- Discuss new offers and packages.



## RECOVERY STRATEGY

# FLEXIBLE CANCELLATION POLICY



Hilton Join | Sign In

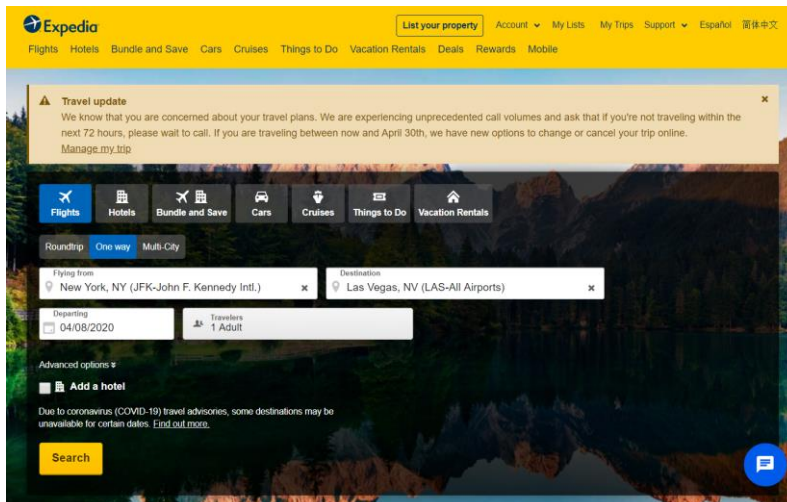
Locations Offers Meetings & Events

Plans Change. So Have Our Policies.

Free changes and cancellations for new, individual reservations made now through June 30, 2020.

While travel demand will rise, many travelers will still be hesitant to book. By implementing flexible cancellation policies, hotels can reassure guests and give them an incentive to book, while combatting OTAs that often make it difficult to cancel.

Booking.com and Expedia enforced a “force majeure policy” during March and have been frequently updating their policies.



Expedia List your property Account My Lists My Trips Support Español 简体中文

Flights Hotels Bundle and Save Cars Cruises Things to Do Vacation Rentals Deals Rewards Mobile

**Travel update**  
We know that you are concerned about your travel plans. We are experiencing unprecedented call volumes and ask that if you're not traveling within the next 72 hours, please wait to call. If you are traveling between now and April 30th, we have new options to change or cancel your trip online. [Manage my trip](#)

Flights Hotels Bundle and Save Cars Cruises Things to Do Vacation Rentals

Roundtrip One way Multi-City

Flying from: New York, NY (JFK-John F. Kennedy Intl.) Destination: Las Vegas, NV (LAS-All Airports)

Departing: 04/08/2020 Travelers: 1 Adult

Advanced options

Add a hotel

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) travel advisories, some destinations may be unavailable for certain dates. [Find out more.](#)

Search

### Considerations for bookings through OTAs:

- On March 30th, Expedia updated their policy to allow free cancellations for all existing bookings with stay dates through April 30th.
- Booking.com offers full refunds on bookings made before April 6th. On future bookings, the hotel's cancellation policy will apply.
- Booking.com appears to be giving higher visibility to properties with more flexible cancellation policies.



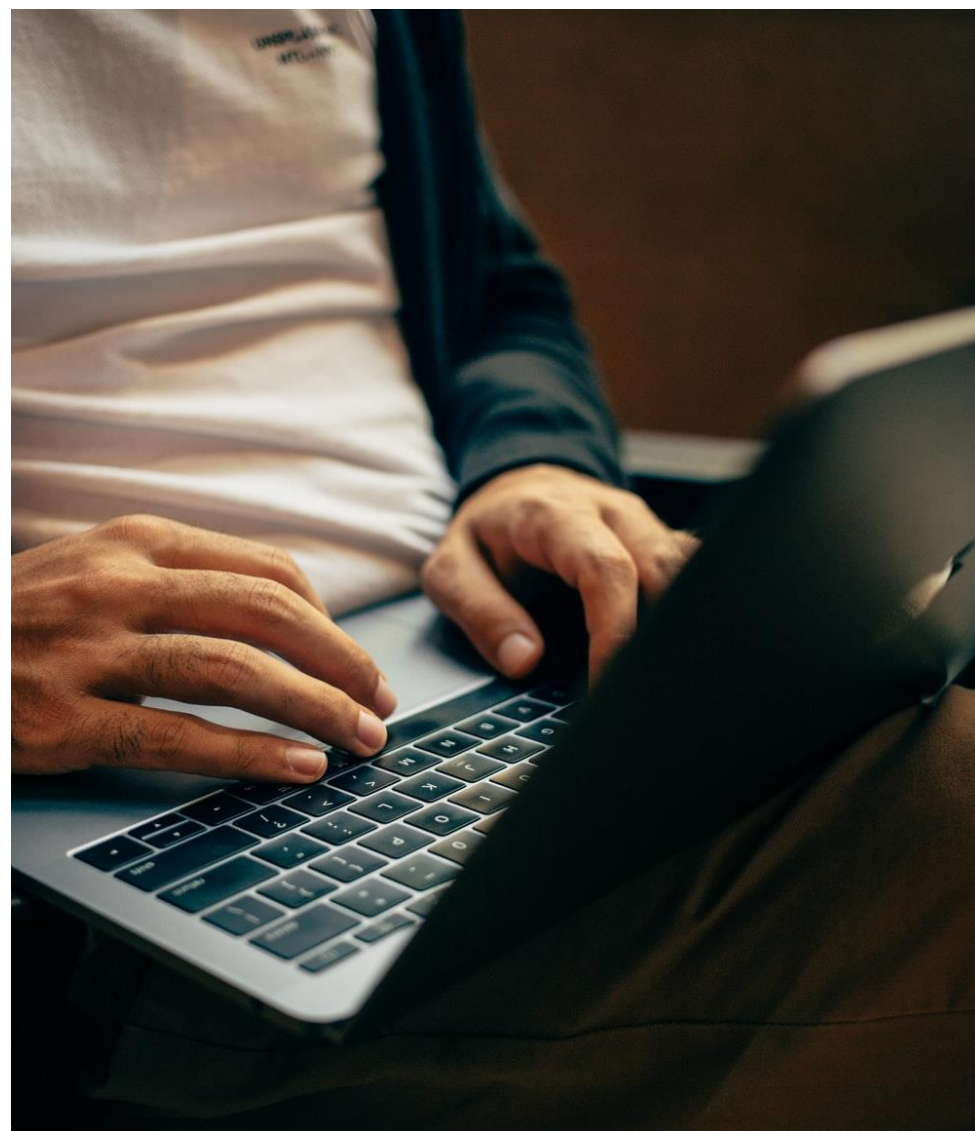
## RECOVERY STRATEGY

# SHIFT DISTRIBUTION TO THE DIRECT CHANNEL

As travel demand starts to pick up and hotels that are closed are preparing to reopen, focusing on shifting distribution to the direct channel is one of the most effective ways to positively impact your bottom line.

### **Considerations for book direct strategies:**

- Prominently display book direct perks throughout the website.
- Implement a reservation abandonment strategy to recover lost bookings and ensure bookings through the website vs OTAs.
- Remarket off website visitors who searched for specific dates in the booking engine.
- Consider an instant rewards feature where visitors can enter their email to unlock exclusive rates.
- Continue to market to potential guests once the email is captured and foster a strong brand relationship.



## RECOVERY STRATEGY

# PREPARING YOUR WEBSITE



Your website should serve as a source of truth for potential guests and allow them to easily find the information they need to make a booking.

### **Considerations for your website content:**

- If the hotel has closed, clearly state that the hotel is open and accepting reservations, groups, spa appointments, etc. Be sure to address cancellation policies.
- Reassure guests that the hotel is still taking proper precautions on property and will continue to do so to ensure the safety of staff and guests.
- Highlight the destination through a blog post, on your area guide, and hero image to show that businesses and attractions are open. Ensure that all destination content on the website is up to date.
- Promote special offers and packages that are tailored to your target audience at this time. Consider highlighting a LOS offer, staycation offer for locals, or a business to leisure package for business travelers.

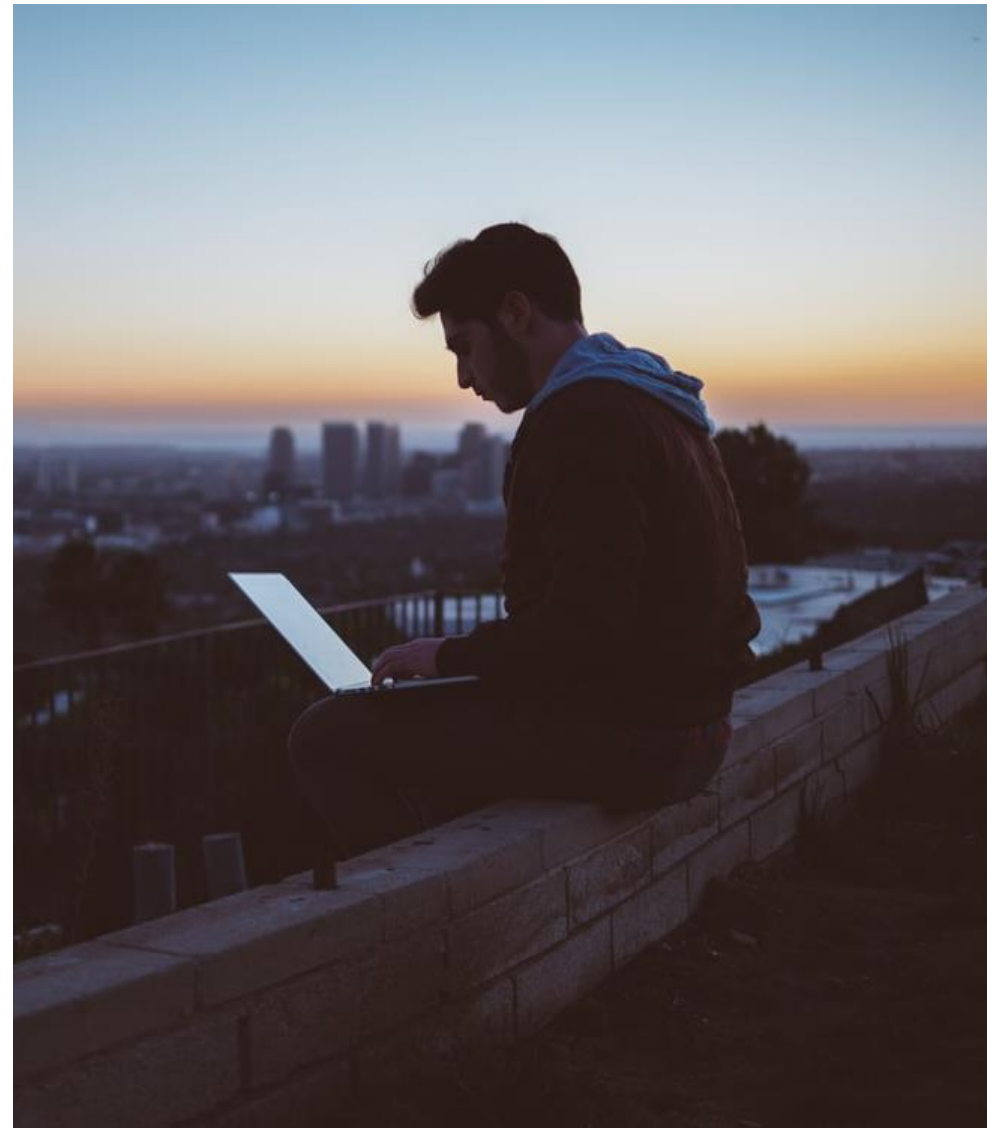
## RECOVERY STRATEGY

# WEBSITE CONVERSION OPTIMIZATION

As travel demand continues to rise, your hotel website should be fully optimized to win the booking.

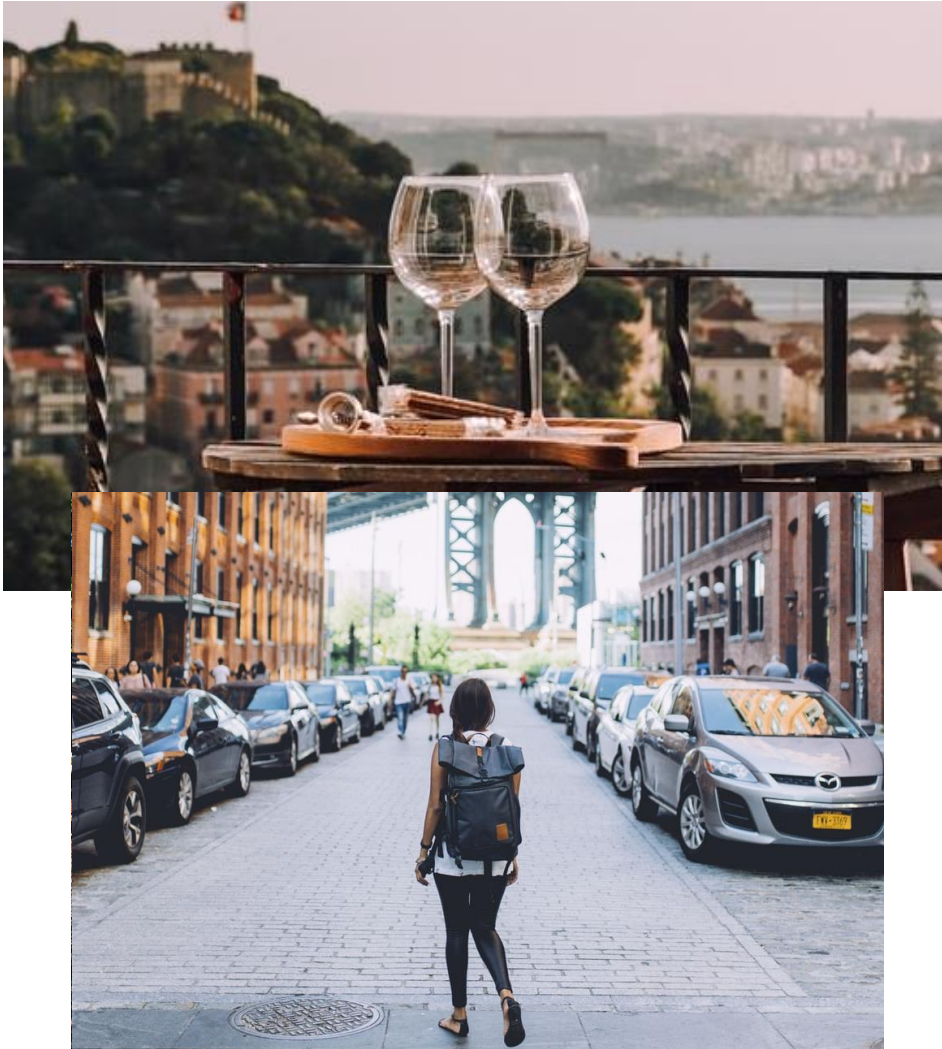
### **Considerations for optimizing your website for conversions:**

- Personalize homepage content and special offers to your target audience.
- Implement a reservation abandonment strategy to recover lost bookings and ensure bookings through the website vs OTAs.
- Consider an instant rewards feature where visitors can enter their email to unlock exclusive rates. This could be a "lite" version of your existing loyalty program or implemented as a standalone feature.





## RECOVERY STRATEGY OFFERS & PACKAGES



It's no secret that special offers and packages are an effective way to drive direct bookings. When determining which offers to push during this time, it is important to consider your target customer personas, business objectives, and key selling points.

**Consider the following special offers & packages:**

- Advanced Purchase
- Weekend Getaway
- Getaway for Healthcare Workers
- Length of Stay
- Business to Leisure
- Staycation
- Loyalty Member

# RECOVERY MARKETING TARGETING & MESSAGING STRATEGY

Targeting strategies and marketing messages should be adjusted one, two, and three months after COVID-19 subsides and people start traveling again.

## TARGETING

## MESSAGING

**MONTH 1**  
INITIAL RISE IN TRAVEL  
DEMAND

Focus on upper-funnel targeting; in-market and affinity audiences; exclude COVID-19 related keywords; large booking windows

Focus on prospecting with messaging around the hotel's availability

**MONTH 2**  
TRAVEL DEMAND  
STRENGTHENS

Shift to mid/lower-funnel targeting; in-market audiences, localized destination & brand keywords; retargeting to growing cookie pool

Highlight the destination, hotel USPs, and special offers to capture in-market audiences

**MONTH 3**  
TRAVEL DEMAND  
INCREASES

Hone in on lower-funnel targeting; brand keywords; retargeting

Continue to promote special offers and value to drive conversions

## RECOVERY MARKETING MARKETING INITIATIVES



**SEM:** Target in-market audiences with broad destination keywords.

**GDN:** Target in-market and affinity audiences to rebuild the remarketing pool.

**Intent-Driven Display:** Target mid-funnel in-market audiences with offers, and target new in-market audiences with upper-funnel native ads.

**Metasearch:** Increase bidding and layer in signal intent.

**Social Media:** Reference Sojern intent data to hone in on location targeting.

**TripAdvisor Display:** If budget permits, begin launching banners on TripAdvisor. Utilize destination targeting and retargeting to hone in on the most qualified audiences.

**TripAdvisor Business Listings:** If the hotel has reopened, indicate this on the property page.

**SEO:** Create optimized content around any new offers. Update destination content.

**Local Listings:** If the hotel or restaurant is open, update the local listing to reflect this.



## RECOVERY STRATEGY SNAPSHOT



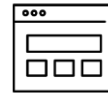
### TOP TIPS

- Align your digital strategy with your revenue management strategy.
- Ensure that flexible cancellation policies are clearly communicated on all channels.
- Develop a month-to-month digital strategy that shifts from upper to lower-funnel targeting and messaging.
- Prepare the hotel website with content and conversion optimization tools to drive bookings.



### BOOKING WINDOW

90+ days



### MARKETING INITIATIVES

**SEM & GDN:** Target in-market audiences with broad destination keywords, and rebuild the remarketing pool.

**Intent-Driven Display:** Launch native ads and promote relevant offers.

**Metasearch:** Increase bidding and layer in signal intent.

**Social Media:** Hone in on location targeting.

**TripAdvisor Display:** Utilize destination targeting and retargeting.

**SEO:** Create optimized content around any new offers. Update destination content.

#### **Local Listings & TripAdvisor Business**

**Listings:** If the hotel has reopened, make sure this is reflected.



### MESSAGING & PACKAGES

- Messaging should focus on prospecting and advanced bookings
- Staycation/Weekend Getaways
- Advanced Purchase
- Length of Stay
- Business to Leisure
- Getaway for Healthcare Workers
- Loyalty Member

## INITIAL RISE IN TRAVEL DEMAND — ACTION PLAN FOR HOTELS

- Establish property-specific indicators that travel demand is picking up.
- Align with your revenue manager on rate strategy, book direct perks, cancellation policies, and offers.
- Provide flexible cancellation policies and ensure this is communicated on all channels.
- Prominently display book direct perks throughout the website.
- Implement a reservation abandonment strategy to recover lost bookings.
- Consider an instant rewards feature where visitors can enter their email to unlock exclusive rates.
- Develop a month-to-month digital strategy that shifts from upper to lower-funnel targeting and messaging.
- If the hotel has reopened, clearly state that the hotel is open and accepting reservations across channels.
- Reassure guests that the hotel is still taking proper precautions on property and will continue to do so.
- Ensure that all destination content is up to date and effectively highlights the destination.
- Utilize content personalization to tailor content and offers on the website to your target audiences.
- Highlight offers on the website that align with your current strategy and business needs.

## RECOVERY PHASE III: TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENS

As more people plan travel, continue marketing efforts focusing on intent as well as targeting the right demographics and feeder markets with the right messaging and packages.

## STRATEGY OVERVIEW

# TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENS

Once COVID-19 subsides and travel restrictions are lifted, hotels can expect a large spike in travel demand. In order to break through the clutter and capture bookings during this time, hotels will need to implement a well-defined digital strategy. There should be a shift in strategy focus each month after travel demand strengthens and hotels that were closed reopen again.





## RECOVERY MARKETING EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

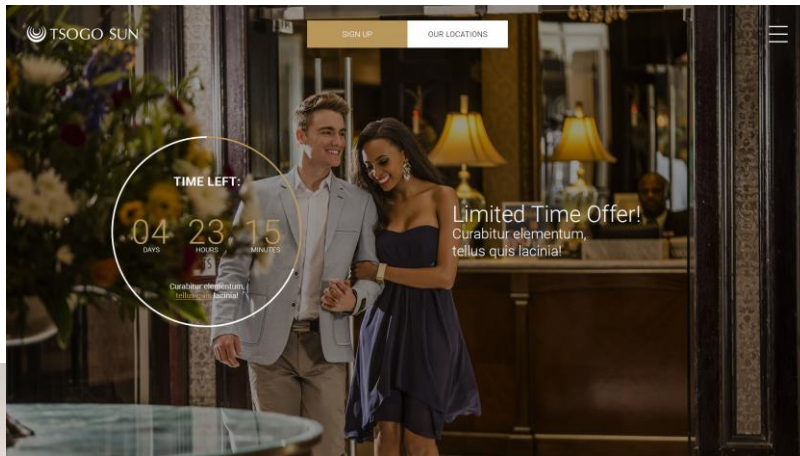
As travel demand strengthens, email is one of the best places to start. The people on your email list are already familiar with your brand and therefore, are more likely to book.

### Considerations for Email/CRM:

- Invite guests who cancelled to book again and highlight special offers. Consider offering a complimentary add-on to incentivize guests.
- Prompt groups that cancelled to rebook. Consider offering a groups incentive such as complimentary daily breakfast.
- Announce that the hotel is open and accepting reservations. Prompt guests to check out special offers and take a much-needed vacation.
- Thank members for their continued loyalty and invite them to come back and explore the destination again. Highlight loyalty perks.
- When restarting email campaigns, hotels should slowly ramp up email frequency and send volume as email frequency is one factor Google uses in its algorithms to define/measure email reputation (Domain Reputation & IP Reputation).



## RECOVERY MARKETING MULTICHANNEL CAMPAIGNS



To make your marketing dollars go further and garner greater visibility, consider launching a multichannel campaign. When executed well, multichannel campaigns can increase brand awareness, increase website traffic, and drive bookings.

### **Considerations for Multichannel Campaigns:**

- Utilize a holistic media mix.
- Target specific customer personas with cohesive and personalized messaging across the travel journey.
- Engage the target audience with a custom landing page or mini-site such as a Limited Time Offer.





## RECOVERY MARKETING GOOGLE INITIATIVES

### Considerations for SEM:

- **Month 1:** Target in-market audiences with broad destination keywords.
- **Month 2:** Focus on more localized, niche destination keywords and USP keywords.
- **Month 3:** Target branded keywords and utilize RLSA; focus on offer-driven messaging.

### Considerations for GDN:

- **Month 1:** Target in-market and affinity audiences and start rebuilding the remarketing pool.
- **Month 2:** Hone in on in-market audiences with geo-targeted campaigns, and start retargeting.
- **Month 3:** Focus on brand campaigns with retargeting.

### Additional Google initiatives to consider:

- **Gmail Ads:** Target competitors and highlight the hotel's USPs with brand messaging.
- **YouTube TrueView:** Target top feeder markets, affinity, and in-market audiences with an experiential call-to-action and messaging.



## RECOVERY MARKETING INTENT-DRIVEN DISPLAY



### Considerations for Intent-Driven Display:

- **Month 1:** Target mid-funnel in-market audiences with offers, and target new in-market audiences with upper-funnel native ads; 90-day or longer booking windows.
- **Month 2:** Focus campaigns heavily on in-market intent data and increase frequency of impressions to capture demand against competition.
- **Month 3:** Continue targeting in-market audiences based on Sojern fly-in data.

### Additional display initiatives to consider:

- **Native Ads:** Utilize contextual targeting with a layer of intent to reach people who are most likely to engage. Focus on engaging editorial content that highlights the destination.
- **Dynamic Rate Marketing:** Utilize intent data and retargeting to reach people who are considering your hotel, and highlight the BAR.
- **Sojern Private Marketplace:** Target people who are actively planning travel to your destination on top publishers and premium sites. Highlight USPs with general brand messaging.

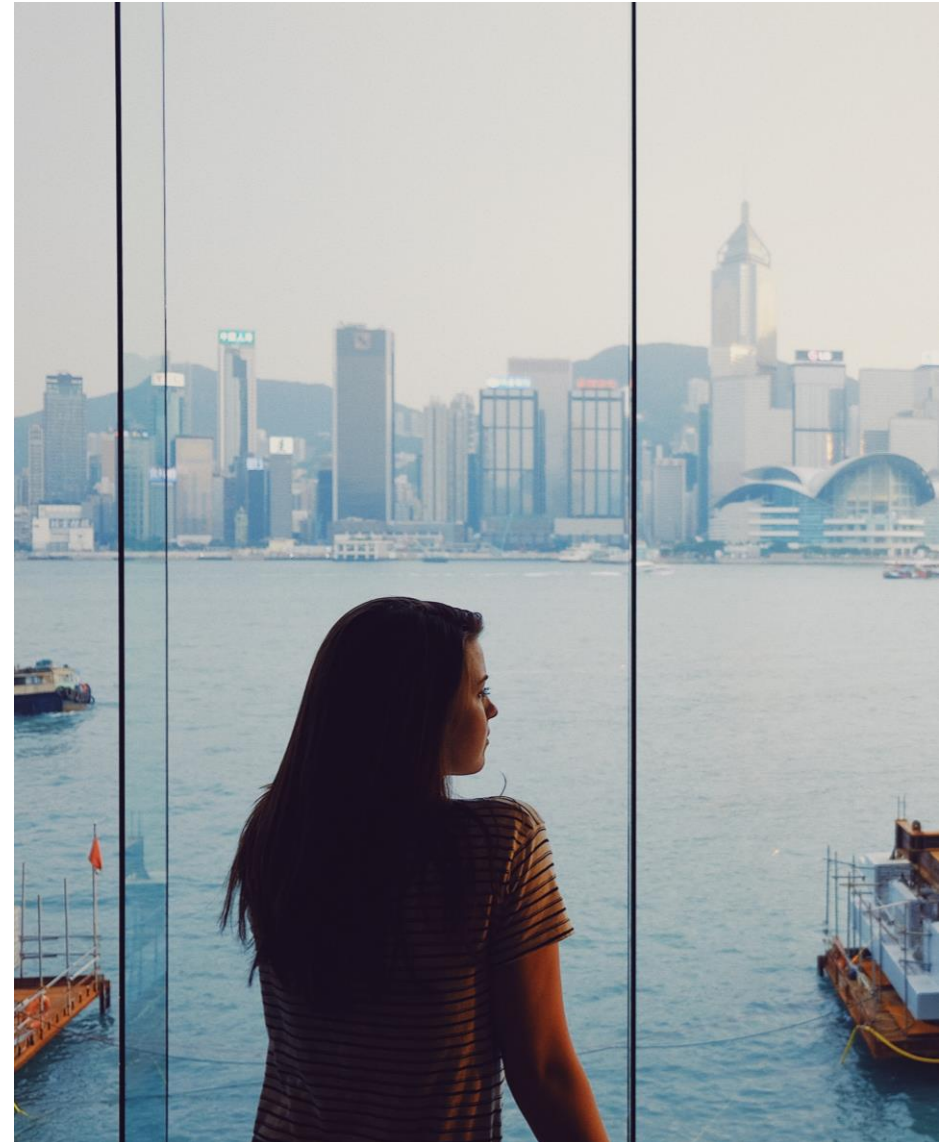
## RECOVERY MARKETING PAID SOCIAL

### Considerations for Paid Social:

- **Month 1:** Reference Sojern intent data to hone in on location targeting for prospecting campaigns; interest & behavioral targeting.
- **Month 2:** Ramp up ad spend to increase impressions as travel demand picks up; adjust copy to be more offer-driven.
- **Month 3:** Retarget website visitors and people who have engaged with the brand on social with offer-driven messaging.

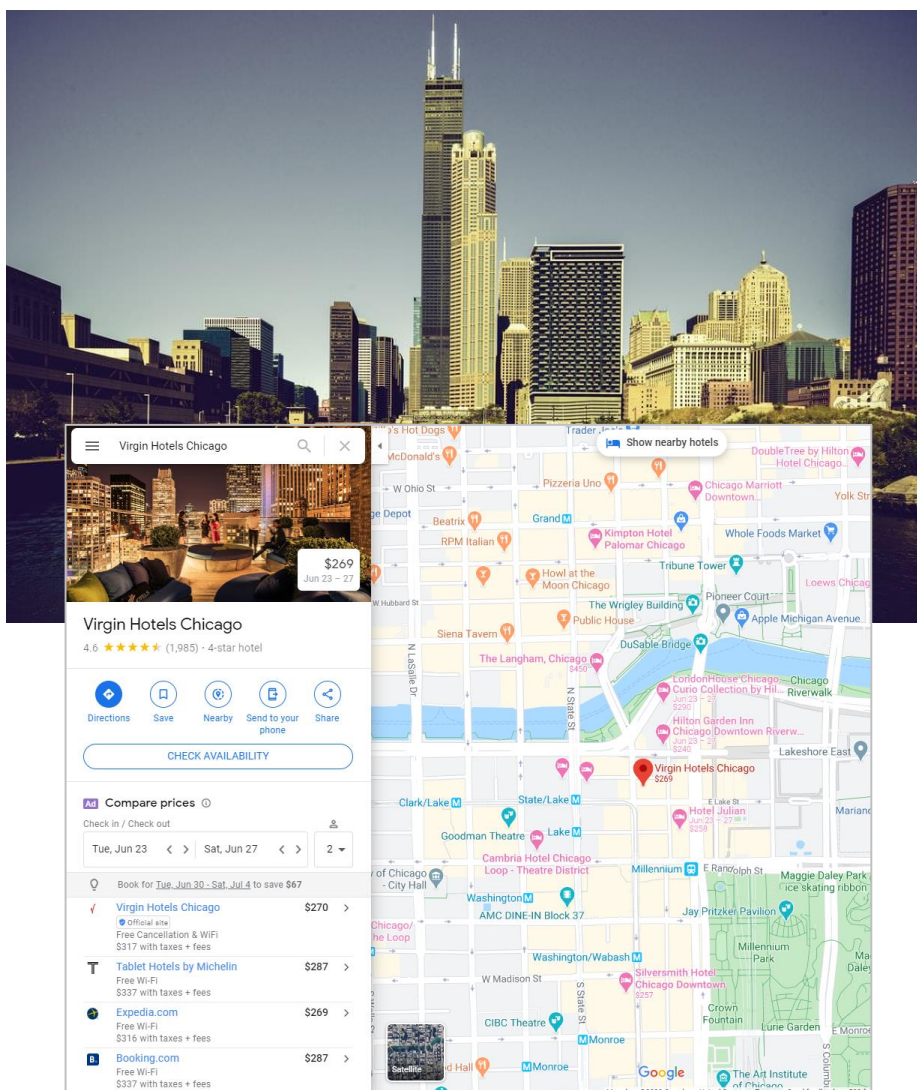
### Additional Paid Social initiatives to consider:

- **Instant Experience:** Target top feeder markets and related interests (destination, customer segments) to capture upper-funnel audiences. Highlight the hotel's USPs with general brand messaging that encourages users to learn more.
- **Instagram Story Ad:** Reference Sojern intent data to hone in on locations to target. Utilize retargeting to capture lower-funnel audiences. Highlight a special offer to capture the booking.





# RECOVERY MARKETING METASEARCH & EDITORIAL CONTENT



## Considerations for Metasearch:

- Ensure metasearch callouts highlight flexible cancellation policies or other relevant messaging.
- Increase bidding to increase impression share and remain competitive.
- Layer in signal intent to reach users that have shown higher intent to travel.

## Considerations for Editorial Content:

- Create a blog post to announce that the hotel is open for business and address the current situation.
- Create a blog post series offering sample itineraries for top customer segments.
- Create social posts that announce the hotel's reopening with a recent photo of the property.
- Create a social post series highlighting local restaurants and businesses.

# RECOVERY MARKETING TRIPADVISOR

## Considerations for TripAdvisor Display:

- Utilize destination targeting to reach people planning travel to your destination.
- Implement retargeting off the property page.
- Target competitors to reach people who are considering similar properties.
- Promote special offers to drive bookings.

## Considerations for TripAdvisor Business Listings:

- Create an announcement that clearly states the hotel is open and accepting reservations.
- Highlight a special offer that addresses your top business need.

Hotel Zetta San Francisco

About Location Reviews

Location Cleanliness Service Value

Certificate of Excellence GreenLeaders Platinum level

Fitness Center with Gym / Workout Room Bar / lounge

Game room Billiards

Pets Allowed ( Dog / Pet Friendly ) Business Center with Internet Access

Show more

In San Francisco, a city of bold contrasts and timeless originals, Hotel Zetta stands out. A creative hot spot and cultural launch pad, this is one of the most creative in SoMa San Francisco hotels. A unique enclave for savvy travelers, culture seekers, and local creatives, Hotel Zetta provides a high level of sophistication and service in a fresh, vibrant setting in the cutting-edge neighborhood of Union Square.

Good to know

HOTEL CLASS 4 stars

HOTEL STYLE Trendy Modern

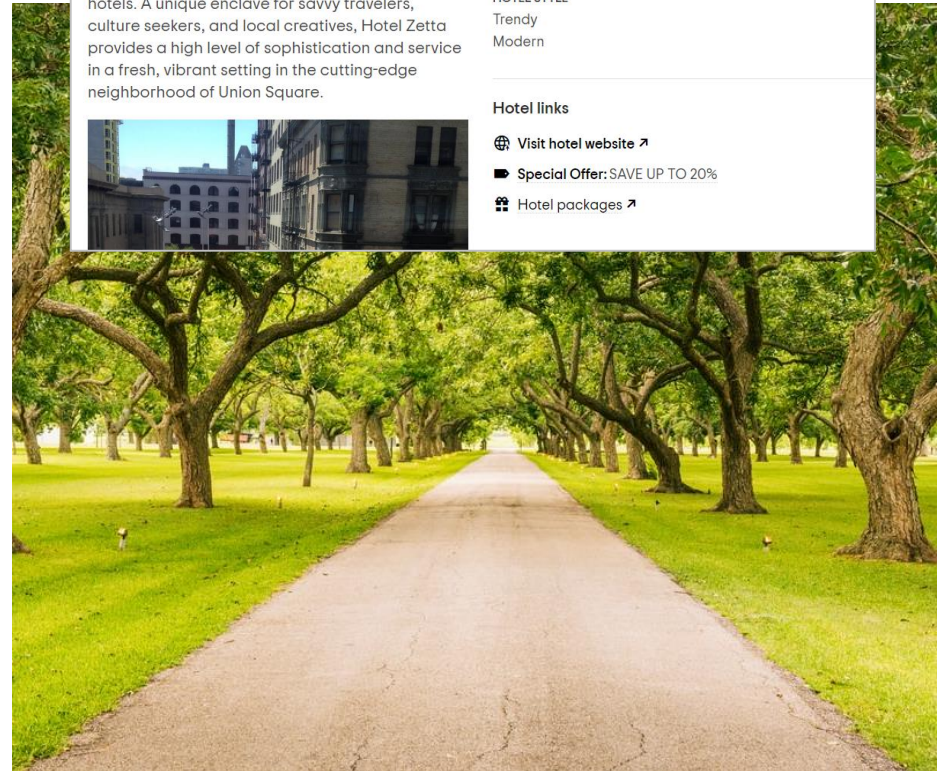
LANGUAGES SPOKEN English, French, Spanish, Chinese and 2 more

Hotel links

Visit hotel website

Special Offer: SAVE UP TO 20%

Hotel packages





## RECOVERY MARKETING SEO & LOCAL LISTINGS



### **Considerations for SEO:**

- Create or update a Schema-optimized FAQ page to increase visibility in Google Quick Answers.
- Create or update optimized content around the hotel's reopening and the destination.
- Continue ongoing SEO maintenance tasks to ensure that the website is properly crawled and indexed to maintain visibility and rankings.

### **Considerations for Local Listings:**

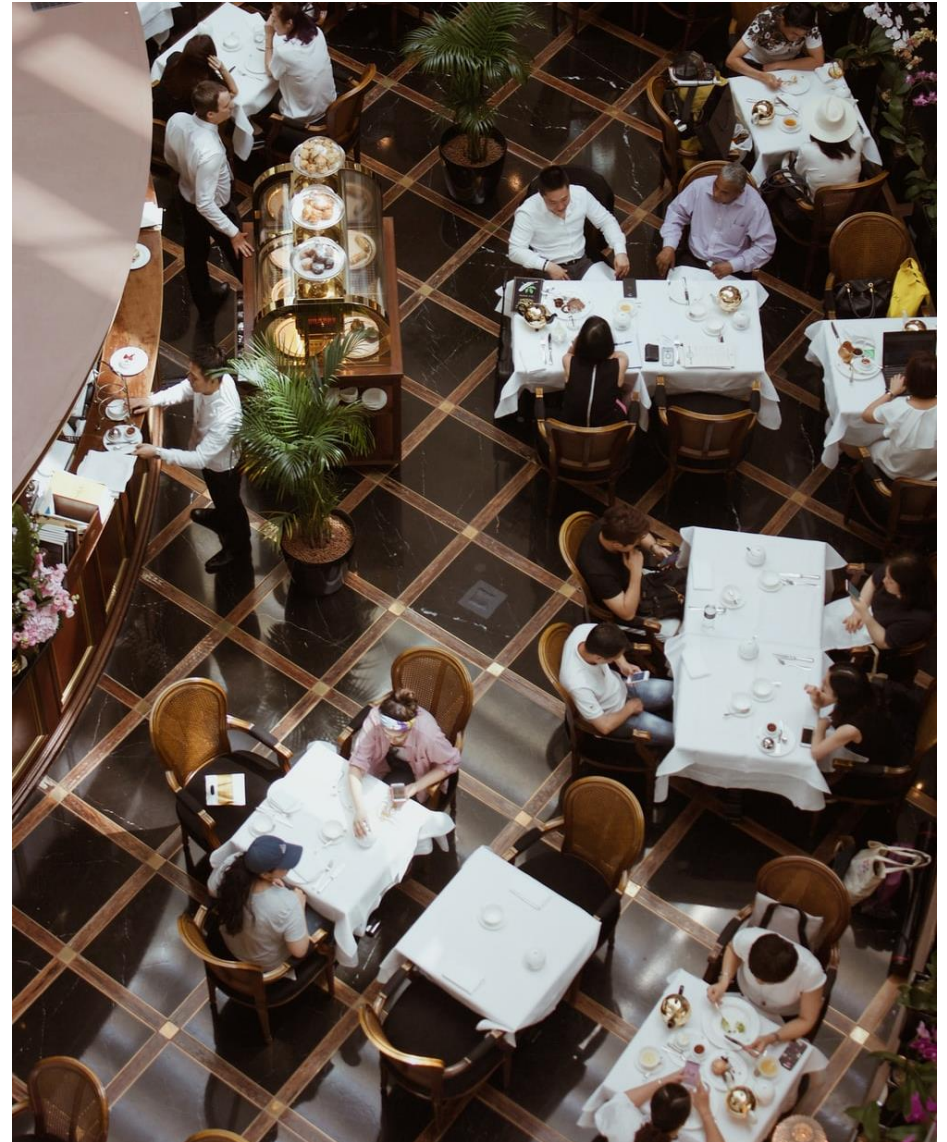
- Make necessary updates to your local listings to convey that the hotel is open and accepting reservations, meetings, spa appointments, etc.
- Highlight a special offer that addresses your top business need.

## RECOVERY MARKETING F&B MARKETING

Once COVID-19 subsides and restaurants and bars re-open for dining, promote the venue as a welcome escape and a place to reunite with friends and loved ones. Messaging should be sympathetic yet optimistic.

### **Considerations for F&B:**

- Highlight the restaurant on the website
- Update local listings to reflect new hours
- Launch SEM and GDN ads
- Launch paid social ads





## RECOVERY STRATEGY SNAPSHOT



### TOP TIPS

- Invite guests and groups that cancelled to book again, and highlight a special offer or complimentary add-on.
- Launch a multichannel campaign to target a specific customer persona with cohesive messaging across all channels.
- Shift targeting and messaging focus from upper to lower funnel.
- Create content for the website, social media, blog, and email that highlights the hotel, local restaurants, and attractions being open.



### MESSAGING & PACKAGES

- Messaging should focus on the hotel being open & flexible cancellation policy
- Staycation/Weekend Getaways
- Advanced Purchase
- Length of Stay
- Business to Leisure
- Getaway for Healthcare Workers
- Loyalty Member



### BOOKING WINDOW

60-90 days



### MARKETING INITIATIVES

**Email/CRM:** Market to cancellations and loyalty members.

**SEM & GDN:** Shift targeting focus to branded keywords, retargeting; promote offers.

**Intent-Driven Display:** Focus on targeting in-market audiences and increase impressions.

**Paid Social:** Ramp up spend and shift to more offer-driven messaging.

**Metasearch:** Increase bidding and layer in signal intent.

**TripAdvisor Display:** Focus on retargeting off the property page and targeting competitors.

**SEO:** Update content around the hotel's status.

**Local Listings & TripAdvisor Business Listings:** Ensure accuracy and highlight special offers.

## TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENS — ACTION PLAN FOR HOTELS

- Send an email to guests and groups that cancelled with a special offer or incentive to re-book.
- If the hotel has reopened, ensure this is communicated across all channels.
- Launch a multichannel campaign targeting a specific customer persona.
- Action on a month-to-month strategy for all marketing initiatives such as SEM, GDN, Paid Social, etc.
- Create editorial content for the blog, social media, and email that highlights the destination.
- If the hotel restaurant or bar has reopened, update local listings and promote this to locals.

# COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

## KEY TAKEAWAYS



When preparing your hotel recovery strategy, keep a pulse on the evolving situation and industry trends. The following strategies should be at the forefront throughout all phases of recovery:

- Align your marketing strategy with revenue management.
- Implement a flexible cancellation policy.
- Hone in on the right audience and customer persona throughout your recovery strategy.
- Market to guests and groups that have cancelled with incentives to rebook.
- Focus on the right offers and the right messaging throughout all phases of recovery.



## COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY CONCLUSION



A nimble revenue management and digital strategy is critical during crisis management. While there's no crystal ball to predict the outcome of COVID-19, keeping a pulse on the evolution of COVID-19 in your destination and measuring the impact on your target audiences is critical in order to quickly shift and adjust your strategy as needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic will subside over time, and people will begin traveling again. In order to maximize revenue before and after travel demand picks up, hotels need to continually engage their guests, be supportive, and follow through on a strategic recovery plan.

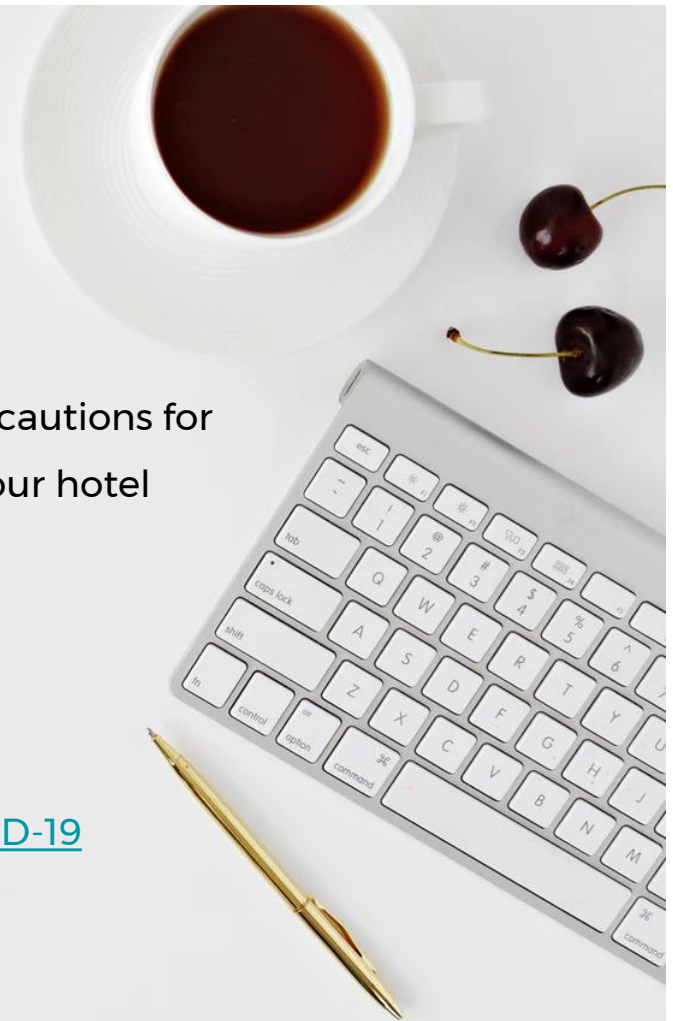
# COVID-19 TOP RESOURCES

Stay up-to-date with the latest recommendations and precautions for COVID-19. These resources are important for developing your hotel recovery plan.

[Center for Disease Control: COVID-19](#)

[World Health Organization: COVID-19](#)

[European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: COVID-19](#)





## MORE ABOUT US

NextGuest provides hoteliers with everything they need to thrive in the digital world. Through its subsidiary divisions, the company provides digital marketing, CRM services, technology solutions, and high-level consulting to some of the world's top hotel brands. Based in New York City, the company is comprised of NextGuest Digital, CRM, Labs, and Consulting. Each arm of the company offers stand-alone services, while together they provide an all-encompassing partner that helps hoteliers acquire, engage, and retain their next guest.

[www.nextguest.com](http://www.nextguest.com)

(800) 649-5076

[hello@nextguest.com](mailto:hello@nextguest.com)



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[linkedin.com/  
company/nextguest](https://linkedin.com/company/nextguest)



[instagram.com/  
nextguest/](https://instagram.com/nextguest/)

NXG  
NEXTGUEST

## APPENDIX

Access and download checklists for all phases here.



## COVID-19: TRAVEL ON PAUSE — ACTION PLAN FOR HOTELS

- Reassess your digital strategy, marketing assets, digital tools, and martech. Revamp as needed.
- Assess your current state of business including YOY occupancy, revenue, ADR, LOS, etc.
- Develop a clear action plan to address existing reservations and cancellations.
- Ensure that the website clearly communicates your prevention plan and cancellation policy.
- Consider ways to give back to the community such as affordable rates, free rooms, meals, and donations.
- Adjust audience and keyword targeting to hone in on audiences that are still likely to be planning travel.
- Leverage light marketing initiatives focused on driving brand awareness and advanced bookings.
- Update metasearch callouts to highlight flexible cancellation policies. Increase bidding if budget permits.
- Develop editorial content for social media, blog, and email to engage past and potential guests.
- Create optimized content for the website such as a FAQ page and rich destination content.
- Continue ongoing SEO maintenance tasks to maintain visibility and rankings.
- Update local listings to ensure that they reflect current hours/closings and link to relevant content.
- Update TripAdvisor Business Listings to reflect closings and link to an advanced purchase offer.
- Keep a pulse on COVID-19 developments in your market and adjust targeting and strategy as needed.



## INITIAL RISE IN TRAVEL DEMAND — ACTION PLAN FOR HOTELS

- Establish property-specific indicators that travel demand is picking up.
- Align with your revenue manager on rate strategy, book direct perks, cancellation policies, and offers.
- Provide flexible cancellation policies and ensure this is communicated on all channels.
- Prominently display book direct perks throughout the website.
- Implement a reservation abandonment strategy to recover lost bookings.
- Consider an instant rewards feature where visitors can enter their email to unlock exclusive rates.
- Develop a month-to-month digital strategy that shifts from upper to lower-funnel targeting and messaging.
- If the hotel has reopened, clearly state that the hotel is open and accepting reservations across channels.
- Reassure guests that the hotel is still taking proper precautions on property and will continue to do so.
- Ensure that all destination content is up to date and effectively highlights the destination.
- Utilize content personalization to tailor content and offers on the website to your target audiences.
- Highlight offers on the website that align with your current strategy and business needs.

## TRAVEL DEMAND STRENGTHENS — ACTION PLAN FOR HOTELS

- Send an email to guests and groups that cancelled with a special offer or incentive to re-book.
- If the hotel has reopened, ensure this is communicated across all channels.
- Launch a multichannel campaign targeting a specific customer persona.
- Action on a month-to-month strategy for all marketing initiatives such as SEM, GDN, Paid Social, etc.
- Create editorial content for the blog, social media, and email that highlights the destination.
- If the hotel restaurant or bar has reopened, update local listings and promote this to locals.