




CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF TOURISM

Tourism Insights Program

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020 REPORT

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Hartford, Connecticut, featuring a river in the foreground, a multi-lane bridge, and a dense cluster of skyscrapers in the background under a hazy sky. A dark teal diagonal overlay covers the left side of the image.

Connecticut Tourism Insights Program

Current Industry Trends

Meal Prep Delivery Service

Last month we reported that consumers eating outside of the home would not likely regain its pre-pandemic share until sometime in 2022 – meaning restaurants may need to find a way to get inside of the home in order to survive. This month, we’re seeing that Meal Prep Delivery services are thriving and brands skyrocketing with more people eating at home.

Eat Clean Bro, a Freehold, New Jersey-based meal prep and delivery service, has seen a surge in orders from new and returning customers. “This time of year, we’re very busy so we’re prepared to handle an influx of orders,” Jamie Giovinazzo, owner and founder told NJ.com. “Our orders are up 40%. We’re just guns blazing with orders.”

Restaurants could easily leverage this trend and offer their customers a familiar taste of eating out at their favorite restaurants—just in their own kitchen.

If full meal-prep isn’t possible for you, maybe canned and jarred goods unique to your restaurant would be an easier task. Many consumers are stocking their pantries, and small businesses that manufacture these goods are seeing more business.

Source: <https://www.uschamber.com/co/start/strategy/coronavirus-successful-businesses>



Key Insight

Prep and package your most popular items for customers to “take and bake” at home.



Key Insight

Find something tangible that represents your event or festival that can be easily shipped to your guests while virtually enjoying the experience.

BRINGING A PHYSICAL DIMENSION TO VIRTUAL EVENTS

The Power of Swag

Many companies have learned the true power of technology during the pandemic. From virtual conventions to virtual tourism offerings, consumer engagement is flourishing in new ways. By sending attendees goodies, or swag, to accompany an online event, brands can create an entire experience for consumers, adding a physical dimension to an event that's otherwise virtual. Here are a few companies that bring this trend to life:

Packaged With Purpose: Prior to Covid-19, this corporate gifting company supplied events with swag bags or boxes curated with items from the host city. As events began to cancel, the company found new recipients for their swag—those at home who are attending virtual events.

Sugarwish: While the pandemic was not in mind when the company started back in 2012, this Denver-based business has always supplied goodies for digital events. These customizable treat boxes provide an F&B experience for any type of event.

StickerYou: Similarly, this company provided stickers, labels, decals, iron-ons, temporary tattoos, magnets and more for conventions and other events. Now, due to the pandemic, they have repurposed these items as virtual event gifts.

Connecticut's Shubert Theater is hosting a holiday concert featuring Jim Brickman this year, at which attendees can purchase a swag package including a CD, autographed photo, and other items delivered to their doorstep in time for the event.

Source: <https://www.pcma.org/virtual-event-swag-brings-physical-dimension-digital-events/>

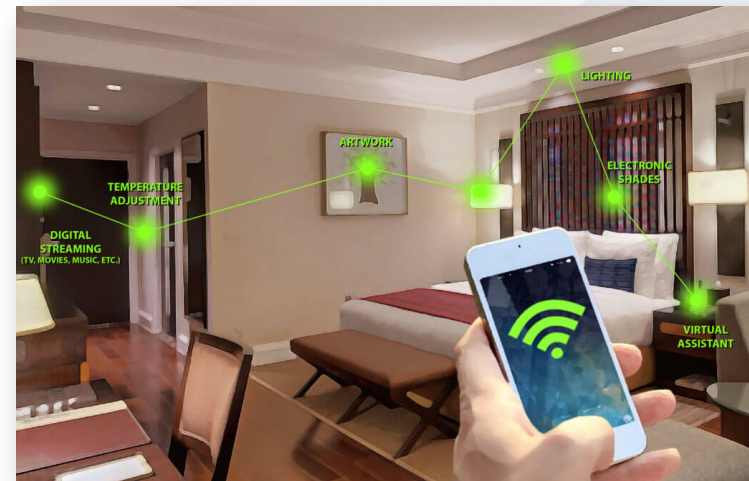
HOTEL HEALTH AND SAFETY TRENDS

Creating Contactless Experiences

Recent increases in safety concerns, stay-at-home orders and CDC guidelines for social distancing have led to the additional need and use of added space, cleanliness and technology to keep guests safe. While many other pandemic-induced trends are likely to be short-lived, the contactless trend is likely here to stay.

New (and soon to be standard) hotel health and safety trends include:

- ✓ **Mobile check-in, check-out and service.** AI-enabled apps allow guests to check in and out, order room service and communicate with staff when they need anything without coming into contact with hotel staff.
- ✓ **Grab-and-go meals.** Don't think you have to shut down your meal services. Switch to a grab and go option that guests can order for pickup.
- ✓ **Reduced housekeeping during long-term stays.** While it may seem counter-intuitive, cleaning on fewer days during a long-term stay will limit contact your guests have with staff and keep both parties safer.
- ✓ **Smart hotel rooms.** Just like smart homes, smart hotel rooms allow guests to control every aspect of their rooms right from their smartphone cutting down on surface touches prime for contamination.



💡 Key Insight

If you haven't already implemented these types of changes, it is time to begin since this trend isn't likely going away any time soon.

YOUNG VISITORS ARE LEADING THE TOURISM SECTOR RECOVERY

Now More than Ever, Connect with Millennials

Guests aged 25-44 are far more willing to visit hotels, restaurants, stores and attractions at this stage of the industry's recovery than older patrons. In fact, our study shows 64% of respondents in this age group describe themselves as "behaving about the same way as pre-Covid, but with some extra precautions" or at least "getting out and about a bit." To increase business at this time, aim for millennials.

Social media has proven a successful tool to reach this audience and can also make historic offerings more relatable to younger consumers. Museums are creatively connecting with this group using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok

One particularly successful example, The Uffizi Gallery recently created its own [TikTok account](#), using it to create and share fun and creative content about their collections. The videos bring the artwork to life, showing subjects of their masterpieces dancing to modern popular music, such as Bronzino's Medici portraits from the 16th century dancing to "Pew Pew Pew" by Auntie Hammy. Other videos show employees dressed up to put a funny, live-action spin on famous paintings that date back hundreds of years. The content is credited with doubling the number of younger visitors since the gallery's reopening this summer.

Madame Tussauds Sydney is running a series of [TikTok challenges](#), inviting visitors to film and post themselves following specific instructions while in the museum. This tactic encourages those who see the museum's posts, then reaches the followers of all who participate.



Key Insight

Aim for millennials in a way that makes your offering relevant.

Sources: <https://blooloop.com/news/uffizi-tiktok-young-visitors/>
<https://blooloop.com/news/madame-tussauds-sydney-tiktok-challenges/>

MEETING NEEDS WHERE YOU CAN

Hard-hit California hotels are turning rooms into office space, classrooms

The pandemic has been tough on California (and Connecticut) hotels. Hotels are accustomed to putting up vacationers and hosting corporate clients, but with the prolonged collapse of travel the customer base looks much different. Many of these hotels have found ways to fill rooms by serving office-less office workers, remote-learning students and locals looking to escape their homes for a day.

Guest rooms that would typically go for \$1,000 per night during a conference week are being converted into remote-work pods that are available for rent between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Hotel ballrooms and conference centers that would typically be rented out for wedding receptions or corporate conventions are undergoing redesigns to cater to the needs of cohorts of socially distanced students. Hotel amenities such as pools and gyms are being offered to those wanting to rent a room as a means of escape from their own homes and everyday routine.


It's no secret that the travel industry is struggling. However, many travel brands have the chance to temporarily pivot their business models to meet the needs of consumers like they have never needed to before. Brands that adjust and step up in times of need will be the ones that thrive afterwards.

Source: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/travel/article/Hard-hit-California-hotels-are-turning-rooms-into-15579210>



Key Insight

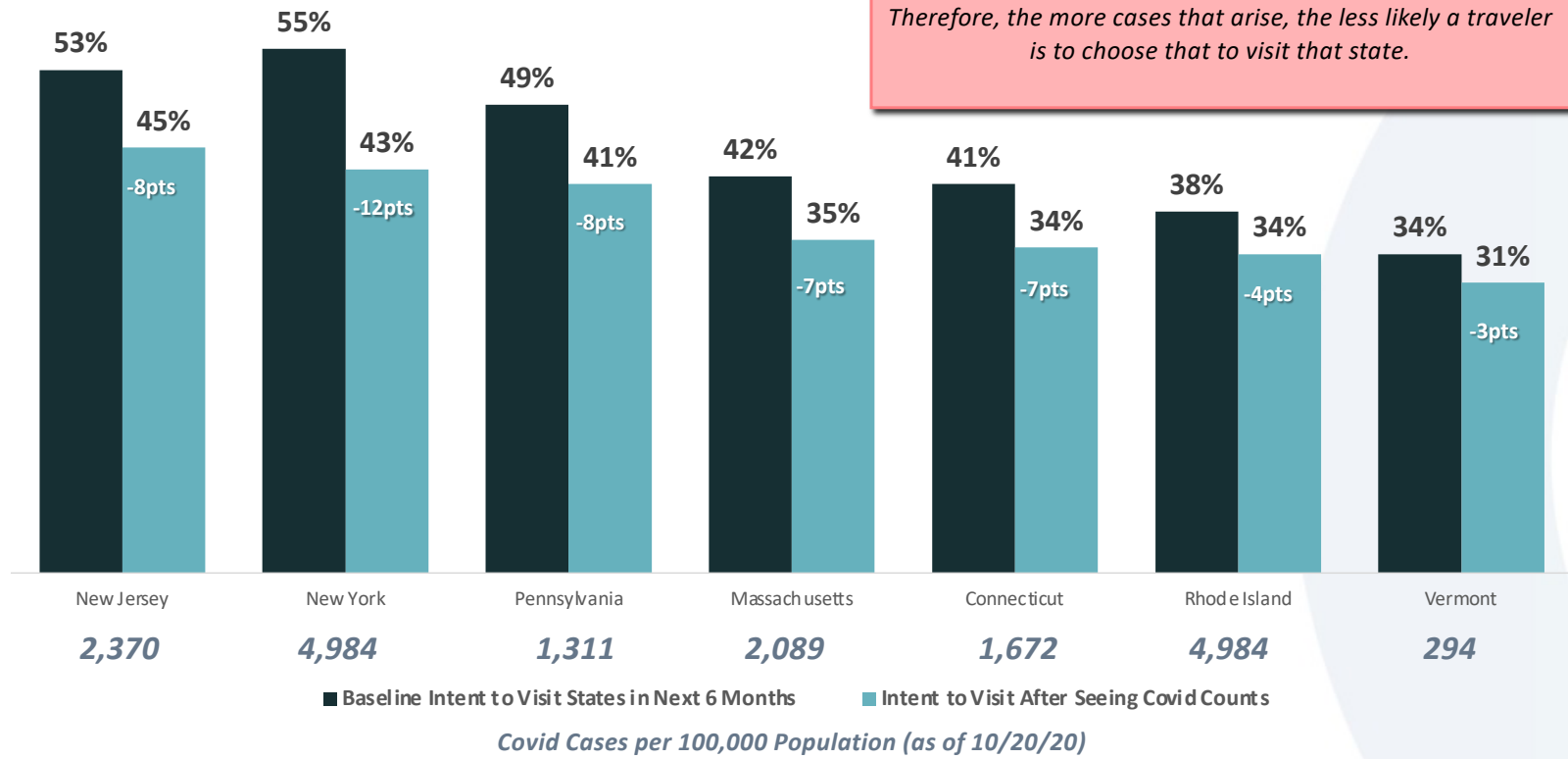
Adapt. Sometimes it's necessary to pivot your business model to meet a new consumer need.



Connecticut Tourism Insights Program

COVID-Related Sentiment Tracker Key Insights

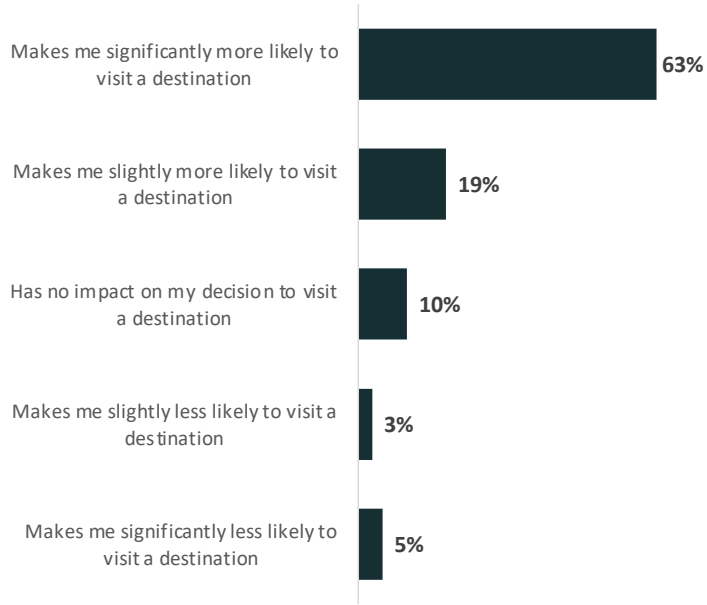
Intent to Visit



Q9: Please indicate how likely you are to visit each of the following states over the next 6 months.
 Q25: (After Seeing Covid Counts): Please indicate how likely you are to visit each of the following states over the next 6 months.

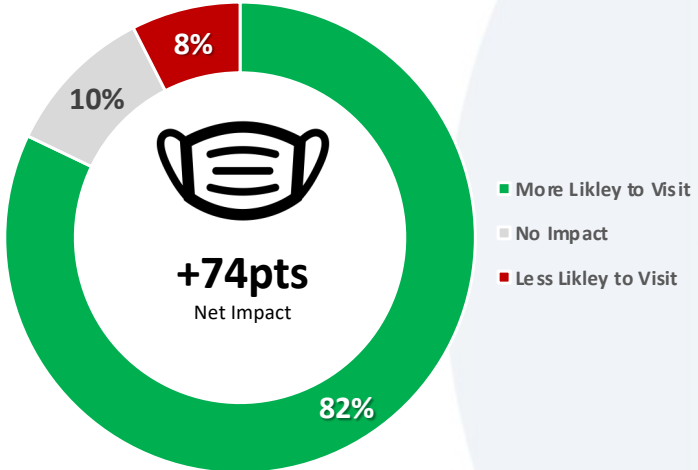
Masking Ordinance Impacts

A Mask Mandate at a Destination...



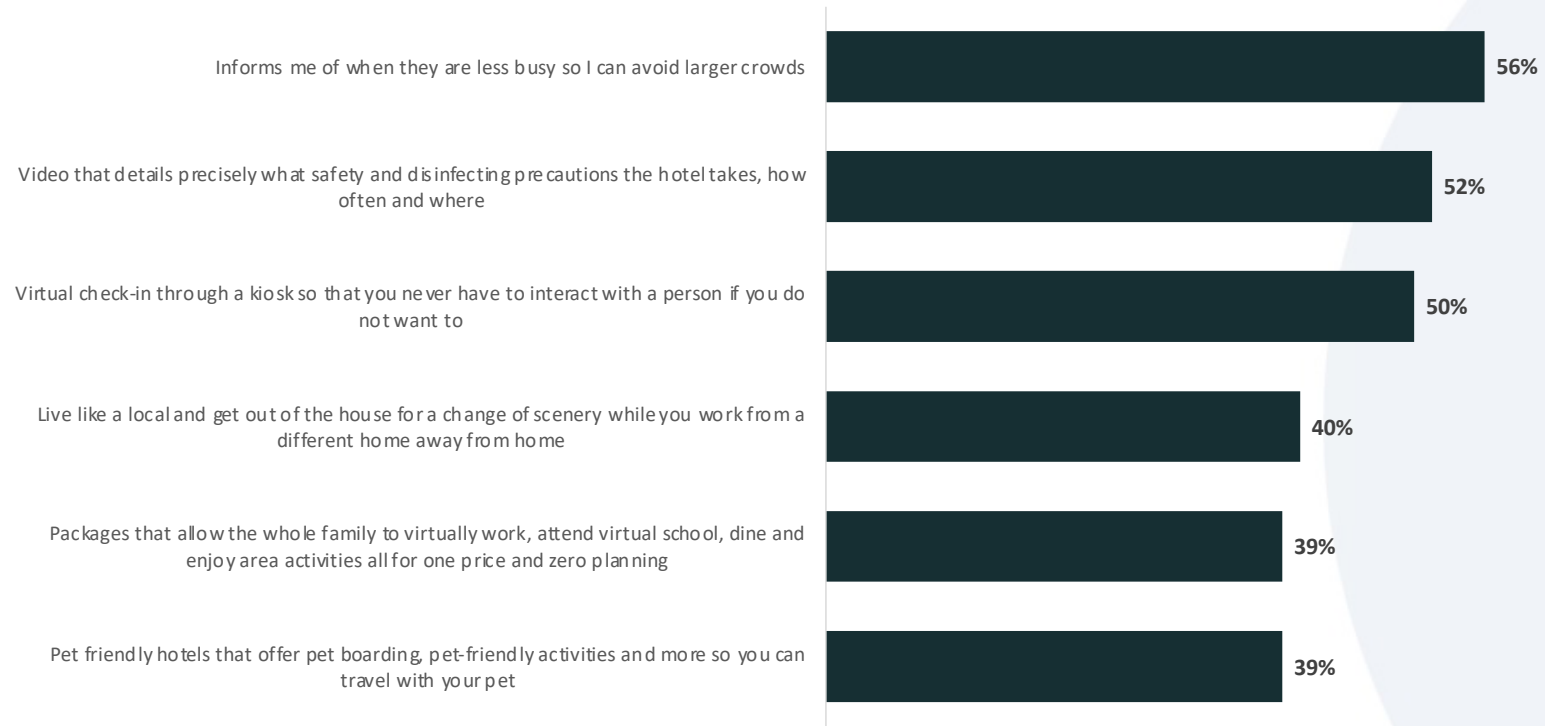
Key Insight
In the Northeast, mask mandates deliver +74pts more customers than not requiring masks.

Net Impact of Mask Mandates



Q15: When thinking about a place you are considering visiting, what impact (if any) would a mask mandate have on your decision to visit?

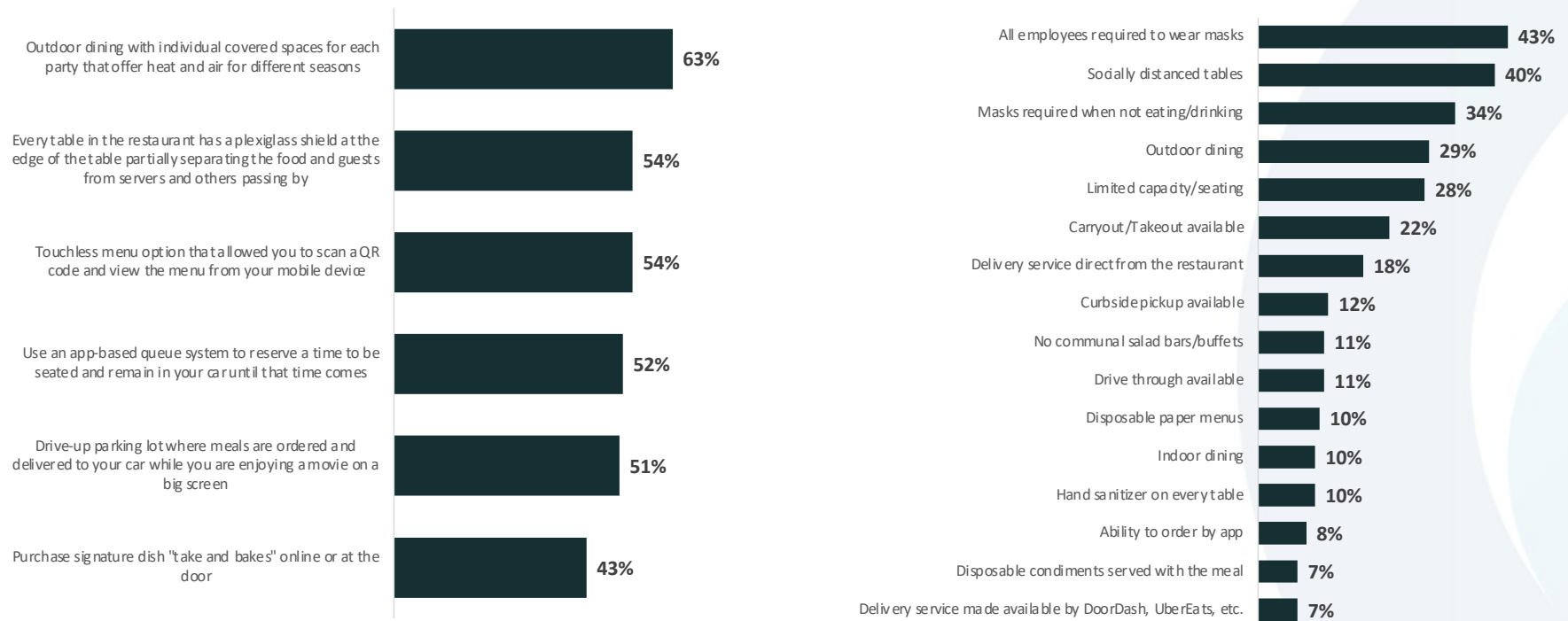
Actions Most Likely to Entice a Hotel Stay



Q16: Using the scale provided, please indicate how likely you would be to patronize a hotel that offered a guest experience like the ones described below.

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS | N=134

Most Important Aspects Travelers Consider When Dining Out



Q17: Using the scale provided, please indicate how likely you would be to patronize a restaurant that offered an experience like the ones described below.

Q18: When thinking about the types of restaurants at which you enjoy dining, which of the following amenities, policies or experiences would be most important to you?

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS | N=134

Why Travelers Choose One Destination, Restaurant, Hotel or Attraction Over Another



Q20: In general, which of the following would be more likely to motivate you to choose one destination, restaurant, hotel, attraction or other retail business over another?

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS | N=134

SHOW ME STATE

No, We're Not Talking About Missouri

The COVID-Related Sentiment Tracker Research had its initial launch in October. We'll be tracking consumer sentiment as it relates to tourism over the course of the next several months in order to give our stakeholders insights into how they can not only survive but thrive in the post-pandemic world.


Our research showed that there is a very strong inverse correlation between the number of Covid-19 cases and intent to visit a destination (-82%) – the more cases that arise, the less likely a traveler is to choose to visit. In order to overcome any spikes in cases, destinations, hotels, restaurants and other tourism businesses must show potential visitors what is being done to help them stay healthy.

For example, those who would be more likely to visit a destination with a mask ordinance outweigh those less likely to visit with a mask ordinance by 74 points.

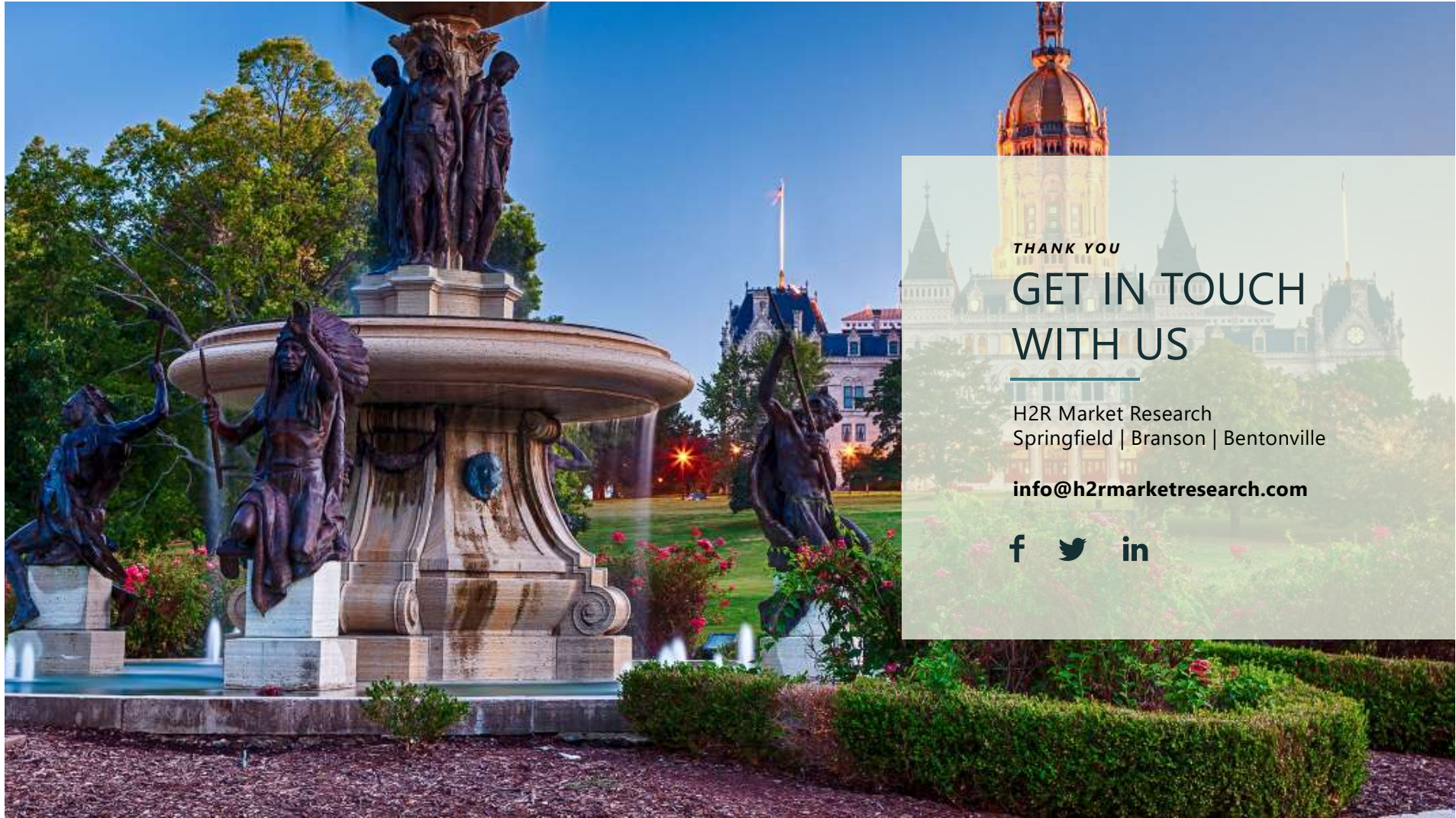
Those planning an overnight stay in paid lodging want to know ahead of time when crowds will be smaller so they can book non-peak days. And, they want to see (preferable via video) the health and safety measures hotels are taking to keep the rooms sanitary and safe for guests.

When dining out, patrons love the idea of individual tents or spaces that allow them to be separated from other diners. Also popular is the idea of positioning plexiglass between tables. And, consumers are more likely to patronize restaurants where employees are required to wear masks and tables are socially distanced.

In short, businesses who show their customers what they're doing to keep them safe will have a much greater influence on visitors' decision to visit than anything else.

 **Key Insight**

Your top priority should be showing your visitors what you're doing to keep them safe.



THANK YOU

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

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