

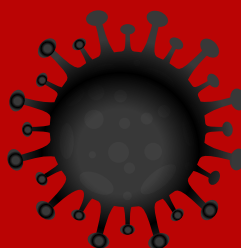
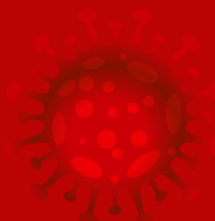
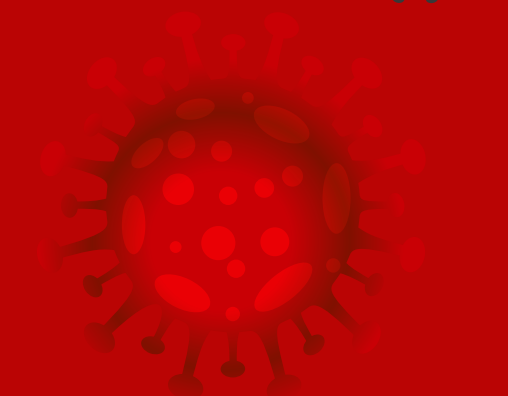
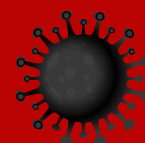
The Impact of
Coronavirus
on Social Media Engagement
for Brands in Tourism


**WORLD
TOURISM
FORUM**
Institute

Social media is a constantly moving target, especially during a

global health crisis.

We wanted to share more about how the situation with coronavirus is impacting social media engagement for brands. This post is intended to provide additional context for brands and marketers so they know kind of impacts to engagement rates they can expect right now on social.





We acknowledge that the situation is changing day-by-day, but here are our top takeaways and tips for marketers working hard to stay sensitive and relevant during this health crisis.

Yes, engagement is down across the board.

The news isn't universally bad, though. Brands and industries that are able to connect thoughtfully with their followers are weathering the storm so far.

Twitter's engagement decline is half as bad as Facebook's and Instagram's.

Why? People are turning to Twitter for news and updates because it feels more instant than algorithm-heavy Facebook and Instagram. Plus, it's easier to connect 1:1 with brands and organizations to get vital information.

Higher Ed is staying high, media is holding steady, nearly everyone else is down.

These industries are working extra hard right now to deliver up-to-date information to large groups of followers and stakeholders, so it makes sense that they're trending ahead of the curve for now.

The best thing you can do is stay calm and be empathetic

Focus on positive ways your brand can create engagement or at a minimum stay top of mind. But don't stretch beyond what is reasonable. Post thoughtful, relevant content whenever possible, and give your followers a chance to connect with you about their questions and concerns.

“

**CHANNEL
PERFORMANCE
BY INDUSTRY
DURING
CORONAVIRUS**

04



Instagram took the hardest hit overall, with a 14% drop in engagement rate by follower this week versus the previous three weeks. It makes good sense that this channel would be impacted most, since it's not likely where people are going to get their news (Twitter) or connect with friends and family (Facebook). It's worth noting that Instagram's engagement rate declines have been sharp of late, suggesting this channel's engagement will keep dropping more rapidly than Facebook and Twitter.

Media brands are obviously working hard to communicate with their information-hungry followers. Nonprofits are on the front lines in working to deliver services to those affected by the virus and closures. These organizations are already starting to coordinate fundraising pleas to help bridge the gap, which is garnering attention from followers on social.

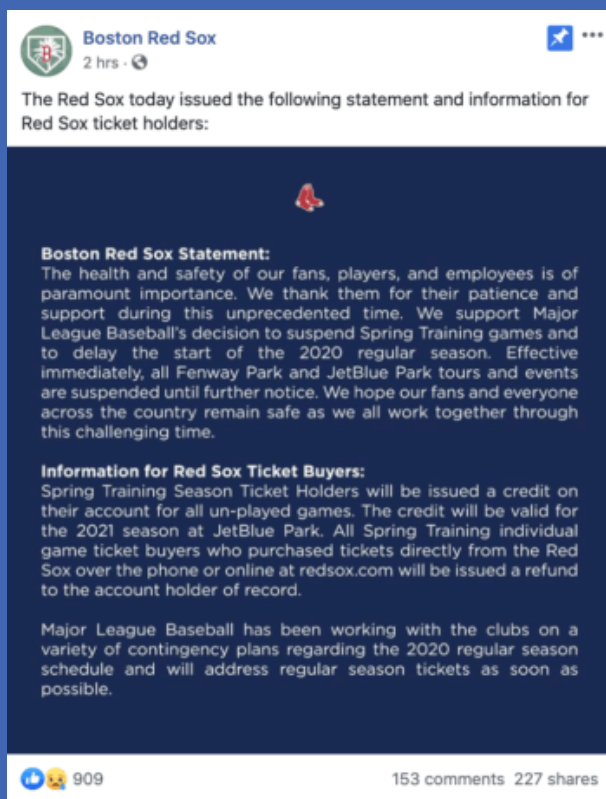
Hotels & Resorts, Sports Teams, and Tech & Software are seeing some of the sharpest Instagram falloffs of any of the industries we reviewed, but thankfully the news isn't all bad for those industries on other channels.

The bottom line: Instagram isn't the first place people are turning to for updates on the virus. With tourism, shopping, and dining out on the decline, many industries are seeing sharp declines in engagement on this channel.




Facebook's declining average engagement rate in the last few weeks is neck-and-neck with Instagram's at 13.5%. It's worth noting that Facebook's engagement rates are declining around 2x per week, so this channel's engagement is definitely still in flux.

Hotels & Resorts and Sports Teams saw some of the sharpest relative declines on Facebook. For example, Sports Teams enjoyed a lot of engagement earlier in the year thanks to lead-up to the Super Bowl and March Madness, but are seeing a precipitous drop beginning in early March as cancellations began. Hotels & Resorts saw their engagement drop by half as more and more travel advisories and bans began in early March.



Boston Red Sox
2 hrs · 🌐

The Red Sox today issued the following statement and information for Red Sox ticket holders:



Boston Red Sox Statement:
The health and safety of our fans, players, and employees is of paramount importance. We thank them for their patience and support during this unprecedented time. We support Major League Baseball's decision to suspend Spring Training games and to delay the start of the 2020 regular season. Effective immediately, all Fenway Park and JetBlue Park tours and events are suspended until further notice. We hope our fans and everyone across the country remain safe as we all work together through this challenging time.

Information for Red Sox Ticket Buyers:
Spring Training Season Ticket Holders will be issued a credit on their account for all un-played games. The credit will be valid for the 2021 season at JetBlue Park. All Spring Training individual game ticket buyers who purchased tickets directly from the Red Sox over the phone or online at redsox.com will be issued a refund to the account holder of record.

Major League Baseball has been working with the clubs on a variety of contingency plans regarding the 2020 regular season schedule and will address regular season tickets as soon as possible.

👍👎 909 153 comments 227 shares

Influencers, Media, Retail, and Tech & Software are all trending down as well. Nonprofits are fighting successfully for engagement on Facebook to offer services and community connection points.

The image shows a Facebook post from the organization 'Save the Children US'. The post is dated '5 hrs' and includes a globe icon. The main text of the post asks, 'Wondering why so many schools are closing if the coronavirus isn't as dangerous for kids? Here's why' with a yellow arrow pointing to the right. Below this is a large orange graphic with the word 'CORONAVIRUS' in white, with 'COVID-19' in a smaller box below it. The graphic features large white letters 'Q' and 'A' separated by an ampersand '&'. The 'Q' is followed by the text 'Why do schools need to close if coronavirus isn't dangerous for kids?' and the 'A' is followed by 'Even with milder symptoms, kids may carry the coronavirus home and infect others.' At the bottom left of the graphic is the Save the Children logo and name, and at the bottom right is the date 'March 12, 2020'. Below the graphic, the Facebook interface shows '298' likes, '25 comments', and '175 shares'.

Save the Children US
5 hrs · 🌐

Wondering why so many schools are closing if the coronavirus isn't as dangerous for kids? Here's why 🏠

CORONAVIRUS

COVID-19

Q Why do schools need to close if coronavirus isn't dangerous for kids?

&

A Even with milder symptoms, kids may carry the coronavirus home and infect others.

Save the Children. March 12, 2020

👍 298 25 comments 175 shares

The bottom line: While it may feel like there's been a spike in Facebook activity as friends and family connect and seek out community news, brands aren't finding a lot of success on this channel unless they have something valuable to add to the coronavirus conversation.



Finally, some more upbeat social media news: Twitter engagement rates have declined by about half as much as Facebook and Instagram (down 7%). Why aren't they feeling the burn as much? You've probably already guessed: people are turning to Twitter for critical information about how coronavirus is impacting their lives, from school and store closures to how they can get involved in their community via local nonprofits.

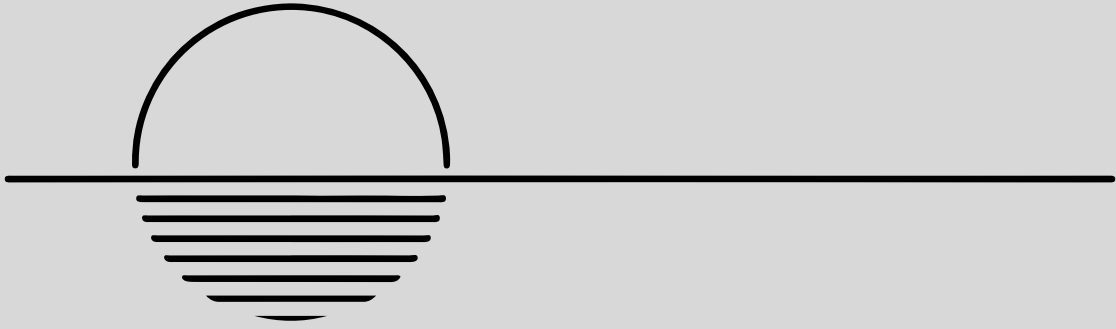


The engagement rates on this graph trend more steadily downward with industries like Nonprofits, Retail, and Tech & Software. Sports Teams have seen a sharp decline but are bouncing back a little as fans turn to Twitter for news on game cancellations and season suspensions.

Influencers and Media are holding steady as people look to trusted sources for more information about what's going on in the world.

It's worth calling out that Hotels & Resorts' dramatic engagement decline is very similar to their current Facebook performance, which underscores how hard-hit that industry is in this health crisis.

The bottom line: Every channel and nearly every industry has seen engagement drops across the board, but that decline is currently more gradual on Twitter than on Facebook and Instagram. If you have timely, relevant content to share on Twitter with your followers, you can continue to expect engagement (at least for now).



TOURISM IS

MELTING!

Tourism
Promotion
Campaigns



visit Portugal

A decidedly uplifting campaign, Visit Portugal's 'Can't Skip Hope' video tackles the issue of travel bans head-on its first few words: "It's time to stop." The sweeping vistas and charming scenes displayed in the two minute video certainly inspire one to visit Portugal in the future, but it does not come across as sales-y. The we're-all-in-this-together tone feels uplifting in these trying times.



 **visitportugal**  • [Follow](#) ...

 **visitportugal**  Can't Skip Hope

It's time to stop.
Time to reset, time to recenter, time to switch off so we can move on.
The best part of it all? We are in this together. ❤️
[#CantSkipHope](#)

6d

 **urbanastudio1x** Brutal . Fantástico. Profundo. Arrepiante . Poderoso. Parabéns toda a equipa que trabalhou neste projecto . Parabéns Portugal 🇵🇹 

6d 13 likes Reply

 **tahtama** Stay strong Portugal ! ❤️ 

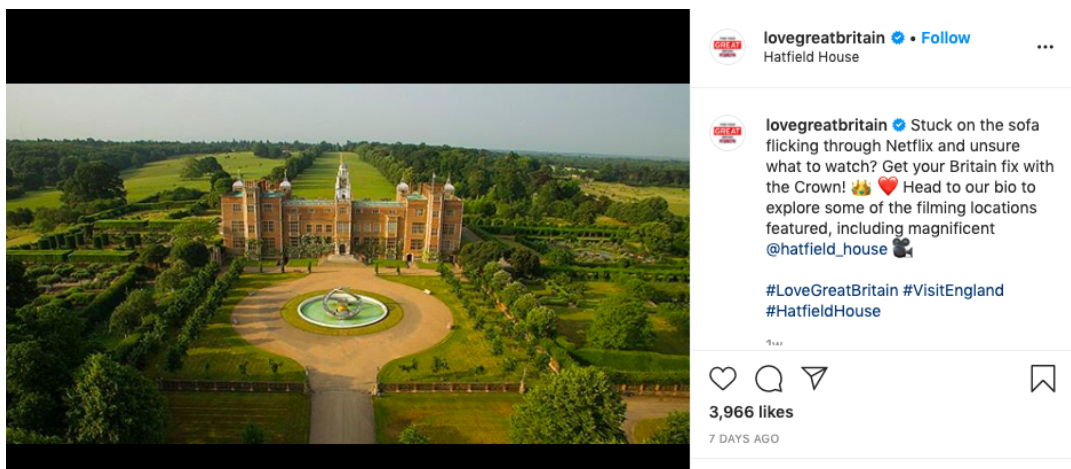
   

68,242 views



VisitBritain®

Britain's greatest export is arguably its culture, from literature and film to music. Visit Britain has capitalized on that during the crisis on its social media feeds. In addition to content that essentially says "we can't wait to welcome you again soon," the DMO has also been posting ways to engage with British culture right now — from a quarantine couch. What makes it truly clever is including call to actions with each post, from crowdsourcing tracks for a Spotify playlist of iconic British music, or inviting followers to explore the filming locations featured in *The Crown* and *Harry Potter*.



Philadelphia’s DMO has launched a “Philadelphia from Home” webpage, which features ways to interact with the city’s offerings from home, which it’s promoting across social media. A Facebook Live from the Philadelphia Zoo, a list of restaurants open for takeout, and recipes for a famous Philly Cheesesteak are all ways would-be visitors and locals can interact with the destination. The offerings feel genuinely useful — and likely to inspire a visit.



discover_phil • Follow
The Original Pat's King of Steaks

discover_phil On
#NationalCheesesteakDay, we encourage you to support your local cheesesteak shop while staying safe by placing delivery or pickup orders and by purchasing gift cards.

Some Philadelphia favorites even ship nationwide, including Pat's and Campo's. You can also try your hand at making Philadelphia's iconic sandwich with the help of a recipe in our Philadelphia From Home guide. Tap the link in our bio to learn more.

#discoverPHL photo by
@anthony.difilippo

6d



723 likes

6 DAYS AGO



SAINT LUCIA

LET HER INSPIRE YOU

The Caribbean destination is inviting followers to experience the destination via Instagram Live, with its "7 Minutes in St Lucia" campaign. It kicked off on March 26 with a seven minute streamed yoga practice in view of the famous Pitons, world-famous volcanic spires. Other activities include a cooking class, a dance party, and a guided meditation. The offerings slot into the kinds of things many people are doing anyway while in social distance mode — cooking and working out — which means it feels less sales-y and more generous.



DISCOVER
Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is inviting its followers and would-be visitors to a virtual getaway, with salsa classes, cocktail making, and cooking. As Discover Puerto Rico CEO Brad Dean told Skift last week, the DMO shifted from a "visit now" approach to a "visit later" one a couple of weeks ago, with the goal of keeping the destination top of mind for future visitors.



Telling Tourists to Stay Away

News headlines described how places in the UK, including Whitstable, the Lake District, and Cornwall are seeing a huge influx of visitors. London parks were rammed with people wanting to enjoy some fresh air, inadvertently making 'social distancing' rules all the more difficult.

As a result, tourism brands in the UK are backing Boris Johnson's plea to stay away, going against the grain of their usual promotional activities. Visit Cornwall released a statement asking people to avoid visiting the region, reassuring them that "we will love seeing you again later in the year."

 **Visit Cornwall** 
@ILoveCornwallUK 

A message from Visit Cornwall Would visitors please stay away and play your part in reducing travel and thereby reducing the speed of the spread of the virus and that is so important in avoiding needless lives being lost. We will love seeing you again later in the year

 413 1:01 PM - Mar 22, 2020 

 271 people are talking about this 

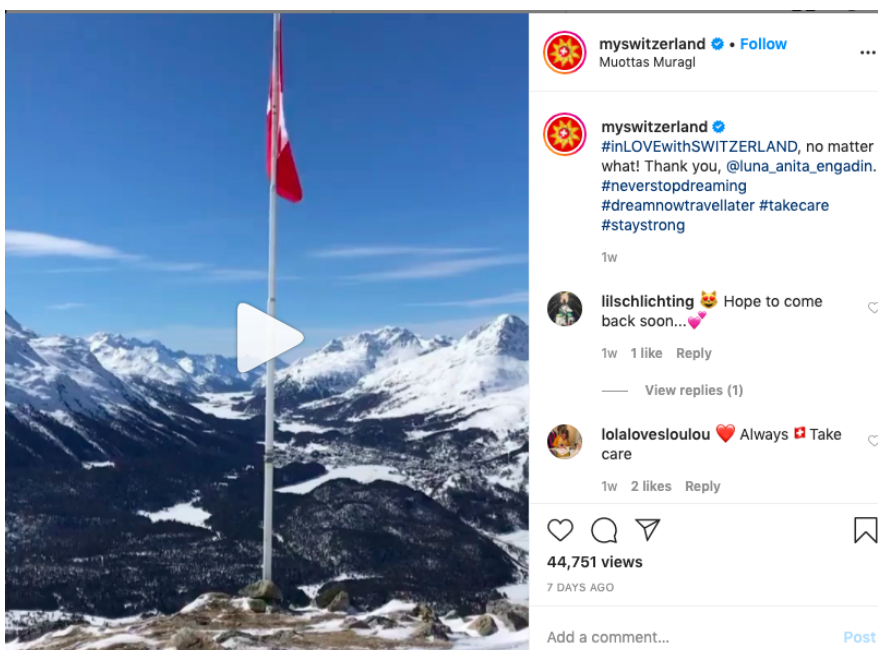
The National Trust is taking more extreme action. Despite announcing just last week that it would open many of its parks and gardens for free to help people deal with social distancing, it has since decided to close them, stating that the amount of visitors is making it impossible to maintain distance. Its coastal and countryside locations remain open, however it's likely that they will also be restricted if visitors continue to flock there.



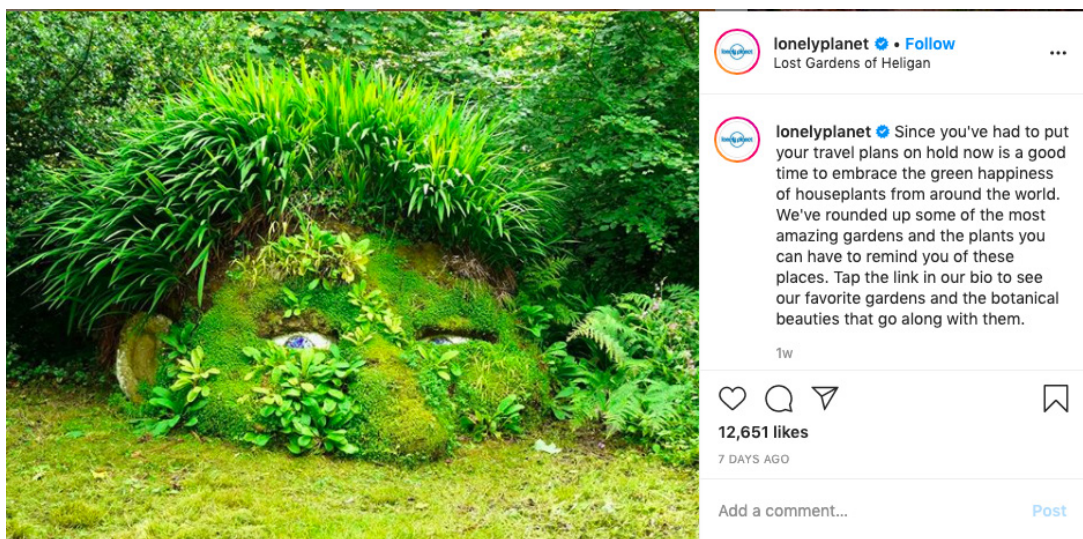
Looking to the future

As travel and tourism brands hit the pause button on planned marketing activities, many are still taking an inspirational approach. This involves giving consumers reassurance and hope that things will eventually return to normal, and encouraging them to think about future travel plans instead of the present moment.


Switzerland's tourist board is a particularly good example of this, giving users on social media a slice of Switzerland from afar, using hashtags like #neverstopdreaming and #staystrong to bolster morale.



Travel publisher Lonely Planet is another focusing on the positive, turning its attention to the potential good that might arise from the current situation rather than anything negative.



Transportation Brands



Experts are saying that airlines are seeing their largest business crisis since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The impact of the coronavirus on the global airline industry could cost \$113 billion as demand dips, according to the International Air Transport Association. Airlines are doing as much as they can to reduce costs by cutting domestic and international flights.



United Airlines' stock has been tumbling since cases of the virus began appearing in the U.S. The airline was selling at \$82.20 on the stock market on February 12 and on Thursday afternoon stock price was around \$41.70, about a 50 percent drop in just a month.



If you're scheduled to travel March 10 - April 30, 2020 and would like to change your plans, there is no fee to do so, regardless of when you purchased your ticket or where you're traveling. Learn more: uafly.co/2lpMCBX



1,922 6:43 AM - Mar 10, 2020



1,421 people are talking about this



Southwest

SimilarWeb, which tracks the desktop and mobile traffic to websites, found that between February 28 and March 6 Southwest Airlines saw the greatest drop in traffic to its website, compared to rivals such as Delta, American Airlines and JetBlue.

 **Southwest Airlines**  @SouthwestAir · Mar 11, 2020 

Are you ready to ROCK? Enter for a chance for you and three friends to travel to Los Angeles, a.k.a. Pop Land, to attend the World Premiere of [#TrollsWorldTour](#), in theaters April 10.
[#SouthwestxTWT](#)



Enter now!
southwest.fm

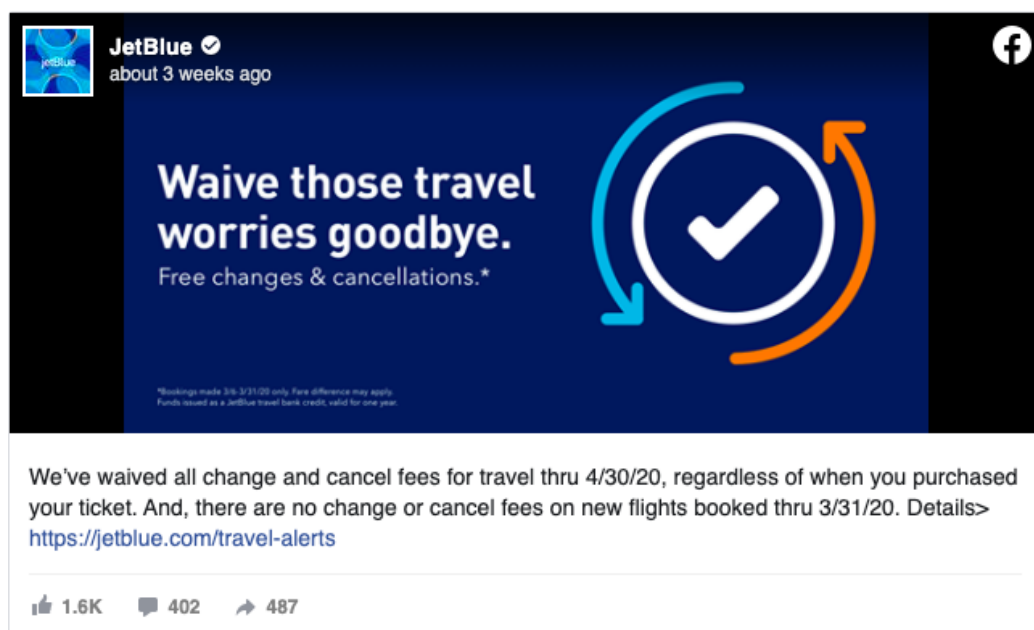
 **TruthSeeker**
@ShorttyNAZ

No thanks, there's a global pandemic in case you don't watch the news.

♥ 1 10:03 PM - Mar 11, 2020 

jetBlue

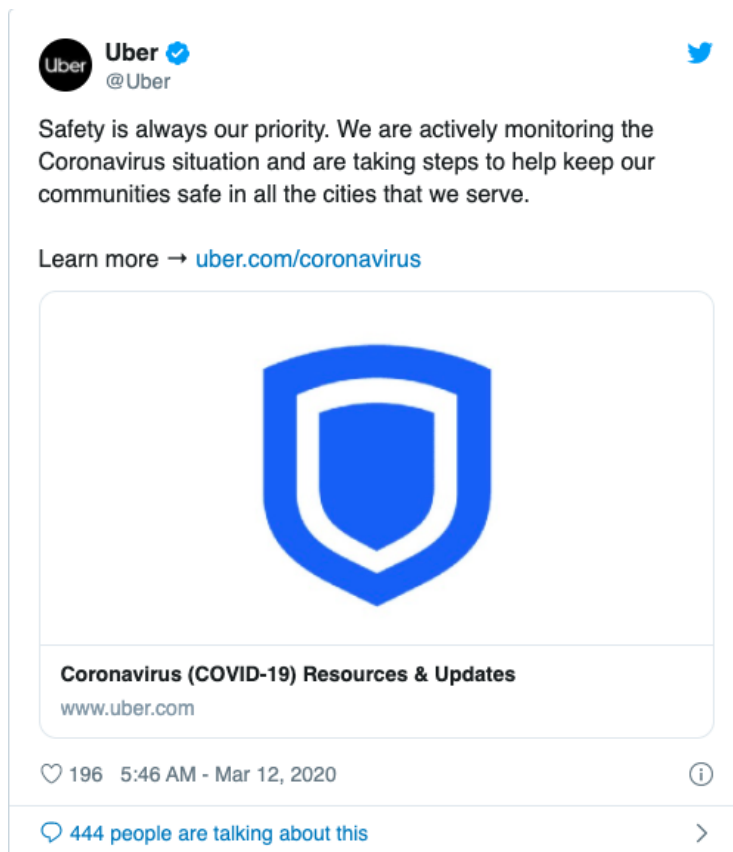
Like its competitors, JetBlue is seeing red. On Thursday, its stock saw a 14.81 percent dip. "We're planning for it to get worse. We don't think bookings have stabilized yet," JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes told CNBC. That same day, the airline shared what it's doing in light of coronavirus. In an email to customers, JetBlue President and Chief Operating Officer Joanna Geraghty explained it has waived all change and cancellation fees for travel through the end of April, and for new flights booked through the end of March for travel through September 8, 2020.



The image shows a Facebook post from JetBlue. The post features a dark blue background with white and orange text and graphics. The main text reads "Waive those travel worries goodbye. Free changes & cancellations.*" To the right of the text is a circular graphic with a white checkmark inside, surrounded by two curved arrows, one blue and one orange. Below the main text, there is a small disclaimer: "*Bookings made 3/30-3/31/20 only. Fare difference may apply. Funds issued as a JetBlue travel bank credit, valid for one year." The post is from JetBlue, posted about 3 weeks ago, and has 1.6K likes, 402 comments, and 487 shares. The post text states: "We've waived all change and cancel fees for travel thru 4/30/20, regardless of when you purchased your ticket. And, there are no change or cancel fees on new flights booked thru 3/31/20. Details> <https://jetblue.com/travel-alerts>"

Uber

Shares of Uber fell 11.85 percent. The drop comes a day after Uber sent out a notice on social media and through email stating what steps its taking during the pandemic. Uber says its suspending drivers that have contracted or have been exposed to the virus and will provide financial assistance for those drivers for up to 14 days. It's also providing disinfectants to drivers.




The image is a screenshot of a tweet from the official Uber Twitter account. The tweet text reads: "Safety is always our priority. We are actively monitoring the Coronavirus situation and are taking steps to help keep our communities safe in all the cities that we serve." Below the text is a link: "Learn more → uber.com/coronavirus". The main visual element is a large blue shield icon with a white outline, representing protection or safety. Below the shield, there is a link to "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources & Updates" with the URL "www.uber.com". At the bottom of the tweet, it shows 196 likes and the time "5:46 AM - Mar 12, 2020". A footer indicates "444 people are talking about this" with a right-pointing arrow.

Uber @Uber

Safety is always our priority. We are actively monitoring the Coronavirus situation and are taking steps to help keep our communities safe in all the cities that we serve.


Learn more → uber.com/coronavirus



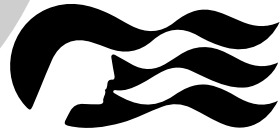
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www.uber.com

196 5:46 AM - Mar 12, 2020

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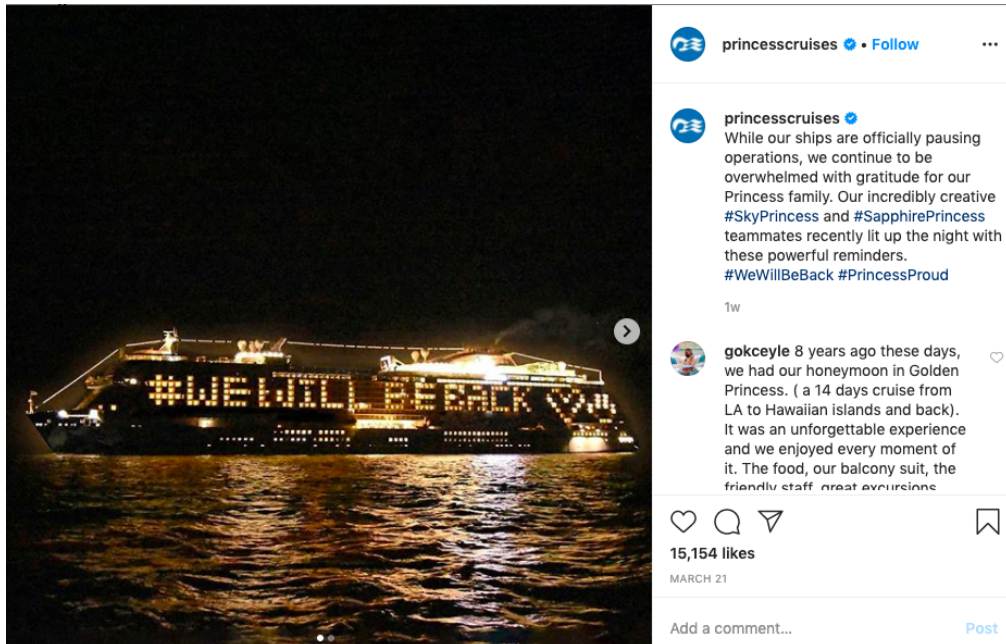


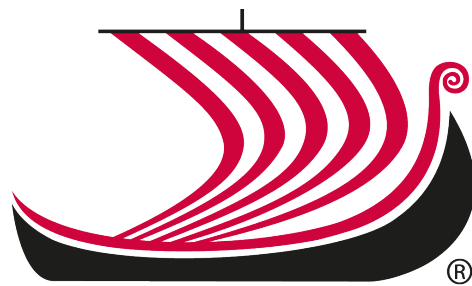
Even at the best of times, cruise ships are criticized by some for being a health hazard ("floating petri dishes") so it's no surprise that business is bad right now. One crisis expert even says it would be a miracle for the industry to recover within a decade. Cruise lines like Princess and Viking are suspending trips, while others like Norwegian and Royal Caribbean are relaying messaging about their updated cancellation policies.



PRINCESS CRUISES

The company announced it's suspending sailings across its fleet of 18 ships for two months and that guests can exchange their canceled trips for future cruises.






VIKING RIVER CRUISES

Viking Cruises announced it's suspending operations until May, and is giving guests who booked cruises during this time vouchers worth 125 percent of the original cruise price, or a total refund.



The cruise line from Richard Branson, a partnership between the Virgin Group and Bain Capital, has postponed its launch. The Scarlet Lady's maiden voyage is now scheduled for August 7, rather than April 1.



As with planes and automobiles, people have to worry about their risk of contagion on trains and buses, too.



AMTRAK®

Amtrak is offering no change fees on trips made through the end of April, has increased the frequency of its cleaning and quantity of cleaning supplies, has suspended three trains that operate between New York and Washington D.C., and is telling customers to stay home if they're feeling ill.



Amtrak ✓
@Amtrak



Safety is our top priority. We are closely monitoring the coronavirus with the help of public health experts, and we are:



Offering no change fees on reservations made through 4/30/20



Maintaining a safe, clean environment

Learn more: [amtrak.com/coronavirus](https://www.amtrak.com/coronavirus)



Coronavirus Update | Amtrak

[amtrak.com](https://www.amtrak.com)

♥ 108 5:30 PM - Mar 11, 2020



💬 106 people are talking about this





Last week, on March 5, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York seemed bullish that New Yorkers “don’t give into fear” and told commuters that the risk around coronavirus remained low. “Drive to Penn Station? At rush hour?? Absolutely not!” read one tweet.



MTA. Stay Home. Stop the Spread. ✓
@MTA



New Yorkers don’t give in to fear. The risk related to the coronavirus remains low and MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick Foye is not letting it interfere with his daily commute.

Drive to Penn Station? At rush hour?? Absolutely not!



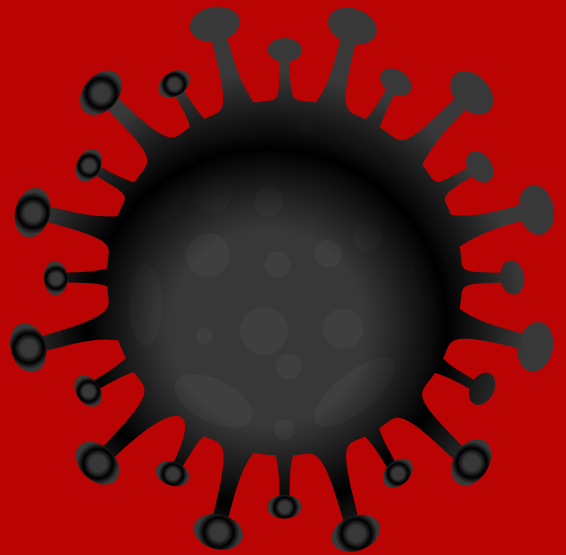
♡ 212 10:07 PM - Mar 5, 2020



💬 118 people are talking about this



**Yes,
of
course**



hurts

Sources:
Skift.com,
Rivaliq.com,
Econsultancy.com

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