

# **TripAdvisor, Yelp and others highlight venue safety, an emerging consumer decision factor**

It's safe to say that the U.S. has badly fumbled its response to COVID-19 and the pandemic will be with us through at least the end of 2020. That means consumers will probably remain cautious about returning to hotels, restaurants, retail stores, gyms and salons for the foreseeable future.

**Varying levels of consumer comfort.** In a recent coronavirus-response consumer survey, the Pew Research Center found:

- 79% of U.S. adults are now comfortable going to the grocery store.
- 53% would feel comfortable going to a hair salon.
- 44% would feel comfortable eating in a restaurant (dine-in).
- 23% would feel comfortable at an indoor sporting event.

There are significant differences in attitudes by age category and party affinity, among other variables. In the hospitality vertical, a new survey from TripAdvisor found that in choosing a hotel:

- 92% of U.S. adults surveyed said cleanliness is the most important factor in selecting accommodations.
- 84% said cleanliness or sanitization certificates are important when booking a travel experience.
- 79% said it's important to publicly display compliance to government safety standards.

**Specialized health and safety reporting.** New tools from TripAdvisor, Yelp and others are trying to help consumers

navigate this uncertain time and enable them to “re-enter” the traditional economy with greater confidence. Yelp previously said it will begin highlighting consumer input on “how businesses are handling their health and safety measures.” This will be separate from user reviews.

### **TripAdvisor COVID safety measures filter**

TripAdvisor recently introduced a new “Travel Safe” toolset for consumers and businesses. Businesses can highlight health and safety measures on profile pages and provide additional discussion “of the steps they are taking to protect customers, including links back to safety information on their own websites.”

In addition to these health and safety descriptions on profile pages, there’s a new filter “properties taking safety measures” (image above). Most consumers are probably going to use it; so hotels that aren’t participating will effectively be left out of the consideration set.

TripAdvisor is also prompting consumers with a new review form to “validate [COVID] safety measures and share their experiences with other travelers.” And would-be guests can also message hotels and business owners directly on the site to ask specific COVID-related questions, although I’m sure it will be more broadly used.

**Startups may emerge.** A startup called OpenForUs is trying to crowdsource information on, among other things, “COVID-19 readiness” at local businesses. It has a long way to go but reflects the idea that traditional search sites and publishers aren’t doing enough to convey health and safety information as people seek to “resume normal life,” which also has a long way to go.

Accordingly, there may be openings for new apps and sites to satisfy new consumer needs that weren't there even as recently as February.

**Why we care.** As the realization begins to sink in that COVID-19 will impact our lives for some time to come, these kinds of tools and data about offline business safety will be essential to attracting business and sales. Many, though not all, consumers will seek them out and rely on them to make decisions. Thus emerges another major variable in choosing, for example, a place to stay: price, reviews and health and safety practices.

## **More about marketing in the time of the coronavirus**

---

### **About The Author**

Greg Sterling is a Contributing Editor to Search Engine Land, a member of the programming team for SMX events and the VP, Market Insights at Uberall.

<http://feeds.searchengineland.com/~r/searchengineland/~3/zLRsWN08S3o/tripadvisor-yelp-and-others-highlight-venue-safety-as-it-becomes-a-new-consumer-decision-factor-336848>