



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023 IN REVIEW





# THE OUTLOOK FOR TOURISM

## A LETTER FROM KEVIN KANE

Despite a travel demand slowdown in Q4 2023, Memphis and Shelby County welcomed over 13.5+ million visitors—from both nearby markets across the river, and 50+ countries across the world. In fact, foreign travelers booked over 460+ thousand hotel room nights in our market in 2023, through international tour operators. And that’s just what we can track!

We also saw significant annual demand growth in downtown Memphis, with over 50 thousand additional room nights sold in 2023, compared to 2019. In fact, hotel room night demand in downtown Memphis outperformed 2019 levels by +6.5 percent—outpacing the national 2019 demand index by +8.2 points.

I know we’ll have to work hard to overcome the obstacles facing the travel industry right now—globally, nationally, and even locally—but I’m convinced the outlook for tourism in Memphis and Shelby County remains bright. With new hotels on the horizon downtown, refreshed attractions, and more events than ever, we have so much to celebrate—and our newly renovated sports stadiums will only enhance our destination even more.

That’s why the Memphis Tourism team is always looking forward, finding new ways to further amplify our visitor economy—now and in the years to come.

In Spirit & Soul, **Kevin Kane**  
President & CEO, Memphis Tourism



## 2023 & BEYOND TOURISM INDUSTRY

The Memphis visitor economy achieved strong results for the 2023 calendar year, despite feeling the slowing effects of economic gravity in Q4. But Memphis Tourism has never slowed down. Our team has kept working hard to boost room night demand with new strategies, intelligent tactics, and fresh ideas. With all of us working together, we know the Memphis hospitality industry will reach new heights.

### 13.5+ MILLION

2023 VISITS  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

### \$4+ BILLION

2022 VISITOR SPENDING\*  
SHELBY COUNTY

### 44.6K

2022 TOURISM JOBS\*  
SHELBY COUNTY

\*Most recent data available



# THE BEATEN PATH

## A LETTER FROM SALLY PACE

When you aren’t facing conventional obstacles, conventional wisdom can’t help you.

Overcoming a global pandemic faster than the nation. Capitalizing on the roaring return of travel with record-breaking demand less than two years later. Maintaining momentum in 2023, selling over 4+ million hotel rooms in Memphis for the second year in a row—despite significant local, national, and global hurdles.

No, conventional wisdom can’t help us understand the trajectory of the visitor economy in Memphis and Shelby County over the past 4 years. But maybe I can.

Over and over, in my tenure as the Chair of their Board, I’ve watched the Memphis Tourism team become even more intelligent, creative, and determined, as they blazed their own destination marketing path through the wilderness, together—not only strengthening the hospitality industry, but also uplifting the soul of our city.

So, no—Memphis Tourism hasn’t followed the beaten path, straight ahead. But if you’re surprised by that, you must not know much about Memphis.

In Spirit & Soul, **Sally Pace**  
Board Chair, Memphis Tourism  
CEO, Connect Healthcare Collaboration



# 2023 & BEYOND HOTEL PERFORMANCE

Overall, hotel demand in the city of Memphis was relatively flat in the 2023 calendar year, compared to the year prior. **But hotel demand in the city of Memphis remains above 2019 levels.**

**+31.7K**

DOWNTOWN HOTEL ROOMS SOLD IN 2023

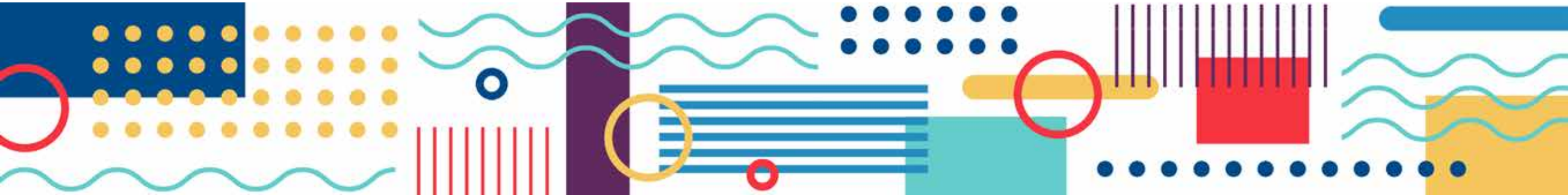
+4.3% INCREASE OVER 2022

**+6.2%**

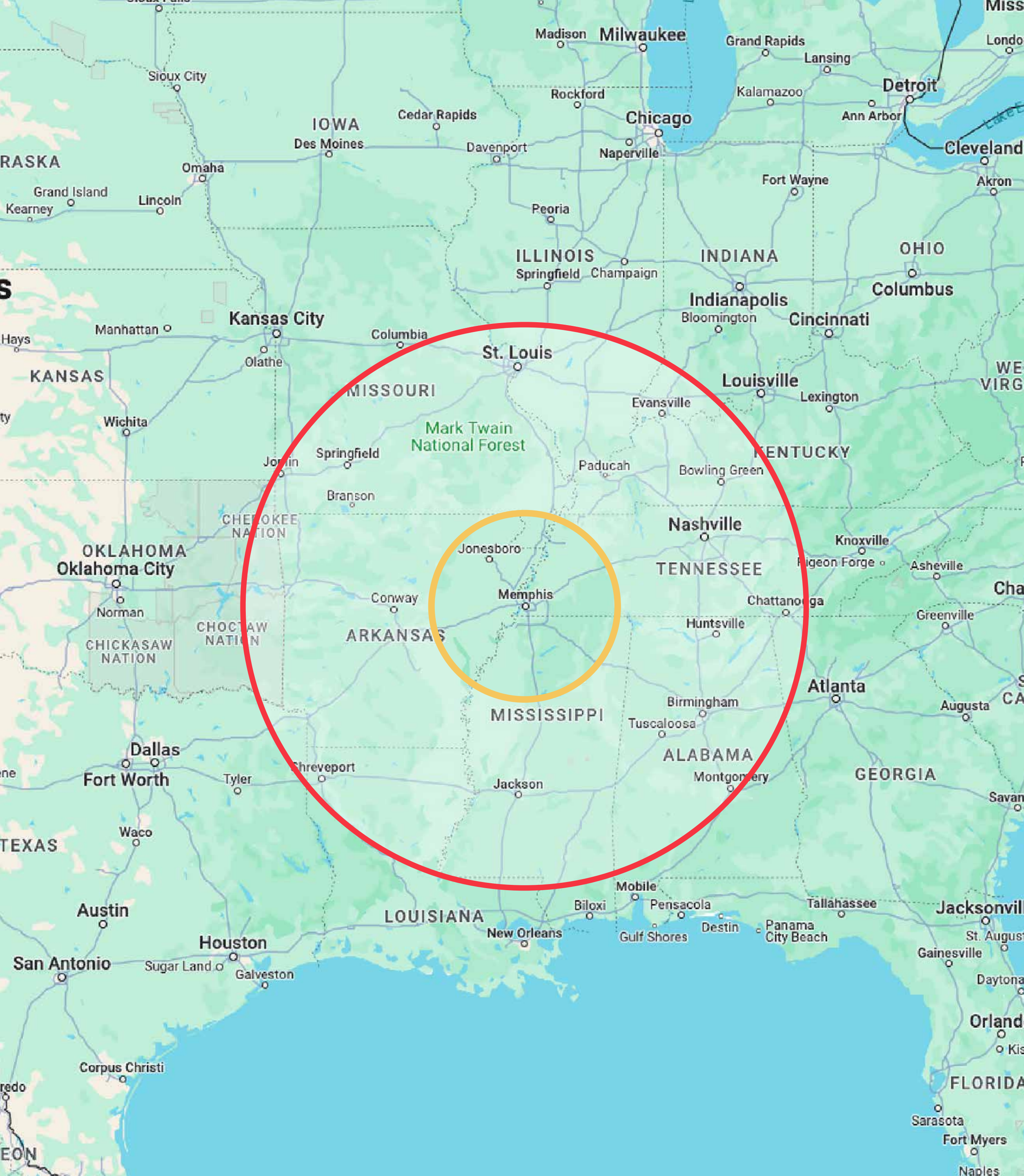
MORE DOWNTOWN HOTEL ROOMS SOLD,  
2023 OVER 2019

**+8 POINTS**

HOTEL DEMAND IN DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS  
OUTPACED THE NATION IN 2023







# 15+ MILLION

## GREATER MEMPHIS AREA VISITORS WELCOMED IN 2023

**30% PROXIMITY**  
50 TO 100 MILES FROM MEMPHIS

- Jackson, TN
- Columbus-Tupelo, MS
- Jonesboro, AR
- Paducah, KY
- Greenwood-Greenville, MS



**51%**  
GROWTH IN  
OVERNIGHT VISITS

**40% REGIONAL**  
101 TO 350 MILES FROM MEMPHIS

- Nashville, TN
- Little Rock, AR
- Jackson, MS
- St. Louis, MO
- Birmingham, AL



**44%**  
GROWTH IN  
OVERNIGHT VISITS

**30% NATIONAL**  
351+ MILES FROM MEMPHIS

- Atlanta, GA
- Dallas-Fort Worth, TX
- Chicago, IL
- Houston, TX
- New York City, NY



**6%**  
GROWTH IN  
OVERNIGHT VISITS





# HOTEL PERFORMANCE



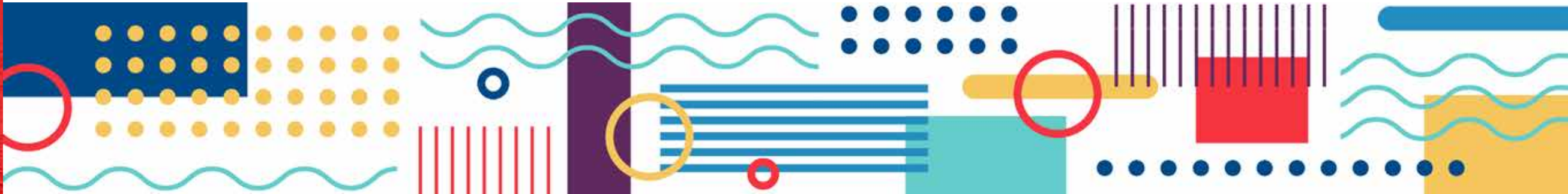
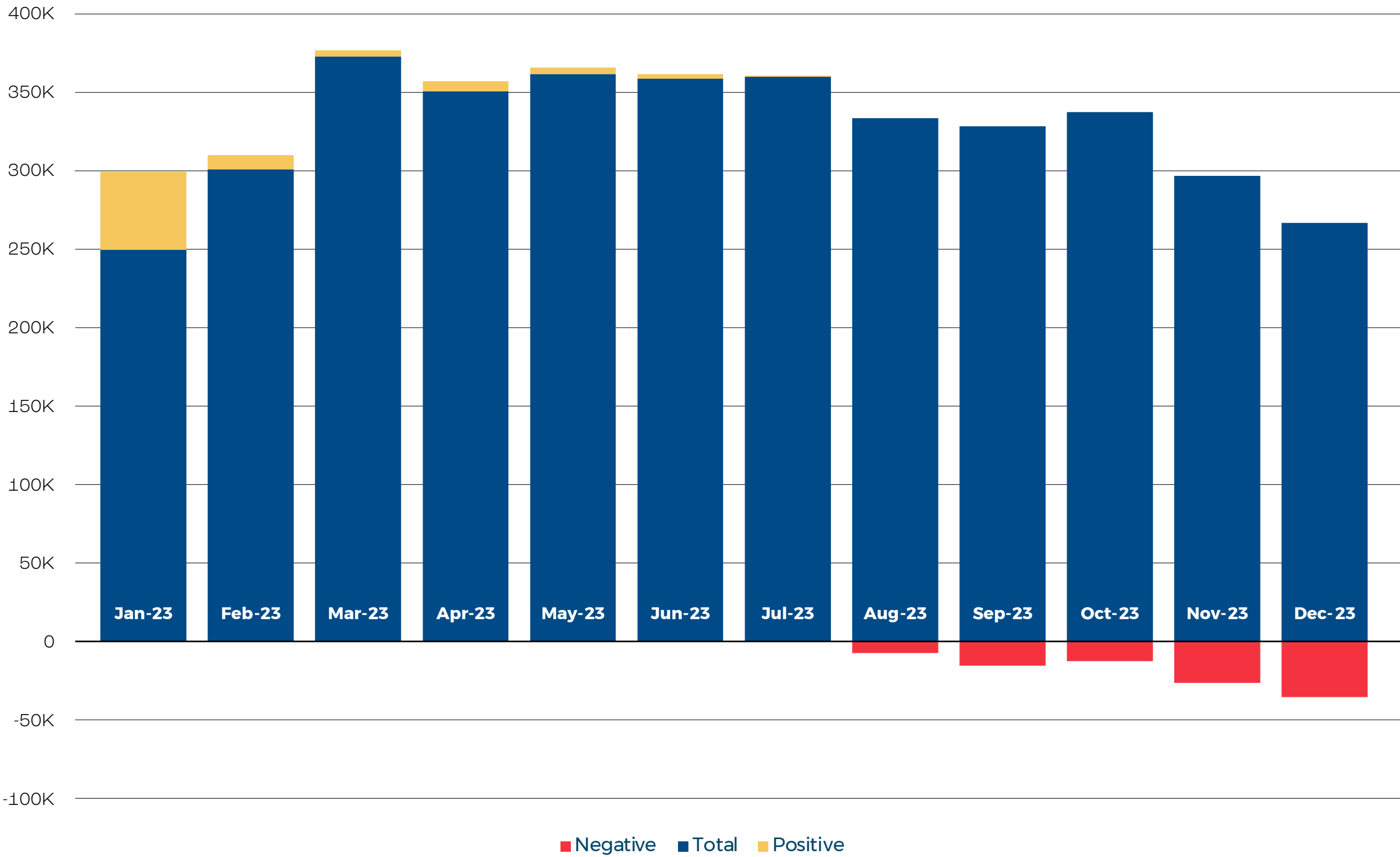


Peabody Duck March | The Peabody Memphis

# 2023 & BEYOND

## HOTEL PERFORMANCE

Hotel demand in the city of Memphis began to decline in August 2023 compared to the same time last year, after a strong start to 2023. Downtown Memphis hotel demand declined by -9 percent in Q4 2023, compared to Q4 2022.





# NATIONAL COMPLICATIONS

## 2024 CHALLENGES – TOURISM ECONOMICS

While some demand concerns can be explained by destination-specific challenges, the national travel landscape is also influencing our trajectory.

### DOMESTIC LEISURE

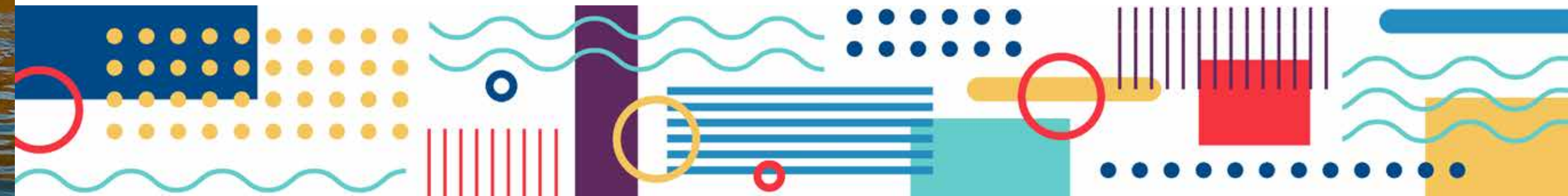
- Slowing economy
- Softening labor market
- Weak balance sheets
- Reversal of outbound international surge

### BUSINESS

- Decline in profits
- Stalled domestic investment market
- Cost-cutting measures
- Return to office mandates

### INTERNATIONAL

- Long visa wait times
- Strong dollar
- Global economic slowdown expected
- Air service still rebuilding







# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES





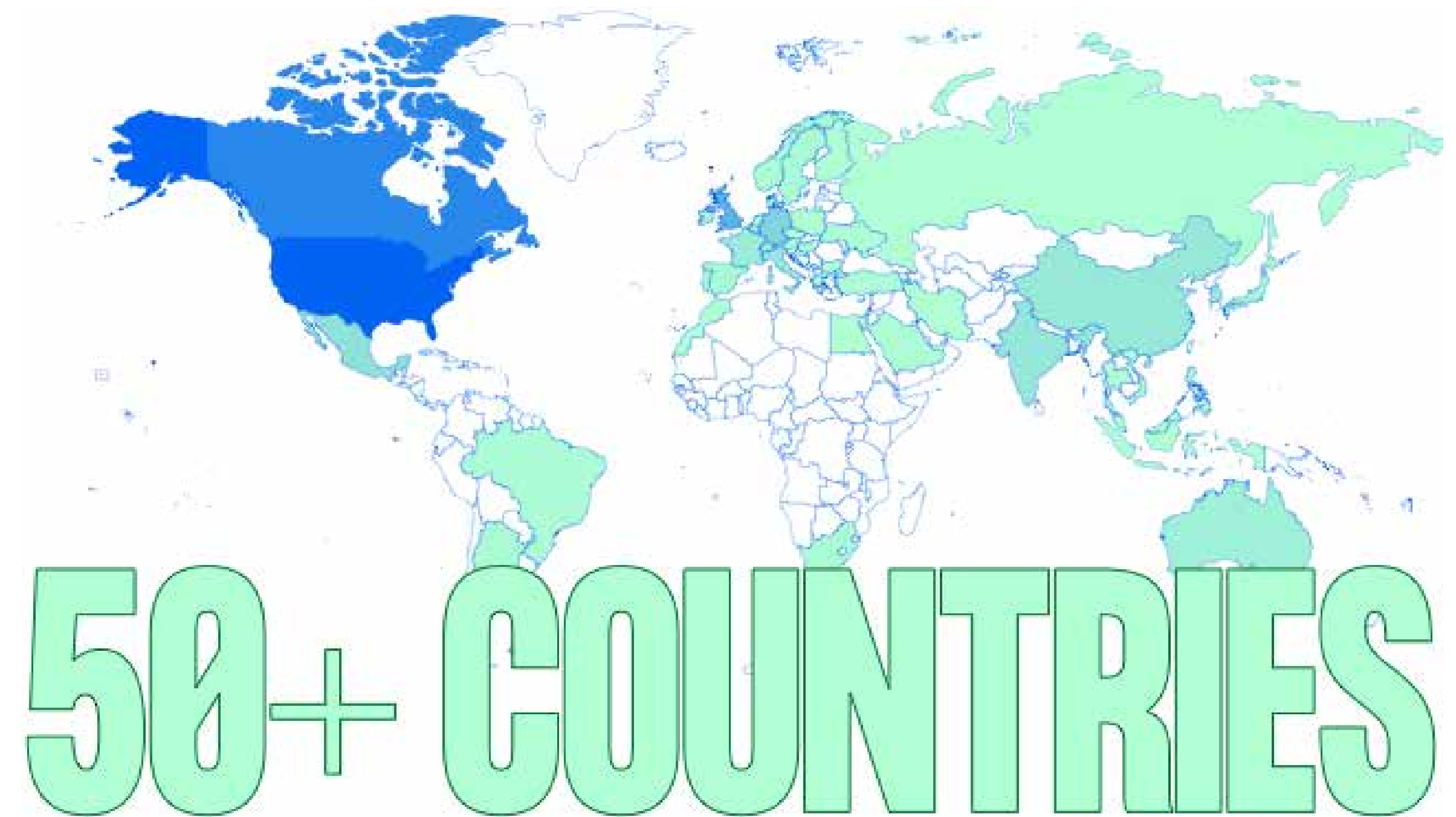
# GLOBAL SALES & MARKETING

Memphis Tourism's global marketing efforts are extensive—including 5 dedicated international offices headquartered overseas that consistently generate measurable results.

Based on our long-term relationships with the worldwide tour operators and domestic receptive operators who serve Memphis, we have full confidence that our destination will continue to attract international travelers from all over the world.

## TOP ORIGINS IN 2023 BASED ON VISITOR SPENDING

Canada  
United Kingdom  
Australia  
Germany  
Japan



TRAVELERS REPRESENTING 50+ COUNTRIES VISITED MEMPHIS IN 2023





# INT'L MEMPHIS VISITORS

## LEISURE TOURISM SALES

In 2023, Memphis Tourism promoted leisure travel to Memphis in more than 20+ countries around the world, while also working with U.S. based receptive operators.

**460+ THOUSAND**

HOTEL ROOMS ACTUALIZED IN  
THE MEMPHIS MARKET IN 2023

**18+ PERCENT MORE**

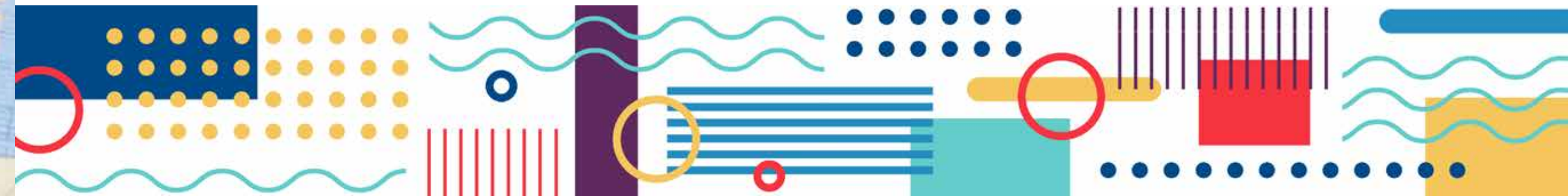
HOTEL ROOMS ACTUALIZED IN 2023, OVER 2019

**220+ THOUSAND**

HOTEL ROOMS BOOKED IN 2023 FOR FUTURE DATES

## WORLD ROUTES 2023

In partnership with the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority, Memphis Tourism attended Routes World 2023 in İstanbul, Türkiye. Our delegation met with multiple airlines to discuss our city's potential for nonstop international air service—and many of these conversations are actively ongoing.







# TRAVEL SOUTH

## INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASE

### 3+ DAYS

In 2023, Memphis Tourism hosted the Travel South International Showcase, the premier Marketplace event in the South, which includes 3 days of intensive meetings with global tour operators, journalists, and others.

### 500+ ATTENDEES

Memphis Tourism welcomed over 500+ attendees to TSIS, including more than 200+ tour operators, who send tens of thousands of visitors from around the world to explore Memphis and Shelby County every year.

### CITYWIDE CELEBRATION

Throughout the event, delegates explored our city's restaurant scene, held hundreds of marketplace meetings at our newly renovated Renasant Convention Center, and took citywide tours with stops at multiple attractions.

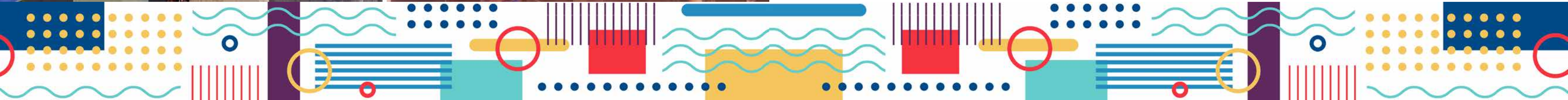
### OPENING PARTY

Memphis Tourism's opening night party for the 2023 Travel South International Showcase began with a second-line parade down Beale Street, led by the Grizzlies drumline, which was met by the Beale Street Flippers.

Once delegates arrived at the New Daisy, they were welcomed by a soul food-driven menu and signature cocktails, highlighting local flavors and suppliers.

A Marcus Scott performance topped the evening's official festivities. Afterward, delegates were encouraged to explore Beale Street, before kicking off meetings the next day.

We are grateful to the many partners who volunteered and participated in this opening party, as well as the other events and activities throughout TSIS.







# MARKETING



# VISITOR PERSONAS

## 200+ VARIABLES

WE CAN DEFINE OUR VISITOR AUDIENCES ACROSS 200+ VARIABLES,  
BASED ON EXTENSIVE SURVEYS

### PROXIMITY

#### 65 percent Gen Z and Millennial

Budget-conscious travelers

Social-media influenced

Love finding local favorites

### NATIONAL

#### 75 percent first-time visitors

90 percent will stay 3+ nights

57 percent over the age of 40

More likely to travel without kids

### REGIONAL

#### Most likely to travel with kids

72 percent 40 to 60 years old

48 percent are bargain hunters

Less frequent vacationers

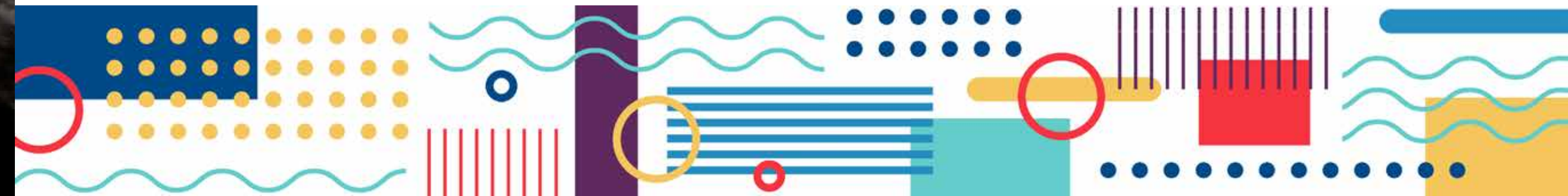
### INTERNATIONAL

#### Plan to spend the most money

82 percent Gen X and Boomer

4+ vacations annually, on average

Self-proclaimed music history buffs





# DESTINATION PERCEPTION STUDY

In 2023, Memphis Tourism conducted a destination perception study of 1.5 thousand Gen Z and Millennial travelers across the nation. With this data, we were able to identify our key competitive advantages, compared to four major competitors.

## NEW GATEWAYS

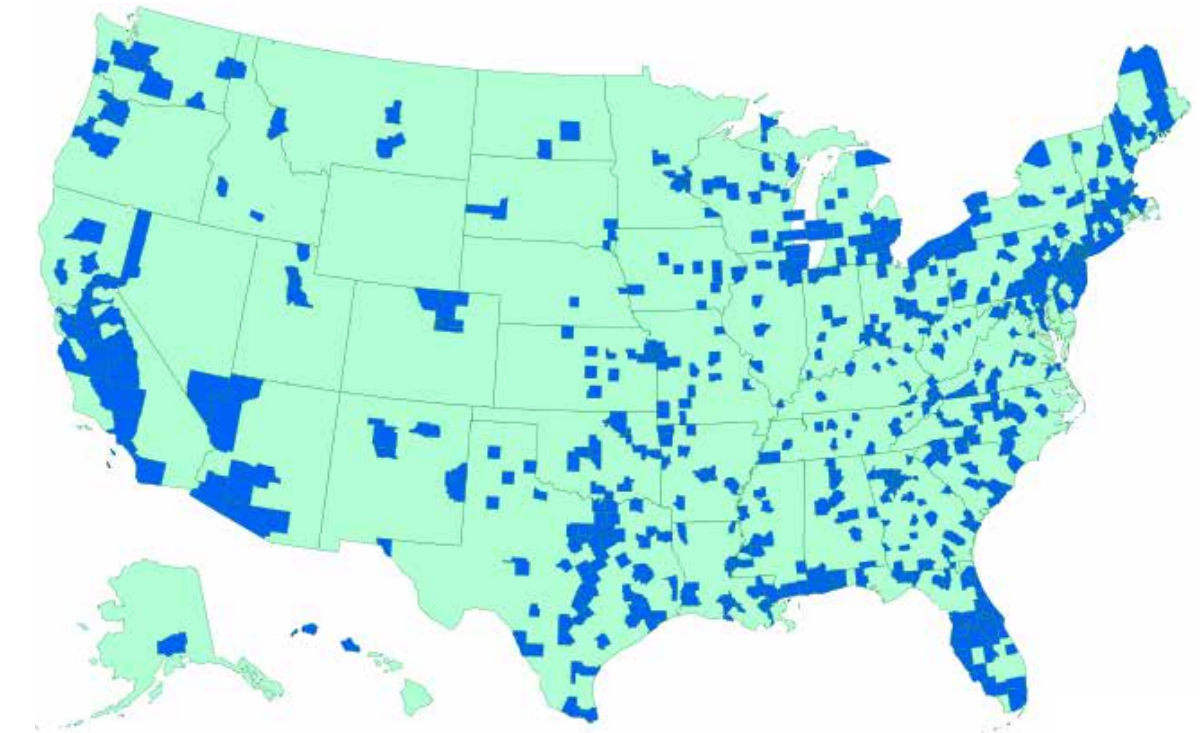
Respondents who were most interested in visiting Memphis had already visited other cities in our competitive set in the past 5 years. These competitive cities can be gateways to the Memphis experience.

## CORE MESSAGES

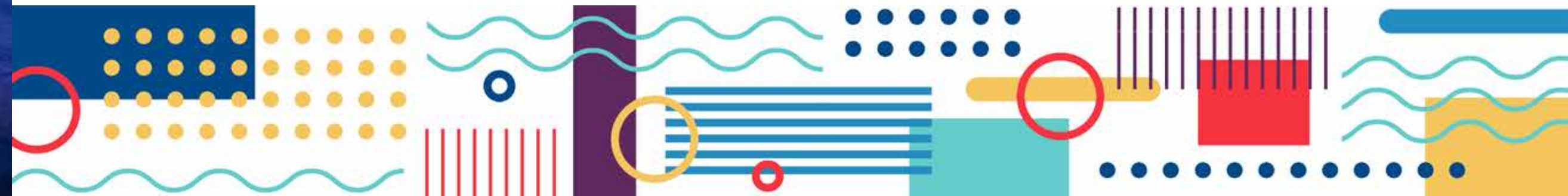
Our audience has heard the Memphis destination messages, loud and clear—music history, nightlife and live music, as well as history and culture, are all core associations among aspiring visitors.

## CRIME PERCEPTIONS

Crime is primary negative association for every city in our competitive set—and several of our major competitors are much more likely to be associated with crime than Memphis.



1.5K RESPONSES  
80% OF ALL DMAS  
ALL 50 STATES CAPTURED





# CORE PAID MEDIA TACTICS

## SEARCH

Paid Search Results  
YouTube Video Results  
Based on Keywords

## SOCIAL

Carousels  
Photos  
Videos

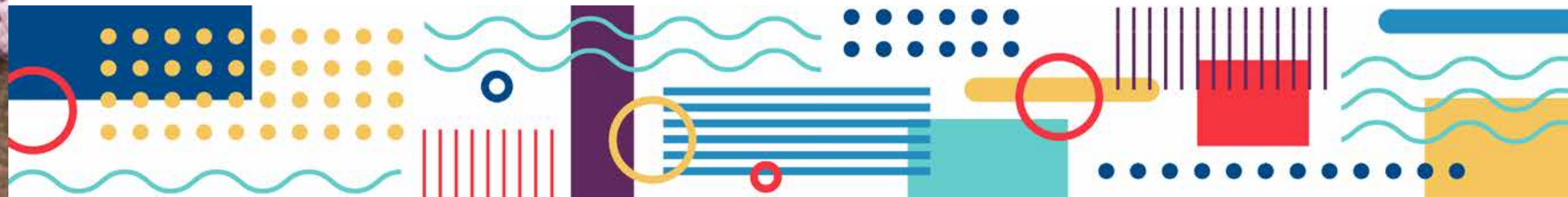
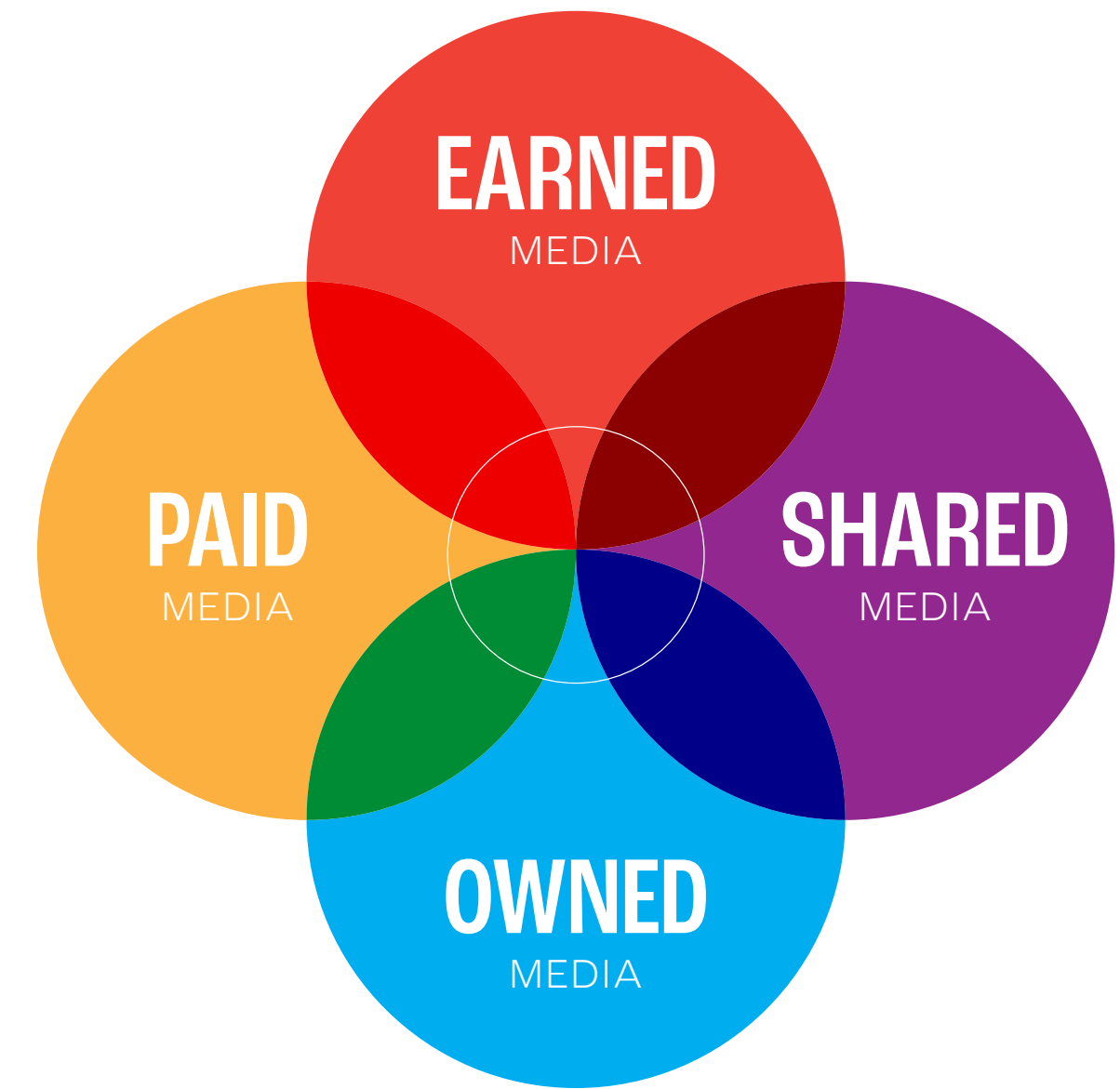
## VIDEO

Programmatic Delivery  
Connected TV  
Instream Video

## NATIVE + DISPLAY

Embedded Content  
Advance Targeting  
Reliable Tracking

## THE PESO MODEL







Raifords Disco | Darrell DeRosia

# CORE PAID MEDIA TACTICS

## ARRIVALIST TRAVEL, QUANTIFIED

Through our partnership with Arrivalist, we can measure how effectively our paid media influences actual arrivals to the Memphis market, using pixels.

Arrivalist provides key datapoints about our ad-viewers:

ARRIVAL VOLUME

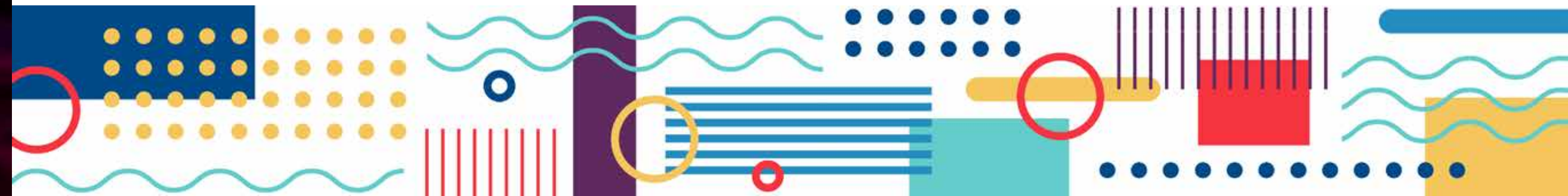
TRIP DURATION

ORIGIN MARKETS

Next, utilizing survey data and traditional media metrics, we can estimate the ROI generated by our paid media—which allows us to double-down on tactics that drove the best results.

# \$27 : 1

MEMPHIS TOURISM 2023 VISITOR SPENDING ROI







# PUBLIC RELATIONS

## BUILDING THE BUZZ

### MEDIA IN TOWN

229 media visited Memphis in 2023, traveling from a variety of national and international destinations such as New York, Atlanta, Japan, Australia and Canada, to name a few – with many traveling to Memphis for the first time. Writers that visited contributed to top outlets like the New Zealand Herald, The Grio, and Blavity.

### BY THE NUMBERS

In 2023, the Memphis Tourism PR Team secured over \$10.6 million in earned media coverage through travel writer FAM visits, in addition to direct phone, e-mail, and marketplace connections with journalists.

**+229**

2023 JOURNALISTS  
HOSTED IN MEMPHIS

**1.6K**

2023 PR STORIES PLACED

**\$10.6** MILLION

2023 TOTAL AGGREGATE  
AD VALUE EARNED



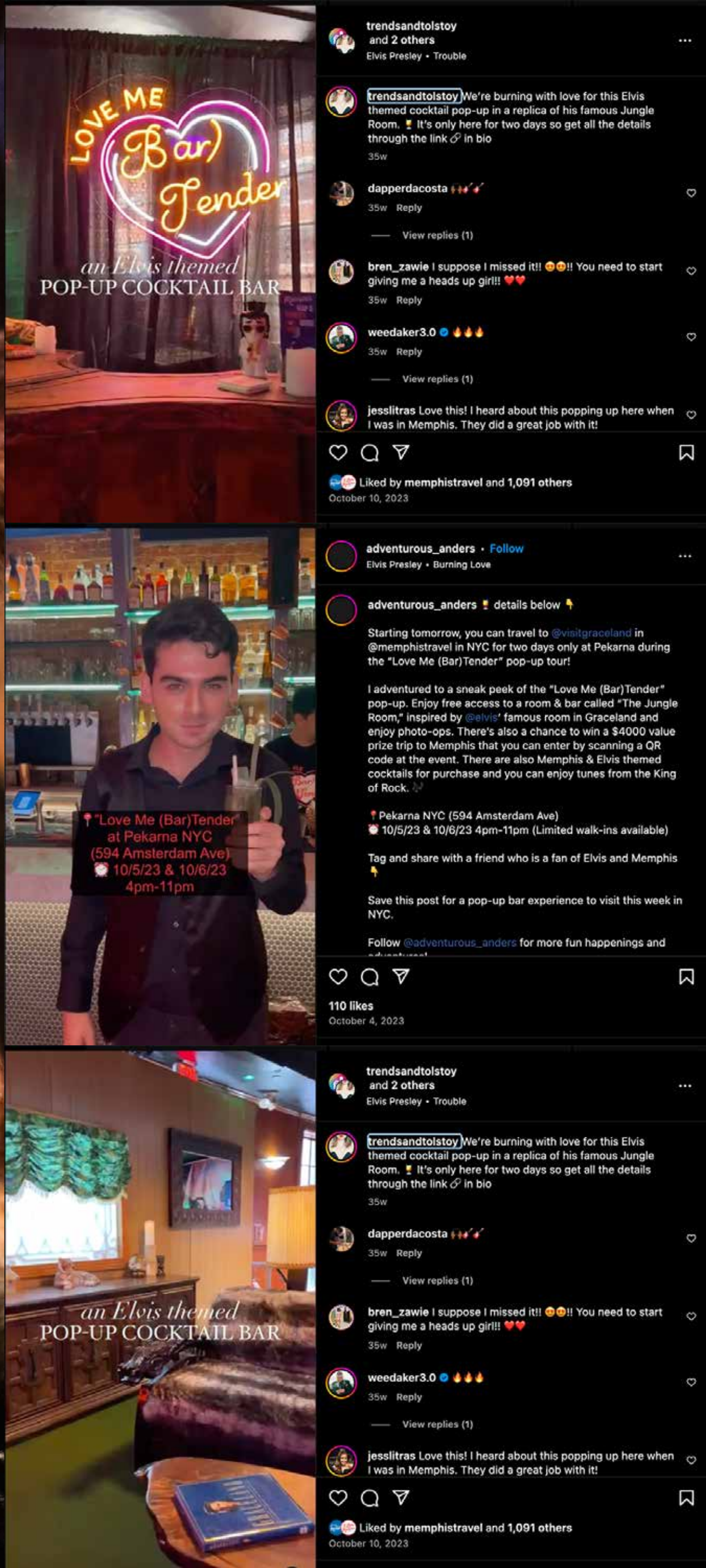
**Wild Memphis: how a new paddle-powered tour sees the musical city in a new light**

A new expedition company is using sail- and paddle-powered canoes to explore the mighty Mississippi River and across the wilderness on Memphis's doorstep.





LMBT Jungle Room - Rebecca Smevne for Memphis Tourism



# LOVE ME (BAR)TENDER

## ELVIS-THEMED POP-UP

### 3+ ACTIVATIONS

Memphis Tourism recreated the Graceland Mansion “Jungle Room” as an experiential PR activation in key national markets, including Boston, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, where music history is our top travel motivator.

### \$3.7+ MILLION

Love Me (Bar) Tender generated 175 articles about Memphis, from publications like People Magazine, AdWeek, and the Boston Globe. Combined, this coverage is equivalent to an estimated \$3.7+ million in aggregate ad value.

### 4.7+ THOUSAND

Over 4.7 thousand people were transported to the Jungle Room by attending one of our first three pop-ups. Our guests included top tier journalists, social media influencers, and other local VIPs, who further amplified our message.



LMBT Jungle Room Chicago - Memphis Tourism PR Team





# SOCIAL MEDIA

INSPIRING LOCALS TO LOVE OUR CITY

## LIVING IN MEMPHIS

**+57 PERCENT**

Social media followers of the Memphis Travel or I Love Memphis Blog accounts are **+57 percent more likely to recommend living in Memphis** to their family or friends, compared to users who follow other local social accounts, but not either of ours.

## VISITING MEMPHIS

**+47 PERCENT**

Social media followers of the Memphis Travel or I Love Memphis Blog accounts are **+47 percent more likely to recommend visiting Memphis** to their family or friends, compared to users who follow other local social accounts, but not either of ours.

**3.3+ MILLION**

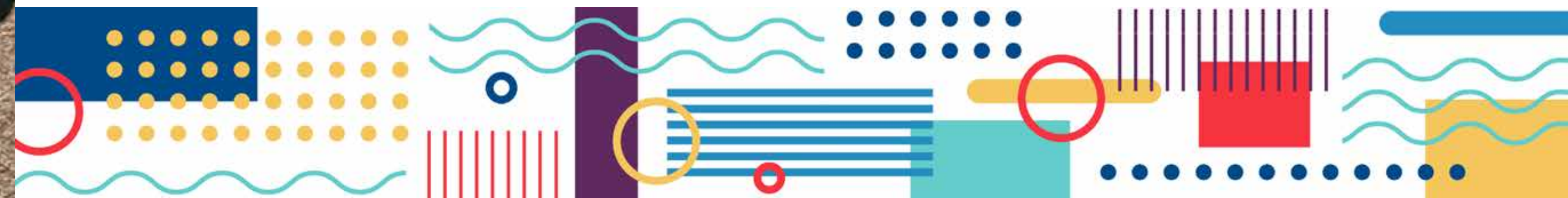
ENGAGEMENTS ACROSS ALL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

**429+ THOUSAND**

FOLLOWERS ON OWNED SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

**4.3+ THOUSAND**

OWNED POSTS ON ALL SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS IN 2023

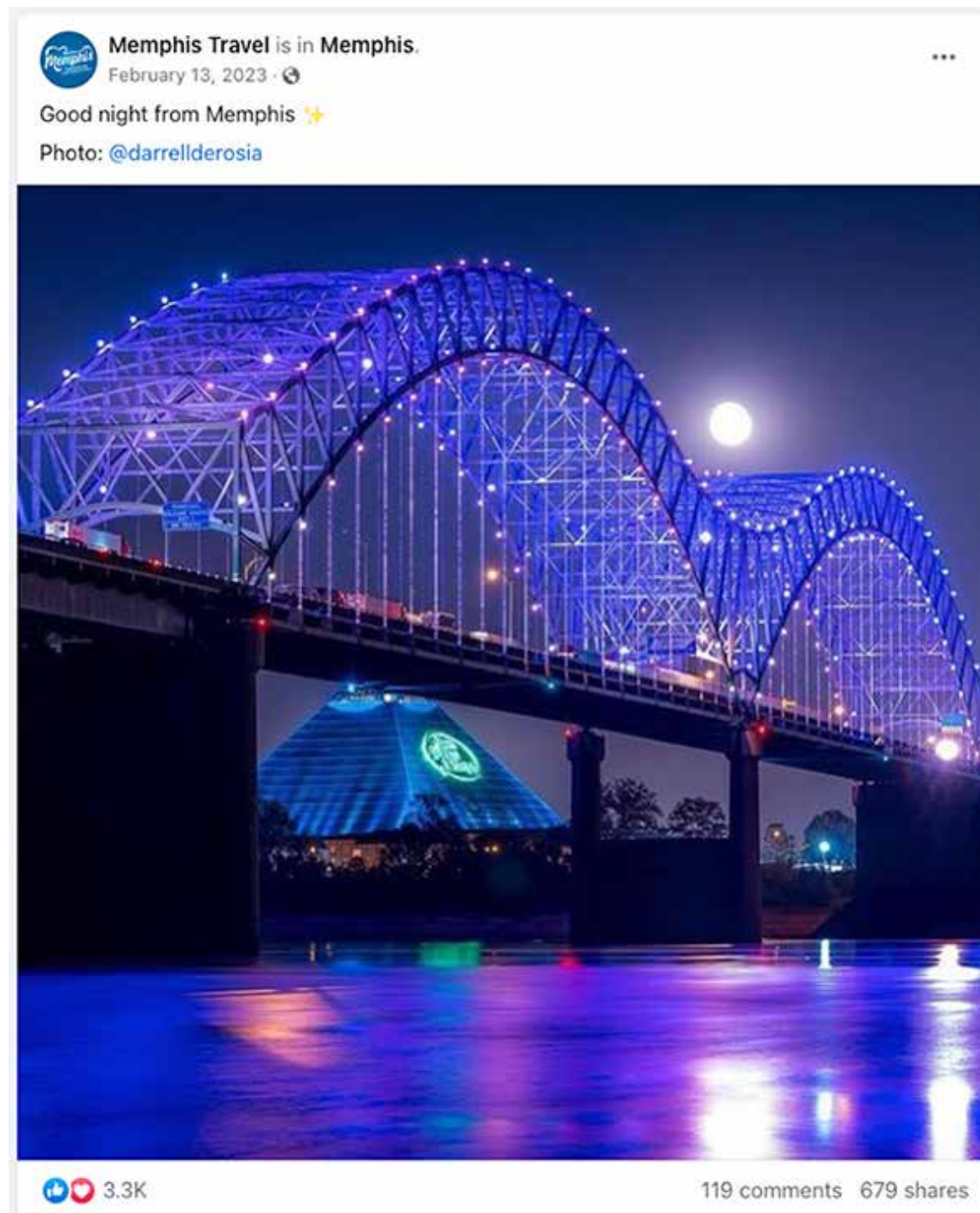




# MEMPHIS TRAVEL: TOP POSTS

## FACEBOOK

+1.39K MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than top 2022 Facebook post



## INSTAGRAM

+9X MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than average Instagram post



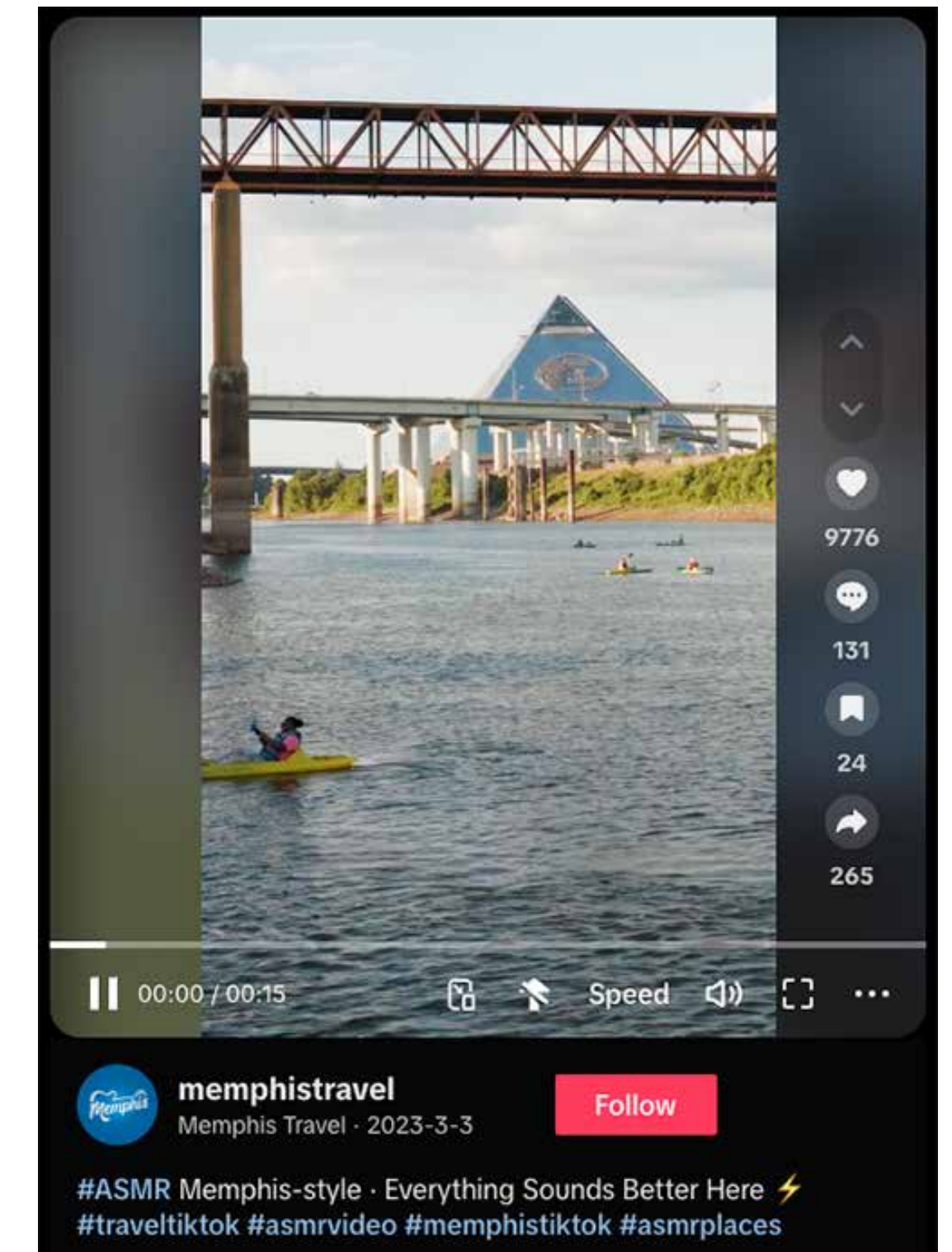
## X (TWITTER)

+26X MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than top 2022 X post



## TIKTOK

+3X MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than top 2022 TikTok post





# I LOVE MEMPHIS BLOG: TOP POSTS

## FACEBOOK

+4.3X MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than top 2022 Facebook post



## INSTAGRAM

8K+ ENGAGEMENTS  
on this Instagram post



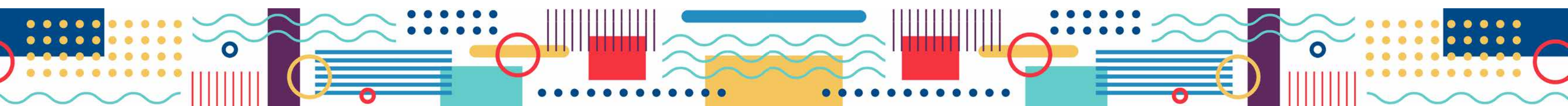
## X (TWITTER)

+5X MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than top 2022 X post



## TIKTOK

+21X MORE ENGAGEMENTS  
than top 2022 TikTok post

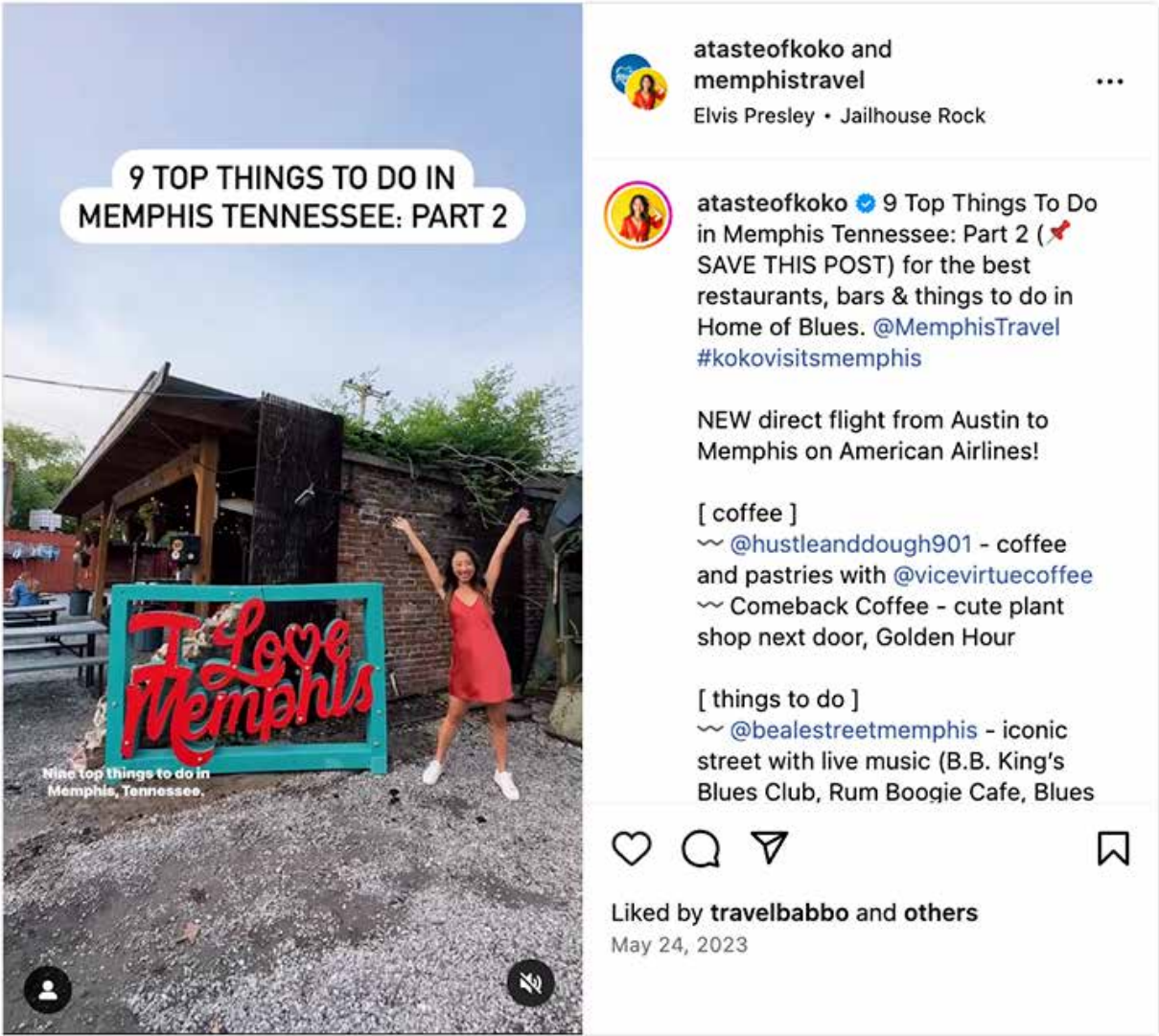




# TOP INFLUENCERS

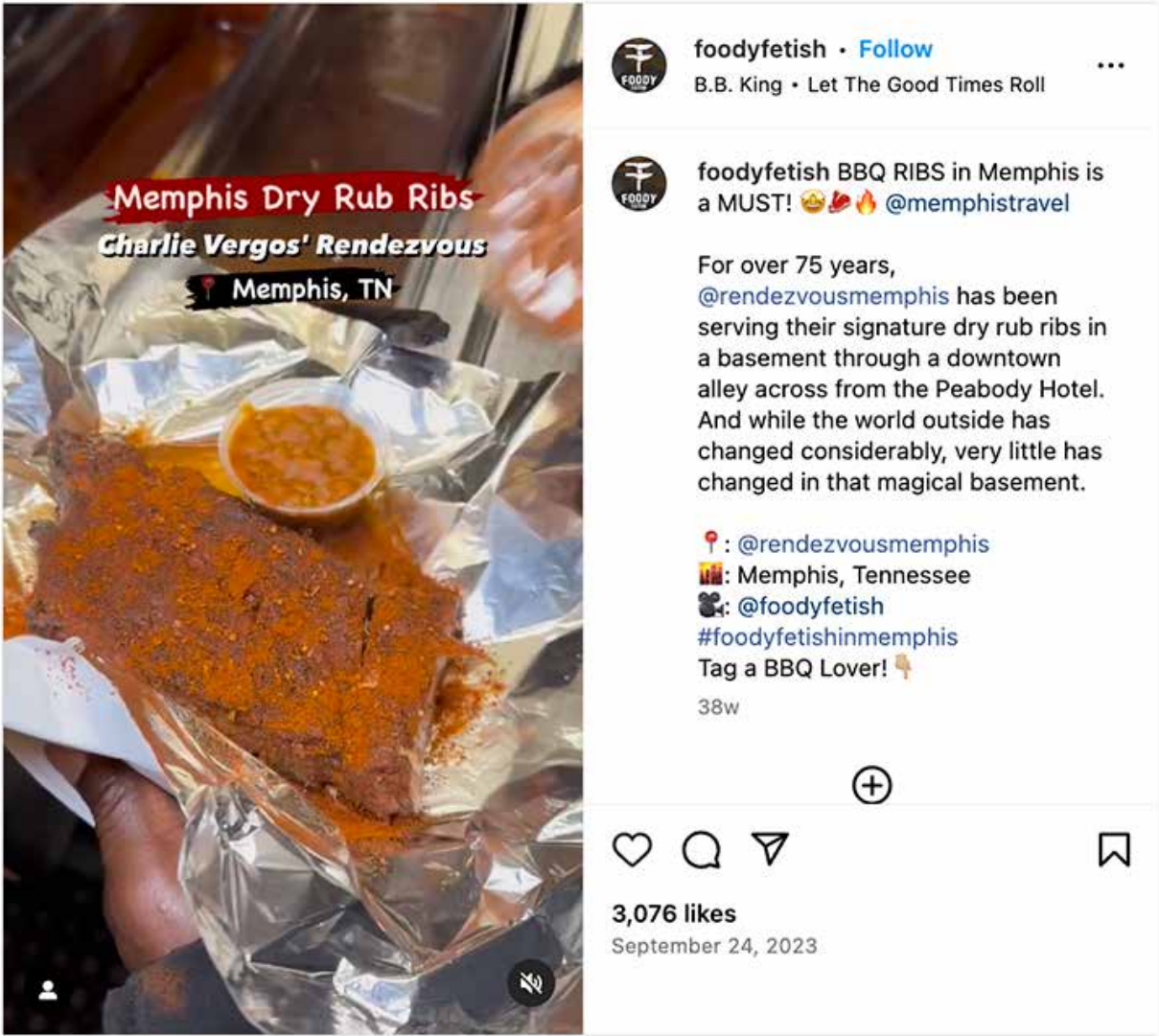
## A TASTE OF KOKO

471K+ VIEWS & ENGAGEMENTS



## FOODY FETISH

374K+ VIEWS & ENGAGEMENTS



## MARIA PONOMARYOVA

59.2K+ VIEWS & ENGAGEMENTS



# INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS

20+

2023 INFLUENCER PARTNERS

33+

CROSS-PLATFORM ACCOUNTS

1+ MILLION

VIEWS & ENGAGEMENTS





# DIGITAL CONTENT

The Memphis Travel website is a marketing impact multiplier. Travelers who view the Memphis Travel website are 5X more likely to visit Memphis, compared to a control group.

## LOOK HERE

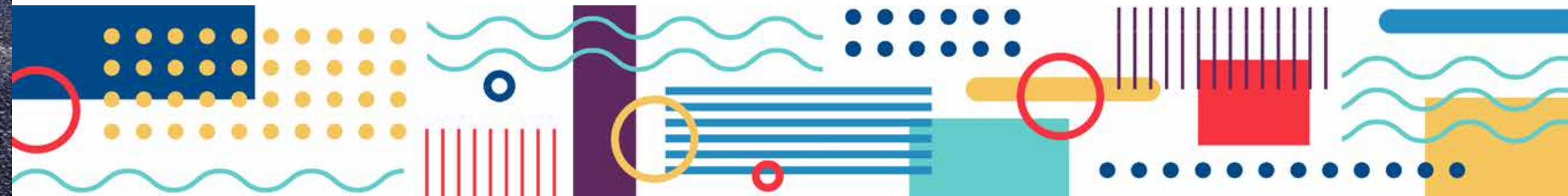
Our content team generated **3.6+ million** pageviews on the Memphis Travel website, and **over 2.0+ million** pageviews on the I Love Memphis Blog.

## PERFECT HANDOFF

Memphis Travel generated **over 241+ thousand clicks to partnered websites**, as well as 16.2+ thousand visitor guide requests and digital views.

## TOP CONTENT

The Memphis Travel **pages that attracted the most organic views** included our attractions page, lists of free things to do, our event listings, and kid-friendly activities.







# MEETINGS & SPORTS





# MEETING IN MEMPHIS

## BY THE NUMBERS

**205.5K**

GROUP ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED  
FOR 2023 AND BEYOND

**216.2K**

GROUP ROOM NIGHTS ACTUALIZED  
THROUGHOUT 2023

**\$142.2M**

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ACTUALIZED  
ROOM NIGHTS IN 2023







Conference on Beale Street | Alex Shansky

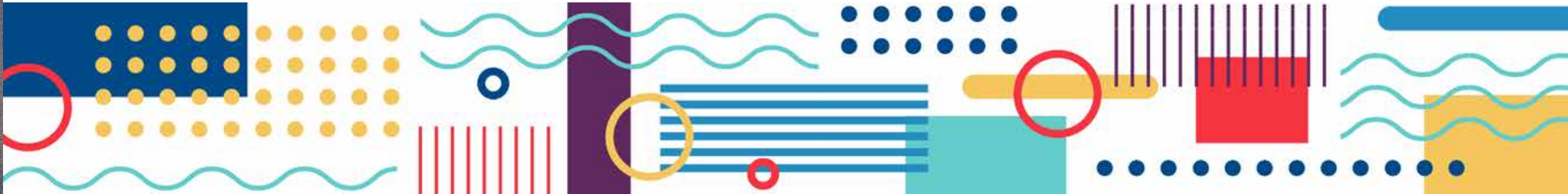
# MEETING IN MEMPHIS

## BY THE NUMBERS

### New Conventions

Memphis Tourism's convention sales team secured significant new business in 2023.

Event	Rooms
American Association of Feline Practitioners	2.6K
Global Industrial Cooperation Association	1.5K
National Bikers Roundup	11.1K
American Contract Compliance Association	3.1K
Clean Water Professional Of Kentucky & Tennessee	1.7K
Partnership Southern Equity	1.9K
MacDon Industries LTD	2.1K
The Presbyterian Church In America	4.9K
FreedomFest	2.8K







Memphis Challenge Volleyball | Greg Campbell

# MEETING IN MEMPHIS

## BY THE NUMBERS

### New Sports Events

Memphis Tourism's sports sales team secured significant new business in 2023.

Event	Rooms
Made Hoops	3.7K
Netlyx Sports	1.6K
NCAA Sports Academy	14.1K
Playbook Group	4.2K
Showtime Events	1.6K

### Retained Events

Memphis Tourism retained key existing accounts in 2023.

Event	Rooms
St Jude Children's Research Hospital / ALSAC	4K
Church of God in Christ	20K
Southern Cotton Ginners Association	5K
AutoZone National Sales Meeting	5K





The Lookout at Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid | Larry Kuzniewski and Brian Groppe

# WELCOME TO MEMPHIS



# WELCOME TO MEMPHIS

## RESOURCEFUL

This past year, Welcome to Memphis has continued its mission to support, train, and recognize workers in the Memphis hospitality and tourism industry, with the implementation of new programs and the continuation of guest-facing employee training in customer service and Memphis familiarization.

Welcome to Memphis stands firm in its vision to be a living and working resource that listens and adapts to the needs of the hospitality and tourism industry.

## 150+ JOBS

An online jobs board was launched on the Welcome to Memphis website in September 2023. The job board is free for both job-seekers and job-creators. Users have already posted over 150+ hospitality and tourism jobs in Memphis and Shelby County—and counting!

## 3 KEY GOALS

### TRAINING

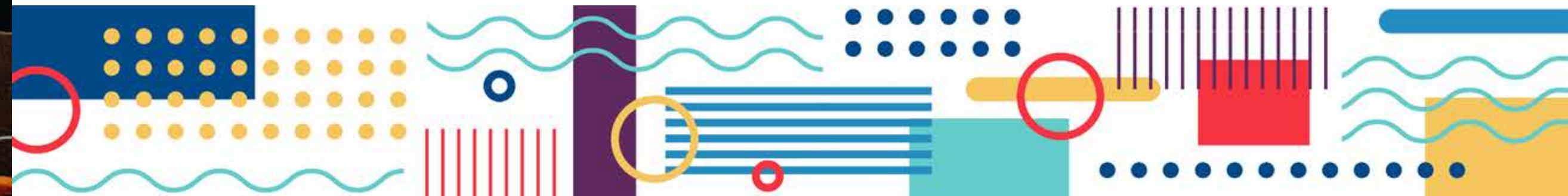
Relaunch guest-facing training with updated content and a fresh educational approach.

### RESOURCES

Support the hospitality workforce through educational resources and advocacy.

### PICK AWARDS

Grow awareness of hospitality industry careers by amplifying our Pick Award program.







Corky's BBQ | Craig Thompson

# MORE MEMPHIS





# OUR BOARD

## BOARD MEMBERS

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### **Sally Pace, Chair**

Chief Executive Officer  
Connect Healthcare Collaboration

### **Doug Browne, Vice Chair**

President & GM  
The Peabody Memphis

### **Craig Unger (A)**

General Manager  
Memphis Redbirds

### **Harold Graeter, Secretary**

Associate Executive Director  
AutoZone Liberty Bowl

### **Scott Brockman, Treasurer**

President & CEO  
Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority

### **John Butler**

President  
Agricenter International

### **Welby Stamps**

Director of Branding & Private Client  
Promotions  
Renasant Bank

### **Dwight Johnson**

Vice President, Arena Operations  
FedEx Forum/Memphis Grizzlies

### **Faith Morris**

Chief Executive Officer  
Culture Lift Inc.

### **Pat Mitchell-Worley**

President & CEO  
Soulsville Foundation

### **Boo Mitchell**

Owner  
Royal Studios

### **Jim LoSapio**

President  
Beale Street Merchants Association

### **Yancy Villa**

President & CEO  
Yancy Villa Art

### **Cindy Addison**

Vice President of Sales & Marketing  
Wright Investments, Inc.

### **Joel Smith**

Market President  
Simmons Bank

### **Kevin Brewer**

Principal  
LEO Events

### **Rose Flenorl**

FedEx Global Citizenship Manager  
FedEx Services

### **Ted Townsend**

Chief Economic Development Officer  
Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce

### **Zoe Kahr**

Executive Director  
Memphis Museum of Art

### **Terry Blue**

President & CEO  
Memphis Shelby County Airport Authority

## EX-OFFICIO

### **Mike Miller**

Ex Officio,  
Memphis Restaurant Association

### **Michael Todd**

Ex Officio,  
Metro Memphis Attractions Association

### **Commissioner Mickell Lowery**

Ex Officio,  
Shelby County Commission

### **Council Member Ford Canale**

Ex Officio,  
Memphis City Council

### **Allison Fouché**

Ex Officio,  
Office of the Mayor of Memphis

### **Danielle Inez**

Ex Officio,  
Office of Mayor of Shelby County



“Catching the blues is unavoidable, especially when walking down historic Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee. It’s a place where the blues, along with soul, and rock and roll spill into the street.”

**WEST NEWS MAGAZINE**



“Nashville was to country music what Motor City was to cars, the place to make a consumer product. Memphis birthed — or at least midwived — the blues, when club performers on Beale Street showcased a new sound that would rock and roll the world.”

**TRAVEL + LEISURE**

“Recently, an influx of fun, quirky businesses has bolstered [Memphis’s] historic assets. Here are the spots to see before you swivel your hips onto bluesy Beale Street.”

**HEMISPHERES**

“While there’s much more to Memphis from the active music scene of Beale Street, to the Stax Museum of American Soul Music and the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968, it’s difficult to resist the city’s Elvis heritage which comes in many forms beyond Graceland.”

**TRAVELLER**

“Barbecue may be king in the Tennessee city, but meat is only half of the story.”

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

“The Central Station Memphis by Hilton Curio Collection has to be the first [hotel] I’ve experienced that is built into a fully functional Amtrak station. And the result is simply sensational.”

**THE AU REVIEW**

“Here [in Memphis], the evolution of music has mirrored Black culture within the city, the Deep South and beyond. To gauge the American social climate, look to music, and look to Memphis.”

**TORONTO STAR**

“The city of Memphis has been quietly reshaping itself to be the hottest destination in Tennessee. Over the past decade, its downtown has invested billions in revitalization projects—and now, visitors can begin reaping the benefits.”

**CONDÉ NAST TRAVELER**





THANK YOU