

# Advertising Through Uncertainty

[BEHAVIOUR CHANGE](#) [CONSUMER](#) [COVID-19](#)

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## Consumer Confidence

This week, consumer confidence dropped by two points to -9, ending a three-month streak of consecutive improvement. It's thought that there will be further deterioration as lockdown continues.

During a global health crisis there are three key phases; acute outbreak, recovery and then the new normal. Right now, most of the world is in or entering acute outbreak, with the economy, the media and consumer confidence feeling the knock-on effects.

Below we share a current update on changing behaviours of media, people and brands as well as potential opportunities during this current pandemic.

## Media Behaviours

During financial crises, brands that spend come out stronger.

As people's lives are changing, media plans will have to adapt but it's important to keep the longer-term implications of the decisions that we make now in mind. The contribution of media to growth needs to be balanced with the short-term changes in purchase behaviour.

### Messaging

When using media in this time, salience remains important when entering conversations, but meaning and difference are still extremely strong indicators of work that will lead to long-term growth; they enable the brand to deliver the 'punchline' at the moment of decision-making. This crisis creates new opportunities for creating meaning and brands should spend time thinking what their role in the world at this time could be, as well as the role of creativity in meaning. However, while altruism is one route to increasing meaningfulness, brands need to be careful that they don't appear to be exploiting the crisis for their own success.

### Media consumption

Brands should consider the effects of the pandemic on media consumption behaviour. The simple rule of thumb for media consumption right now is that if it can be accessed at home, expect consumption to rise, and vice versa. Furthermore, in some cases collaborative consumption is also rising. For example, Spotify have reported an increase in collaborative playlists during the last few weeks as people connect with one another over shared music.

### People's behaviour

The change in media behaviour comes as a result of the changes in the wider population's behaviour. Since coronavirus struck and lockdown was enforced, there has been an almost 50% rise across communication and social media apps. High growth has been seen in

Facebook Messenger (+60%), WhatsApp (+73%) and Zoom (+750%). In total, some people are spending more than 10 hours a day on their phone and social media. However, in a recent survey on the topic by the Metro it was reported that 80% of people said they are also using the phone to stay in touch. (Source: Kantar, Campaign Live, Viewers Login, MailMetro).

With coronavirus being on everybody's minds, there has been an 11,434% increase in coronavirus related searches since the start of January. Captify have highlighted the concerns that are generating the most search interest with consumers, but brands can also consider what other things their customers might be searching for, and whether they have the content that might be able to help them. Brands might consider looking at the searches on their own sites, and whether the most useful and recent content has been placed on the homepage.

Demands in content are also changing. Spotify have reported an uptick in listeners adding 'chill' tracks (more acoustic, less danceable) to their playlists, while news brands are seeing a rise in people seeking entertainment and positivity. The Ozone Project reports that the biggest sources of unique users across news brand websites is entertainment – 22.1 million users- and sports – 20.5 million users. The Guardian found that around 50% of its readers said it's important to try to produce more coronavirus-related good news, while Mail Online are finding that baking recipes and emoji quizzes are proving most popular content streams. Gaming is also seeing an uplift, with Captify predicting that there has been a 200% increase in searches for gaming globally. Twitch, the streaming video game platform, has seen its fifth week-on-week live audience growth.

Some businesses are adapting to consumers' changing demands for consumption by investing in digital routes to market. For example, Universal's Trolls World Tour became their first ever home cinema release with LinkFire. DFS and Sky are also developing new online journeys to help meet the changing demands of their customers.

## **Brand behaviours**

The pandemic has led to consumers changing what they have come to expect from brands.

The majority of people have indicated that they think advertising should use a reassuring tone (69%), inform the audience about the brand's efforts to face the situation (69%), show how they can be helpful in the new everyday life (66%) and not exploit coronavirus to promote themselves (60%). (Source: Kantar)

In some cases, brands may find that they have to prioritise existing customers over new ones; some brands are pausing performance budgets to manage demand, some are ensuring that existing customers and those most in needs are prioritised and some are adapting customer experiences to ensure the most positive experience possible. In some cases, businesses with supply and demand challenges are redirecting spend to prioritise providing customer support over sales. For example, British Gas reviewed all copy, adlinks and landing pages to ensure that they are appropriate and useful, easing pressure on engineers and call centres.

For other businesses it has been about focussing on removing friction in the consumer journey. NOW TV, for example, are reviewing propositions to ensure that they are offering the most relevant and useful services, as well as fixing bumps in the journey to capitalise on increased demand.

Facing into the crisis is key to being meaningful; brands should think what would be both a genuinely helpful and meaningful contribution for customers, connecting with people in the right places and in the right context. Good examples are Halifax's 'Here to Help' press ads and Budweiser's gift-card initiative for supporting local pubs.

Finally, driving relevancy is directly affected by brands' ability to adapt quickly to changing behaviour. Being quick can both look good and help to differentiate your brand from competitors. For example, Tesco went from 'brief' to 'live' in two and a half days with their social responsibility ad when social distancing was first introduced.

You can read the full report [here](#)

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