

Cutting Edge: Our weekly analysis of marketing news

1 April 2020

Welcome to our weekly analysis of the most useful marketing news for CIM members.

Quick [links](#) to sections

Marketing trends and issues

Advertising

Ad industry draws up ad MOT

Keith Weed, president of the Advertising Association, talks about the declining levels of public trust in advertising. Campaigns about the coronavirus show that “when a message needs to be delivered to people with power and clarity, advertising remains the most effective way to do this”. But recent events will not make up for years of declining trust and a lot more needs to be done after the crisis is over. The UK ad industry’s Trust Working Group, which came up with a five-point industry action plan, found that “advertising bombardment” and “excessive frequency” were the top drivers of public negativity. Following on from this, ISBA has launched an Advertising Experience MOT, an independently verifiable test for safeguarding the consumer. It contains five main elements.

**marketingweek.com, 26 March 2020 (Weed);
adassoc.org.uk, 23 March 2020 (Mason)**

Carry on advertising say consumers

Brands face the problem of whether to carry on advertising during the pandemic and hope they resonate with consumers, or to stop until it is all over. Yet only 8% of consumers believe that brands should stop advertising, according to a global survey of consumers by Kantar. While 50% say that brands should talk as they have always done, 41% think they should avoid humour and 74% say that it is not acceptable to exploit the situation. Campaigns that support healthcare messages and the need to stay indoors, such as those from Ikea and Nike, are welcomed.

marketingweek.com, 27 March 2020

Coca-Cola halts all UK adspend

Coca-Cola GB is to suspend all marketing activity in Britain. This will be a huge blow for agencies, such as Ogilvy, Wieden+Kennedy and McCann, which share some of Coca-Cola’s £3.7 billion global ad budget. A spokesperson for the brand said that, “we don’t believe it would be appropriate” to continue marketing in Britain at the moment and “we will focus our efforts on how we can make a difference to our consumers, customers and communities in the weeks and months ahead”. Coca-Cola’s actions reflect the deteriorating advertising environment.

thedrum.com, 25 March 2020 (Glenday)

Agencies

Publicis to launch AI system company-wide

Publicis plans to roll out its artificial intelligence platform, Marcel, to its worldwide operations by the end of April. This week its 30,000 US employees will receive Marcel in a move that has been accelerated by the pandemic. CEO Arthur Sadoun reports that in the UK, where Marcel has been in use for eight months, engagement has risen “significantly” during the crisis. Employees can use Marcel to access company and industry information, training modules and updates on Covid-19.

adage.com, 30 March 2020

ICRC and VMLY&R in humanitarian campaign

VMLY&R, which has offices around the world, has partnered with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in a year-long initiative. The aim of the campaign is to target Millennials and Gen Zs on social media platforms to “confront apathy and encourage humanitarian action”.

prolificlondon.co.uk, 27 March 2020 (Spargo)



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Brands and branding

Brands can help relieve consumer anxiety

FMCG companies and retailers can play a key role in helping to alleviate consumer anxiety as they adjust to the crisis, according to IRI Australia's report, *COVID-19: Impact On the Australian FMCG Landscape*. It offers a number of suggestions, such as positioning indulgences as "antidotes to reality" and adjusting marketing messages and channels away from OOH and into digital, using social channels as an "engagement bridge". Ultimately "Consumers will place more value than ever on authentic and transparent reassurances" says IRI. This will help to shape brand equity in both the short- and long-term.

warc.com, 24 March 2020

Reimagining brand logos in the age coronavirus

Some creative efforts inspired by the coronavirus have been well received online. These include the reimagining of various brand logos by Jure Tovrljan, a motion and graphic designer. They include the Mastercard logo, where the two circles have been separated to denote social distancing, Starbucks' mermaid seen wearing a face mask and Nike's messaging changed to "Just Don't Do It". (See also under Public relations and Transport)

creativebloq.com, 19 March 2020 (Coggan);

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/93755381/Coronavirus-Logos>

Strong brands get stronger

Nike is helping to tackle the pandemic through actions including exploring designs for personal protective equipment for doctors, nurses and others. It has also launched a digital campaign across Europe and the US encouraging people to stay healthy and connected while at home. CEO John Donahue is adamant that: "We know in times like these that strong brands get even stronger" and he expects Nike to make a full recovery. Even though 80% of Nike's stores in China have reopened, its digital business is still ramping up. Donahoe says this reflects the company's "agile problem-solving in times of disruption".

marketingweek.com, 26 March 2020 (Vizard)

Children

Betting ads could make children into gamblers

Children exposed to gambling ads are more likely to become gamblers later on, according to research from Ipsos MORI and the University of Sterling. There are concerns that children will see many more gambling messages because of having to stay at home during the coronavirus. The report reveals that 96% of 11 to 24-year-olds have seen marketing messages over the past month. It estimates that 41,000 UK followers of gambling-related material on social media are likely to be under 16.

marketingweek.com, 27 March 2020

Conferences and events

AI event tools

Artificial intelligence is transforming everything from marketing to entertainment, transport and delivery. It is also changing how we meet and there are many tools on the market that are using AI to assist with various aspects of events. Wordly, a simultaneous interpretation system, uses AI voice recognition to translate a presentation into 15 languages; Zenus and others are using facial recognition to aid check-ins at events; TrackMany anonymously tracks attendee demographics; Grip helps to put you in touch with the right people at conferences; and Rasa.io is a content aggregator that delivers content according to user interests.

Association Meetings International, April 2020, p28 (Ball)

Taking a conference online

Many conference organisers are moving their industry events online. US not-for-profit The One Club for Creativity, is preparing virtual trade shows and awards ceremonies. But moving online isn't as simple as it sounds; Scott Varland of Jack Morton Worldwide, says you can't simply take an offline experience online "and expect that you're going to meet your objectives". So, how do you make a virtual event into something more than just a webinar? High-quality video streams with TV-level production and interactive audience engagement are key to competing with offline, according to Varland. Webcasting company Intrado Digital Media uses a live polling system to recreate the feedback of a live audience where the speaker responds in real time. The web platform could feature an image of a convention hall with small photos of people standing in it. Robin van Lieshout, co-founder of community management platform inSided, believes the crisis could be a turning point for how people view remote events.

Adweek, Vol 61(8) 20 March 2020, p8 (Kulp)

Consumer behaviour

McKinsey has been tracking consumer sentiment in China, Italy, Spain, the UK and the USA to find out how their income, spending and behaviour is changing during the coronavirus crisis. The latest graphs, relating to 21-22 March, indicate that just 23% of UK consumers are optimistic that the economy will rebound within 2-3 months, compared with 48% in China (the most optimistic) and 13% in Italy (the least). The most pessimistic consumers are in Spain (36%) compared with China (6%) and the UK (24%).

mckinsey.com, March 2020

Direct marketing

Direct marketing during the pandemic

The current lockdown and disruption to business makes distance communication with customers and

clients more important than ever. But companies must be careful not to breach ePrivacy rules on direct marketing, as this could lead to hefty fines. This blog examines some of the main issues that companies in the UK should consider when engaging with customers. It covers the type of information that can be sent by email or SMS and when marketing to customers by phone.

lexology.com, 25 March 2020 (Evans and Brimsted)

Law

Responsible advertising, fair pricing

Some businesses that have sought to exploit the coronavirus have been in breach of advertising and consumer regulations. The ASA has recently banned two companies from making false claims about the effectiveness of facemasks and the CMA has been clamping down on pricing practices that break consumer protection laws. Amazon and eBay have started removing products from their sites which make questionable claims or that have been deliberately overpriced. Companies should ensure that they comply with the law and with CAP codes for both broadcast and non-broadcast media by ensuring: that all advertising is socially responsible; that it is clear and truthful; that price changes are fair and reasonable; and that marketing does not equate to harassment or "undue influence through the use of aggressive pricing or advertising mechanics".

lexology.com, 9 March 2020 (Brown and Ryan)

Marketing

The CMO role, proving corporate value

Prior to the advent of digital, marketers didn't have a measurable way of tracking their company's growth and proving their own value. Now CMOs have the wherewithal to measure their value and this should help to enhance their roles within the business. eMarketer's *The Future of the CMO* report describes conversations with over 60 marketing leaders about how they prove their worth. This article offers brief extracts from what seven CMOs had to say and their relationships in the boardroom.

emarketer.com, 26 March 2020

Focus on the 4Ps, not just communications

Are you tired of receiving so many concerned (coronavirus-related) emails from brands? Mark Ritson says: "What feels wrong about these tweaked logos and earnest acts of direct marketing is that they are focused around communications and by definition are superficial". It seems that marketing departments have moved away from the 4Ps towards just one thing, namely communications, yet good marketers should be doing a lot more. "Rather than dwell on all the inane Covid advertising fluff", why not follow the example of those who have responded with the other marketing Ps. He cites three examples: Uber Eats, which has been making

changes to delivery protocols; Iceland, the first supermarket to give the elderly priority shopping; and Meny, a Danish supermarket which used pricing to deter people from hoarding hand sanitiser.

marketingweek.com, 25 March 2020 (Ritson)

Marketing ops teams - staying agile

When the agile movement first started, it involved face-to-face communication, with some "agilists" even claiming that if people aren't co-located then they are not agile, says Stacey Ackerman of agile training services company Aglify. Now that remote working has become a necessity, some marketing operations teams must learn how to maintain their agile practices while their fellow team members work at home. Here is some advice for doing this, such as keeping lines of communication open, having the right tools in place and having a working agreement.

marketingland.com, 25 March 2020 (Gesenhues)

Market research

Demographics – what next?

Quantitative research is still the most frequently requested and applied data approach but does it have a future? The author argues that demographic differences, which "have long been the crutch of the lazy quant researcher", uses data that is cut crudely by age or gender. These days age is becoming less of a predictor of behaviour which makes it unreliable as an analytical device. One of the most unpredictable generations is Gen Z where the wider cultural context, rather than just age, must be taken into account. Demographics is certainly under pressure to change as part of the analytical tool kit and it's time to consider what comes next...

research-live.com, 24 March 2020 (Power)

Public relations

Not lovin' it!

Many brands are emphasising the importance of social distancing. McDonald's decided to highlight the issue by separating its famous Golden Arches into two separate arches. The ad, which appeared in the company's social media accounts in Brazil, attracted a fierce backlash and the logo and associated posts have since been removed. McDonald's has also apologised in a statement to *The New York Post*. This is a reminder that brands should be backing up their coronavirus-creative initiatives with actions rather than appearing to be opportunistic.

creativebloq.com, 25 March 2020 (Piper)

Rethinking your PR strategy

Even the most prepared of businesses won't have a crisis plan in place for the coronavirus. Although the pandemic will affect each brand differently, there are certain challenges that they will have in

common. Even well-meant communications can damage a brand's reputation and you may want to consider carefully before associating your brand with a global crisis. Here are some things to consider when working out your pandemic PR strategy.

thedrum.com, 27 March 2020 (Sparrow)

Sponsorship

Olympics branding – 2020 not 2021

The Olympics has been postponed until 2021 but the IOC has announced that Tokyo 2020 will continue to use 2020 branding. This leaves brands with a dilemma because their names will be linked to an out-of-date year. The Tokyo 2020 logo is already being used on merchandising and OOH ad campaigns. The 2020 Olympics could set an example for other major events that have had to be cancelled or postponed. So how should branded events deal with this? The author asks some brand strategists for their thoughts. Ultimately, altering the branding for Tokyo 2020 would require a "potential overhaul of its \$1.3 billion marketing budget", not to mention tapping sponsors for more money.

fastcompany.com, 29 March 2020 (Smith)

Olympic sponsors can look for opportunities

The postponement of the Olympic Games presents challenges for sponsors but pushing the Games back to 2021 could provide an opportunity for greater engagement and a stronger relationship with the Olympic movement. Brands could get involved with the storylines around athletes changing their training schedules or athletes who might get a chance to compete next year but have missed out on this year's selection. Andy Westlake, chair of the European Sponsorship Association, says that the Games will be "a massive catalyst for a bounce out of this terrible time that we're living in at the moment."

marketingweek.com, 27 March 2020

Play the long game

With most sporting events being cancelled or postponed, how can sponsors rescue their investments in sponsorship programmes? Alex Burmaster of sports marketing platform caytoo, offers four pieces of advice to help sponsors get through this difficult period. One answer is to try to "fill the void" for fans. Trying to counteract their disappointment might even give sponsors more opportunity to create goodwill among fans than in normal circumstances. Ultimately, however, it is important not to compromise long-term relationships by reacting negatively.

warc.com, 13 March 2020 (Burmaster)

Agriculture, fishing and forestry

It's blooming awful for garden centres

In Britain some 2,000 nurseries and garden centres have been closed because of the virus. This so-called "ornamental horticulture" has no alternative outlet for its plants and the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) warns that up to a third could go out of business. Garden centres who produce seasonal plants will have no choice but to bin their plants because their entire supply chain has been shut down and there isn't enough delivery capacity to fulfil online sales. There are around 23m gardeners in Britain who will be stranded at home during the virus but won't be able to get their hands on the plants they need!

bbc.co.uk/news, 31 March 2020 (Jack)

Britons turn to growing their own

More than half of UK food (53%) is produced by domestic suppliers, but 28% comes from the EU which has been hard-hit by the coronavirus. Britain's reliance on seasonal agricultural workers from overseas is also an issue as is the fact that one in ten people involved in crop and animal production is over 70 years old. Sales of fruit and veg are soaring and consumers, who are looking for ways to fill their time, are turning to homegrown produce. According to the Royal Horticultural Society, the demand for fruit and veg plants, herbs and compost has risen significantly this month compared with a year ago.

bloomberg.com/news, 31 March 2020 (Meakin and Shankleman)

Building industry

Builder aims for plastic-free industry

A Merseyside builder has launched a scheme to remove plastic from the British construction industry by 2050. Neil Maxwell, who founded not-for-profit Changing Streams after seeing the high levels of plastic pollution in the Arctic, has drawn up a programme together with researchers at the University of Liverpool. In the UK the construction sector is the second largest producer of plastic waste after packaging. Maxwell has also drawn up a charter for builders which he hopes will become legally binding.

theguardian.com, 30 March 2020

Hard hat AI helps remote working

Stoneforce, a building contractor, has been trialling a new AI-based technology from Oculo.ai which can help building sites to minimise the number of people on site during the coronavirus. The technology offers project managers, quantity surveyors and health and safety inspectors a 360-degree view of the site without having to be physically present. A worker wears a camera on their hard hat enabling

professionals to interact with a virtual site online.
constructionenquirer.com, 30 March 2020 (Prior)

Businesses and strategy

What CEOs do now and in the future...

The Covid-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented situation for governments, business and society. Business leaders must react promptly with actions to protect customers, employees and the company. There are various actions they should be taking if they haven't already done so: these include setting up a rapid response room; ramping up communications; staying loyal to customers; and engaging with staff. However, urgent steps are not enough in themselves and CEOs should also be planning for what happens after the virus has subsided. There are questions they should be asking such as "What is the shape of the recovery?" and "What will change for good?"

bcg.com, 20 March 2020 (Poulsen et al)

...and a five-day plan for CEOs

Companies that come through the coronavirus will have CEOs that can "rapidly assess these new circumstances, recognize new patterns and opportunities, and act with urgency". Those who can't do this, may not survive. Here's a five-day plan to help CEOs of cash-flow negative companies respond with the necessary speed and urgency. However, before embarking on a course of action, the CEO must also assess the external (the economy, current target markets, new markets and forecasted recovery date) and internal (operating numbers including marketing spending, and sources of additional capital) environments.

hbr.org, 29 March 2020 (Blank)

Making remote meetings work

Workers have never had so much on their minds as during this pandemic. Yet now is a time when business leaders need their employees to focus more than ever to help their companies survive the crisis. Those who have not worked remotely before are faced with a new set of challenges including the possibility of miscommunication in an environment that is devoid of the usual visual cues and reminders. There are some best practices that leaders can introduce particularly for remote meetings where employees need to communicate and plan. Here are six steps leaders can put in place to ensure that remote meetings are effective.

fastcompany.com, 26 March 2020 (Summers)

Covid-19 – what major companies are doing

A new study from Gallup provides insights into what steps 100 large companies are taking to protect their employees, clients and partners from Covid-19 while trying to reduce the impact on their business. Some of the actions taken by these businesses

include: forming crisis management teams; developing protocols for when an employee has been diagnosed with the virus; limiting travel; monitoring business impact; encouraging wellbeing; testing technology; maintaining good communication; and having bespoke training.

warc.com, 18 March 2020 (Whiteside)

Automation a priority as employees stay home

A new survey from EY reveals that 41% of company bosses across 45 countries are speeding up their automation plans as people are forced to work at home and businesses prepare for a post-virus situation. Some 43% of the 2,900 executives who took part in the survey said they expected to return to normal by the third quarter of the year, but 73% expect Covid-19 to have a "severe impact" on the economy. The majority plan to focus their investment on digital and technology once normality returns.

theguardian.com, 30 March 2020

Charities and NGOs

A digital action plan

Digital marketing agency Mediaworks has issued an action plan for charities and businesses on how to be, "agile and adapt your marketing approach based on potential digital opportunities and threats" during the Covid-19 pandemic. This follows a survey of charity leaders which showed a decline in confidence in using digital. As their shops have closed, charities need to ramp up their online retail marketing and make use of platforms such as Amazon and eBay, according to the action plan. They should also use analytics to focus marketing in the right areas.

charitydigital.org.uk, 25 March 2020 (Lepper)

Changing names

A charity's name, which may have been in place for many years, is one of its most valuable assets. As the world changes, many charities need to change their name to better reflect what they do and reach new audiences. Blood Cancer UK changed its name twice in four years, moving from Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research to Bloodwise and then its current title. Collette Philip of branding consultancy Brand by Me, identifies three main reasons for charity name changes: if the name is misleading; if people can't remember it; or if it is inappropriate or offensive. Charities shouldn't change just because they have become bored. Philip advises that charities should have the right in-house resources as well as seeking external, objective help for a rebrand.

Third Sector, March-April 2020, p53 (Ricketts)

Economy

Consumer price inflation

The Consumer Prices Index 12-month inflation rate was 1.7% in February, down from 1.8% in January. The ONS attributes the slight slowing in the rate of inflation mainly to the fall in the price of motor fuel, games, toys and hobbies. There were price rises in recording media, restaurant and hotel services. The largest contribution to the inflation rate came from housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels.

ons.gov.uk, 25 March 2020 (Gooding);
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/february2020>

Population trends

The ONS's latest population study, *Our population – Where are we? How did we get here? Where are we going?*, looks at how the UK population has changed since the beginning of the 20th century. It examines the main themes of the country's demography including births, deaths and migration. The data are related to a model for understanding population change and how far it can be used to look at the future. A key observation is that over the past year the birth rate across the country has been at its lowest recorded level. Moreover, the almost 100-year rise in average life expectancy has been slowing over the past decade.

ons.gov.uk, 27 March 2020 (Crofts and Stripe)

Covid-19 – over-70s and homeworkers

The ONS has published its first statistics looking at the impact of the coronavirus on the UK economy, labour market and society. This forms part of a series of publications on the topic. The first two releases cover employment for those over 70, who are regarded as amongst the most at risk from the virus and who represent 1.6% of people in employment. The other report, which relates to homeworking, says that 8.7m people (less than 30% of the 32.6m workforce) have worked from home – until now at least!

ons.gov.uk, 24 March 2020 (Evans); ons.gov.uk, 24 March 2020 (Watson);
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases>

Education

University admissions could see controls

The coronavirus could reduce the number of university applicants which could make some institutions financially unviable. Universities UK says that any control on numbers has yet to be decided but that financial support from government is "necessary". Sir Chris Husbands, vice chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University, believes that controls on numbers will be necessary so that universities have a "viable first-year-student population". In a paper for the Higher Education Policy Institute, he writes

that "radical action is needed on university admissions for the foreseeable future. This means suspending the market in admissions". Following the closure of schools and cancelled exams, more students are likely to defer university entry or take a gap year. Universities are likely to see a fall in the numbers of students from overseas and will become more reliant on domestic students.

bbc.co.uk/news, 30 March 2020

Energy and utilities

Wind energy slows

Wind energy growth this year will be a lot lower than previously forecast. BloombergNEF predicts that developers will increase capacity by 9% compared with a previous forecast of 24%. This is one of a number of downward revisions for renewable energy as the coronavirus continues to hit supply chains and investment. While solar panels are made cheaply in China, huge wind turbines are often made closer to where they are installed. In Europe 12 wind turbine facilities have seen production stop because of the virus. However, offshore wind is expected to be largely unaffected.

bloomberg.com/news, 31 March 2020 (Mathis and Hodges)

Environment

Consumer – disconfirmed eco-claims

Companies use environmental claims to appeal to consumers, but increasingly such claims are being evaluated by independent parties that are interested in consumer protection. This means that consumers can compare corporate environmental claims with external, "often disconfirming", information that helps to form their brand attitudes and purchase intentions. It is as yet unclear how the "information specificity" of environmental claims and external disconfirming information interact to influence consumer behaviour. Two experiments reveal that when specific environmental claims are offset by specific external information, consumers are more negative towards the brand and have lower purchase intentions. This effect is influenced by scepticism toward the claims and a lack of corporate credibility.

Journal of Business Ethics, Vol 163(1) April 2020, pp107-123 (Orazi and Chan)

Discovery of bacterium that can eat plastic

Scientists have discovered a bacterium that is the first known to feed on toxic plastic (polyurethane). When plastic is broken down, it releases toxic chemicals that kill most bacteria but this strain can survive. The research, which is published in the journal *Frontiers in Microbiology*, identifies the *Pseudomonas* bacteria, which can withstand high temperatures and acidic environments. However, there is still much work to do before it can be used

to break down large amounts of plastic.
[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com), 27 March 2020 (Carrington)

Warnings for high-carbon products?

Warnings similar to those seen on cigarette packets should appear on high-carbon products, such as airline tickets, energy bills and petrol pumps to apprise consumers of the health impact of the climate crisis. A group of health experts writing in the *British Medical Journal* say that warning labels would be a cheap but effective way of raising consumer awareness of the effect that their purchases are having on the environment. They would also like to see the restrictions on advertising by smoking brands being imposed on fossil fuel companies.

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com), 31 March 2020 (Harvey)

Fashion

The opportunity for a greener future?

Even though it was unlikely that fast fashion could continue to operate in the way it did, nevertheless the slowdown due to the coronavirus has been rapid. Brands, such as Prada and Zara, have started using their production lines to make medical gowns and masks; others are shifting from perfumes to sanitisers. There is a "new sense of connectedness, responsibility and empathy" says the author who asks whether it is possible to use this pause in production to rethink how the industry can be "redesigned for the planet and the health of the people who work in it".

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com), 27 March 2020 (Blanchard)

Staying at a fashionable distance?

Social distancing, which has become something of a buzzword, is not the sort of thing one associates with fashion. However, clothing has long been a way of helping to reduce close contact. Face masks, which have become a signal for "stay away", were important during the bubonic plague when doctors wore bird-like, pointed masks. Over the years, fashion has been used to establish distance between genders, classes and races. The Victorian crinoline dress, a wide skirt, was fashionable in the mid-19th century to maintain social distancing between genders. A voluminous skirt also established social status since a servant wouldn't have been able to move around freely wearing one. In the early 1900s large hats and hat pins offered women protection against unwanted attention! Will the coronavirus lead to new styles and accessories, including innovative forms of protective clothing? One Chinese company, Penda, has developed the "wearable shield" which could be used during epidemics.

[fastcompany.com](https://www.fastcompany.com), 27 March 2020 (Rabinovitch-Fox);
[fastcompany.com](https://www.fastcompany.com), 2 March 2020 (Wilson)

Financial services

Contactless payment limit raised

Many countries are increasing their contactless card transaction limit as a way of helping to tackle the spread of the coronavirus by reducing the number of transactions requiring a PIN entry. NFCW has created a table listing the countries together with their current and new payment limits. The spending limit in the UK has been increased from £30 to £45, which will take effect on 1 April. Barclaycard, which handles almost half of the UK's credit and debit card transactions, is to prioritise retailers in certain sectors.

[nfcw.com](https://www.nfcw.com), 24 March 2020 (Clark); [nfcw.com](https://www.nfcw.com), 26 March 2020 (Clark)

Could virus mean the end of cash?

The use of cash has halved over the past week as people are concerned about the health risks of touching coins. This is despite the WHO saying that touching money isn't any more of a risk than touching other surfaces. There are fears that the virus could lead to changing habits and a permanent reduction in the use of cash. Many shoppers are even rejecting card payments in favour of Google and Apple Pay on their phones. Giving people access to cash could be a problem, especially in remote locations. Natalie Ceeney, head of the Access to Cash campaign, fears that the coronavirus could result in a "dramatic shift to digital".

[The Times](https://www.thetimes.com), 28 March 2020, p60

Relying on cash

Millions of people rely on cash and it is important that they are able to pay for essential goods during the coronavirus. Peter McNamara, founder of Note Machine, an ATM operator, reports that withdrawals at its cash machines halved last week although the average value of transactions rose from £62 at the start of March to £74 last week. Cash handlers are currently regarded as key workers and Note Machine's staff will need to keep the company's around 11,000 machines running.

[The Times](https://www.thetimes.com), 28 March 2020, p61

FMCG

Food and drink – clear communication is key

The Government's lack of a clear message has left the food and drink industry in disarray. The author argues that if online grocery is currently regarded as the fourth emergency service, then PM Johnson's message to 27m viewers that they should have their food delivered is unhelpful because it will impede the ability of supermarkets to prioritise the elderly, sick and those in self-isolation. There has also been confusion over who are key workers, with some food workers being told to return home by police.

[thegrocer.co.uk](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk), 27 March 2020 (Leyland)

Beverages

BrewDog opens virtual bars

On 27 March BrewDog opened 102 virtual bars so that people could get together for a beer. Other events planned include beer tasting, homebrewing classes, live music and pub quizzes. BrewDog hopes to launch similar initiatives around the world and all its bars in the UK, Germany, Australia and the US will have online sessions for people to connect with. James Watt, BrewDog co-founder, says that "Community has always been at the absolute core of what we do".

cityam.com, 27 March 2020 (Searles)

Cosmetics and toiletries

Bulldog suspends free NHS offer

On Friday male grooming brand Bulldog Skincare launched an online offer of a free "care package" for NHS employees. Unfortunately, the demand has been so great that the Bulldog site fell over at the weekend and the company has had to suspend its offer "for a short while".

thegrocer.co.uk, 30 March 2020 (Selwood)

Food

Top grocery brands

The Grocer has produced its *Britain's Biggest Brands 2020: the top 100* which ranks brands by absolute value. Cadbury, which tops the list with growth of 6.6%, says success is down to "a mix of innovation and big marketing investment". It is followed by Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Walkers and Warburtons. Despite the continued decline in sales of bottled water, Highland Spring (up seven places to 57) has increased its sales by 12.1% which it attributes to green initiatives, product and pack innovations and marketing. Monster (26), with sales up 14.1%, says its success in the energy drink market is down to "investment in impactful marketing campaigns".

thegrocer.co.uk, 27 March 2020

Household

Cottonelle promotes friendly loo roll etiquette

FCB, an Interpublic agency, has created a campaign for Cottonelle, a toilet paper brand (part of Kimberly-Clark). The "Share A square" campaign aims to promote neighbourly toilet paper behaviour in the US. Cottonelle's new ad, which says: "We assure you there will be enough to go round", sends a reassuring message to toilet roll hoarders. The brand is currently working with United Way, a not-for-profit, to donate \$1m and a million rolls of toilet paper.

adage.com, 31 March 2020

Government and public sector

ICO approves use of phone data

The UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has approved government use of personal data from people's phones to track and monitor their behaviour and help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The Government has been in talks with mobile phone companies to use anonymous location and usage data to see if people are adhering to lockdown. Other Governments, notably China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Israel, are using active surveillance measures including a smartphone app to track infected people. The ICO has emphasised that data protection law allows data sharing in the public interest. The mobile phone industry has been looking into the creation of a global data-sharing system to track people as a way of curbing the virus.

theguardian.com, 27 March 2020

Health and pharmaceuticals

UN in global call to creatives

The United Nations is calling on "creatives everywhere" to help spread public health messages about the coronavirus. The *Global Call to Creatives: An Open Brief from the United Nations* says it wants help in, "translating critical public health messages into different languages, different cultures, communities and platforms, reaching everyone everywhere". It wants a "stream of fresh, innovative content" that will help to encourage the personal behaviour and support needed and has identified areas of activation to target: personal hygiene, social distancing, know the symptoms, myth-busting, do more and donate.

thedrum.com, 26 March 2020 (O'Brien)

3D printers mobilise

In the US small manufacturers, such as Tangible Creative, are using 3D printers to make face shields and Covid-19 test swabs. To meet demand, Tangible is organising a coalition of makers, such as volunteers from Columbia Library and MakerBot. Over 100 hospitals in the US and overseas have FormLabs 3D printers in place so that essential items can be printed, including parts for ventilators. Meanwhile HP is getting its 3D printing teams to produce hands-free door openers and other items.

fastcompany.com, 27 March 2020 (Touissant)

Campaign to keep Britons active

Sport England has launched the "Join the movement" campaign to help people stay active at home during the coronavirus. An online hub will offer a range of options such as free exercise content and advice from organisations such as the NHS. It will include workouts from fitness brands

and influencers such as Joe Wicks (The Body Coach). The public will be encouraged to share images of their activities, some of which will be used in Sport England's advertising over the coming weeks.

prweek.com, 26 March 2020 (Delahunty)

IT and telecoms

Huawei increased spending with US last year

Despite a ban on American companies selling goods to Huawei, the latter increased its spending with US suppliers by 70% last year. Huawei spent \$18.7 billion with US companies, including Google, Microsoft and Qualcomm, in 2019, up from \$11 billion in 2018. Huawei has been developing its own software, chips and apps in a strategy that Eric Xu, its chairman, calls "Plan B", although he stresses that he does not want to stop using US suppliers. Xu says that US pressure has led to slowing growth across all its business units. The company's consumer business grew by 34% last year while carrier operations grew by just 4%. China accounted for most growth while revenue in Europe rose by less than 1% and in Asia-Pacific it fell by 11%.

ft.com, 31 March 2020 (Fildes et al)

AI could help turn thoughts to text!

Scientists from the University of California have developed artificial intelligence that can turn brain activity into text with word error rates as low as 3%. The brain activity is fed into a computing system which can create a representation of regularly occurring features such as vowels, consonants or commands. It currently works by monitoring neural patterns while someone is speaking out loud but could eventually help patients who are unable to speak or type.

**theguardian.com, 30 March 2020 (Davis);
bbc.co.uk/news, 30 March 2020 (Rincon)**

Leisure and tourism

Tourism brands making a comeback

The coronavirus has knocked the tourism sector for six with the overall cost to airlines currently estimated at \$29 billion according to IATA. With the predicted slowdown in global GDP growth this year, consumers will be more careful about their travel spending. Business trips are also likely to decline in the long term as businesses turn to virtual meetings. Yet tourism has shown resilience in the past. Here are three examples of destinations that have attracted tourists despite suffering a financial crisis (Iceland), natural disaster (the Philippines) and a lockdown caused by a terrorist threat (Brussels). The author highlights the ability of these destinations' tourist boards to galvanise the local population and help boost visitor numbers.

warc.com, 23 March 2020 (Aitken)

Sky and BT to lose £1 billion

Sky and BT are set to lose nearly £1 billion in revenue if major sporting events are postponed until August, according to a report from Enders Analysis. Sky has stopped charging business customers such as pubs that show Sky Sports while pay-TV subscribers can "pause" their payments. After July Sky and BT could save some money because rights payments and licence fees will have been postponed. The report suggests that football players should do their bit by taking a pay cut. Wages account for 59% of Premier League Revenues. "Pain will have to be shared across the supply chain" says Enders.

theguardian.com, 26 March 2020 (Sweney)

Materials and mining

Uranium prices up while mines are closing

The prices of most industrial metals and minerals have been hit by the coronavirus but uranium is an exception. Its price has risen by 14% over the past two weeks to \$27 per pound which analysts say reflects the disruption at key uranium mines. There are 442 reactors around the world but just four to six mines produce two-thirds of global supply. Cameco, a Canadian miner, has just announced the closure of its Cigar Lake mine which generates 13% of global supply. Namibia, a key supplier of uranium to China, has closed all its mining activities. Kazakhstan, another major supplier, has so far not been affected.

ft.com, 30 March 2020 (Hume)

Media

Internet

Major platforms reduce streaming speeds

Last week we reported that Netflix and YouTube would be making standard definition their default mode in the EU to reduce broadband congestion. Since then Apple, Disney and Amazon have reduced their streaming speeds in the EU rapidly followed by Facebook and Instagram. YouTube says it will extend the standard default policy worldwide for 30 days. Last year Netflix, Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft and Apple accounted for 43% of all internet traffic, according to analysis from Sandvine. Video streaming accounts for 62% of global mobile internet traffic while YouTube is the greatest generator of mobile traffic, making up 25.5% of it.

mediapost.com, 25 March 2020 (Lukovitz)

Newspapers

IPA call to support journalism

The IPA has called on advertisers not to block the term "coronavirus" online. Some news sites are seeing a huge surge in readership but because some advertisers have blacklisted the term "coronavirus", they are depriving news brands of much-needed

revenue. Nigel Gwilliam, the IPA's director of media affairs, says that, while the IPA is an advocate of blacklists to ensure brand safety, the coronavirus falls outside this remit. Meanwhile "Consumers are actively seeking the most up-to-date, in-depth, high-quality journalism that is more often than not funded by advertising".

ipa.co.uk, 26 March 2020

Social media

Facebook usage up, revenues down

Not surprisingly, Facebook (including WhatsApp and Instagram) has seen a surge in usage during the coronavirus. Messaging volumes have risen by a half in some countries compared with February. Yet Facebook's digital revenues have fallen. In Italy time spent on Facebook apps rose by 70%, but many of Facebook's most popular services are not monetised so it doesn't benefit from the increased engagement. In addition, brands are reducing adspend in the countries that are taking the most extreme measures against the spread of Covid-19.

marketingweek.com, 26 March 2020

The changing role of influencers

Influencers regard raising brand awareness as their main role when collaborating with marketers. Over the past year social networks have begun to launch commerce features for influencers who could become more active in direct e-commerce sales. For its report entitled *Influencer marketing and the Path to Purchase*, eMarketer spoke to 16 creators to find out where they are on the path to purchase. It reveals how their conversations with marketers influence their content and the platforms they work on. They also spoke about how they measure the success of such collaborations. Here are some key insights from the report.

emarketer.com, 26 March 2020 (Droesch)

Television

BBC campaign to promote staying at home

The BBC is helping to encourage people to stay indoors during the coronavirus by using scenes from sitcoms such as *I'm Alan Partridge* and *The Mighty Boosh*. Each scene ends with the message: "Seriously, stay at home. Please help stop the spread". In a scene from *In The Thick of It*, Peter Capaldi's Malcolm Tucker enforces an office lockdown while in *Miranda* the main character shows how to make living alone fun by conducting an "orchestra" of kitchen utensils.

prolificlondon.co.uk, 27 March 2020 (Spargo)

Packaging

Accessible packaging in for ageing population

Packaging needs to be secure, tamper-proof and leak-free; but as the population ages it should also be easy to open, a factor which may well influence

consumer buying decisions. With over 350m people worldwide suffering from arthritis, packaging must be accessible. "Inclusive" packaging for milk is particularly challenging for dairies because it must be leak-proof and promote shelf life as well as being suitable for mass production. As the number of customers with mobility problems increases, manufacturers should start designing inclusive packaging now. This article considers design guidelines and mentions the Food Packaging Design Accessibility Guidelines which have been developed by Arthritis New Zealand and others.

packagingeurope.com, 31 March 2020 (Tindale)

DS Smith develops food boxes

DS Smith, the corrugated packaging specialist, is working with food retailers to design and produce boxes for emergency provisions during the coronavirus. The "stack, drop and go" boxes can be filled with food and placed on people's doorsteps by retailers in the most efficient manner. The company is also offering packaging for face masks and ventilators so that they can be transported safely.

packagingnews.co.uk, 27 March 2020 (Qureshi)

Retailing

Retail outlook – a stark warning

Retail sales were down by 0.3% in February year-on-year (below the predicted 0.2%), according to the ONS's latest release. These figures refer to the period immediately before stores were affected by the coronavirus. March's figures will be a lot worse, says Richard Lim, CEO of Retail Economics who points out that most of the industry is now in "survival mode". Retailers that are best positioned over the next few months will be those that are "aligned with needs, rather than wants". Those with high debts and weak balance sheets will fail "and this is likely to happen quickly". Online sales accounted for 19.6% of all retailing in February, up from 19.1% in January.

marketingweek.com, 26 March 2020;

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/bulletins/retailsales/february2020>, 26 March 2020 (Murphy)

Surge in grocery e-commerce

The boom in online grocery shopping has been a predictable result of the coronavirus. Even before the virus, one in five UK internet users aged 18 and above were buying groceries from websites, according to YouGov. The virus has lifted online grocery shopping to levels never seen before, with 14.2% of UK internet users of 18 and above increasing their online grocery shopping in March. Websites, such as Waitrose and Ocado, have been unable to cope with demand. An Ipsos MORI survey of British adults in March found that over 40% were buying more supermarket goods than usual. Meanwhile some restaurants have been moving

online to offer direct-to-home delivery of prepared meals.

emarketer.com, 29 March 2020 (von Abrams)

Services

Millennials turn to interior design apps

Young people, many of whom don't own their own home, have become entranced by interior decorating apps. Older generations had the luxury of personalising their homes in real life, but younger people have to be satisfied with a virtual reality. This has led to the popularity of apps such as Design Home, which has at least one million daily users. The app gives players daily "challenges" to decorate rooms, with users voting for the best design of the day. Social media has encouraged people to share images of their homes with complete strangers through Instagram and the like. Interior design apps help to plug this gap for "Generation Rent".

theguardian.com, 27 March 2020 (Bishop)

Pubs – Budweiser launches gift card service

Budweiser is doing its bit to save Britain's pubs by launching a £1m gift card service. The Save Pub Life campaign enables people to buy drinks in advance of the post-coronavirus reopening. It has pledged to match all purchases up to a total of £1m to help struggling landlords. Diageo has also launched a package with Guinness by pledging £1m to go towards bartenders' wages.

thedrum.com, 30 March 2020 (Glenday)

Carluccio's goes into administration

Carluccio's, the Italian restaurant chain, has gone into administration, which it says is due to "challenging trading conditions" caused by the coronavirus. The chain had previously warned that it would have to close some branches permanently due to the virus. It has also been hit by the downturn in the casual dining sector. John Colley, associate dean at Warwick Business School, says that other restaurants in the sector are likely to go under.

bbc.co.uk/news, 30 March 2020 (Plummer)

Transport and travel

NHS supplies to be delivered by drone

Solent Transport, a partnership of south coast councils, has been granted £29m by the Department of Transport to use drones for transporting important supplies to the NHS, such as chemotherapy kits and pathology samples. This was after research by Nesta, an innovation foundation, revealed that using drones could save the public sector £1.1 billion and add almost £7 billion to the economy. Subject to successful trials, the drones will fly almost 15 miles, serving three Hampshire hospitals.

The Times, 28 March 2020, p23

Socially-distanced logos

Brands are responding to the coronavirus by reminding people about social distancing. A trend to have emerged from this is "socially distanced" logos (See also under Public relations and Brands). Audi's Twitter page features an animated logo in which the famous interlocked rings become disconnected with the words "keep distance". However, the message becomes confusing when the rings then join back together with the message "stay together". VW has done something similar on YouTube with its V and W parting company.

creativebloq.com, 30 March 2020 (Hughes and Piper)

Bike rental companies helping out NHS

Many NHS workers rely on public transport to get to work but crowded buses and trains are not the safest of places to be. Bike companies in London and other areas have responded by offering free bikes to NHS staff. Bike-rental company Buzzbike is delivering bikes and locks while its "bike professors" are offering maintenance services. Other companies offering free services include Brompton Bicycle Ltd, which has so far distributed 200 bikes to NHS workers; Beryl Bikes in Bournemouth and Poole; and TfL's Santander Cycles.

independent.co.uk, 30 March 2020 (Sullivan)

Written by CIM's Knowledge Services Team

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Cutting Edge: Our weekly analysis of marketing news

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