

# STAYING CONNECTED IN A PANDEMIC WORLD:

The impact and considerations  
for Marketers

*APRIL 2020*

# CMOs - WHAT IS YOUR NEXT MOVE?

As humanity navigates through these new and scary realities, new emerging behaviours arise in response to what essentially is a threat on our health and financial stability. However, it is critical that we do not become paralysed by the current nervousness and that we find a way to start planning for the short- and long-term repercussions. What we know for sure is that this crisis will come to an end, and in getting there we need to step through 3 phases that will challenge us as marketers and humans.



PHASE 1

# LOCK DOWN



PHASE 2

# AN OPEN WORLD



PHASE 3

# A NEW NORMAL



PHASE 1LOCK  
DOWN

This is essentially where we are now and have been for the past 2 weeks since governments have either enforced or recommended policies around lockdowns, social distancing and self-isolation. In this phase, our roles as marketers is to assess and evaluate how we can contribute as a brand [either on a big or small scale] to support and empathise with the current situation.

**CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & NEEDS:**

- People are nervous and their minds are not in a state where they consider when to purchase the next SUV, or even going on a shopping spree online- it is essentially how can I adapt to this new situation; how can I protect myself and my family. We are in survival mode and our focus is on how we can ensure minimum impact on our long-term plans and commitments.

**BRAND ROLE & ACTIONS:**

Show solidarity and community spirit - and tone down your commercial driven agenda for a while.

- Now is the time to **emphasise story-doing versus storytelling**. Focus on showcasing solidarity, empathy and how you can support the situation through either creative business development or supporting actions/messaging. A great example of this is how LVMH has changed its production of perfumes into product of sanitisers or Deliveroo has reduced its commission by 20% in reaction to no in-dining customers.
- Many companies may not be able to make such a radical shift in their business model, but a little goes a long way. **Messages emphasising solutions and support** to the problems we are all facing - or simply reemphasising key messages being communicated by government bodies - will resonate well (e.g. #InItTogether or #StayHome). Speed to market is key, but do it with compassion and with your brand taking a backseat in your communication.

## ADVERTISING CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Review your channel mix and secure audience reach** – don't go dark and make sure you are preparing for the next phase already now. Kantar research shows that 'going dark' can cause 39% reduction in total brand communication awareness, potentially delaying recovery in the post-pandemic world for some brands.
  - **Explore upcoming channels** and use it as an opportunity to drive engagement on platforms that you don't yet use. Hold spending on traditional platforms such as print and OOH - move your media spend to platforms where people will be looking for conversations on solidarity, actions and inspiration on how to cope in this current situation. The key is to play the long game while keeping your consumer behaviour/needs in mind. They are in survival mode – and as human beings one of our basic needs is to feel secured and connected.
  - **Focus on reach campaigns with relevant/ impactful content** to further strengthen/ build your online communities, create meaningful connections with your followers (and customers). *More young people are online today than ever before with web browsing increasing by 70%, followed by (traditional) TV viewing, which has increased by 63% and social media engagement increasing by 61% over normal usage rates.* Leverage this opportunity – with major events getting postponed social media is being considered the new 'prime time'.
  - **Consider leveraging positive influencers** to help drive the key messages of solidarity and support versus pure media spends. In times of crisis and uncertainty we turn to our peers and authorities for guidance. Leverage the insights from your data for full funnel optimisation and fix the weak links across your digital estate to enhance your customers' experience. Shift your campaign and keyword focus to where thumbs and eyeballs are currently being drawn. No promotions for the sake of promotions - but run them to add tangible value to your customers lives.
- In conclusion:** Adjust media investments based on expectations and needs of your consumers
- **Minimise:** OOH (billboards, cinema, airport, railway)
  - **Increase:** Digital (official media, short video, social, influencers/news and info-sites)
  - **Maintain:** OTT, Online video, social growth campaigns

PHASE 2AN OPEN  
WORLD

*We are back in business, or are we?*

### CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR & NEEDS:

- Once we move out of the lockdown, where people have most likely been isolated for at least 4-6 weeks, **our human instinct is to regain our freedom!** We want to get out, we want to live again, and we want to do it together. We want to express ourselves. We may have found new meaning with life, but many may also still be hesitant to jump right back in. Businesses operating within the experience economy are more likely to benefit from this revival, but consumers will have been impacted heavily financially as well as mentally. They are likely to still hold off making larger purchases and focus on their immediate needs and experiences with loved ones within spaces that feels secure and COVID free.

### BRAND ROLE & ACTIONS

- This phase is a crucial phase for many companies and probably the most critical of all. You will need to be ready for it now. **Your brand is your most valuable asset** during this time, and this will be the time to drive a strong brand and value proposition. Those who will have invested in their brand positioning to begin with as well as their customer experience will emerge as the winners and leverage the trust required in this phase when consumers behaviour changes and all players start advertising again.
- **Be adaptable**, be open to looking into partnerships with your competitors and unite the conversations that will help humans regain trust in humanity and industries back on their feet, having been decimated by the lack of customer activity over the previous weeks and months.

## ADVERTISING CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Don't focus purely on lower funnel activities**, even though this may appear the right thing to do to win back some of your potential losses. Cost of advertising is estimated to be the highest in this phase for the entire year and your lower funnel activities will most likely be inefficient and more expensive as there are less people in the market to purchase and it may end up doing more damage than good.
- **Think long-term** in terms of your brand and its position as well as how people connect with it. Adopt a multi-platform, multi format strategy that follows the audience This is what will help to drive you through the trough of this crisis.
- Again, **influencers can be a great way to leverage your core brand message** as people will continue to look to their communities and peers for ways to move forward.
- Whilst **online retailing and e-commerce** will have seen a tremendous spike during the previous phase and into first half of 2020, we are likely to see a slight drop in online consumption as consumers will have an immediate need and desire to connect again post isolation and redefine how they live their life. OOH and location-based advertising may again be worth your media spend to target people out in the world, breathing the fresh air.
- Even though any permanent change in purchase behaviour is yet to be seen it is evident that marketers need to **be alert to an expedited shift to e-commerce**. Either way the need for digital transformation in your business is absolutely vital now more than ever.

PHASE 3A NEW  
NORMAL**CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & NEEDS:**

- **Will a fundamental behavioural shift and change take place** as a consequence of this health and financial crisis? Post-Covid, having lived through disconnection and isolation, will we be seeing people “re-evaluating” priorities in life, how they live? Consumerism may take a back seat to a life more focused on values and experiences.
- How can your brand create and be relevant during such a seismic shift in needs? As we have been shaken to our core - will this decade see an enhanced focus on security, safety and the bottom of Maslow’s pyramid? Is self-actualisation a thing of the past?

**BRAND ROLE & ACTIONS:**

- It is likely that new business models will appear as a result of the crisis. Monitor start-ups and newcomers in your industry and market. Crises have historically always been a period of tremendous innovation and this time will be no different. Watch out for those new organisations who have seen opportunities that others haven’t. How can you help them to create a point of differentiation and value? Re-evaluate your current brand positioning in light of this very likely change in consumer behaviour. Turn your corporate social responsibility program into an ongoing, purpose-driven initiative. Never will there have been more of a need for personalised communications, offers and messaging.

**ADVERTISING  
CONSIDERATIONS:**

- **Revisit your media and digital strategies**, leverage new technologies that enable you to scale quickly and consistently and provide you with a differentiated edge in your market(s).

# Traffic Digital :

Part of  The Collective

Deciding on the next actions for your business is a difficult one during this time and a lot is too early to predict. However, it is not too early to start planning and quickly mobilising your activity and channels to respond to these three phases. Please contact us if you would like to chat about how we can help you to be prepared.



**Sophia Kenvold**  
Regional Head of Marketing  
+971 525541831  
[sophia@wewanttraffic.com](mailto:sophia@wewanttraffic.com)



**Sami Iqbal**  
Media Director  
+971 523872990  
[sami@wewanttraffic.com](mailto:sami@wewanttraffic.com)