

Cutting Edge: Our weekly analysis of marketing news

20 May 2020

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

Quick [links](#) to sections

Marketing trends and issues

Advertising

Advertising works – it's an economic hero

During this time of shifting consumer behaviour, businesses need to be seen and remembered. This is what advertising helps to do and the UK is very good at it. Whatever one's view of advertising, it has taken on the role of "economic hero" and it can help the UK economy to emerge from the crisis in as good a shape as possible. A £1 investment in advertising creates growth of £6 in GDP, according to the Advertising Association. Despite adspend suffering in the current situation, some businesses are using it to their advantage. For example, Karcher, the pressure washer business, has ramped up its TV advertising on the basis that people might want to do some serious cleaning. Online businesses are also taking advantage of the cheaper advertising available at the moment. Furniture retailer SCS is advertising now so that it will be ready when its stores reopen: advertising now will pay dividends further down the line.

[telegraph.co.uk](#), 13 May (Clay)

Adspend variable depending on sector

The travel, entertainment and telecoms sectors combined reduced their adspend in March by over £39m according to Nielsen data, down by 48%, 17% and 15% respectively. In contrast, food adspend rose by 18%, government by 22% and computing by 41%. Online retailers ramped up their spending the most, by a colossal 208%. Overall, however, adspend was down by 5% year-on-year to £586m. TV accounted for 70% of total adspend in March, with the top two TV advertisers for the month being Unilever (£10m) and P&G (£9.4m), while NHS England spent £3.9m. Barney Farmer, Nielsen's commercial director, says that the return to

advertising and the amount spent, will depend on a variety of factors including, in the case of travel and tourism, Government guidance.

[marketingweek.com](#), 15 May 2020 (Hammett)

Multinationals to postpone adspend

According to research from the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), 89% of large multinationals have postponed marketing campaigns this month, up from 81% in March, while 52% now say they will defer adspend for at least six months, compared with 19% who said so last month. The figures give some idea of what could happen for the rest of the year as the industry looks at a potential advertising recession. Some 62% of brands recognise that it is important not "to go dark". Globally TV investment is expected to be down by 33% for the first half of the year, but print (down 37%), OOH (down 49%) and events (down 56%) will suffer more. This article also considers the implications for agencies. Stephen Loerke, CEO of the WFA, believes that marketing leaders are making efforts to support their agencies wherever possible.

[thedrum.com](#), 13 May 2020 (Stewart)

Creative trends during the pandemic

This article lists ten creative trends that advertisers have been using during the lockdown. Some are quite inspiring while others should probably be retired says the author. They include: logo spacing to denote "social distancing" (fun for a while but not really contributing anything); the BBC's use of old comedy footage to reflect the situation (might help brands to stand out); and the way that outdoor media owners are finding ways to fill their empty spaces (could make an impact but might equally go unnoticed).

[Advertising Age](#), Vol 91(9) 4 May 2020, p18 (Jardine)



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Agencies

Agency hubs in the Asia Pacific region

Agencies have furloughed or made staff redundant but in Asia Pacific it's the big hubs that could be the worst affected as layers of management disappear from the big ad groups. As agencies move towards global platforms that are implemented locally, agencies are removing duplication within their operations. BBDO is closing its Malaysia office and reducing its presence in Hong Kong. Agencies are likely to continue to use Singapore as a key hub and to increase their presence in India. Hong Kong continues to be seen as a gateway to China by European and US agencies, although some may switch to just having a presence in some of the major cities in China. This article looks at the impact of Covid-19 on Asia-Pacific agency hubs and the potential scenario post-virus.

thedrum.com, 19 May 2020 (Lim)

Brands and branding

Celebrity spokescharacters and luxury brands

Brands use spokescharacters to market products such as sweets and fast food to adults and children. Now there is a trend for brands to use spokescharacters to promote luxury products to women. This could be because it plays to women's feelings of nostalgia towards these characters from childhood. In this study, women were asked to assess two popular characters (Miss Piggy and Hello Kitty) on their credibility and fit with products in two luxury categories: makeup and handbags. The results indicate that fit is influenced by perceptions of spokesperson attractiveness and expertise, as well as the particular product category. Trustworthiness, an important factor in assessing fit with "real" celebrities, did not affect fit for spokescharacters. Women's propensity for nostalgia was found to influence perceptions of attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise; although not perceptions of fit.

Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising, Vol 41(2) 2020, pp144-159 (Sheehan)

Brands must have long-term return potential

Brands that focus on what they are doing to help consumers are more effective in their advertising, according to research from Kantar. It also suggests that people are becoming tired of ads that look and feel the same while having nothing particular to say about the brand. Ads that encourage people to stay at home or express optimism for the future are not actively disliked but neither are they memorable. For example, Nike's "Play for the world" ad has the lowest scores for some measures, including "long-term return potential" and "does it make the brand feel different to alternatives?" By contrast, Heinz, Tesco and Aldi scored 98, 89 and 65 respectively for "long-term return potential". "The brands that win out are those that pursue a creative and distinctive

creative platform, through a powerful and original human insight that resonates deeply, or through a unique brand vision or purpose", says Kantar. (See also Cutting Edge 13 May under Advertising)

marketingweek.com, 12 May 2020 (Hammett)

Conferences and events

Spatial meetings with avatars

Spatial, a startup, allows people to meet through AR or VR using VR or mixed reality headsets. The platform, which is free and open to anyone, enables you to create a room and invite people into it. If you have a headset, then you have an avatar and can wander around the room interacting with other avatars, rather than just sitting and looking at a gallery of faces, as you would on Zoom. Originally the company served large, enterprise-only clients as a way for their offices to connect, but remote working during the pandemic has expanded its scope. The company is also anticipating that Spatial could be used to teach seminars. However, the cost of immersive headsets is high and, until the hardware becomes cheaper, Spatial may not be as accessible as it would like.

wired.com, 13 May 2020 (Chokkattu)

15 ways in which event design will change

Event planners will adapt to the new situation and be able to hold engaging events once more, although social distancing measures are likely to be in place for some time and it is important to assess the purpose of the event, says Rebecca Brennan-Brown, director of The New Black Studio. She has spoken to clients, suppliers and colleagues to produce a report called *The Future of the Event Industry*. Here she sets out 15 ways in which she thinks event design will change.

citmagazine.com, 14 May 2020 (Brennan-Brown);
<https://thenewblackstudio.co.uk/event-industry-future/>

London event buyers – positive sentiment

A survey of London corporate event buyers regarding their event plans for Autumn and Christmas, reveals that 25% expect London corporate events to start in September vs 28% who think this will not happen until next year. It also reveals that 25% have contracted events for September and 66% in December. However, 77% say they have not yet booked anything for the Christmas party season and are awaiting news. The research, carried out by Venue Search London, reveals that there have been no mass cancellations and that the overall sense is positive. It places caveats around the sample size.

eventindustrynews.com, 15 May 2020 (Parry)

Consumer behaviour

Influencing behaviour

In the current environment marketers face longer buying cycles and falling demand while still being

expected to deliver growth. Here are four psychological drivers to help influence consumer behaviour and drive the business forward. The anchoring effect helps to influence consumer behaviour based on the order in which you introduce information; social proof is based on the fact that people tend to “view a behaviour as more correct” when they see others behaving in the same way; loss aversion refers to the fact that people will work harder to avoid a loss than to seek a gain, which is why offering a free trial can sometimes work; goal gradient is where people will speed up their responses the closer they get to a goal, such as buying more coffee to earn stamps with the promise of a free coffee. Despite the current uncertain economic climate, these cognitive biases can still influence behaviour.

marketingland.com, 14 May 2020 (Bunke)

Customer relations

Shifting to a customer success journey

The author argues that you should think about your customers or clients as members. If you did this, it would change how you innovate and approach every aspect of the business. In a membership relationship, your goal is to help the member achieve the transformation they want. In other words, you must care more about the member getting a result than about you scoring a transaction. Doing this could change your customer journey into a customer success journey. Here are a few points to consider for creating a customer success journey.

ducttapemarketing.com, May 2020 (Jantsch)

Relationships in live streaming commerce

Live streaming has become a popular direct selling channel, especially for small sellers. Current research tends to focus on consumer motivation and intention to shop via live streaming but little is known about the seller's point of view. Sellers experience different levels of success with live streaming commerce. This study analyses Facebook data on live streaming sellers to ascertain the nature and extent of engagement metrics, and to understand the dynamic live streaming sales process. It identifies four sales approaches and twelve strategies that sellers use to acquire and retain customers. The typology is used to create a framework for understanding online relationships in live streaming commerce.

Journal of Marketing Management, Vol 36(5-6) May 2020, pp488-518 (Wongkitrungrueng et al)

Direct marketing

Email challenges

The DMA's recent *Marketer Email Tracker 2020* report found that email is playing an important part in helping to provide customers with advice and reassurance and to keep them updated. This article

examines six types of challenge that marketers struggle with most in their email programmes: budget and resources; data; content; internal processes; leadership and strategy; and technology. Budget and resources seem to be of concern to most marketers (61%), followed by data (42%) and leadership and strategy (40%). The analysis is accompanied by a series of infographics.

dma.org.uk, 18 May 2020

Law

Chuckling Goat ads reprimanded by ASA

Chuckling Goat, a kefir and gut health brand, has been censured by the ASA for suggesting that its products could protect people from viruses and flu during the pandemic. This forms part of the ASA's drive to tackle ads that “exploit health-related anxieties during the crisis”. Ads placed on buses in Reading and Yorkshire, which asked “What's your best defence against any virus? Boost your immune system”, were thought to imply that Chuckling Goat's products could prevent or cure disease. Chuckling Goat claims that boosting gut health does improve immunity. Only health claims listed on the EU Register of Nutrition and Health Claims are permitted in marketing communications.

thegrocer.co.uk, 13 May 2020 (Woolfson)

Ad Tech guide – staying within the law

The DMA's *Seven-Step Ad Tech Guide*, produced in partnership with ISBA and in consultation with the ICO, aims to address the privacy issues of Real Time Bidding (RTB) in programmatic advertising. It offers support for UK businesses that are using programmatic for digital advertising and who must ensure that they protect the privacy rights of individuals. It also helps organisations to ensure that they comply with the GDPR and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

dma.org.uk, 12 May 2020

Marketing

Why sustainability is more important

Marketers may see climate change and sustainability as a way of building public trust during this period. In fact, the pandemic offers marketers a way of shifting more rapidly towards sustainable strategies. Joint research from the NYU Stern Centre and IRI found that sustainability-marketed products accounted for 50% of market growth among CPG brands from 2013 to 2018. Marketers should keep the momentum going at a time when consumer expectations around sustainability are likely to be higher than ever but consumers are also likely to be less forgiving of brands who perform token gestures. There are barriers to sustainable success, due to trends such as extreme cleanliness and a reliance on e-commerce, neither of which are good for the environment. Furthermore, consumers, especially those laid off or furloughed, will be

spending less money which means that brands will have to reduce their premiums on sustainability. However, in the long term this is a way to grow both market share and loyalty.

marketingdive.com, 12 May 2020 (Adams)

There should be a focus on ongoing training

Instead of "sporadic" training days on specific issues, there should be a commitment to ongoing learning. This is according to Keith Weed, president of the Advertising Association, when responding to the question: "What proportion of marketing budget do you think should be invested in developing the skills and capability of marketing people in any given company?" This will involve a mix of formal training and self-help. With so many changes in marketing over the years and the rise of multiple channels used by consumers, it's no wonder that marketers struggle to keep up. Since marketers with enhanced skills will be in demand, it is often worthwhile for them to invest in their own training in addition to that offered by their employer.

thedrum.com, 18 May 2020 (Weed)

Whether to bundle or unbundle

Bundling, where different products are placed in one package or bundle and sold to the customer as one unit, has traditionally been an important marketing strategy. Unbundling involves dividing a product or service into smaller parts that can be sold separately. This article considers the critical decision of whether to bundle or unbundle; when unbundling becomes more profitable; and what the internal and external factors are that a company should consider when choosing one strategy over the other.

Industrial Management, Vol 62(3) May-June 2020, pp13-17 (Gopal and Guttierrez)

Market research

What research to continue and what not to

Research is an important element of marketing at any time but at the moment it is more important than ever to maintain an understanding of how consumers feel about your products and competitors. By maintaining levels of research, you can stay well-positioned to address the marketplace in the future. Although it may not be feasible to undertake a full range of market research, some essential research should be kept running but be sure to show empathy and sensitivity towards participants at this time. Here is a guide to what research to run during the current environment, what not to run, and where to be creative.

ama.org, 12 May 2020 (Chun)

Using semiotics to inform communications

Semiotics, the study of signs and their meaning, is powerful because it engages our intuitive understanding. It can also help us to understand

how consumers interpret meaning and to design artefacts for them based on that understanding. Semiotics research can help if current communication strategies – visual and verbal – aren't as effective as they should be. Semiotics can enable consumers to visualise "the energy, emotion, form, colour, shape and tactile qualities" of an experience to produce "highly actionable" intelligence.

ama.org, 14 May 2020 (Murtell)

Public relations

Preparing for post Covid-19 risks

In the future the process of doing business with customers will change. Businesses will be expected to take health and safety measures to protect all stakeholders. Providing reassurance is the best route forward for maintaining business trust and confidence. A post-Covid-19 world will have unique issues and there are four main areas of risk that the smart business should consider: conflict arising within the business; a social media video which highlights inadequate health and safety practices; protests at a business; and the resurgence of coronavirus. Businesses must have the necessary plans and messages in place, especially those that have face-to-face interactions with customers. Doing the right thing has never been more important for reputation management...

prdaily.com, 18 May 2020 (Mitchell)

PR volunteer initiative

The Community PR Initiative (CPRI) provides a matchmaking service for PR professionals, who may have been furloughed or are freelance, to volunteer to help NHS trusts and charities. To date, it has brought together 100 volunteer comms professionals with 60 charities and NHS teams during the pandemic.

prweek.com, 18 May 2020 (Hickman)

Sponsorship

Football – will we see a new type of sponsor?

The impact of the coronavirus made itself felt three-quarters of the way through the 2019-2020 European football season. Depending on how long restrictive measures remain in place, the season may be terminated early in parts of Europe which has major implications for stakeholders. This article considers the effect on competition organisers (broadcasting rights and sponsorship contracts) and on clubs (match day revenue, sponsorships, player salaries and contracts). It concludes that we may see a change in the types of brands that continue to sponsor competitions or clubs. Some brands that have been major sponsors (such as betting companies) have been badly affected and may not be able to continue at the same level. Brands in food and drink or delivery and tech companies, who have

fares better during the crisis, may step in to provide sponsorship in the future.

lexology.com, 14 May 2020 (Terziu)

Legitimacy and sincerity in social sponsorship

This research looks at how social sponsorship can become more commercially effective. Two factors are examined: the extent to which social sponsorship is seen by consumers as legitimate; and the extent to which the sponsor is perceived as sincere. The results suggest that these factors have a positive and significant impact on consumers' intentions to purchase the sponsor's products. They also show that the sponsor's perceived sincerity increases when the sponsorship is combined with philanthropic investments, either in sequence (philanthropy followed by sponsorship) or simultaneously; furthermore, the legitimacy of a sponsorship is enhanced when the cause and its sponsor are compatible. The implications for firms considering using social sponsorship as a marketing communication strategy are discussed.

International Journal of Advertising, Vol 39(4) May 2020, pp504-522 (d'Astou et al)

Agriculture, fishing and forestry

Tree-planting drones

Drones have been firing seed pods into the ground in fields north of Toronto. Flash Forest, a Canadian startup, aims to plant 40,000 native pine and spruce trees in the area this month. By the end of the year it will move into other regions with a target of planting one billion trees by 2028. It, along with other startups that are using tree-planting drones, wants to help reduce biodiversity loss and fight climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that one billion hectares of trees must be planted (the size of the US) to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The planet is suffering from a net loss of 7 billion trees a year.

fastcompany.com, 15 May 2020 (Peters)

UK cannabis producer sold to US equity fund

Bridge farm in Lincolnshire, a cannabis producer, has been acquired by Artemis Growth Partners, a US private equity fund for around £66m. While cannabis is still illegal in Britain, the farm has a Home Office licence to produce and export it to countries where it is permitted. The equity fund's partners believe that the coronavirus could speed up the trend for cannabis legalisation in countries such as the UK. A 2018 study found that the Government could make up to £3.5 billion in revenues from the legal sale of cannabis.

telegraph.co.uk, 15 May 2020 (Clowes)

Exports of pork to China up

Chinese imports of pork rose by over 150% in March compared with the same month last year. British producers have benefited from the high prices in China, the world's largest consumer of the meat, due to African swine flu in their domestic herds. The UK shipped 7,500 tonnes of pork in February, up by 75% year-on-year. This has created some challenges for UK supply chains, since prime cuts and carcasses are increasingly being sold to China. However, despite volumes being up, the UK's share is down while the US has benefited from its trade deal with China which took place in January.

thegrocer.co.uk, 14 May 2020 (Holmes)

Building industry

Construction company administrations

A total of 90 construction companies collapsed in the first quarter of 2020, according to data from Creditsafe. However, the Government's £330 billion financial package helped to reduce the number of companies going into administration during April. Chris Davies, MD of DRS Bond Management, warns that "the hole in companies' cashflow" will lead to a rise in insolvencies during May and June.

constructionnews.co.uk, 19 May 2020 (Kelly)

JCB to lose 950 employees

JCB has told employees that 950 jobs are at risk in the UK. CEO Graeme Macdonald said that the company had planned to sell over 100,000 machines this year but now that number has been halved to 50,000. Around 85% of what is manufactured in the UK is usually exported but factories will be cutting back. JCB employs around 6,700 people in the UK, most of which are furloughed until the end of May.

constructionenquirer.com, 15 May 2020 (Morby)

Thyssenkrupp test tower for new lift concepts

Thyssenkrupp Elevator has constructed a 128m-high test tower at its new headquarters and Innovation and Qualification Center (IQC) in Atlanta. The tower, which has 18 shafts, will be used to trial new concepts in lifts, such as high-speed elevators, and Twin, the company's system for two elevators working in one shaft. The IQC will also test Multi, a ropeless and sideways-moving elevator system. The tower, which has a glass facade to help showcase the lifts, will also contain event and meeting spaces and other facilities at the top of the building.

theconstructionindex.co.uk, 19 May 2020

Businesses and strategy

Women's career setbacks – how to tackle it

The current pandemic has increasingly disrupted women's careers with layoffs, hiring freezes and delayed promotions. In this podcast, two women who have seen their professional career disrupted

during the crisis, talk about their experiences. Sociologist Alexandra Kalev explains why organisations lay off more women than men and what managers can do to tackle this imbalance. Daisy Auger-Domínguez an HR professional, offers advice on coping with, and recovering from, a setback.

hbr.org, 11 May 2020 (Kalev and Auger-Domínguez)

From busy to productive

Everyone is busy but there is a difference between being busy and being productive. This is a distinction that top performers understand. Studies suggest that multitasking damages our ability to pay attention, remember information or complete activities effectively, more so than if we focus on one task at a time. People who are too busy should regularly review and reset their priorities to give themselves better control over their time and their lives. The author sets out the three things that stand out among high performers in terms of managing their schedules and provides three things you can do to shift from being busy to being more productive...

managementtoday.co.uk, 13 May 2020 (Ireland)

Getting ready for the new digital reality

The pandemic has focused attention on the need for resilience and digital capabilities. Businesses must be able to react quickly to sudden changes but many aren't able to do that. So how can businesses compete in this evolving situation? Three key elements have been identified: a "relentless" focus on outcomes that matter; new ways of working; and savvy use of digital and technology. Research suggests that digitally mature companies significantly outperform digital laggards. These so-called "bionic" companies mix human and technological capabilities to produce superior results. The authors have developed an approach to help companies build up the necessary resiliency. It centres on four imperatives which are explored here.

bcg.com, 8 May 2020 (Close et al)

Focus on the individual, not stereotypes

The expression "OK boomer" shows just how easy it is to stereotype generations and generational stereotyping has crept into the workplace. IBM's 2015 Smarter Workforce Institute white paper, *Generational Differences at Work Are Much Ado about Very Little*, was written to counter "blanket statements" about different generations in the workforce. It found just minor differences between the generations' work attitudes. Yet some companies do use generational stereotypes to inform how they view their workforce. Just as marketers have learned the value of personalisation, so employers should focus on the individual and their sense of purpose.

ama.org, 13 April 2020 (Steimer)

Charities and NGOs

Text to donate campaigns

Text to donate campaigns can be a highly effective aspect of digital fundraising. Text donations are likely to become increasingly important to charities over the coming months thanks to the growing market for phone paid services, the rise in the maximum limit for text donations to £30 and the speed and ease of using text to donate. Here is some advice on: getting started with text to donate; encouraging text to donate donors to become repeat givers; promoting the campaign; campaign tracking; and the type of campaigns that benefit from this type of giving.

charitydigital.org.uk, (Rubens)

Launching a radio station

Barnado's radio station was launched on 1 April and had over 2,400 listeners within its first two weeks. It features pop music and pre-recorded messages from children, young people, staff and volunteers. This case study tells how the radio station was created, the technicalities, unexpected challenges and what it means for the charity's comms.

charitycomms.org.uk, 19 May 2020

Durable consumer goods

Antler goes out of business

Antler, the luggage brand, has gone into administration with the loss of 164 jobs. The company, which operates 18 stores and one concession, has been "profoundly impacted" by the coronavirus lockdown, according to administrator KPMG. While the business was "trading well" in the weeks leading up to the pandemic, the combination of store closures and the collapse of the travel industry, has hit the company badly.

telegraph.co.uk, 19 May 2020

Economy

Globalisation – a triple whammy

Globalisation was "in trouble" before the coronavirus took hold, due to the financial downturn and the US trade war with China. Even when economies reopen, there is unlikely to be a speedy return to free movement and trade. The pandemic will reinforce the leaning towards self-reliance which could endanger the recovery and lead to geopolitical instability. Worldwide trade in goods could fall by 10% to 30% this year. *The Economist* argues that "the way to make supply chains more resilient is not to domesticate them...but to diversify them". Doing things on a country-by-country basis could make it harder to solve global problems, including finding a vaccine, and recovering economically.

economist.com, 14 May 2020

Great Britain – social impact of coronavirus

The latest ONS bulletin on the social impact of the coronavirus on Great Britain asks people about their attitudes and expectations of the country after the pandemic. It paints a fairly optimistic picture, with 57% of adults believing that the nation will be more united and 67% that it will be a “kind” nation post-pandemic. However, 46% of adults believe that it will take longer than six months to return to “normal” and 41% expect their financial position to get “a little or a lot worse” over the next 12 months.

ons.gov.uk, 14 May 2020 (Davies);

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/14may2020>

Coronavirus impact on economy and business

The latest ONS release on the impact of coronavirus on the economy reveals that 44% of businesses who had not ceased trading during the period 20 April to 3 May, said their cash reserves would last for more than six months while 91% of businesses that had paused trading had applied for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

ons.gov.uk, 14 May 2020 (Gibbs);

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirusandtheeconomyandsocietyfasterindicators/14may2020>

Education

Students should be told if courses are online

University applicants still don’t know whether their courses will be taught by distance learning or at the university itself this autumn. CEO of the Office for Students, Nicola Dandridge, has said that applicants must be told with “absolute clarity” how courses are taught. If universities update their plans after students have made a choice, then they should be entitled to change their minds. Universities minister, Michelle Donelan, has suggested that there might be a blend of face-to-face and online teaching but that this must not amount to just “binging lectures online”. She has made it clear that even if courses are taught online, students will have to pay full tuition fees. Universities UK says that universities are “already preparing for a range of scenarios”.

bbc.co.uk/news, 18 May 2020 (Coughlan)

Business schools face further challenges

Covid-19 has disrupted the plans of students as universities around the world remain closed. Business schools, a sector already facing a raft of problems, are also suffering. A survey of American business schools by Eduvantis revealed that most thought the coronavirus would result in some permanent closures. A survey by *The Economist* of seven business schools in America, Britain and France, has found that they have turned to online learning. Some have even launched pandemic-related courses such as the London Business

School’s “The Economics of a Pandemic”. In the past, business schools may have benefited from a recession as people chose to pursue their education rather than enter the jobs market, but this time around things could be different for a number of reasons, not least poor perceptions of how the UK and US have handled the pandemic...

economist.com, 16 May 2020

Energy and utilities

Consumers unaware of energy usage

A new survey reveals that 66% of British homes have a smart meter, yet 85% are unaware of how much electricity they are using. This shows a disconnect between efficiency measures implemented by utilities companies and consumer behaviour, according to Mark Sait, chief executive of SaveMoneyCutCarbon. He argues that the utilities sector has a huge opportunity to influence consumer behaviour and knowledge because it serves the whole population. The company has just released the findings of its first phase of research in a five-year survey into energy and water usage in the home.

utilityweek.co.uk, 13 May 2020 (Wallin)

Environment

Climate risk

This article was adapted from the McKinsey Global Institute report, *Climate risk and response: Physical hazards and socioeconomic impacts*. It examines the physical risk from climate change over the next three decades. The authors explain why some global warming is locked in and the kind of physical changes that can be expected. The article looks at four of the report’s nine case studies showing how physical changes could create socioeconomic risk at a local level. It also looks at the choices that business leaders must face. Leaders will have to understand the “new climate reality” and its impact on their organisation in different regions around the world.

mckinsey.com, 15 May 2020 (Woetzel et al)

Climate change – public attitudes

BEIS’s *Public Attitudes Tracker* covers a series of topics asked annually on climate change, energy use and smart meters. In the latest report, for March 2020, 76% of people said they were very or fairly concerned about climate change, down from 80% in March 2019; while 25% (excluding the 2% who don’t believe in climate change) think that people in the UK are being affected a great deal by it, up from 14% in 2019. The survey also covers views on renewables, nuclear energy, shale gas, carbon capture and corporate trust and transparency. This year, for the first time, it seeks to understand perceptions of the term “Net Zero”. The proportion of people who had any awareness of the term was

found to be just 35%!

gov.uk, 7 May 2020;

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884028/BEIS_PAT_W33 - Key findings Final .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884028/BEIS_PAT_W33_-_Key_findings_Final_.pdf)

Fashion

Big discounts expected in fashion retail

It is likely that some non-essential retailers will be able to reopen next month in the UK. Richard Lim of Retail Economics warns that fashion stores have huge inventory that they will have to shift to release capital, which is likely to result in heavy discounting. Fashion retailers have been badly hit by the pandemic and even online operations have reported a big decline in sales. Next, for example, has seen online sales fall by 32% in the three months to the end of April. The Government has been vague about which stores may be able to open from 1 June and the British Retail Consortium is pushing for clarity. There will be big issues around creating a safe shopping environment.

bbc.co.uk/news, 19 May 2020 (Read)

Chinese sportswear brand upping the ante

Anta, the world's third largest sportswear company by market capitalisation, has a sixth of China's market, but trails Nike and Adidas. Its aim is to become "a Chinese brand that stands out in the world" but even in China it "lacks the cool factor" of Nike and Adidas, which have more brand appeal. Ding Shizhong, the company's founder, is trying to shift perceptions of it as an "affordable brand" to a "desirable" one.

economist.com, 14 May 2020

Financial services

Facial recognition payments – user concerns

A new study in China has found that face-based payments can improve customer convenience and checkout speeds but require consumer education to allay concerns over security. The study by Nielsen Norman Group looked at face recognition payments (FRP) services offered by Alipay, WeChat and JD.com in China. It found that four out of five participants preferred QR code scanning because the "onboarding experience" failed to make them feel secure enough. The study also identified four user experience mistakes that made users feel less trusting of the security of the technology.

nfcw.com, 12 May 2020 (Clark)

FMCG

Beverages

Cobra beer launches Big Curry Night

Cobra Beer has brought back its furloughed employees for a campaign to raise money for South

Asian countries that have been badly hit by the pandemic. Big Curry Night, running from 22-31 May, will encourage people who order a curry from a takeaway, buy a ready meal or make their own curry and to donate to the British Asian Trust's Covid-19 Emergency Appeal. People ordering curries will have the option of donating a pound to the cause, which will be matched by the British Asian Trust. The campaign is being undertaken in partnership with Molson Coors, Uber Eats, Deliveroo and BT. Cobra normally supplies over 6,000 curry restaurants.

thegrocer.co.uk, 15 May 2020 (Woolfson)

Food

Stilton feeling blue following lockdown

Stilton cheese, which was granted protected designation of origin status by the EC in 1996, is under threat as sales have fallen by 30% since the lockdown and export markets have closed. The Stilton Cheese Makers Association (SCMA) hopes the British public will support it but has expressed fears that the situation will discourage the next generation of cheesemakers. Stilton is permitted to be made by just six dairies in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

bbc.co.uk/news, 18 May 2020

Huel fuel

Since 2014 entrepreneur Julian Hearn has been marketing Huel, his "human fuel" meal replacement brand which claims to be "nutritionally complete". It takes the form of a powder that is mixed with water or milk to form "affordable food" that has "minimal impact on animals and the environment". In January the company sold 2.7m meals solely through e-commerce and raked in £5.3m in revenue. Hearn hopes that a mixture of direct marketing and word-of-mouth will help to boost the company's growth. For now, it is a novel product but he believes that once it hits the mass market it will really take off and lose its futuristic, sci-fi connotations.

thedrum.com, 8 May 2020

Tobacco

Big tobacco – social media marketing

PMI and BAT, two of the big tobacco companies, have appropriated the "Stay at home" hashtags of the type used by governments and health authorities to market their heated cigarette products and e-cigarettes on social media. This is according to Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids which has conducted an analysis of the marketing tactics of tobacco, e-cigarette and vaping companies across 28 countries. Some brands are using influencers to promote branded masks or giving away free masks with products. The campaign's president, Matthew L Myers, says the companies will "stop at nothing" to sell more products while "shamelessly capitalising on a pandemic".

prweek.com, 15 May 2020 (Hickman)

Government and public sector

Police recruitment campaign

Yesterday saw the launch of the next phase of the Government's campaign to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers. TV commercials illustrate the central role of policing in the community while new social media ads aim to attract applicants from a variety of backgrounds. The campaign hopes to take advantage of the community spirit shown by the public during the pandemic by offering them the chance to make a difference. The Government is on track to meet its target of 6,000 additional officers by March 2021.

[gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), 19 May 2020

Health and pharmaceuticals

Digital transformation – NHS

Some of the NHS's IT systems are outdated and inefficient. The main health bodies believe that it is important to implement new ways of working and that the NHS needs a digital transformation. Previous attempts have been expensive and mainly unsuccessful but in July 2019, a new unit, the NHSX, was set up to lead digital transformation. It will allow NHS trusts greater autonomy in their approach to digital transformation and IT systems so long as they comply with national standards. This downloadable report, *Digital Transformation in the NHS*, sets out the current state of digital services in the NHS and the NHS's readiness to deliver it.

[nao.org.uk](https://www.nao.org.uk), 15 May 2020;

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-use-of-digital-technology-in-the-nhs/>

BAT could start trials of Covid-19 vaccine

In April tobacco company BAT said that its US biotech subsidiary, Kentucky BioProcessing, was developing a plant-based vaccine for the coronavirus. Now it is moving to human trials pending FDA authorisation. The vaccine uses BAT's proprietary tobacco plant technology which it claims has advantages over conventional vaccine production technology. Its rival, Philip Morris, is also working on a vaccine through a biotech company it part-owns.

[thegrocer.co.uk](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk), 18 May 2020 (Devlin)

IT and telecoms

Keeping your distance – Bump technology

The new Bump alert system will help employees to social distance in the workplace when they return to work. Tharsus, based in Blyth near Newcastle, has developed a system for use in building sites or warehouses, that uses radio frequency technology to trigger a light or sound if people get too close to each other. It will also enable managers to identify hotspots where social distancing has been difficult to

maintain. The company is trialling 2,500 devices this month with the aim of a full launch in June.

[telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk), 15 May 2020 (Lynch)

Leisure and tourism

Britain's gardens

One in eight (12%) of people in Great Britain have no access to a private or shared garden, according to Ordnance Survey data. In England black people (37%) are almost four times as likely as white people (10%) to have no outside space, such as a garden, patio or balcony, according to Natural England. Gardens in London are 26% smaller (median size of 144 sq m) than the national average (188 sq m). This article includes a map where you can look at garden sizes by postcode.

[ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk), 14 May 2020;

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/oneineightbritishhouseholdshasnogarden/2020-05-14>

Making lockdown walks more interesting

The Randonautica app uses a random number generator to produce coordinates within a specific radius of your location so that you can go there and explore. The user can set a "personal intention" before visiting a location in the hope of discovering "synchronicities, coincidences or unusual occurrences". On one occasion a person stated their intention of "seeing something unexplainable" and ended up finding an empty armchair in a field. Randonauting has seen a surge in activity, especially since lockdown.

[wired.co.uk](https://www.wired.co.uk), 16 May 2020 (Walker)

Materials and mining

BHP stays on top for most valuable brand

Brand Finance's *Mining, Iron & Steel 25* ranking for 2020 reveals that BHP retains lead position as the most valuable brand in the sector, with a value of \$5.8 billion. CITIC Pacific Mining is the fastest growing brand, up by 25% while Thyssenkrupp is the fastest falling, down by 18% due to problems in the steel industry. However, Rio Tinto has overtaken BHP as the strongest iron and steel brand with a Brand Strength Index score of 71.8 out of 100. Mining brands are increasingly having to tackle intolerance towards new mining projects which means that a strong brand is important for keeping influential stakeholders on side, says David Haigh, CEO of Brand Finance.

[branddirectory.com](https://www.branddirectory.com), March 2020

<https://www.branddirectory.com/rankings/mining-iron-and-steel>

Media

Film

Film industry animated

While the film industry has been forced to postpone the filming of popular shows, the animation and special effects industry has remained at full capacity. Animators are able to work in isolation, often working remotely in groups which enables them to social distance. Even when the cinemas open, it could take film and TV schedules up to two years to get back to full strength and this could lead to continued demand for animation and special effects. People stuck at home are keen to see fresh content. UK viewers have been watching an additional five hours of TV every week, according to Thinkbox while streaming services are up by 20% globally.

theguardian.com, 19 May 2020 (Sweney)

Games

Games industry – highs and lows

People around the world have turned to digital entertainment during the lockdown, with the video game industry being a particular beneficiary. The industry has been described as “recession proof” yet parts of it have struggled during this period while others have met the challenges. In March 2020 videogame sales were up by 44% year-on-year. In general, games, such as *Animal Crossing*, have been released on time and have been well received. However, it is harder for games developers to work from home than it is when working with a dedicated team in the same room and some release dates have been pushed back. Major events have also been cancelled, such as the Game Developer Conference. The industry can expect to face legal and commercial challenges. Yet the strong sales of software, a growing customer base and the sector’s flexibility and adaptability, which have been key to growth so far, are expected to continue.

lexology.com, 11 May 2020 (Vyas); gamesindustry.biz, 8 April 2020 (Dring)

Internet

Ironing out the bugs – the website audit

Analytics is all about finding opportunities, but it can also be about discovering bugs on a website. Here is a seven-step approach to auditing your website using Google Analytics, a free audit tool. The author describes in some detail how to check for broken pages or bad URLs and broken links; whether the site works well in different browsers; whether the e-commerce operation works across browsers; whether the site works on all devices; why there might be a sudden drop in traffic; and why there are searches with no search results.

orbitmedia.com, (Crestodina)

Google to tackle resource-guzzling ads

Google plans to block display ads that drain batteries or use too much network data on its Chrome browser. It has warned advertisers that they have until the end of August to fix the problem or they could be blocked. Users will be shown a message telling them that the ad has used too many resources and redirecting them to an error page.

marketingweek.com, 18 May 2020

Social media

Facebook acquires Giphy

Facebook has announced that it is to acquire Giphy, a well-known service for making and sharing GIFs. It enables users to embed short animations on sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Giphy will become part of Instagram, a fact that has not been too well received by critics concerned about Facebook’s privacy record and other issues. Although Giphy’s head of content has tried to quash rumours that the service would remove GIFs of Mark Zuckerberg, Giphy’s tools are integrated with many of Facebook’s competitors, such as Twitter and Snapchat, and ultimately Facebook will be the gatekeeper...

wired.com, 15 May 2020

Television

Streaming services benefit from lockdown

Since the lockdown began in the UK, there have been 4.6m sign-ups to subscription VoD services. The lockdown has also been beneficial for Disney+ which only launched in the UK on 24 March and is estimated to have attracted 1.6m subscribers during its first month. The survey, by Oliver and Ohlbaum Associates, found that a quarter of people were more willing to subscribe to a service during the lockdown than before it. Netflix remains the market leader in the UK with 12.4m subscribers compared with Amazon Prime in second place with seven million subscribers, according to Barb.

theguardian.com, 15 May 2020 (Sweney)

Video

Live video replaces in-person

Since face-to-face interactions are off the menu, consumers are using live video to stay in touch. According to a 31 March survey by Business Insider Intelligence, 47.6% of US adults had used Apple’s Facetime to chat with friends and family vs 44.1% who used Facebook Messenger, 31.5% Zoom, 22.5% Skype and 18.4% WhatsApp. In late April Facebook announced Messenger Rooms, a live videoconferencing service for up to 50 people. Even smaller social platforms, such as Houseparty (See next article), are benefiting from the trend for live video. However, according to eMarketer, it is unlikely that live videoconferencing will remain as important to consumers once the pandemic ends.

emarketer.com, 12 May 2020 (Enberg)

Houseparty turns to live events

Houseparty, the viral video app, has become increasingly popular during the lockdown, with millions of downloads. Now it is introducing live events in a series called In The House. This is a three-day festival in which celebrities host their own events and groups of friends are able to watch a show while chatting to each other. Increasingly people are turning to virtual events, music festivals and parties during lockdown. Houseparty has seen downloads reach nine million within just a few weeks.

[telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk), 14 May 2020 (Field)

Retailing

Will people go back to retail stores?

Local businesses are opening again in some US states, yet polls suggest that consumers are still nervous about the coronavirus. One found that 56% of people are comfortable with going into a grocery store but 67% are uncomfortable about entering a clothing store. Other research backs up the idea that consumers have conflicting feelings. While people want to return to normal, they are uncertain as to whether it is safe to do so. When Georgia began reopening non-essential businesses in April, it was inundated with visitors from neighbouring states. This suggests that there is pent-up demand for offline experiences. But marketers should beware of assuming that shoppers are returning to normal and the new normal is likely to see a greater role for e-commerce. Research from SmarterHQ shows that 26% of people will now shop primarily online for non-essentials. Other research backs up the idea that e-commerce will grow at the expense of stores.

[marketingland.com](https://www.marketingland.com), 11 May 2020 (Sterling)

Changing customer experience requirements

Digital-first and omnichannel retailers have adapted to the current situation better than retailers that previously prioritised stores and face-to-face over omnichannel strategies. Retailers that can use their omnichannel strategy to create a memorable customer experience will recover faster after the pandemic. During the 2008 financial crisis, customer experience leaders saw less of a downturn and recovered faster, with three times the total shareholder returns compared to the average player. To remain relevant, retailers must focus on five actions to make their customer experience more resilient and to come out of the crisis stronger. These are: to “double down” on digital; innovate in omnichannel; transform store operations and offer a safer customer experience (SafeX); reimagine the physical network; and embrace an agile operating model.

[mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com), 14 May 2020 (Briedis et al)

Retail footfall nosedives

Retail footfall fell by a record 84.7% year-on-year in the four weeks to 2 May, according to the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and ShopperTrak. BRC CEO, Helen Dickinson, believes that we will see “an acceleration of many trends seen prior to the coronavirus” such as lower footfall, more consumers browsing digitally and a rise in online sales. Retailers will have to rapidly adapt to meet the needs of consumers. The need to offer “impressive customer service and the effective use of technology” will become even more important.

[marketingweek.com](https://www.marketingweek.com), 18 May 2020

Supermarket approval falls

The major UK supermarkets have seen a decline in public approval as consumers return to their old attitudes towards retailers, according to the weekly Covid-19 tracker from Populus Group. However, food retailers are still at the top of the poll for their response to the pandemic, ahead of the Government, airlines, payment companies, energy firms, telecoms groups and non-food retailers. Now that it is easier to get products and delivery slots, “supermarkets are going back to fulfilling their key role – essential but not necessarily worthy of note on any given day” says Manfred Abraham, CEO of BrandCap, part of Populus Group.

[thegrocer.co.uk](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk), 15 May 2020 (Devlin)

WH Smith sales plummet

WH Smith has reported an 85% fall in overall sales for April as its lucrative airport and railway station shops have taken a hit. Although the retailer continues to trade in 130 hospital stores and stores that contain a post office, over 300 high street stores have closed. On the upside, it has seen a 400% rise in the sale of books online over the past month. Carl Cowling, chief executive, says he is expecting a gradual uptick in trading at airport and railway stores from the autumn, especially in the US.

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com), 14 May 2020 (Butler)

Services

Love in the time of corona – virtual dating

With so many people shut indoors around the world, how can dating apps (Tinder, Bumble, Grindr, etc) possibly survive? Yet dating services are still up and running through video calls and instant messaging. Online dating businesses are revamping their business models in response to the pandemic and people are increasingly exploring the idea of “virtual dating”. Some virtual dating apps are even enjoying a rise in in-app advertising as advertisers turn to new audiences.

[thedrum.com](https://www.thedrum.com), 12 May 2020

Restaurant uses mannequins to fill seats

A restaurant in northern Virginia is using mannequins to stop guests feeling lonely while they are social distancing. The Inn at Little Washington will only be allowed 50% dining capacity due to the state's social distancing regulations. The mannequins, which are dressed in tuxedos and long dresses, are treated as if they are real guests by waiters, who chat to them and refill their wine glasses. The restaurant is well known for its slightly alternative dining experiences. It already has a mooing cow on wheels with a platter of cheese on its back!

theguardian.com, 14 May 2020 (Aratani)

Can hotels and B&Bs survive the summer

Hotels across the UK are closed and waiting to see if they might be allowed to reopen in July. According to research from VisitBritain, most Britons who have planned a holiday this year believe it probably won't go ahead. The UK's 13,000 hotels and 35,000 B&Bs and guest houses that make 30% of their revenue during the summer months, will take a huge hit if the lockdown doesn't lift by then. For hotels and B&Bs that do open, social distancing will remain a problem.

wired.co.uk, 10 May 2020 (Lee)

Transport and travel

Privacy rules for connected vehicles

Self-driving cars are no longer a thing of the future and the relevant technologies (AI, IoT, high-performance computers, etc) are developing rapidly. The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) has published draft guidelines on the processing of personal data in relation to connected vehicles and mobility related applications. The guidelines examine the data protection risks associated with these applications and make recommendations about the processing related to connected vehicles. This article summarises the risks identified by the EDPB and its recommendations. It also sets out some considerations for businesses that are involved in the connected vehicles industry.

lexology.com, 5 May 2020 (Van Ecke and Haie)

Airlines – flying towards a zero-carbon future

This year has seen the largest contraction in the history of the airline industry, with airline capacity shrinking by around 75% in early April. It could be several years before demand returns to pre-crisis levels, leading to structural changes such as consolidation. However, this gives it an opportunity to start working towards a low-carbon future, argue the authors. This might include fuel-efficiency programmes and retiring older, less fuel-efficient aircraft. The scale of the task requires multi-stakeholder support including governments, tech players and suppliers with a view to creating a

suitable regulatory framework and incentives. This paper examines the issues in some detail.

mckinsey.com, 13 May 2020 (Dichter et al)

Ryanair – passenger numbers to halve

Ryanair expects its passenger numbers to nearly halve for this financial year to below 80m, compared to its target of 154m. CEO Michael O'Leary says he plans to increase flights in July despite the UK Government's two-week quarantine plans which he has described as "idiotic". The airline's profit rose by 13% to just over €1 billion for the year to the end of March. Despite admitting that it will be a difficult year, Ryanair says it has one of the strongest balance sheets in the industry but is expecting a loss of over €200m for the April to June quarter.

bbc.co.uk/news, 18 May 2020

EasyJet admits to massive data breach

EasyJet says that hackers have accessed the travel details of nine million customers as well as the credit card details of 2,200 customers. Easyjet has not said when the breach occurred but has reported it to the ICO. Companies have 72 hours in which to inform regulators. Last year the ICO fined BA a record £183m after a data breach involving the details of 500,000 customers. The BA breach should have been a "wake-up call" for the airline industry and public confidence will be "at an all-time low" after the latest incident, says Mike Fenton of threat detection firm Redscan.

**techcrunch.com, 19 May 2020 (Whittaker);
bbc.co.uk/news, 19 May 2020**

Written by CIM's Knowledge Services Team

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