

Cutting Edge: Our weekly analysis of marketing news

9 September 2020

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

Quick [links](#) to sections

Marketing trends and issues

Advertising

The effects of priming on creativity

It is estimated that up to a third of advertising effectiveness derives from the creativity of a brand's advertising communications; while agencies with a reputation for creativity are more successful at keeping their clients. Research suggests that creativity can be primed, a process by which exposure to one item may enhance responses to a related item. Hence, the stimuli that advertising creatives are exposed to during the creative design phase may influence their creations. This article looks at the way advertising creativity could be influenced by primes in the form of competitor product information presented at the briefing stage of engagement with a client. It specifically examines the impact of near primes on the originality and appropriateness of the advertising.

International Journal of Market Research, Vol 62(5), September 2020, pp633-648 (Brown et al)

Google passes digital tax costs to advertisers

From November Google will pass on the cost of digital services taxes in Europe to advertisers. This will initially affect the cost of ads served on the Google platform or purchased through Google Ads. Costs will rise by 2% in the UK and 5% in Austria and Turkey to reflect the new digital services taxes in those countries. The UK Government has estimated that the digital tax on social media groups, online marketplaces and search engines could raise £400m a year. Advertisers and publishers are concerned that the fees will damage ad spending which has already suffered during the pandemic. Amazon has previously said that it would pass the 2% tax on to sellers on its platform.

ft.com, 1 September 2020 (Barker)

Agencies

WPP – organic revenue down but not out

WPP has reported a 15% organic fall in net revenue for the second quarter of the year and a 10.2% fall for the first half. However, it believes the second half of the year should see some improvements. China and the US have been WPP's best-performing areas. CEO Mark Read reports business wins amounting to \$4 billion for the first half of the year, with work coming from Intel, HSBC and Unilever, among others. The fact that 56% of the company's business derives from sectors less likely to be affected by Covid-19, such as packaged goods, technology and healthcare, has helped it to perform "above expectations", says Read.

mediapost.com, 27 August 2020 (McClellan)

Reasons for becoming employee owned

The trend for employee-owned firms is notable among architects where 20 of the top 100 are employee-owned. Now this model seems to be gaining traction among PR and marketing agencies. The author examines the reasons for this, including evidence suggesting that employee-owned firms can weather tougher economic times than others.

prweek.com, 27 August 2020 (Mason)

Brands and branding

Consumer creativity

Creativity is a powerful way for brands to interact with their customers; over recent years consumers have expressed a need to be more creative but what exactly does creativity mean? The DMA, together with Foresight Factory, has examined key customer trends relating to creativity. They found that in 2019 51% of British consumers said they wanted to be more creative to fulfil themselves. This was a stronger sentiment than the need to own things



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(27%), being involved in a community (31%) or wanting more excitement (47%). The question is what brands can do when interacting with consumers to help them realise this creativity. The *Pathways to Creativity 2020* report examines four areas brands should explore to stimulate consumer creativity. They are set out in the form of an infographic.

dma.org.uk, 2 September 2020

Empathy – action not words

Consumers prefer to buy from empathetic brands, people say they prefer to work for empathetic brands and companies claim to place empathy high on their list of priorities, so why isn't there more empathy? There is a risk that companies spend a lot of time talking about empathy without translating it into measurable outcomes. Research consistently shows that employees, particularly younger ones, will move to companies that better align with their values; while customers prefer to buy from brands that put action before words. Here the author proposes that organisations should build and install a "human operating system" which acts as the glue to encode how values like empathy can permeate throughout the business.

Entrepreneur, Vol 48(5), September 2020, pp58-64 (Solomon)

Conferences and events

Virtual events fail in networking

A recent survey from IDC has found that when "in-person" meetings and conferences moved online, consumers wanted to replicate their in-person experiences, particularly with regard to engagement. Live events generally involve conversations and networking which attendees of virtual events do by posting on social media and exchanging LinkedIn addresses. The survey revealed that almost half of virtual event attendees engage via social media compared with only 16% who do so at in-person events. Yet less than half of virtual events offer live chat involving questions for speakers or audience interaction. Wayne Kurtzman, an IDC research director, says that in order to succeed, virtual events must ensure that attendees have easy ways to engage with each other, the organisers and speakers.

CRM Magazine, Vol 24(7), September 2020, p15 (Klie)

Video conferencing zooms during Q2

Zoom's revenues rose by a colossal 355% to \$663.5m in the second quarter of the year, with customer usage up by 458%. The video conferencing app has succeeded in attracting business customers that are prepared to pay for the service and the number of large customers doubled to 988 during Q2.

marketingweek.com, 1 September 2020

Consumer behaviour

Experiential brand loyalty

Consumers not only act and think, they also experience and this also applies to their relationship with brands. An "experientially loyal" consumer is defined as one who is so committed to the brand that they find personal symbolic meanings in the very act of consuming the brand. This article reviews the literature on brand loyalty, focusing particularly on the "fan", a type of consumer that epitomises experiential loyalty. The concept of experiential brand loyalty is discussed and considered in terms of bridging the gap between brand loyalty and experiential consumption. Implications for future research and marketing practice are set out.

Marketing Theory, Vol 20(3), September 2020, pp251-271 (Obiegbu et al)

Customer relations

Targeting the at-home consumer

As events and special occasions have become limited to "hyperlocal" affairs due to Covid-19, people are also becoming more careful with their spending. These trends are likely to continue due to safety concerns, a new approach to working and the economic impact of the pandemic. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for brands and retailers. With greater collaboration in areas such as e-commerce, shopper marketing and experiential marketing, companies can engage with consumers along the purchase path and reinforce their brand leadership. As competition ramps up, it is more important than ever to increase loyalty, especially for key occasions. This will require a data-driven, personalised approach to targeting the right consumer with the right content at the right time. This article explores the targeted approach to the "at-home" consumer.

strategy-business.com, 20 August 2020 (Baker and Egel)

AI – its impact on customer experience

Contact centre reps can't provide good customer service if they don't have access to good data. In his latest book, *The AI-Powered Enterprise*, Seth Earley argues that the key to giving customer experience professionals the tools they need is artificial intelligence. Companies that get AI right are more likely to engender loyalty. Here CRM editor Leonard Klie asks Earley about how AI will create value for customers, what areas of business will be most affected by AI, how AI can turn customer service from a cost centre into a revenue centre and other areas in which AI affects customer service.

CRM Magazine, Vol 24(7), September 2020, pp17-18 (Klie)

Direct marketing

Registration forms for marketing opt-ins

Online events, resources and other services are often created for the purpose of lead generation and

customer acquisition but they can be expensive and organisations need to see a return on their investment. This new guide from the DMA Email Council, *How to Use Registration Forms to Get Marketing Opt-In*, explains what one can and cannot do, with examples of good and bad practice. It outlines five marketing and communication scenarios, discusses electronic/email marketing permissions, service messages, event communications, sign-up forms and bundled terms, with references and links to GDPR, PECR and the ICO.

dma.org.uk, 3 September 2020 (Henderson)

Law

New consultation paper on EU copyright

Article 17 (often known as the “meme ban”) of the EU Directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market, came into force last year. It states that online content sharing platforms are communicating to the public when they host copyright content uploaded by their users. This means that the platform, in addition to the user, will be liable for communication of unauthorised copyright content. In July the European Commission issued a consultation paper, open for comment until September 2020, giving businesses a small window of opportunity to raise issues. This article comments on the ramifications of the paper and argues that it lacks the “decisiveness and precision” which would give content providers an effective guide to compliance.

lexology.com, 26 August 2020 (Newman)

IoT sector inquiry

The European Commission (EC) has recently launched an inquiry into the Internet of Things products and services with the aim of producing a preliminary report in spring 2021. By the end of 2019 the number of smart home devices in the EU had reached around 108m, with predictions that the number will reach 184m by 2023. The EC is particularly looking at the flow of data through IoT products and services which companies can use to monitor consumer habits, trends and even health, and allows them to predict consumer behaviour up to a point. This data is key to the development of AI. The Commission is concerned about “distortions of competition” and the “potential for markets to tip”. This will be the first Commission sector inquiry to occur since the UK left the EU so it will be interesting to see if there is divergence between the EC and the CMA in their approach to regulating data and tech companies...

lexology.com, 28 August 2020 (Hunt)

Marketing

Shocking can be positive

Consumers are the “ultimate judges” of what constitutes ethical marketing. This research aims to

fill a gap in the literature by looking at the interconnections between consumer ethical judgement, consent and context. The authors examine consumers’ ethical judgements of experiential marketing communications that use threat appeals designed to elicit emotions such as fear, shock or distress. The research suggests that consumers can feel positive about being shocked, with threat appeals judged to be pretty much ethical because of the negative emotions they produce. The research is set in the context of horror film marketing! (See also under Leisure)

Journal of Business Ethics, Vol 165(4), 2020, pp735-751 (Moraes et al)

Integrated marketing communications

Marketing Communications: Integrating Online and Offline, Customer Engagement and Digital Technologies, a book by PR Smith and Ze Zook, is into its seventh edition. Part one, entitled “Communications background and theories”, introduces new thinking and tools which are largely driven by marketing automation, social media and virtual worlds. Part two covers “Communication tools” that marketers will need to manage, such as advertising, PR, sponsorship, sales promotion, direct mail, exhibitions and so on. The book is very comprehensive and therefore not intended to be read cover-to-cover but rather as a reference source for delving into marketing communications. The book can be purchased at:

<https://www.johnsmith.co.uk/cim-shop/product/9780749498641/marketing-communications-integrating-online-and-offline-customer-engagement-and>

koganpage.com, September 2020

Market research

Survey research in a shifting landscape

We are living in uncertain times, as business models change and PR professionals face a challenging media landscape. Data has a limited shelf-life and, however good your research strategy, there is always someone who is ahead of you with high-profile statistics. Yet survey research can still be a good way of getting coverage and, if done in the right way, can benefit other areas of business. Here are five tips for successful research during uncertain times.

prdaily.com, 2 September 2020 (White)

Ideal online survey is 10 to 15 minutes

The number of surveys, especially online surveys, has increased hugely over the past few years. Because interviewers are not present to motivate respondents, some would argue that online surveys should not exceed 20 minutes, but there has been little research to back this up. This study, based on respondents from two online panels in Germany, suggests that the ideal length of an online survey is

between 10 and 15 minutes while the maximum length is between 20 and 28 minutes. The study also reveals that other factors have significant effects on respondents' tolerance, such as socio-demographics (gender, age and education), personality traits, and survey-related questions (whether the respondents liked the survey, for example) on at least one of the variables (ideal or maximum lengths).

International Journal of Market Research, Vol 62(5), September 2020, pp538-545 (Revilla and Höhne)

Public relations

PR guide to search engine strategy

It's not easy to rank high in a Google search results page but brands can create a Search Engine Visibility (SEV) strategy from earned media results. A new report, entitled *The Ultimate PR Guide to Search Engine Strategy*, shows how to optimise link-building with PR; to use keyword search to improve the success of press releases and pitches; how PR can help brand success in search engine results; and how to create reports on media coverage that highlight SEO gains. The report can be downloaded here:

<https://www.ragan.com/white-papers/the-ultimate-pr-guide-to-search-engine-strategy/prdaily.com>, 25 August 2020

Sponsorship

Brand loyalty from supporting racial equality

A new survey reveals that sports fans are more likely (38%) to be loyal to sponsor brands that stand up for racial equality than people who don't consider themselves to be sports fans (29%). The research, which was conducted in the US by international sports agency Octagon, also found that 54% of people aged 18 to 34 were likely to support a brand that sponsors athletes and teams who actively support racial equality vs 30% among older age groups. Nike has particularly benefited from this trend. Its share price reached an all-time high in 2018 when it made Colin Kaepernick (the footballer who knelt during the US national anthem) the face of its ad campaign.

adweek.com, 31 August 2020 (Barwick)

Betting sponsors – on a losing streak?

Betting firm Betway is to be the new front-of-shirt sponsor for Espanyol, a Spanish soccer club. Betway already sponsors other Spanish teams, but these deals could be threatened by new regulations due to be introduced in Spain in October. These will prevent professional sports teams from promoting betting companies through shirt sponsorship, stadia branding and most other marketing. Clubs in Spain's top La Liga could lose up to €80m. Meanwhile, Fulham FC has named BetVictor as its main partner until the end of the 2021/22 season. Fulham FC is signing up with yet another betting company at a

time when there are calls for English football to end its reliance on the gambling industry for income.

sportspromedia.com/news, 7 September 2020 (Dixon); sportspromedia.com/news, 8 September 2020 (Carp)

Agriculture, fishing and forestry

Seaweed – a growing market

The Faroe Islands is home to a seaweed industry, including seaweed producer, Ocean Rainforest. A raft of seaweed farms are springing up across Europe and North America due to rising demand for its use in food and animal feed, as well as to replace fossil-based products such as plastic. Ocean Rainforest recently won funding from the US Department of Energy to build a system in California to develop seaweed for biofuels. Relatively little seaweed cultivation happens outside Asia, mainly because of the labour cost. Annette Bruhn of Aarhus University in Denmark says that, to make farming economical, "the yield needs to go up and the cost needs to go down". There is a lot of innovation, including the use of robots and inland cultivation, and the market is set to expand.

bbc.co.uk/news, 27 August 2020 (Murray)

Showing support for farmers

Back British Farming Day (9 September) is in its fifth year and was created by the NFU to celebrate the work done by farmers and their importance to the economy. The NFU says it will be reminding politicians that: "British food and farming contributes over £120 billion to the UK economy each year and employs four million people". This year is especially significant because the Agriculture Bill (which provides the legislative framework for replacement agricultural support schemes) is due to return to the Commons.

farminguk.com, 8 September 2020

Tractor sales continue downwards

Tractor sales have been in decline this year, with 2,500 fewer being registered so far compared with the same period last year, a decline of 26.7%, according to the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA). In August sales were down by 7% year-on-year. AEA economist Stephan Howarth says that adverse weather conditions and Covid-19 have been the main factors in the downward trend but farmers have blamed rising tractor prices.

fwi.co.uk, 4 September 2020 (Meredith)

Building industry

Sustainable building for everyone

The World Green Building Council (WorldGBC) has launched its *Sustainable Buildings for Everyone, Everywhere* strategy aimed at tackling climate change, health and wellbeing and resource

efficiency issues in building. Buildings generate nearly 40% of global carbon emissions and 50% of global material use; while 91% of people are living in areas where air pollution levels are above WHO limits. By 2050 the world's building stock is expected to double which will speed up the damaging effect of the built environment on the environment, society and the economy.

https://worldqbc.org/sites/default/files/Sustainable%20Buildings%20for%20Everyone%2C%20Everywhere_FINAL.pdf, September 2020

Mass timber – the future of building?

Wood is sustainable and renewable and is becoming ever more versatile as a building material due to a raft of new products, such as cross-laminated timber (CLT), which is making wood bigger and stronger. This so-called "mass" timber is making its way into construction projects around the world such as an 18-storey tower in Norway, which is the world's largest timber building. Mass timber buildings are far more environmentally friendly than concrete which produces 5% of human-generated CO₂ emissions every year. Despite rising global temperatures and wildfires in places like California and Australia, mass timber products like CLT could be a more sustainable choice in the future for builders who want a fire-resistant material.

[fastcompany.com](https://www.fastcompany.com/900000000/mass-timber-the-future-of-building), 2 September 2020 (Berg)

Businesses and strategy

Creating an innovation culture like 3M

3M, with products such as glue, face masks and asthma inhalers, does not have a glamorous image, yet it is an "innovation pin-up", argues the author. It has displayed a consistent approach to profitable creativity which has allowed it to thrive for more than 100 years despite it having over 60,000 products. Although Google, Amazon and Netflix are regarded as the "most creative" media companies in company rankings, much of their success is based on strategies that 3M has been using for years. Here are some things that other organisations can learn from 3M to boost their innovation culture.

[managementtoday.co.uk](https://www.managementtoday.co.uk/2020/08/24/3m-innovation-culture/), 24 August 2020 (Turner)

Profiting when your customer do

The Ends Game: How Smart Companies Stop Selling Products and Start Delivering Value, a book by Marco Bertini and Oded Koenigsberg (MIT Press, 2020), argues that the "ends game" can give better results for companies and customers and proposes a case for rewriting the rules of commerce. Customers want to buy a solution to a "job that needs to be done" but buying a product doesn't always lead to this end goal. The book focuses on three forms of waste exchange between companies and customers and offers an alternative proposition in the form of "lean commerce". This is where the success of the company relies on delivering value to the customer,

which, it argues, is a more efficient model. The book includes a range of cases studies.

[strategy-business.com](https://www.strategy-business.com/article/20200831), 31 August 2020 (Lancefield)

UK public divided over trust in use of data

According to the annual track survey from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), only 27% of participants said they had high trust and confidence in companies and organisations that store and use their data, down from 32% last year. This compares with low trust and confidence, which has fallen from 38% in 2019 to 28% this year. Many respondents (45%) opted for the neutral midpoint, up by 15% on 2019. Some 18% of participants said that the belief that companies sell data to third parties was the main reason for low levels of trust. The ICO intends to use the data to help inform how it works with the public and organisations.

[research-live.com](https://www.research-live.com/news/2020/08/28/uk-public-divided-over-trust-in-use-of-data), 28 August 2020 (McQuatar)

Pivoting – get your story right

A new company must bring together investors, employees, customers and the media with a good story, but often the narrative is wrong and entrepreneurs need to change direction. The authors have conducted extensive research to come up with strategies for keeping stakeholders on side during such changes. In the early stages of a pivot, entrepreneurs must avoid focusing on a specific solution but instead present the big picture. They can then demonstrate continuity by explaining how the new plan aligns with the original vision. Once the new plan has been implemented, they must be empathetic to stakeholders. Employees and customers are more likely to stay loyal if they are told how the changes will impact them and if they believe that leaders genuinely care.

[Harvard Business Review](https://hbr.org/2020/09/pivoting-get-your-story-right), Vol 98(5), September-October 2020, pp98-105 (McDonald and Bremner)

Charities and NGOs

Hybrid events – the way forward?

Many charities have transformed their operations during the pandemic, by moving services and fundraising online. Virtual events have been a boon because they have allowed charities to increase their reach and given their global supporter network access without the physical barriers to entry. For some organisations, physical events are better for lead generation. In B2B, for example, face-to-face events have been rated as being the most effective, according to 81% of marketers. Face-to-face is often more highly valued in an increasingly digital era but hybrid events can offer charities the best of both worlds, by combining the accessibility and reach of virtual events with the networking opportunities of physical events. This article examines hybrid events, their suitability for charities and how to get started.

[charitydigital.org.uk](https://www.charitydigital.org.uk/news/2020/08/27/hybrid-events-the-way-forward/), 27 August 2020 (Paterson)

Inclusive marketing

Inclusive marketing involves connecting with people of all backgrounds with content reflecting that diversity. It seeks to remove barriers by working with people who are generally underrepresented in conventional marketing. Inclusion also helps to engender loyalty and growth. It is particularly important for charity communications to show commitment to all people in society. Several charities have demonstrated inclusive marketing, such as Age Concern and Soundabout, a charity that uses music to help people with severe learning disabilities.

charitydigital.org.uk, 31 August 2020 (Fazil)

Durable consumer goods

Trying on sunnies with AR

Trying on sunglasses during a pandemic is not an option but it can be done using AR. Here Chris Abbruzzese, VP of trade marketing at Bollé Brands, a maker of high-end sunglasses, explains how the company used AR for the first time on Instagram. The AR experience, which people could access via Bollé's ads, offers both a selfie and a world view. At \$200 to \$300 a pair, the glasses "need to perform" says Abbruzzese. Moreover, as an older company Bollé needs to be revitalised and to reshape the shopping experience. Within two to three days, its AR experience was viewed by thousands of people. "When you think about marketing in general and social media specifically, it's about being useful, relevant and lightly branded. That's what AR can do", says Abbruzzese. (See also Social media)

emarketer.com, 28 August 2020 (Williamson)

LG produces breathable mask

Consumer tech companies have recognised the potential of Covid-19 masks, which has resulted in a raft of innovation, making them into the latest "must-have" gadget. Now LG has created a mask that enables people to breath "effortlessly" using a battery-powered HEPA filter that fits on the face. The PuriCare Wearable Air Purifier has sensors that can track the rhythm and volume of breath. It also has a carrying case which automatically sterilises the mask, while a connected smartphone tells you when the filters need to be replaced. More details will be made available at CES in January. Could masks be a trend at the show?

fastcompany.com, 28 August 2020 (Wilson)

Lego to open new stores

Lego is to open 120 new shops this year despite the problems faced by the retail sector. More adults having been using Lego during lockdown and the company has enjoyed a 7% rise in sales for the first half of the year, with operating profits up by 11%. Lego reports that there were queues at its stores

after shops reopened following lockdown. Eighty of the new stores will be in China.

marketingweek.com, 3 September 2020

Economy

The state of the UK economy

This House of Commons Library briefing discusses the state of the UK economy and summarises the latest data. While economic output fell by 20.4% from April to June, it believes that the UK could be past the worst since the economic contraction seen in April was followed by growth of 2.4% and 8.7% in May and June respectively. However, total Government debt at the end of July reached 100.5% of GDP, the first time it has exceeded 100% since 1960-1961. Some sectors, notably retail, have started to recover, with sales up by 3.6% in July compared with June and higher than in July 2019. The Purchasing Managers indexes for both manufacturing and services show growth, thanks to increased consumer spending and help for restaurants and hotels from the Eat Out to Help Out scheme. However, the indexes also warn that this recovery might not be sustainable.

commonslibrary.parliament.uk, 27 August 2020 (Powell and Brien)

Economic recovery might not be until 2023

A new forecast from KPMG suggests that the UK economy might not return to pre-pandemic levels until 2023. It expects GDP to fall by 10.3% this year. However, if a vaccine is produced by April next year, growth of 8.4% could be achieved. If a vaccine is not found until July, growth could fall to 7.1%. KPMG chief economist Yael Selfin says the timing and speed of the recovery will depend on both the vaccine and the outcome of Brexit.

marketingweek.com, 1 September 2020

Business and consumer confidence

This short House of Commons paper, *Business and Consumer Confidence: Key Economic Indicators*, summarises confidence surveys from three sources: the European Commission *Economic Sentiment Indicator*, reports that between July and August the UK sentiment index fell by 0.4 points to 75.1, up from a low of 61.7 in May; the CBI's *Industrial Trends Survey* for August, found that more manufacturers believed that output would fall over the next three months than thought it would rise; while the GfK *Consumer Confidence Index*, which measures a range of consumer attitudes, reports a reading of -27 in August, with no change compared to July. There are links to the original surveys.

commonslibrary.parliament.uk, 28 August 2020 (Brien)

Education

Higher education and the effects of Covid-19

QS has been conducting ongoing research into the effects of the coronavirus on the higher education sector. A new report, *The Coronavirus Crisis and the Future of Higher Education*, shares some of the findings to date. In particular, it examines how prospective international students are adapting to the Covid-19 crisis. In August 69% said the pandemic had affected their plans to study abroad, up from 27% in February. Just 10% of international students said they were extremely interested in studying online, 11% were very interested and 36% said they were not at all interested. The report also looks at how universities are adapting their approach during this period; in July 70% said they had switched scheduled courses online, down from 74% in June.

<https://www.qs.com/portfolio-items/the-coronavirus-crisis-and-the-future-of-higher-education-report/>, August 2020

Universities in crisis

In this BBC Sounds broadcast, entitled *Seriously...Universities in Crisis*, Sam Gyimah, former minister for universities in Theresa May's government, asks if universities can survive the current crisis. Gyimah looks at whether the existing business and education models for Britain's higher education sector are fit for purpose. The pandemic has exacerbated the issues that universities were already facing, notably in relation to funding. This broadcast looks at the changing circumstances for students, teachers, researchers and others connected to higher education.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08qq7m7>, 4 September 2020

Slogans and student purchase behaviour

This research looks at the influence of slogans on the brand awareness and purchase behaviour of students. It reveals that recall and recognition are boosted by conciseness, rhythm and jingle. The role and influence of slogans also depends on what stage the person has reached in their decision-making process. For example, slogans provide a reference point for young consumers to decide whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their purchase during the post-purchase phase. Not surprisingly, key influencers continue to be product quality, popularity and price, but memorable slogans can nevertheless enhance a product's chances of differentiation and purchase.

Young Consumers, Vol 21(3), 2020, pp305-317 (Rybczewska)

Energy and utilities

Just 10% of utilities prioritise renewables

New research suggests that just one in ten utility

companies around the world is prioritising renewable energy investment over fossil fuel power plants. The study of 3,000 utilities from the University of Oxford found that most of them were still investing heavily in fossil fuels while others were actually expanding fossil fuel plants. Just 10% of the companies said they were expanding their renewable energy faster than gas or coal. Most of the companies prioritising renewable energy were based in Europe while 10% of utilities who prioritised gas-fired power plants were mainly US companies, followed by Russian and German ones.

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com), 31 August 2020 (Ambrose)

Robin Hood loses its merry customers

Robin Hood Energy, set up by Nottingham Council in 2015 to give residents an alternative to the Big Six, has sold its customer base to Centrica. Now the brand will be subsumed within British Gas, which has promised to offer tariffs at the same price as, or lower than, Robin Hood's. One of Robin Hood's key principles was to support vulnerable customers so it is ironic that the acquisition comes at a time when Centrica has agreed to pay out £1.7m to address failures over pre-payment meters. Gaining customers from challenger brands aligns with Centrica's aim of being the cheapest supplier by 2022.

[utilityweek.co.uk](https://www.utilityweek.co.uk), 4 September 2020 (Wallin)

Gen Z most positive about water sector

Those under the age of 24 who pay water bills have a more favourable view of the water sector than those in other age groups, according to the *Generation Z Report: A new wave of customers for water companies*, by Echo Managed Services. It reveals that under-24s score water companies highest for being responsible, ethical and authentic. However, Gen Z is concerned about the environment, with promoting water conservation and offering water-saving advice and devices cited as the second-most important issue (35%), followed by investment in water pipes (33%) and good customer service (29%). Echo points out that customer satisfaction among Gen Zs is lower than for other age groups but that there is an opportunity for water companies to build positive relationships for the future.

<https://www.echo-ms.com/knowledge-centre/research-resources/a-new-wave-of-customers-consumer-research-report>; [utilityweek.co.uk](https://www.utilityweek.co.uk), 3 September 2020 (John)

Environment

Removing fossil fuels from cleaning products

Unilever plans to invest €1 billion to remove fossil fuels from its cleaning products by 2030. Brands such as Cif and Domestos will instead contain plant-based ingredients, including algae. Unilever expects the initiative to reduce its carbon footprint by 20%:

petrochemicals currently account for 46% of its carbon footprint. The latest move is part of the company's Clean Future pledge to achieve net zero emissions from its products by 2039. The money will be used to finance biotechnology research alongside investment in the, "development of brand communications that make these technologies appealing to consumers".

[marketingweek.com](https://www.marketingweek.com), 2 September 2020

Fashion

Selfridges enters rental and resale market

During this difficult period some retailers are looking to reinvent themselves and appeal to different types of consumer. Selfridges has recently entered the luxury rental and resale markets by teaming up with HURR, an online fashion rental platform that connects fashion owners with those wanting to rent clothing, shoes and accessories. Selfridges is also extending its second-hand clothing to include vintage clothing and will allow consumers to trade in accessories in exchange for store credit. Zalando and Macy's have launched similar initiatives. The luxury second-hand market is estimated to be worth \$24 billion and is growing at four times the rate of the primary luxury market, so it presents a big opportunity. From a legal perspective, it is important to have "robust" contracts in place, says the author.

[lexology.com](https://www.lexology.com), 26 August 2020 (Dunnill)

Decarbonising the fashion industry

The fashion industry is a significant contributor to climate change, having been responsible for around 4% of global greenhouse-gas emissions in 2018, according to McKinsey research. Its emissions are equivalent to those of the entire economies of France, Germany and the UK put together. The industry is also on a path to exceed the 1.5-degree limit as set out in the 2015 Paris agreement. McKinsey has looked at the fashion industry's value chain, from farms to factories and brands to retailers, policymakers and consumers. It finds that all areas of the value chain can help to bring about decarbonisation and identifies the need for action in three key areas, which are set out here.

[mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com), 26 August 2020 (Berg et al)

Financial services

Former criminal joins bank campaign

HomeEquity bank of Canada is hiring a famous criminal as the face of its "catch the Scam" campaign. Frank Abagnale is the author of *Catch Me If You Can*, which was made into a film by Steven Spielberg starring Leonardo DiCaprio. The bank's campaign is linked to an online series by Abagnale which aims to help vulnerable people to avoid being scammed. Abagnale originally defrauded banks of almost \$2.5m at the age of 21. Following five years in prison, he worked for the FBI, helping them to

catch cheque forgers.

[mediapost.com](https://www.mediapost.com), 27 August 2020 (Faw)

Market for wearable payment devices surges

The market for payment-enabled wearable devices is expected to be worth \$7.2 billion by 2024, according to ABI Research. This trend is attributed to changing consumer behaviour and the fact that wearable payment technology can "easily converge with other applications, such as loyalty and rewards, fitness and health, ticketing and transport", says ABI. This offers new revenue streams and business opportunities for stakeholders.

[nfcw.com](https://www.nfcw.com), 1 September 2020 (Phillips)

Co-op job losses reflect shift online

The Co-operative Bank is to lose 350 jobs (around 11% of staff) and will close 18 branches by the end of the year. This follows a £44.6m first-half-year loss. Chief Executive Andrew Bester says it is important to reduce costs and, "have the right-sized operating model in place for the future". The bank has found that customers are increasingly moving online which has resulted in fewer transactions in branches, a trend reflected in the wider banking sector.

[marketingweek.com](https://www.marketingweek.com), 26 August 2020

FMCG

Beverages

Craft beers – protecting your trademark

The success of craft beer has led to a huge increase in the number and variety of beers available, with over 2,000 commercial breweries in existence in the UK by the beginning of 2020. With so much competition, it is important that beer producers should use trademarks that not only enable them to stand out, but ensure that their rights are protected. However, many beers in the craft industry are used on a temporary basis or on a small scale, such as for limited editions, which can be problematical when it comes to protecting them. Here is some advice for determining the value of a trademark, checking for conflicting trademarks and registering one in the UK.

[lexology.com](https://www.lexology.com), 16 June 2020 (Dass and Gwilliam)

Tea in decline but Yorkshire brew strengthens

The lockdown has benefited all sorts of products that had gone out fashion but the long-term decline in sales of tea has not been reversed. Although shoppers spent an additional £6m on tea in the 12 weeks to 7 July, volume sales fell by 2.8%, according to Kantar. By contrast, coffee sales grew by 16.8% in value and 15.2% by volume. Yorkshire Tea bucked the trend with growth of 16.2% over lockdown year-on-year, way ahead of Twinings, whose value sales rose by just 1.1%. Yorkshire Tea has seen its fair share of controversy, with calls from

right-wingers to boycott the brand because of its support for Black Lives Matter, while left-wingers were incensed when Chancellor Rishi Sunak was seen posing with a box of the tea!

thegrocer.co.uk, 4 September 2020 (Woolfson)

Food

PHE rows back on calories targets

Public Health England (PHE) has lowered its calorie targets for the food industry after admitting that they were “unrealistic”. Instead it has published a list of voluntary targets for the sector which cover products including ready meals, chips, garlic bread and crisps. It has also halved the targets for most supermarket ranges from a 20% reduction by 2024 to just 10%. Despite this, industry bosses see the new targets as a “monumental” challenge and have criticised PHE for going ahead with the initiative despite Covid-19; and PHE itself having been axed by the Government. PHE has also published salt reduction targets for 84 different foods with a deadline of 2024.

The Grocer, 7 September 2020 (Quinn)

Household

Dettol ad prompts Twitter backlash

A series of Dettol ads, which promote going back to work safely, have gone viral but not in a good way. The poster ad, which lists things that people are supposed to miss about being in the office, are described in a “cringe-inducing style” that is supposed to be humorous or even sentimental. Some of the Twitter responses, including “Oh look! They’ve made a list of everything I hate about work and put it on a poster!”, range from the witty to outright derision. While the ad has certainly attracted attention, Dettol may want to, “clean up its act for its next campaign”!

creativebloq.com, 4 September 2020 (Coggan)

Tobacco

Tobacco sales up during lockdown

Since March, wholesale sales of tobacco to retailers have risen by 17% year-on-year, according to the Federation of Wholesale Distributors (FWD). It attributes this to the rise in the number of people using convenience stores since the start of the pandemic, a decline in the black market and travel restrictions which have limited the supply of counterfeit products. The FWD and Association of Convenience Stores have written to HMRC to warn that businesses could run out of tobacco unless wholesalers could buy it during the controlled period. Purchasing restrictions usually occur from the beginning of September to stop businesses stockpiling tobacco ahead of the Budget.

thegrocer.co.uk, 4 September 2020 (Cambridge)

Government and public sector

Campaign for returning to the office

The Government aims to get people back into their workplaces with a new campaign. They will ask employers to reassure staff that it is safe to return and to inform them of safety measures being put in place. The initiative also seeks to limit the damage done to city centres. Dame Carolyn Fairbairn, head of the CBI, has warned that city centres could become “ghost towns” if more workers don’t go back to the office. The Government insists that the campaign will not suggest that people who work from home are at greater danger of losing their jobs.

bbc.co.uk/news, 28 August 2020

US political advertising trends

With the US elections coming up in November, it is interesting to see how political advertising is panning out. A survey, by Centro, of agencies, consultancies and other groups that specialise in political marketing, has found that the amount of paid media directed towards digital advertising is less than 40%, which is substantially lower than the proportion allocated by other industries. Digital spend is expected to be around 58% of all US spend this year. When asked about the most promising developments in their digital campaigns, 63% of respondents focused on programmatic and connected TV, while 53% mentioned programmatic and the use of data.

Adweek, Vol 61(17), 31 August 2020, p41

Public messaging

The coronavirus has shown the importance of effective messaging during a crisis but political messages can be both inspiring and confusing. The various strategies behind their delivery have shown what is and isn’t effective and how people do or don’t absorb messages. Researchers, who have been working closely with the Australian Government, have looked at the different ways in which governments have been trying to influence behaviour during the pandemic. Here are some of the lessons to be learnt for responding and communicating more powerfully.

research-live.com, 27 August 2020 (Jeeawady)

Health and pharmaceuticals

Blockchain potential in life sciences

Blockchain use in the life sciences and healthcare sectors is still in its early stages, but companies and other organisations are increasingly looking at blockchain solutions. Here the authors explain what blockchain is and set out six potential uses for it in the life sciences sector. The integrity of data is of huge importance to the business models of the

sector, either through electronic health records, clinical trial data or information on the pharmaceutical supply chain. Blockchain has the potential to help in a variety of ways, ranging from assisting with clinical trials to protecting patient data.

European Pharmaceutical Review, Vol 25(4), August 2020, pp59-62 (Baillieu and Emmanuel)

Medical-device makers

The pandemic resulted in a serious reduction in elective medical procedures requiring sophisticated equipment which meant that medical-device makers' sales took a hit. Yet the pandemic also provided opportunities for companies that make ventilators and testing kit. Medtronic, a US equipment maker, saw sales plummet by 17% in the three months to July, yet sales of its ventilators rose five-fold. Medical-device makers entered the pandemic in a strong position following impressive growth in global revenues (global sales are expected to reach \$795 billion in 2030, up from \$371 billion in 2015) and their share prices have outperformed Big Pharma. The future fortunes of these companies may well depend on the progress of the pandemic, however.

economist.com, 27 August 2020

IT and telecoms

Improving email – the new apps

Email can be difficult to manage but now a new generation of email apps is competing for people's inboxes. An app called Superhuman has already raised \$33m in funding. Such apps can help to integrate capabilities such as social networking, as well as improving individual workflow. Superhuman is costly, at \$30 a month, but it is sophisticated in that it uses AI to highlight the most important emails; it can direct messages from different kinds of people to "split inboxes"; and keyboard shortcuts enable messages to be processed at great speed. Other new email apps, such as Hey, Zoho Mail and Twobird, are mentioned.

Entrepreneur, Vol 48(5), September 2020, p16 (Brandon)

Leisure and tourism

Dracula – it's all done by lenses

A recent poster campaign advertising the Western Australian Ballet company's production of Dracula, was designed to scare. The poster could only be viewed in the toilets of selected theatres, the point being that it needed to be next to a mirror. The mirror image of the poster appears to be blank apart from the word "Dracula" but, as you move, you become aware of the chilling face of the vampire staring down at you. The campaign, created by Wunderman Thompson, is based on lenticular printing, which allows lenses to flip or change the image when viewed from different angles.

creativebloq.com, 7 September 2020 (Coggan)

Staycations help Airbnb and hotels

It's been a terrible year for the travel industry but analysts believe that some listed hotel chains may actually make a profit this quarter as they cut costs and "staycationers" boost demand. Home-sharing platforms, such as Airbnb, have performed best during the recovery: in Europe, demand for non-hotel accommodation is down by just 20% year-on-year compared with a slump of 60% for hotels. One explanation is that, even though branded hotels are associated with high levels of cleanliness, the rental of entire properties offers the chance to stay apart from other people. Although Airbnb's recovery has been significant, the number of Americans likely to use it this year will fall by 60%, according to Insider Intelligence, which will be the first time it has experienced negative user growth.

economist.com, 31 August 2020

Materials and mining

Renewables mining could impact biodiversity

According to researchers at the University of Queensland, protected areas, key biodiversity areas and remaining areas of wilderness will suffer from the mining of minerals and metals needed to transition to clean energy. Laura Sonter, lead author, says that renewable energy production is more "material-intensive" than fossil fuels. Mining these materials will increase as fossil fuels are phased out which in turn will put pressure on biodiversity. The team found that almost 10% of all mining areas occur within protected sites; of the areas analysed, 82% target materials needed for renewable energy, 12% of which are in protected areas, 7% in key biodiversity areas and 14% in wilderness.

mining.com, 8 September 2020 (Leotaud et al)

Media

Global entertainment and media forecasts

PwC's annual *Global Entertainment & Media Outlook for 2020-2024*, due for released in October, offers commentary on 14 media segments across 53 territories. The website presents findings for each segment with graphs covering 2015 to 2024. It reveals the fall in global entertainment and media revenue this year is the steepest on record but this will contrast with the steepest year-on-year rise in 2021, albeit from a low base. Advertising will be the slowest to recover, not rising above 2019 figures until 2022, although internet advertising remains relatively unharmed. Some advertisers are shifting away from traditional channels to podcasts. More consumers are interacting with AI through mobile phones.

pwc.com, October 2020;

<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/tmt/media/outlook/segment-findings.html>

Games

Protecting your brand assets

Much of the value of a video game lies in its intellectual property (IP), which ranges from the coding through to the title and characters. Trademarks are a powerful way of protecting your brand assets, by enabling video games to keep competitors at bay and to maintain a distinctive presence in the gaming industry. Here the author provides an overview of: word marks; logo and image marks; sound marks; and motion and multimedia marks, accompanied by illustrations and examples.

lexology.com, 25 August 2020 (Hanratty)

Thinking outside the chessboard

The traditional game of chess is undergoing something of a renaissance. From 21 August to 6 September Twitch and Chess.com are putting on a tournament called Pogchamps in which gaming streamers will compete for \$50,000. Since 2015, Twitch, a live-video streaming website that has become a hub for users to watch people play video games, has seen huge growth in chess viewership. Grandmaster of the game, Hikaru Nakamura, has been adding to his fanbase on Twitch but traditional long-time chess players regard the trend as detrimental to the game. However, David Llada, chief marketing and comms officer for the International Chess Federation, believes that it is important to think "outside the chessboard"!

fastcompany.com, 4 September 2020 (Brookwell)

Newspapers

Facebook to launch UK news service

Having launched a news service in the US last year, Facebook now plans to introduce one to the UK over the next few months. It already pays US publishers for content which comes from over 200 outlets and thousands of local news organisations. Publishers are concerned that they will lose out on advertising as readers move away from their own websites and apps to consume content on Facebook. There are already concerns over Facebook and Google's dominance of the ad market and their control of publishers' distribution.

marketingweek.com, 26 August 2020

Radio

Local radio – more consolidation

Regional radio stations have been much depleted over recent years. Now, in the latest cutback, Bauer Media is to replace many of its regional radio stations with a single brand, Greatest Hits Radio. Most will have national programming for 20 hours a day although there will be some locally produced news bulletins. Local stations are heavily involved in local community activities but this latest consolidation will leave just a few "truly independent" local radio stations. The big companies

responsible for the trend – Global Radio and Bauer – argue that listening habits are changing and that having one brand makes it easier to sell advertising.

theguardian.com, 31 August 2020 (Waterson)

Social media

AR in social media

Snapchat pioneered the use of AR in social media but now Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and TikTok all have their own versions. The closure of retail stores has led marketers to invest in AR as a way of trying goods and experiences that would normally only be available in-store. It is predicted that 43.7m people in the US will use social network AR at least once a month in 2020, representing 20.8% of all social network users. eMarketer has produced a report entitled *Augmented Reality in Social Media*, which looks at how consumers engage with AR on social platforms and why marketing use is on the rise. (See also Durable consumer goods)

emarketer.com, 26 August 2020 (Williamson)

Packaging

Seedlip gift box made from mushrooms

Seedlip, maker of non-alcoholic spirits, is working with the Magical Mushroom Company to produce a fully biodegradable box made from Mycelium, the root structure of mushrooms, which will break down in flower beds in just 45 days. The box has been designed for Seedlip Spice which has a bottle made from 100% recycled glass and a seeded neck tag containing Thyme seeds and instructions on how to grow them using the biodegradable box as a planter. The set will be on Seedlip's sustainable online gifting shop which launches on 1 October.

packagingnews.co.uk, 7 September 2020 (Corbin)

Cost of plastic bags to double

The cost of a plastic shopping bag in England is to double to 10p from April 2021. Small retailers, with fewer than 250 employees, will also have to impose the charge, having previously been exempt. Greenpeace has welcomed the move but is calling for, "fast and substantial reductions on plastic pollution" that go beyond carrier bags. Since the initial 5p fee was introduced in England, around 15 billion bags have been taken out of circulation.

bbc.co.uk/news, 31 August 2020

Retailing

Retail jobs nearly half that of 2019

UK retail jobs have been disappearing at their fastest rate since 2009, a trend that could continue into September, according to the CBI's latest survey of retailers. Employment in the retail sector is just 55% that in August 2019 and the CBI expects it to fall to 50% during the next quarter. This trend is reflected across Europe; McKinsey predicts that 59m

jobs could be at risk in one way or another, with retail the hardest hit. However, a recent increase in retail footfall (up by 4.1% in the week ending 22 August and by 6.8% in London) has created some grounds for optimism, according to data from Springboard. The CBI survey of 63 retailers also indicated a smaller fall in retail sales, with some saying that sales were 27% lower than “normal” compared to 79% in June.

businessinsider.com, 26 August 2020 (Dean)

Waitrose vs M&S – the online battle begins

Waitrose has just ended its partnership with Ocado after 18 years. Ocado has teamed up with M&S which aims to expand its food offering and take advantage of the rising demand for online grocery shopping since the onset of the virus. Both M&S and Waitrose are at the premium end of the market but, according to YouGov’s BrandIndex, M&S scores 37.6 (top of the supermarkets) for brand health while Waitrose is fifth with 28.2. Despite M&S beating Waitrose for quality perceptions (62.6 vs 52.5), Waitrose’s purchase intent comes out ahead of M&S (4.6 vs 3.7). Yet Waitrose may have a hard time convincing its customers that its online store will provide the same experience as Ocado, while M&S could struggle to offer the range of goods that Waitrose does. The battle for customers has begun...

marketingweek.com, 27 August 2020 (Fleming)

Six-year high for empty shop premises

There are more empty shops on UK high streets than at any time in the last six years, with almost 11% of shops standing vacant in July, up from 9.8% in January, according to Springboard, the retail analyst. Greater London has seen the number of empty shop premises rising by almost two-thirds. This comes at a time of falling visitor numbers to large city centres, with almost 40% fewer visitors in August than in the same month last year. Mark Robinson, chair of the High Streets Task Force, believes that we will see the rise of multifunctional town centres, with empty shops being used for other purposes.

theguardian.com, 2 September 2020 (Butler)

Younger consumers – “convenience converts”

Some 56% of UK shoppers visited their local convenience store for the first time during lockdown, according to new research from PayPoint. This figure rose to 68% among younger consumers (18- to 24-year-olds) and 59% among 25- to 34-year-olds. Two-thirds of respondents said that local stores met their product needs and have a positive impact on the area. Over half indicated their intention to continue shopping locally during the post-lockdown period.

marketingweek.com, 27 August 2020

Services

Pret – first instore subscription service

On 8 September Pret a Manger launched the first in-shop coffee subscription service in the UK. YouPret Barista allows subscribers to order up to five barista-prepared drinks a day for £20 a month. These include coffee, teas, hot chocolates, smoothies and frappes which can be ordered via email, phone or digital wallet. Pret CEO Pano Christou says this is the first stage in establishing the company as a “multichannel, digitally led business”. Pret’s new digital infrastructure aims to provide tailored services which will lead to better insight and data-led products and services.

marketingweek.com, 4 September 2020

Transport and travel

Gatwick lost two-thirds of passengers

Passenger numbers at Gatwick airport fell by 14.7m (two-thirds) during the first half of the year and the airport has just posted a £344m loss compared with a profit of £59.4m last year. Although there has been some recovery, Chief executive Stewart Wingate expects that it will take four to five years before passenger numbers return to pre-pandemic levels. The airport has announced that it is to cut 600 jobs.

bbc.co.uk/news, 28 August 2020

Rolls-Royce in £5.4 billion loss

Rolls-Royce has reported a record £5.4 billion loss for the first half of the year, warning that it is unlikely to recover to pre-pandemic levels before 2025. It had expected to make 450 jet engines this year but will instead make just 250. The company is undergoing the biggest restructuring in its history, which will involve the closure of some production sites. It previously announced that it would lose 9,000 jobs (15% of its workforce) globally. The company will also sell off some assets, including Spanish engine maker, ITP Aero.

theguardian.com, 27 August 2020 (Partridge)

Written by CIM’s Knowledge Services Team

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Cutting Edge: Our weekly analysis of marketing news

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Young Consumers*

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