

NAVIGATING
BRAND
EXPERIENCE
DURING
A
TIME
OF
CRISIS

➤ ALL BRANDS



Photograph by Edward Howell on Unsplash

Page 03

Discover the unsurprising and unexpected ways the global pandemic is affecting the economy, consumer behaviour and the way your brand needs to communicate.

Page 08

Explore the five brand experiences you can deliver to do things right by the government guidelines, by your people and by your customers. Right now.

Page 16

See what the experts have to say about what's happening now, and next—and secure support from a trusted partner.

“One of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone.”

Shannon L. Alder



THIS ISN'T ABOUT CAPITALISING ON A CRISIS, IT'S ABOUT DOING THE RIGHT THING—AND REAPING THE REWARDS.

Right now it feels like we don't have to look very far to find bad news. Death rates, new cases, PPE shortages, failed testing targets... as our screens fill with doomsday-esque headlines and depressing stats, our minds and hearts fill with dread.

But here's something good.

While the COVID-19 pandemic poses obvious challenges for businesses and consumers alike, it also creates an opportunity.

That is, an opportunity for your brand to do things differently... and make a difference. A chance to communicate more sensitively, more personally and more innovatively. A way to do good, stand out and be heard. Get your message wrong, and trust me, you'll know about it. Because your customers will tell you. Probably very publicly.

However, get it right, and this could be the start of an exciting new dawn for your business... and pretty awesome for those who engage with you, too. Are you ready to switch up the way you talk? Are you ready to make your voice matter?



All change, please.

Morrisons has donated £10m worth of produce to food banks. The supermarket group is also offering a 10% NHS discount and grocery home delivery in partnership with Deliveroo, as well as giving frontline staff a bonus increase.

Result: While the FTSE 100 crashed 18% during April, Morrisons sales rose 0.2%; [Source](#)

LOVING

Apple has taken many steps to play its part during the crisis, including donating \$15 million to charities, adding COVID-19 diagnosis capabilities to Siri, offering free reading material on Apple Books and introducing new health screenings and temperature checks across all its offices.

Result: A quick Google search shows the positive traction Apple is gaining as a result of its altruism. And while revenue may be down right now, the company is predicted to bounce back by the end of the year; [Source](#)

Pret a Manger is offering NHS workers free hot drinks, and 50% off all food. It also acted extremely quickly at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic—offering sanitiser to customers while stores were still open, and making its shops takeaway-only as soon as the real danger of the virus was known.

Result: Not only has Pret seen a 3.7 point increase in its Buzz Score, it's also received extensive praise across social media; [Source](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered just about everything in our world, and that includes consumer behaviour. Here are a few of the brands people are currently loving and leaving based on their response to the crisis.

FYI, a “Buzz Score” is a YouGov metric that measures whether someone has heard something positive about the company; [Source](#)

LEAVING

Virgin Atlantic cut 3,000 jobs—that’s 30% of their staff—as well as delaying pay rises into 2021, reducing its contribution to pensions and requiring its people to take eight weeks of unpaid leave over the next three months.

Result: A Buzz Score decrease from -0.2 to -22.5.

Wetherspoon’s told its 43,000 staff that, as a result of the business’s forced closure, they would not be paid until the government reimbursed the company... and suggested they find a job at Tesco instead.

Result: A Buzz Score decrease from +6.3 to -27.1.

Sports Direct ignored protocol and played down the risk of COVID-19, begging the government to let stores remain open. Billionaire boss Mike Ashley was forced to apologise.

Result: A Buzz Score decrease from -3.9 to -42.9. (The apology boosted it back to -31.6.)

65%

Nearly two thirds of consumers say how brands respond to the pandemic will have a “huge impact” on their likelihood to buy their products; [Source](#)

ONE
IN
THREE

survey respondents said they had already stopped using a brand that was not acting appropriately in response to the public-health crisis; [Source](#)

AND RIGHT BY YOUR PEOPLE
AND RIGHT BY YOUR CUSTOMERS.

37%

of people polled globally said they have started using a new brand because of the innovative or compassionate way they have responded to the virus; [Source](#)

THINGS
TO DO
RIGHT

RIGHT BY THE GUIDELINES
RIGHT BY YOUR PEOPLE
AND RIGHT BY YOUR CUSTOMERS.

ABOUT
90%

of customers expect brands to keep the public fully informed of changes to how they are now behaving and operating.; [Source](#)

IT'S NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT TO DO THINGS RIGHT

WE'RE
GONNA
NEED
A BIGGER
BOAT

Last year, consumers around the world were searching on Google for designer handbags and shoes. Today, priorities have shifted; as we face months cooped up and constrained within the walls of our homes, feeling free has become more important than looking good.

Savvy shoppers, desperate for a sense of escapism, have caused a spike in one surprising, fascinating Google search. Boats. Because on 13th May, the final government guidelines stated that “the use of privately-owned motorised craft (in line with the guidance issued by the relevant navigation authority) [is] allowed.” And what better way to see the world from indoors?

Amongst key words like sneeze guards, hand sanitiser and disposable gloves are terms like:

- ➔ Boats for sale UK
- ➔ Canal boats for sale
- ➔ Houseboat
- ➔ Narrowboats for sale UK

The unprecedented growth in searches for this fast-rising retail category is just one example of how consumer behaviour is changing, and fast. And one compelling reason that you need your finger on the pulse at all times.

If you’re in the boating business (or if you sell pet hair clippers, free weights or flour, all seeing a peak in search-term stats too), advertise well now and expect sales to boom.

Everyone else: keep watch for trends and prepare to spring into action. Your moment may come rather unexpectedly, and it’s essential that you’re ready when it does. In the meantime, here are five more solutions that’ll help you survive—and thrive—during the COVID-19 crisis.



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Photograph by Mitchell Luo on Unsplash

FIVE BRAND
EXPERIENCES
YOU
CAN
DELIVER



It's clear that consumer behaviour is changing. So, your brand needs to change the way it communicates and operates, too. Here are five brand experiences you can offer that'll keep you busy, profitable... and in your customers' good books. All from a distance of at least six feet.

Hyper-personal brand experiences

How human is your brand?

It's critical that today's businesses see customers as individual people, with unique needs, wants and ways of thinking; people to be listened to, valued and made to feel special. Communication needs to be authentic, not salesy, adding value to people's lives much like a trusted friend or confidant.

Now is your chance to get this right, where others are missing the mark. 76% of consumers say that not all companies are making the effort to customise the online experience—despite the fact that 73% expect online personalisation as standard, 83% want to receive personal emails from brands, and a huge 50% will switch from brands that don't deliver the personalised service they want. ¹

And you don't need fancy algorithms or the smartest tech to personalise experiences for your customers—though by all means, if you've got them, use them (think Netflix and Amazon's personalised recommendations or Spotify's digitally curated personal playlists).

In effect, you just need to talk to consumers casually and empathetically based on the information you do know about them.

Create concierge-style services that feel personal and leave a lasting impression. You could send emails, messages or notifications to people based on their preferences or interests (or brighten their lockdown birthday with a tailored email and discount code, sent on the special day). You could host consultations on a one-to-one basis, adjusting your recommendations to the customer's need. Or you could offer tutorials for products that customers have just bought, answering any questions they may have along the way.

Even allowing people to simply personalise their experience with you by uploading a picture or adding their name to their product's packaging is a good start.

Whatever you do, make it human and make it count.

Function of Beauty offers completely personalised haircare products that are tailored to your hair type, hair goals, desired colour and fragrance, and more. Customers take a "hair quiz" on their website, and the brand creates a unique formula according to their answers—even printing their name on the bottle, and providing waterproof stickers for fun at-home customisation. ²

Borussia Mönchengladbach's "Stay at home. Be in the stands" campaign has seen the club fill Borussia Park with over 10,000 cardboard cutouts of fans. Consumers can pay €19 to have a cardboard version of themselves installed in the stands, with a portion of sales placed in a fund for fans requiring help during the pandemic. ³

1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4 Source



There are two huge global trends that support our thinking: an increase in media consumption and a decrease in advertising spend. ⁴



Photograph by Amgela Franklin Unsplash

02

User-generated brand experiences

In this time of uncertainty, there are a few things we're all seeking: connection. A shared understanding. People to relate to, and who relate to us.

Gone are the days of perfectly made-up influencers posting lush images that could've come straight out of a lifestyle magazine. Today, we want to see "real" people—people who remind us of ourselves. Normal people with stories that may not be remarkable, but that resonate in some way and make us feel closer to ourselves and to others. ¹

Added to this new desire for normality is a need for something to do. We've suddenly got less going on, less to do and a desperate yearning for some kind of outlet or productive task to occupy our time.

BBC Good Food said visits to its website started increasing dramatically on 23rd March—the day the UK's enforced lockdown was announced—past levels experienced at Easter, Christmas and on Pancake Day as people sought comfort in home cooking. The website's "How to make bread" video saw views skyrocket 700% in April. ²

And Google searches have spiked around activities like learning a language, gardening, DIY, yoga and home workouts. ³

This is your chance to not only connect with your customers on a human level, but to give them the creative outlet they need. The fascinating thing about this journey is that it's cyclical; your customers share with you to feel connected, you share their output with others, and others—in turn—feel connected, to them and to you as a brand.

Encourage consumers to forge meaningful interactions with you, and tell you their stories. Use their pictures, videos and words to craft campaigns that people can—quite literally—see themselves in.

You could create even more incentive by offering discounts or prizes in return for the content they create. But for many, the gift of being known by people like them will be enough.

Teleflora put together and shared a video for Mother's Day in the US, featuring real stories of real Mums who have suddenly taken on new roles at home. Mums throwing quarantine birthday parties, choreographing social-distancing dance-offs and home-schooling their children are celebrated in the simple yet heart-warming customer-created piece. ⁴

Tik Tok and **Deliveroo**—both big players during the pandemic—have crafted user-generated TV ads using customers' contributions. This is especially relevant for a brand like Tik Tok, which is, after all, a creative content-sharing app (and, might we add, one that's now surpassed two billion users). What better way to demonstrate the app's functionality?

¹ Source ² Source ³ Source ⁴ Source

Micro-doorstep experiences

There's no doubt that lockdown measures are affecting many people's mental health in some way.

In fact, according to a study conducted by the Mental Health Foundation, a quarter of UK adults say that lockdown has made them "feel lonely."¹

Some are combatting these feelings by finding a furry companion—Battersea Dogs and Cats Home rehomed more than double their usual number of animals the week restrictions were imposed—but there's a way you can help, too. Without giving out free puppies or kittens.²

How? By offering people a little taste of normality, without having to leave their homes. A break from this strange situation, so to speak. Think about the type of thing your customers would usually be doing if they weren't sat on the sofa watching their eighth hour of Netflix today. Perhaps they'd be watching a film or play at the cinema or the theatre, socialising with friends, eating at a restaurant or travelling abroad.

Now, consider how you can make some of these everyday experiences possible—and give customers that much-needed sense of escapism—by bringing something similar, if smaller, to their doorstep.

This could mean bringing physical experiences to homes and communities by finding a new way of delivering your product locally. It could mean making your product translate digitally so people can access it from the comfort of their computer. Or it could even mean innovating with an entirely new service that addresses the new needs of your customers, today... giving them something to answer the door for.

Secret Cinema is hosting "Secret Sofa" events in collaboration with Haagen-Dazs. The virtual film club allows people to recreate the cinema experience at home, but even better, by providing extra quirks relevant to the film of the week—from character and costume suggestions to eredefining music and activities.³

Hedonism Wines is bringing the vineyard to the people, offering £600 luxury tasting kits to be enjoyed at home. Wine fans will join Edouard Moueix, owner of one of the world's greatest wineries, for a virtual tasting and tour—during which they'll also discover the history of Edouard's family's estates.





04

Local, mobile brand experiences

Today, pop-ups aren't just the annoying ads that appear on our screens at inopportune moments.

The real-life pop-up experience is far more desirable: mini retail experiences brought to your customer's door, as a convenient, local taste of the full offering.

The pop-up concept is taking the US by storm. 80% of global retail companies that have opened a pop-up store said it was successful, 58% are likely to use the tactic again, and 44% of survey respondents said they spent less than \$5,000 on their efforts. ¹

Here in the UK, business is booming too. Our pop-up industry is currently worth over £2.3 billion a year, and almost 30% of British companies began their entrepreneurial journey as a pop-up. ²

So, there's never been a better time to take your brand on the road. You can interpret this literally, and repurpose a vehicle to stock, showcase and sell your products from anywhere you can travel to—mobile payment options make it possible—or, you can create a solution to be sent via post.

Either way, it's all about the experience. Let your customers smell, taste, feel or learn about whatever you're offering. Your aim should be to make your pop-up feel as authentic as your full-scale operation. If you're there in front of your captivated audience, now is your chance to really demonstrate what your product can do; if people have received theirs by mail, be sure to include full instructions or even online extras to maximise their time with your product.

¹ Source ² Source ³ Source ⁴ Source

Amazon is bringing its Treasure Truck to cities across the world. Customers who use the Amazon app will receive a text notification about the day's offer. They then buy it directly in the app, and collect their order from their nearest Treasure Truck. It's like an ice-cream van for grown-ups, without the irritating music. ³

Singtel's "next-generation" pop-up retail store, UNBOXED, is completely unmanned... and open 24 hours a day. Customers can buy from the telco by comparing products on screens and scanning QR codes to pay—all with the help of a live bot, which has an actual Singtel staff member on-screen to assist. Facial recognition even allows experiences to be completely personalised. ⁴

Virtual sampling brand experiences

If your brand relies heavily on sampling experiences, or you're used to letting customers try before they buy, the COVID-19 crisis may really seem like a crisis for your business.

However, there are plenty of ways you can offer samples virtually to generate just as much demand for your product. Maybe even more, with your target audience no longer just “the people in this shopping centre at this particular time” but “everyone with an internet connection.”

Send physical samples of your products, or digital vouchers for consumers to redeem offline, so people can give your offering a go from home. Host online events with competitions and games where people can win (and therefore try) your product. Brewdog, for example, recently opened their online bar—the Brewdog Open Arms—which puts on tastings and pub quizzes. No prizes for guessing what the lucky winners are sent. (Those less knowledgeable can still order fresh craft beer from Brewdog's physical bars, and receive it in less than an hour).¹

In April, Travis Scott's virtual “Astronomical” show broke Fornite's streaming records as he gave players a digital taste of his new collaboration with Kid Cudi, “The Scotts”. Over 12.3 million concurrent players participated in the online event. After the show, Scott was added into the game as a playable character—complete with his own outfits, emotes and more.²

And it's not just a fantastic entertainment experience or sampling opportunity that Brewdog, Travis Scott and other online sampling pioneers have created. They've also forged a way of bringing together socially isolated consumers in a space that could become the new standard: digital venues.

Still think you need a stand in that shopping centre right now?

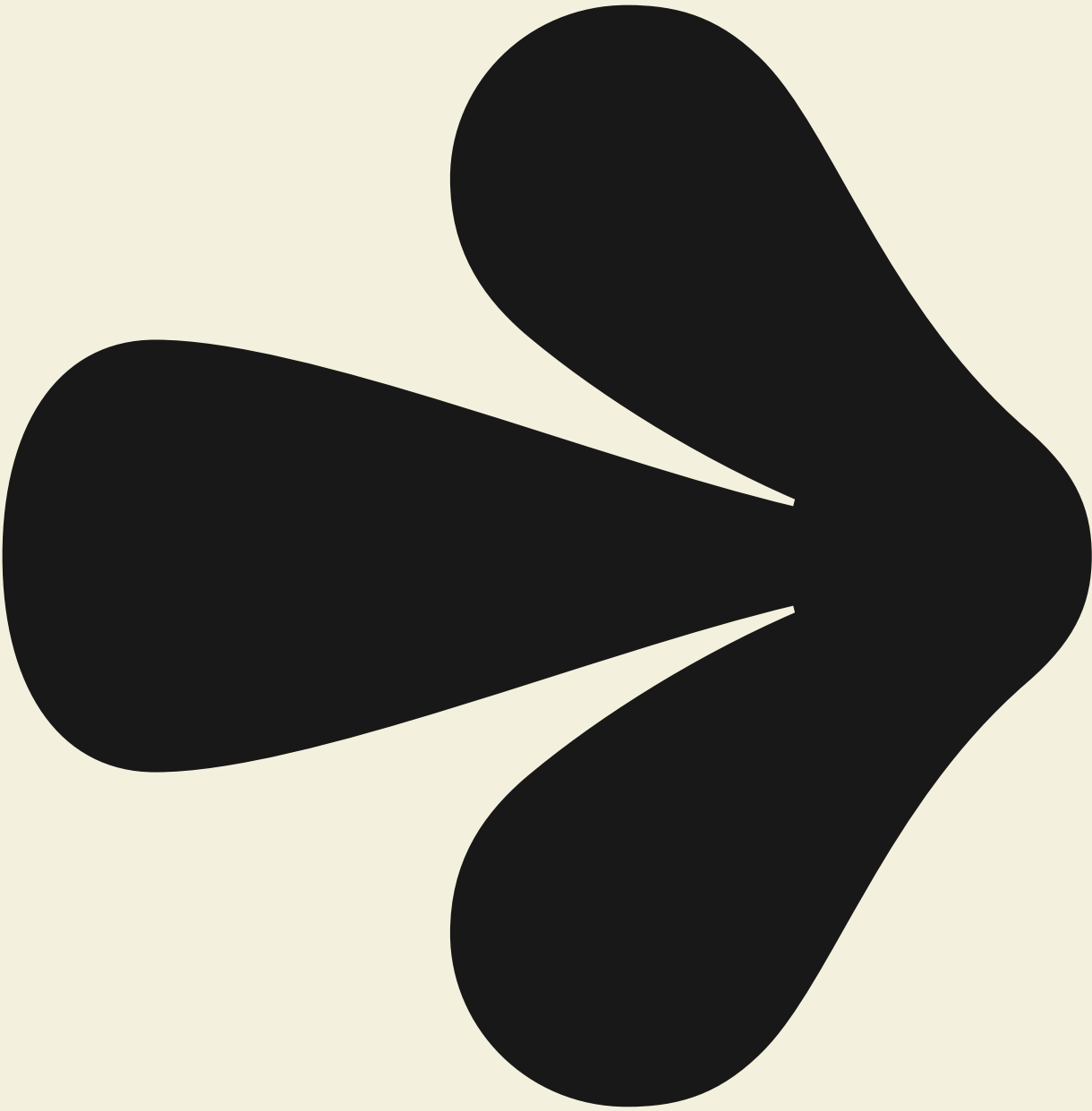
BMW gives gamers the opportunity to test-drive cars using their controller, having partnered with all the world's biggest eSports companies. The company has joined forces with the makers of League of Legends, DOTA 2, Fornite and FIFA to reach a global audience of 454million.³

Chipotle hosted a series of lunchtime Zoom hangouts—the Chipotle Together sessions—with 3,000 fans each call. Every day, selected attendees were surprised and delighted with codes for free starters, so they could sample the menu before ordering something bigger.⁴

1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4 Source



LOOKING AHEAD



...to when the *new* becomes *normal*.



Photograph by Jose Llamas on Unsplash



Photograph by Chloe Evans on Unsplash

Although what you're reading is a start, there's no playbook for how best to navigate through the marketing landscape now and in the immediate future. The most important thing to remember is that "all change" really does mean "all change."

Much like the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, and the virus itself, consumer behaviour is constantly shifting and evolving. In this case, not by the month or the year, but by the day.

Consumers are dictating the tone more than ever during lockdown, and brand marketers should allow themselves to be taken on that wave for the foreseeable.

The customer's need-state is defining how brands approach communication and brand activity. Established structures and disciplines have been dismantled overnight, with innovation, adaptability and creativity being the tools that are most in-demand in our current world.

It's only a matter of time until micro-doorstep experiences can transcend the doorstep itself, and before user-generated content becomes boring—it's natural to favour the bold and the beautiful that only a professional studio can provide.

This means you'll need to adapt your approach and working practices to reflect changing consumer sentiment and fickle shopping behaviours... especially now there's more emphasis than ever to demonstrate a return on every pound spent.

It's also worth noting that the advice in this guide isn't just for the here and now. It can be used during the transition to our new normal, helping you to remain agile and future-focused even when social isolation is—hopefully—a thing of the past.

Now is not the time to be doing things alone. Our expert team is here to help you find your way through the challenges you're facing today and the opportunities that await you tomorrow. Read ahead for our viewpoints on the current situation, what's coming next and what you can do about it.



THE SPECIALISTS



“To transition back to a world that looks anything like “normal”, we have to become mindful of a massive shift in consumer priorities. Focus on authenticity, community and adaptability; these have become core currencies for brand resonance.”

Neil Survilla, *Business Director*



“Brands and agencies should make every customer feel like they’re being treated as an individual, enjoying quality experiences at every touchpoint. Place more emphasis on concierge-style service, high-convenience and subscription-style solutions, and personalised attention—all of this will build consumer intimacy and win people over.”

Duncan McCaslin, *Managing Director*

“We’re beginning to see the world differently, and our constraints are becoming catalysts for creativity—a force for good.”

Simon Patel, *Creative Director*



ONE- OF- A-KIND COMMUNICATIONS. REAL- WORLD ➔ THINKING.

If you want to truly grab your audience's attention—and keep it—during these unprecedented times, Kreate can help.

We'll guide you through understanding your customers and potential customers, and speaking to them on a human level. We'll empower you to forge authentic connections and craft unique communications. And we'll work with you across every touchpoint, digital and physical, drawing on our team's specialist knowledge to get you the results you want.

We're equipped to support you practically, too, by offering solutions like video-production kits—packed with recording devices and instructions so you can create those all-important user-generated experiences.

Whatever your scope, we're here, we're ready and we're waiting to take it on together.

We'd have loved to meet you for a coffee to talk about this in person. But right now, that's obviously not possible. Instead, why not hop onto a Zoom call or Microsoft Teams meeting with us? You don't need to know what you need or have a brief ready—let's just have a chat so we can get to know you and your business better.

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