

# CREATIVE EXCELLENCE GUIDELINES DURING COVID-19 CHALLENGES

By Shaun Dix and Adam Sheridan | March 2020

Ipsos is a multi-national business that services a range of advertisers globally in supporting their creative development and evaluation decision-making to grow their brands.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event that has led several advertisers to ask Ipsos for advice about if they should start, stop or continue their research programs and, if so, how to execute them during this time.

This document outlines the Ipsos guidelines specifically related for creative development and evaluation, underpinned by our overall guidelines on conducting research during the pandemic and recovery period.



# Considerations when running Creative Development or Assessment Projects

## Overall CRE Perspective on executing Creative Research Projects

Ipsos has published substantial content on various topics relating to the current Covid-19 crisis. Please reach out to your local Ipsos contact for details of the various content as we continue to release new information. Please see this [release](#) (called Signals) as an example.

If you are considering campaigns in the coming months to maintain and grow market share and to reinforce your brand's relationship with consumers, you will want to evaluate and optimize the creative in this new context. For example, in China where the epidemic struck first, many brands were able to engage during the virus outbreak with people, strengthening their bond, equity and business, expressing how their brands empathize and help during these troubled times.

As it relates to creative research, there are two core considerations:

### 1. Is it safe and feasible to execute fieldwork while retaining service consistency?

Ipsos has one of the most extensive global networks of online panels in the world and we have the capability and capacity to transition any F2F fieldwork to online. For more information please reach out to your Ipsos contact – this includes important

points such as our confidence in accounting for data consistency in the transition from offline to online.

### 2. Should I run any creative research during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The answer to this question will depend on the circumstances of the brand and the campaign as to whether you start, stop or pause research programs.

First and foremost, we need to remember that any measurement of creative response is dependent on the context in which it's received, and clearly the context of most peoples' lives has changed in the last two months:

- As we do not know when the pandemic will recede and a recovery will begin, **the Ipsos perspective is that if you have the intention to launch a campaign in the next months, now, more than ever, you need to be sure that you are considering the very new context your creative will operate in**, and the investment in research remains critical.
- For example, in changing circumstances, people may switch to non-branded products promoted by ecommerce retailers or bricks and mortar retailers via



via delivery services, meaning **attention salience and memory salience** could degrade over time without campaign and creative support, which could lead to a loss in market share; amongst other things.

There is of course in some cases a very real question of when advertisers should execute their planned research and Ipsos can consult on the right time, relative to the planned time of the media buy.

We have a great deal of experience in understanding the impact and receptivity of cause marketing for many advertisers worldwide. While COVID-19 is a unique situation we can draw upon the learnings we have found to date for other global crises and natural disasters. In general, consumers react positively to marketing directed at helping humanity and contributing to a purpose, particularly in a time of need. However, the most impactful ads tie the creative message to an intended impact or contribution.

Here are some key lessons learned about how brands can position themselves, clarify their purpose and communicate in challenging times:

- *In times of crisis, strong brands must make a stand*
- *Advertising needs to be authentic and faithful to what the brand stands for*
- *This type of purpose led communication means doing as much or even before telling*
- *Storytelling and striking the right tone are essential*

- *Integrated, multi-touchpoints campaigns are great vehicles to communicate around a purpose-led campaign*
- *Standing-out with a purpose requires to be bold, but it also requires to be sure – **research is instrumental here.***

In addition, for example, you have developed a campaign to launch a new product, the context of how this creative and message will be received will now be very different and we believe especially in these challenging times to maintain attention salience and market share, you should run research in the current context to be sure. In these situations, Ipsos will work with you to design the right approach and scope.

With people's attitudes and behaviours dramatically changing, we believe it is essential for brands to confirm or uncover new insights and ways for their brands to help and connect with people. Early creative development research can help explore opportunities for brands to express themselves in the future, leveraging in-depth qualitative research and Virtual Creative|Labs, in order to understand the reactions to early ideas and content, uncovering the what and why behind the response and how to take forward your campaign in this new context. We have taken the best of our offline solutions to execute them now fully online. Ipsos can **outline a series of agile, online options** to achieve this; in where we offered Creative|Labs in central location in the past.

**Creative Evaluation** solutions are even more valuable today than ever before. Ipsos' approach is unique as we utilize an **experimental design approach**; meaning that we have a brand-specific-time-sensitive benchmark that considers the context of the moment.

In effect, your **unexposed condition represents the context of the day** and does not rely on norms outside these extreme circumstances like the current Coronavirus.

We will be launching a new creative evaluation service, namely, Creative|Spark which offers you a unique opportunity, to gain access to Ipsos validated metrics with an exposed/unexposed design, either via serviced options with a video debrief, or self-serve via the Ipsos Digital Platform.

This will enable you to gain access to key measures and expertise quickly and at an affordable price.

In summary, it is **rarely good for brands to "go dark"** and stop advertising, both for a long-term impact on the brand as well as generate a sense of being "perceived silent" during times of crises. However, **tone is paramount** and the creative must **strike a delicate balance to be sure to not convey a perception of "capitalizing on a crisis"**.

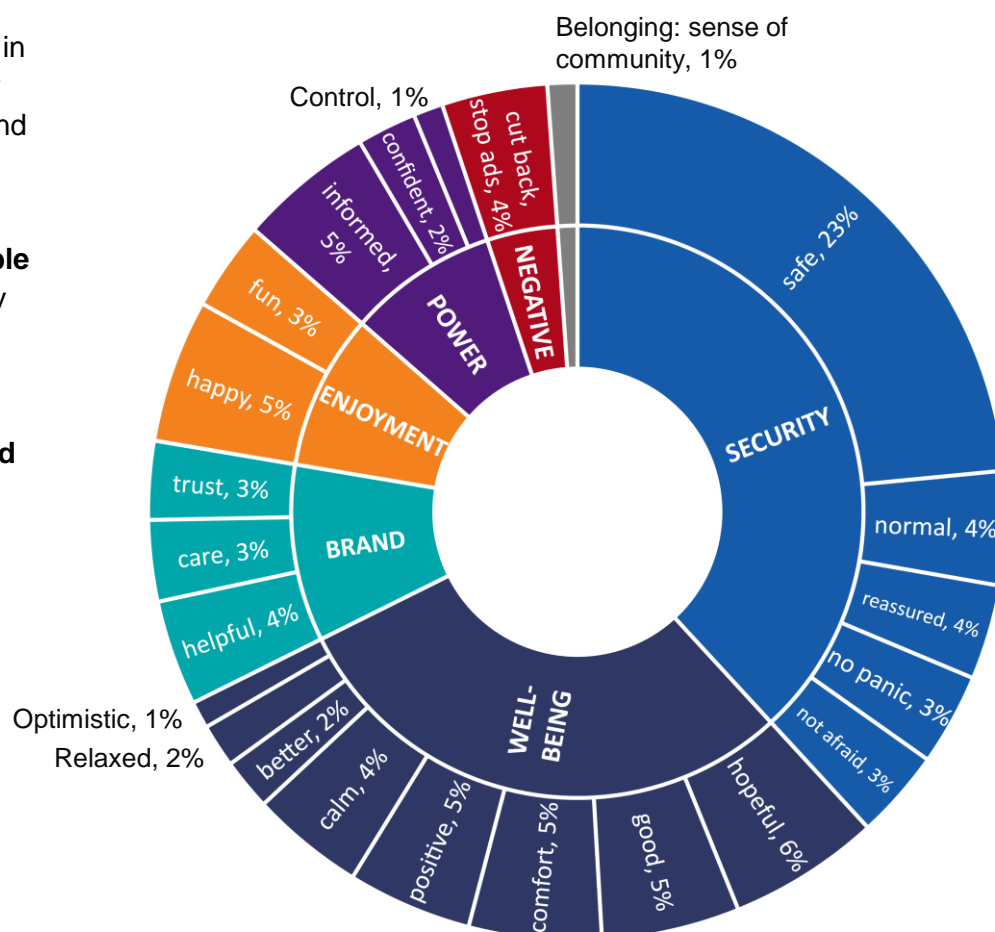


**In times of crisis, strong brands must make a stand.**

# Given the current situation with the Coronavirus, how do you want advertising to make you feel? Please be as specific as possible with your thoughts, feelings, and ideas

This chart is an excerpt from a study we ran overnight (March 17<sup>th</sup>) via [Ipsos.Digital](#) platform in the USA fielding questions how people feel about advertising and the connection to the Coronavirus.

The key take-away is that **people are looking for security** – they would like to feel **safe and secure, be re-assured**. They too mention that **well-being is pertinent to them feeling good again**, relaxed and comforted. Hardly any-one says that advertising should just stop or be cut-back.



Note: Base=999 No filters applied

Source: Ipsos. Research was conducted in the US on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 among 999 adults, age 18-65.

## Power

They want to feel empowered with factual information and confident and sense of control to take on the crisis

## Enjoyment

They want to be entertained and feel happy, so they can forget about all the crisis and stress in the world

## Close to Brand

They want to feel that the brand is helpful, can be trusted and brand really care

## Well-Being

They want to feel good again and improve their well-being. They want to feel calm, comfort, relaxed, hopeful, positive, optimistic

## Security

People want to feel safe and secure again. They want to be reassured that things will return to normal. There is no need to be afraid. There is no need to panic.

## Just Stop

These people just don't want to see advertisement. Just not be bothered by advertisement makes them feel better

## Belonging

They want to feel being a part of community