



How to measure and optimize tech brands' marketing efforts in the time of coronavirus



An Ipsos White Paper

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TL; DR

- Through this pandemic, consumers will increasingly rely on tech brands to access their favorite products. Tech brands can acquire new customers, increase Customer Lifetime Value and grow back trust and advocacy.
- The current coronavirus outbreak is the first major crisis Tech brands face. As such, it presents them with new challenges as most of the software, hardware and social media platforms we use every day did not exist in 2001 and 2008.
- Now is a crucial time for marketers to uncover new insights, closely monitor brand key performance indicators and capture new metrics.

The COVID-19 virus will change the way we live, shop, and work for the foreseeable future. By now, almost all sports, cultural events, concerts, and conferences have been cancelled. Gathering in bars, restaurants, and large venues is not recommended and could soon be restricted or even forbidden.

The relationship consumers have with tech brands is changing immediately, and for good. Here is some guidance on how to measure and optimize the impact of tech brands' marketing efforts through the coronavirus crisis and beyond.

The coronavirus outbreak is the first real crisis tech brands have had to face.

As we evolve in this uncharted territory and seek guidance to support our decisions, marketers reflect on the 9/11 attacks and the 2008 financial crisis for guidance. In the context of tech brands, it is worth highlighting that most of the software, hardware and internet services that are now part of our everyday lives either did not exist or were in their infancy back then. Our media consumption habits were also drastically different.

To put things in perspective, Facebook appeared in 2004, three years after the 9/11 attacks. Back then, Microsoft's Internet Explorer held an 89.03% market share.¹ Popular cell phones included the Nokia 8310 (featuring a fully functional calendar and a FM radio) and the Ericsson T68, one of the first handset equipped with a color screen. In 2008, 48.5 million of us still read daily print newspapers, more than double of today's readership.² In contrast, only 21% of the public used some type of social media vs. 72% today.³ MySpace boasted 126 million users, behind Facebook (200 million) and Blogger (222 million).⁴

¹ <https://www.technologizer.com/2011/09/11/september-2001-was-a-long-time-ago-in-the-world-of-technology/>

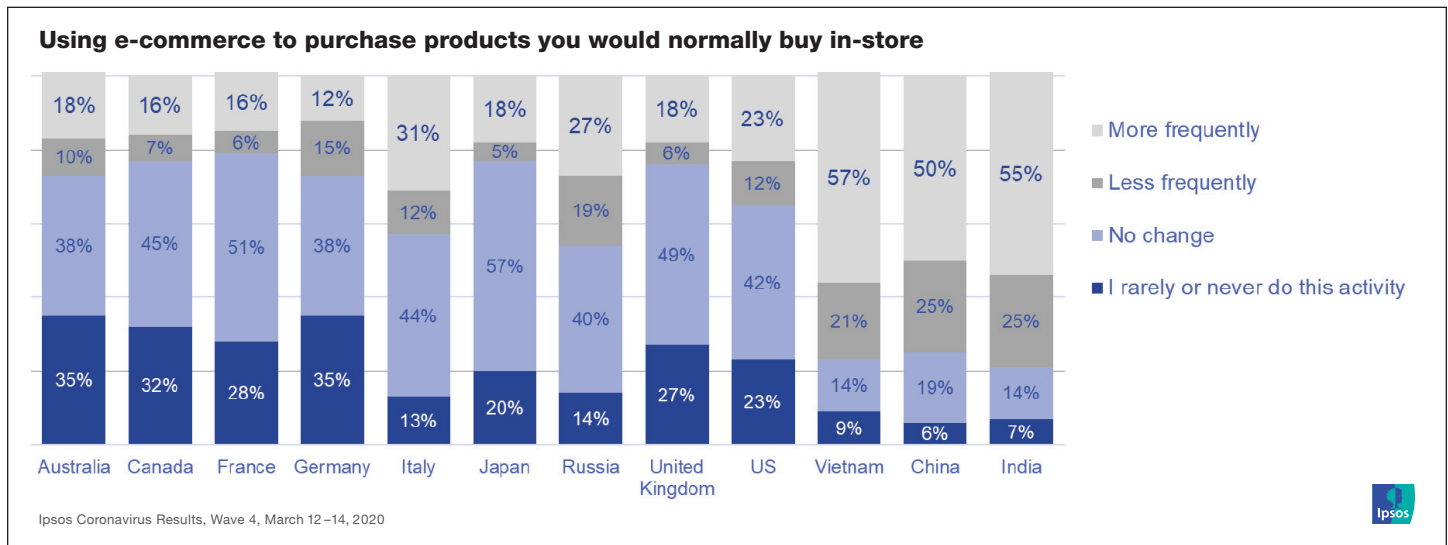
² <https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/>

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

⁴ <https://techcrunch.com/2008/12/31/top-social-media-sites-of-2008-facebook-still-rising/>

The Pandemic presents an opportunity to instill new consumer behaviors

As people are temporarily unable to visit physical stores, they will increasingly rely on technology companies and online services to give them access to their favorite products. Ipsos Coronavirus tracker shows that 23% of U.S. consumers surveyed now use e-commerce more frequently to purchase products that they would normally buy in-store.



Online grocery apps such as Instacart, Walmart Grocery and Shipt have seen their daily downloads surge in February by 218%, 160% and 124% respectively.⁵

Starved for entertainment options, people will also likely subscribe to new streaming services such as NBCUniversal's Peacock, WarnerMedia's HBO Max and Quibi, which will all debut by May. If this is any indicator, Netflix and Now TV have already recorded growth of 12.4% in the U.K.,⁶ with users streaming so much content that Netflix had to reduce its European network traffic by 25% to manage this surge.⁷

Whether it is for entertainment or essential needs such as groceries, people are establishing new habits in their relationship with tech brands. Providing that tech brands deliver on their promises, these consumers might never revert to their old habits prior to the virus outbreak.

Importantly, this is an opportunity for technology-based services to shift consumers perception of their service from discretionary ("I treat myself to some new wireless headphones from Amazon") or non-essential ("I order a meal through Uber Eats because it is more convenient; I could have picked it up from the restaurant") to essential and dependable ("in time of crisis, Amazon is the one who delivers my groceries and cleaning products"). Indeed, consumers will remember the brands that stood by them during this unprecedented crisis. History shows that such a strategy pays off in the long run: during World War II, Marks&Spencer was manufacturing ration clothing for the British public. People admired the brand for its contribution and remained loyal to M&S well after the war ended.

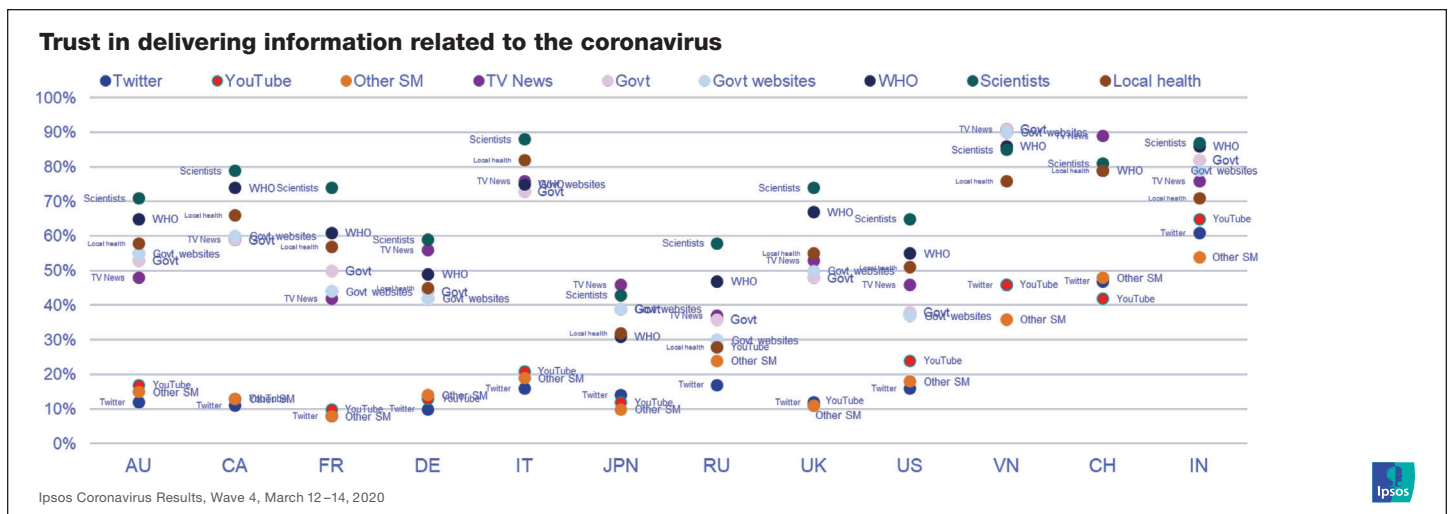
⁵ <https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/16/grocery-delivery-apps-see-record-downloads-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/> (March 16, 2020)

⁶ <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/03/10/deliveroo-and-netflix-experience-coronavirus-boost> (March 10, 2020)

⁷ <https://www.theverge.com/2020/3/19/21187078/netflix-europe-streaming-european-union-bit-rate-broadband-coronavirus> (March 19, 2020)

In this unprecedented crisis, tech brands can grow back trust and advocacy

Tech brands have suffered large losses in trust since the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2017. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer 2020, 61% of people believe that “technology is out of control” and the government is late in regulating emerging technologies.⁸ Fake news and misinformation further contribute to distrust. The Ipsos Coronavirus Tracker shows that barely 25% of people trust Youtube, Twitter and other social media to deliver information on the virus, compared to 45% for TV news. Tech brands can regrow trust and advocacy by making a positive impact to the pandemic crisis.



For example, Google is developing a website in partnership with the U.S. government that will focus on “COVID-19 education, prevention, and local resources nationwide.” Also, the YouTube homepage (YouTube is owned by Google) is pointing users to videos from the Centers For Disease Prevention and Control (CDC). Facebook plans on rolling out a Coronavirus Information Center that will feature verified information from public health experts, the World Health Organization and the CDC, as well as governments and celebrities around the world.⁹ Facebook is also offering up to \$100 million in cash grants and ad credits to support 30,000 small businesses and giving \$1,000 to each of its employees to help offset some of the economic uncertainties.

Key consumer understanding approaches

Now is a crucial time to uncover new insights, closely monitor brand key performance indicators and capture new metrics.

- Behavioral science facilitates the understanding of the contextual, non-conscious drivers of consumer behaviors. It helps integrate non-conscious cues and determine optimal wording for all marketing materials, from packaging to ads through online presence.
- Social Intelligence Tracking combs through billions of mentions consumers generate online everyday to deliver insights that translate into action. Evaluate conversations about your brand and COVID-19 in terms of volume and sentiment.
- Brand Health tracking pays close attention to key brand KPIs such awareness and consideration. It adds specific questions that arise as a result of this pandemic, such as behavior and lifestyle change in habits. Also, it measures and monitors brand trust, advocacy and helpfulness in dealing with the virus outbreak.

Brands that implement these approaches will be best positioned to foster meaningful relationships with their audience today, and increase their Customer Lifetime Value for years beyond the outbreak.

⁸ <https://www.edelman.com/trustbarometer> (January 19, 2020)

⁹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/18/tech/zuckerberg-facebook-coronavirus-response/index.html> (March 18, 2020)

Contact

Emmanuel Probst

Senior Vice President—Brand Health Tracking

Emmanuel.Probst@ipsos.com

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