

MARKETING IN CHANGING TIMES

Reassessing the eight motivators of purchase in the context of COVID-19

By Prasad Shinde, Steven Naert and Tammy Ho | September 2020

“Children now have contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders, they contradict their parents and tyrannize their teachers.” This is something which many parents these days can relate to. What is interesting about this quote is that it was first said by Socrates around 2,400 years ago. The French journalist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr was right when he said, *“the more things change, the more they remain the same.”* This is worth remembering during these times of unprecedented change.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique event that marketers, like all of us, are experiencing for the first time. Planning for brands during these extraordinary times presents a real challenge. A look through the various articles in marketing journals and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn show content broadly focussed around the following themes:

- The world as we know it has changed.
- Marketing practices that have worked well in the past are no longer valid.
- The new normal requires new tools and strategies to grow brands.

While we agree that *how* people buy a brand and the context of purchase may change over time, what does not change is *why* people buy a brand. Most brand purchase behaviours can be linked back to one of the same fundamental motivations.

In this article, we make a case for marketers to:

- Be mindful of the basic human motivations that influence brand purchase and consumption.
- Adapt brand messaging to reflect the changing times while staying true to the basic motivation that the brand fulfils.

We will begin in section 1 by identifying the basic human motivations that influence brand purchase. Then, in section 2, we will review how brands are adapting their messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic to address these motivations.

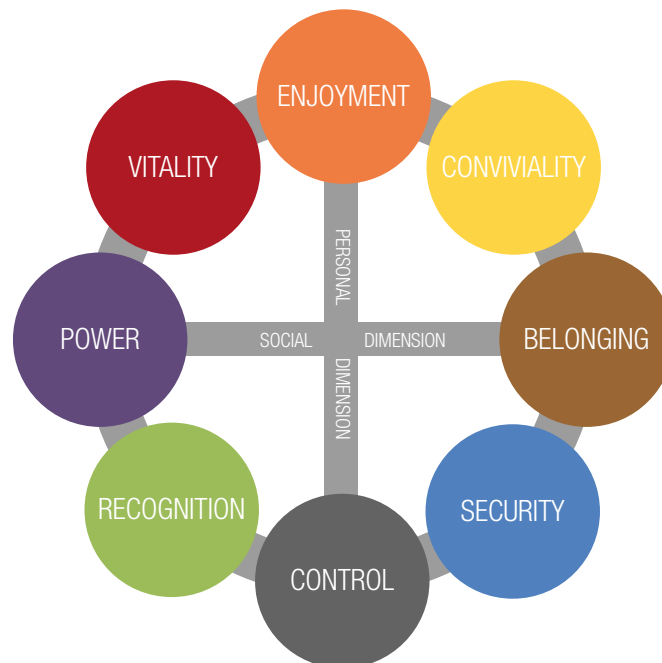
SECTION 1: AND THEN THERE WERE EIGHT

Motivations are the fundamental human desires that drive our behaviour. Some companies call them need states, others call them emotional drivers, but it boils down to the same thing: we put the 'why' before the 'what' in helping clients to understand and explain the relationship consumers have with brands. All companies want to be reassured that the investments they are making are based on a true human need or desire, a need which is fundamental not transient, a need which can be tapped into by new product offerings,

adverts, promotional offers, and sponsorship. A product or brand which lacks this connection with real human desire will fail to become part of the fabric of someone's life, as there will always be a faster, better, or cheaper alternative around the corner.

Ipsos believes that there are eight basic motivations that influence brand purchase. These motivations are represented in figure 1.

Figure 1 The Eight Basic Motivations



Source: *The Censydiam Compass*

There are two main forces in this framework:

- How we feel in relation to ourselves: the North-South dimension, and,
- How we feel in relation to others: the East-West dimension.

There are times when we want to follow our impulses and let ourselves go, and there are times when we feel the need to control these urges and behave. We are trying to

balance the tension that exists between the two motivations – to be spontaneous or to be in control. This gives us two motivations: Enjoyment (North) and Control (South).

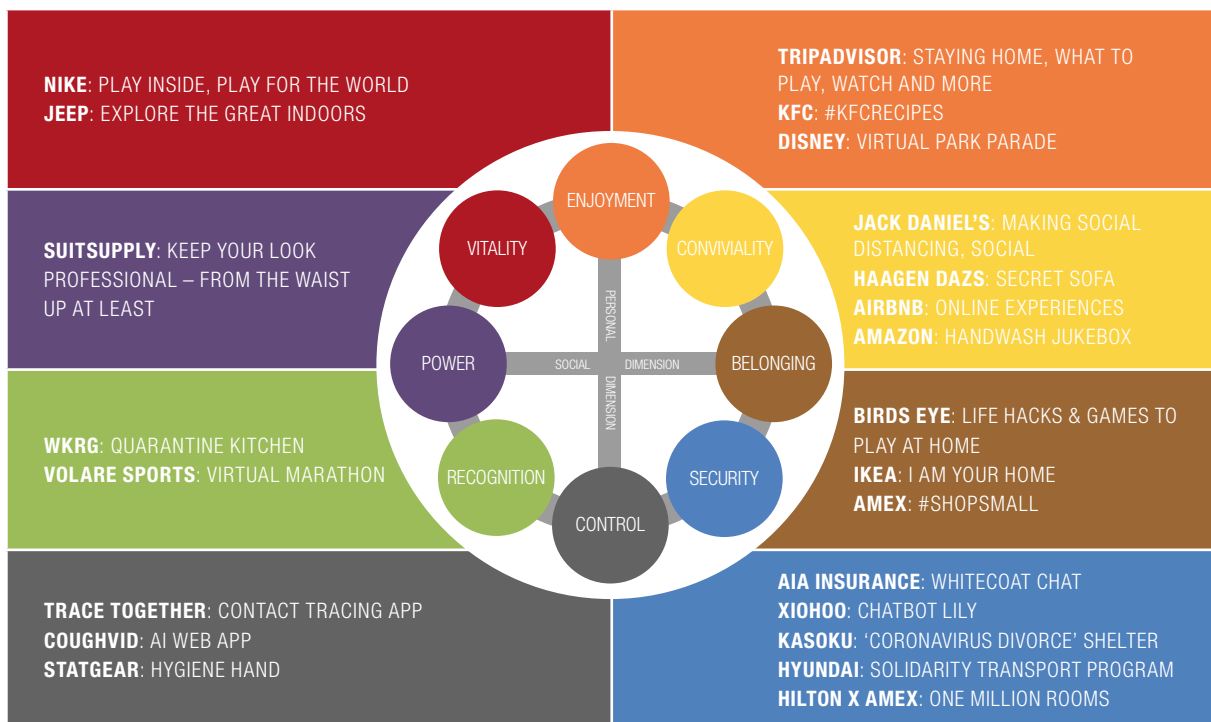
There are times when we want to be better than other people, to feel superior and to be a leader, and there are times when we want to fit in, to be part of the group and to be just like everyone else. This gives us two more motivations: Power (West) and Belonging (East). The remaining four motivations combine elements of the personal and social.

SECTION 2: ADDRESSING THE BASIC MOTIVATIONS IN AN EVOLVING CONTEXT

Now, let us look at some of these motivations and how some brands have addressed them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have come across various examples from well-known brands that address these eight motivations. A snapshot of these examples can be seen in figure 2. We have elaborated on two of these examples in detail in the subsequent section.

Figure 2 Examples of brands that have addressed the eight basic motivations during COVID-19



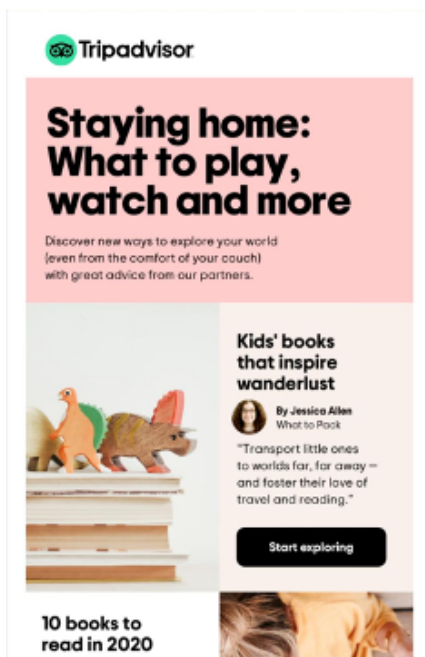
Source: see appendix for links to the ads

Here, we examine a couple of examples in more detail:

ENJOYMENT MOTIVATION

Enjoyment is all about maximising the pleasure we get out of life and enjoying ourselves without worrying about the consequences.

Travelling on holidays primarily satisfies the enjoyment motivation. There can also be secondary motivations such as bonding with family/friends (belonging motivation) or bragging about the holiday on social media (power motivation). Let's keep things simple for now and focus on the main motivation. When lockdowns were enforced in many countries and the airline industry was grinding to a halt, travelling as an option was almost completely ruled out. We like how the travel site tripadvisor.com adapted:

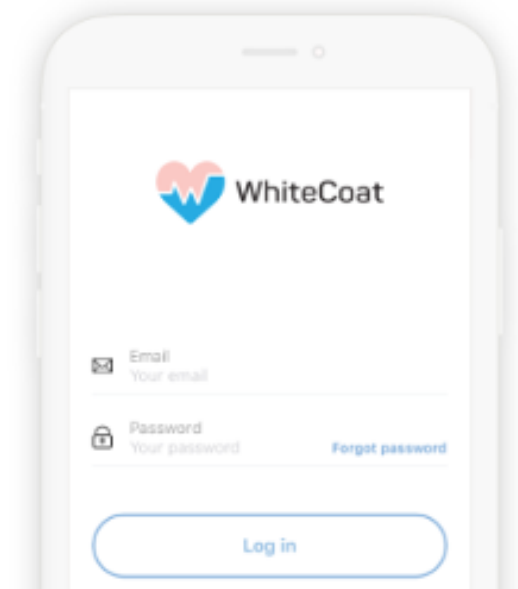


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Recommending kids' books that inspire wanderlust, for example, stays true to the basic enjoyment motivation. At the same time, it helps build up interest in future travel holidays for the post-pandemic days.

SECURITY MOTIVATION

Security is about the experience of relaxation, tranquility, and safety.



AIA Insurance in Singapore offers video consultation with medical professionals in Singapore. According to an Ipsos survey, 34% of Singapore residents are concerned to visit their doctor as they fear they could be busier than usual.² This is understandable during the pandemic as there is fear of catching the COVID-19 virus from other patients. AIA's WhiteCoat service is the remote diagnosis and treatment of patients using telecommunications devices i.e. a smartphone with camera. This service allows the comfort and security of health treatment when patients are not able to physically visit a doctor, and offers flexibility without compromising on security/safety concerns.

IN CONCLUSION

The takeaway for marketers is to understand what basic motivation drives purchase of their brand. The next step is to understand how best to deliver on that motivation in the changing context of the pandemic. For some categories, we understand, this is easier said than done. We hope the examples cited in this article provide some guidance on how brands are adapting to these changing times.

Finally, we would like to highlight the importance of showing empathy. If brands continue to address their consumers' underlying motivations, they will naturally come across as being helpful and avoid being seen as exploiting the situation.

REFERENCES

1. https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2018-07/censydiam_true_colours_print-sm.pdf
2. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-sg/report-digital-doctor-2020>

APPENDIX

Brand examples by motivation:

VITALITY – [NIKE](#), [JEEP](#)

ENJOYMENT – [HAAGEN DAZS](#), [KFC](#) (search #KFCcrecipes), [DISNEY](#)

CONVIVIALITY – [JACK DANIEL'S](#), [AIRBNB](#), [AMAZON](#)

BELONGING – [BIRDS EYE](#), [IKEA](#), [AMEX](#)

SECURITY – [AIA WhiteCoat](#), [XIOHOO](#), [KASOKU](#), [HYUNDAI](#), [HILTONxAMEX](#)

CONTROL – [TRACETOGETHER](#), [COUGHVID](#), [HYGIENE HAND](#)

RECOGNITION – [WKRG](#), [VOLARE SPORTS](#)

POWER – [SUITSUPPLY](#)

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