

BETTER RESPONSE & RECOVERY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES:

What Are The Digital Best Practices I Should Be Thinking About Right Now?



ABOUT THIS SERIES

These are unprecedented times. Not only have our day-to-day lives been radically changed, but the fast-moving nature of the situation also makes planning ahead highly challenging. The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that the **RESPONSE** phase of a pandemic will be followed with a **RECOVERY** phase – and while we need to adapt to the short-term, preparing for the long-term will be just as important. To that end, UM is harnessing the expertise within the agency to provide practical, actionable media advice that helps our teams and clients better Respond and Recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This issue is authored by our Chief Digital & Brand Safety Officer, Joshua Lowcock. Your UM team can help you with further information or arrange action plans around this area.

FIVE KEY AREAS TO CONSIDER

In this issue, as we collectively look to navigate a new normal and the path to recovery, we examine five key areas where there are current challenges and opportunities for marketers to respond.

1.

BRAND SAFETY

2.

CHANGES IN TRADING HOURS

3.

E-COMMERCE SALES CONVERSION

4.

E-COMMERCE OPPORTUNITIES

5.

ADS SENSITIVE TO THE MOMENT

1. BRAND SAFETY

Advertisers who block Covid-19 and related terms are seeing up to double-digit block rates, which is having an adverse impact on ad delivery, media costs, and performance. The preliminary research from third party verification vendors such as [Integral Ad Science \(IAS\) on Coronavirus Ad Adjacency](#) found that outside of food/beverage and travel/tourism, people were not opposed to ads next to these topics if creative was appropriate.

So what is appropriate? A [Morning Consult survey](#) found that consumers want to see creative that is respectful of social distancing.

It is recommended that advertisers do not block the term Coronavirus, COVID-19 or associated terms. The global nature of the pandemic and the impact it is having on all facets of life, from work, and education to

cooking, and sports, means there is not a single publisher not talking about the topic. As the world moves towards recovery, it's highly likely that Coronavirus will be in the news for the medium term and at the very least until the recently postponed 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

Consumers want to see creative that is respectful of social distancing.

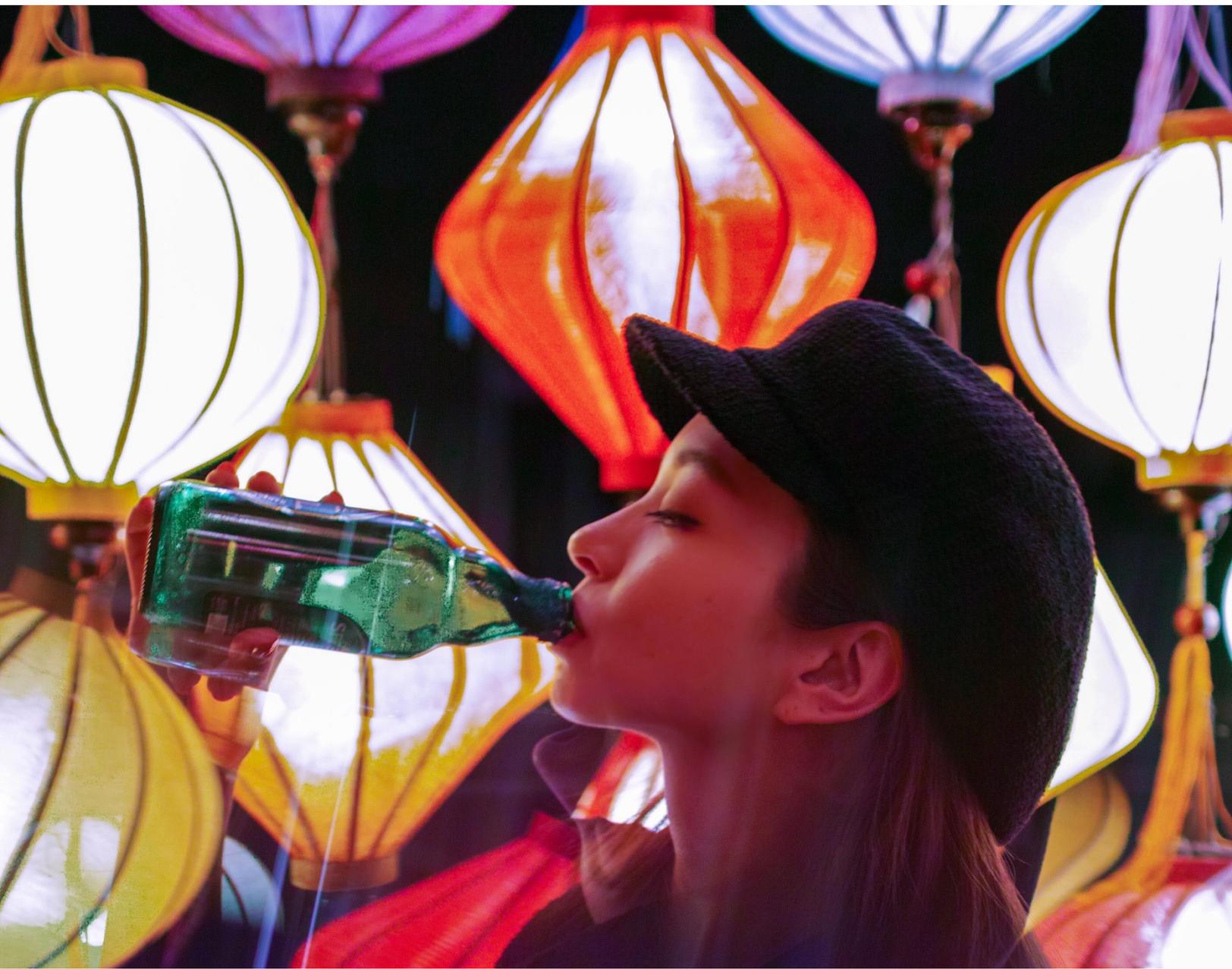
2. CHANGES IN TRADING HOURS

With the CDC and state and city government authorities issuing “shelter in place” or “stay at home” directives, there has been a corresponding spike across Google Trends in search queries on “store hours” and “open hours”. Some retailers we have seen 300%+ increases in search volume related to store hours with search queries for “store hours for seniors” increasing up to 900% in the past seven days. These queries are not just isolated to store hours, as Yelp has [seen a dramatic shift in queries](#) away from “dine-in” to prioritizing “take out and delivery” as people adopt social distancing. Finally, many retailers are adjusting store hours to allow for extra time for restocking, sanitation, and general staff welfare.

Given all of the dynamics in play, it's important that local store information across search platforms (including voice assistant results) accurately reflects current retail trading conditions. This includes updating information in Google, Bing (which is used by Amazon

Alexa), Google Maps, and Yelp as well as optimizing SEO for store information on your owned and operated websites. If you're temporarily closing locations for public health and safety reasons, Google has also introduced the ability to temporarily mark locations as closed. Keeping your store information current is more important than ever, as it can help reduce people traveling and also redirect customers to alternate service channels.





3. E-COMMERCE SALES CONVERSIONS

Across all markets, consumers are shifting to online shopping, driven by local requirements or as a YouGov survey discovered, [concerns about crowded public spaces](#). An [IPSOS survey](#) has shown that the shift to online shopping has accelerated in markets where lockdown and shelter in place directives are in effect, most notably in Australia, Germany, Italy, Vietnam.

As e-commerce demand increases, marketers should look to invest in online shopper marketing activity. This goes beyond search ads on Google, Baidu, Yandex, etc., to advertising and marketing programs specifically on e-commerce websites.

This includes paid search advertising programs on retailer websites, retailer product pages, and generally optimizing digital shelf space. In addition, close attention should be given to ensuring product information is accurate, encouraging, responding to, and monitoring ratings and reviews, as well as creating content that helps merchandise your products, such as demonstration videos and how to guides.

These e-commerce principles are further explored in "How Can I Be Successful In E-Commerce During COVID-19?", which has been released in conjunction with this issue.

4. E-COMMERCE OPPORTUNITIES

With adjusted physical retail trading conditions, the increased consumer demand for transacting online, and global and local supply chain challenges, it is increasingly important that potential customers are provided with accurate information as to where they can buy your products. Google has offered Local Inventory Ads for some time, providing a way for retailers to surface nearby product availability. However, this solution is not unique to Google, as Pinterest offers Shopping Ads across a number of categories, Instagram has their own shopping ad product, and Snapchat has Collection Ads.

Creating and publishing product feeds to Google and other platforms ensures you can reach customers where they are searching for you, which may not always be on a retailer site. Leveraging platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, and Snapchat can also help with inspiration and discovery of your products, and can be supported by paid media if desired. An added benefit of working with non-retail-based platforms in e-commerce is it provides a way for brands to get closer to their customers. When supported by paid media, this can provide valuable data and insights as to the personas of your customers as well as helpful learnings should you be planning a mid-to-long term DTC strategy.

5. ADS SENSITIVE TO THE MOMENT

A new challenge that has arisen as a result of the pandemic is that advertisers need to repurpose creative to making it acceptable for the moment. As an example, KFC needed to [cancel and adjust a proposed “Finger Lickin’ Good” campaign](#). There is also an additional complexity in adjusting messaging when there are conflicting Government directives in place either across or within a market. Leveraging addressable or dynamic creative can help mitigate these complexities.

Addressable creative can be used to dynamically generate new ad units to replace creative that is no longer appropriate. Brands can feel confident in adjusting messaging in a local market to drive people to online options, or to set expectations on when, where, and how to transact, e.g., “We’re open for drive-through service only between 10:00 AM – 4:00PM”.

It’s also worth the effort of connecting product inventory data to dynamic creative to ensure that your marketing is not driving demand for products that are now out of stock or where there may be shipping delays.

For non-retail-based clients, addressable and dynamic ads directing customers to alternate customer service channels can be equally important, e.g., prioritizing online chat vs call centers.

These dynamic creative principles will be explored further in a thought leadership paper, which will be released in the following weeks.



For further advice, or if you’re concerned about your digital strategy, your UM team is ready to help evaluate how you are doing and guide you towards growth both in these uncertain times and in the future.



UM *futureproof*