

essence

Communications in the post-lockdown landscape:

New rules for media strategy and planning

June 2020



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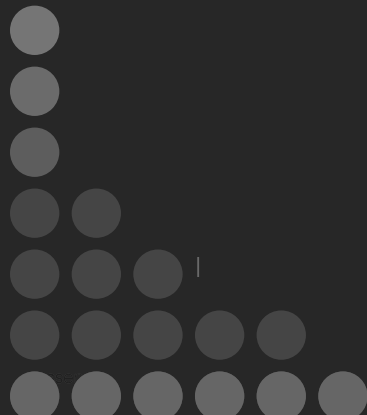


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Foreword

Given the fast-moving nature of the still unfolding COVID-19 crisis, writing this report has been far from straightforward. No sooner than each sentence was committed to the page, it seemed another twenty-something data points would come to light; each to be analysed, understood and put in to context, our previous conclusions questioned anew.

The crisis is far from over and it remains tricky to predict what the situation may look like next week, let alone to the end of 2020 and beyond. However, in the almost three months since countries across EMEA began to introduce restrictions designed to stop the spread of the virus, strong signals have emerged which allow us to forecast with a degree of confidence how media behaviours have changed for the short, medium and relatively long term.

This report is designed to provide an overview of the profound changes we have seen in media consumption over the recent months of huge disruption to people's daily routines.

More importantly, we have included here our views on what the medium and long term impact of these changes will be on media consumption patterns in the emerging post-lockdown world. On this basis, we have developed high-level guidelines for the way media strategists and planners should think differently about the way they approach responses to briefs in this new environment.

As ever, our treatment of each new brief will be bespoke to the specifics of business challenge, marketing objective, target audience and market landscape. But our 'new rules' should be used as a lens through which to produce campaigns that are relevant to and effective in the new media, behavioural and attitudinal context in which we now find ourselves.




Introduction

Around the globe, the last few weeks and months have seen unprecedented disruption to people's lives. At the height of the pandemic, about one third of the global population - 2.6 billion people - were living under some sort of restriction, and Danny Shaw, the BBC's Home Affairs correspondent was not exaggerating when he wrote that people faced *'the most far-reaching curbs on personal freedom ever introduced in the UK in peacetime'*.

This enforced transformation of people's habits and routines has led to huge behavioural disruption across pretty much all aspects of their lives from retail to recreation, travel to technology, entertainment to education.

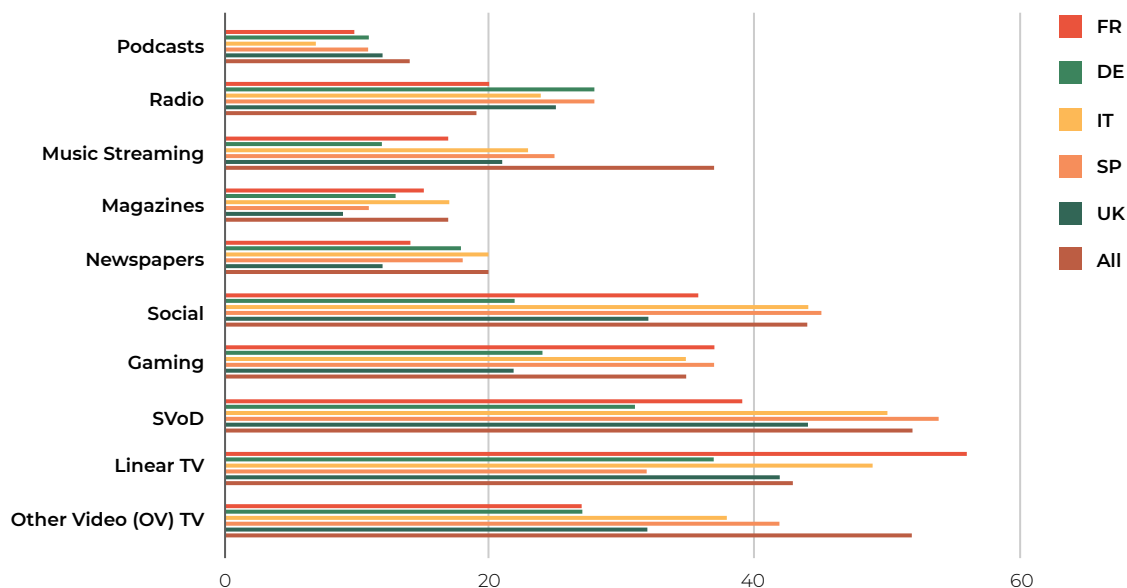
Accompanying this has been a whole host of sweeping assertions from various commentators about permanent change and how things will never be the same again. Over the rest of this paper we look at how media behaviour has shifted in these last few momentous weeks and months, discuss which of these behaviours we believe will 'stick', and lastly explore the significance of these shifts for media strategy and planning as we start to develop approaches for a post-lockdown world.



COVID-19 and media consumption changes

With the obvious exceptions of Out of Home (OOH) and Cinema, the lockdown period has seen significant rises in media consumption across all age groups. Consumer reports from both Kantar and GlobalWebIndex (GWI), along with syndicated, or in some cases proprietary, data from panels, platforms and individual media owners confirm that more time is being spent on media consumption:

% Consumers spending more time, by activity



Source : GWI Coronavirus Research Tracker Wave 3

(All is aggregated data across 16 markets : AU, BR, CA, FR, DE, IN, IR, IT, JP, NZ, PH, SG, ZA, SP, UK, USA)

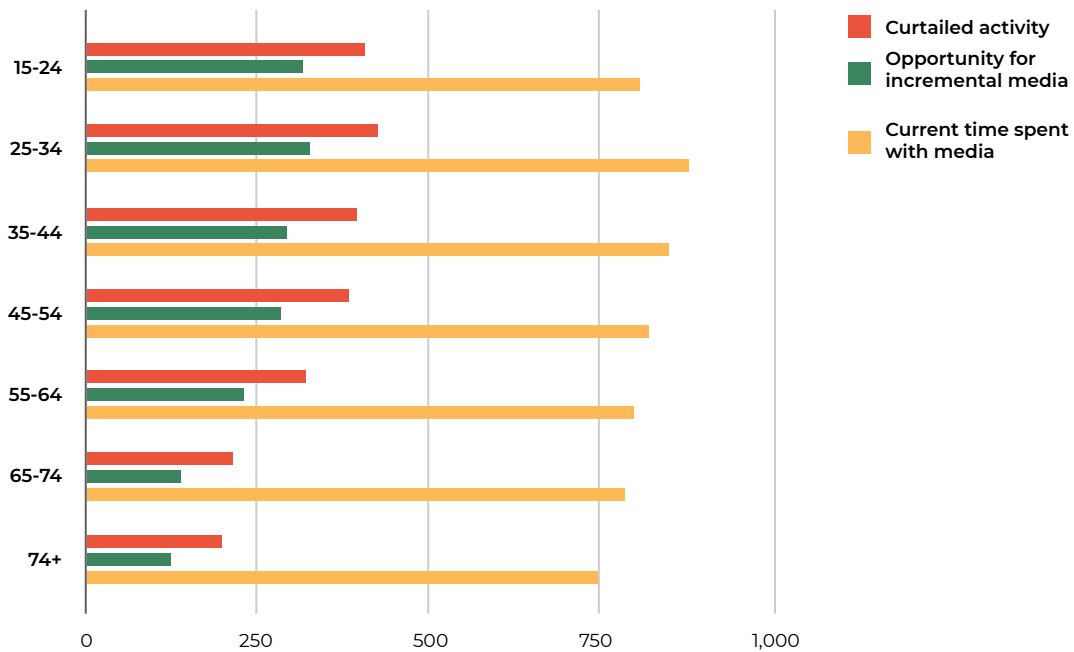
Across all channels and platforms that are still accessible to people, consumption is up, in many cases reversing historic patterns of decline that have been at play for a number of years. On linear TV, for example, impact supply grew in double digits amongst the younger and more upmarket audiences that have been migrating away from the channel in recent years.

Commercial radio impacts are up 15-20% (based on streaming figures). Traffic to news websites rocketed (although is now falling back). But in order to have a view on the impact these rises will have on future planning, we need to understand what is driving these changes, how permanent these drivers are, and lastly how sticky these changes in behaviour are likely to be.

The drivers of change

By far the biggest driver of this increased consumption is the simple fact that people in lockdown had more time on their hands to fill with media. For young adults in particular, the stereotypical teenage complaint of “I’m bored” has rung out with far greater frequency than usual, as regular activities are curtailed and people are left to entertain themselves.

Time spent, pre-lockdown, on media and currently curtailed activities by age cohort (Average minutes per day)



Curtailed activity includes but is not limited to activities such as travelling/commuting, attending work/college/school, socialising, visiting pubs/cafes/restaurants, going to the gym and high street shopping.

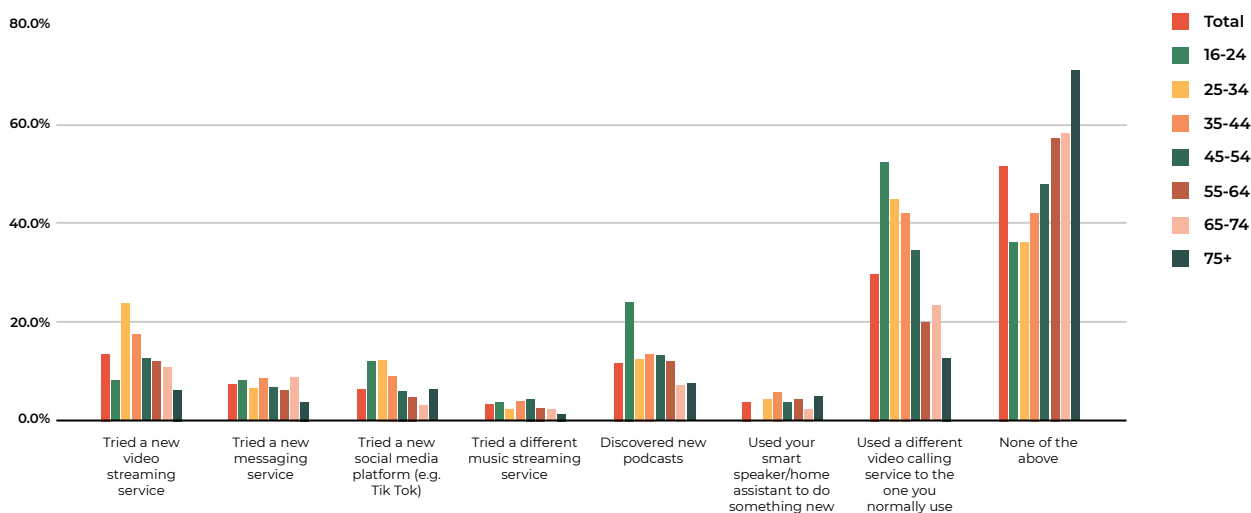
Of this activity some is already used for media consumption e.g. travelling/commuting. This has therefore been excluded from the second bar to arrive at a figure for potential incremental media consumption.

Source : IPA Touchpoints

However, it is also the case that this extra time not only resulted in more media consumption, it also resulted in different types of consumption, as people explored new platforms, channels and formats:

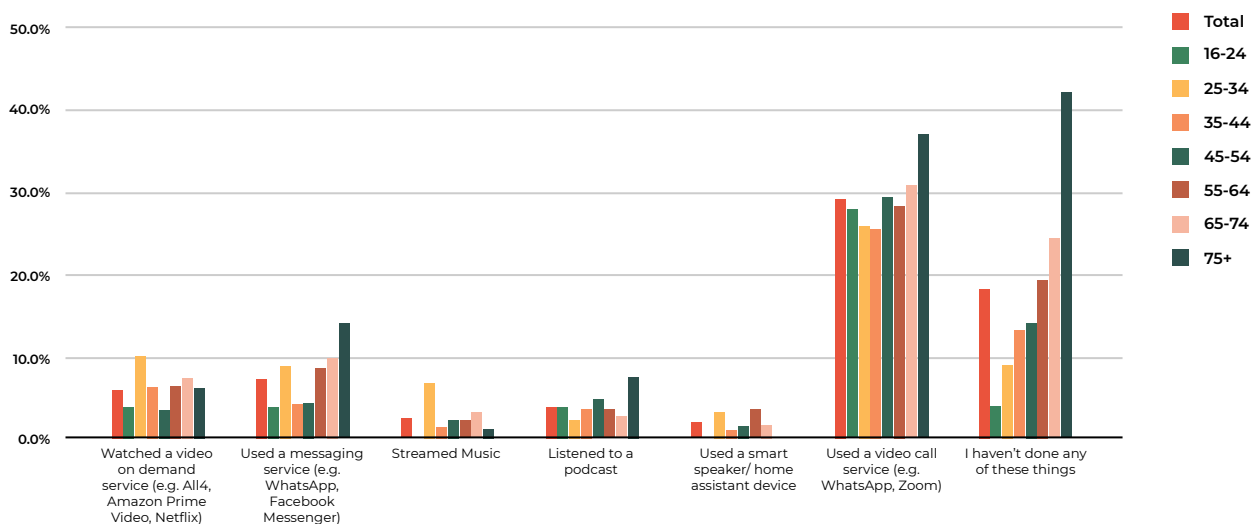
Which of the following have you done since Lockdown:

Source : Essence / NewsCo Panel Survey (conducted w/c 20th April)



Which of the following have you tried for the *first time* since Lockdown:

Source : Essence / NewsCo Panel Survey (conducted w/c 20th April)



In short, we have seen an acceleration of media experimentation and adoption across different age groups. In order to understand the extent to which these new behaviours will stay with consumers, it is necessary to dig deeper into the motivations behind their adoption.

This is important because behaviours that are highly specific contextually are less likely to be adopted on a long term basis. When the context changes, or reverts to previous norms, the new habits are more likely to fall away.

We have seen three broad categories of media consumption:

1. Media use for staying informed

According to research from Kantar, 'keeping up to date' was the number one consumer motivation across all markets during the time of the lockdown. This is reflected in the massive spikes experienced in audiences to news bulletins, and the increased traffic to news brand websites.

However, we are already seeing 'news fatigue' setting in, with Ofcom reporting weekly increases in the proportion of people actively avoiding the news (up to 33% as at 26 May) and hence this consumption is merely an anomaly that will disappear once 'normality' (whatever that may look like) returns.

The one possible exception to this is an acceleration of an already nascent trend: the decline of 'fake news'. In the UK, the BBC has emerged as the key source of news and information on the pandemic, with around 80% of adults referring to them on a weekly basis.

Going in the other direction, since the start of the pandemic there has been a marked decline in people using social media and closed groups to get news and information about the virus (declining from 49% to 37%, and 15% to 8% respectively). Similarly there has been a marked decline in people sharing information about the virus on social media as the pandemic progressed (from 25% in week one to 15% in week eight).

2. Media use for displacement and a sense of control

Another function of increased time, and limited leisure options, has been the rise of what we have called 'displacement' activities, meaning that people have turned to media to help them do new and different things. Basically, 'quarantine resolutions'. The Kantar research mentioned above also reports that people on lockdown are looking both for diversions, but also a sense of control, and some of the new behaviours we have seen demonstrate this.

Research commissioned by OnePoll in the first week of April reported that over 60% of Britons intended to do some sort of self-improvement activity over the course of the lockdown, with 32% aiming to improve their cooking skills, 25% mastering a new language and 12% learning a musical instrument. Clearly there is a large gap between intention and action, as the traditional January gym membership spike will attest, however we have seen evidence of these desires translate into media behaviour, with significant spikes in consumption of, amongst others, fitness and exercise, cooking and education resources.

Whilst we would all love to believe that this behaviour will stick post-lockdown, we believe it is unlikely to be significant. Old routines will return and good intentions will be (largely) forgotten.

3. Media use as a substitute for previous behaviours

The final driver of media use is what we call 'substitutive'. Basically, this is using media as a proxy or a substitute for pre-existing behaviour, and covers a much broader range of consumption, from the rise of on-demand TV streaming as a substitute for (more limited) linear schedules, to the use of Zoom and Houseparty as a substitute for physical gatherings, and the growth of e-commerce as a substitute for physical retail.

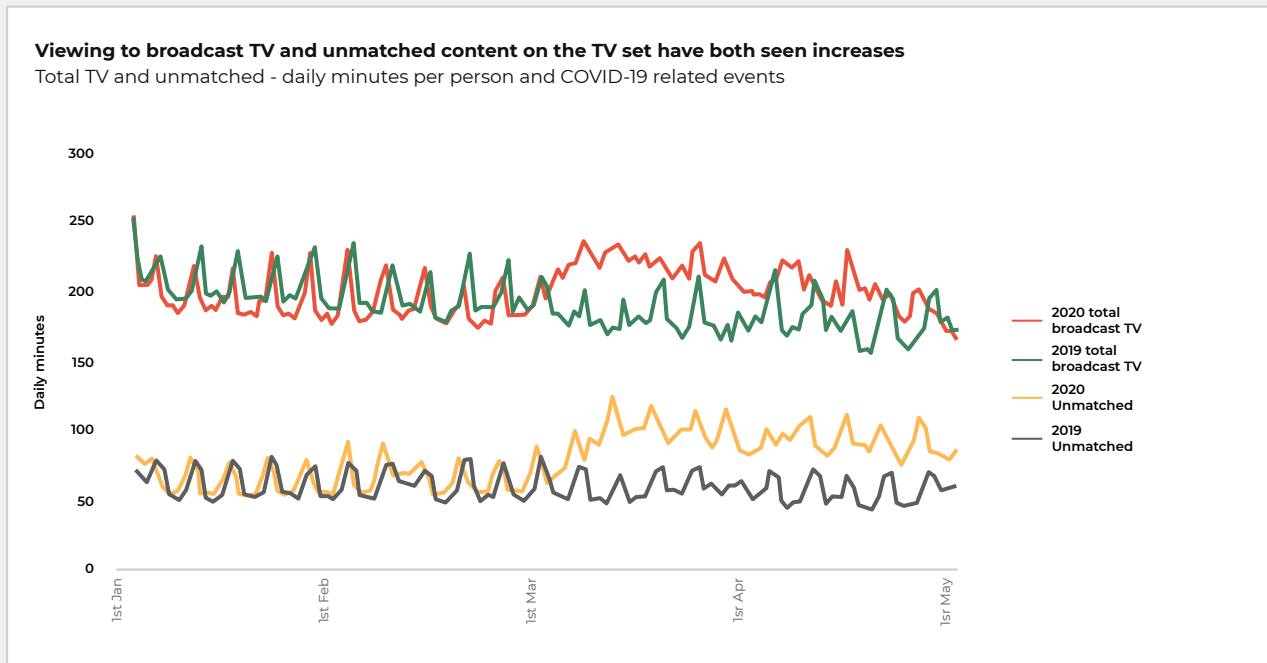
New media behaviours that fall into this category are the ones most likely to 'stick'. The barriers to adoption have been (forcibly) removed, and if the new experience has provided a better, or easier, or more rewarding substitute for the user then there is a good chance it will continue.



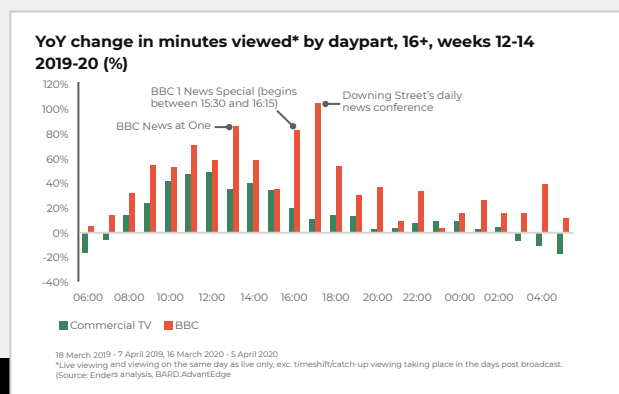
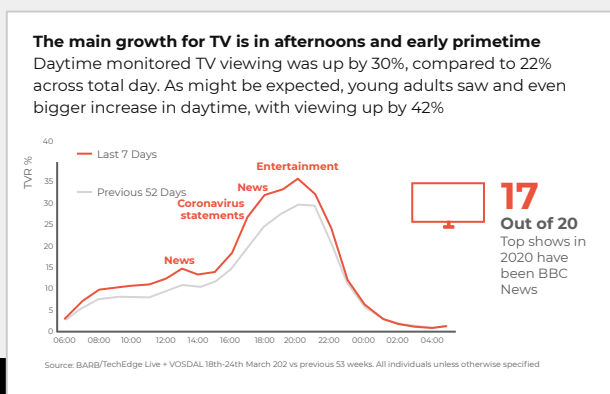
Video

Video viewing, in all its forms, had a significant boost from the enforced lockdown.

TV viewing reported massive YoY increases across both broadcast and 'unmatched', particularly in the first few weeks of the lockdown, with the first full week (23 March) recording a 25% YoY increase in UK all adult impacts and an increase in time spent watching TV of 99 minutes per day to 323 minutes. Of this, 236 minutes were spent on live or catch up, and 87 were 'unmatched' - a YoY increase of 93%



Additionally, increases in viewing have been seen across all audiences and dayparts:



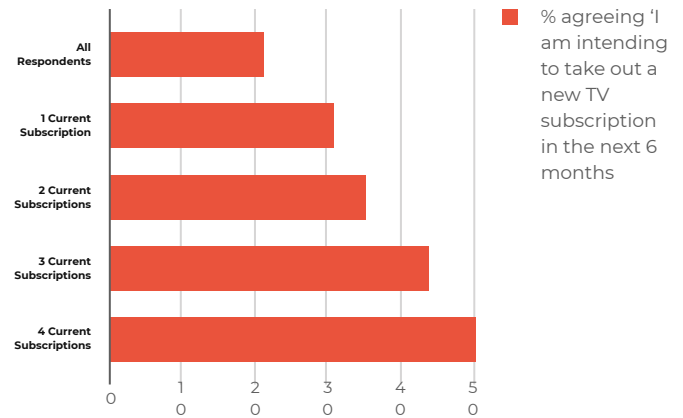
Up to the end of May, UK daytime viewing was up 31%, versus 19% across all dayparts, and within this young adult impacts were up 37%. Additionally, news bulletins have also been a significant driver of growth, particularly early in the pandemic, with Boris Johnson's 'Lockdown' announcement attracting an audience of 27.7million UK viewers.

The same is also true across the UK BVoD platforms. ITV Hub consumption hours are up over 80% for the quarter, with All4 and Sky On Demand posting rises of 35-40%.

However, looking beyond the first few weeks of the lockdown, whilst impacts were still high, viewing was starting to stabilise. By the middle of April, live and catch up viewing had started to drop back (although it was still around 20% higher YoY). However, it is interesting to note that 'unmatched' has stayed relatively constant.

For this reason, we suggest that the accelerated adoption of on-demand services has a high likelihood of outlasting the lockdown.

Essence research into the adoption of streaming services pre-dating the outbreak indicated that the most significant predictor of adopting a new steaming service was already having one.



Source : Essence / LivePanel February 2020

Essentially, once people have experienced these services, they want more. The lockdown has accelerated this uptake: our own research demonstrates that just over 13% of people have tried a new video streaming service, with over 40% of them using video streaming for the first time. This was confirmed by Netflix's announcement on 21 April that it had added 15.8 million new subscribers in Q1, 7 million of them in Europe - easily breezing past its *global* target of 7 million for the quarter - as well as Disney+ hitting 50 million subscribers by 8 April - just five months after launch.

It's not just that viewing is up, as the numbers show, but penetration is up too.

Modelling Pre- and Post-COVID TV viewing

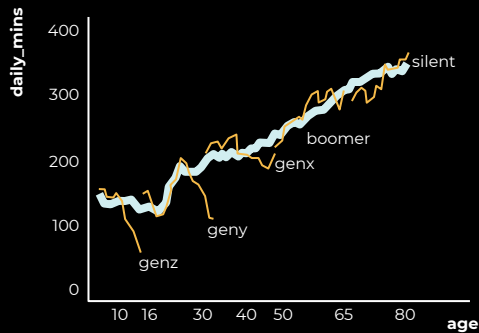
At Essence we have built a cohort model, based on 17 years worth of BARB data to predict how we expect linear viewing to change in the coming years. The approach accounts for "cohort" effects and age effects simultaneously. That is, we have accounted for the fact that in general terms as people age, they tend to watch more TV. And at the same time, consumers generally are watching less linear TV.

Our approach is able to balance these competing trends for specific age groups - for instance, for Millennials the rate at which they are watching less TV due to cultural change is outpacing the *increase* in TV viewing you'd expect from them as they age - hence the overall decline in linear viewership for this group.

The outputs from this model are shown on the next page:

Live & catch up viewing by age

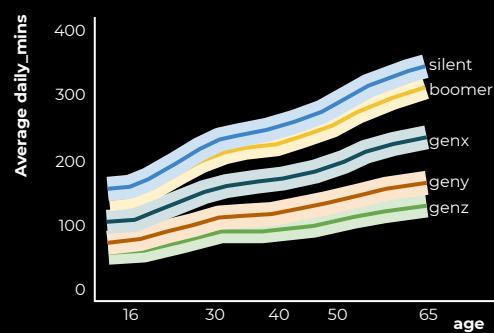
Average daily viewing minutes (2002-2019)



Source: BARB

Projected Life Stage Viewing

Model simulation, no further tech adoption



Source : Essence

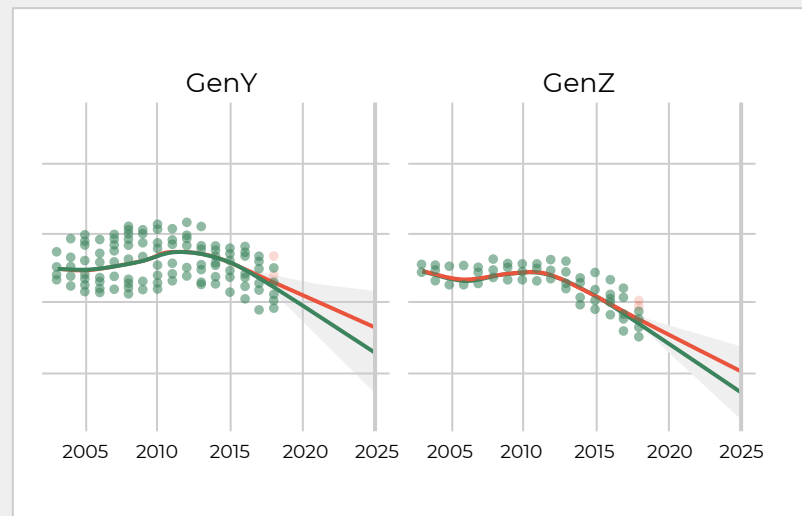
(Hierarchical Bayes Model with Age & Cohort Splines)

In light of the changes to viewing behaviour outlined above, we have run some scenarios with this model to understand how the lockdown increases in viewing will play out over the longer term for different audience groups:

Younger age groups (Gen Y & Gen Z)

To reverse the longer term decline in these audiences would require a much bigger shift in viewing patterns than we are currently seeing:

For example, assuming a 20% increase in linear viewership (a similar magnitude to what we have seen so far) annualised across the whole of 2020, we predict we'd estimate only **8 extra minutes per day** for Gen Y by 2024, and 7 minutes for Gen Z, compared to pre-COVID data.

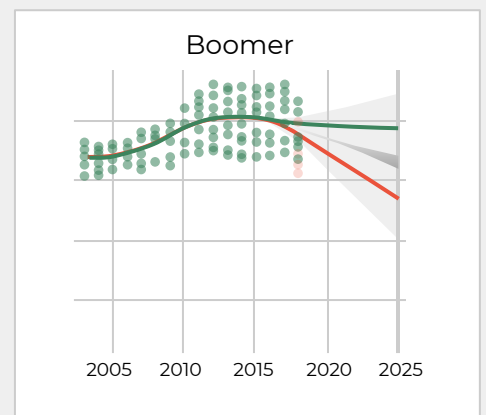


It would take a more substantial change now for us to see meaningful difference in a few years time. With a 50% increase in linear viewing in 2020, we'd expect Gen Y to see an additional 17 minutes, while Gen Z would see eight extra minutes.

Older age groups (Boomers)

Substitution effects in older age groups have much bigger impact

Even a relatively small decline now - just 5% substitution effect- would mean a 3% decline by 2024 for Boomers, and a 2% decline for the elderly generation by 2024, and a 20% substitution effect would create a much bigger decline.



To summarise: long term viewing trends in younger age groups are so ingrained, that it takes a huge shift in the short term to make any difference longer term. On the other hand, because older age groups have been less affected by the shift away from linear, even smaller short term shocks have much bigger effects over the long-term.

Social & Messaging

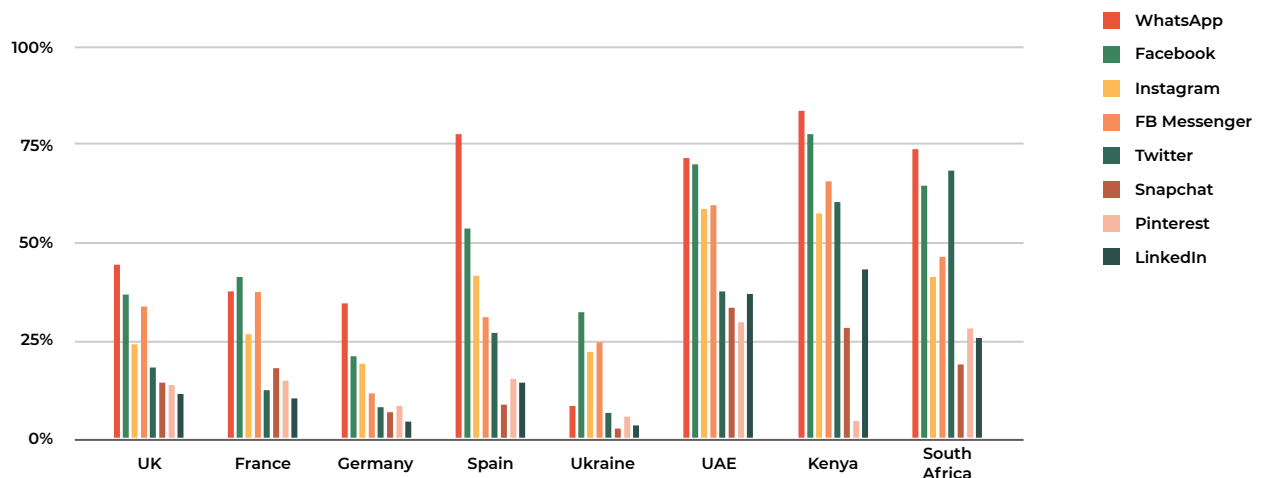
The wide-ranging functionality and unique strengths of the various social platforms have provided a collective boon to the medium during this time.

All the lockdown use cases outlined in our opening section have been enthusiastically applied by social media users - from the obvious function of connecting with family and friends through to keeping informed, gathering ideas on how to live now and seeking distraction from anxiety and boredom.

In markets across EMEA, respondents to Kantar's COVID-19 tracker reported significantly increased usage across all social and messaging platforms. With the major platforms already at maturity and enjoying high audience penetration in most EMEA markets, it was our assumption that the vast majority of these gains were due to existing users spending more time with their preferred platforms, rather than adopting new usage patterns.

We put this question to News UK's panel of Sun, Times and Sunday Times readers in order to validate the hypothesis and, indeed, only 6.3% told us they had tried a new social platform under lockdown, with 7.3% having tried a new messaging service. This view is further validated by Kantar's multi-market data which universally shows the biggest platforms making the strongest gains:

% Of respondents using social & messaging platforms more this month than last
(Kantar COVID-19 Barometer W3)



With this in mind, **we believe social media use will largely revert back from lockdown behaviours as restrictions are eased** and daily routines move closer to pre-COVID patterns. This forecast is reinforced by Kantar TGI data which reveals that those most keenly embracing technology to stay in touch are the people who are usually the most likely to go out and socialise in person.

Our bespoke Essence study of Generation Z behaviours in lockdown supports this too, with respondents saying they are currently spending way too much time on social media and are keen to cut this back again.

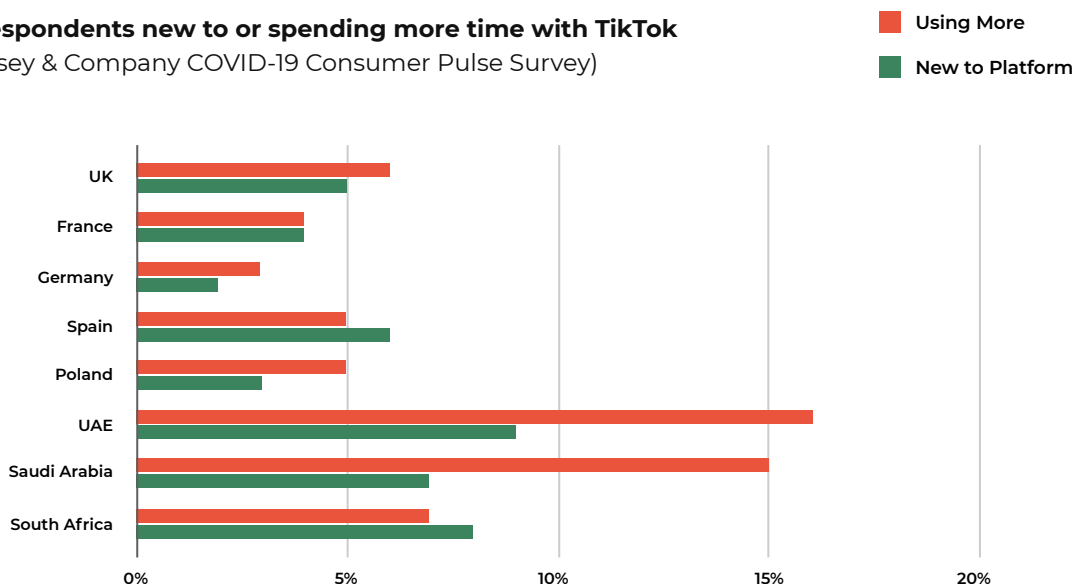
However, **we foresee a few notable exceptions to this rule. Users are discovering new functionality** that will make certain platforms more sticky in the long run, going on to claim a higher proportion of their social media time than before. Snapchat, for example, reports that time spent using Lenses - arguably their best-known functionality - is up 25% globally. But, at 50%, the total

increase in time spent video calling on the app is double. Our research suggests this variance is an indication of people using the video calling function for the first time.

On Instagram, an explosion of high quality content has been attracting users to Live for the first time. Users have been enjoying lockdown concerts, DJ sets and fitness classes and say as long as quality content is there, they will keep going back for more.

In terms of net new users, TikTok appears to be the most significant beneficiary of a populace with more time on its hands and a need for distraction. Already growing rapidly among the young, the app has reported growth from those aged 35+ in lockdown, aided by a blend of headline-making political satire and parents spending more time with their children. McKinsey data shows just how TikTok has gained popularity across EMEA, with new users joining and existing users spending more time with the platform in lockdown:

% Of respondents new to or spending more time with TikTok
(McKinsey & Company COVID-19 Consumer Pulse Survey)



Whether these new and newly enthusiastic users will translate to regular monthly active users post-lockdown is in doubt. COVID-19 will surely help further accelerate TikTok's growth, but for many current users the novelty will wear off and they will fail to find time for it in the longer term.

Pinterest is another platform doing well under lockdown, as users forcibly adapting to working from home, cooking from scratch and home-schooling children browse for inspiration and advice. Globally, the site hit a number of all time highs in April, with the creation of new boards up 75% year on year, many from first time users. In Europe, markets including the UK, Ireland, Germany and France all recorded monthly search gains of over 20%.

This behaviour reinforces the perception of Pinterest as a platform most relevant to big life moments

and it's likely that, for newly formed users, future decisions around home decoration or a new hair colour will continue to be fuelled by the platform. While infrequent needs, they do represent robust targeting opportunities for advertisers.

In summary, the post-lockdown landscape for social will deliver a little more diversification across platforms (gains for TikTok and Pinterest) **and a lot more fragmentation across functions.**

For advertisers this means the opportunity to connect with users across a wider range of environments, based on a broader range of in-platform behaviours.

While feeds will continue to be the biggest drivers of reach, we'll have more scope to engage via different types of messages in places where attention levels may well be higher.

Audio

Audio channels have not missed out on the extra time spent at home. Broadcast radio, usually considered to be highly dependent on in-car listening, is proving itself to be in rude health. Global, for instance, reported a 24% increase in streaming reach and a 21% boost to total streaming hours between the start of the crisis and the end of April.

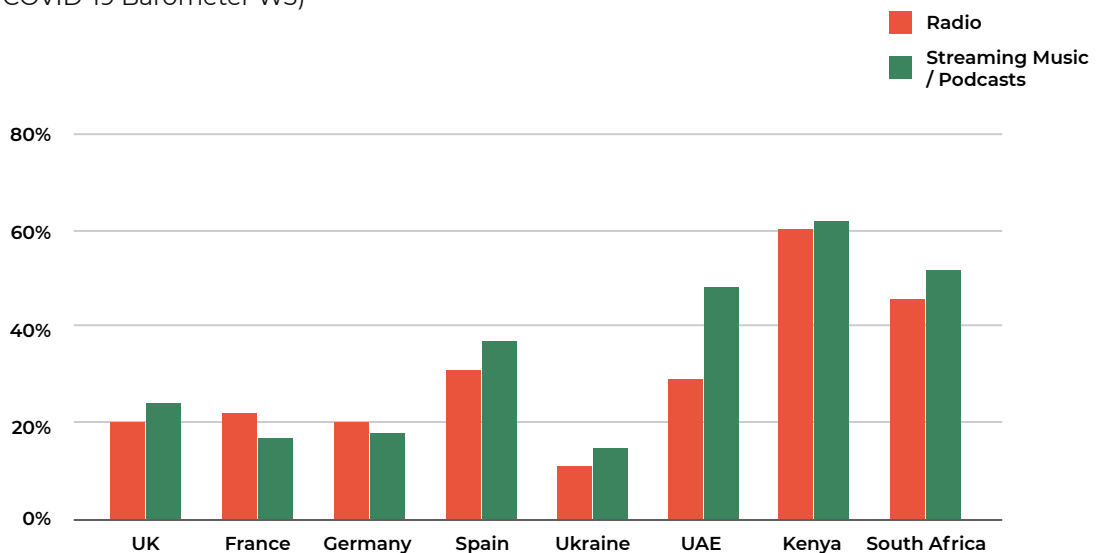
In lockdown, the traditional morning peak for radio lasts throughout the day, as listeners who usually drop off between the morning and evening commute stay tuned for day-long companionship. For those enduring lockdown in isolation, appetite for the company that radio provides is a key driver of this trend.

However, it's not just the comforting chatter of another human voice that we crave. The listening trend applies equally to audio streaming services, with Spotify employing Morrissey's prescient claim that *Everyday Is Like Sunday* to describe users' adjusted lockdown behaviour.

People all across EMEA, as surveyed by Kantar, are behaving universally in an increased uptake of audio services during lockdown.

% Of respondents using audio channels more this month than last

(Kantar COVID-19 Barometer W3)

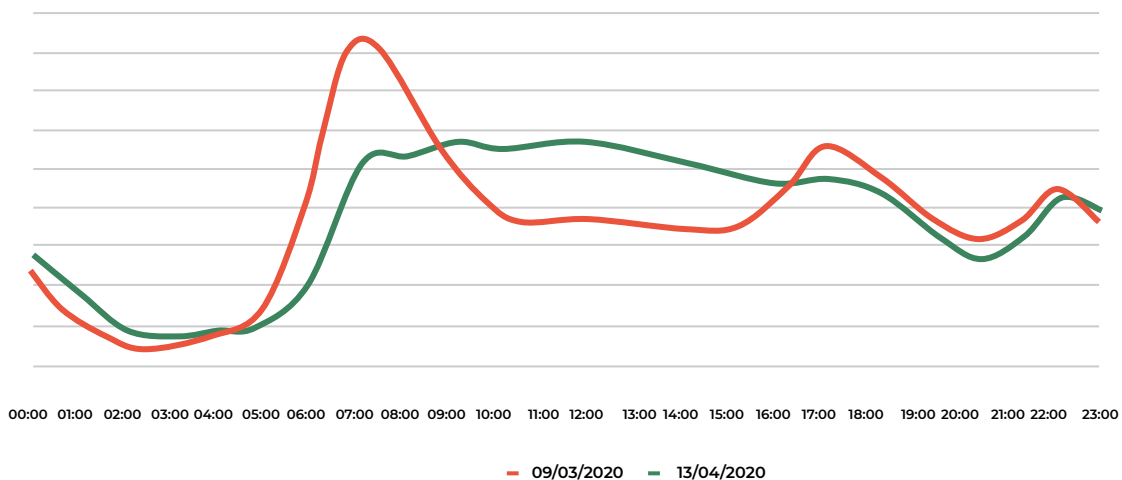


As we can see, locked at home listeners are not just using audio for background noise. Podcast consumption has been boosted too, with Acast reporting a 20% increase in UK listenership between March and April, and 11.8% of the News UK reader panel saying they have discovered new podcasts during lockdown.

As with other audio channels, podcast engagement starts to build slightly later in the day than in pre-lockdown times - as people swap the early morning commute for a lie in. The usual peaks in listening have flattened out.

Source: Acast

Consumption habits during COVID-19



Most interestingly for the long-term view, lockdown has accelerated the use of newer forms of audio amongst older audiences in particular.

Audio streaming has gained relatively few net new users over this period - just 3.9% of the News UK panel listened to a podcast for the first time during lockdown and 2.6% started streaming music. However, a GlobalWebIndex survey

tracking changes to engagement across 17 markets shows which cohorts are taking the biggest behavioural leaps. While music streaming and podcast listening among 16-24 year olds rose only 3% and 8% respectively from mid-March to early April, 55-64 year olds increased their music streaming by 61% over this time, while 45-54s reported a 51% rise for podcasts.

Alongside this shift to streaming, **more time spent at home is prompting users to experiment with using audio commands.** As of January this year, Kantar reported an 18% penetration of smart speakers in the UK, with around 9.5m adults claiming to own one. During lockdown, interest in this type of device has soared to levels normally only seen at key retail or gifting periods, with unique purchases of the Google Nest Mini growing in the UK, Ireland and Germany by 67%, 786% and 13% respectively from March to April.

Not only are smart speakers and home assistants attracting new users during lockdown - 1.9% of the News UK panel said they had used one for the first time during this period - but existing owners are broadening their relationship with their device: 4.1% of the same panel told us they had recently used it to do something new.

To summarise: in the post-lockdown landscape for audio, radio consumption will continue to flex around the needs of the listener. As they have adapted their listening patterns in line with new daily routines, so we expect them to reset accordingly as lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Extra time at home has meant more opportunity for users to explore streaming services and podcasts and we expect the lasting impact will be older audiences incorporating these in to their daily routines. This will increase the range of audiences available to advertisers in audio streaming environments and drive a corresponding dip in radio listening hours.

It's important to note, however, that we don't predict an immediate corresponding decline in overall radio reach versus pre-COVID times, as this tends to hold up even when hours dip. As with younger audiences who have already migrated a large portion of their audio time to streaming, overall radio reach of older groups will remain relatively robust for the medium term.

As for the way users listen to their preferred service, smart speakers will feature more heavily and, additionally, will be seen as more than just a glorified radio or alarm clock. More time getting to know these devices means users will be empowered to maximise their potential, something that advertisers should also aim to do.

Publishers



As with social, the incredible breadth of publisher content available is serving to satisfy all prevailing needs of our locked down populations. From keeping abreast of swiftly-developing headlines to feeding new-found interests in baking sourdough, growing lettuce and doing the downward dog, publishers are seeing huge appetite for their varied offerings.

News publishers are the most obvious beneficiaries of the current situation, with Comscore UK registering a 28% increase between January and March in average daily minutes spent with News & Information websites. Here, the biggest rises in monthly unique users were achieved by the Guardian, Telegraph and Metro, with 11.5m, 8.6m and 8.1m respectively, representing gains of 48%, 44% and 39%.

Titles such as **the Times and Telegraph, whose content sits behind paywalls, have reported record-breaking uptake in subscriptions**, directly prompted by stories such as *The Sunday Times' 38 days when Britain sleepwalked into disaster*. Interestingly, these new subscribers represent a broadening of audiences for the titles, with the Times, for example, reporting a notable uptick in younger female members.

The lifestyle sections of national news titles have proven almost as popular as the news pages, and specialist publishers are benefiting from equally strong levels of engagement. Hearst UK, for example, saw monthly unique users grow by a third year on year, achieving a total of 29m digital readers for April.

Hearst subscriptions are up 289% over the same period, with newsletter sign-ups at +9%. Across all publishers, digital users are flocking to content that is both clearly useful and also more unexpected during this time. For instance, traffic to Popsugar's fitness content was up 531% in the week to the end of April and Country Living's gardening channel saw a 317% year on year rise in the same month. More unforeseen is the across-the-board rise in consumption of beauty content with, for example, Cosmo, seeing an increase of 47% from March to April. There are a number of drivers here: people using their spare time to indulge in self care and also to experiment and plan ahead to their "big reveal" back in to society. But mainly, we suspect, everyone has realised how bad they look on video calls.

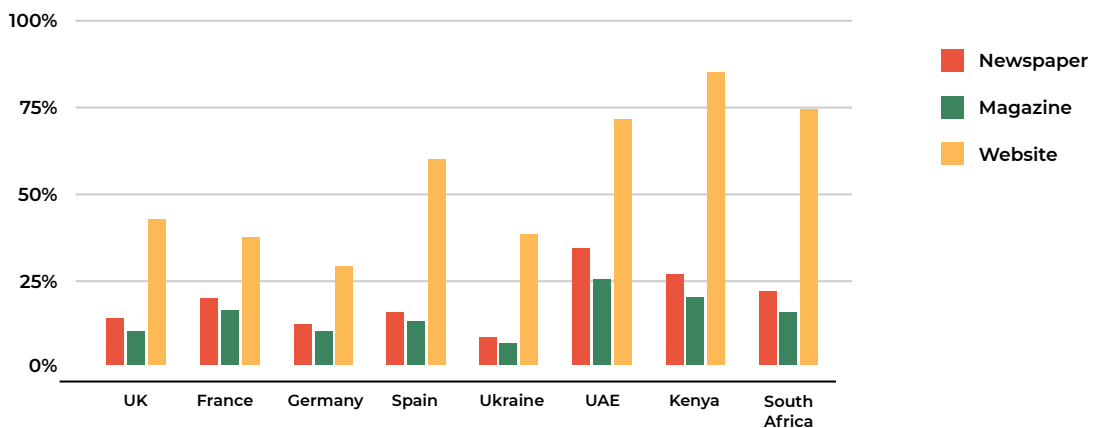


The UK publisher trends are replicated across EMEA, with similar patterns to those seen for social, messaging and audio in that some countries are more conservative in their dedication to extra media time while others display a universal appetite for more.

One ubiquitous trend is that digital consumption by far outstrips physical formats in absorbing the

extra time spent with publisher content. Some of this is driven by practicality - fewer people picking up titles on the way to work and fewer trips to the shops. But, overall, **the behaviour represents nothing more than an acceleration of a pre-existing trend towards preferring convenience and control in the way we consume news and lifestyle content.**

% Of respondents using publisher content more this month than last
(Kantar COVID-19 Barometer W3)



So, does this mean the COVID-19 crisis has created a new generation of lifelong news hounds and lifestyle devotees? Well, no. Various sources already point to a waning of interest in slavishly following every detail of the evolving news.

A survey of Global UK listeners just four weeks in to lockdown saw the

proportion of those still hungry for news falling from 40% to 33% week on week, while those saying they were bored with it rose from 23% to 29%. Analysis by the Financial Times (below) paints similar picture across European markets, concluding that “one month in the novelty could be wearing off”.



In summary, with the limited exception of readers who have committed to subscriptions - a very small proportion of overall readership - we expect the vast majority of publisher content consumption to eventually return to pre-lockdown levels.

The news will continue to be of less interest and all those temporarily-keen yogis, gardeners and bakers will largely abandon their lockdown displacement/substitution interests once they can leave the house to socialise again.

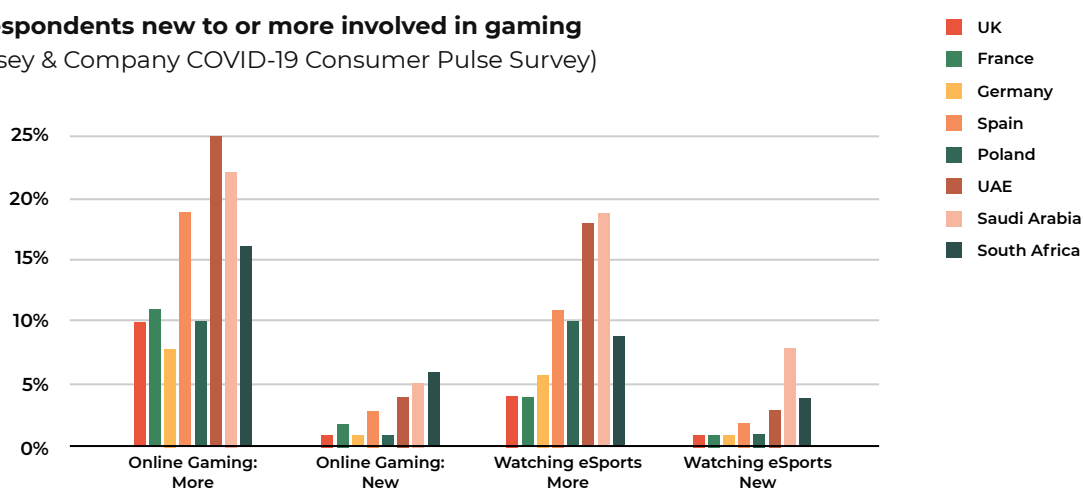
One thing we must be clear on is that the shift from print to digital will sustain beyond lockdown (as per the pre-existing trend) as will the presence of COVID-19 keywords within both news and lifestyle content. With this in mind we'll need to apply nuanced brand safety controls in order to ensure we do not block ourselves from access to the high volume, valuable audiences present in quality publisher environments.

Gaming & eSports

The escapism inherent in gaming and its unique ability to swallow time is proving extremely attractive to bored, anxious populations across EMEA. Up to 25% of us are spending more time with this hobby and many are trying it for the first time, with South Africans proving particularly curious according to McKinsey & Company.

Nintendo's *Animal Crossing* is the breakout star of lockdown gaming, with users attracted to the family-friendly format which has been described as "relaxing, rewarding and satisfyingly slow". On release on 20 March, the latest version of the game - *New Horizons* - immediately leapfrogged high-profile titles such as *Call of Duty* and *Fifa* to reach the top of the UK gaming chart.

% Of respondents new to or more involved in gaming
(McKinsey & Company COVID-19 Consumer Pulse Survey)



Lockdown has also accelerated interest in eSports, driven in part by the involvement sportspeople and fans who are currently unable to do their day jobs or follow live games. Users in the Middle East seem to have embraced eSports most enthusiastically, according to the McKinsey data, with 19% of UAE respondents claiming to be watching more and 8% trying for the first time under lockdown.

The trends are reflected in record viewing for Twitch, who suddenly have major new competition in the eSports viewing landscape. The "Googlebox of gaming" has been joined by mainstream broadcaster platforms such as Sky Sports and BBC iPlayer who started showing eSports competitions in the absence of live, in-person events.

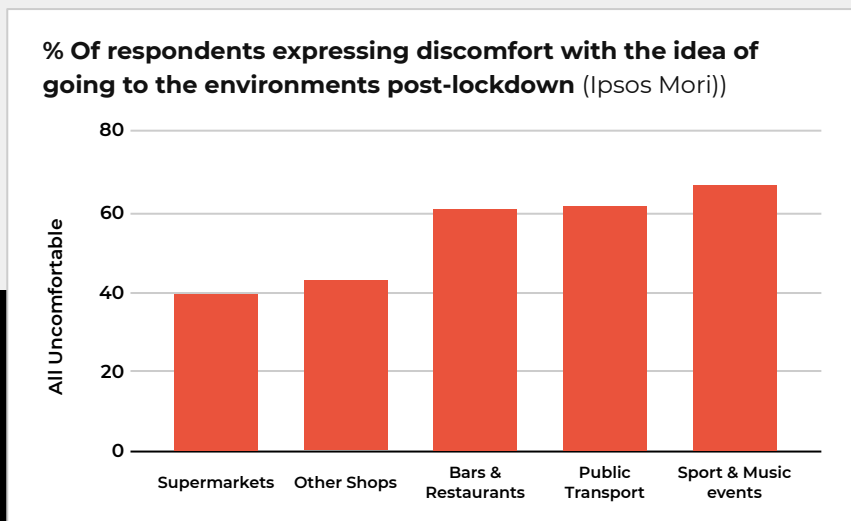
McLaren F1 driver Lando Norris and England footballer Raheem Sterling are just two of the sports personalities who have swapped their usual arena for the virtual equivalent, bringing fans with them.

Long-term, our 'usual' rules apply; as lockdowns are eased most people will no longer have excess time on their hands and interest in gaming will wane. However, the increased profile currently being enjoyed by eSports will have a lasting effect. While lockdown gains in net new users are modest, the interest shown by famous athletes, mainstream broadcasters and 'regular' sports fans is changing attitudes, setting up eSports for continued growth beyond niche and hardcore gaming audiences.

Cinema & OOH

The industry is looking keenly at Cinema and Out of Home in an attempt to judge if and when pre-lockdown volumes will return. Of course, these largely depend on the easing of restrictions on who can travel to work, the reopening of shopping and entertainment venues and the restoration of public transport to full capacity.

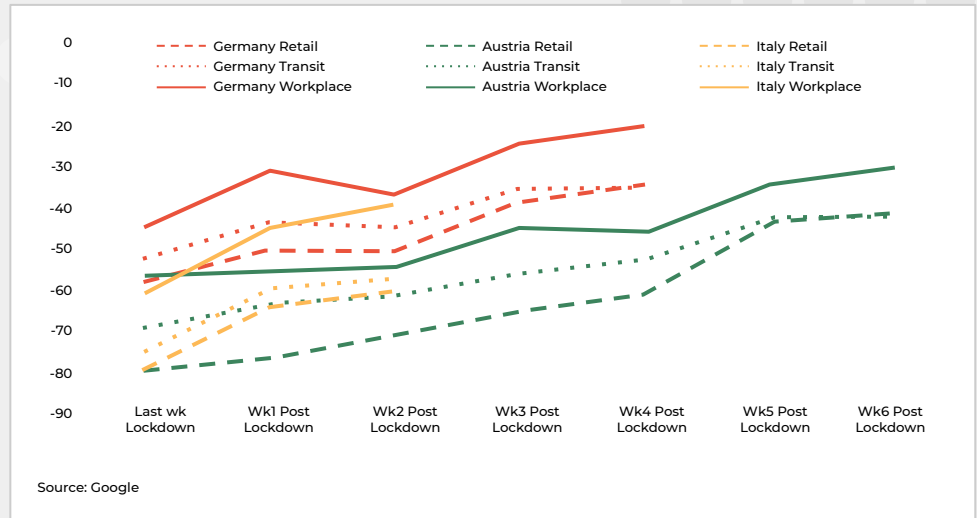
However, **the lifting of government restrictions is only half the battle; public attitudes will prove hugely influential** here and we see real tension between people's desire to enjoy unrestricted activities outside the home and their feelings toward spending time in public spaces. Early in May, Ipsos Mori reported serious discomfort amongst Britons at the thought of being in a range of out of home environments after lockdown:



So while out of home drinking/dining, shopping and entertainment rank high on Britons' list of what they are "most looking forward" to when some level of normality resumes (at 55%, 50% and 38% respectively for Mail Metro readers), acting on these desires very much depends on them considering it safe to do so.

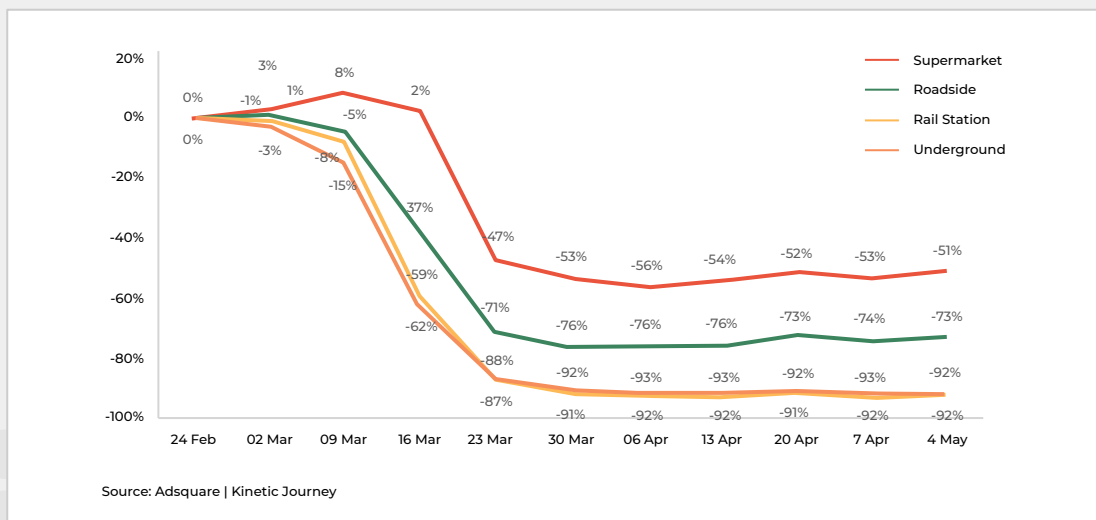
A TI Media poll conducted early in May reveals just how cautious we have become, with 57% of UK respondents saying they will wait a month or more after restrictions are lifted even to plan a family gathering. 33% say they will wait a few months or more to book tickets for the theatre, cinema or sporting events.

This helps to explain why **out of home footfall climbs quite slowly back to baseline levels** after countries begin to lift restrictions. Figures supplied by Kinetic using Google data show lags of over six weeks for key environments returning to pre-COVID audience volumes.



The time lag for retail environments may, in part, be a reflection of populations now happy to stick with eCommerce. However, in grocery only 10% of UK lockdown shopping was done online, according to figures from IRI - not too much more than usual, thanks to supermarkets' inability to cope with demand.

This resulted in supermarkets, along with roadside, being the most resilient out of home environments during this time.



As many people continue to work from home and fear causes others to avoid public transport, we can expect grocery and roadside to dominate opportunities for out of home reach for some time. The facts are, people need to eat and they feel safe in their cars - 81% of the Mail Metro panel are comfortable with this mode of transport, the highest by far.

This insight around in-car comfort has been enthusiastically embraced by the cinema industry, which has rapidly increased the availability of drive-in movies. In the past few weeks, sites have been popping up across Europe, complete with enhanced audio technology. **Open-air cinema - with appropriate social distancing in place - will also return in force this summer.**

These initiatives are needed to mitigate the fact that 76% of Times & Sunday Times readers, for example, feel uncomfortable with the idea of going to the cinema. In England, the Odeon, Vue, Everyman and Showcase chains are planning to reopen on 4 July along with the lifting of government restrictions, with capacities of around 50% to maintain social distancing requirements (at the time of writing the other UK nations are yet to announce their roadmap).

As to what admission volumes may look like, cinemas in Norway sold 96% of available tickets in reopening week, on similar capacity restrictions. Clearly then, **demand does remain in EMEA markets and a range of audiences should be tempted by the strong slate of summer movies**, from new Christopher Nolan offering Tenet, through Wonder Woman 1984 and the live-action adaptation of Disney's Mulan.

As cinemas typically sell 30-50% of available seats weekly, a widespread replication of the demand shown in Norway could suggest that admissions won't be too far down, even with capacity reduced by half. However, this relies on demand being evenly distributed across the week, which is a stretch, even in light of many people adopting new, more flexible patterns of working in these post-COVID times. Realistically then, **Pearl & Dean are currently forecasting a 40% weight of usual admissions for July, rising to 50% for August and increasing steadily as more cinemas open (assuming no return to lockdown and the spread of the virus being under control).**



Implications for media strategy and planning

Across all markets, the COVID-19 crisis prompted a surge in consumption of media that can be consumed at home, resulting in net overall gains in the average daily time spent with media.

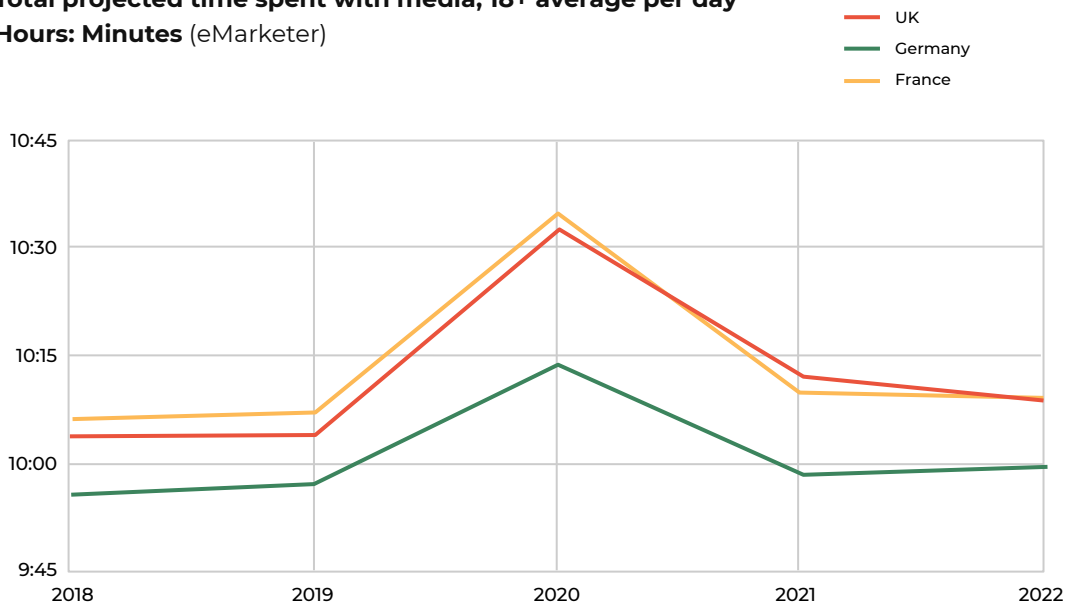
However, as lockdown restrictions are lifted and people gradually resume previous patterns of behaviour we predict a resetting of this total time to near pre-COVID levels.

Very simply, the vast majority of people will have neither the time nor the motivation to maintain such high levels of media consumption

This view is reflected in Mindshare's global New Normal tracker, with Wave 4 data (gathered w/c 11 May) reflecting declines in media consumption across countries - including France, Spain, Italy, Germany and UK - where lockdowns were relaxing.

It is also supported by eMarketer who forecast a COVID-driven spike in average daily media time for 2020, followed by declines for 2021 and 2022.

Total projected time spent with media, 18+ average per day
Hours: Minutes (eMarketer)



While this crisis won't result in users spending more time with media in the long term, they will want to pack more in to their media day. Having used lockdown to experiment with new channels, different ways of consuming them and a myriad of new features, at least some of these will be deemed entertaining or useful enough to be incorporated in to new routines.

As the adoption of a new media behaviour doesn't automatically mean an existing one is replaced (we are still listening to the radio well over half a century since televisions became commonplace in homes) the net result will be accelerated fragmentation of consumption.

Implication #1

With similar levels of overall media consumption fragmented across more channels, devices and environments, we'll need to work harder to maintain levels of overall reach. For this **we'll need more lines on our plans, representing a wider range of touchpoints.**

For example, audio plans will need to feature streaming and podcasts alongside traditional radio. AV plans should include a higher proportion of broadcaster and other on-demand video spend. And so on.

In the short to medium term, this need will be exacerbated by the fact that volumes in cinema and other out of home environments such as public transport remain depressed.

Implication #2

2020 plans will need to remain biased towards in-home channels in order to maximise reach. However, this should not mean a total abandonment of other channels while audience volumes slowly build back up, especially if costs per thousand remain at pre-COVID levels.

It is in all our interests to ensure a robust, diverse and future-facing advertising economy emerges from this crisis and for this reason we should support our partners by continuing to leverage the available reach in all relevant channels.

On that note, thanks to blanket blocking of news and COVID-19 keywords many advertisers are failing to capitalise on the huge volumes of traffic currently directed to online display environments. These environments include quality news and lifestyle content offering impactful formats visible to valuable audiences, and the content is not necessarily negative in tone.

Meanwhile, the organisations that people are relying on for information and entertainment are under threat due to revenue loss.

Implication #3

COVID-19 content is not going anywhere soon and is currently dominating many online environments. To unlock access to audiences and support the long-term viability of independent journalism, **blocking and exclusion strategies should be reviewed and replaced with more nuanced tactics**

Even as populations become free to travel, work and socialise as normal, they are not emerging in to the world universally carefree. There is hesitancy to resume pre-lockdown behaviours and anxiety will be with us at least until the health risk of COVID-19 has passed and likely for longer, as economic recoveries lag behind.

According to Dr. David A. Savage, associate professor of behavioural economics at the University of Newcastle, *“There will be longer-term ramifications. These events will serve as a signal to people... this is something else they need to worry about”*.

Increased anxiety in a population is not helpful to marketers as the state limits our ability to take in and process information. As clinical psychologist Dr Angharad Rudkin puts it *“Even if you manage to take in what is being said, the information is... not being processed properly or stored in your long-term memory”*

Implication #4

Heightened consumer anxiety about health and finances will continue post-lockdown, reducing people’s ability to attend to and process our messages. **We should therefore plan higher levels of frequency to ensure our stories cut through.**

Continued uncertainty and constrained finances will ensure that the considered purchase - a key habit formed in lockdown - will persist for the medium to long term.

With more time available for research and every spending decision now more critical for populations who are furloughed, working reduced hours or newly unemployed, purchase journeys have become more deliberate. According to Affectv, time to conversion for online purchases has doubled during lockdown versus the pre-COVID average.

Implication #5

Purchases will continue to be more deliberate due to reduced disposable incomes and sustained uncertainty over the course of the recession. **Plans will therefore need more time in market to effect persuasion over longer purchase cycles.**

Implication #6

Pre-purchase research will continue to take place primarily online, even if the final decision and transaction is made in a real-life store. **Our plans will need to account for this, with increased focus on search, eCommerce and review environments.**

Far from being the great leveller predicted by some, the effects of COVID-19 have been felt more keenly by certain sections of our populations and will continue to impact upon their attitudes, media behaviour and purchasing power post-lockdown. As such, we must appreciate that there will be no universal response to the lifting of restrictions.

For instance, young people in the UK feel more at ease than most at the thought of going to bars and restaurants, according to Ipsos, with 36% of 18-34s saying they would feel comfortable doing so, compared to only 22% of 55-75s. Similarly, YouGov reports that 64% of 18-24s are happy with the idea of going out clothes shopping, compared to just 46% of 50-64s

However, brands targeting the Gen Z audience should be careful of assuming they are all gung-ho about throwing themselves back in to post-lockdown life. Research from the University of Sheffield shows that young British men have been twice as likely as their female counterparts to break lockdown rules, with half of 19-24 year old male respondents admitting to this behaviour, versus a quarter of women. This startling disparity in attitudes suggests there will be a break between the genders in their post-lockdown behaviour.

Implication #7

We need to **think differently about how we segment and target audiences** in the post-lockdown world. Standard demographics have long proven inadequate for sophisticated planning models but now extra layers of attitudinal and behavioural considerations will need to be overlaid.

Finally, we must consider how the regular cadence of routine and seasonal 'moments' typically harnessed by marketers will be affected in the new landscape, and how new ones may come in to play.

For example, with the vast majority of UK school children not due to return to class until September, this year's Back to School moment will carry much greater significance than ever before. In contrast, the Monday morning commute loaded with a 'preparing for the week ahead' mindset and the Thursday evening drinks with colleagues, unofficially signalling the onset of the weekend may eventually return, but probably with a notable loss of power.

Implication #8

We'll be required to **reevaluate the context in which we deliver our messages**, consider whether the occasions we have come to rely on as marketers are still relevant and question our preconceptions of what people may be thinking and feeling at any particular moment.

Afterword

The world over has been impacted by COVID-19, albeit in very different ways. Some have prospered, many have struggled. All of us have had to adjust.

We don't have a clear view as to if and when things will begin to revert back to how they were. Many areas of life never will. As the past few months have demonstrated, while there are no pre-existing models made that fit this unique situation, what's important is to be agile and keep an open mind as the future unfolds.

Looking at human truths and behaviours, as Clare and Toby have done in this report, is essential for finding solutions and setting strategies based on what comes next.

Media and technology give brands the platform and the opportunity to make a difference to people's lives and, if recent events show us anything, it's that future communications - and actions - should be helpful, thoughtful, creative and respectful.



Tim Irwin
CEO, EMEA

The image features a dark grey background with four decorative clusters of light grey dots in the corners. Each cluster is arranged in a roughly triangular or rectangular shape, with the number of dots decreasing towards the top or right edges. The top-left cluster is in the upper left, the top-right in the upper right, the bottom-left in the lower left, and the bottom-right in the lower right.

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Thank
You.