

# Ketchum London COVID-19 media intelligence report



When we're all adjusting to a 'new normal' around the globe, it is easy to assume that 'business as usual' has been eroded beyond recovery. That the intense focus on one of the greatest global health challenges in a generation means there is no room for brands to maintain a connection with their consumers, or businesses with their stakeholders. Whilst there is no doubt some truth in that, at Ketchum we have been staying in close contact with our media to ascertain the opportunity for our clients to maintain a presence in the media, in a way that is sensitive to the current situation.

*That is why during this challenging time we are proactively sharing insights on consumer behaviour and media patterns with our clients and agency friends. We will update this frequently based on our continuous conversations with our contacts, ensuring that we're able to provide robust and real-time recommendations on communications best practice at a time when connection matters most.*

## So what are the 4 strategic takeaways for this week?

1. While media are focussed on Coronavirus, and little else right now, we should ensure that where we are pressing ahead with campaigns, our pitches have a sense of "what does this mean in our current climate" narrative.
2. We are also seeing an increasing number of requests from media, especially trade, for lighter stories (ideally with a strong visual attached) unrelated to the virus. These are coming in via social feeds and tied to themes that are prevalent right now, e.g. home, health, tech, remote working, wellness and education.
3. Media are looking at how content can live over time online and have the ability to update as stories continue to unfold. From live Q&As (which is something the WSJ is doing) to infographics which share data in new forms.
4. Many of our contacts are telling us that after we come through this, people will be eager to connect with each other in new ways. It will be important to reskin event plans with this in mind whilst we have the chance.

## Brand action examples which have generally been well received this week

Generally, brands which behave authentically, and true to their equity, with actions that are seen to be 'serving' in the current context seem to be well received; although there are always detractors especially on social. Our general advice is to be careful with heavily campaigning actions directly related to the Coronavirus context to avoid being seen as exploiting the situation.

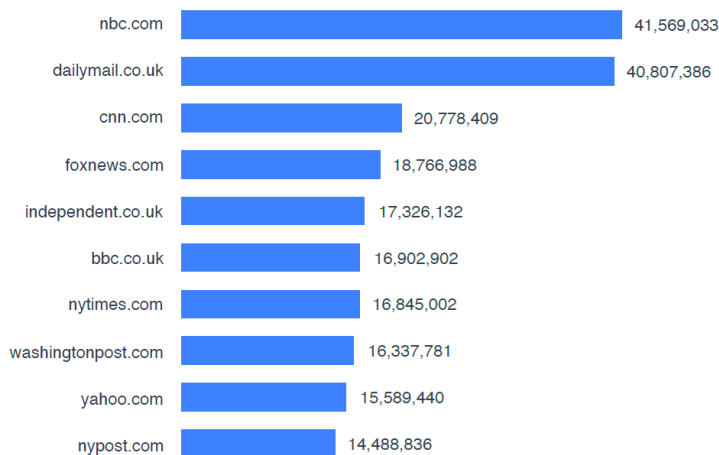
- **Fast food chains** (Pret, McDonalds, Costa, Greggs, Leon) are rallying behind frontline workers to deliver free and discounted food and drink to keep our services going ([here](#))
- **LVMH** switched to producing hand sanitiser at three of its perfume and cosmetics factories ([here](#))
- **BrewDog** has started work on making hand sanitiser at their Scotland distillery ([here](#))
- **Guinness** announced a fund to help bar staff and the elderly ([here](#)) as well as encouraging people to safely celebrate St Patrick's Day ([here](#))
- **L'Occitane** is sending hand creams to hospitals for NHS workers ([here](#))
- **IKEA** donates 50k unused masks to Swedish hospitals ([here](#))
- **Hallmark Channel** schedules Christmas movie marathon during Coronavirus, period ([here](#))

## Influencers

- Lots of uncertainty over whether they should be posting online at all during this difficult time
- Majority of influencers' fans are asking for them to continue posting, to share light-hearted content to take their minds off the current virus. Fans also acknowledge that influencers still need to make a living
- Other influencers like Lydia Millen and Clare Chanelle are receiving backlash for having an opinion on the virus with some trolls stating 'you're not a medic' – according to both influencers, they're only sharing government advice. They're not the only ones receiving backlash
- Attended new collection media launch for [M&S](#) over web/WhatsApp
- Social Media Today: [UK Government](#) is partnering with social media influencers to combat Coronavirus, misinformation. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) will hand £500k in funding to help influencers share the facts via the H2H network who dealt with the Ebola crisis. Aim is to reach younger audiences who are more susceptible to reading 'fake news' online

## Most engaged global websites for content about Coronavirus [source: NewsWhip]

Most engaged websites for content about coronavirus



## Increased at home behaviours in UK and US [source: Global Web Index]

% who say they are doing the following activities more often than before while at home

	All	U.S.	UK	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Reading more online news	38%	39%	31%	39%	47%	37%	16%
Watching more TV	36%	39%	25%	32%	42%	39%	23%
Cleaning my home more often	34%	36%	25%	35%	39%	35%	18%
Spending more quality time with my family	30%	33%	17%	26%	40%	29%	12%
Communicating with my friends / family more often	29%	32%	15%	27%	35%	30%	15%
Using social media more often	27%	29%	16%	32%	37%	23%	6%
Listening to more music	26%	28%	15%	35%	30%	23%	12%
Watching more online TV	24%	26%	14%	21%	34%	22%	10%
Buying more items online	20%	22%	13%	12%	26%	24%	3%
Cooking more	20%	22%	11%	18%	29%	16%	14%
Exercising more	17%	19%	7%	20%	22%	16%	5%
Reading more books	16%	17%	12%	20%	19%	14%	11%
Gaming more often	14%	15%	11%	21%	21%	8%	8%
Reading more print news	12%	13%	9%	8%	20%	11%	4%
Dedicating more time to learning	12%	13%	8%	20%	15%	9%	5%
Ordering more takeaways	11%	12%	5%	7%	20%	8%	1%
Working more often (longer than my expected hours)	8%	9%	5%	7%	12%	6%	4%
Other	6%	7%	3%	5%	6%	10%	3%
My behavior at home hasn't changed significantly	33%	30%	48%	28%	21%	36%	63%

## NATIONAL NEWS



Staffing of national newspapers has been severely disrupted with the Coronavirus crisis. We have been speaking to a number of senior editorial decision-makers for the main news sections of the UK national titles. And whilst we acknowledge that there will likely be different dynamics among some of the smaller section teams, individual specialist reporters, and indeed more niche media titles away from the mainstream grind of Fleet Street, a common theme prevails. It's a fluid situation and while media are focussed on Coronavirus and little else right now, that situation may well change regardless of whether the country is in lockdown or not. We will keep you abreast of any changes that may arise.

### FT

- Running a live blog on Coronavirus for all the most impactful pieces news – acid test of asking do you really need to know that for whether to include or not?
- Everyone is WFH bar a skeleton crew in the newsroom
- Data is good rather than comment – there's lots of commentary out there but not a huge amount of hard data on what's been impacted, by how much etc

### BBC News

- Almost all resources being used for Coronavirus coverage
- There is some appetite for lighter, feature-type pieces to balance all the negative Coronavirus coverage
- Large proportion of the workforce WFH
- Only those critical for broadcast coverage being asked to come in
- Interviewees being discouraged from attending Broadcasting House – down-the-line Skype interviews or similar the preferred option
- Lots of teams being reallocated and staff “playing out of position” e.g. entertainment reporters being drafted in to cover Coronavirus

### Mail Online

- Coronavirus accounting for about 70-80% of all staff output
- Picture-led stories are also getting coverage – where they can be used to bring levity
- Press agencies who provide a lot of Mail Online content are mostly WFH – and producing much less content
- About 60% of workforce WFH – and rising every day
- Reporters are able to self-publish stories to the website remotely but it's slower than usual
- Unprecedented situation in newsroom – on war footing
- Staff from sports desk being transferred to work for news (some with no news experience)

### Daily Mail (print)

- Nearly all staff now WFH
- The only news operation employees working in the office are the five members of the newsdesk
- Two news lists are being produced every day: Coronavirus and other news
- Other news list is very light – only stories getting in are either the very strongest (items that would ordinarily lead the news agenda) and a small number of happy stories to balance the doom and gloom of Coronavirus
- Advertising is being cut. This means fewer pages in the paper and therefore greater competition for space and only the cream of “other news” is getting in

### Daily Telegraph and online

- 95% of the workforce now WFH. News is the only section working in the office
- Newsdesk operating on three shifts – one in the office, one WFH, and one at a remote location in Chatham – with the aim of preventing spread and ensuring business continuity
- There is a dedicated Coronavirus team made up of science/health correspondents plus some general news reporters
- Only 2-3 print pages available per day for non-Coronavirus news – and these are eaten up by the most important national news stories of the day
- Advice is to only submit PR stories if they are really strong and uplifting to counter the gloom. Some picture-led pieces are also getting in for the same reason

### Sun Online

- Only a skeleton crew of staff working in the office (sub-editors, newsdesk) – about 10% of workforce

- Senior editors are rotating between coming in and WFH to avoid contamination
- Number of people working remotely is increasing every day
- All non-editorial staff are working remotely
- Coronavirus is the core focus of news output due to reader demand – the web traffic to these stories is huge
- A memo went out in the last 24 hours urging editorial teams to continue to seek and place stories that are funny, uplifting, light or sexy to bring balance to the negativity of Coronavirus
- They are also deliberately trying to put less emphasis on other negative news stories (crime etc) to prevent the website looking too gloomy and depressing readers
- There is an appetite for upbeat, light stories – any campaigns that tick these boxes could have a good chance of coverage – and they have the staff to cover them
- From a business perspective, Sun Online is actually seeing a boost from Coronavirus because there is a much greater appetite for news – and so traffic to the site is up
- Some disruption to Sun.com (the new US version of the Sun Online – established in January to rival the Mail Online’s US offering) because key leaders are unable to travel there at the moment

### The Sun (print)

- Most of editorial workforce are working remotely – predominantly just the subeditors and newsdesk
- Paper is roughly a 50:50 split between Coronavirus news and other news
- Sales are up as more people buying newspapers to stay informed
- Massive integration project between the paper and website has been postponed due to Coronavirus

## CONSUMER LIFESTYLE



We predict that there will be health story fatigue given Coronavirus is a major global health story. We also know that as people are on lockdown, they won’t be buying newspapers and magazines as much and therefore competition will be rife across online and broadcast, making it even more challenging to generate coverage in these sections.

That said, we do know that media are looking for consumer stories as they simply can’t just run Covid19 stories. So there is appetite for content and news stories from brands (albeit it with the right, positive and mindful message). In particular we have seen journalist requests for:

- Celebrity interviews with a positive feel
- Light and bright, consumer research stories, to cut through the doom and gloom of the current news agenda e.g.
  - fun top twenty list of home cooking recipes
  - a look into the nation’s work from home habits
  - a guide to the best movies or TV shows to watch over the next few weeks

The following categories have strong opportunities here; home and garden, DIY, cookware, food and ingredients, baking, recipes boxes, board games, apps and downloads, tech, gaming, home exercise, movies, music, stationery, books, bathroom and cosmetics.

Also, worth knowing that as the population begins to bounce back in China, so too is retail. Apple has reopened 42 stores in China and luxury malls in China are beginning to see a small return of traffic, as confidence gingerly returns. In a [Fortune](#) article, Amrita Banta, managing director of Agility Research, cites the start of a “revenge spending” cycle, where recently isolated consumers starved of stores open up their wallets again.

## CONSUMER BEAUTY



Almost all beauty and lifestyle titles are publishing content related to Coronavirus, working from home or social distancing. Topics include:

- the best face masks to be using while you self-isolate
- home workouts and fitness apps
- comfortable clothing, loungewear and at home styling tips
- how to cope during this period, reduce anxiety and improve general mental health
- winter related content such as how to soothe dry hands and scalps
- Titles are publishing content around beauty brands that are doing their part to help their customers through Coronavirus,
- Retailers have closed their stores e.g. Glossier and Selfridges

- Pop culture and celebrities with positive stories are being used as an attempt to distract people from the overwhelming negative stories
- Mother's Day content continues to appear

Opportunity:

- Look to take note of the potential [Lipstick Effect](#)
- Bolster online shopping communications
- Consider generating content and owning WFH beauty topic online

## TECHNOLOGY



Tech Trade publications online are covering Coronavirus, but not at the same rate as nationals. If Coronavirus, has directly impacted a technology company, they are likely to cover it, e.g. Microsoft Team's service going down due to high demand of employees working from home (*IT Pro*). Many titles have commented on the issue of fake news spreading across Facebook and the effects that this is having. Overall, most titles will cover if there is a strong tech link, with a few of the core trades e.g. *The Register* continuing to focus purely on tech news.

- Most journalists are now working from home for the next two weeks.
- CORONAVIRUS coverage is present in key tech publications, without a direct link to their area of expertise, proving readers' interest in finding more about the current situation. For example, *Wired* has published an in-depth article looking into the developments in Italy and the country's response to the situation
- *T3* has published various articles about Coronavirus,, but these are more tech-focused. For example, "Three ways to avoid public transport" with links to running shoes, electric scooters and bikes. Other stories in *T3* include tips for stretching while working from home, tips for gym goers, home workout suggestions
- *Pocket-Lint* hasn't changed its tech-focused content as much as other tech titles, with only a few articles relating to the pandemic. For example, a guidance for Skype video calls - see here
- *Tech Radar* has published an article looking into the most important elements of making home office work for you - see here
- *Gizmodo UK* has also covered a variety of Coronavirus, articles, including a shopping list of all the essentials needed for working from home

## TRAVEL



According to research commissioned by Global Web Index, about 50% of U.S. consumers and 38% of UK consumers report that they voluntarily cancelled, voluntarily delayed, or were forced to cancel vacation plans due to the coronavirus and ensuing crisis. 35% of consumers in both markets reported not planning for any travel to begin with, and only 15% in the U.S. and 27% in the UK said that their travel plans were not actually disrupted.

Expectedly, those who travel abroad frequently faced the greatest level of disruption of their plans. Among millennials, the number of people who report they were forced to change their travel plans because of government or airline restrictions is nearly as high as the number who voluntarily cancelled. This is not the case for Gen Zs or Gen Xs, who are more likely to take it upon themselves to cancel travel, and may be reflective of the "cheap holiday" trend that many millennials on social media were jumping on in the early days of the outbreak.

The majority of consumers are being frugal with their travel funds, with over 4 in 10 of both U.S. and UK internet users reporting that they are opting to save the money they would have spent on traveling. Frugality is especially important for millennials and Gen Xs, while Gen Zs are seeking to shift that money into other purchases. A promising result for the travel and tourism industries is that, after saving some cash, the second most popular way to shift these funds is into re-booking travel at a later date. A recovery of the industry is not out of the question, as demand for travel will still be there.