

# Ketchum London COVID-19 media intelligence report – Edition 11

## *Open for business*

*Welcome to the eleventh edition of Ketchum London's COVID-19 media intelligence report. With many countries around the world bravely stepping into the "new normal" after months of lockdown, frustrated audiences in still impacted markets are eager to follow suit. This week we take a closer look at how this "Corona Fatigue" is moving us away from the informative crisis communications that has so far dominated lockdown, toward playful campaigns designed to take anxious minds off the realities of the current situation.*

*Read on to see how some brands are responding.*



This week 'Corona Fatigue' has hit home in earnest. Across the world, we've seen a number of nations where infection rates have fallen – from China to Switzerland – increasingly easing restrictions on movement. This has prompted citizens in other countries, where infection rates remain high, to clamour for more of the same. Take the US, where [Apple's new mobility](#) tool continues to report that fed-up Americans are beginning to venture out of their homes despite stay at home orders, with reports of packed bars in Wisconsin, non-socially distanced restaurants heaving in Texas, and casinos across Mississippi and Louisiana opening their doors.

Cognitive behavioural scientists have all jumped on the band wagon to explain our urge to perhaps prematurely return to normal. "Living with that fear and uncertainty takes a toll. Being on guard or hyper-vigilant or extra conscientious does take a toll on our energy" said pre-eminent mental health professor Janet Miller, Mount Royal University in Calgary.

This may explain why a recent (12 – 15 May) [Opinium survey](#) found that 64% of those questioned across the UK believe important day-to-day activities outside COVID-19 are being side-lined. They're calling for brands to focus their campaign activity on *anything* beyond lockdown and social distancing – with an overwhelming 73% looking for non-COVID content, in comparison to just 27% of consumers who want the pandemic to remain front and centre.

It appears that appetite for crisis communications has significantly waned. Emails and talking head videos from CEO's detailing business continuity plans, were once celebrated for their transparency and authenticity (see [Marriott](#)

**International** CEO [Arne Sorenson video](#) to employees shareholders and customers; and [Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky's emotive internal note](#) following large scale redundancies). But the public appears to be telling us that, these are no longer reassuring, and potentially unnecessary. This is particularly pertinent for those businesses in the fashion and beauty, automotive, fitness and entertainment industries – where consumers want more “playful”, “entertaining” and “warm” communications, whether they continue to focus on COVID-19 or not.

This is a tricky line to tread – if communications are too conservative, you risk sacrificing cut-through with your audiences. If it's too flippant, you risk undermining the trust and loyalty you have accumulated throughout the crisis. The key has to be a carefully curating communications approach that is attuned to the public's anxiety over what the 'new normal' will look like, and their eagerness to get there quickly.

## So, what are the four strategic client takeaways for this week?

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- **GAUGE APPETITE FOR A MOVE INTO 'PLAYFUL' COMMS:** The playing field is not level for this foray back into playful communications campaigns. The fact that masks and hand sanitisers continue to be in high demand – and are still sold out in select online and physical platforms alike – attests to the fact that the general public are still concerned about venturing out into the real world. They want 'critical' businesses – in industries such as supermarkets, healthcare and pharma – to continue on the line they're already walking; informative, serious, and responsible. So before launching into a 'back to normal' communications approach, brands should carefully consider if this will sit well with their audiences.
- **LEARN FROM THOSE GETTING IT RIGHT:** Some brands already have an established foothold as being 'playful' and are most likely to be first out of the gate in this tonal step change. It'll be vital to keep an eye on how these communications approaches are landing when devising 'new normal' campaigns. While imitation is definitely the highest form of flattery (as we've seen from [multiple food brands following suit](#) in giving discounted and free wears to frontline workers), uniqueness and authenticity are going to be words of the day.
- **HOPE FOR THE BEST, PLAN FOR THE WORST:** When launching any campaign, it's extremely important to predict potential weaknesses and holistically prepare for the worst. But even more so in the current environment, where we're essentially reverting back to a 'test and learn' approach (see last week's COVID-19 media intelligence report). That includes devising reactive messaging, deciding on what level of backlash would require a response, which audiences to speak to and on what channels, and – critically – who's going to lead each activity.
- **RALLY SUPPORTING VOICES:** When it comes to building customer loyalty, there's nothing worse than marking your own homework. Getting third party advocates on board to attest to the hard work that you've undertaken during the pandemic and put their weight behind more 'playful' campaigns could be the deciding factor in whether this is a homerun or swing and a miss. Bringing your employees on the journey, asking for their creative input and facilitating their public endorsement is an extremely logical first step.



## 'Playful' communications approaches getting noticed

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### RETAIL

- [Nationwide is opening up spaces on billboards](#) to let art and design graduates show off the work they spent a long time creating, but didn't get to showcase due to cancelled exhibitions.

## TRAVEL

- [Airbnb and Bumble have teamed up](#) to provide more fun with dating from afar. **Bumble** is sponsoring a contest where one hundred of the app's users will be selected to go on unique, virtual first-dates through Online Experiences.

## HOSPITALITY

- Fast food chain **Burger King** are reopening their stores with [giant social distancing crowns](#). So far launched in Germany, pictures of the headgear have featured in nationals across Europe (including The Sun). The fast-food chain built on this playfulness through aligned social media content: 'distancing but make it fashion'. In Italy, the brand has also introduced a [campaign around the burger that keeps others away from you – with triple onions](#).



- **Beavertown** has launched a new campaign, *Staycation IPA*, a beer which tastes like a holiday at home. [A mobile site is launched to transport you to paradise while you're drinking the beer.](#)
- [M&M's, Smirnoff, KFC, and Doritos – to name but a few – have all released humorous ads in recent weeks to win back consumers.](#) Beginning in May, a number of major food brands returned to light-hearted, low stakes advertising, with [ad dollars following the emotional curve](#) of the pandemic, and giving consumers what they wanted, but didn't have: a sense of normalcy.

## UTILITIES

- **British Gas** takes pick of the week from [Campaign with new fun "Here to solve" ad](#), which allows us homebound viewers to see, from their point of view, how they are doing important work during the pandemic.

## Brands taking action

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## ENTERTAINMENT

- In previous reports we have discussed the rise of **TikTok** during lockdown. [The Drum poses the question of continued popularity post pandemic.](#) Its answer? Popularity will continue for the social media app, and now is a great time for brands to collaborate with **TikTok**, whilst the market is relatively fresh.
- [Regina Blitz has launched a playful campaign](#) that focuses on the happiness of having family around you in the home.
- [Cinema chains are battling to reopen first](#), and win the messaging contest around what distancing measures they'll use.

## FOOD

- [The FT outlines how different brands realising long-held ambitions to sell directly to consumers in the pandemic:](#)
  - **PepsiCo** started selling boxes of snacks and drinks
  - [Snacks.com](#), allows online shoppers to pick from more than 100 Frito-Lay products, such as **Doritos** crisps and **Tostitos** tortilla chips
  - **Kellogg**, which once had a [cereal café](#) in New York's Times Square, and **Nestlé**, which tried delivering [premium KitKat](#) chocolate bars to households in the UK.
- [As reported by Kantar in Sky News](#), online food retailer **Ocado** saw sales rise by 32.5%, with its market share increasing to a new high of 1.6%, up from 1.3% last year.

## RETAIL

- BBC News reports that [all non-essential shops will reopen from 15<sup>th</sup> June, according to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson](#). "New guidance has been published detailing the measures they [retailers] should take to meet the necessary social distancing and hygiene standards. Shops now have the time to implement this guidance before they reopen. This will ensure there can be no doubt about what steps they should take" commented Mr Johnson. While Business Secretary Alok Sharma noted "Enabling these businesses to open will be a critical step on the road to rebuilding our economy, and will support millions of jobs across the UK."
- [Sports Direct has branded government's reopening plans a 'shambles'](#). The Chief Financial Officer of **Sports Direct** says the reopening of non-essential shops on 15<sup>th</sup> June is a "delay" that will "finish off" some retailers.
- [Retail footfall soars over bank holiday weekend, reported CITY AM](#). High street footfall surged 49% on Bank Holiday Monday compared to Easter Monday, while coastal towns saw visitor numbers jump 62%. Commenting on the spike, Diane Wehrle, insights director at **Springboard** said: "We anticipate that once stores open on 15<sup>th</sup> June – despite the rise in online shopping that has been recorded – the evident pent up demand to go out amongst consumers will absolutely translate into footfall. However, an anticipated spending spike could possibly be short lived, as consumers will be cautious and looking at reigning in their spend due to ongoing financial uncertainty in many UK households."
- Many retailers given the go-ahead to reopen next month will face a "fight for survival" in the coming months, as they try to restore their fortunes with tough new physical distancing and health and safety requirements, [warns](#) Helen Dickinson, CEO of the **British Retail Consortium**.
- **B&M** has [recorded an "exceptionally strong" performance](#) in its fourth quarter as customers flocked to the grocery, DIY and gardening categories during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- **Boots** has said [it is preparing to reopen its No7 counter and branded beauty lines to the public](#) following a lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **BP** has [decided to adopt the Real Living Wage \(RLW\)](#) and from 1<sup>st</sup> August will pay all its directly-employed UK retail staff the RLW, as set by the Living Wage Foundation. The move will affect around 5,000 staff working in circa 300 BP-operated retail sites and stores across the UK.
- **Debenhams** is [cutting more than 300 jobs at its headquarters](#) as it slims down its back office team in line with a swathe of store closures. The redundancies in merchandising, buying, design and other administrative functions come after the British department store went into administration last month – the second time in a year. The retailer has said it will permanently close at least 11 of its 142 outlets.
- **Halfords** is [set to reopen 53 stores across the country](#) with extensive social distancing measures in place under a new model called "Retail Lite". The reopenings follow successful trials at stores in Peterborough and Bristol Cribbs Causeway and will allow shoppers to physically enter branches for the first time since March.
- **Harrods** is [opening a second outlet](#) in a nearby shopping mall to stop congestion when trading resumes. The new Shepherd's Bush 'concept' store will effectively host Harrods' summer sale across two floors of the **Westfield** shopping centre from July.

- **John Lewis** is to begin its phased return to high street shopping by [reopening two stores in Poole and Kingston](#) upon Thames on 15<sup>th</sup> June, followed by 11 more three days later. The retailer said it would open more depending on the response from shoppers to the initial wave.
- **Ted Baker** is [reportedly preparing for a gradual reopening](#) of its stores from mid-June as it recalls furloughed staff based on the needs of its operations.

## FITNESS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- The term 'new-normal' is commonly used when discussing post-pandemic lifestyle. [The Drum reports that Durex](#) have created a campaign that encourages not going back to normal. Meaning certain 'norms' such as shaming women who carry condoms.
- As home fitness continues to grow during lockdown, consumers are looking for new playful exercise ideas, [The Independent highlights hula hoops as a perfect lockdown workout](#). The article highlights how hula hooping is this summer's retro fitness trend.
- Across the UK and Europe, the public have been looking to China for post-pandemic trends within the 'new-normal'. Currently in China [high-net-worth consumers have pivoted away from buying luxury fashions and toward enhancing physical and mental health](#). The younger generation have turned to wellness to curb anxieties about an uncertain future. Wellness in the article includes skin, mind and body.

## GAMING

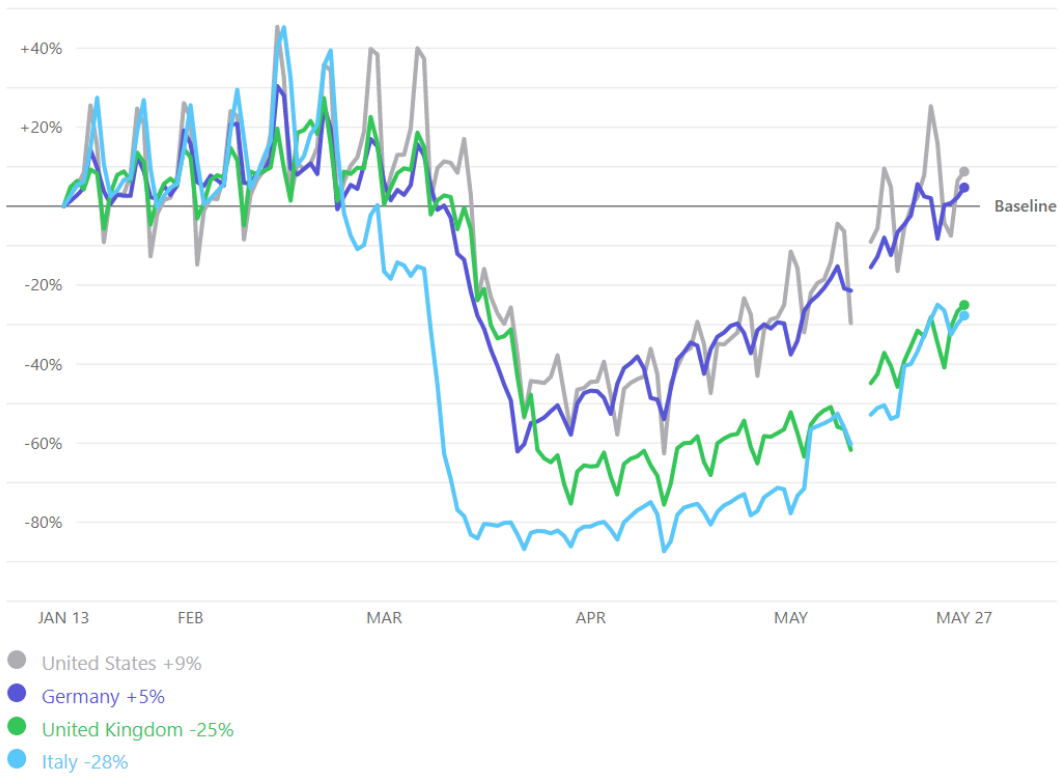
- [SEGA are rumoured to have a huge, "revolutionary" announcement in the works that will be dropping next week](#)
- [Casinos are looking to reopen in Nevada from June 4<sup>th</sup>](#) reports KNPR.

## TECHNOLOGY

- [TikTok looks on the bright side of lockdown life with a spot featuring content creators and celebs alike](#). With appearances from Little Mix, Tom Daley, Tinie Tempah and Gordon Ramsey, the ad brings to light the unifying power of TikTok in keeping the nation occupied during the coronavirus pandemic.
- [Zoopla has challenged the nation to build fun homes within their own homes while they are stuck indoors during lockdown](#). The brand launched the competition with influencers Rosie Ramsey, Fritha Quinn and Kerry Villers, who posted photos on Facebook and Instagram of their own forts, accompanied by a Zoopla-style property description. The entries will be judged weekly by a Zoopla estate agent and lead designer, with weekly winners receiving a £100 home-improvement voucher and an overall winner being given a luxury UK mini break in 2021.
- [Virgin Media](#) enlists the Capital Children's Choir and The Avenues Youth Project for a mood-boosting spot. To showcase the resilience of young'uns during lockdown, the ad shows children aged 7-14 as they cover Starship's '80's ballad Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now, with special effects, pets and the odd accidentally-muted Zoom call thrown in for good measure.

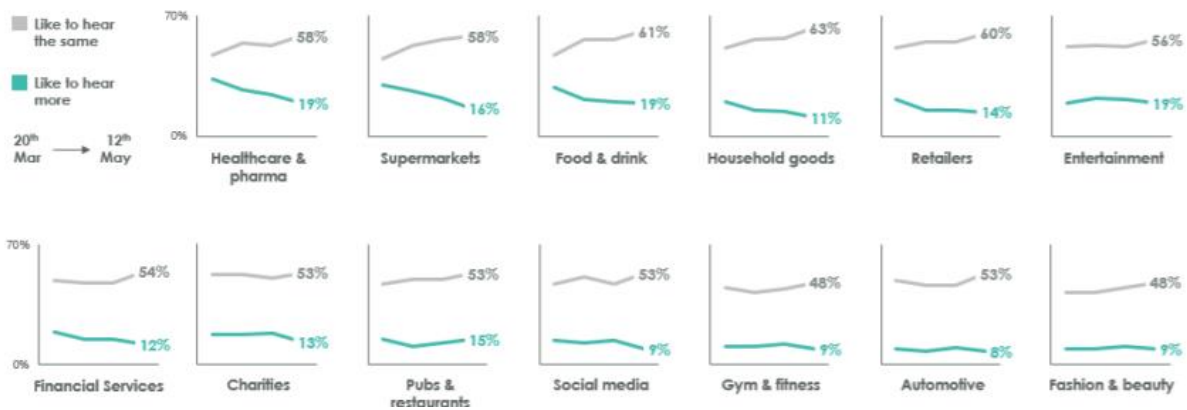
# Useful charts [source: FT and Opinium]

## Apple routing trends 2020



## People want to hear the same, or more, from sectors

Would you like to hear more or less from these types of company?  
From the weekend of lockdown to 8 weeks in



## Appetite for crisis communications is over

What tone of voice do consumers want to hear?  
From the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of lockdown to 8 weeks in



## Media insights on key verticals

### BROADCAST AND PRINT

- [The Guardian](#) reports that the owner of the Daily Mail, the I and the Metro, **DMGT**, have reported print advertising revenues plunging by 70% in April and May, as the lockdown hammered the newspaper industry. Already strapped for cash, the downturn means the outlets are operating at a loss and risks the longevity of these outlets. Looking ahead, the publisher said: “The advertising market is expected to remain difficult and the duration of the impact of lockdown measures on circulation volumes is uncertain. The Board remains confident, however, that high levels of reader engagement will help to support revenue recovery in time.”
- The role of Technology in easing the transition to the ‘new normal’ continues to dominate leading media outlet’s agendas: FT: [Three game-changing ideas for our post-pandemic world](#); The Telegraph: [Pandemic lets Big Tech take on the duties of nation states](#); BBC News: [Video streaming: Lockdown sees fifth of UK homes sign deals](#); The Guardian: [Donald Trump's move against Twitter factchecking could backfire](#); FT: [Amazon’s Autonomous Drive](#).

### TRAVEL

- Travel incentives:** We have seen articles surface this week that illustrate the methods and plans that various companies/countries are looking to implement to entice people to travel post COVID. Examples of this are the Japanese government, who have announced that to boost domestic tourism they would like to subsidise some of the flight costs for visitors, once the outbreak is under control, as well as the Cypriot government who have said it will cover all costs for anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 whilst on holiday there. This bolsters the common notion that consumer confidence towards travel is low and implies that brands/tourism boards will be required to incentivise them to help the industry rebound quicker. ([The Sun: The countries that will PAY you to go on holiday after coronavirus](#); [Evening Standard: Japan wants to pay for half of your flights if you visit this year](#); [ITV: Cyprus vows to cover costs for tourists infected with coronavirus while on the island](#)).
- Remote retreats:** With the resumption of travel being more frequently discussed, we have seen a number of articles appearing that are recommending off-grid destinations – particularly in the UK. This is largely due to the assumption that travellers are set to favour remote, wilderness areas over busy city streets post COVID. Such features highlight the media’s ongoing appetite for round-up travel features and prediction led articles. ([Dorset Echo \(PA Media syndication\): The world’s remote retreats](#); [Evening Standard: 15 secluded holiday cottages and huts to escape to this summer](#))

- **Travel industry trust:** Reports have surfaced which reveal that trust in the travel industry has dropped from a net score of 9 in February 2020 to -12 in May 2020, following many holiday companies and airlines continuing to deny and delay refunds for coronavirus cancellations. The research was commissioned by consumer champion Which?, who also revealed that just one in five (22%) say they trust these industries. ([Which?: Trust in the travel industry plummets to record low amid coronavirus refunds scandal](#))
- **UK domestic travel:** This theme continues to have a strong presence within media, particularly following the announcement from the government that it hopes staycations in the UK can go ahead from the beginning of July. As many of us eagerly anticipate a return to 'normal', these types of features provide inspiration and optimism towards our future travels. ([The Telegraph Best of Britain: 10 great summer holiday ideas, from remote hikes to luxury yurts](#) (Mentions: VisitBritain); [Express Online: UK holidays: Cornwall summer hotspot opens doors for ocean activities - will you visit?](#))
- **Data led articles:** Media continue to be receptive to data and insights on consumer behaviour, particularly from a travel perspective, as the industry edges closer to reopening in some ways. For example, recent data from Booking.com, which reveals the places that Brits have been dreaming about the most during COVID-19, has resulted in a splash of coverage across various media titles. ([Trinity Mirror Booking.com reveals the top travel destinations Brits want to head to](#); [Time Out Booking.com reveals the top destinations people want to visit after lockdown](#))

## TECHNOLOGY

As we move into the next phase of this pandemic, when the immediate threat has been reduced, people are now beginning to reflect on some of the consequences of the fast uptake of new apps and technologies. These were readily embraced, without much forethought, given the nature of the threat.

- In China, the authorities have been using tracking QR codes to track the spread of the virus. The superpower is now [looking at expanding the use of this technology](#), as authorities have been impressed by the quality of the data sets and are thinking about new applications for everyday life. The QR codes are embedded in the popular WeChat and Alipay smartphone apps, and are self-reported and automatically collected travel and medical data to give people a red, yellow or green rating indicating the likelihood of having the virus. There are now growing complaints from Chinese social media users about the lack of transparency in how the data is being used, and its possible expanded use.
- Across the world, people are readily giving up money and personal data in a rise in state-backed hacking, phishing related to COVID-19. As employees shifted to working from home in mass, the standard security protocols were weakened and as a result, [Google sent out 1,755 warnings in April to users whose accounts were targets of government-backed attackers](#). Google said on Wednesday its Threat Analysis Group saw new activity from "hack-for-hire" firms, many based in India, that have been creating Gmail accounts spoofing the World Health Organization (WHO).

On the positive side, companies are continuing to innovate to help with both the healthcare crisis, and the resulting change in people's everyday life, bringing new products to market by thinking laterally about customer needs.

- The new tech company Syng is raising money [to launch a new integrated, home-audio system, similar to HomePod and Sonos](#), to cater to those who are investing more in their at-home electrical products. It has just raised \$15m and is looking to raise several million dollars more.
- The Drone firm, Zipline, [has been given the go-ahead to deliver medical supplies and personal protective equipment](#) to hospitals in North Carolina. Granted an emergency waiver from the authorities, it will enable hospitals to deliver medicines and healthcare to people remotely.
- As retail and food outlets are slowly opening back up, a smart factory in South Korea has [developed an AI solution to help people stay socially distanced when eating in cafes](#). The robot was developed in collaboration with smart factory Vision Semicon and a state-run science institute.
- As a result of this investment, the healthcare industry in particular is likely to see an increase in turnover. Biometrics in healthcare are [set for a four-fold increase by 2024 to over \\$2.7bln](#) according to market analysts,



Frost & Sullivan. This will be an increase from \$670 million in 2019. Although biometric adoption in the healthcare sector was initially limited to patient identification and verification, the adoption of electronic health records will generate a four-fold revenue growth for the global biometrics in healthcare market by 2024, governments and healthcare systems around the world are investing in upgrading their healthcare tech long-term.

- Given the shock-shift to remote working, governments, businesses and the public are all aware how they have been under-utilising technology, as they are learning more everyday about how it can help them adapt to their new way of life. As a result, we are beginning to see the first shoots of a boom in long-term investment in digital infrastructure across the world.
- Chinese tech giant Tencent Holdings [is investing 500 billion yuan \(\\$70 billion\)](#) over the next five years in technology infrastructure including cloud computing, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, the company said on Tuesday.
- Likewise, the outlook for the global IoT market remains bullish, [with one study projecting that it will grow by double digits through 2021 to reach \\$243 billion](#). The healthcare sector in particular has seen a rapid deployment of IoT technology during the pandemic, sometimes in novel and improvised ways. Tablets have been used to enable family members to converse with sick loved ones, for example, while in China, hospitals are using robots for delivery and sanitation services.

## International Updates

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### USA

- US shoppers likely pulled back on purchases at a record pace in April, but since then signs are emerging that consumer spending is starting to pick up, albeit slowly. As [states start to reopen businesses](#) and Americans return to work, activity in some pockets of the economy appears to be perking up—or at least not deteriorating further—after hitting rock bottom in April. [\[WSJ\]](#)
- UPS is adding “peak” surcharges for companies that have been inundating its delivery network with many more packages and oversize items during the coronavirus pandemic, an unprecedented move to manage a summer flood of shipments and higher costs. [\[WSJ\]](#)
- Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey have clashed over how to tackle misinformation on their social networks, escalating tensions between the founders of **Facebook** and **Twitter** as they brace themselves for an executive order from US President Donald Trump over what he called their censorship. [\[FT\]](#)

### China

- China loosens business travel from Korea and Germany, pressuring other countries. Companies are trying to rebuild supply chains, boost sales and increase productivity, moving quickly to gain a competitive edge. [\[WSJ\]](#)
- The World Health Organization has launched an internal review into the position of one of its celebrity ambassadors who was involved in the airing of an allegedly forced confession on Chinese state television. [\[FT\]](#)
- Pro-democracy protesters have said they have 100 days to save Hong Kong from Beijing’s “evil regime” after China’s parliament voted to impose a security law that deals a mortal blow to the territory’s freedoms. [\[The Times\]](#)

### Latin America

- Brazil’s health minister, Nelson Teich, resigned on Friday after just four weeks in office, leaving South America’s biggest country without a top health official as the coronavirus pandemic rages there and across much of Latin America.

- As oil companies globally pull back on drilling, Mexico is doing the opposite. Across the country's oil belt, **Pemex** is spending more money to drill new wells, eke oil out of aging fields, revamp its six unprofitable refineries and construct a new one for \$8 billion—the first refinery the country has built since the 1970s. [[WSJ](#)]

## Europe

- **BBVA**, Spain's second-largest bank by market capitalisation, said it would cut its internal financial targets for this year and called for the relaxation of coronavirus restrictions to help kick-start the economy. [[FT](#)]
- European markets fell more than 1 percent in early trading on Friday after a mixed day in Asia, as investors confronted the possibility of worsening tensions between Washington and Beijing. [[NYT](#)]
- Rishi Sunak, the UK chancellor, is to announce that employers will have to pay a fifth of the wages of furloughed staff, and national insurance and pension contributions, as the state subsidy scheme is wound down. [[The Times](#)]
- The English Premier League, the most watched sports league in the world, will restart next month. [[Politico](#)]

## Africa

- Ethiopia has emerged as a key transit hub for the shipment of much sought-after medical equipment to Latin America, as poorer countries complain they are being muscled out of the market by richer nations and their cargo seized during refuelling stops in Europe and the US. [[FT](#)]
- The relatively low number of coronavirus cases in Africa so far "have raised hopes that African countries may be spared the worst of the pandemic", in the words of the UN. But at the same time, it urges caution. [[BBC](#)]

## Asia

- Worried for its economy, India loosened tough restrictions and may lift them entirely this weekend. But infection numbers are climbing fast. [[NYT](#)]
- More than 200 schools in South Korea have been forced to close just days after they re-opened, due to a new spike in virus cases. [[BBC](#)]

## South Korea

- Have re-imposed some coronavirus restrictions. Following the biggest spike of new coronavirus infections [in nearly two months](#), museums, parks, and art galleries will all be closed again from Friday for two weeks, with authorities struggling to identify transmission routes.