

Marketing to the post-lockdown consumer



By [Michael Baretta](#)

24 Apr 2020

We're experiencing a global phenomenon unlike anything before. Individuals, governments and brands are navigating uncharted territories as, together, we face a 'new world'. While healthcare takes primary focus, the economic and political stabilities of countries are in grave danger of tumbling over.



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The imminent restructuring of the global economic order means an ultimate change in the way we do things. How will people consume products and services, and how can businesses adapt to these changes in the consumer market?

There's no doubt that things will change. They already have. We've seen trends like increased e-commerce activities, e-learning and WFH (working from home) take off across the globe. We're not going to hop right back into 'business as usual'. Business is very unusual at the moment and companies that can adapt and scale their operations accordingly will be the ones to survive the economic downturn our country is set to face.

To help businesses navigate this uncertain time, I've highlighted three key marketing strategies that need to be employed at this time, namely:

- a change in behaviour, planning for a sustainable future and no longer solving problems of the past;
- affiliate marketing, aligning with the right activists and influencers;
- and purpose and cause marketing, ensuring an organisation has a clear and marketable purpose for operating.

Change in behaviour

During the crisis, and well after it, I believe we will see greater collaboration between brands, organisations and governments. With many businesses likely being held more accountable for their actions, the scrutiny will, however, become intense.

Consumers, having experienced a new way of living, are re-evaluating their spending, as they've found more convenient and efficient ways of doing things. This increases the likelihood that their attitudes and spending behaviour may permanently shift between categories, with a focus on food, health and privacy. During this time, South Africans, in particular, are more aware than ever of the great divide between those living above and below the poverty line, and I believe we'll see a rise in conscious consumerism because of it.



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Online services and simple mobile interventions, for example, could be adopted far faster than expected and we'll see a steady continuation of online store purchases and service provision. Brick-and-mortar stores will not fall away, however, as people like the tactile experience of going into a physical space.

As consumers will no doubt continue to welcome innovation post-Covid-19, two main groups will emerge:

- Those who have experienced severe 'cabin fever' will become more sociable than ever and will go out and spend on things like entertainment if they can afford to do so. There will be a new-found appreciation of public events, whatever these may look like, and connection.
- Those who have been more 'shell-shocked' will have become more connected to their home environments and more cautious in their spending. They'll opt, instead, to save money by embracing more 'Do It Yourself' and 'Make It Yourself' projects and will slowly re-emerge into social gatherings.

We need to plan and reconstruct for the future and not solve the problems of the past.

Affiliate marketing

Activists and influencers will play an even more significant role in marketing post-Covid-19. A passionate activist will promote an organisation they believe in, yet they are often an undervalued resource to companies. Brands can no longer afford to underestimate the power of activists. There is an unmistakable purity to what an activist says. Their passion and authenticity are far more convincing than an advert from a company telling consumers to 'buy now.'

Affiliate marketing takes advantage of this trust and research shows that 71% of consumers would help a brand promote their product if they had a partnership with a relevant cause.*



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Affiliate marketers – brand influencers, bloggers and social media gurus – often already have an audience that they engage with and promote to. A relationship is established through the marketer interacting with their followers daily. The marketer learns what the followers respond well to, and in turn, the followers trust the marketer to promote appropriate products.

Their scope of influence and social media following may be far more tailored and useful than any paid advertising. Through these platforms, organisations can spread brand visibility with a high likelihood of obtaining new customers.

Purpose and for-good cause marketing

To gain new customers and build deeper connections with current consumers, a business needs a clear purpose for operating.

So, what does this entail? Does this mean investing in employees, supporting communities and dealing ethically with suppliers, for example?

In order to truly be a key differentiator from competitors, an organisation's purpose needs to be deeply embedded in the brand culture and experienced at every touchpoint, both internally and externally. It's important to communicate purpose in such a way that all stakeholders are aware of what the business stands for and its authentic, impactful role in society.



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This influential role allows an organisation to grow its business and positively impact the world simultaneously, particularly as consumers now seek out brands with a deeper purpose. Consumers don't want to feel that they are simply buying a product, but that they are buying into an idea. They want to feel that by supporting a particular brand or company, they are making a difference and helping to improve the lives of their fellow South Africans.

As we consider the scale of change that the coronavirus has caused – and will continue to cause in the months and years ahead – an imminent restructuring of the global economic order is on the horizon. In essence, this crisis will not just reveal threats to a business and its operations, but opportunities to improve the performance and impact of companies and organisations.

ABOUT MICHAEL BARETTA

Michael Baretta is an experienced creative thinker who is deeply committed to changing the world for the better through innovative marketing and communications. Baretta is the founder of [dot]GOOD, South Africa's first and foremost for-good marketing agency.

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