



Advertising during COVID-19 Crises

Here are **7 recommendations for advertising during the Corona Virus Pandemic**. They reflect Colmar Brunton's expertise in advertising and what makes compelling creative, drawing upon the Company's vast global advertising databases and more than forty years of experience in the field together with insights gleaned more recently from other countries during the pandemic.

1. Brands that **continue to invest** in their advertising during an economic downturn typically come out the other side in better shape than those that don't. We saw this during the GFC. Now is precisely the time to **think long-term** for the good of the brand to keep it salient and to communicate its meaningful differences. Continue to **build future brand predisposition**. What is more - people expect brands to continue to advertise as witnessed in our global study of people's reactions to the pandemic where only 8% of people said companies should stop advertising.
2. There will be **exceptions**. Some categories such as tourism and travel, out of home entertainment etc are doing it particularly tough and so **for some brands and categories now simply will not be the time** to advertise. The same would also be true of 'high-demand/out-of-stock' items like some toiletries where people aren't able to get hold of them and where communication not handled deftly could be viewed as simple profiteering. New Zealanders appear particularly sensitive to this.
3. **View your advertising through a 'human' lens** rather than a consumer lens. *Is this advertising something I would expect? Does this feel right to me? Am I comfortable with this?* Go with your gut instinct or, better still, check-in with people (see our final recommendation)

4. **Be genuine or be silent.** Keeping your brand present in the minds of consumers can be done in a number of ways. In some categories, ads can be more **product-centric** in their approach, **focusing on people's reported needs** – in some instances this may be assuring that products and services are safe to use. In other categories, it might be more appropriate to focus on the **emotional support and positive values** offered by the brand especially if they align with strongly held current, societal values like *solidarity, togetherness etc.* For brands that can do neither of these things, simply demonstrating that they are **thinking of people** is a possible approach. New Zealanders are looking for compassion. Whatever the strategy, however, it is imperative that the brand **is seen as authentic** and not contrived.
5. **Be prudent about advertising with promotional content.** Under current circumstances, this may come across as too self-serving. That said, there can be exceptions if executed appropriately e.g. Disney+ offering a one-year subscription offer in the UK. Again, put the human lens over it to see if it *feels* right
6. **Reflect the new norm.** If your current advertising seems to fit in with the 'new norm' e.g. showing the need for relaxation, the need to fulfil particular daily routines, etc this will help provide some normalcy to the situation, remembering that people aren't expecting advertising to disappear. Similarly, brands need to reflect the new way we go about things and the new mores we have adopted e.g. KFC rightly felt it appropriate to suspend a campaign that featured people licking their fingers after eating the chain's fried chicken. That said, New Zealanders do not appear as sensitive on this point as in some other countries.
7. **If in doubt, check it out.** If you have any uncertainty or doubt about how your advertising is going to be received now is the best time to quickly check-in with people to see how receptive they will be. Colmar Brunton can help with this and provide answers within as little as two days using our on-line panel and our globally renowned approach to communication enhancement.

The current situation, of course, is constantly evolving so, if we see changes in the way people are behaving or responding to advertising, we will certainly be updating you. If, in the meantime, you have any questions or would like us to help with your creative development please don't hesitate to contact me: brian.turner@colmarbrunton.co.nz