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GWI.

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2020...



by

JASON MANDER CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER

...where to start?

Many stories start at the end, only to take us back to the beginning. Unfortunately for us, we really don't know when the end will be. It's difficult to judge where we are now.

We're in the middle of a global crisis. When it ends, we may not even realize. After all, not many people can pinpoint exactly when the Great Recession ended.

In last year's **Connecting the dots** report, we anticipated trends to watch in 2020.

We believed that more people would adopt telehealth and that digital payments would become more widespread. We also predicted that technology would inch further in providing social interaction and companionship, and that we might be headed into a recession.

In hindsight we made some pretty good calls, but we could never have imagined why these would be strong predictions based on what 2020 had in store for the world.

We also expected to see big developments in the role of physical retail spaces and in the use of data and personalization in the travel experience. These two sectors have borne the brunt of the pandemic's disruption.

Yet we're still confident in our assertions. The pandemic has led to a vast experiment, giving retailers unique lessons in the limitations of online channels and their relationship with bricks-and-mortar. Also, more than ever before, passenger data is key in managing risk in travel during the outbreak.

There's never been a stronger case for harmonized research

Uncertainty rules the day

A lot can happen in the next year or so.

To account for such severe uncertainty during COVID-19, we've outlined dual scenarios in each article based on two slightly more predictable circumstances:

A worst-case scenario
involving more cases and further restrictions

A best-case scenario
where normality seems more plausible

As if things needed to be any more complex, it's highly likely that different countries will find themselves in different scenarios, at different times.

Global pandemic, myriad outcomes

From the get-go it became very obvious in our recurring **coronavirus research** that although most of the world found itself under lockdown, the response and impact of the virus was highly fragmented.

Our 46-country research is harmonized, meaning we can compare countries and audiences in a like-for-like manner. This has proved invaluable.

The pandemic has shown us that there's never been a stronger case for harmonized research.

We're still teasing out the intricacies of what's taken place across our 46 countries in the past year. But we've found some of the strongest variables impacting both B2C and B2B behaviors have been when the virus hit, severity of cases, types of economies, and also climate.

The rules have changed

Against this complexity, we want this report to provide clarity and perspective.

It's easy to get swept up in ideas or assumptions that seem to be playing out before us during such a vast and complex event. Understanding what's hype and what's real has always been a challenge; never more so than now.

In the shadow of this uncertainty, many companies – regardless of their industry – find themselves in a similar position, facing up to the daunting task of rebuilding.

But the rules have changed.

What worked before might not work now or in the future. Consumers'

attention has shifted as the internet has swept in to help us manage our lives more effectively, and their behaviors have shifted too.

We firmly believe behavioral shifts are only half the story. Through Connecting the dots, you won't just know what the biggest behavioral shifts were in 2020, you'll also understand what's been driving them, and how to take advantage. This, coupled with a harmonized global perspective, can help give confidence that what you're seeing isn't just a regional fad.

In an era defined by universal change, context is king. Without it, distinguishing between hype and reality is even more difficult.



Data sets included in this report



GWI Core

Our flagship research, a global survey representing more than 2 billion connected consumers, which offers over 40,000 data points on the behaviors and perceptions of internet users around the world.



GWI USA

Launched in July 2020, GWI USA provides more relevant and timely insight into the modern American consumer. Representing over 240 million people across all 50 states, the study tracks new and emerging trends not typically covered by traditional market research providers, including key questions around cultural identity, race, and ethnicity.



GWI Zeitgeist

Bespoke research on topics which complements and further interrogates themes in our Core research and beyond. The data in this report draws from recontact studies made at different points throughout 2020. Respondents who took part also completed GWI Core.



GWI Coronavirus

Our bespoke research into the COVID-19 pandemic, consisting of five waves conducted across 20 markets between March and July 2020. It covers a host of topics, including: feelings about the virus, its economic impact, media consumption during lockdown, changes in spending habits, and many others. Respondents who took part also completed GWI Core.



GWI Work

Our B2B dataset, which analyzes business professionals across 10 global markets. Respondents who took part also completed GWI Core.

Discover the data on our platform

Each chart from our ongoing global research in this report contains a hyper-link that will bring you straight to the relevant question on our Platform, where you can investigate all data by demographics, over time, and among your own audiences.

Sneak preview of our new platform

The screenshot displays the GWI platform interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Charts', 'Audiences', and 'Crosstabs'. Below this, a breadcrumb trail shows 'New Audience 7 May 2020 12:33'. The main area is divided into sections for 'Data set' (GWI Core), 'Waves' (Q2 2020), and 'Locations' (UK). A filter section allows users to 'Include' or 'Exclude' 'people with' 'All' of 'these 2 attributes'. The filter criteria include 'Age (Groups) > 16 to 24' and 'Age (Groups) > 35 to 44'. A summary box indicates 'Your audience sample size is 9,188 respondents out of 40,453'. Below the filter section, a table displays data for the question 'Someone in my household has a mental health issue'. The table has columns for 'Data point %', 'Universe', 'Index', 'Responses', and 'Audience %'. The data points are as follows:

Data point %	Universe	Index	Responses	Audience %
100	15.7K	84.9M	100	47%
100	15.7K	84.9M	100	32%
100	15.7K	84.9M	100	52%
100	15.7K	84.9M	100	38%
100	15.7K	84.9M	100	16%

1

Each of the graphs is numbered

More information can be found in the Appendix section at the end of this report



Just click this icon to explore the data on the platform

Source

Information about the source

Base

and base



by
VIKTORIYA TRIFONOVA

There's no place like home



01

How the pandemic will reshape city life

Samuel Pepys' depiction of London during the Great Plague can't help but resonate with the world today. The death of the city is once again feared; but even then, urban environments eventually thrived once more.

At that time, one vital part was missing from the equation – the Teams, the Slacks, and the Zooms that make mass remote working not only possible, but potentially a better solution for

businesses and employees alike. So, are people tempted to walk away from the city for good this time?

Yes and no. The pandemic has without doubt contributed to a growing desire to escape from the city, but one that's not so much defined by the movement of people as it is by a shift in the urban mindset. Don't focus on consumer postal/zip codes; double down on the changing consumer lifestyle.



“

But, Lord! how sad a sight it is to see the streets empty of people [...]

SAMUEL PEPYS (1633 - 1703), DIARIST



Don't believe the hype

The gap between the haves and the have-nots appears to be getting bigger; whether that's people having access to essential goods and employment, or governments having access to affordable debt to prop up economies and manage the outbreak. The 23 percentage point difference in **concerns for falling ill** between higher and lower earners speaks for itself.

A desire for a city escape might be on the cards – but mostly for those who can afford it. In many parts of the world, the momentum is still on the side of cities.

Urbanites in advanced economies are much keener on getting out of the city compared to those in fast-growth countries. What we're seeing with the latter are in fact signs of continued urbanization, with those in suburban and rural areas waiting for an opportunity to flock to cities. A lot of megacities in developing economies are not only luring new workers but retailers as

well, with **Apple** and **Huawei** launching flagship stores in Beijing and Shanghai, respectively.

There have been many **reports** of a “great escape” from cities due to COVID-19, but relocating from the city during a pandemic may be a luxury limited to those who can easily work remotely. Common sense tells us that mass remote working just isn't applicable for manufacturing-based economies where opportunities are clustered around city environments. And although our data shows migration from the city is desired in Western countries, this isn't as much induced by fear of the virus as by shifts in consumer priorities.

Our research in the UK and U.S. shows that where people want to relocate is primarily about a change in lifestyle (31%) and a quest for a quieter location (29%) than what the city can offer. That's why 2021 won't see a drastic change in the physical composition of urban areas, but rather one that reflects a shift in urban mentality.



Pay attention to the new urban mindset

The city is more than just a place to live; it embodies a unique mindset geared toward convenience and diversity, and an economy designed to accompany that.

Pret a Manger and Au Bon Pain, for example, were explicitly designed with the coffee morning and lunch break of the urban office-based professional in mind. These are just two examples of how businesses that were once a perfect fit for the urban dweller are now having to essentially **recalibrate** entire business models.

During lockdown we were forced to adapt to a new way of living that made us take a step back and realize what

really matters to us and what brings us joy might not be the same as before. The nights out with friends transformed into nights in with family; the saved money from theater and live concert tickets was reinvested in kitting out our homes. Not to mention the enthusiasm about that daily outdoor exercise slot. This doesn't mean that cities are dead – but our relationship with them, and what we enjoy about them, has changed.

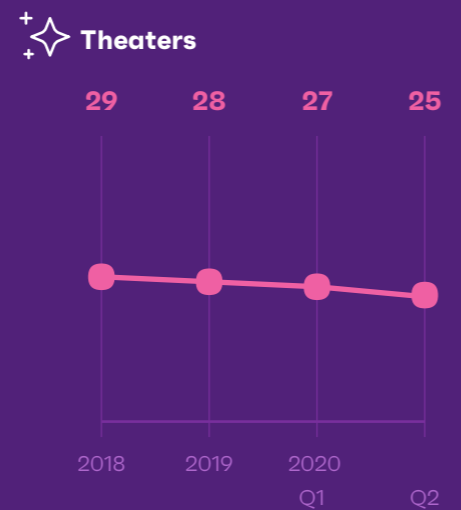
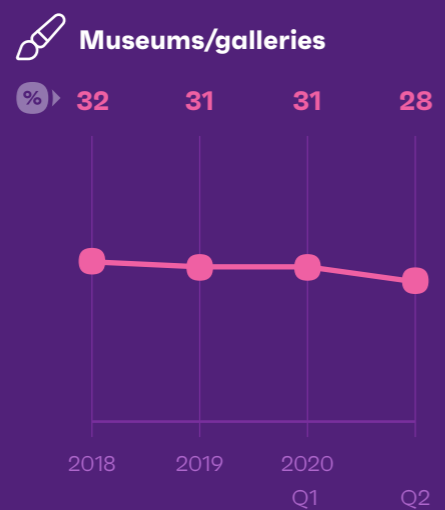
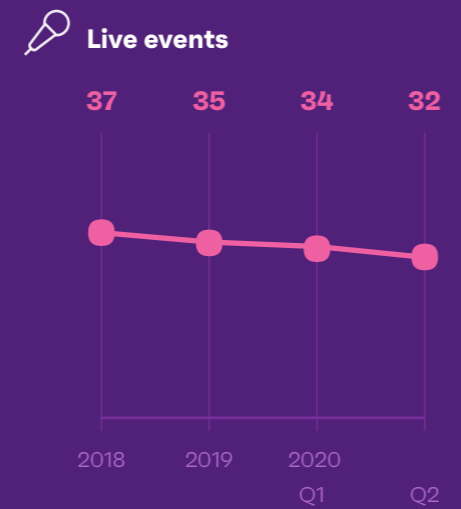
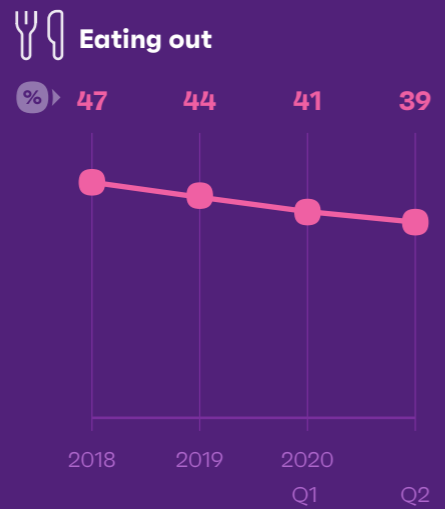
Behaviors that were mostly associated with suburban or rural culture have now sprawled across cities' young populations, slowly but surely becoming ingrained into actual consumer interests.



Urban perks look increasingly less appealing

% of global urbanites who say they're interested in the following

2



GWJ Core 2018-2020 (Averages of waves conducted between Q3 2018-Q2 2020)
691,827 internet users living in urban areas aged 16-64

With many of us baking our way through the pandemic, cooking, home improvements, and gardening have come to symbolize our new reality. Our data from 46 markets shows that our youngest demographic, Gen Z, are increasingly more interested in these activities, with cooking jumping 7% between Q1 2020 and Q2 2020. And data from Q3 2020 suggests this trend is going to continue.

On a more profound level, these behaviors are more than just new pastimes consumers have picked up because of the outbreak. With their therapeutic effects, they speak to a desire to wind down and push the brakes on

the fast-paced pre-COVID way of life – even within a city setting.

Having grown into a hot social media and fashion trend, the #cottagecore craze has come to represent what consumers have longed for during these times: simplicity, tranquility, and nostalgic comfort.

Businesses and marketers have a unique opportunity to tap into this new mentality. As we discuss elsewhere in the report, mental health will be a big topic in 2021, so positioning offerings and messaging to be in line with the mental health-conscious segment will be key.

Cooking, home improvements, and gardening have come to symbolize our new reality

Prepare for a hyper-local future

This new urban mentality means global businesses should think even more local. Consumers' shifting interests, combined with remote working opportunities, signal a sustained change in the amount of time we spend in our local areas.

Where consumers would previously drive or board a train, they now prefer a short walk or a cycle. The 42% of regular public transport users looking to a future where they walk to work give proximity a whole new meaning.

You might think smaller cities – where distances are shorter and virus concern is typically high – drive this trend. But even in megacities across Asian markets like Beijing – where only 26% of residents said they're extremely/very concerned about coronavirus – walking is consumers' top preference for future commute (56%).

The idea of a hyper-local city isn't new, and it's been proposed as a **model** across major European cities

WALKING

42%

of regular public transport users say they'd prefer to walk for their commute to work in the future

pre-COVID; but what was once a proposition is now a mainstream consumer need that's not limited to European borders.

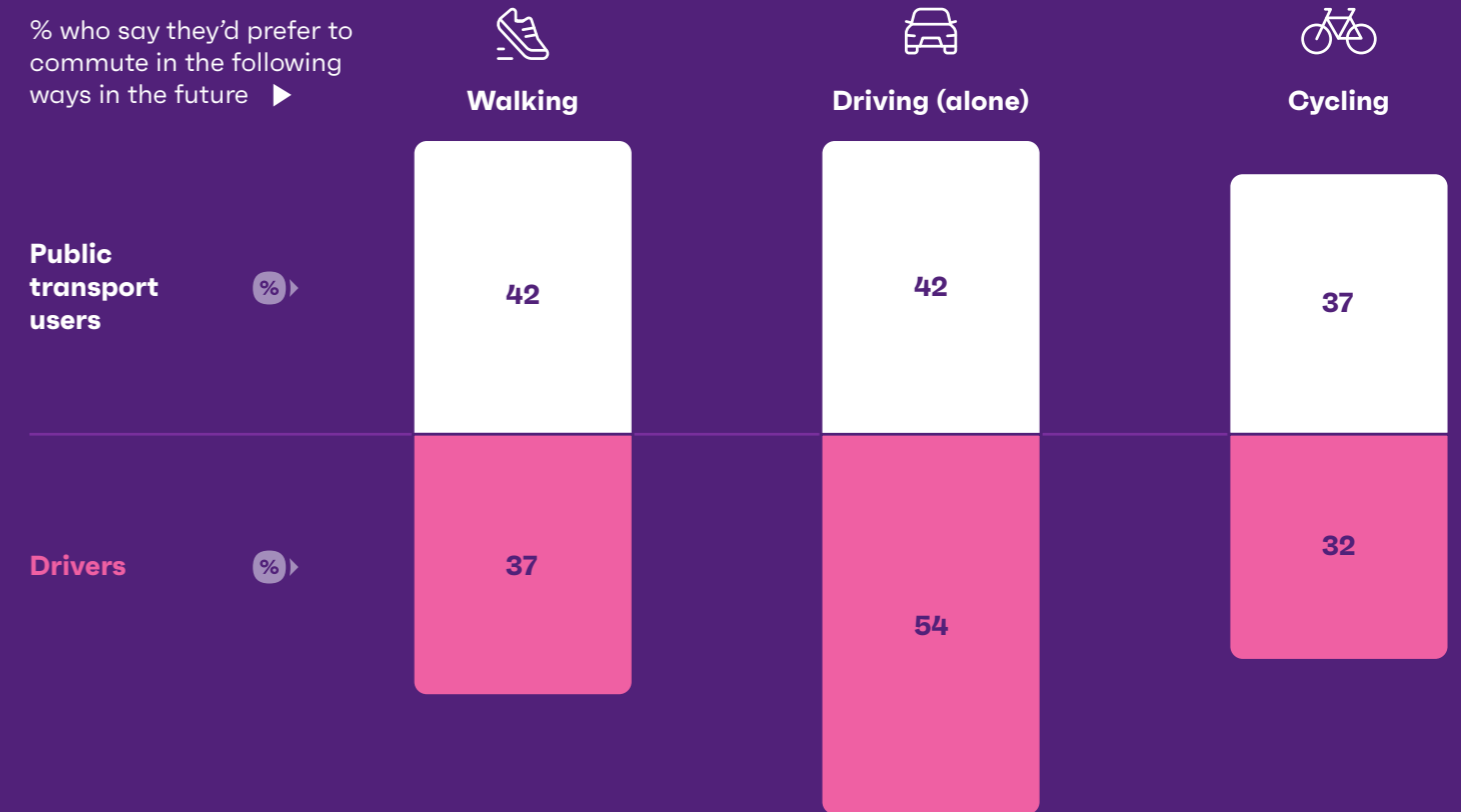
The demand for local solutions will reach an all-time high, with major grocery chains already **jumping** on the bandwagon. But the implications stretch beyond just retail and physical presence. Marketing to various city clusters will be a challenge and the need for locally-tailored messaging will grow in importance. Budweiser has been quick to get in on the act with its latest Detroit **campaign** aiming to help the brand reach "hyper hyper-local" groups in 2021. If successful, others are sure to follow, and the granularity could go even further – marketing to neighborhoods, not just cities.

Segmenting target audiences by location with regional and spatially granular data has never been more critical. Cities aren't dead, but they are changing. Your next customer may literally be around the corner.

Top 3 means of future commute

3

% who say they'd prefer to commute in the following ways in the future ▶



GWJ Zeitgeist September 2020



5,649 regular/semi-regular drivers and 2,923 regular/semi-regular public transport users in 7 countries aged 16-64

Worst-case



In the event that a vaccine or a treatment isn't viable, cities won't become redundant, but the service economy reliant on city vibrancy might. This will make space for new offerings that cater specifically to a slower-paced, home-oriented, and mental health conscious consumer segment. The busy city life could be behind us for good and the appeal of cities will have to change. In this scenario, what's considered rural, suburban, and urban ways of living will blend together and it'll be more about quality of life than a quest for opportunity.

Consumers have re-evaluated their priorities and some urban perks as we once knew them have taken a backseat. They won't be as ingrained in consumer culture going forward as they were prior to the outbreak. The bond people have established with their households isn't going to be easily broken, although it's likely to be loosened as public spaces and offices are deemed safe again. City centers will be far from the ghost towns they were during peak lockdown, but consumer activity will be more equally distributed across the inner circles and the outskirts.

Best-case





by
SHAUNA MORAN

All work and no play



Accounting for the pandemic

Whether it was learning a new **language**, picking up **baking**, or growing **vegetables**, many were quick to adopt new hobbies and maximize family time at the start of lockdowns.

But for some, these extra hours were used more “productively”; the number of knowledge workers saying they always work overtime has increased by 11% since 2019.

Businesses have to be proactive in combating this new kind of presentism. In recognizing the flaws of

OVERTIME

+11%

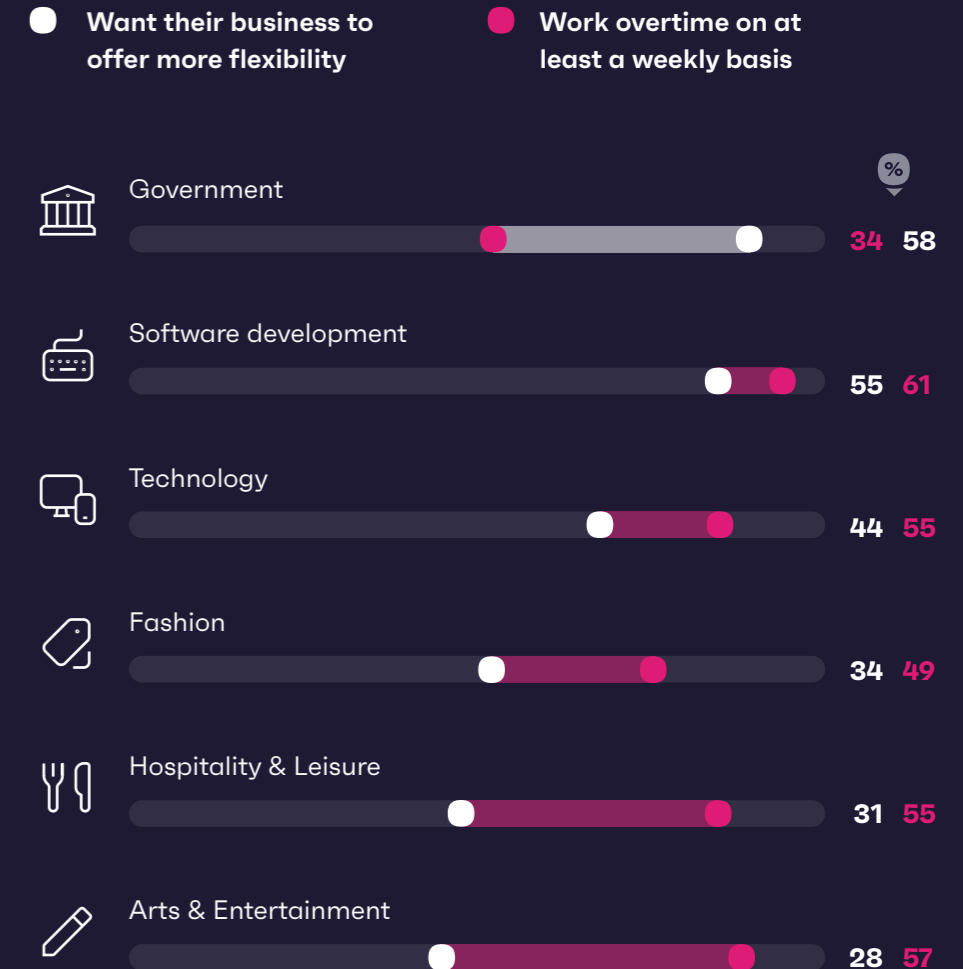
increase in the number of knowledge workers saying they always work overtime (since 2019)

“time in seat” as an accurate measure of productivity, the chief strategy officer of SocialChorus **encourages** company employees to state their top three priorities for each day, and log off as soon as they’ve accomplished them.

Commanding hordes of employees, and seen as trailblazers in their products, it’s easy to look to Twitter and Facebook as role models. But decision-makers are better off relying on peer companies for working-from-home insights, and listening to employees, as demand for flexibility varies significantly by sector.

The demand for flexibility is more dependent on sector, than hours worked

% of workers in the following sectors who...



GWI Work Q2 2020 17,794 knowledge workers aged 18-64

When Netflix's CEO **said** working from home has no positive effects, he was voicing a feeling common to his industry. Demand for flexible working is lowest among workers in the arts and entertainment sector. With the industry **ill-fitted** to remote work in many cases, employees have different priorities.

Industry examples offer useful guidelines, but companies should push some of the power to drive culture onto workers. Creating a cycle of ongoing feedback and demonstrating how it's implemented is crucial to this process. Surveys should also be crafted with industry challenges in mind, which reduces the risk of being misled by a noisy debate.

**The
perception:
a good
work-life
balance
means
protecting
the 9-5**

**The reality:
since 2019, the
number of workers
who always work
late and say they
have a 'good
work-life balance'
has grown 22%**

Exploring the benchmarks for satisfaction

Our research helps us to better understand what good work-life balance is, by highlighting what it's not. Companies adopting remote working to hit this elusive metric must note it reflects several aspects of our working lives.

Some companies have **unveiled** initiatives that include a restricted working week and weekend curfew. Yet, those who feel they have a good balance are actually more likely to say they're always contactable outside of working hours, challenging the value of maintaining fixed boundaries.

One worker's idea of good work-life symmetry is very different to another's. Though not a general preference among white-collar workers, it's been

argued that working a few hours on the weekend offers a superior balance, and reduces the likelihood of burnout.

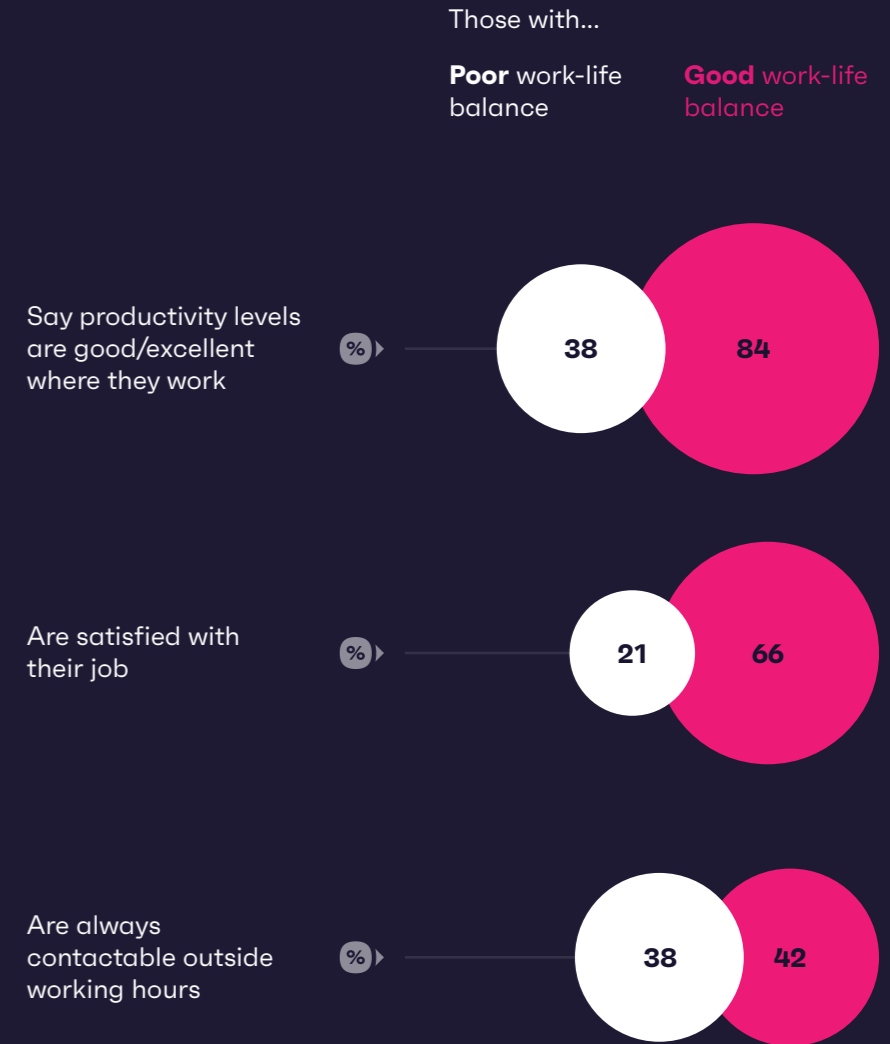
This perspective has been **adopted** by a technology firm in Scotland, which prides itself on staff having the freedom to set their own schedule. As long as hours are extended during the week, employees are allowed to take long weekends; or alternatively, work fewer hours each day and not take a weekend.

The pandemic has rapidly accelerated the remote working shift, but barely nudged the trend of flexible work-weeks. Compared to 2019, office staff are 32% more likely to say they have broad permit to work remotely, but are only 5% more likely to report the

same increase in flexible working hours. More importantly, less than a third of workers are broadly permitted to do either – which means we've only scratched the surface of this new workplace paradigm that many are already taking for granted.

Given the direction we're headed, this journey is going to have a huge impact on HR departments, responsible for supporting an increasingly remote and flexible workforce. These professionals will soon be on the radar of B2B companies marketing collaboration tools, communication software, and wellness schemes, as their role in managing workplace cultures becomes more intrinsic to a positive employee experience.

A positive work-life balance drives productivity and satisfaction



GW I Work Q2 2020

11,260 knowledge workers with a good work-life balance and 1,832 with a poor one, aged 18-64

Linking balance and freedom with performance

Plotting a course through 2021's economic turbulence will require businesses to be agile, innovative, and quick in their decision-making. Especially with working environments in flux, leaders should ensure they're able to replicate the spirit of the workplace and preserve recognition rituals in a changed environment – rather than solely focusing on whether workers can be productive at home.

Work-life balance is tightly bound with culture. Those who enjoy a healthy balance feel empowered to make strategic decisions – and the contrast, when pitted against those who don't, is striking. By encouraging employees to branch out and explore new ideas, businesses cultivate a passionate workforce, able to drive tomorrow's success.

A strong culture should continuously refer back to the vision and principles of an organization. 51% of workers with a good balance have their company's strategic goals communicated to them on a monthly basis, compared to 37% of those with a poor one.

Especially in large enterprises, or the absence of a physical office, a line

of communication between C-suite executives and employees should be maintained. Employees want leaders to be transparent about company plans, and understanding of how their work feeds into them.

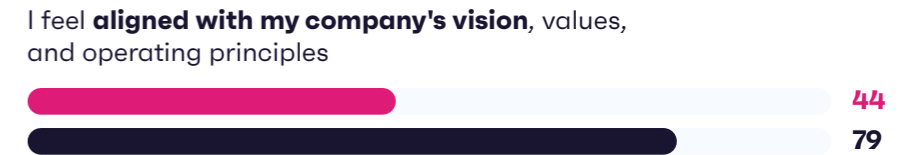
Alongside company-wide meetings, employees with a good balance are also 76% more likely to say their business' goals are communicated via collaboration tools like Slack, Yammer, or Microsoft Teams than those with a poor one. Company threads dedicated to celebrating achievements create a culture of recognition, where successes are acknowledged in real-time. This reminds employees that their work carries weight and unites workers around shared goals.

It's inevitable that remote working will be widespread once the post-COVID dust settles. In many cases, this is beyond an employer's control. But amid this uncertainty, decision-makers are still able to drive productivity and satisfaction by loosening their grip on 9-5 workweeks; and by driving cultures of empowerment and open communication.

Those who enjoy a healthy work-life balance feel empowered to make strategic decisions

Employees want to see their work is valued and meaningful

● Poor work-life balance ● Good work-life balance



GWl Work Q2 2020 11,260 knowledge workers with a good work-life balance and 1,832 with a poor one, aged 18-64

Worst-case



In the event of new stay-at-home orders, companies that have already recalled workers back to the office will face fresh upheaval. Those still finding their groove in this WFH situation also risk not preserving recognition rituals or cultural values. Employees can quickly lose incentive, and spend more hours working unproductively. Employee health (and therefore company performance) will ultimately suffer off the back of this. If unable to nurture productivity now, some businesses may never recover.

Even if a vaccine is made available quickly, we shouldn't disregard 2020 as a one-off WFH experiment. Companies now have an opportunity to experiment with effective practices. For many, this process is a marathon, not a sprint. Once the threat of the pandemic has been minimized, companies don't need to make remote or flexible working decisions overnight. Positive results can and will be gleaned from a process of trial and error. Thankfully, there are many routes to driving employee engagement and performance.

Best-case





by
CHRIS BEER

03

More than lockdown blues



The looming mental health crisis

Imagine a disease that, every year, killed 800,000 people, and cost the world economy \$1 trillion. A disease invisible to the naked eye and without a vaccine to cure it.

Unfortunately, you don't have to imagine. It **does exist**, and it spends much of its time out of the spotlight. It's not COVID-19, nor is it a disease

in the classical sense. It's depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and everything else under the umbrella term "mental health conditions".

Very few predicted 2020 would be defined by a pandemic. But it's sown the seeds for an almost inevitable health crisis in 2021, one for which we all need to prepare.



Rising to the challenge

In the early days of the pandemic, businesses stepped in and contributed to a global effort where governments could or would not. They made PPE. They kept quarantined populations entertained, inspired, and supported. Beer and perfume makers became sanitizer specialists.

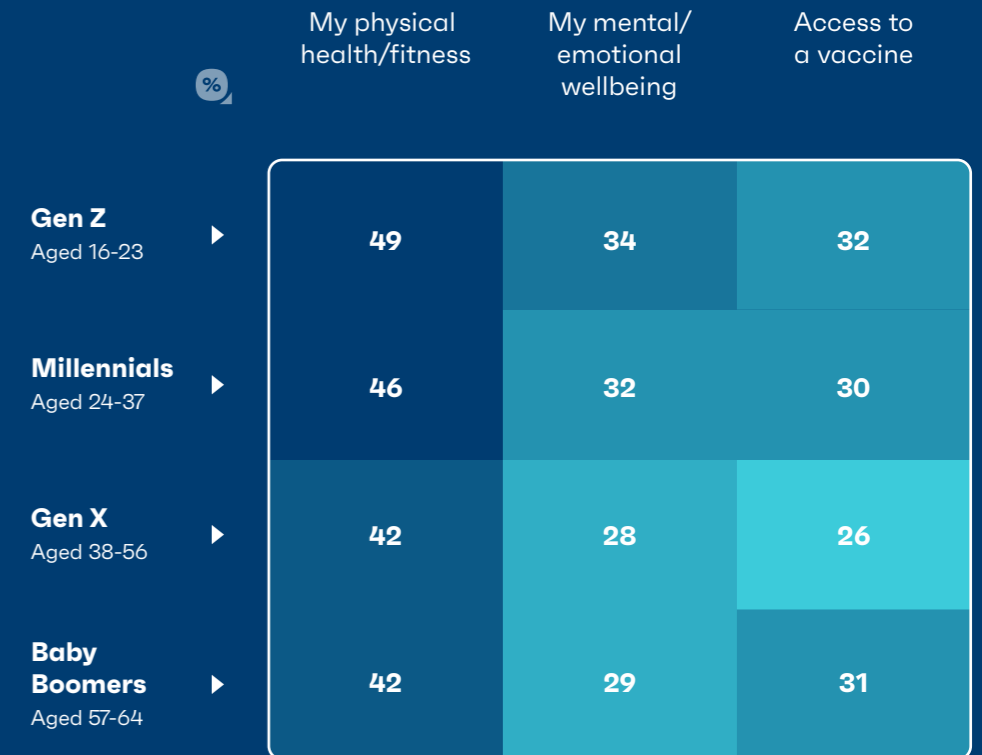
2021 – and beyond – will be dominated by a health crisis less likely to make the headlines, but one that will need businesses on the frontline once again.

Physical health and wellbeing is understandably everyone's biggest priority at the moment. But it's telling that for most people, mental health is currently more of a concern even than access to a vaccine. As several countries face further lockdowns, mental strain is set to increase through the start of 2021.

2021 will be dominated by a health crisis less likely to make the headlines, but one that will need businesses on the frontline once again

Mental health as much of a concern as vaccine access

% who are most concerned about the following in relation to COVID-19 (in 7 countries)



Supporting those most in need

Make no mistake – we expect most people, and most businesses, to be affected in some way. But our research has identified particular groups worth focusing on, and companies whose customers (or employees) fall into these categories should pay particular attention.

Academic research has **shown** the biggest increases in distress have been among the young, who have suffered huge disruption to their education and early adult life. Women have been disproportionately affected too, with many having to take on a greater burden of family care.

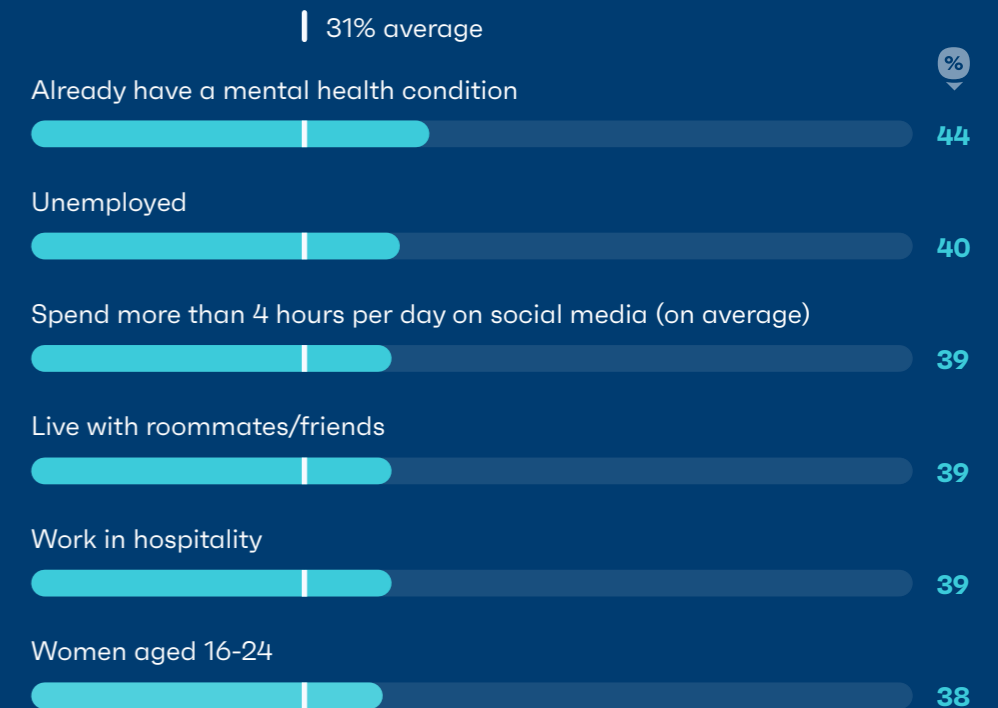
Women have been disproportionately affected, with many having to take on a greater burden of family care

Mental health campaigns were building momentum before the pandemic, but many businesses still need to realize the scale of the problem, and the groups who face new challenges.

As an example, British TV channel ITV has been running a campaign in recent years called “Britain Get Talking”, raising awareness for a host of mental health charities in the UK. As further restrictions were implemented at the beginning of winter, the channel kickstarted a fundraising campaign to support crisis helplines. It’s a good example of how the ante can be upped on what’s set to become an even bigger issue.

Diverse groups worried about their mental health

% in the following categories who are concerned about COVID-19’s impact on their mental health (in 7 countries)



GWJ Zeitgeist September 2020 8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

There are clear correlations between consumption of social media, and online news, with mental health concerns

The channel's response to the pandemic has included awareness campaigns around elderly people who may be isolating, but it's also given space to YoungMinds, a charity whose mission concentrates on children and young people. At a time when some young people are **openly blamed** for viral spreads at college campuses, it's important to lend a hand at a heavily disrupted stage of their life. JanSport's back-to-school #LightenTheLoad

campaign is another instance of a meaningful, authentic, and supportive response recognizing what young people are going through.

There are clear correlations between consumption of social media, and online news, with mental health concerns. This is partly to do with their heaviest users being on the young side, but it's a reminder of how unprecedented the situation is. How much regular news,

much of it negative, on a single subject, can consumers endure? A viral Twitter **thread** from Dr Aisha Ahmad likened the situation to being in a conflict zone, and it's a useful way to understand what's at stake for people's mental wellbeing.

That doesn't mean it's all doom-and-gloom. Social media is one of the resources consumers most feel they can reach out to (31%, putting it only

just behind medical professionals). Publishers of any kind must balance reporting necessary information with respecting and supporting the mental health of their readers and viewers.

One of the more surprising groups at risk is those living with friends or roommates. While isolation can be a triggering factor behind mental health conditions, those living alone are currently less concerned (26%). In July, dating app Bumble **partnered** with wine brand Babe to cover the costs of those stuck living with an ex-partner, and it's a great example of how imaginative actions can draw awareness to hidden issues.

Few industries are under more strain than hospitality, where lockdowns have lowered demand and created an uncertain climate. Hospitality workers,

CABIN FEVER

39%

of those living with friends/roommates are concerned about their mental wellbeing

as well as the unemployed, are cases in practice of how much uncertainty at work affects mental health. Some retailers have **already** recruited from the talent pools of laid-off hospitality workers, and businesses set to hire during 2021 could learn from their example.

Brazil's online population skews young, and this may be a reason why its internet users feel more concerned about their mental health than other countries we surveyed. But Brazil has suffered a particular ordeal from COVID-19. The spread in one of its cities, Manaus, has been so extensive that some **believe** the country effectively achieved herd immunity by September – at a considerable cost. Any business with a footprint in the country should be aware of its collective mental state.

Coping mechanisms

We were already in a mental health crisis before COVID, and the pandemic has made an urgent and complex problem even worse.

Because of this, consumers have been trying to support themselves. Friends and family are the most popular group to reach out to, and social media has proven a boon to many. Universities and workplaces could, however, be doing more to support their students and employees.

Consumers have frequently turned to music and TV to relax and de-stress, so media companies are well-placed to help. Streaming platforms could push playlists, shows, and other content tailored for relaxation. Offline activities are a popular way to unwind too, so even deeply digital businesses shouldn't be afraid to support their consumers with tools to disconnect.

The pandemic has
made an urgent and
complex problem
even worse



Sources of support

Self-help measures

% who have done the following to help their mental health/wellbeing during the pandemic (in 7 countries)



9

Reaching out

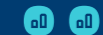
% who feel able to turn to the following sources for help with their mental wellbeing (in 7 countries)



10

*among an audience of students

**among an audience of full-time employed workers



GWI Zeitgeist September 2020

8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

Time to stay safe again

Only 3% of academic literature on coronavirus currently deals with the mental health effects. It's unlikely the mental health crisis of the next few years will receive the same attention through billboards, posters, and regular government briefings. Instead of dominating conversation, there's every chance people will find it difficult to speak out about their experience.

But the damage could be just as severe.

We saw businesses rise to the challenge of an unprecedented pandemic, recognizing their actions could meaningfully contribute to a global health crisis. But what some have **called** the “hidden wave” is lying in wait. Vaccines may eventually account for the virus itself – but the mental health impact will persist for years to come. We neglect it at our peril.



Vaccines may eventually account for the virus itself – but the mental health impact will persist



If you or someone you know has been affected by the topic of this report and are looking for someone to talk to there are resources available to help. Click **here** for mental health resources based in the UK, or **here** for sources based in the USA. The charity CheckPoint has a directory of sources located in other countries around the world, which can be found **here**

Worst-case



The toll of one COVID-19 wave on mental health was profound; the toll of multiple ones could be catastrophic. In the event of further waves, or delays and difficulties with vaccination, viral transmission will have to become the focus again – but mental health has to be addressed as well. Should businesses need to go back to the frontline in managing its spread, it should ideally be done in tandem with supportive measures for mental health.

Even if normality is restored within a short timeframe, many will still be left in need of mental health support, particularly among our outlined groups. To borrow some famous words, any rollout of a vaccine is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. It would be wrong to assume we're back to normal at that point. Many will have lingering mental health issues that will need to be addressed.

Best-case





by
DOUG GORMAN

It's a kindness magic



Promoting social responsibility in the new normal

For years now, brands have become more and more vocal about their sense of purpose and their commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

But the rules have changed.

It's a question of brand positioning. In a world where interactions with a brand's products are increasingly online, companies need to get more creative in how they distinguish themselves from the competition.

Social responsibility and brand purpose can go a long way in filling the gap left

over in the absence of being able to see and touch a brand's products.

COVID-19 has been a baptism of fire for brand purpose, putting commitments to the test when society needs them the most. More than just large donations or empty platitudes, consumers want to see that brands actually care.

Businesses looking to grow their brand amid the pandemic will need to align with their customers' values in ways that are genuine and sustainable. And what's more – consumers and prospective employees will hold them accountable like never before.

More than just large donations or empty platitudes, consumers want to see that brands actually care



Consumers care more than ever

Since the start of the pandemic, businesses have led the way in their practical responses and moves to cement community ties, sometimes with six-figure investments.

But for consumers, the small interactions matter just as much. They also agree with more aggressive corporate social initiatives, but since the start of the pandemic they have become just as concerned with how they are treated.

Support during COVID-19 more important than price or product quality



Due to the outbreak, I want brands to put more focus on the following...

11

% ▶ 56



Supporting people during COVID-19

51



Being eco-friendly

49



Offering value for money

49



Producing high-quality products

44



Treating staff fairly

41



Supporting social causes

GWJ Zeitgeist September 2020 8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

Asking consumers what they want from brands almost always produces results of “high-quality products”, and usually at an affordable price as well. So the fact that supporting people through the coronavirus has surpassed these factors points to the permanent changes in corporate social responsibility ahead.

Even more than discounts, consumers want meaningful support. They want to do business with companies that value the environment, and over 4 in 10 say brands should place more focus on social causes and the wellbeing of their employees.

And these themes aren’t limited to the pandemic crisis. After the world emerged from the strictest weeks of

quarantine, consumers’ support of community welfare initiatives jumped.

The portion of consumers in Europe and North America that want brands to support local suppliers has grown from 31% in Q1 to 37% in Q2.

Support for social welfare initiatives has grown most where the virus has hit hardest. Support for brands that donate to charity has grown 16% in Brazil, and 10% in the U.S.

For years, corporate PR teams have been promoting the idea that they provide value for their shareholders, as well as for their customers and employees. Now they have the opportunity to make good on those promises.

CHARITY DONATION

In Brazil, support for brands that donate to charity has grown

+16%

Customers will be won and lost through everyday interactions

Small acts of kindness

Massive actions on behalf of brands have dominated the story so far.

Tech brands have poured hundreds of millions into programs to promote everything from the right to vote in the U.S., to more volunteer days for their employees globally. And the list of companies **taking action** on racial issues continues to grow.

While these initiatives are important to consumers, there is a lot more opportunity to win or lose new customers through smaller, everyday interactions.

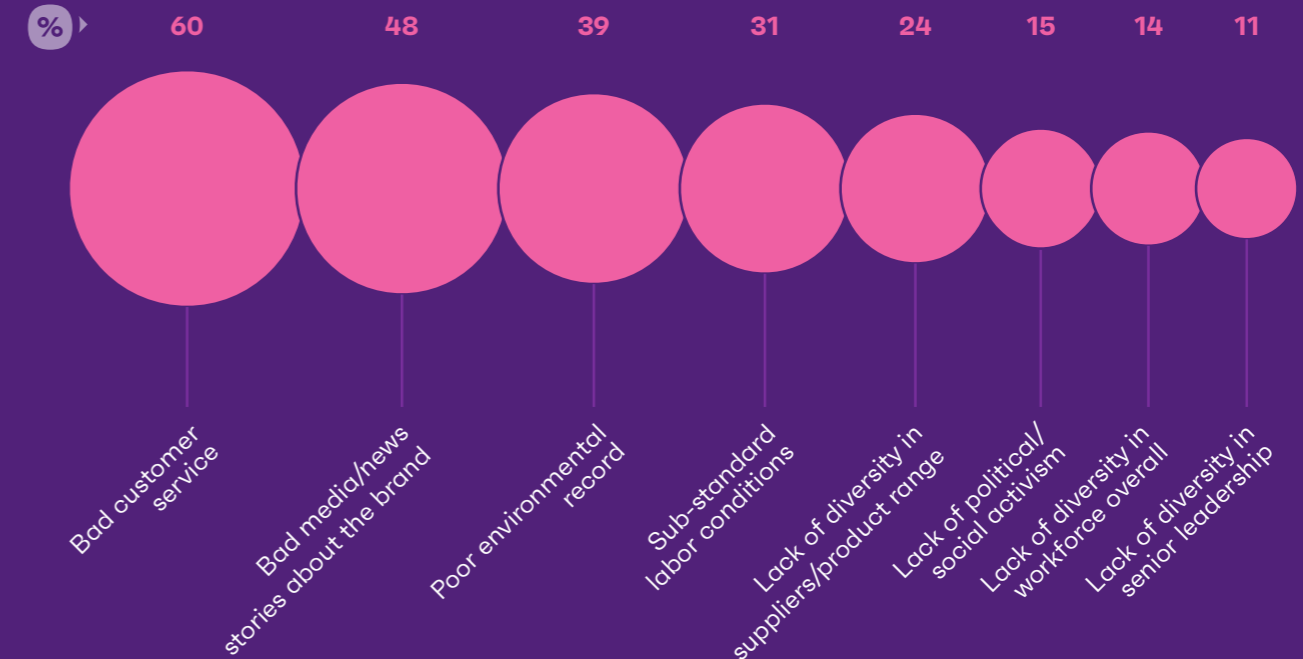
Even though the typical tools brands use to distinguish themselves (retail environments, sales associates, packaging etc.) may be inaccessible, they can still increase their value in the eyes of their customers by focusing energy on their digital experience, customer service quality, and even the social issues they choose to support.

When your competitor is just a click away and your customers are relying on a website to judge a product, what your brand stands for could become a hygiene factor in market competition moving forward.

Consumers are going to hold companies accountable

“

These would concern me most when deciding to buy from a brand...



Note: respondents were asked to select a maximum of 3 options



GWI Zeitgeist September 2020



8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

3 out of 5 internet users say that bad customer service would negatively affect their purchasing decisions, while nearly half say that bad press would do the same.

Customer service has always been important. But in light of so many big, attention-grabbing, COVID-fighting initiatives, we shouldn't overlook the everyday, personal interactions that most affect the bottom line. And customer service in 2021 won't just be about providing helpful advice quickly, but being empathetic as well.

This can apply at any stage of the customer experience. It could mean investing in giving quicker responses from support teams, using more video or face-to-face communication, providing more flexibility in payments and returns, or helping people with their transition to digital channels. In any case, it means showing your

customers that you genuinely care. Some companies have demonstrated a new focus on **care and compassion**. Zappos set up a mental care hotline for customers to call for any reason, and Hallmark gave away millions of free greeting cards. Smaller businesses, without such deep pockets, can lean on their deeper integration with local communities.

Consumers want to be treated with respect more than anything. Charitable giving and eco-consciousness are important, but companies who fail at customer service run the biggest risk of losing market share.

Brand purpose in 2021 should ideally combine these two initiatives. Promoting big-ticket social causes on the one hand, and demonstrating empathy in everyday interactions with customers on the other.

A focus on goodness in professional life

Employees have also gained a louder voice in corporate social responsibility conversations.

By pressuring their employers to take meaningful stances on social issues, employees are driving large social initiatives, as well as improving their everyday treatment.

Athletes in the U.S. **refused to play** games in protest of police brutality and racial inequality. Former officers of social media companies have come forward in **The Social Dilemma** to discuss the implications of these platforms, and there is further evidence that social justice issues are resonating throughout the workforce.

As with their customers, the most important thing brands can do for their employees is care.

Half of internet users now say that employers should prioritize employees' mental wellbeing and make them feel valued. One third say that supporting

diversity in the workplace and demonstrating social responsibility should also remain priorities. This is on a par with providing flexible working for employees, which reinforces how small, more practical gestures like this carry weight among consumers.

The effects of this year's social awakening are evident. Employees now demand a higher level of treatment from employers, and demand for greater diversity in the workforce now rivals that of other initiatives – like sustainability and overall charitable giving.

Younger generations are often the poster child of activism in the media, but other generations mostly share their position – 3 in 10 baby boomers care about the diversity of their own companies.

As younger generations inch toward becoming a critical mass of the workforce, the companies that will be able to attract the newest wave of talent will need to prove their support for every employee.

Employees are demanding more attention from their employers

% of internet users who said these are the most important priorities for an employer



GWJ Zeitgeist September 2020 8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

Brand building is more tightly- wound with brand purpose than ever before

The little things mean a lot

The coronavirus has offered brands a unique opportunity to demonstrate the value they create for all of their stakeholders. At the height of the pandemic, with economic uncertainty abounding, employees, customers, shareholders, and suppliers all looked to brands for assistance.

In the next 12 months they need to consider the next stage of their COVID-19 response, bolstering their support of large-scale initiatives and social causes with a more empathetic approach to their customers on the ground.

Growing a brand amid a pandemic is no easy task, but the coronavirus has given companies the opportunity to

successfully reposition their businesses amid changing consumer needs and values that go beyond even offering the best product at the best price.

This is a recession as well as a pandemic, and **previous recessions** have shown us the importance of brand building to future prosperity. In today's environment, brand building is more tightly-wound with brand purpose than ever before.

Brands will need to play a much larger role as a force for good in the lives of each individual, and consumers will be more likely to hold these brands accountable on the promises they make.

The coronavirus has offered brands a unique opportunity to demonstrate the value they create for all of their stakeholders

Worst-case



The attitude that inspired early, ambitious responses to the pandemic will need to be maintained. Should the first half of 2020 turn out to be the first of many waves, the same kind of initiatives will be needed just as much. Collective fatigue with COVID-19 will become more of an issue each time, and in the worst possible scenario businesses will have to lead in fighting that fatigue.

Even if the prognosis for COVID-19 improves through 2021, brands will still need to help manage the collective trauma. As we cover in our mental health trend elsewhere in the report, the pandemic will have lasting effects for years to come, most of which cannot be vaccinated against.

Best-case



2020: A year in insights

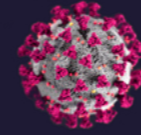
Around
the world ▶

Insights
from GWI
datasets ▶



by
TOM MORRIS

JAN



China confirms human-to-human transmission of “mysterious SARS-like virus”

33% planned to purchase either travel tickets or a vacation abroad. By September, this will fall by 22%

GWI Core Q4 2019 & Q2 2020

FEB

Australian wildfires ravage the country, burning 46 million acres by March

Interest in environmental issues among Australian Gen Zs grew by 13%

GWI Core Q4 2019 & Q1 2020

MAR

COVID-19 officially declared pandemic by WHO

60% said they were extremely/very concerned about the COVID-19 situation globally. By July, this will rise to 64%

GWI Coronavirus Research Waves 1 & 5

APR

Netflix sees an additional 15.6m subscribers with Disney+ passing 50m

57% said they were watching more shows/films on streaming services because of the pandemic

GWI Coronavirus Research Wave 2

MAY



Black Lives Matter protests erupt across the U.S.

Just 11% of Black U.S. internet users agreed they felt represented in the advertising they saw

GWI USA Q2 2020

JUN

Masks begin littering the world's oceans as worldwide concern for sustainability and eco-consciousness shows

3 in 4 said companies behaving in an eco-friendly manner had become more important to them post-pandemic

GWI Coronavirus Research Wave 3

JUL

Many employers announce they have no plans to re-open offices until 2021

42% of full-time workers in the UK/U.S. said they were working fully from home - 1 in 3 were still working fully from their workplace

GWI Zeitgeist July 2020

AUG

Restrictions begin to relax globally as businesses, pubs, and offices cautiously reopen

The number of knowledge workers using Zoom increased by 315%

GWI Work Wave 2

SEP

TikTok/
Oracle deal
provisionally
approved by
the Trump
administration

47% of U.S. Gen Zs used TikTok -
double the number who watched
live television on a TV channel
each week

GW I USA Q2 2020

OCT

Democratic
congresswoman,
Alexandria Ocasio-
Cortez, makes her
Twitch debut to over
400k viewers – one of
the 20 biggest streams
in the site's history

3 in 10 UK and U.S. users said they're playing more
games now than before the COVID-19 outbreak

GW I Zeitgeist October 2020

NOV



Joe Biden is
declared President-
elect pending legal
challenges

87% of voters in the U.S. have little
or no trust in the media

GW I USA Q2 2020

DEC

Pfizer and
Moderna
vaccines
move
closer to
market after
successful
trials

54% of UK and U.S. internet
users said in May they'll
likely have a coronavirus
vaccination when one
becomes available

GW I May Custom Data 2020



by
KATIE GILSEAN

05



A green awakening

Make sustainability part of the recovery

As the world locked down in 2020, the environment appeared to get a new lease of life.

The Himalayas were **visible** from India for the first time in three decades. Venice's usually murky **canals** turned clear. The air was cleaner in many major cities.

The reduced economic activity as a result of widespread stay-at-home orders led to a major decrease in CO2 emissions

and improved air quality. In 2020, it's estimated the world will use around **6%** less energy compared to 2019. The biggest carbon crash we've ever seen.

This all sounds like a considerable win for the environment, and for people's health. And it would be – if it were sustainable.

Sadly, this isn't the case. And these stories also mask the full picture.



High, high hopes

COVID-19 initially led to much greater optimism about the potential impact on the environment. In Q2 2020, 53% of consumers globally said they think the environment will get better in the next 6 months, up from 41% in Q1 2020.

This is the first time we've seen increases of this magnitude. Across the majority of the 46 countries we track, consumers' environmental optimism jumped up by at least 20 points during this timeframe. Only 4 markets had a slight decrease, or no change, in optimism.

Among generations, even though Gen Z and millennials are far more positive about the future of the environment than baby boomers generally, there's still significant increases across the board.

This optimism is largely influenced by the perception that COVID-19

Consumer backlash is looming as the reality of the situation becomes clearer

has, or will have, a positive impact on the environment.

Despite this, it seems the positive developments have been short-lived and overstated.

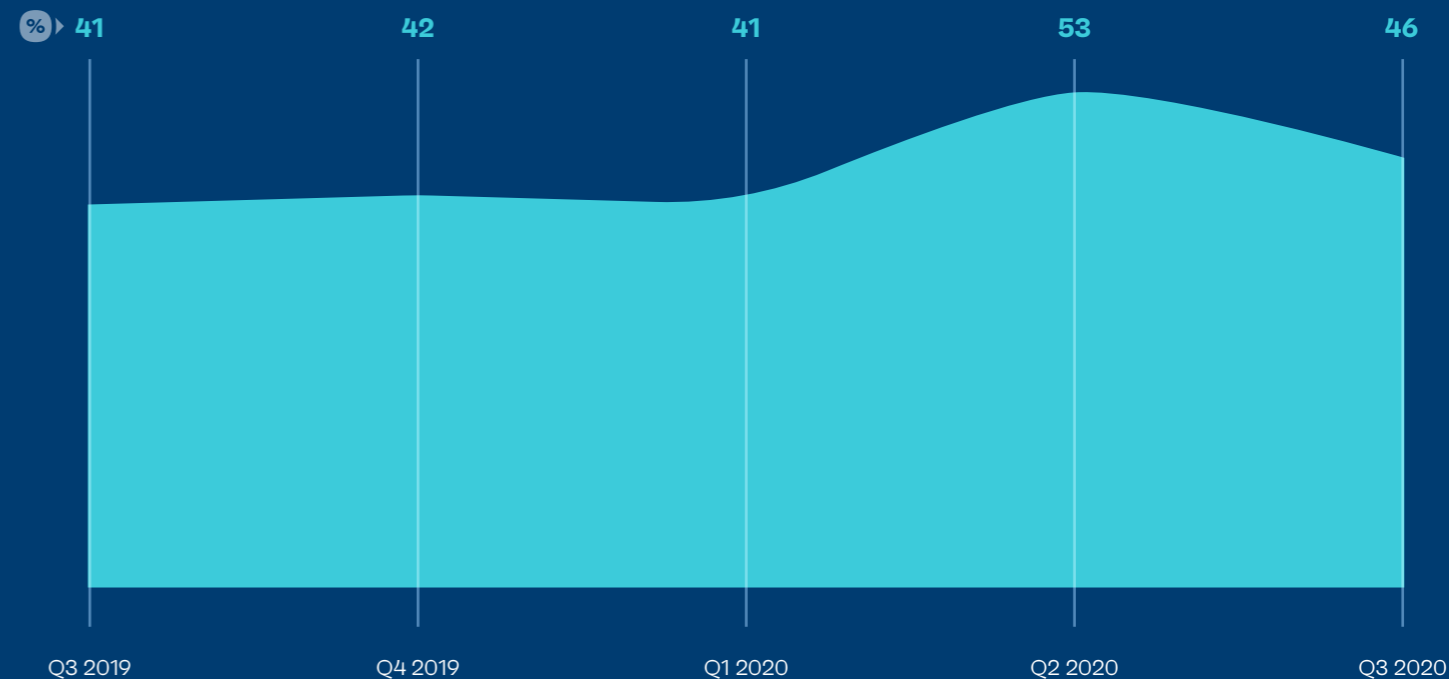
Air pollution **levels** quickly returned to pre-pandemic levels in 12 major world cities. Research also shows that the dramatic drops in air pollutants and greenhouse gases will have very **little impact** on global warming. This is because the changes were temporary, and have come at the greatest possible cost. One which no one wishes to continue.

Consumer backlash is looming as the reality of the situation becomes clearer. In findings from our Q3 2020 research, we can already see that optimism about the environment has sharply declined. Brands should heed the warning.

“

the environment will get better in the next 6 months

% who agree with the above statement





Mounting problems

Aside from the very short-lived gains, which are quickly lost as economic activity resumes, the outbreak has created a whole host of problems that are simmering under the surface.

The production of single-use plastics and waste has increased considerably, especially as PPE usage surged. A study by SYSTEMIQ **forecasts** that the flow of plastic into oceans will nearly treble by 2040 if governments and industries don't take greater action to combat the growing plastics crisis. This can be minimized by producing and buying more **reusable PPE** that work just as well, but spare the environment and wildlife.

At the same time, other changes in consumer behavior during the pandemic have contributed to the waste problem. Consumers are shopping online more and consuming more takeout food,

both of which are still heavily reliant on overusing packaging or single-use plastics. In February 2020, food delivery giant Just Eat **partnered** with sustainable packaging startup Notpla to trial tree and grass pulp boxes lined with seaweed, which decompose in around 4 weeks. More need to follow suit.

Some companies in China – one of the world's biggest users of plastic – are also making headway in tackling the growing waste problem. Meituan Dianping, China's leading ecommerce platform for services, is ramping up efforts to build a **green supply chain** for packaging. Showing the importance of continued business action, even during this time.

As the mountain of plastic waste piles up, so will the pressure on businesses to take action.

Increased waste due to COVID-19 has quickly become one of consumers' biggest concerns, alongside air pollution, showing just how much the environmental issues associated with COVID-19 are starting to play on their minds.

When we asked consumers what impact COVID-19 will have on the environment, the majority were pretty pessimistic – a sign of the impending backlash to come. Just over 40% of consumers say the outbreak will have a negative impact on the environment, either short-term or long-term. Even among those who think it will be positive, 25% of them say the impact will be short-lived.

When we asked consumers what impact COVID-19 will have on the environment, the majority were pretty pessimistic

Environmental worries

% of consumers in 7 countries who say they're concerned about the following



GW
 GWI Zeitgeist September 2020
 8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

**In July 2020,
72% of consumers
across 20 countries
said companies
behaving
sustainably was
more important
to them because
of COVID-19**



Walk the walk

Understandably in the current situation, COVID-19 has garnered far more attention than environmental issues. But our research shows the importance of behaving sustainably, both at an individual and business level, has increased.

A little less conversation, a little more action...

% who say they plan to do the following in the next 6 months (in 7 countries)



Consumers also have high expectations of their own behavior; around 70% also said that reducing their own impact on the environment was more important because of the outbreak. Consumers haven't forgotten about one crisis during another.

The Philippines and India post the highest figures across the board, reaching over 85%. Both countries that are often at the sharp end of the waste crisis.

Clearly consumers' positive intent is there, but so is their willingness to take action.

The top actions people say they plan to do in the next 6 months are: reduce food

waste, walk or cycle more, and reduce the amount of plastic/single-use packaging they use. But they can't do it alone. Governments, brands, policy makers, and manufacturers are all instrumental in making these ambitions a reality.

For example, something as simple as walking or cycling more (a far more sustainable form of transport) requires cities to invest in dedicated cycling infrastructure and create more walking space. The pandemic has spurred many cities to take action, including London's **Streetspace** and Mexico City's commitment to create 54km of designated cycle lanes.

REDUCING IMPACT
70%
 said that reducing their own impact on the environment was more important because of the outbreak

Opportunity to reset

COVID-19 has shown us just how difficult it will be to address climate issues. Energy emissions are set to drop around 6% this year, but to reach the goal of keeping global temperature increases to less than 2 degrees, net emissions of greenhouse gases must fall to around zero by 2050. And we've got a long way to go. Analysis from *The Guardian* found that in at least 18 of the world's biggest economies, pandemic **rescue packages** are dominated by spending that has a harmful environmental impact.

Making the changes that are needed involves a complete reset of our economies and how we operate.

Every industry – from aviation to manufacturing – needs to take responsibility to reassess their supply

EMISSIONS

This year, energy emissions are set to drop around

6%

chains, their operations, and make tangible steps forward in tackling this growing problem. Several **fashion brands** have promised to make sustainability front-and-center to their recovery, while Shell plans for a major **restructuring** as it prepares to invest more in renewable energy. Unlike the pandemic, for which there will likely be some kind of a solution in the next two years, tackling climate change is a bigger, long-term battle that will take decades to improve – with catastrophic health, economic, and environmental consequences if we don't.

COVID-19 has taught us so many lessons about our impact on the world we live in, and the changes we need to make. Don't let this opportunity go to waste.

COVID-19 has taught us a lot about our impact on the world we live in, and the changes we need to make

Worst-case



If future waves of the virus come our way, or if a vaccine is delayed, there's no doubt COVID-19 will be the primary focus again. While we need to be doing what we can to fight the virus, we also need to lay the groundwork to rewire the economy and make it more sustainable going forward. Our impact on the environment was bad enough before COVID-19; without more collective action and awareness, it could be far worse.

Even if the situation with COVID-19 were to drastically improve overnight, our fight against climate change won't. We're a long way off reaching the goals set out in the Paris Agreement. COVID-19 has shown us just how difficult decreasing energy output is and how much work there's left to do. Businesses, governments, and policy makers need to use COVID-19 as an opportunity to double down on sustainability commitments and investments – inaction is not an option.

Best-case





by
CHASE BUCKLE

06



Coming of age

2020: a generation- defining year for Gen X and boomers

By the end of this decade, most global consumers are expected to be older than 60.

Though the global population is aging and people are having fewer babies, the power and influence of older groups in the marketplace seems to have been largely lost on some marketers. As Generation Z have taken the pedestal from under millennials

as the newest enigma for the modern marketer, Generation X and baby boomers have often been left at the margin.

Exact age definitions for generations vary to some extent. What matters are the lived experiences these groups have in common, and the subsequent shared-consciousness which unites their beliefs and habits.



“Old” and “young” stereotypes are becoming old-fashioned

Younger generations attract such attention for a reason – they break the status quo in society, demand new innovation in products, and reset long-held expectations.

But in terms of digital behavior, the “generation-defining” year of 2020 has been much more impactful for Gen X and boomers compared to their younger counterparts.

Barely any part of their online lives has been left untouched by the pandemic, to the extent where distinctions between “young” and “old” from a digital standpoint have taken a big step toward becoming less relevant.

As lockdown restrictions came into effect, spikes in digital activity followed. For younger groups, it didn’t take long for these spikes to settle down. For older groups, their engagement continued to flourish.

As lockdowns began to ease, older groups were doing much more than just browsing Facebook, Amazon, and Netflix. These shifts represent a step-change in how the internet fulfills the basic needs of older consumers, and how much they’ll rely on the internet in the future.

Three areas stand out:

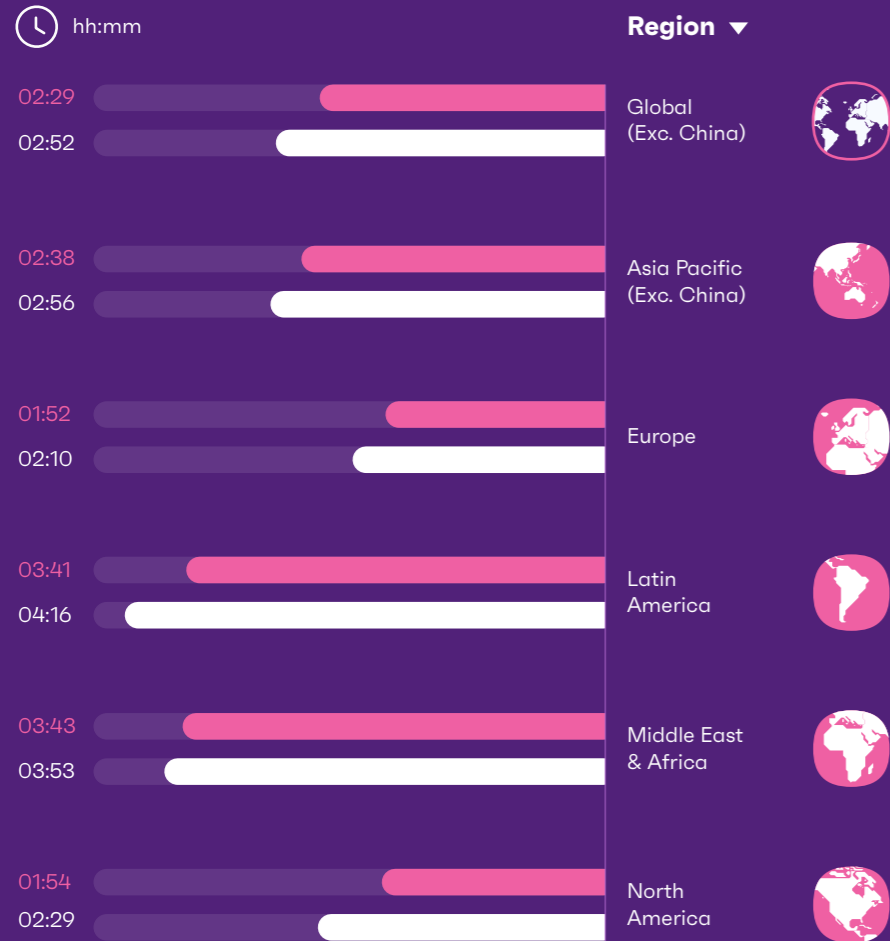
1. Commerce
2. Finance
3. Social-connectedness

As lockdowns eased, older groups were doing much more than just browsing Facebook, Amazon, and Netflix

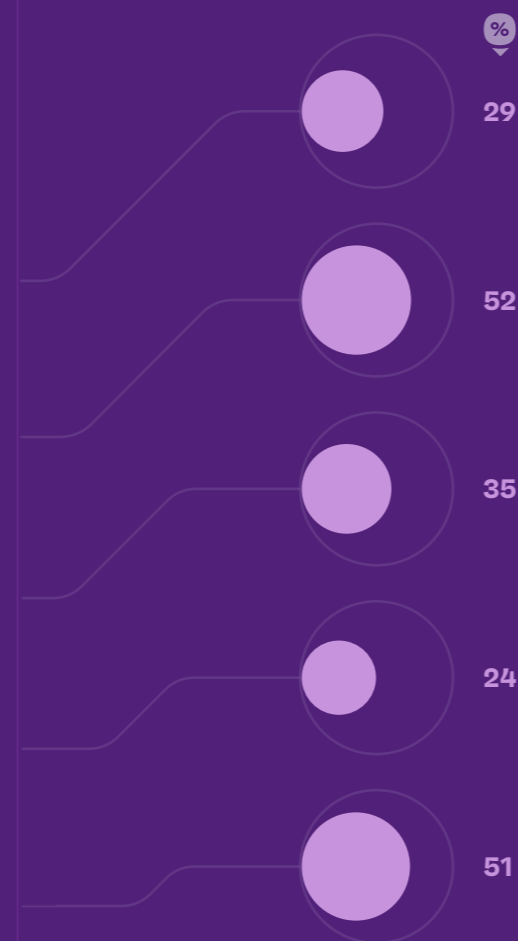
Mobile has compounded digital engagement growth

Average time spent online on mobile per day among Gen X/boomers

● Q3 2019 ● Q2 2020



% of internet users that are Gen X/boomers

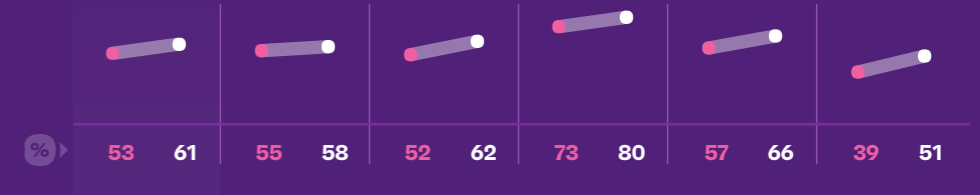


GWII Core Q3 2019 & Q2 2020

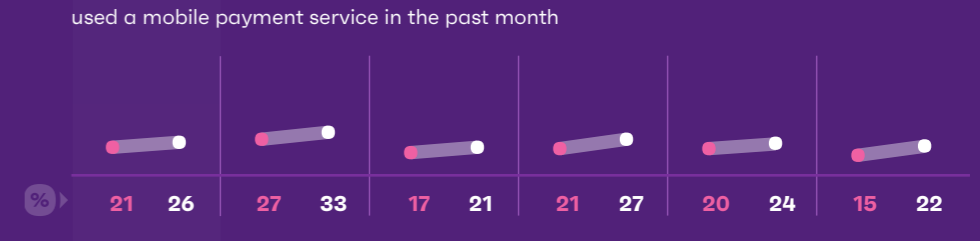
127,713 internet users born between 1956-1982

● Q3 2019 ● Q2 2020

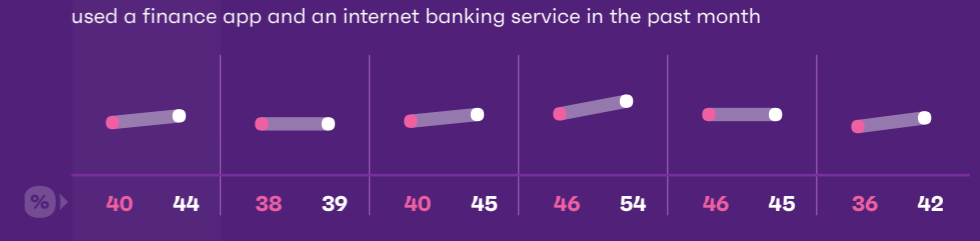
Social media: a source of belonging



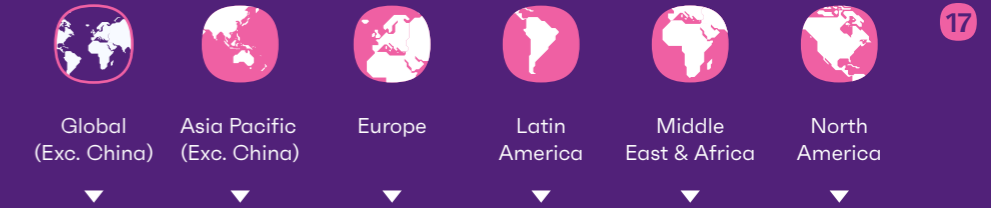
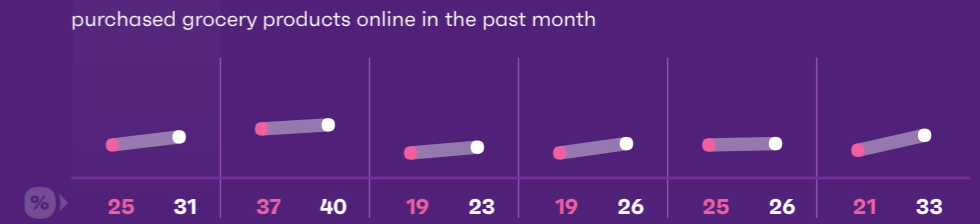
Contactless payments: a source of safety



Online finance: a source of security



Online grocery: a source of sustenance



A source of sustenance

Ecommerce has exploded, but not just thanks to new online shoppers. The surge in ecommerce demand is mainly thanks to existing online shoppers buying more products online than they typically bought in-store before the pandemic.

Although many categories saw increased online spend, online grocery has been the most insightful into how habits developed during the pandemic can impact future behavior. Unlike the occasional online purchase of clothing or electronics, purchases of high-frequency items online like groceries are much more powerful in forming habits and keeping online options front-of-mind.

This is a matter of sustenance, rather than materialism. Just as UK online

grocer Ocado has **found**, once people realize the ease of carrying out a weekly necessity from the comfort and safety of their homes, they're unlikely to look back.

The biggest growth in online grocery shopping has come from Europe, LatAm, and particularly NorthAm; markets where growth before the pandemic was hard-won, especially among older consumers. In these regions, Gen X and boomers typically make up the vast majority of household food shoppers. Expect even more pressure on traditional grocers as online competitors cause race-to-the-bottom pricing, and look out for major logistical and user experience improvements to streamline online grocery in these countries.

The biggest growth in online grocery shopping has come from Europe, LatAm, and particularly NorthAm

A source of security

Feeling secure in our lives is another basic human need, and older groups have taken strides in getting their sense of security online.

Much like online grocery, wholesale digital transformation in financial services has been hampered by older consumers sticking to managing their finances offline.

Over the course of 2020, adoption of internet banking and finance apps accelerated among older groups in NorthAm, LatAm, and Europe. Mobile payments also gained momentum, and a growing number of people were managing their finances exclusively on their smartphones.

Over the course of 2020, adoption of internet banking and finance apps accelerated among older groups in NorthAm, LatAm, and Europe

There's a lot of moving parts here. Fintech ecosystems are much more developed than they were a few years ago, but traditional banks are still the main interface between consumers and their money. For banks looking to shore up their balance sheets, the smoke is yet to clear on the extent of bankruptcies and loan defaults postponed by government rescue packages.

Bank branches are costly, and closures were already happening before the pandemic. Given the sizable base of older consumers in Western countries with older-skewing populations, the future banking landscape will be more determined by the present choices of older consumers than you'd expect.



A source of social fulfillment

You often hear younger generations are ditching Facebook because their parents are signing up and cramping their style. This isn't really true. They're not ditching Facebook, but until March Facebook usage and social media usage were largely one and the same for Gen X and, especially, for boomers.

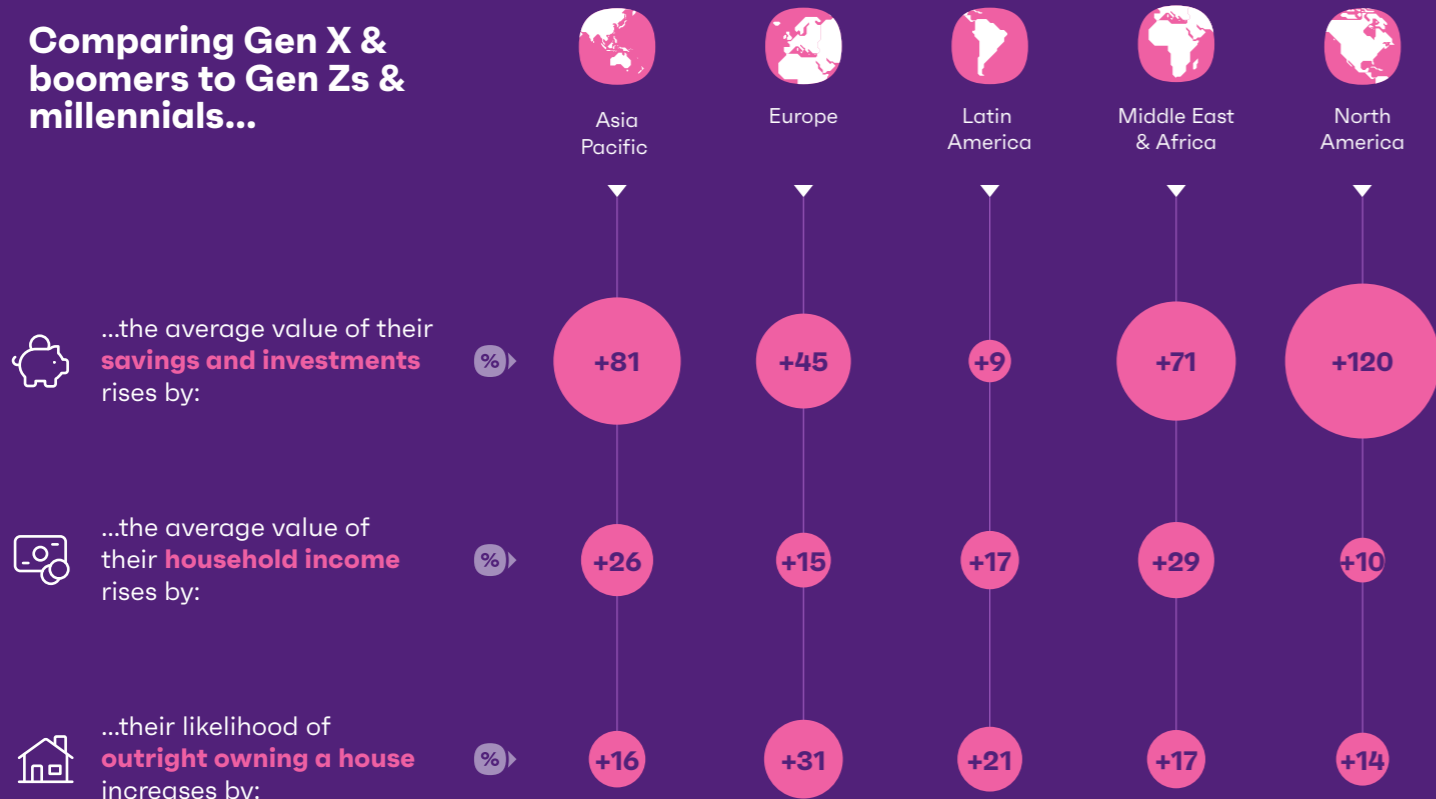
There are many ways to measure social media usage beyond the monthly user counts you see in earnings calls and news reports. Our monthly visitation data shows older groups outside of China have embraced messaging apps during Q2. They have even embraced new platforms like TikTok, where **#over50** reveals plenty of older creators weighing in on TikTok challenges, and plenty of younger experts posting how-to videos for older newcomers. But the most striking results come from frequent usage in a day.

Messaging apps in particular have found ways to embed themselves in older groups' day-to-days; coinciding with increased daily time spent online on mobiles. The "killer app" quite predictably has been voice and video calling, which older groups have adopted in swaths. Rather than just scrolling through updates, social media has proved itself as a viable source of belonging and social connection for older groups. They're now relying on seeing and hearing their friends and family on their smartphones.

This has consequences on the makeup of marketing mixes. In Western countries with older – faster aging – populations, younger social media engagement hasn't always persuaded marketers to move the needle toward digital over traditional channels. The growing adoption among older users could prove decisive in changing that.

Gen X boomers are wealthier than their younger counterparts

Comparing Gen X & boomers to Gen Zs & millennials...



GWI Core Q2 2020 179,219 internet users aged 16-64

Why they matter

If all this wasn't convincing enough, there's also Gen X boomers' purchasing power to consider. There's a reason why millennials are referred to as "generation rent". Many were priced out of the property ladder after the 2008 recession. Yet depending on where you're standing, their parents' generations were lucky – or savvy – enough to cash in on lower tertiary education costs, more affordable property deposits before massive price booms, and generous pension schemes (by today's standards) thought to be unsustainable for younger workers.

This isn't to take sides on the perennial generation debate about who got luckiest; younger generations benefit from opportunities and freedoms which their parents could only dream of. It's to show that older groups already have the most market power, and this will only increase as populations age. Thanks to technology, people are living longer, healthier lives, and they'll be able to enjoy their superior purchasing power in retirement more than any generation before them.

Their attitudes toward advertising and spending indicate a willingness to use this purchasing power, too. They're characteristically loyal to the brands they like, they can be vocal advocates when they want to be, they're keen online shoppers, and they tend to be very accepting of advertising in general. Yet only 13% say they feel represented in the advertising they see, dropping to as low as 8% in North America, and just 5% in Europe. This might well be one of the most important obstacles for marketers to overcome as this group comes of age.

This trend is as old as its subject matter, but the pandemic has had a huge impact on their technology reliance, skipping us forward many years. Now is the time for brands to get to know these digital latecomers.

Younger groups haven't lost their relevance, but older groups are about to rediscover theirs.

SMALL REPRESENTATION

13%
of older groups say they feel represented in the advertising they see

Worst-case



If the virus cannot be contained and heavier restrictions follow, technology will again be the main connection between us, the services we need to sustain ourselves, and our friends and family.

Activity spikes might not be as dramatic, but it'll be another chance for technology to prove itself across our lives through forced circumstance.

The digital knowledge gap is wider among older consumers, but most tech is so intuitive that the major hurdle is in exposing people to new ways of doing things in the first place. Heavy restrictions will close this gap fairly rapidly as reliance on the internet strengthens.

This is a pretty unstoppable trend. It mainly comes down to how permanent these behaviors prove to be. While older groups' activities subsided slightly in Q3, that's only to be expected. They're still notably above that seen before the pandemic.

Whether a vaccine arrives tomorrow, or if new cases begin to decline to the extent that "normality" rears its head, the precedent has been set in older consumers' technology attitudes.

Best-case





by
ISAAC HOPKINS

07



The digital storefront

How livestreams will support ecommerce 2.0

When the world closed up shop in 2020, ecommerce shifted into a **new gear**. But how consumers shop online is set to change.

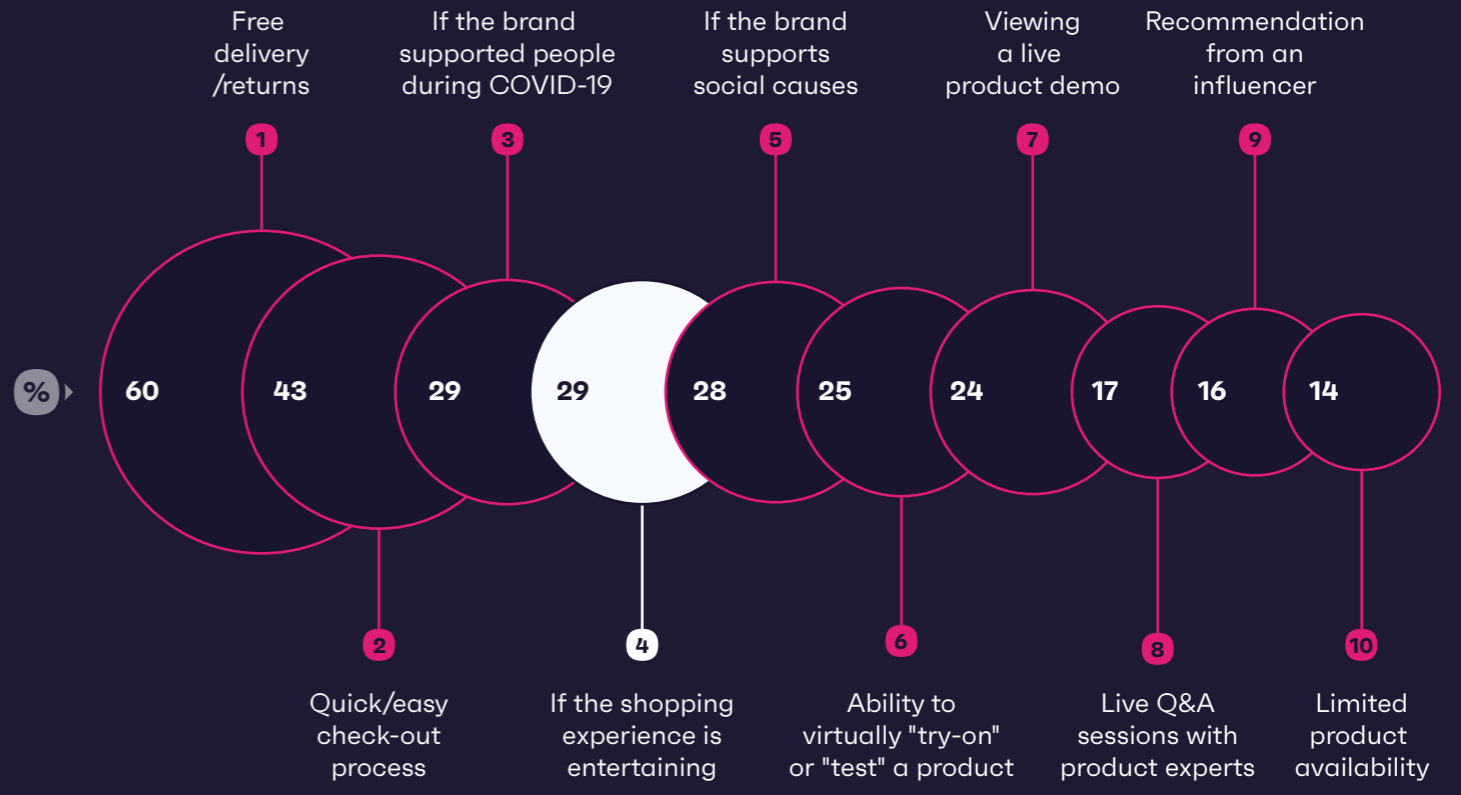
In the shock of the pandemic's early days, simply getting goods out of the door was a challenge in its own right. But with more consumers set to shop online, and brick-and-mortar footfall down in many locations, a new competitive frontier will arrive in retail. With more activity online, the competition will be just a click away. It will be harder for brands to stand out, and to guide their customers to the products they want.

With more activity online, the competition will be just a click away



Entertainment just as important as support

% who say the following would encourage them to buy a product when shopping online (in 7 countries)



GW I Zeitgeist September 2020 8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

That's entertainment

Ecommerce boomed as stay-at-home orders were issued, and the increased activity will stick. 49% of consumers expect to shop online more frequently, even after the pandemic. But given the context of a virus, aspects of the experience could become stale. Product delivery has to be socially distanced, there is little interaction with staff or fellow shoppers and, most of all, fewer ways to distinguish a brand.

Online purchases are still largely driven by the "seamless" qualities of free delivery (60%) and an easy check-out (43%).

But 29% want the experience to be entertaining. Consumers want reduced friction in the purchase process, but it's worth thinking about what's lost from the shopping experience under

widespread restrictions. Trying on products is harder, if not impossible, and the social aspect is largely gone as well.

Many retailers recognized support for social causes as a potential deal-clincher (or deal-breaker) for consumers during 2020. But an entertaining experience is just as important – and it will become even more so through 2021. The call for "entertainmentmerce" has come loudest from high-income earners (32%) and millennials (33%), so there is some serious spending up for grabs.

Livestreams are already emerging in some parts of the globe as a way to provide that entertainment into the shopping experience. They're engaging and easily accessible, as well as entertaining. They're probably best

known for being popular in China – in May 2020, Chinese livestreamer Viya hosted a livestream to more than 37 million users – and each night her audience places orders worth millions of dollars. But brands across the globe should be prepared for this trend spreading in some form. TikTok and Instagram are both doubling down on commerce integrations with livestreams (to say nothing of Amazon's ambitions), and the global context will require retailers to work harder to fight for customers.

While entertainment is less in demand in the West, it's still up there in the priority list. In both China and Germany, for example, an entertaining experience is the third leading purchase motivator – just behind free delivery/returns and quick/easy check-out.



The value of browsing

When consumers watch live-streams they're not necessarily there to make a purchase. Much like when visiting retailers in-store, they can be "just browsing". This creates an environment where retailers of all sizes can recreate their own unique storefronts online.

We've **covered** elsewhere how Gen Z are surprisingly fond of shopping in-store. There's likely to be pent-up demand among younger consumers for aspects of the in-store experience – even when shopping online – and livestreams may just fit the bill.

The livestream model in China is based around influencers (known in the country as "key opinion leaders") like Viya, and it's understandable retailers might flinch from putting their reputation in someone else's hands. But our research shows just how much consumers trust and value influencers' opinion, and how ready they are to buy through them.

Small businesses have been at the vanguard, showing off their personalities and catalogs via livestreams

More to the point – communities can form around influencers when many consumers are shopping in isolation. They can also provide a human face to brands at a time when consumers are looking for empathy to help support them through the pandemic.

29% of internet users across 7 countries frequently watch livestreams from influencers they follow on social media. And among those who do that, 80% say they're likely to buy products as a result. This is an important point in seeing the trend as something more than QVC and teleshopping moved to a new medium. This form of online

LIVESTREAMS

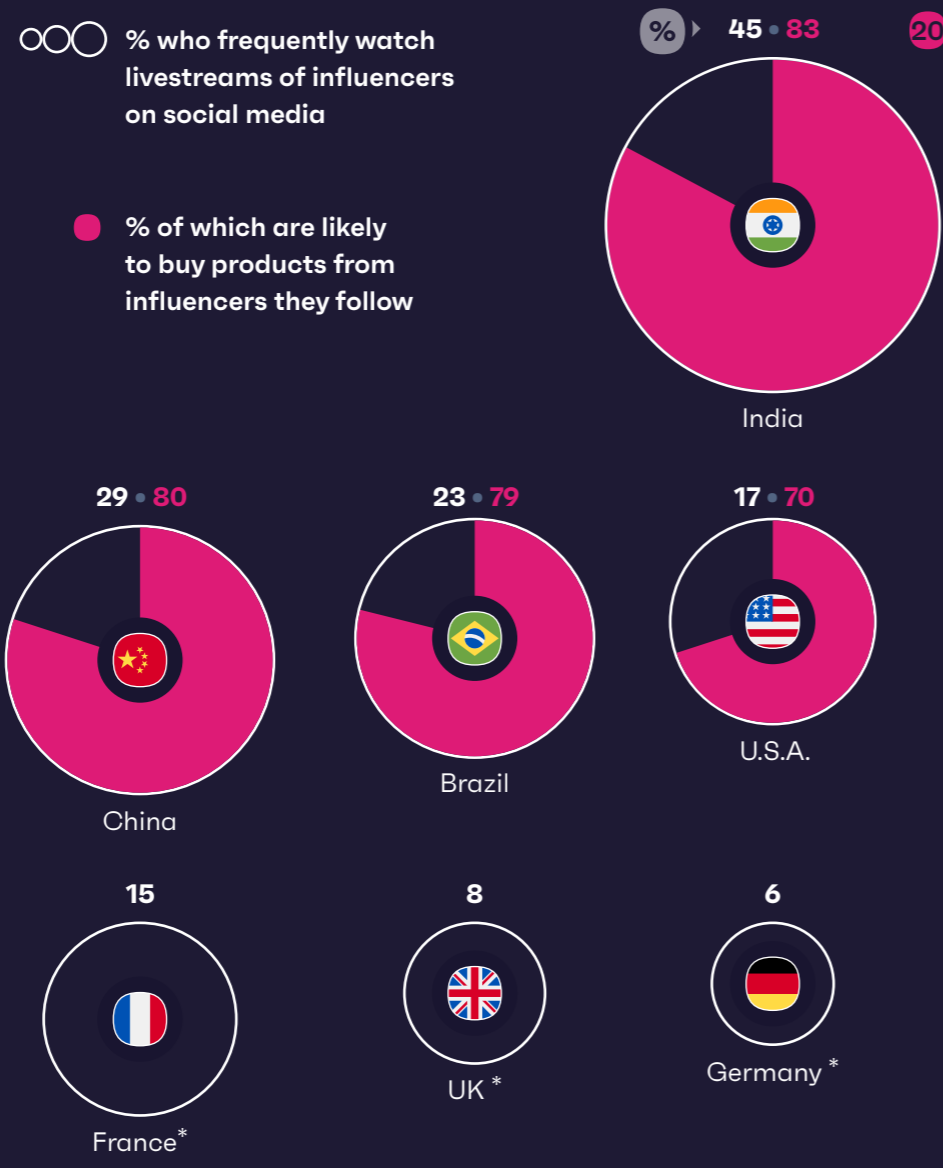
29%

across 7 countries frequently watch livestreams from influencers they follow on social media

shopping stands apart because of the interaction it fosters between viewer and streamer.

Small businesses, forced to innovate with fewer resources to manage store closures, have been at the vanguard, showing off their personalities and catalogs via **livestreams**. Larger retailers looking to get on board can reflect their values and identity as well. While using influencers as sellers or brand storytellers requires relaxing control, it may well be worth the risk to avoid getting lost in a sea of competitors.

Livestream markets are mobile-first markets



GWZ
GWZ Zeitgeist September 2020

*insufficient sample of influencer viewers
8,001 internet users in 7 countries aged 16-64

A new horizon

Those with a close eye on China have speculated whether livestream shopping could move West before, and many have different interpretations of what's at the heart of the trend. For some, it's all about keeping the viewer entertained. Or, it's about being able to see products demonstrated live. For others, it's the scarcity factor, driving purchases through offering limited "drops" of new merchandise.

While it has to be entertaining, it also has to be informative. Consumers tune into livestreams because they'll learn much more about the brand and product than simple online descriptions, pictures, and even videos. It's about finding the best way for brands to teach the consumer why they should buy their product.

But most of all, aspects of it matter more in some markets than others. Broadly speaking, entertainment is

the key draw. But in some important markets (the U.S., UK, and India) viewing a live demo is more important to consumers than being entertained. So there are different implications depending on cultural factors. In these countries, a more restrained approach, concentrating on product quality and durability, will land better than more entertainment-minded approaches.

It's been **stated** that 2020 jumped ecommerce forward by "about 5 years". 2021 may be the year infrastructure catches up to deal with the extra demand. Consumers thrive on experiences, and the pandemic has forced retailers to ensure this is possible online. Livestreams aren't just a way to offload stock in a pinch, they're a way to stay relevant and discoverable in a retail world increasingly online-first. Livestream commerce will be one key way to making this possible.

Consumers thrive on experiences, and the pandemic has forced retailers to ensure this is possible online

Worst-case



If further lockdowns are on the horizon, and in-store shopping is restricted even more, demand for a more entertaining and interactive online shopping experience will no doubt escalate. To replicate the social, fun, and interactive element that comes with in-store shopping, livestreams are the perfect avenue. Now would be the time to start experimenting, as tactics may be even more necessary in the coming years.

A quick return to normality will likely unleash pent-up demand back to stores, but livestreams will stick around. The majority of consumers plan to shop online more often once the pandemic is over, and for those craving a more entertaining and interactive experience, livestreams help brands to elevate the online shopping experience into something far more than just buying a product.

Best-case





by
VIRNA SEKUJ



Data for good

Nurturing the new relationship between consumers and their online privacy

As digital citizens, we leave an ever-growing breadcrumb trail of personal data behind us every minute of every day. And through recent years – and recent scandals – this has increasingly troubled us.

In 2013, 56% of internet users were concerned about the internet eroding their personal privacy. By 2019, this had climbed to 61%.

ONLINE PRIVACY

+5%

increase in concern about online personal privacy from 2013 to 2019



As digital citizens, we leave an ever-growing breadcrumb trail of personal data behind us every minute of every day

Fast-forward to 2020, however, and the pattern has muddied. Some privacy concerns have actually declined in the wake of COVID-19.

So what's happened? The threat to online privacy itself hasn't lessened – if anything, it's actually increased with **contact tracing apps** and **wider surveillance** operating in heavily affected regions.

What's more, this is unfolding at a crucial time, when government regulation and moves by big tech to safeguard data privacy are challenging the ad space – an industry largely reliant on user tracking to make money.

Now, with Google's announcement to **block 3rd-party cookies from Chrome by 2022**, digital marketers must pivot their strategies under a ticking clock.

Unraveling this trend and figuring out what's next has many layers. It requires us to look at the increasingly complex relationship we have with our data and how that's been impacted by COVID-19.

Fortunately for brands, advertisers, and publishers, the implications are positive. Consumers' relationship with data privacy is evolving; it's up to the industry to nurture it in the right way.

Privacy concerns dipped, especially in key markets, in early 2020

A blip or a mindset shift?

Declining privacy concerns are most evident in countries that suffered through the pandemic early on. In China, the number of internet users who reported concern about the internet eroding their personal privacy dipped by 8% between Q4 2019 and Q1 2020. In Italy, it decreased by 4%.

The story takes a more nuanced path in other regions, urging us to further explore the changing relationship between consumers and their privacy. In Latin America, Argentina stands as a clear outlier. Related to this might be the country's recent increased use of surveillance technology, both **pre-COVID** for public safety and **post-COVID** to manage the virus' spread on transit lines.

A chicken-or-the-egg question comes to mind with this case – does a

For European countries, noticeable declines in privacy attitudes suggest a mindset shift might be happening

softening public opinion allow for more widespread erosion of privacy, or is it the other way around?

For European countries, noticeable declines in privacy attitudes suggest a mindset shift might be happening. In Sweden, concern about the internet eroding personal privacy went down 12% between Q4 2019 and Q1 2020, while in Switzerland it declined by 9%, and in Austria, by 7%.

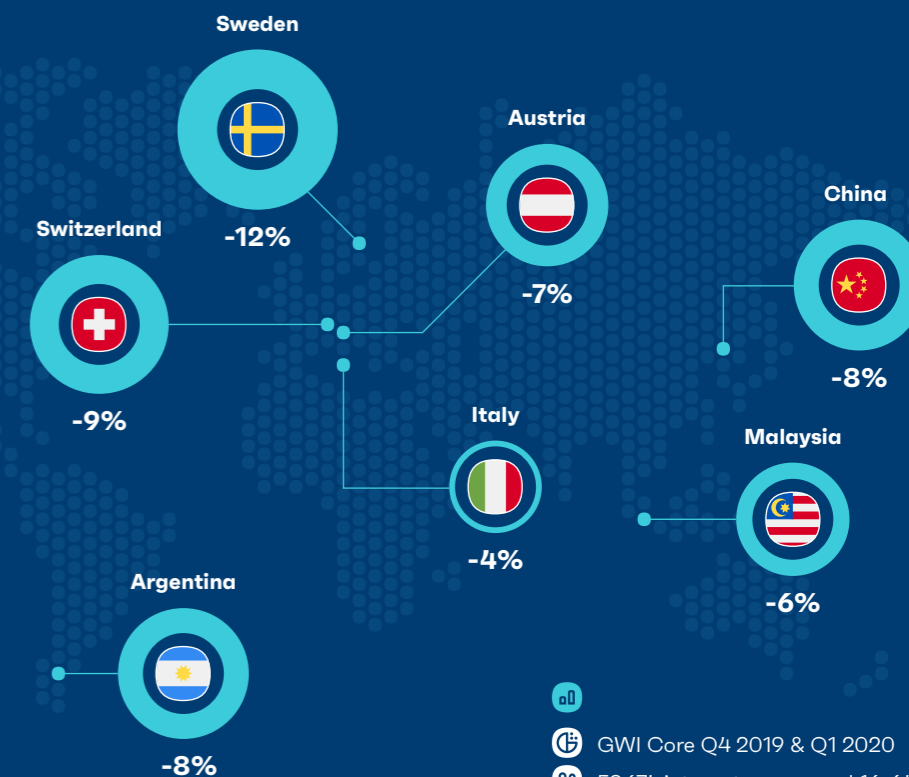
Europe has been at the forefront of consumer data protection, setting a precedent with GDPR. Seeing this dip in privacy-consciousness across many of its markets, begs the question – how?

Being accustomed to stronger protection of their data, many Europeans might be the first to move into a new, more open, and evolved relationship with online privacy.

“

I am concerned about the internet eroding my personal privacy

●●● % change in agreement levels with the above statement between Q4 2019 and Q1 2020



GWI Core Q4 2019 & Q1 2020



59,674 internet users aged 16-64

Data in the name of public health

It's difficult to isolate the effects of the pandemic from broader factors shaping data privacy. However, our research shows a more direct link via the demand for data-driven solutions to curb the pandemic: namely, contact tracing.

Numerous apps now allow registered devices to communicate with each other via Bluetooth, logging potential exposures and notifying individuals if they're at risk.

This method for contact tracing, while effective, is rife with potential privacy issues because of how sensitive data would be identified, stored, and processed.

But that concern has hardly made a dent in public demand for these apps, whose potential benefits to public health evidently outweigh the privacy risks. Across 18 markets, nearly 3 out of 4 internet users support government

TECH IN HEALTH

30%

say they trust new technology to improve their health

contact tracing apps/programs to curb the spread of the virus.

What's especially striking is that the most privacy-conscious among us are just as likely to support contact tracing apps as the rest.

Aside from COVID-19, technology's capacity to improve our health seems to also mediate the usual suspicions. Among all global consumers, 30% say they trust new technology to improve their health. This is equally as high among those with strong privacy attitudes. It's even higher, at 35%, for those with strong privacy behaviors.

It seems that even the most privacy-conscious consumers are able to relax their fears when they know their data is being used for a public good. But what does this imply for data being used for commercial good and is there any way the ad space can tap into this mindset shift?

Support for contact tracing apps is high, even among the most privacy-conscious

% in 18 countries who support governments using contact tracing apps/systems to control the spread of the coronavirus

22



77

Most concerned about the virus

77

Live an urban area

75

Privacy behavior-driven*

75

Health conditions in household

74

Privacy attitude-conscious**

73

All

*those who have done at least 2 privacy-related activities in the past month • **those who select "strongly agree" with at least one statement (out of three) relating to online privacy



GWI Coronavirus Research Wave 5



15,271 internet users aged 16-64 across 18 global markets

From public good to personal benefit

Between the public good and the commercial bottom-line there is a step: the personal benefit. For an industry grappling with consent laws and opt-outs, emphasizing this step is crucial.

Consumers make decisions every day based on costs vs. benefits. They'll pay for what they deem to be "worth it" as long as they know the terms. But how do they evaluate when it's "worth it" to give up on some of their privacy?

Despite GDPR and other efforts, this has been wildly difficult for most people.

In reality, data sharing does provide personal benefit for internet users. It's what gives us a seamless browsing experience online, keeps ads we see relevant, and lets us take advantage of more tangible things like free wifi or discounts. And, of course, it does come at a cost – the exact terms of which are often murky or difficult to find.

Brands and publishers need to make both of these clear in order to cultivate a more equitable relationship with consumers. When you understand both costs and benefits, you can make a more reasoned choice.

Even the most privacy-conscious ones see the personal benefits of data sharing and are willing to make that exchange. 41% of global consumers prefer to exchange their personal data for free services rather than pay for those services to safeguard their data.

Interestingly, those who say they feel represented in advertising are also more likely than average to be among the data-sharers. This points to the implicit, but often unseen, personal benefits of data sharing. The experience will be inherently more customized, and the knock-on effect is likely a stronger sense of seeing advertising that reflects you. That type of feeling is what brands strive for.

FREE SERVICES

41%

of global consumers prefer to exchange their personal data for free services rather than pay for those services to safeguard their data

Data exchange is attractive when users see personal benefits

“

I prefer to exchange my personal data for free services*

% of the following groups who prefer to exchange their personal data for free services



*vs. paying for services in order to keep their data private

**those who picked at least 1 of 3 data concerns in our new Q2 2020 attitudinal question

GWJ Core Q2 2020 179,219 global internet users aged 16-64

Our relationship with online privacy is evolving and maturing



The relationship matures

While emphasizing these benefits is key, being transparent about the cost is, ultimately, the other half of the analysis. For advertisers to take advantage of relaxing consumer worries during this period, a new commitment to transparency and clarity in the long run will be paramount.

Our relationship with online privacy is evolving and maturing; the pandemic has accelerated this, and made clear what we will tolerate and why.

For brands, advertisers, and publishers the opportunity lies in nurturing this new relationship the right way, so that data can truly be for the good of all.

Worst-case



A more long-term struggle to control the virus will recruit data to the battlefield more than ever before. Governments and private industries will increasingly scrape and process personal data for the good of public health. If done right, this will accelerate our acceptance of a new reality of less privacy, with the benefit of better safety and organization. Advertising and marketing only stand to benefit.

The future of less online privacy is, in the long run, inevitable, so even if the pandemic subsides, the data movement will not. But developments are likely to be slower and consumer acceptance a more gradual slope. The ad industry will continue to be challenged, as this overall trend will lose some of the initial wind in its sails.

Best-case



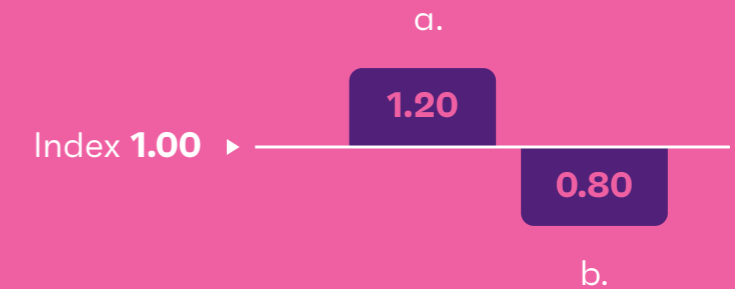
Methodology & definitions

All figures in this report are drawn from GWI's online research among internet users aged 16-64*. Our figures represent the online population of each market, not its total population. Note that in many markets in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region, low internet penetration rates can mean online populations are more young, urban, affluent, and educated than the total population. Each year,

GWI interviews over 700,000 internet users via an online questionnaire for our Core dataset. Some of these respondents complete a shorter version of this survey via mobile, while others answer additional questions about their brand and media consumption, hence the sample sizes presented throughout this report may differ as some questions are asked of all respondents while others are only asked of a subset.

*GWI USA is representative of internet users aged 16+

Defining index



Throughout this report we refer to indexes. Indexes are used to compare any given group against the average (1.00), which unless otherwise stated refers to the global average. For example, an index of “1.20” (a) means that a given group is 20% above the global average, and an index of “0.80” (b) means that an audience is 20% below the global average.

Want more answers?

Our survey-led research gives you the answers you need on your target customers. That's why the world's biggest brands rely on us to shape their thinking

[Find out more](#)

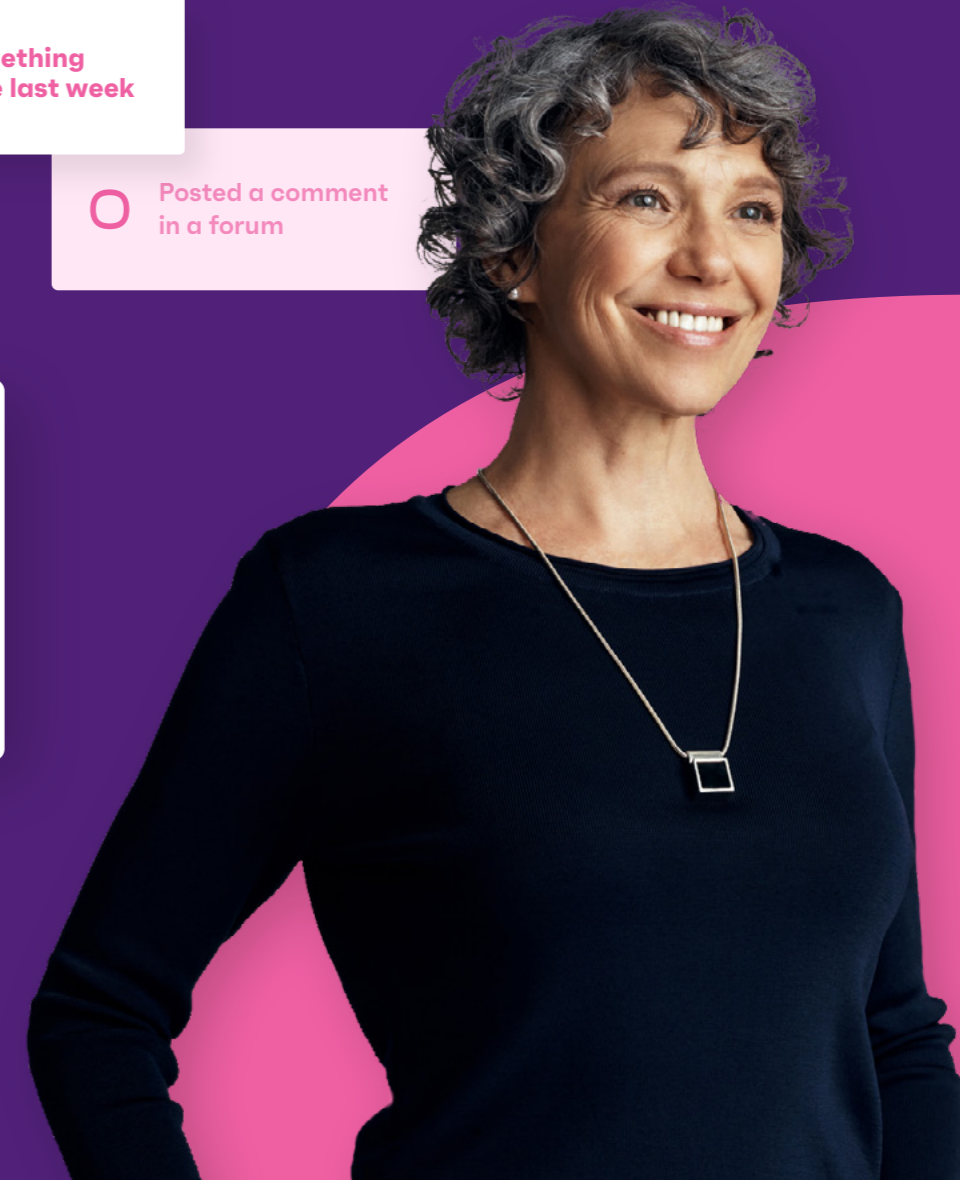


Bought something online in the last week

Posted a comment in a forum

1/4

buyers say blogs are very influential when researching a new product



Appendix

- 1 If you could live in any of the following areas, which would you choose? • Have any of these things become more important to you because of the COVID-19 outbreak? (My career/employment)
- 2 Which of these things are you interested in?
- 3 Assuming you could easily get to your place of work/education via any of the following means, how would you prefer to commute in the future?
- 4 How frequently would you say you do the following? (work late/work overtime) • What do you want your business to do to help workers during the pandemic? (More flexible working)
- 5 How would you rate your company in the following areas? (Work-life balance/Productivity) • Thinking about your current role, how satisfied are you with your job overall? (Extremely satisfied/Satisfied) • How frequently would you say you check emails/messages outside of your normal working hours? (Always)
- 6 To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? (Strongly/some-what agree)
- 7 Thinking about COVID-19, which of these things most concern you at the moment?
- 8 Thinking about COVID-19, which of these things most concern you at the moment? (My mental/emotional wellbeing)
- 9 Since the COVID-19 outbreak, which of these things have you done to support your mental wellbeing?
- 10 Which of these do you feel able to turn to for support with your mental wellbeing?
- 11 Since COVID-19, which of these do you want to see brands/companies putting more focus on?
- 12 Which of these would concern you the most when deciding whether or not to buy from a brand?
- 13 Which of these do you think should be the most important priorities for an employer?
- 14 In the next 6 months, how do you think the environment will change? (Get better)
- 15 Which of these issues are you most concerned about at the moment?
- 16 Which of these do you plan to do in the next 6 months?
- 17 On an average day, how long do you spend online on a mobile? • How frequently do you visit/use these? • Which of these have you done on your mobile in the last month? • In the last month, which of these app types have you used? • In the last month, which of these have you or your household purchased? Which of these items did you purchase online? Which of these items did you research online before purchasing?
- 18 What is your yearly household income before tax or any other deductions? • Thinking about all the savings and investments you said you have, approximately how much do you think they are worth? • How many houses/properties do you own?
- 19 When shopping online, which of these would most increase your likelihood of buying a product?
- 20 Do you watch live-streams from influencers on social media? • How likely are you to buy products that have been recommended by influencers you follow?
- 21 To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statements below on your outlook on technology and the web?
- 22 How much do you support or oppose the following? (Governments using contact tracing apps/systems to control the spread of the virus)
- 23 Typically, which of the following would you rather do? (Exchange your data for free services vs. keep your data and pay for services)

GWI.

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