

## How to nudge consumers back to the marketplace

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### As the lockdown gets lifted, three types of shoppers will emerge. Marketers will need to appeal to each of them differently

It is finally “that” day! The lockdown has been lifted, the stores and restaurants are permitted to open, and consumers are allowed the freedom to go out and shop. The key question is: What should marketers do? How should we attract the right consumer? And, will they buy what we have to offer?

First, it is extremely doubtful whether we will have such a special day when everything gets back to normal. From all reports, it looks like it is going to be a gradual opening of the economy. Baby steps more than giant strides. Delivery by e-comm merchants will start and they will offer a wider range of products in addition to the daily staples/essentials.

Malls and movie halls may or may not open for a while but standalone stores, apparel stores, consumer-durable stores, electronic stores, electrical stores, kitchen aids stores, book and stationery stores should all open together. Or in phases.

So, what should marketers do and whom should they target?

#### Revenge shopper

We feel that the initial focus should be on the “Revenge Shopper”. We define the revenge shopper as that consumer who has been dreaming of the things they missed during the lockdown. It could be a tasty meal from KFC or McDonald’s or could be the headset they wished they had during the lockdown. Or it could even be a new pair of jeans or a visit to the local pub/bar. A new shade of lipstick. A new mobike. A chance to get together and talk face to face with their friends and share stories about the lockdown over a beer.

These consumers are likely to be the younger, more affluent shoppers who feel they have missed out on the opportunity to shop and have been waiting for the stores to open again. It is quite likely that mortality salience (being reminded of own death) could motivate them to go for the more expensive option. Bose anyone?

### Revelation shopper

A second more cautious buyer is the “Revelation Shopper”. After having spent considerable amount of time at home (and that too with spouse/kids), it is possible that they have undergone considerable amount of suffering and hard work. After all, who thought sweeping and mopping and washing dishes could be such a difficult chore? Maybe they feel that they should upgrade to a better vacuum cleaner or a dish washer so that household chores could be done more easily when needed. Maybe they feel they can manage to do the house work themselves without having to worry about the maid. Can they manage? And how can we help? These shoppers should be open to buying durables like a washing machine or an oven or a dishwasher.

### Restricted shopper

And finally, a third type of shopper, the “Restricted Shopper”. We see this group as being older, wealthier, but who are at the same time conscious of the future and what it can bring. Do they have enough savings to manage if they fall sick or lose their job? Have they set aside enough for retirement and for their kids? Do they have enough health insurance? Rather than focus on splurging or buying durables, these shoppers are more likely to focus on products which will need thought and discussion within the family. Marketers can appeal to them using logic and fear appeals.

The larger question is whether consumers will actually step out for shopping. Will they feel confidence in the safety of the public space? What can stores and restaurants do to make them feel safe? Stores could potentially allow consumers to make appointments so that selected consumers could shop without the store being crowded. Restaurants could make it special by allowing only limited consumers and allowing enough space between seated consumers. And they could curate the menu in such a way that consumers could enjoy their favourite food all over again. So, a focus on the best-selling dishes? Maybe.

What appeals will work? To nudge the revenge shopper, the mere announcement that shops are open maybe enough. However, it would be good to generate the excitement of shopping. But stronger nudge may be needed to get the other two to venture out with their credit cards. Special ‘clearance sales’ and ‘exchange offers’ will have to be announced and advertised widely. Big brands will have to collaborate with retailers to create a consumer push.

We also feel that emotion will play a huge role, especially if it can be connected to helping the local economy or the country. An anti-Chinese theme may well resonate with some consumers [sorry Apple iPhone]. However, this could be a limited segment and may not be worth the extra effort. Rather, the focus should be on what one can do for the economy and jobs.

The range of products that could be appealing to consumers could vary from the simple car battery to comfort foods to FMCG to automobiles to devices that allow one to work at home

to durables. So, the range could be quite broad and it is important for marketers to select their TG carefully and to appeal to them effectively. Marketing 101 and segmentation are very much needed.

## Travel and education

The travel industry could face the biggest challenge, with international travel suffering more than local travel. With the type of restrictions in place across the world and the scary stories that have come out in the media, vacationing or even travelling for work may just have to wait. People are quite comfortable with using Zoom and other devices to connect. However, some travellers could feel the need to connect and tick off a few places from their 'bucket list' when the prices are good. We anticipate a huge surge in domestic 5 Star travel, after the travel restrictions are lifted. So good vacation spots in the country could get a boost six months down the line.

Education, especially those which require students to stay on campus could be a huge issue. Which parent would like their child to stay on campus with 600 other students? What sort of arrangements would residential schools have to make to ensure safety? This is going to be a tough call for the schools to make as they will be held responsible if anything were to go wrong. On the other hand, if safety can be assured, parents would feel comfortable that their child is in a safe environment. There are immense possibilities to achieve this by the top schools.

Healthcare can see a big boost. There is a possibility that governments will spend money to upgrade all the government- owned hospitals. There could also be a big boost to tele or e-consultations. Start-ups in that space should start doing mass media advertising and not wait for the trickle to grow on its own steam.

So, in summary, we believe that as lockdown gets lifted three types of shoppers will emerge. Wise marketers should spend the next four weeks trying to understand these trends and be ready with strong marketing interventions. The most foolish thing to do will be to hunker down, cut all marketing and innovation spends. Instead companies should figure out how to collaborate with adjacencies, with vendors, with retailers, to build a robust consumer demand. And if consumer demand comes back, economic growth cannot be far behind.

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