



## Responding to Coronavirus: Advertising Trends & Strategy for Gas Stations



The novel coronavirus outbreak, also known as COVID-19, has severely affected many industries due to cancellations, restrictions and a drop in demand. Managing expectations of current and future customers has become even more important during this period of uncertainty. Digilant is committed to closely monitoring the impact of coronavirus on consumer behavior in order to provide the best digital advertising recommendations to advertisers during this time of uncertainty.

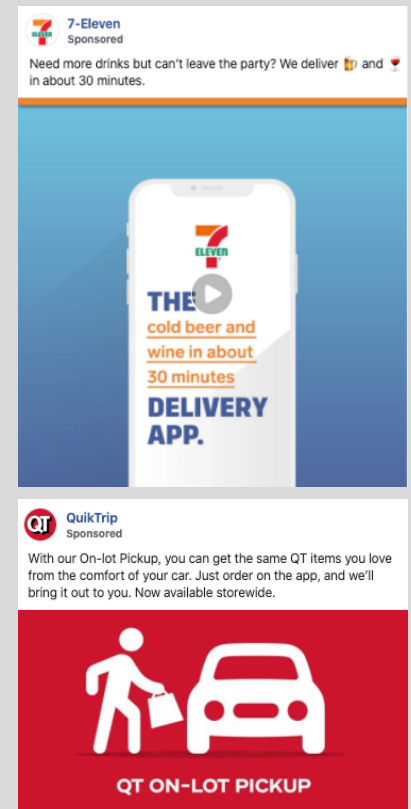
In this guide, you'll find several trends and strategies to consider to stay connected to customers and to prepare for economic recovery during this challenging time.



## 02. RETHINKING GAS STATION STRATEGY & MESSAGING

As grocery stores are out of many essential CPG items, like toilet paper, bottled water, hand soap, hand sanitizer, etc., consumers are looking for these items, along with fast food, in other, not-as-common outlets, gas stations/convenience stores included.

To respond to this, gas stations are tailoring their offerings to meet the needs of consumers. QuikTrip just launched an ad campaign featuring "On-lot Pickup" via the QT app: "Hungry? Let us do the legwork. With our On-lot Pickup, you can order your favorite items on the QT app, and we'll bring them out to you." 7-Eleven is boasting beer and wine delivery in 30 minutes. Additionally, some gas stations are offering no-touch fill-up services, in the form of both mobile gas stations and employees that come out to pump for you.



In the interest of social distancing and avoiding public facilities, a Silicon Valley startup on Thursday is demonstrating its alternative to gas pumps by offering a **touchless, mobile gas station**. Booster Fuels, based in San Mateo, filled up customers' vehicles in the parking lot of a Target store via "gas station on wheels," at prices comparable to traditional gas stations. A Utah gas station that offers plastic gloves has recently seen an increase in use. Other patrons there were calling for sanitizing wipes next to the pumps.

### MESSAGING TIP

Employ curbside pickup & message that "we'll bring it out to you."

### TARGETING TIP

Target essential workers who are still commuting to work.

### PUMP TIP

Offer plastic gloves & sanitizing wipes at pumps

### STATION TIP

Deploy touchless, mobile gas station



## 03. REASONS NOT TO GO DARK

While initial instincts may be to stop advertising during this time, there are several reasons to consider keeping a campaign running or refreshing strategy to better fit the nature of the current environment. Shifting messages could include promoting efforts to accommodate the times (no-touch gas stations, curbside pickup), philanthropic efforts, or simply changing out messages that are not relevant (dining in, in-person events, store openings, etc). As an example, Ford recently pulled ad campaigns promoting vehicles and incorporated ads supporting customers with a car payment relief program during the crisis (AdAge).

Going dark could risk losing brand equity, while as an alternative, properly shifting brand messaging could lead to an increase in both awareness and brand trust. Now is a time more than ever to stay in touch with your consumer base. Ad costs are lower, and with many companies pausing their efforts, it provides an opportunity to gain a larger share of voice.

### QUICK TIP

Shift messaging as necessary

### QUICK TIP

Reallocate budgets to surging channels

### QUICK TIP

Build on CRM & existing relationships

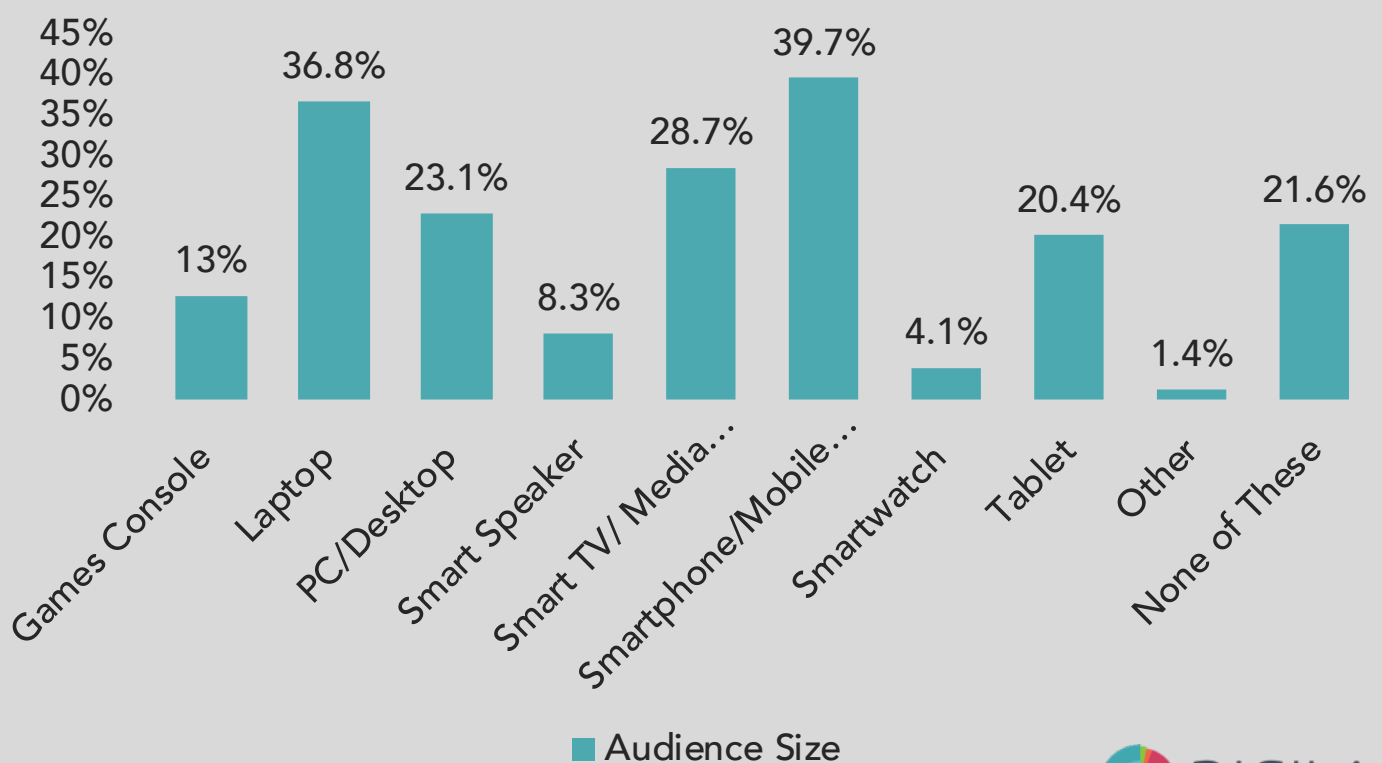
## 04. TECH USAGE

With social distancing, more consumer are turning to their devices while at home to stay connected to their loved ones and the world, as well as to entertain themselves in their down time.

Data usage has seen a huge spike since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, with overall web traffic increasing 20% (CNBC). This means more ad inventory and a larger reach than usual for advertisers looking to hone in on their target audience.

Devices expected to see a significant increase include Smartphones, Smart TVs, Laptops, Game Consoles and Tablets. Now is a time to consider expanding targeting to devices and channels that are going to see heavy usage during the coming months.

### WHAT DEVICE(S) HAVE YOU BEEN SPENDING MORE TIME USING SINCE THE START OF THE CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19 OUTBREAK?\*



\*Source: Global Web Index



# 05. RETHINKING BUDGET ALLOCATION

In looking at the research of top consumer channel trends, there is a wide range of support to continue to advertise and rethink strategy:

- **Allocate budget towards surging channels such as CTV & Social:** Now more than ever, people are on their screens and devices. As seen in recent research, TV and social are on the rise, alongside overall web traffic.
- **Reach existing customer base with tactics such as CRM Onboarding** – By focusing on upselling & staying top of mind with a current audience base, brands can avoid fading out of consumers' minds. Target past converters, drive higher engagement and utilize direct mailing lists via CRM Onboarding. Digilant's **Look-A-Like Targeting** tactic also allows advertisers to reach users who act most like their most loyal customers.
- **Crawl, Walk, Run Approach:** Instead of going dark, focus on upper-funnel strategies for the time being. With tactics such as Behavioral Targeting, Whitelisting & Keyword Targeting, Digilant can help you reach your target audience and further brand perceptions.



## 06. SHIFT TO STREAMING AND CTV

With streaming services, such as Hulu, Netflix and Youtube TV offerings binge-able content, there is no shortage of content to be watched while households all over the nation experience this quarantine. With many live events being cancelled as well, people are turning to at-home entertainment to fill the void.

According to Nielsen, the nation staying home during COVID-19 can lead to upwards of a **60% increase** in the amount of TV we consume. Nielson looked to past major crisis such as Hurricane Harvey, which showed a **56%** increase in total TV usage during that time, while in the severe North East snowstorms of 2016, TV usage in New York was **45% higher**. Understandably, desires to consume and keep up with the current events has risen, alongside entertainment .

Now is the time to allocate budget towards CTV. Reach the growing cord-cutting and cord-never audiences, achieve high completion and viewability rates, and access premium networks cost-efficiently compared to Linear TV. Digilant has wide range of CTV/OTT inventory, alongside a partnership with platforms such as Hulu.

### QUICK STAT

**29%** of users indicated they have been using streaming services/Smart TVs more since coronavirus began.

*Source: Global Web Index*

### QUICK STAT

**9%** of users indicated coronavirus outbreak as a major reason they subscribed to a streaming video service, while **12%** indicated the outbreak as a minor reason.

*Source: eMarketer*

### QUICK STAT

**32 million Americans** watched the news mid March, up **42%** from the same week last year.

*Source: Quartz*



# 07. STAYING CONNECTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

While social distancing has kept people physically away from one another, social media now more than ever, provides a way for users to stay in contact with one another. It is also a way to stay on top of the latest news surrounding COVID-19. Facebook reported that WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger use has more than doubled during this crisis (Hootsuite). In addition to users engaging with one another, social channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide an outlet for brands to stay connected with their user base and potential customers during this time, while simultaneously analyzing how they are responding to the crisis.

## QUICK STAT

**64%** of surveyed users expect their usage of YouTube to increase, while **63%** expect their Facebook usage to increase.

*Source: Yahoo Finance*

## QUICK STAT

Users are engaging with ads on Instagram more than usual with a **76% increase of likes** on #ad posts.

*Source: Obviously, 2020 Influencer Study*

## 08. GAMING SEES STRONG UPTICK

One vertical that is currently seeing positive numbers is the gaming industry. Verizon reports that gaming has seen a **75%** increase in usage since the outbreak (CNBC). This is logical given the increase in time people are spending at home looking for various ways to keep themselves entertained indoors. Some video games, such as Pokémon Go, have added features to make it more accessible to play at home or alone as opposed to with a group to encourage social distancing (Polygon).

Given the strong uptick in gaming, gaming streaming services have also seen an increase in activity. Twitch, one of the leading live video streaming platforms popular amongst gamers, has seen a 10% spike in viewership (Game Industry Biz).

This is a time to test out advertising on these interactive, engaging platforms for applicable verticals looking to reach a tech savvy audience – eCommerce, CPG, Technology and more. Through Digilant's ability to advertise via Twitch, advertisers can reach this highly engaged group as they game.







Questions?



There's a lot going on right now. Social distancing is impacting how we all do business and we know there is concern over the days ahead. Not only do you have to worry about your health and the health of your family, but you have to find the best path forward for pursuing your company's objectives for the year.

We are (and have always been) optimists and believe that we will get through this together.

We are with you for the long haul and will continue to provide relevant insights and guidance as you navigate this new normal. You can reach us with any questions or concerns at [digilant.com/contact](https://digilant.com/contact) or [info@digilant.com](mailto:info@digilant.com).