



A Practical Guide For Advertisers: Ramping Up After a Slowdown



Executive Summary

Recovery from a slowdown presents new opportunities for legacy and disruptive brands alike.

Earlier this year, advertisers were forced to change how they look at their digital advertising strategy. Leaning into agency and technology partners, advertisers have been pushed to ask tough questions and make difficult decisions when it comes to advertising investments. Through conversations with our own clients, at brands and agencies, we found that there is no conclusive answer to questions concerning how to safely invest advertising dollars, but we did find that there were some quick wins to be had for advertisers who are willing to shift their strategy to join the momentum behind digital adoption.


Now, the question is: in the face of unprecedented change, can advertisers ramp back up after the recent slowdown?

The answer is yes. When advertisers are acutely challenged to engage and convert consumers, the core elements of your digital media strategy matter more than ever.

We've taken a look at how a strategic channel and tactic mix can be practically applied to get your brands on-track for maximum success during the second half of 2020. For recommendations and considerations, keep reading.



...brands that increase [advertising] spending during a recession achieve market share gains averaging 1.6 percentage points during the first two years of a recovery.



Christian Polman
CSO, Advertising Research Foundation

Source: Ebiquity



Introduction

Transformation is more relevant than ever, as marketers must test and adopt new strategies that go beyond business as usual. Digilant's digital media solutions are dedicated to this end. We use our institutional expertise to help advertisers transform their media strategy from the inside-out. We've observed that transformation can be daunting and that advertisers are often unsure where to start — or, if transformation is already underway, where to go next.

Our guide covers three recommendations that are intended to help advertisers focus their efforts on the audiences, channels, and tactics that are best-suited for driving engagement and growth. These recommendations are not intended to be prescriptive but rather, a helpful guide for you and your team.

01 Look to consumer insights.

02 Realign your strategy with current business challenges.

03 Carry new learnings forward.



01

Look to consumer insights

If you want to engage your audience, meet them where they are. And, with over four billion people staying home worldwide, consumers' behavior and media consumption habits are changing rapidly.

While we don't know how or when the crisis will resolve, we have early insight into how consumer needs and behaviors may evolve as they seek to regain a sense of balance. To date, we've identified three consumer behavior patterns since the onset of COVID-19: streaming, app usage, and online shopping.

STREAMING

Video streaming subscriptions and usage have surged, with +40% time spent consuming and higher volumes of new subscriber requests among popular platforms.

+40%
more time spent streaming
content*

IN-APP USAGE

Digital-savvy consumers have gravitated towards apps that meet the needs of their temporary indoor lifestyles, largely in the entertainment, e-commerce, social, and messaging categories.

40%
YOY growth in mobile app
usage**

ONLINE PRESENCE

Time spent consuming content on the Internet is up +34% while our nation's e-commerce system is being pushed to its limits with increased online shopping, largely in grocery and household sectors

+34%
more time spent consuming
content online*

QUICK TIP

Test Connected TV advertising (CTV).

29% of consumers have been using streaming services and Smart TVs more since coronavirus began. Reach this audience using CTV advertising.

Source: eMarketer



02

Realign your strategy with current business challenges.

Each company has unique goals. But overall, we've seen businesses' marketing impacted in three distinct ways by COVID-19 — and they don't always progress directly from one to another.

1. You're Faced with New Challenges
2. You're Shifting Priorities
3. You're Pivoting Your Strategy

Identify which of these three situations relates most to your business, then consider the corresponding digital marketing strategies in the next section to take the best step forward.

1. YOU'RE EXPERIENCING NEW CHALLENGES

Find ways to get better results from your digital ads.

- Pause lowest performing tactics or audiences.
- Test higher engagement and lower CPA ad units like high-impact or native.

Focus on your most valuable customers.

- Adjust audience targeting to prioritize people who are most likely to take action.
- Adjust ad scheduling and pacing to reflect most optimal time and dayparts for engagement.

Make sure your updated offerings show up in your creative.

- Use dynamic creative where applicable to drive performance with limited budgets.
- Update ad creatives to reflect changes in available products or services, limited hours, special terms or conditions like "senior hours," etc.

2. YOU'RE SHIFTING PRIORITIES

Focus on your business and lean on digital media partners to help with your digital ads

- Ask your digital media partner if there is MORE they can do for you. Whether that's helping you redefine your target audience or make quick updates to ad creative.
- Utilize planning tools that save you time so you can quickly optimize bids and budgets.

Make sure you're communicating your new priorities to customers

- If you haven't already, onboard 1st Party CRM data to enhance the accuracy of targeting to existing/repeat customers so you don't fall into the trap of only reaching prospective customers.
- Review your creative to make sure they reflect your current inventory and the timeliest messaging.

Talk to your high-priority customers where they already are

- Look beyond traditional channels like display and video to engage consumers who are spending more time than ever streaming content and on social media.
- Adjust audiences to prioritize high-intent/high-converting groups and identify the geographies that work best for you. Adjust your investment accordingly.



3. YOU'RE PIVOTING YOUR STRATEGY

Make the most of existing customers

- Repurpose user-generated content in your digital advertising campaigns to capture consumers' attention and engage them in a non-intrusive way. Consumers are 2.4x more likely to view user-generated content as authentic compared to content created by brands.
- Target past converters, drive higher engagement and utilize direct mailing lists via CRM Onboarding. Look-a-like targeting allows advertisers to reach users whose behavior mirrors that of their most loyal customers.

Use automation to match your approach with changing customer behavior

- Follow the changing customer journey to inform where you should increase spend and where you can safely dial back spend.
- If you have concerns over your ads surrounding questionable content, consider creating a blocklist of any concerning keywords surrounding worrisome or controversial current events. 48% of consumers report that they would avoid a brand that appears next to undesirable content or fake news.

Align your campaigns to your goals and priorities

- To reflect business priorities, ensure that credit is given across customer touchpoints with data-driven attribution or non-last-click attribution. Diligent can help.
- Allocate budget towards surging channels such as CTV & Social: Screen time is on the rise and ad is streaming TV and social consumption.

QUICK TIP

Onboard CRM data to drive performance.

Leverage CRM data to **upsell and nurture** existing and past customers.

Utilize look-a-like targeting to **reach new consumers** whose behavior mirrors that of your most loyal customers.



Carry learnings forward.



Commerce and life after Covid-19 will change, though exactly how is uncertain...this puts a premium on fast decision making for marketing. An Agile team closely aligned with the right partners can use continual testing to get closer to consumers as their priorities evolve.

Christine Removille and
Francine Gierak
Bain & Company

The public health, political, and social upheaval of 2020 has been the ultimate test of character for advertisers. They have been charged with showing resilience and allyship - by revisiting priorities and pivoting digital marketing strategies to connect with consumers in new ways. In recent months we've learned that now is not the time for advertisers to sit still and wait for things to return to normal. Here's what else we've learned since March 2020.

- Habits triggered by COVID-19 are continuing during the re-opening of local, state and national economies – these **new behaviors are expected to remain well past re-opening**.
- **Spending more on media doesn't always yield better results.** Media investments of any amount only pay off when you invest in the right strategy.
- **Rapid response capabilities are becoming table stakes** for advertising partners and in-house teams – and for good reason. The ability to quickly pivot digital media targeting, update messaging and creative quickly will result in closing or widening the gap between consumers and brands.
- A resurgence of demand for non-essential products and services as economies re-open isn't enough to drive brand growth. **How you differentiate your brand in the eyes of consumers** will determine whether you grow faster or slower than the competition.

As an omni-channel digital services company that always trusts data over a hunch, we have changed the way we approach media campaigns on behalf of our clients during this uncertain time. Our nimble approach to our client's business has given us insight into what's resonating with consumers and what isn't. Though we continue to tailor our approach to the ever-changing landscape, we hope you found this guide as practical and actionable as it's been for us and our clients.



NEXT STEPS:

START A CONVERSATION

If you want to learn more about how to set your brand up for success in today's changing world or you just want to chat through some of the ideas shared in this guide, please reach out to us at info@digilant.com

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Digilant is an omni-channel digital partner built to take advertisers from now to next. We do this with omni-channel digital advertising strategies that are data-driven, actionable, and effective. Part of ispDigital, Digilant is made up of 100+ data-driven media minds and advertising technologists spread across US offices in Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Atlanta. By combining big ideas with executional scale we are well-equipped to champion consumer insights, campaign analysis, and media initiatives that propel brands and agencies forward. Visit us at digilant.com to learn more.