

Indicators

Coronavirus
COVID-19

Early clues on the post-crisis consumer & market realities
March 31st



#3 Simply Safe.

Consumers are looking for security in simplicity, transparency and familiarity

BORD BIA 
**Thinking
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#3 SIMPLY SAFE

Consumers are re-prioritising basic, simple safety needs from their food

We are all hard-wired to seek out safety at times of fear. Our “safety circuits” are based in the *amygdala*; part of the most primitive structure in our brain. Its primary concern is to protect us, which is rational and welcomed with the threat of Coronaavirus. But the challenge to protect ourselves is heightened by the unpredictability and lack of clear understanding of the threat from the Coronavirus. This leads to unusual responses according to Dorothy Frizelle (Consultant Clinical Psychologist).

Grocery stockpiling is a well documented outplaying of this response, serving as a means of comfort, control and reassurance for consumers. However, we are also seeing more subtle manifestations of this with consumers seeking reassurances regarding **food safety**, something that for many was taken for granted.

The foundational work by Theodore Maslow on the *hierarchy of needs* puts safety behind physiological needs, one might argue that the safety need is for now, at least temporarily, paramount. For brands and businesses it is important to recognise how this will manifest itself in consumer choices in Covid-time and beyond. What will we need to do to respond to this evolving consumer reorientation? Focus on:

TRUST > **SAFETY** < TRANSPARENCY

We call this early indicator “**Simply Safe**”.

#3 SIMPLY SAFE

Think about how “safety-first” consumers will respond

Many of the fear responses we see from consumers are arguably irrational but it is deeply ingrained human behaviour that is hard to subdue. “Nation Brands” as well as consumer brands are seeing the effect of this unstoppable quest for safety.

Google Trends data shows that interest in cuisines from China and Italy have plummeted in recent weeks by 33 and 24% respectively. This raises an interesting question about the role that a nation’s Coronavirus response could have on food exports from that market in the future. Also, referencing the fact that half of Italian agri-food exporters had received Corona-related cancellations of orders from abroad; with some seeking “virus-free” health certification, Coldretti/Ixe research are devising a plan to fight the “misinformation”.

Indeed in the world of brands, a survey by 5WPR in the US claims that 38% of US beer drinkers would not drink Corona beer under any circumstances at the moment, so this pandemic is raising irrational questions about the safety of the brand.

Guidance too issued in good faith on washing fresh fruit and vegetables with soap and water or peeling have been doing the rounds too have leading some to question incorrectly the safety of fresh produce. We also are picking up on people baking bread to avoid eating foods that others may have handled and questions arising for some about the safety of delivery services.....

While possibly extreme, these only serve to highlight the sensitivity of consumers at this time. Brands operating in this new World need to be open and honest and to leverage available assets that can authentically underpin a trust and safety.

#3 SIMPLY SAFE

Driving “Safety First” with Hyper Transparency



Couriers for Meituan, China's biggest food delivery company, undergo temperature checks with the information provided to customers © Meituan

In addition to the usual price and other information, many restaurants are also providing a “reassurance guarantee” with the temperatures of the cooks, food packages and courier with every order.

Yuan Yuang, FT, 11 Feb 2020, Beijing

“More than ever, shoppers want to understand the supply chain, with complete transparency from farm to factory to distribution, and they want details of the measures being taken to assure their safety”. (Nielsen).

In this context digital traceability and blockchain technologies are likely to get a boost as will businesses “that have a proven ability to produce, store and distribute food safely over large distances” (Joe Gill, Irish Examiner).

#3 SIMPLY SAFE.

So what should we do about it?

We all hope that the Coronavirus dissipates before long, however it is likely that many of the changes in consumer needs will persist well beyond the crisis.

“This global crisis will fundamentally change how we think, behave, and consume. There is no rapid return to normal. The new world will have trust at its core”. (Richard Edelman)

Brands should redouble their efforts to build trust and transparency into their DNA and to leverage any national and proprietary assets at their disposal for now and for the future.

Forrester believe that now is the time to build that trust in words and actions by prioritising consumer’s wellbeing; including safety.

And its important to get this right. *“Nearly two-thirds (65%) saying how brands respond to the pandemic will have a “huge impact” on their likelihood to buy their products”. (Campaignlive/Edelman)*

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