

THE NEW HORIZON

COVID-19 INNOVATIONS & OBSERVATIONS

APRIL 2020





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INTRODUCTION

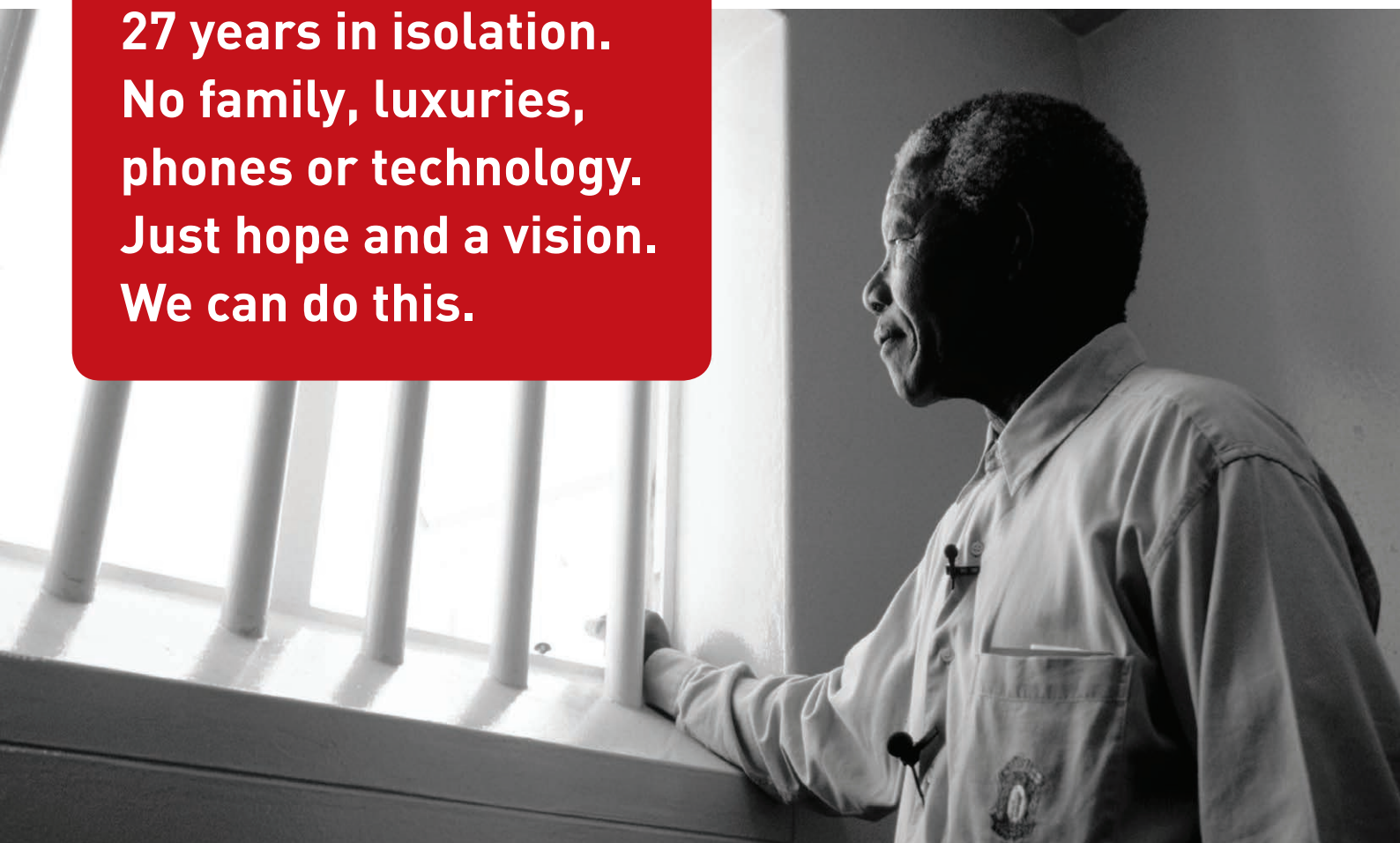
South Africa has been praised by the international community for its swift and bold reaction to the Covid-19 crisis. Last week, the BBC described the country's interventions as "faster, more efficient, and more ruthless than many other countries around the world".

Fourteen days into the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus, and it is tempting to breathe a sigh of relief. Incredible progress has already been achieved. More than 58 000 people have been tested, and more than 70 mobile testing units have been organised. There are even drive-through testing centres. Soon the country will be able to test 30,000 people every day. To date, thirteen deaths from the virus have been confirmed. Approximately 1 750 have tested positive for Covid-19 in South Africa until now.

As the economic and business impact of the Covid-19 crisis mounts, leaders in every industry are moving urgently to protect their employees' health and build their companies' resilience, while governments are mobilizing to safeguard citizens and manage the social and economic fallout. Immediate action is critical, but business leaders must also embrace a new agenda—one aimed squarely at what comes next, for the economy and all of society. Now more than ever, business and government have a crucial role to play in protecting people's health, bolstering the economy, and developing both practical solutions and game-changing innovations that will shape the recovery and beyond.

The effects the pandemic and 21 day lockdown are having on the retail sector are significant. This report shares a few trends and observations from retail spaces both locally and around the world, from the bizarre to the obvious, to the insightful and thought-provoking.

**27 years in isolation.
No family, luxuries,
phones or technology.
Just hope and a vision.
We can do this.**





RETAIL AT HOME AND ABROAD – A QUICK LOOK

As travel comes to a virtual halt, schools close, and governments react, most people find themselves stuck at homes to avoid and halt the spread of the coronavirus. Due to the lockdown, retail is at the mercy of legislative changes which have determined which stores may continue trading, and which products may or may not be sold. Many are already feeling the toll on their bottom line. As people's behaviours change, their buying behaviour is changing too.

Some industries were well poised for the shifting market, but many are not. But change doesn't necessitate failure. As more data emerges and trends become apparent, there's plenty of room for businesses to adjust to the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and weather the storm.

With consumer behaviour swinging from panic buying to staying out of stores, to taking advantages of online sales, new trends are appearing in business are worldwide.

Increased online attention



As businesses change their operations, people stay in their homes more, and the world reacts to a pandemic unfolding in real time, people are turning to online searches and news for answers to their questions and solutions to their new needs. For some brands, these new searchers are driving new audiences to find their way to their businesses, and some are becoming new customers. For others, the results aren't as great, and their strategies will need to shift.

As traditional brick and mortar businesses suddenly can't rely on foot traffic to fill their store fronts at the moment, businesses must focus on their online presence. Google search traffic has increased tremendously since the Covid-19 outbreak, so all small businesses should take this time to improve their online web presence fast. The coronavirus has impacted Google Ads results for different industries tremendously —and the results are unprecedented.

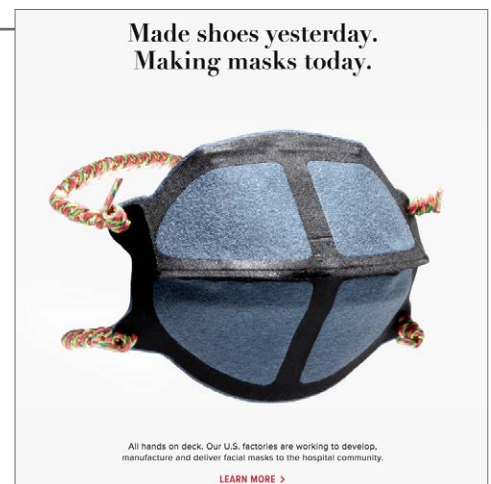
Brands are communicating more frequently with customers than ever before. Utilising their websites, digital advertising campaigns and social media platforms, frequent communication is vital to staying relevant in the minds of consumers. Communicating effectively and efficiently is going to be key to maintaining your customer relationships.

Cause related business activity

Several businesses worldwide have made their facilities available to support the cause. The athletic footwear and fitness apparel company, **New Balance** has dedicated a portion of their U.S. factories to develop, manufacture, and deliver face masks to hospitals, and the brand updated their website to share this information with visitors. Similarly, at home, **Cape Union Mart** have reopened their K-Way factory in the Western Cape in order to make cloth face masks. Chairperson Phillip Krawitz said the factory has already confirmed an order for 30 000 masks. Now in full swing, the factory has been set up for social distancing with space between the machines and all the sanitising and temperature check measures in place.

LVMH, the luxury conglomerate that owns brands such as **Louis Vuitton**, **Christian Dior**, **Givenchy**, and many more announced that it would use some of its facilities to produce its own hand sanitizer in response to the shortage in France caused by the coronavirus epidemic. LVMH is using the production lines of its perfume and cosmetic brands to produce large quantities of hydroalcoholic gels which are delivered free of charge to the [French] health authorities.

Above and beyond the steps put in place by government, **First National Bank** has announced additional measures to assist small and medium-sized enterprises battling with funding in the country. In addition to the implementation of financial relief systems for individual and business customers, FNB has expressed commitment towards assisting SMEs through, "alternative funding support, critical business support resources, links to various government resources and private funding initiatives."



While generous R 1 billion donations having been made by the Oppenheimer, Rupert and Motsepe families to government administrated funds, some companies have taken the initiative to support businesses in their own supply chains. For example, **Outsurance** has pledged R 1,2 million worth of support to its SME Claim Service Providers whose work and income has dropped due to the pandemic, and reduced excesses and faster payments of no-claim bonuses, among other interventions, to clients.

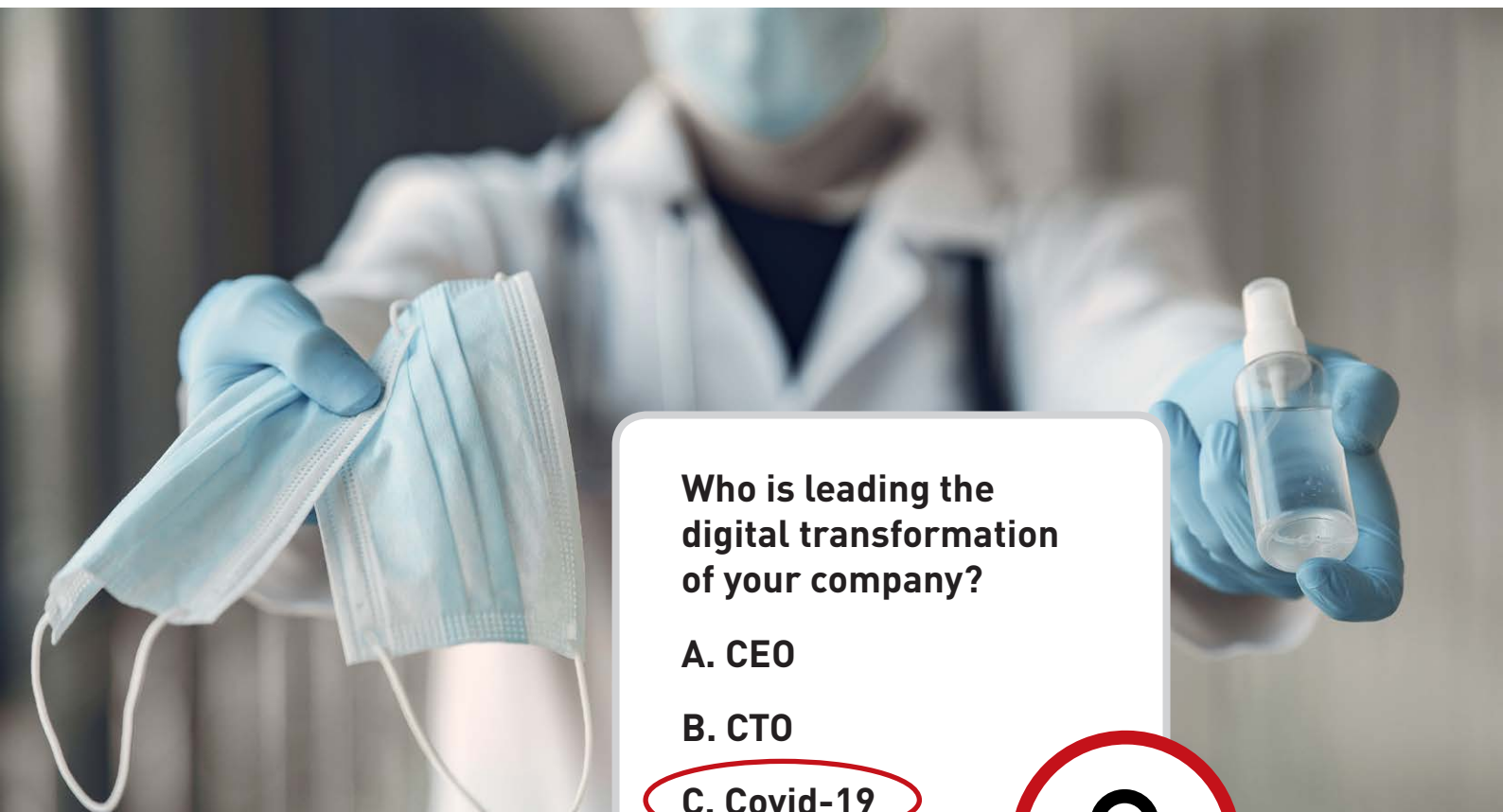
A conscious choice to support local



With local economies struggling, retailers around the world are placing increased on focus on highlighting goods that come from local suppliers. Consumers are acutely aware of the strain that the pandemic is placing on the economy, and are showing appreciation for locally sourced produce now more than ever. Supermarkets across Europe display signage indicating locally sourced produce.

In South Africa, consumers are even encouraging each other to support local businesses, such as by buying vouchers from their favourite restaurants or bars for later use, putting deposits down to get into the front of the queue at hairdressers and beauty salons after lockdowns end, buying gift vouchers for upcoming birthdays now and making donations to local businesses to help keep their workers employed. A number of well-known leaders have called on all those who can to assist the less fortunate, and local celebrities have taken to social media to encourage people to follow the lockdown guidelines and stay at home.

The economic impact of the coronavirus calls on business leaders to step up in multiple ways: attending to people's immediate needs, ensuring the health of the business, scanning the continually changing business and societal landscape, and positioning the company to thrive in a new normal.



Who is leading the digital transformation of your company?

A. CEO

B. CTO

C. Covid-19

?



OUR RAINBOW NATION

Woolworths



Woolworths announced this morning that it would be trialing a “click and collect” service at its Village Store in Durbanville, Western Cape. This will be a safe, no-contact, cashless way to buy groceries and essentials.

The retailer also posted answers to frequently asked questions regarding online shopping on the home page of its website to help clarify confusing things for consumers, such as what may and may not be bought during the lockdown period.

Woolworths is also enabling online customers to plan their winter wardrobes by offering 50% off new essentials such as coats, boots, jackets and knitwear, by viewing and ordering these staples online, for a limited period, with delivery taking place after lockdown, .

Dis-Chem

Dis-Chem has launched drive-through coronavirus testing in parking areas which are open on weekdays from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. The drive-through testing sites in Gauteng include Centurion Mall, Olympus, Fourways Mall and Blu Bird Centre. From Thursday, more sites will become operational at the Ballito Lifestyle Centre and the Pavilion in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as at Canal Walk in the Western Cape.

The test costs R850 per person and will be done inside your car, which limits exposure for customers and staff. Payment can be made by card only. The retailer said each site would be equipped with protective equipment for staff including face screens, gloves, masks, protective gowns and disposal equipment.

Results will be available in 24-48 hours of testing and will be logged with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).



Pick 'n Pay

Selected **Pick 'n Pay** stores are offering a drive-through service where shoppers do not have to leave their vehicles to buy groceries. This forms part of Pick 'n Pay's strategy to better serve their clients during the 21-day lockdown.

For those who would prefer to avoid as much physical interaction as possible with other shoppers and staff, this is how the Pick 'n Pay drive-thru service works:



- You email your order to your local Pick 'n Pay store with a drive-thru service.
- You receive a two-hour notice about your order.
- You park your car in a designated spot in the Pick 'n Pay shop's parking lot.
- A Pick 'n Pay staff member delivers the groceries and load them into your car.
- You pay from within your car through a sanitized credit card machine.

Prior to the nationwide lockdown being enforced, Pick 'n Pay was praised for its swift action to assist pensioners, knowing that the elderly are the most vulnerable to the coronavirus. The retailer now opens all of its supermarkets and hypermarkets an hour earlier every Wednesday for customers over 65 to shop for their groceries and essentials.

Additional to avoiding exposure to crowds, this move also meant that pensioners could beat panic-buyers who were frantically clearing the shelves of food and other essential supplies. All Smart Shoppers over the age of 60 now also earn double points in-store every Wednesday.

Spar

In a clever move, selected **Spar** stores are offering customers the opportunity to place their grocery shopping orders via Whatsapp, which are then delivered to their homes for a nominal fee, depending on their distance from the store. This means that customers can still access the products and quality that they are accustomed to, with a decreased risk of exposure.

Additionally, Spar has rolled out Perspex screens to protect staff and customers from contracting the deadly coronavirus at selected stores. The screens were installed three weeks ago as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the virus between customers and cashiers. The protective screens are one and a half metres wide and nearly one metre high and they feature messages to explain the social distancing measure and the need to keep both customer and teller safe. Spar Glenwood manager Vanessa Naidoo told news reporters that customers were impressed by the measures the Durban supermarket had taken. "They were impressed that we were protecting the cashiers as well as the customers. The cashiers are pleased with the extra protection."



Shoprite Checkers

Shoprite and **Checkers** supermarkets have opened special till points for pensioners and the disabled during the coronavirus crisis. The Shoprite Group has also appealed to senior citizens to shop outside of peak travel times (early mornings and late afternoons) and when stores are quieter to minimise exposure. Various measures have been put into place to ensure social distancing at till points.

Shoprite said all employees have access to a 24-hour helpline which offers guidance and information on health, well-being and trauma to employees and their immediate families.

Netflorist

South Africa's largest same-day gift and flower delivery site, **Netflorist** has added an essential services category to the array of products it sells and delivers. Customers can now purchase food and groceries, including fresh produce, dairy, meat poultry, non-perishable goods and cleaning supplies from the retailer that delivers nationwide. Fresh fruit and vegetable boxes containing a variety of items, are also on offer.

Additionally, the online service is offering a 10% discount to customers who place an order for a gift delivery after 17th April.

3D Printing

While many are wondering what to do with their spare time during lockdown, there is a group of South Africans whose days and nights are busier than ever. Their hobby has turned into a very worthwhile way to make a difference during the Covid-19 pandemic. In garages around the country, 3D printers are whirring and buzzing, printing reusable masks, screens and even unique valves that will allow our limited supply of ventilators to be shared between four patients at a time.

The arrival of Covid-19 in South Africa spurred the 3D-printing community to step forward to "collectively help the frontline, unsung heroes such as emergency workers, pharmacists and other vulnerable groups," said Johannesburg-based IT consultant Michael Scholtz. The 3D-printing fanatic is one of the coordinators of this community project.





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In an effort to flatten the curve of the virus, Scholtz said those with 3D printers have come together to provide basic protective equipment directly to those who need it. The project - formed by three members of the 3D-printing community shortly before the lockdown began - has already grown to include more than 200 people, each with his or her own 3D printer. More than 200 masks and face shields have been produced so far.

The University of Pretoria has also made its 3D printers available, which are currently printing visors for face shields to help address the shortage of protective equipment in the country at the moment.

Local designers



South African sunglass manufacturing company **Ballo** is one of many who have pivoted to making fashionable face masks, in an attempt to stay afloat amid the Covid-19 outbreak. "We've made about 500 up to now but are just gonna keep making them" says founder Alistair Barnes. Ballo's fashion masks are in no way claiming to be able to prevent you from being infected. Like other simple face masks, they serve as a reminder not to touch your face, just with a touch of fashion.

Similarly, a Gauteng based furniture company, **Eloquent Designs** is also contributing by using its production line to make face masks. It uses three-ply and 100% cotton, and the masks are waterproof. The company said they are affordable and easily accessible. Apart from selling the masks, Eloquent Designs said it will donate them to the Eldorado Park Police Station, charity organisations and an retirement village in area.

Keeping the kids entertained



Toys R Us are helping to lend parents a hand by offering customers a variety of free activities to do, and videos to watch at home via their website. Knowing that parents may be struggling with the additional burden of having to work from home, while keeping the little ones engaged, the retailer is providing an enormous amount of downloadable content that will provide hours of fun for children.

Similarly **Mr Price Home** has created a range of downloadable fun worksheets for kids, including colour-in join-the-dots and other activities, which will also help keep kids entertained.

Property Industry Group



South Africa's retail landlords announced an industry-wide assistance and relief package earlier this week for retail tenants hardest hit by the Covid-19 lockdown. The relief package was revealed by a newly-formed alliance of retail property landlords in the country, known as the Property Industry Group.

It is offering relief in the form of rental discounts of between 15% and 100%, as well as interest-free rental deferrals for April and May to help mitigate the impact on retail businesses that are not allowed to operate during the lockdown.

The initiative is principally focused on supporting affected small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), however, it also provides relief and assistance to all other retail tenants and is set to be rolled out by landlords nationally. To qualify for the relief benefits, retail tenants will need to undertake not to retrench staff during the relief period, and fulfil other requirements.



If you see any innovative or practical solutions that could help others in the industry, from a retailer or shopping centre perspective, please send these to amanda@sacsc.org.za for inclusion in future publications.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS.

LUXURY BRANDS IN CHINA

The outbreak is taking its toll on the global luxury industry that is heavily dependent on the spending of Chinese shoppers around the world. Forrester estimated that Chinese consumers spent \$104.44bn on luxury in 2019, making up one-third of global luxury retail sales. Despite these difficulties, leading luxury brands responded quickly to the crisis and have taken positive initiatives in brand communication, customer engagement, and digital marketing.

At the outset of the outbreak, many luxury brands temporarily closed some of their retail stores or shortened operating hours and halted marketing spending in China altogether.

However, leading luxury brands are gaining brand affinity by supporting the cause of combating the Covid-19 outbreak. Leading luxury groups expressed their caring via donations: On 27 January, LVMH announced that it had given \$2.2 million to the Red Cross Society of China. Days later, Richemont donated \$1.4 million to the same cause and Kering donated \$1.1 million.

On 18 February, Louis Vuitton launched a cause marketing campaign, 'Love has no fear', on Chinese social media platform Weibo. Multiple Chinese celebrity brand ambassadors recorded videos to encourage residents in Wuhan and support frontline medical workers.

During the Covid-19 outbreak, leading luxury brands have continued to engage customers via digital initiatives. On 25 February, Dior live-streamed its Paris Autumn / Winter Women's Collection fashion show on Weibo. Louis Vuitton launched a Valentine's Day exclusive pop-up store via a WeChat mini-program that allowed customers to place orders online. Store associates were able to share exclusive offline promotions to customers via QR code. The brand moved pre-sale consultations and post-sale customer services online and partnered with SF Express to ensure smooth delivery. Despite the outbreak, Louis Vuitton doubled its online sales compared to last year's Valentine's season.

There has never been a more important time to deploy the right brand communication. Leading luxury brands communicate constantly to customers, employees and stakeholders with positive and caring messaging in a timely and transparent manner. On 7 February, Louis Vuitton posted a heartfelt message to Chinese customers across Little Red Book, WeChat and Weibo: "Every paused journey will eventually restart. Louis Vuitton hopes you and your beloved ones stay safe and healthy." The message is consistent with the brand image that is positioned as a purveyor of fine luggage.





MARKS & SPENCER HELP THE VULNERABLE



Most malls in England have largely closed, following government guidance, but retailers offering essential products and services have shown creative ways to add value to shoppers. The list of what is considered essential in the UK is slightly broader than SA, and includes food stores and pharmacies, and selected restaurants which offer takeaway or delivery.

British retailer **Marks & Spencer** have adjusted their opening hours of their popular **Food Halls** in malls to service those most in need in these uncertain times. The Monday and Thursday 8 - 9 AM hour is exclusively for the over 70s, pregnant women, those with underlying health conditions and those who are shopping for all of the above individuals. On Tuesdays and Fridays, this hour is dedicated for those who work for the National Health Services and other emergency services, with ID required.

Malls have closed some of their entrances, and communications on signage plead for visitors to shop “sensitively and respectfully”.

BOLD, SWIFT ACTION IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The question of why the Gulf states continue to have so many cases of the virus has been the subject of much international news coverage. This may be aggravated by the fact that some countries on the peninsula, such as Yemen, are at war, so health authorities are unable to check for the virus. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are both involved in Yemen, and migrants move undocumented across some borders.

The UAE states, known to many as a shopping haven, are currently in a two week lockdown from 25 March – 8 April. A three day sterilization drive started the following day, with all retail and public spaces thoroughly sterilized by the ministry of health using a combination of steam cleaning, disinfectant fogging machines and compressed sprayers. Thermal detectors have been installed at the entrances to malls to check body temperatures, where hand sanitizer is available to all customers entering to access essential stores.

In a series of announcements, the Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah governments announced relief for people and businesses who may struggle with rental and banking payments, and eviction judgements for any defaulting tenants have been suspended.

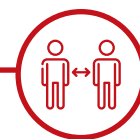
Sharjah Asset Management, the investment wing of the Sharjah Government, announced that it would waive rental fees for tenants of selected malls. Retailers in these properties have been exempted from paying rent for three months.

With the usual supermarkets and pharmacies being exempt from lockdown, restaurants have been allowed to continue trading but are allowed to service home deliveries only. All pharmacies are now required to be able to deliver to people’s homes. While this was optional before, it is now mandatory, which specific packaging and data privacy requirements in place.

Public transport is still operating in the UAE, to support essential workers. Germ killing, walk-through sterilization booths are being installed at the entrance to bus stations across various states. People get sprayed with disinfectant from top to toe before entering the station.



WALMART AND TARGET LIMIT CUSTOMERS PER SQUARE METRE



Walmart has started limiting how many people are allowed inside its stores at one time, reducing its capacity to roughly 20%, as a way to enforce social distancing. The retail giant joins **Target**, **Costco** and other North American supermarket chains in deciding to count and restrict the number of visitors to keep shoppers at least six feet (1,8 metres) apart — from each other and from the workers — hoping to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

“While many of our customers have been following the advice of the medical community regarding social distancing and safety, we have been concerned to still see some behaviors in our stores that put undue risk on our people,” Walmart announced. The company also acknowledged the added complexity of varying policies across different states.

Walmart says it will allow no more than five shoppers per 1,000 square feet (300 square metres) of space at a given time. Target, whose shopper restrictions also kicked in last weekend, did not specify the number but said it would actively monitor and, when needed, meter guest traffic.

Walmart said it would begin using only one entryway at each store, keeping track of visitors and reminding them to stay a proper distance while they wait to go in, especially before the store opens in the morning.

SHORTER PAYMENT WINDOWS FOR SMALL, LOCAL SUPPLIERS



Kiwi retail group **Footstuffs**, which operates three of New Zealand’s largest supermarket chains has announced a decision to help cushion the effect of the coronavirus on local businesses, by allowing small and medium-sized suppliers to move to 10-day payment terms during the coronavirus lockdown. It is hoped the move will give the suppliers more financial certainty during the lockdown.

“We recognise it is tough out there for many businesses at the moment and we want to make it as easy as possible for our valued suppliers to keep trading. They are critical to our business and we want to help them by taking a bit of pressure off them financially” said a company statement.

Co-operatives of the organisation have already worked with a number of suppliers to help with cash flow since the start of the virus outbreak. The change for invoices will be available during this country’s three-week lockdown and for a further three months afterwards.



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CLICK AND COLLECT SHOPPING À LA MODE IN FRANCE

A service that started out small in France to help mobility impaired customers, has boomed and rolled out across the country overnight. While French supermarkets are still operating, the major chains, such as **Auchan**, **Carrefour** and **Le Clerc** have reduced the risk of customers being in stores by offering an order online and drive-through pickup service. With convenient smart phone apps carrying the full range of products available in stores, after placing a grocery order online, shoppers get a notification when it is ready to collect. Turnaround times are usually only a few hours. Customers then go to the drive-through pickup area at the store, enter their reference number into a machine and pay either via cash, debit card or credit card, so the limitations and risks of online payments are avoided. The order is brought out to the car by a store assistant, who also helps put it in the car boot. Retailer Auchan even offers a returnable “Drivebox”, which the customer takes home and returns, lowering the use of plastic, making the pickup really quick, and groceries are packed in a protective way. With supermarkets bearing the brunt of increased demand, these systems have been stretched to capacity, as some chains have experienced up to 70% increase in sales week on week.



AUSTRALIA'S ADOPTA HEALTHCARE WORKER



While social media has been widely blamed for spreading fake coronavirus misinformation, tens of thousands of Australians are using their networks to support the healthcare workers risking their lives on the front lines of the pandemic.

When Chris Nicholas launched the Facebook group **Adopta Healthcare Worker** in Perth on March 14, he expected a handful of “mates and friends of friends” might join. “I had a friend who is a nurse, and she had been struggling to get shopping done around her shifts, so I offered to help her, and then I thought of extending the idea,” Nicholas told AFP. Within days, the initiative “exploded”, spreading across the country and internationally and now boasts over 140,000 members in Australia alone.

The goal is to match volunteer helpers with “adoptee” healthcare workers struggling with increased work hours and the stress of fighting an unprecedented medical emergency that has seen cases top one million worldwide.

The help on offer includes grocery shopping, mowing lawns, household chores, delivering home-cooked meals and lifts to work for nurses so they don't have to take public transport.

Cards and children's drawings saying thank you to “healthcare heroes” have also been collected through the site for display on the windows and entrances of COVID-19 wards, where deliveries of other gifts can not be received.

AMAZON'S GIANT RESPONSE



The online giant, **Amazon** has filled 80,000 jobs in the span of a few weeks, part of a hiring spree to add 100,000 workers to meet soaring demand amid the coronavirus pandemic across America and Europe. There have long been reports of strained relations between the retailer and its workforce, which only worsened with the onset of the virus as staff pleaded for more protective measures. The company has since announced plans to protect its growing workforce by conducting daily temperature checks and the provision of masks for workers.

Online commerce has boomed globally over the past few weeks, with Amazon enjoying the prime share of this business. Reports of the company's growth cite figures ranging from 32% growth year on year for the same period, with certain categories delivering astounding numbers such as 287% growth in vitamins, 862% growth in colds and flu medication and 1 181% growth in home and kitchen items.

The company has launched a dedicated blog, named **Day One**, providing staff and consumers with daily updates on how the company is addressing the coronavirus. The blog details Amazon's various donations to relief organisations, including a whopping \$100 million donation to Feeding America, the country's largest nonprofit focused on food security.

The Amazon Web Services Education division is making available its vast network of educators who have experience teaching online. From 6th April, webinars on a variety of remote learning topics will be available at no cost. Amazon's educators with experience teaching online will provide webinars to help teachers improve their online teaching skills, helping to bridge the gap caused by so many education institutions around the world closing overnight.

The company is also donating Kid Edition Kindles and wi-fi hot spots to communities that have been particularly hard hit by the virus, to assist while schools and libraries are closed.



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WHY HAVE CONDOMS SOLD OUT IN SINGAPORE?

You could be forgiven for thinking that Singaporeans simply planned to have more fun during their lockdown but the reason for them stockpiling condoms was a far more sensible one. People in this first world hub bought condoms to put on their fingers when touching things in public spaces. Pressing the buttons in a lift, entering your pin into a credit card machine, holding an escalator side, or closing the door in a change room are all touches that carry a risk of virus transmission. Their solution of a makeshift individual finger glove is pretty inventive.

The shortage may not end there though. With condom factories in Malaysia, the world biggest producer, being forced to close due to the coronavirus lockdown, experts estimate a current global shortfall of 100 million condoms, normally marketed internationally by brands such as Durex, supplied to state healthcare systems such as Britain's NHS and distributed by aid programmes such as the UN Population Fund. A worldwide shortage is predicted soon.



TULIP MANIA IN THE NETHERLANDS



The love that Dutch people have for their national flower is a universal symbol of enjoying life's simple pleasures. However, with restrictions being placed on retailers to curb the spread of the coronavirus, farmers in the Netherlands feared that tons of tulips, which have just started blooming, would go to waste if they could not be sold.

Amsterdam based florist Bolt was quick to get ahead of the curve. They began offering a bundle of 200 tulips, and allowed customers to choose what to pay, to support the tulip industry. Customers can decide whether to buy a "direct-from-the-farmer" tulip bundle at cost or retail price. The initiative aims to prevent tulips from ending up in landfills and support tulip growers. The company is also encouraging buyers to send the bundles as care packages to friends and family, as well as those who may be especially isolated during this time.

Since Bolt debuted its offering, over half a million tulips have been saved and the company has expanded its network of growers to meet the demand.

GOOGLE TO THE RESCUE



Google has announced that it will publish users' location data around the world from Friday to allow governments to gauge the effectiveness of social distancing measures, brought in to stem the Covid-19 pandemic.

The reports on users' movements in 131 countries will be made available on a special website and will "chart movement trends over time by geography", according to a post on one of Google's blogs. Trends will display "a percentage point increase or decrease in visits" to locations like parks, shops, homes and places of work, not "the absolute number of visits," said the post, signed by Jen Fitzpatrick, who leads Google Maps, and the company's chief health officer Karen DeSalvo.

For example, in France, visits to restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, museums or theme parks have plunged by 88 percent from their normal levels, the data showed. Western European shops initially saw a jump of 40 percent when confinement measures were announced, before suffering a drop of 72 percent.

We hope these reports will help support decisions about how to manage the Covid-19 pandemic," the Google execs said. "This information could help officials understand changes in essential trips that can shape recommendations on business hours or inform delivery service offerings."

Like the detection of traffic jams or traffic measurement Google Maps, the new reports will use aggregated, anonymised data from users who have activated their location history. No personally identifiable information, such as an individual's location, contacts or movements, will be made available.

From China to Singapore to Israel, governments have ordered electronic monitoring of their citizens' movements in an effort to limit the spread of the virus, which has infected more than a million people and killed over 50,000 worldwide. In Europe and the United States, technology firms have begun sharing "anonymised" smartphone data to better track the outbreak. Even privacy-loving Germany is considering using a smartphone app to help manage the spread of the disease.

This information could be a valuable aid in decision making regarding retail spaces moving forward. While current restrictions have affected foot traffic in predictable ways, the post Covid-19 retail landscape promises to come with new complexities including new shopping patterns, amidst shifted consumer priorities.

HARRODS EMPTIES ITS SHELVES



The iconic London store **Harrods**, which stayed open throughout the bombing of the capital during World War II, announced a week ago it would closing its doors amidst coronavirus concerns. It has kept its Food Halls and pharmacy open, but the rest of the iconic department store in Knightsbridge has been shut. High-end shop-in-shops within the luxury department store like Prada, Chanel and Louis Vuitton have been emptied of all products, to avoid potential looting, according to videos on social media which show empty shelves.

Harrods suffered negative publicity in early February for prohibiting staff members from wearing masks due to the "risk of spreading further anxiety" among customers and staff, as retailers started to face new dilemmas due to the pandemic.

A spokeswoman for the company told news reporters that the store's 5 000 staff would keep their jobs despite the closure.



LONG LOCKDOWN QUEUES GET THE BOOT IN NEW VIRTUAL QUEUE TRIAL



A new feature of daily lockdown life in some countries has been the snaking queues running from supermarkets' front doors and through the carparks, as retailers limit the number of customers allowed in stores.

But supermarkets in Auckland, New Zealand are using technology to make the lines of endless customers disappear, through an online queuing system. To make life easier, customers sit in the comfort of their cars until they are called in to the shop by text message. Shoppers show that text as they walk in, meaning a near-empty line heading into the supermarket despite a wait of around 45 minutes.

For now, the service is only available at selected stores. One store owner Wade Brown, says it was a "no brainer". "You know you've got to imagine that that is a queue, it's a virtual queue, and it's a good indication when you see how many cars are in the carpark," he continued.

It's not just about keeping customers comfortable or taking a break. It's also very good for keeping people apart. Shoppers in this trial are giving it a big thumbs up, describing it as "really easy" and acknowledging that it reduces stress.

KEEP THEM SMILING



The coronavirus is hardly the only thing causing people mental anguish. Even before it triggered a global public health crisis and raised fears of a deep economic slump, people were facing inequality, always-on social competition, the looming existential threat of the climate crisis and more. It's hardly surprising therefore that any organization that can help improve people's mental wellbeing will be welcomed with open arms.

Great examples of companies trying to cheer customers up are gyms offering customers home workout programmes on their social media platforms (with some also cancelling membership fees temporarily), restaurant chefs offering free online cooking demonstrations, make-up artists demonstrating new looks, and brands sponsoring online live music concerts. Now is the time to find ways to put smiles on customers' faces as they internalize the short and long term effects that this crisis will have on their lives.

THREE WAYS TO HELP SHOPPERS ONLINE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Tips from **Emily Eberhard**, Global Head of Retail and Shopping Ads, Google

As communities around the world respond to concerns over the coronavirus pandemic, this time presents unique challenges for retailers of all sizes and the people they assist. It's more important than ever to be there for shoppers in the most helpful ways — whether it's letting your customers know a product is back in stock, providing information on how you're taking precautions to ensure safety, or sharing an update on how your business and employees are adapting.



1

STAY INFORMED



2

**BE CURRENT AND
TRANSPARENT**



3

ADJUST IN REAL TIME

Here are some retail strategies and recommendations you can apply today to help navigate this dynamic environment.

1 Stay informed

Take the pulse of the current landscape and category demand to understand the needs of your customers. Resources such as **Google Trends** and **Google Alerts** can help you stay up to date on local conditions and better understand your customers' frame of mind.

Review metrics by **retail categories** to see what customers may be searching for across your Search and Shopping campaigns, especially if you sell high-demand products during this time.

2 Be current and transparent

Your customers are looking for information and trust your company to deliver, so make sure you proactively communicate any business or product availability updates.

If your hours of operation have changed, for example, update your customer-facing sites and **Business Profile** on Google Search and Maps. Use a post in your Business Profile or adjust your messaging in your ads to share information about any extra precautions you're taking, such as providing any extra services to the community or whether you're experiencing delays. If your shipping timelines are delayed, update your website to reflect these changes and, if possible, provide an estimated delivery date.



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3 Adjust in real time

As consumer behaviour shifts, make sure product information is up to date across all channels and communications to ensure you're striking the right tone during this time.

Reassess your creative and ad campaigns by asking yourself, "Is this creative or ad placement right for this moment and in this context?" The Covid-19 pandemic has increased sensitivities to certain issues and tones, for example it's not a good time to employ slapstick humour, or to use any wording that may frighten people.

In this challenging time, people are looking to retailers for preparedness. Through the uncertainty, the primary thing people want from retailers is relevant and up-to-date information. Being there in these important moments with useful information will help ensure you're delivering the assistance your customers need most.



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