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COVID-19 BRAND SENTIMENT NAVIGATOR

Understanding Lasting Impact as Restrictions Ease

MAY EDITION 01

The COVID-19 crisis abruptly changed our buying behaviors and attitudes as we adjusted to new routines. With many areas of the country seeing a lift in restrictions, we asked 5,800 consumers as part of our ongoing research series (March Edition, April Edition) to share their current brand expectations and anticipated plans.

Overall, consumers were feeling slightly less concerned about the COVID-19 situation

MARCH 74% concerned → APRIL 68% concerned

Boomers are the most concerned (42% "extremely concerned")

Gen Z's concern grew the most over the past two months ("extremely concerned" up 6% to 27%)

There is good news for brands

While the impact of brands' actions on how consumers perceive them remained flat during April (67%), 70% of consumers rate brands positively (excellent/good) for how they have stepped up during this time.

Consumers would like to see brands...

- **72%** Donate products to healthcare workers
- **61%** Give back to the community
- Keep employees (59%) and customers (55%) safe and well
- **57%** Offer online delivery/curbside pickup
- **54%** Extend benefits to the consumer

Brands should avoid...

- Price gouging 65%
- Failing to keep employees (54%) and customers (48%) safe and well
- Doing nothing to benefit the community 39%
- Not recognizing the "new normal" we're living in 33%
- Failing to provide empathy or comfort 32%

Consumers are stocked up.

Consumers who purchased extra household items as a result of the crisis has remained steady, up just 3% to 65%.

Looking ahead, more than half (58%) plan on going back to purchasing products as usual once stay at home restrictions have been lifted, while 42% will live off their stockpile first.

This will impact product categories that consumers stocked up on including:

- Cleaning/disinfecting products 69%
- Toiletries 66%
- Frozen Food and Other Food 65%
- Canned goods 65%
- Health and wellness 53%

Online shopping grows

68% of consumers are purchasing more products online now vs. a few months ago

Especially younger generations - 77% of Gen Z and 74% of Millennials

Almost half of consumers (45%) are purchasing their personal care and beauty care products Online at least half the time.

Health and Wellness products (40%), Pet Supplies (38%), and Baby Products (36%) are also being purchased Online as much or more than In-store.

Stimulus spending is on necessities and preparing for rainy days

86% of respondents were expecting to receive a stimulus check and more than half had already received it (54%).

More shopping & experiences on the horizon

Consumers are planning to spend more on shopping at retail locations (20%) and shopping online (18%) when restrictions have lifted.

Younger consumers are intending to celebrate the return of their freedom by spending more on experiences when restrictions are lifted.

	Gen Z	Millennials
Travel and vacations	26%	23%
Going out to bars and restaurants	30%	25%
Concerts, shows and performances	24%	14%
Sporting events	13%	

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Methodology

This research was conducted via a 11-question online survey issued to the peer-to-peer influencer community, Smiley360, from April 24 - May 6. 5,811 U.S. respondents completed the survey.

About Social Media Link

Social Media Link powers online communities to turn real consumers into brand evangelists—using zero-party data to deliver personalized content and experiences at scale. Hundreds of brands have partnered with us to activate millions of consumers to drive customer acquisition, long-term loyalty, and actionable insights. Founded in 2009, we work with leading brands including Unilever, P&G, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and more.