

COVID-19 DIGITAL MEDIA PLAYBOOK

Q1Media has compiled a list of best marketing practices and recommendations to help adapt for the COVID-19 pandemic's impact across digital media.



Around the world, dramatic measures have been taken in order to slow and contain the spread of COVID-19.

Entire industries, of all sorts, are adapting to a drastic shift caused by global pandemic responses. These significant shifts include the majority of the workforce now working from home, students moving to online classrooms, as well as many other social distancing practices. Due to this on-going crisis, there have been major changes in media consumption habits that marketers must account for. These changes include:

- A 200% increase in CTV consumption since March 1st, 2020.
- 60% of consumers who are staying indoors are also watching films, news, and general programming via connected devices.
- Audiences at home are consuming media at a 60% higher rate.
- There has been an 18% increase in total ad call volume compared to March 2019.
- CTV news viewership has increased nearly 50% since the outbreak began.

This audience shift presents all-new challenges to marketers.

On top of adapting to consumption changes; 18% of all online ad calls in March 2020 came from *brand-unsafe* content relevant to COVID-19. As the pandemic dominates news and discussions online, delivering media to *brand-safe* environments becomes increasingly complicated.

At Q1Media, we are the experts at building digital media solutions for any circumstance. We've compiled this playbook to help you and your team adapt to shifting consumption habits, account for increased COVID-19 content across digital media, follow changing interests, and evolve your marketing strategies to find brand-safe digital delivery mediums.



WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

1. Maintain your brand presence.

With audiences house-bound and consuming media at rapid rates, it is critical to maintain your communication now more than ever. Using this opportunity to strengthen brand awareness and continuing a dialogue with your consumers will help improve brand relevance and preference for the time when the pandemic is over.

Consumers will remember the brands that sustained communication and showed empathy during the difficult time.

2. Craft a new plan and roll it out in phases.

It's important to re-work existing plans to reach your audience in the right place and with a message that resonates.

Phase 1 — Focus on making immediate edits to existing creatives that acknowledge the crisis and illustrate empathy.

Phase 2 — Maintain softer messaging while focusing on your brand, service, or goal.

Phase 3 — Roll out a newly structured campaign that is pivoted back to the original audience and geotargeting once the pandemic has run its course, while still remaining mindful of messaging as people acclimate back to their normal lives.

Example:

Daytona Beach's "Wide.Open.Fun." is a \$1.2 million tourism campaign. In April, that campaign will temporarily pivot to focus on "welcome back" and "awareness" language with the intent of normalizing the market.

This 3-step plan acknowledges the setback, gets things back up and running, and changes the course of targeting with the anticipation of people returning to normal environments again.



3. Adapt your communications for changing audiences.

In times of crisis we can learn from past events on how to move forward. A 2016 blizzard in the Northeast US and notorious Hurricane Harvey which devastated Houston in 2018 both provide a good model for increased media consumption during crisis events. During Hurricane Harvey, Houston's total TV viewing grew 56%. New York saw a similar 45% growth during the blizzard weekend versus the previous weekend.

The COVID-19 crisis is showing similar numbers; there has been a 60% increase in digital media consumption nation-wide.

Connected TV/OTT

Currently, many people are tuning into cable news, which has shown a 50% increase in viewers since the COVID-19 outbreak. However, some are seeking other digital entertainment options and streaming services. Media consumption has also become more consistent over the course of the day, as people have replaced their commutes with increased time in front of screens. Viewers spent about 40% more time streaming both ad-supported and subscription TV March 16 through 22, compared to the previous week, according to data from Vizio Inc.

These changing consumption habits provide valuable information around pacing, consumer mindsets, and missions, which brands and campaigns need to align with. This is a highly engaged audience and our goal is to help your communications reach these dedicated TV viewers and OTT watchers.

Q1Media's Recommendations for Boosting Your Engagement

- Find relevant audiences
- Reach TV viewers seeking entertainment and/or news content
- Engage connected TV viewers at home.
- Capitalize on premium networks including: *DiscoveryGO, TLCCGO, Food Network, A&E, Fox News, and Newsy.*
- Ensure brand safety within COVID-19 coverage.



Premium CTV/OTT applications available with Q1Media



Display/Video

60% of Americans staying home during this pandemic have increased their consumption by reading news, watching videos, searching/reading articles on many media sites and more. This brings a strong opportunity to target audiences on standard display and video.

Premium properties available with Q1Media



Social

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other social platforms have seen a rise in usage as the pandemic keeps communities homebound. People are frequently visiting social networks to check in on family, friends, influential leaders, to get news updates, and to consume entertainment media.

In a recent call with reporters, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said that recent traffic is “well beyond” the rise the company normally has on New Year’s Eve.

Social media platforms accessible with Q1Media



4. Adjust your messaging for changing interests.

While consumption habits are shifting due to pandemic response, audience interests are trending towards in-home activities.

Monitoring these new habits, and pivoting messaging as it's needed, will be essential for engaging with audiences. A strong recommendation is to update your targeting interests on your campaigns to either include the increased interests highlighted below or solely focus on them, as your key audience will be aligned with these.

Increased Audience Interests

pharma	entertainment	trending television
charity	cold & flu season	home makers
quit smoking	travel	science
movies	gamers	

Decreased Audience Interests

celebrity news	taxes	new jobs
US sports	home movers	fashion
auto enthusiasts	getting married	retail
premier league	auto shows	



5. Account for brand-unsafe COVID-19 content.

Thus far, COVID-19 has been the most discussed news topic across the internet in 2020. Up to 15% of daily web traffic is visits to content with explicit mentions to the virus. Because of this, COVID-19 relevant terms are now in the same category as other brand-unsafe topics such as; crime, adult content, and other obscenities.

Q1Media's Recommendations Regarding Unsafe COVID-19 Content

- Improve decision-making on campaign bidding strategies by understanding the scale of content that has been affected.
- Analyze the presence of unsafe content relevant to your brand and your industry.
- Utilize contextual targeting technology to track stories and their overall impact on your communications.
- Continue to monitor the scale of pandemic discussion online over time.
- Account for unsafe content as news breaks to help plan pacing, delivery and bidding.

6. Work with Q1Media to adapt.

Every year, thousands of brands & agencies entrust us with their digital marketing strategy. Whether it's simple, complex, or working through unprecedented digital changes, our team of digital media experts are ready to help.

**Contact us directly or at [Q1Media.com](https://q1media.com)
if you have any questions.**

