



Advertising in the Age of COVID-19

Presented by Brainsights

IAB Community Uninterrupted, April 2020

Today

About Brainsights

Advertising in the Age of COVID-19 – Perspectives from the brains of Canadians

The problem of – and solution to - ‘emotional numbing’

Winning in the COVID-19 News Environment

Mindset Marketing - efficient AND effective advertising during COVID-19

Actions, not ads – A Brainsights announcement



Brainsights: Brain data to insights, insights to results

Brainsights is a persuasion and engagement analytics company.

We measure the unconscious minds of people in real-time to understand what content, media and products persuade and engage.

Measurement platform powered by Electroencephalography (EEG)

– brain wave readers.

Brain waves are characterized by their frequencies. Different frequencies are associated with different mental states. Brainsights focuses on three core metrics of interest to content creators and marketers .



Attention



'Is the stimuli capturing my attention?'



Connection



'Is there a deeper relationship with the stimuli?'



Encoding



'Is the stimuli being committed to memory?'

Our Process



Content

+



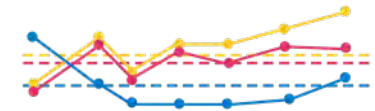
Media

+



Audience Brain Measurement

=



Consumer Unconscious Insights

Insights that drive behaviours

Double-digit % increases in trial for new consumer care product

Double-digit % uplift on all key brand metrics for leading bank

66% increase in monthly donations for a Toronto charity

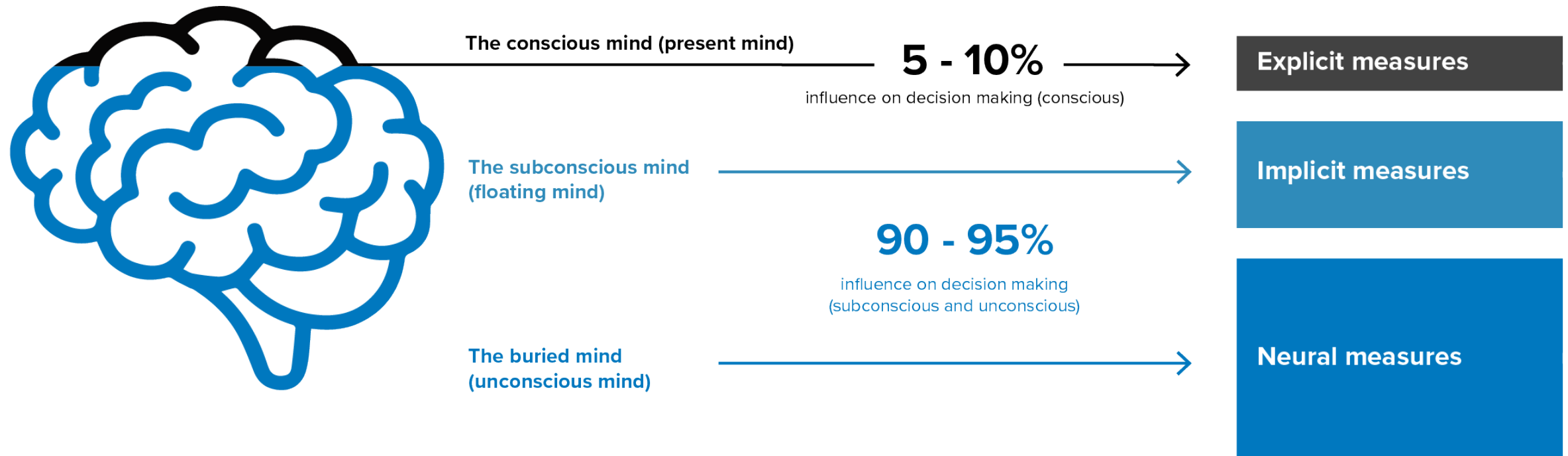
Market share gains for top beer brand driven by branded content measurement and insight



Why neuroscience needs to be in your measurement toolkit

“Much of what drives human decision-making is not consciously accessible”

Daniel Kahneman – Nobel Laureate and author of *Thinking Fast and Slow*



Without Neuroscience, you're not getting the full picture





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Three things to take from today:

1. The tools of neuroscience and psychology can help advertisers understand how and why COVID-19 advertising is different from recession advertising.
2. The news environment is a threat only to advertisers who don't know how to use it. Otherwise, it's a huge opportunity.
3. Emotional advertising during COVID-19 is risky. "Solution advertising" is better.



What we know about advertising during a recession

When A Recession Comes, Don't Stop Advertising

Brad Adgate Contributor

Media

Brad Adgate is an Independent Media Consultant



Numerous case studies point out the best strategy marketers can have during a recession is to maintain their advertising budget and/or change their ad message to adapt to the current market. This will provide long-term market growth for their brands. [-] GETTY

The best marketers will be upping, not cutting, their budgets

It may seem like a paradox, but recessionary periods actually provide fertile grounds for marketers to grow their brand's market share if they're prepared to think long-term.

Share this article



What we know about advertising in a recession

10 min read

WARC

WARC Best Practice, March 2020

TOPICS

MARKETING IN A RECESSION | MARKETING BUDGETS | MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS BUDGETS

Marketers should think twice before cutting media budgets during a recession. There is a range of evidence from past downturns that shows those companies that maintained their investment generated higher growth than those who reduced budgets and went dark. Brands should think about long-term brand building rather than promotions. Some suggest this requires focus on customer service and current customers. Others argue for broad reach, brand building activity rather than focusing on loyalty. Largely, consumables are seen as fairly recession proof as long as there is a noticeable difference in price and quality. Other categories have been seen to suffer



Recession



Pandemic



Pandemic Advertising

\neq

Recessionary Advertising

The physical health risk of COVID-19 makes this *very* different.



Advertisers face challenges and risks everywhere they turn

Cut Advertising?

Figure 1: Cutting budgets in recession harms future growth

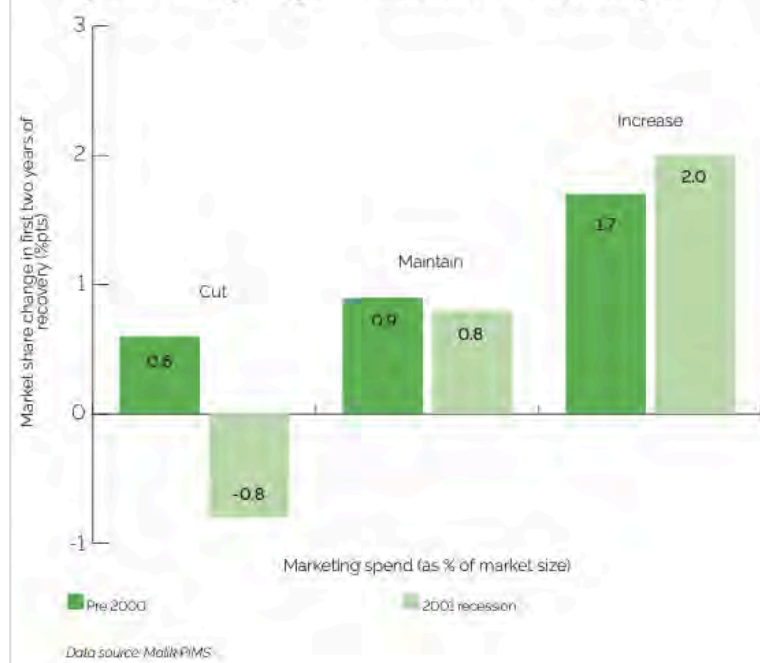
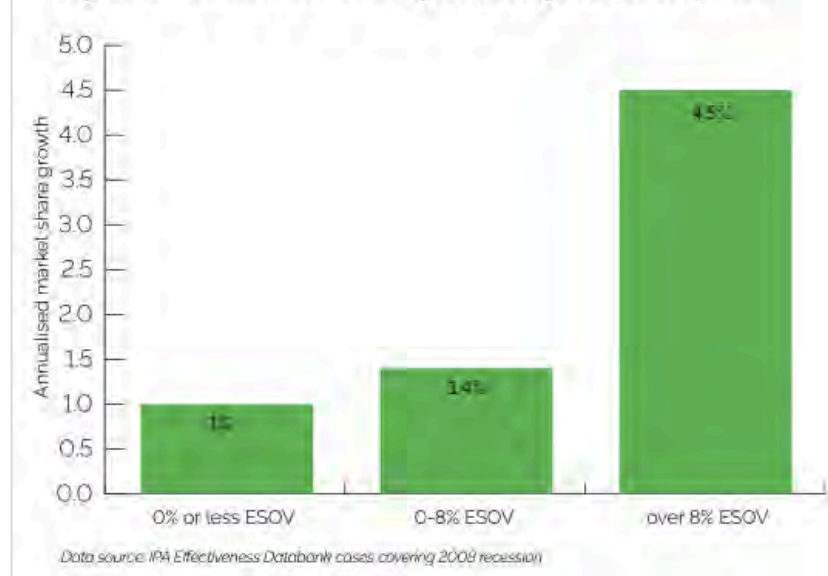


Figure 2: Businesses with high ESOV grew share faster



Risks/Challenges*

- Loss of market share/mental availability

*Note, we recognize there are exceptions to each of these choices. For some industries ravaged by COVID-19, cutting advertising may be the only path to survival. Faced with an existential choice, the choice is to exist.

Advertisers face challenges and risks everywhere they turn

Lower-funnel Advertising?



Risks/Challenges*

- Supply/distribution constraints
- Perceptions of tastelessness, opportunism; being out of step with consumer mood

*Notable exceptions: Streaming platforms.

Advertisers face challenges and risks everywhere they turn

Crisis-based Advertising?

Lucian @LucianTrestler
FUCK RIGHT OFF YOU AWARD-DESPERATE MORONS.
[twitter.com/creativitymag/...](https://twitter.com/creativitymag/)

Creativity Editors @creativitymag
McDonald's separates its golden arches in an act of coronavirus solidarity ow.ly/xYBC50yRaCb

Bernie Sanders @BernieSanders
. @McDonalds give your workers paid sick leave.
twitter.com/adage/status/1...

Ad Age @adage
McDonald's separates its golden arches in an act of coronavirus solidarity ow.ly/agd050yRzZo

Risks/Challenges

- Trivializing a health crisis
- Sounding like everyone else

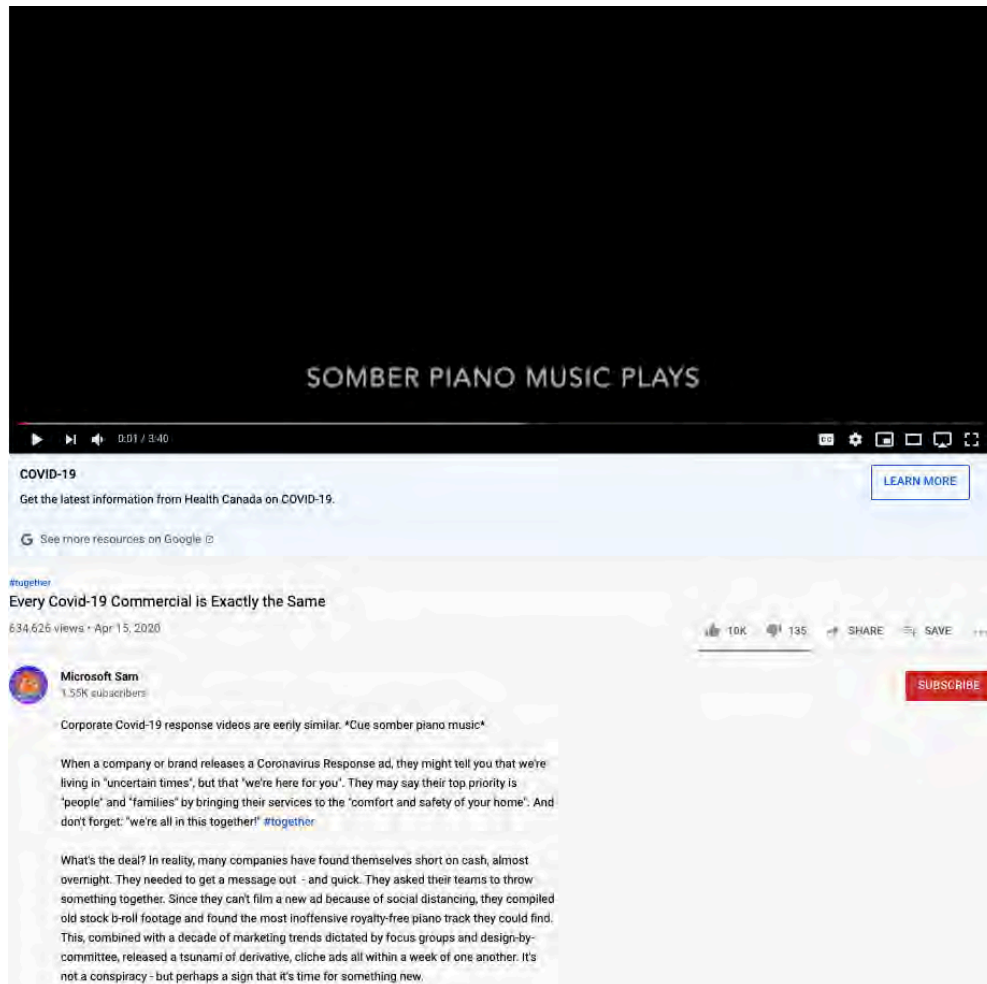
Stephen Jurisic • 2nd
Dean of the Miami Ad School Toronto
2h • 🌐

Every commercial is the same during these challenging times.



Advertisers face challenges and risks everywhere they turn

Crisis-based Advertising?



COVID-19
Get the latest information from Health Canada on COVID-19. [LEARN MORE](#)

See more resources on Google

#together
Every Covid-19 Commercial is Exactly the Same
634,626 views · Apr 15, 2020

Microsoft Sam
1.55K subscribers

Corporate Covid-19 response videos are eerily similar. *Cue somber piano music*

When a company or brand releases a Coronavirus Response ad, they might tell you that we're living in "uncertain times", but that "we're here for you". They may say their top priority is "people" and "families" by bringing their services to the "comfort and safety of your home". And don't forget: "we're all in this together!" #together

What's the deal? In reality, many companies have found themselves short on cash, almost overnight. They needed to get a message out - and quick. They asked their teams to throw something together. Since they can't film a new ad because of social distancing, they compiled old stock b-roll footage and found the most inoffensive royalty-free piano track they could find. This, combined with a decade of marketing trends dictated by focus groups and design-by-committee, released a tsunami of derivative, cliché ads all within a week of one another. It's not a conspiracy - but perhaps a sign that it's time for something new.

Risks/Challenges

- Trivializing a health crisis
- Sounding like everyone else
- Emotional numbing

Advertisers face challenges and risks everywhere they turn

Upper-funnel Advertising?



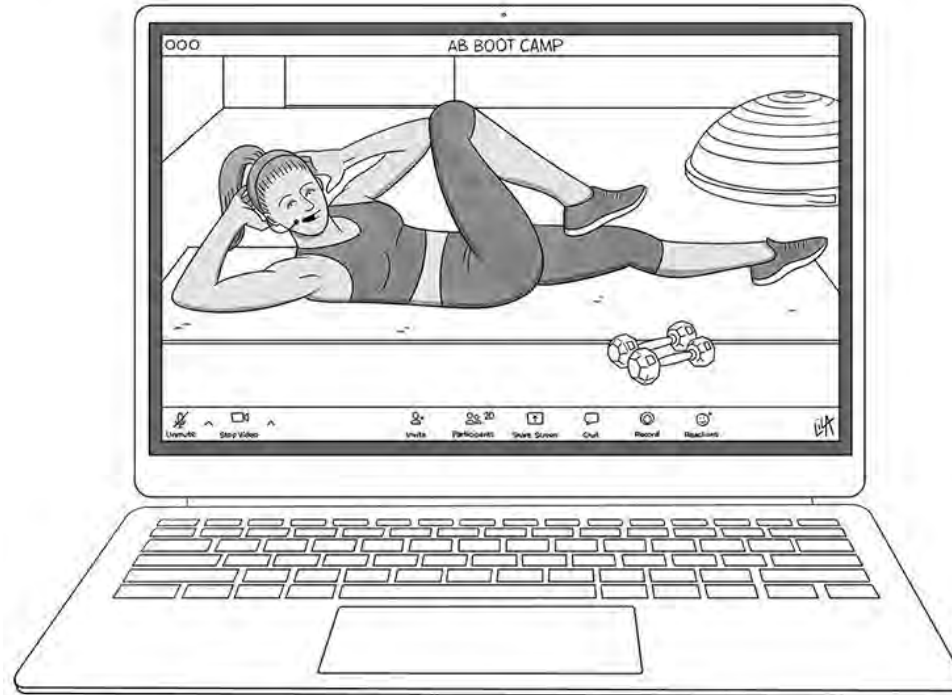
Risks/Challenges

- Emotional numbing

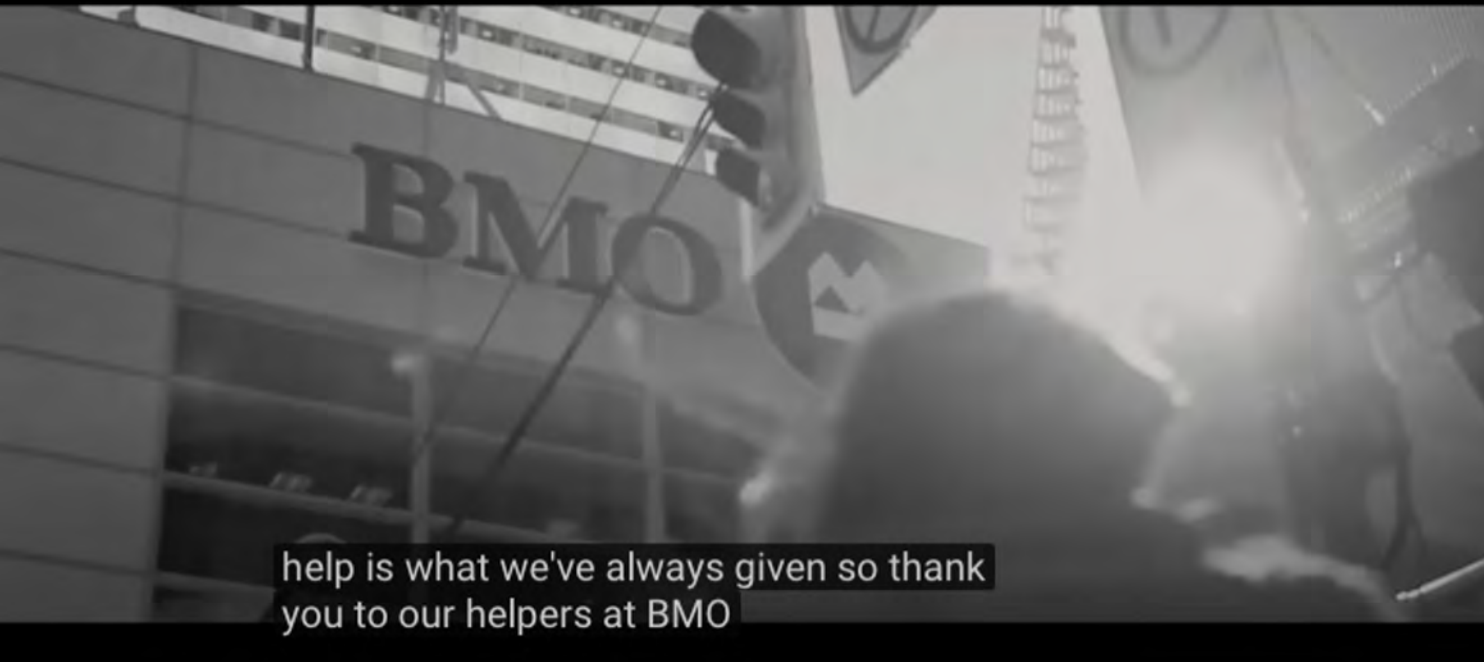
Why emotional advertising is risky during COVID-19



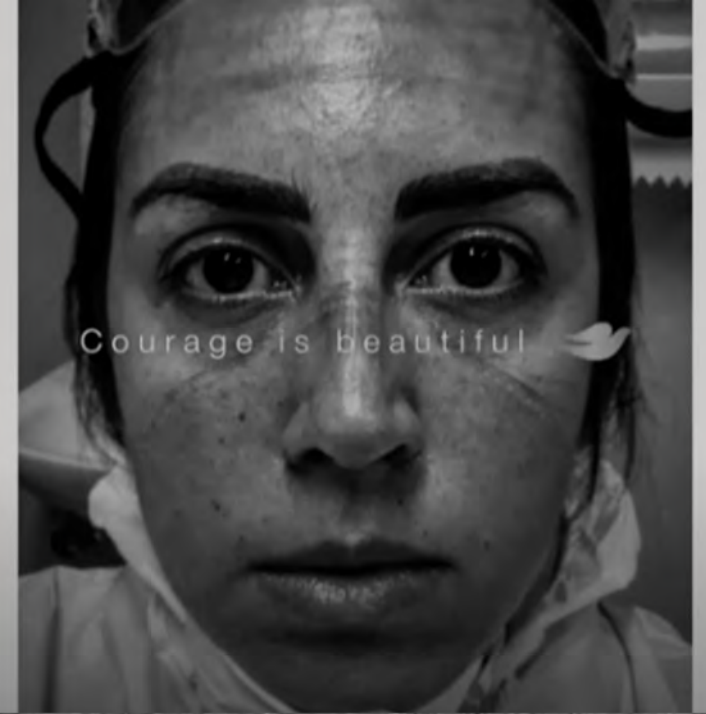
newyorkercartoons



“If you don’t have weights at home, try using canned food or the psychological burden of simply existing in this world!”



help is what we've always given so thank
you to our helpers at BMO



Courage is beautiful



But instead, we'd like
to use the next 30 seconds



Why emotional advertising is risky during COVID-19

The numbing effect of mortality salience in consumer settings

Dr Miranda Goode of Western University:

“Contemplating death dampened people’s expectations of emotion in a future consumption experience and **diminished the attractiveness of the experience...** this **dampening effect** of mortality salience was **replicated with advertisements that portrayed death-related concepts...**”

Beware the frozen heart...

Using Brainsights' brain measurement platform, Dr Goode could understand the neural impact of thinking about one's own mortality

1

Think about your own death



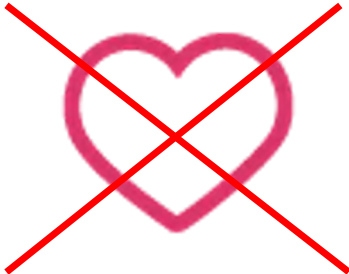
Reflect on an emotional experience

2

Watch ads portraying death



Watch additional emotional ads



Connection



Consumer brain activity recorded

If this:



Then
this:



And
this:



Connection

The implications of this emotional numbing are not confined to news consumption

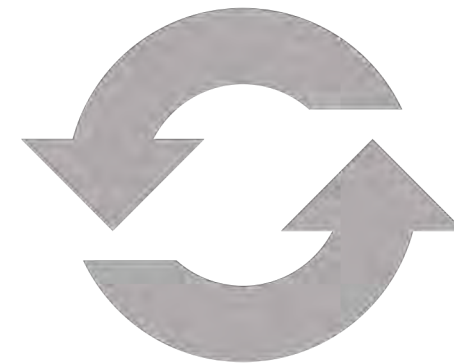
COVID-19

(Everything)

COVID-19

(News Consumption)

Implications to everyday
consumer behavior, life, outlook
and mindset



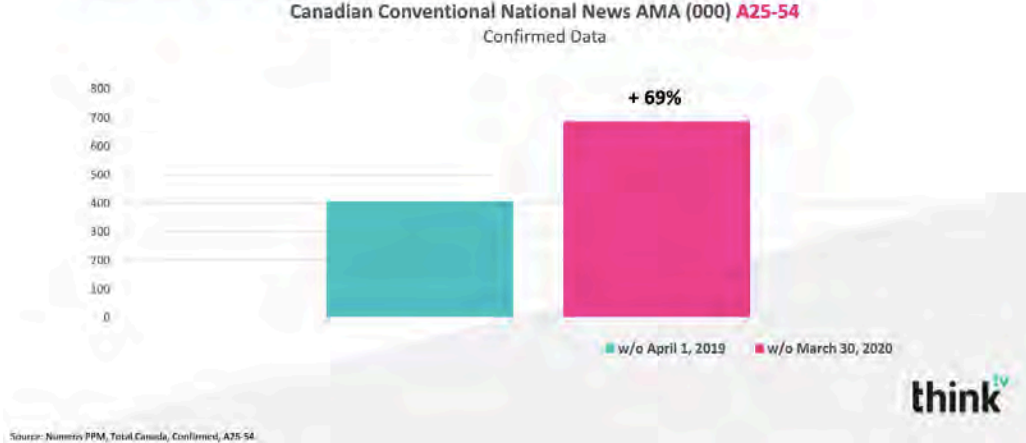
Implications to media mindset
and ad receptivity (effectiveness)

Canadians are spending more time consuming News

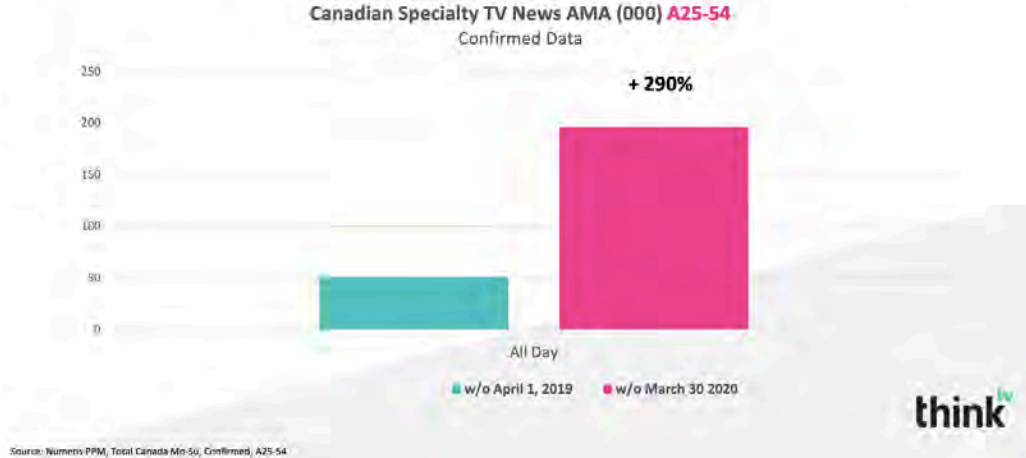
News/Information Category Consumption in Canada



significant AMA increase for Canadian conventional national news



explosive growth for Canadian specialty news networks



Beyond the bigger audiences today, there are other benefits of news advertising now

Brands can save American lives during the coronavirus crisis by running ads next to news coverage of the pandemic

David Cohen Mar 24, 2020, 8:00 AM



Place news next to ads to keep viewers informed. Shutterstock/dly13

Advertisers can also boost their brands

+XX%



Attention

+XX%



Connection

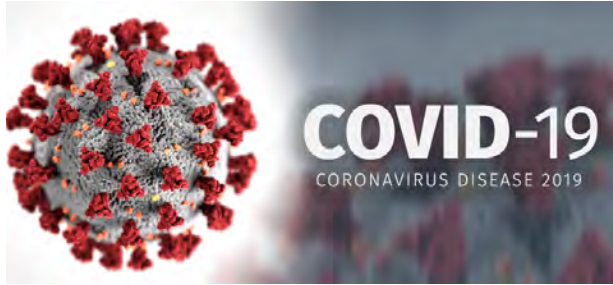
+XX%



Encoding

Average upside to ad receptivity in COVID-19 news.

How we learned this

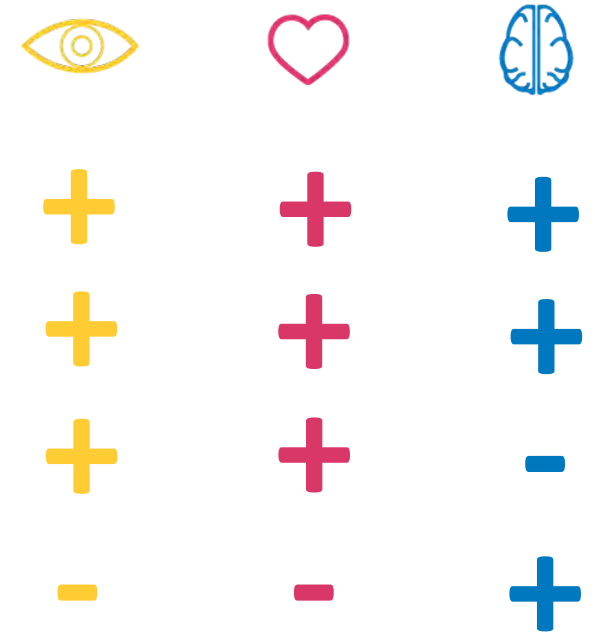


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Other
Contexts

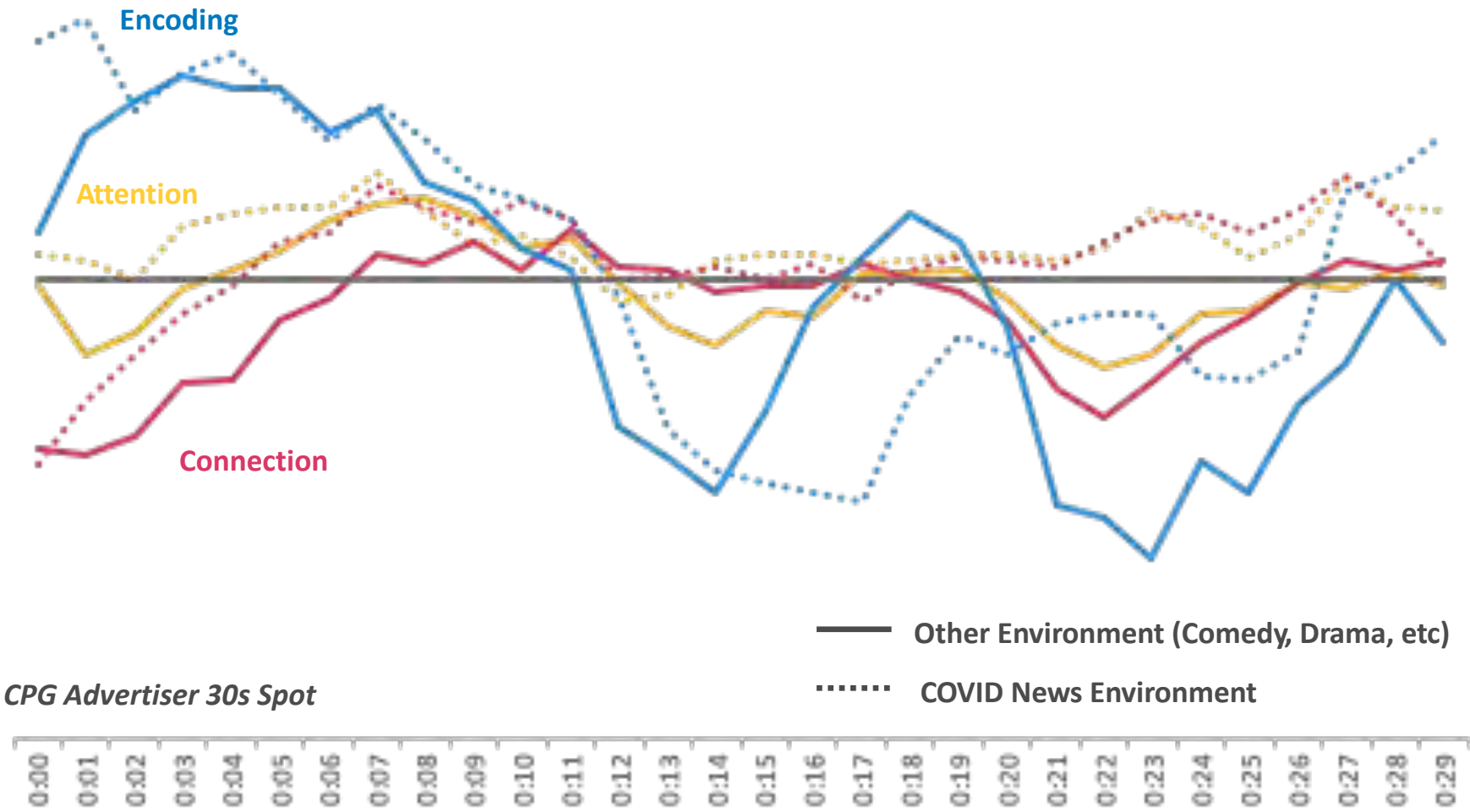


- CPG Advertiser
- BMW
- Sobeys Ad
- Mass Auto Advertiser



Change in neural metrics when ad was viewed in COVID-19 news environment versus elsewhere

Advertising in COVID-19 news can bring significant benefits if advertisers can strike the right tone



When placed in a COVID-19 news environment, this CPG advertiser's Brand Power spot saw double-digit lifts in Attention, Emotional Connection and Memory Encoding versus when it was viewed in any other context.

+11%  **Attention**

+11%  **Connection**

+10%  **Encoding**

CPG Advertiser 30s Spot

— Other Environment (Comedy, Drama, etc)
 COVID News Environment



What is this right tone?

1) Understand Consumer's Mindset.



2) Match Tone to Mindset

Matter of Fact Tone

Deliver facts in straightforward language; support with clear information/evidence

3) Support with complimentary ad structure

Explicit Problem-Solution Structure

Lay out the specific problem to be solved, and how your product solves it.

How to advertise successfully in a COVID-19 News context



COVID-19 News

Embrace: Solution-focused ads, with strong problem-solution structure delivered in 'matter-of-fact' tone with evidence of benefit

Avoid: Overly emotional tone (regardless of valence), hard sells

Why? Consumers are in a **solution-seeking mindset**

Impression Quality Potential: +11-31% Emotional Connection

Impression Quality Potential: The lift that can be achieved for ads that is attributed to the placement in complementary contexts compared to that ad's overall performance (across any/all contexts).

Two additional data points support these findings:

- 1) What brands and businesses are doing outside of the advertising space.

Delivering solutions.



WE'LL BE OFF AIR FOR A WHILE...

These are challenging times for all of us, and we are fully committed to doing everything we can to help.

Starting today, commercial advertising of Coca-Cola and all our brands in the Philippines will be put on hold. All our committed advertising space and budgets will be redirected towards supporting COVID-19 relief and response efforts for the most affected communities.

We will re-channel PhP 150 million to the following efforts: provision of protective equipment and beverages for health workers, delivery of food packs to the most vulnerable families and support for affected small retailers.

Together, we can make a difference.

2) Mindset Marketing insights from Brainsights



News

Embrace: Information-focused ads with strong calls-to-action

Avoid: Equity spots, and emotional tone

Why? Viewers are in an **information-gathering mindset**

Impression Quality Potential: +28% Emotional Connection



Comedy

Embrace: Humorous and high energy ads

Avoid: Serious and dramatic tone; heavy product focus

Why? Viewers are in a **light-hearted mindset**

Impression Quality Potential: +19% Emotional Connection



Drama

Embrace: Serious, positive emotional ads

Avoid: Absurd humour and high energy

Why? Viewers are in an **emotional storytelling mindset**

Impression Quality Potential: +19% Emotional Connection



DIY

Embrace: Functional ads, focus on progress, performance

Avoid: Slow builds, emotional tone

Why? Viewers are in a **learning mindset**

Impression Quality Potential: +14% Emotional Connection

Impression Quality Potential: The lift that can be achieved for ads that is attributed to the placement in complimentary contexts compared to that ad's overall performance (across any/all contexts).



BRAINSIGHTS





newyorkercartoons



“Are you talking about the new normal of an hour ago, or is there a new new normal right now?”

Actions for advertising during COVID-19

- 1) Recognize that this recession is different.
 - a) Pandemic advertising \neq Economic recession advertising
 - b) Mortality is salient, which is likely to numb emotional response of consumers (to advertising)



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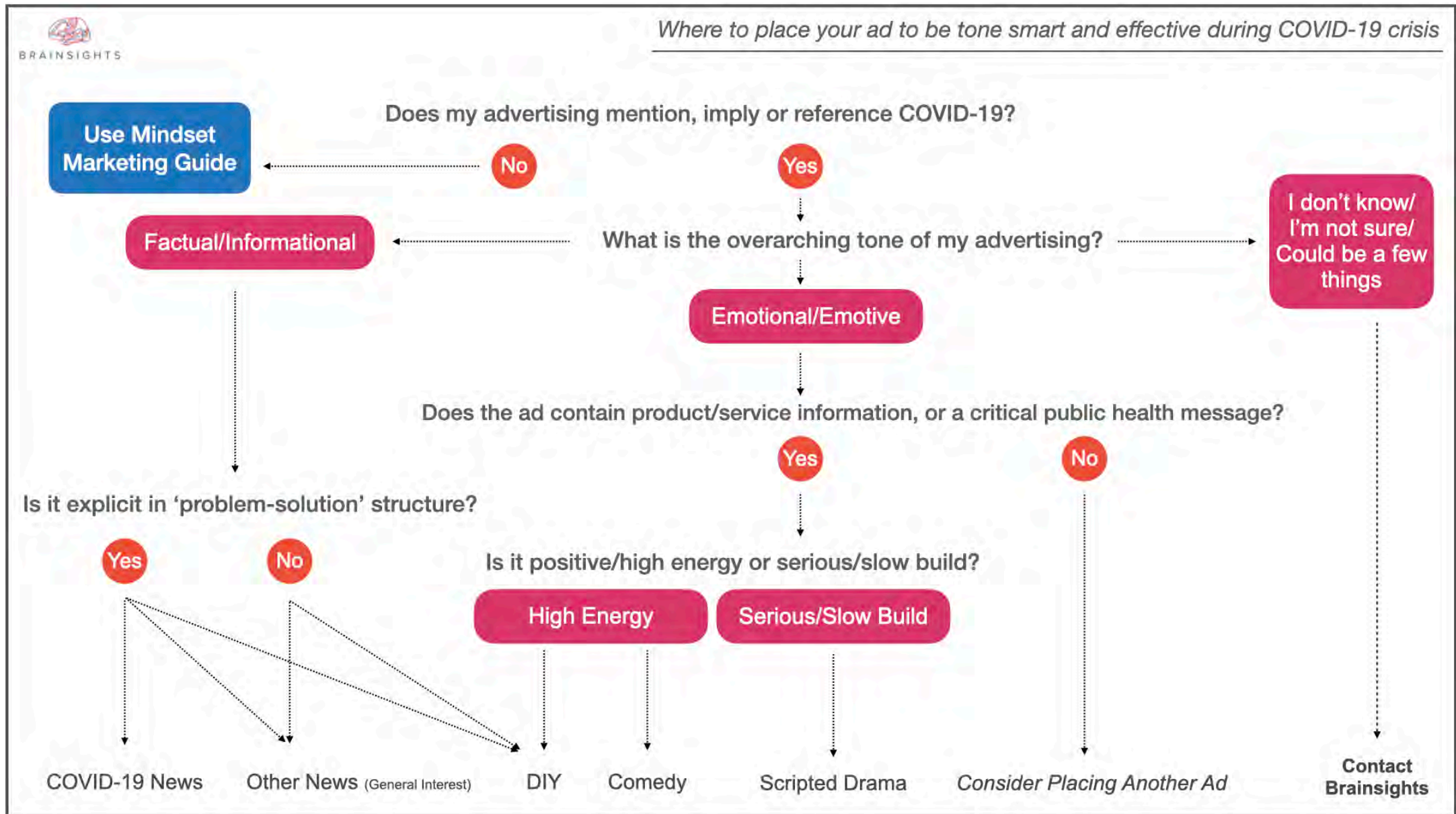


2) Brand-building/Advertising should take a solution-focused tone, delivered ‘matter-of-factly’ and supported by a clear problem-solution structure.

Avoid emotional tones.

3) Understanding consumer mindsets by context can help advertisers leverage media to enhance creative impact and be tone-smart.

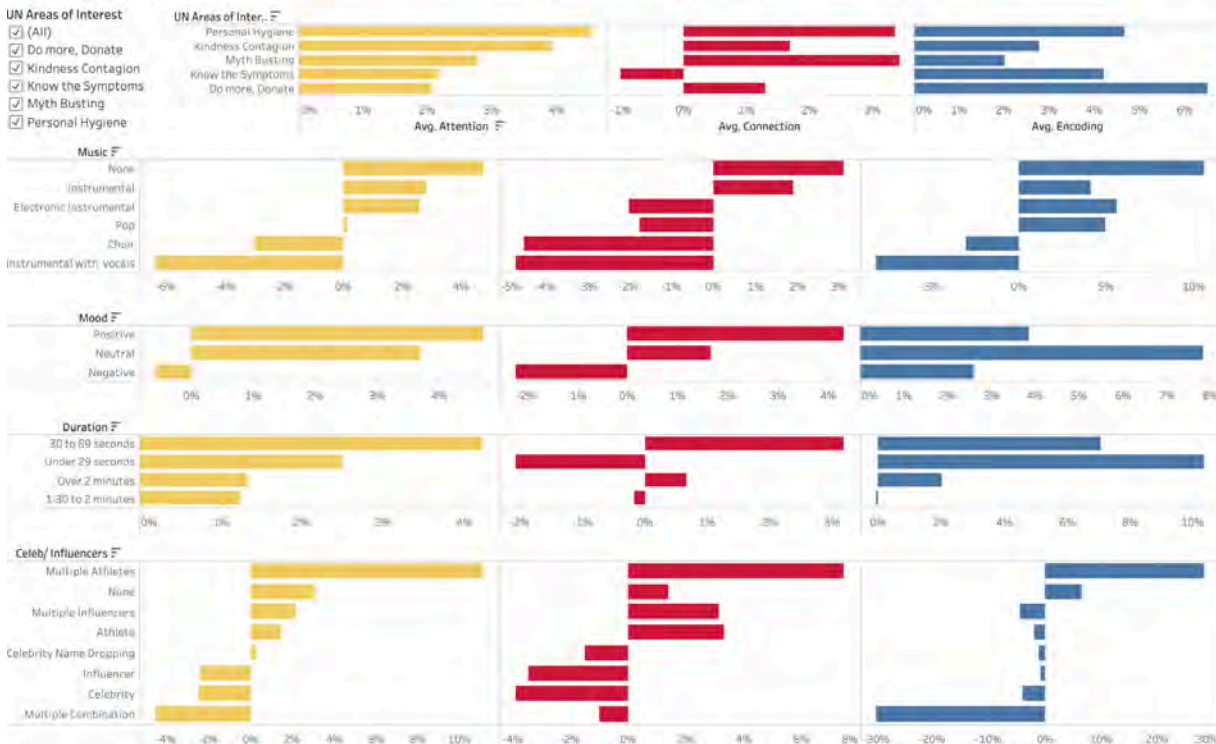
Actions for advertising during COVID-19 - Mindset Marketing in COVID-19



Taking a Solution Mindset – Data for Public Health Communicators

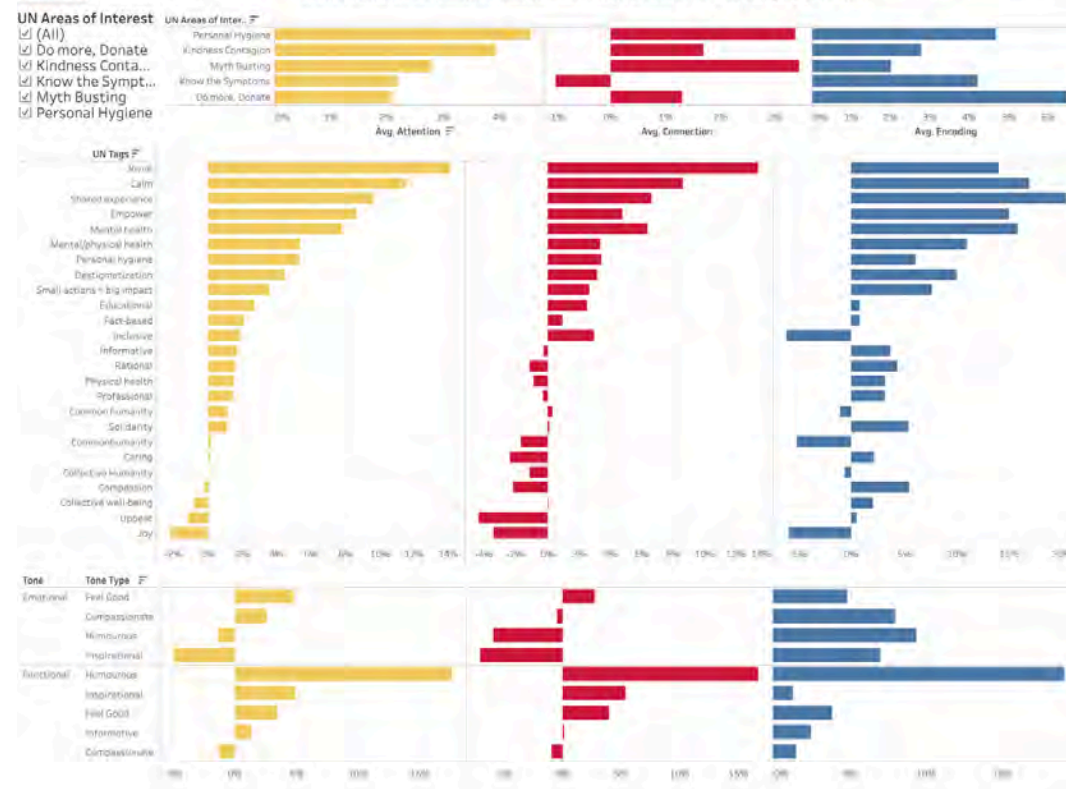
Public Health Comms Best Practices: Tactical

Using filters, click on the UN Area of Interest you want to explore. Your selection will change the view to show avg. scores across UN tags and Tones. This shows, based on our data, the best communication practices for that category of content.



Public Health Comms Best Practices: Tones & Tags

Using filters, click on the UN Area of Interest you want to explore. Your selection will change the view to show avg. scores across UN tags and Tones. This shows, based on our data, the best communication practices for that category of content.



Available this week on [Brainsights.com](https://www.brainsights.com)



Thank you. Stay safe.

kevin@brainsights.com

