

COVID-19

SERIES

Week Four – Looking Forward

October 27, 2020

BACKGROUND



It goes without say that 2020 is an unprecedented period in modern history due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

As we've detailed in the first three weeks of our COVID-19 series, many aspects of the way consumers shop for groceries have changed, yet a few have remained the same.

The following is a distillation of principles that we've observed while creating these reports. They are based on prior learning about marketing during times of crisis, and our understanding of specific challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

NOW IS THE TIME TO CONNECT

Life with COVID-19 has become the norm. People are seeking connection, simplicity, and meaning. Crisis fatigue has set in, yet most remain hopeful that “normal” is just around the corner.

As a marketer, it's tempting to turn off communication during times of crisis. Short term financial or inventory considerations may even demand it.

However, consumers' increase in emotionally-based decision-making means investing in brand strength will create an unfair advantage that the brand can leverage for years. Now is the time to build connections with consumers that will last well beyond the crisis to give brands an edge over the competition and private label.



MEMORIES ARE FRAGILE

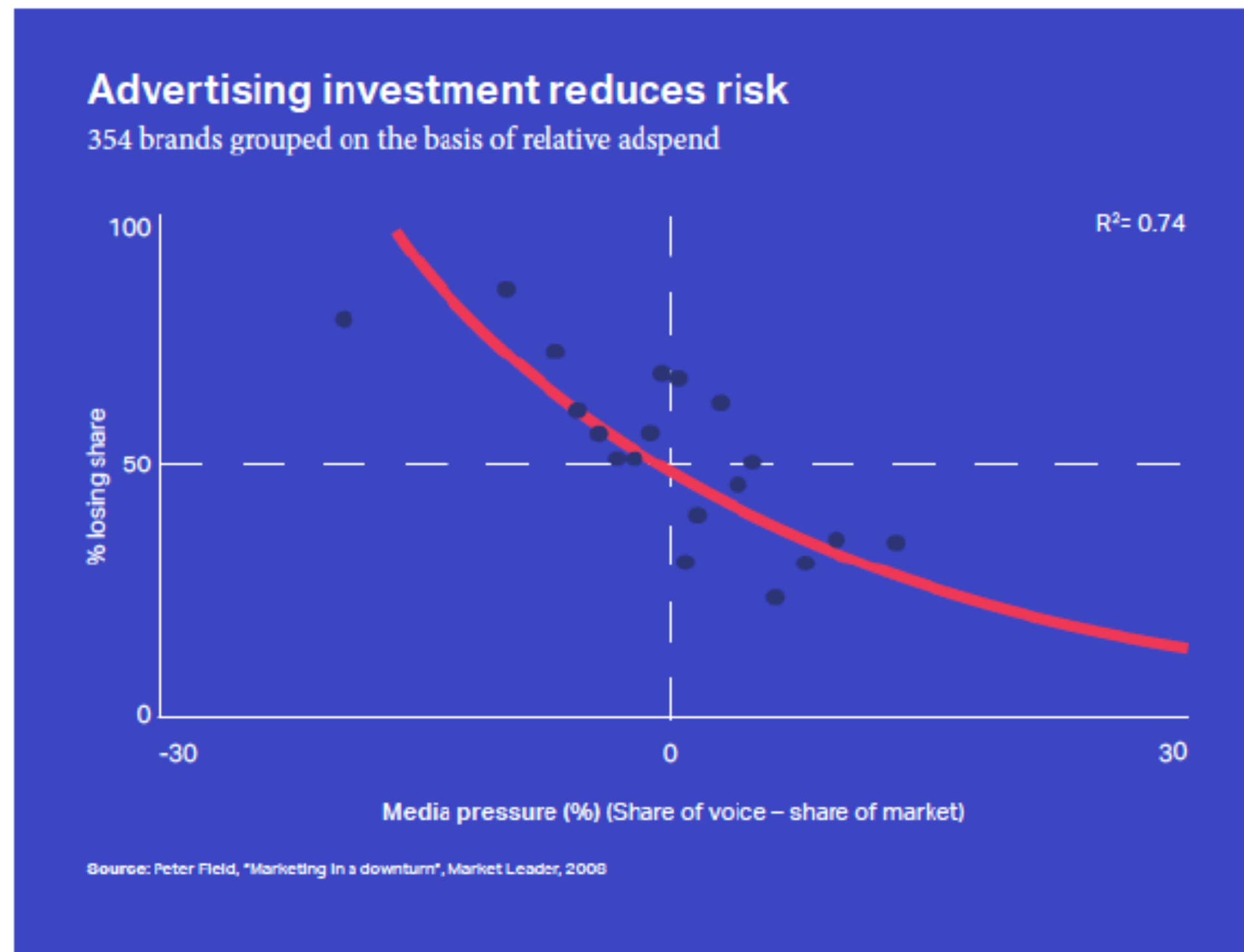
Going dark gives up hard-earned brand equity and salience

BRAND POSITION AT RISK

Cutting ad spend carries the risk of damaging a brand's market share, including during periods of economic down and crisis.

Reducing a brand's share of voice (its proportion of ad spend within its category) often results in an attendant decline in its overall market share.

As such, when a brand cuts its advertising budget relative to its competitors, it is at higher risk of losing market share.



BRAND STRENGTH IS BUILT ON SALIENCE AND EQUITY

SALIENCE

Active state built from noticeability, memorability and comprehension that ensures brand becomes the primary consideration when triggered into purchase mode.

Creativity is utilized to recruit and re-recruit at all points along a path-to-purchase using simultaneous top-down & bottom-up signaling.

EQUITY

The commercial value that derives from consumer perception of the brand name of a particular product or service, rather than the product or service itself.

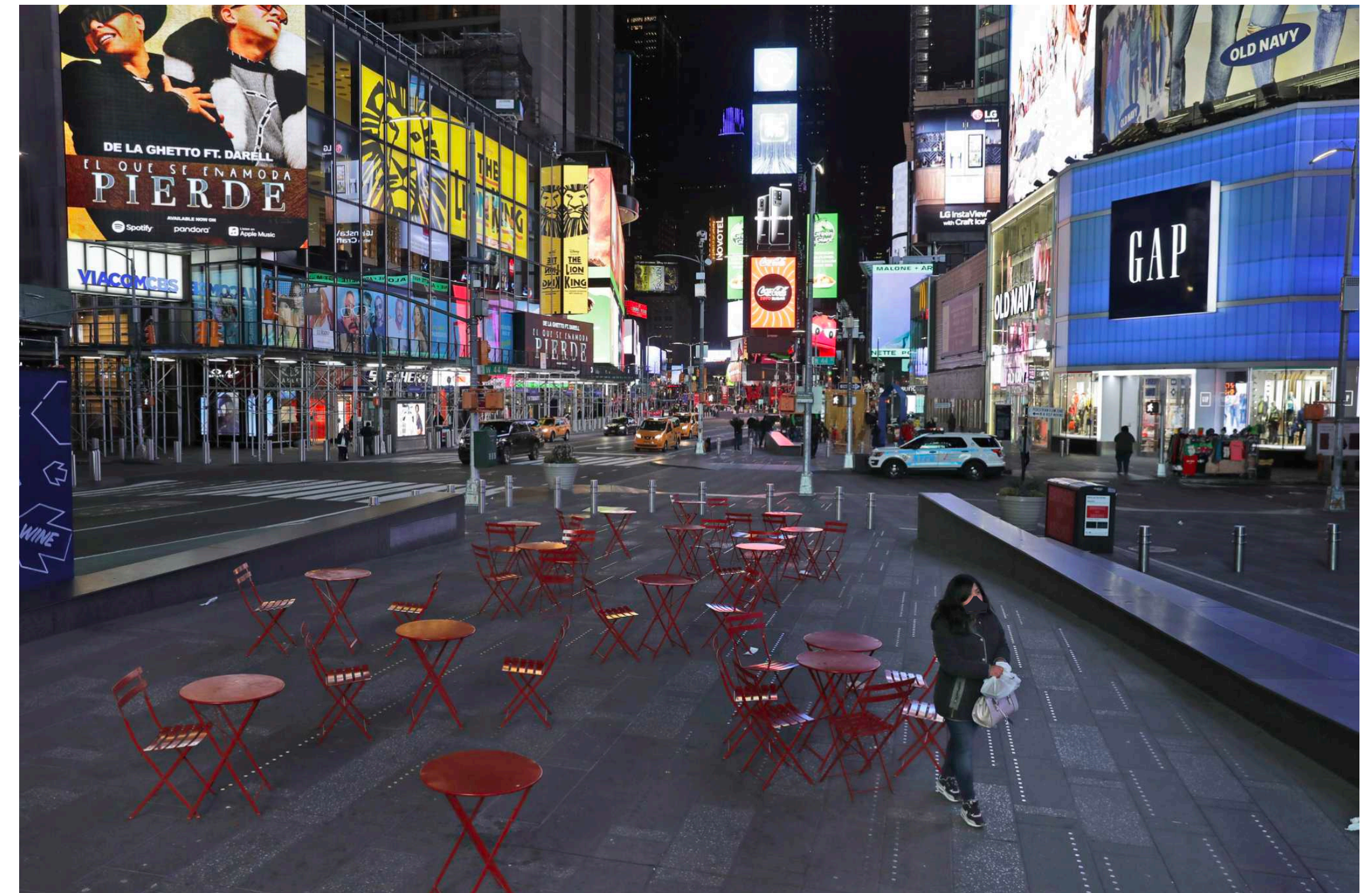
Strong brand equity commands a premium for a brand's products, even when shoppers could get the same thing from competitors for less.

HOW CAN BRANDS BUILD STRENGTH DURING CRISIS?

The crisis brought a handful of new challenges and accelerated consumer trends that were in infancy just a few months ago.

In moments of transition, confusion, and change, brands can provide a stabilizing presence by connecting with consumers emotionally. These connections will build short-term salience and long-term brand equity that the brand can utilize to grow share and fend off private label in the future.

It is important for brands to be present, be aware, be timely, and be consistent to their values in order to remain relevant.



SOLVE A PROBLEM

The average consumer has cooked the same meal 28 times since the onset of COVID-19, and fatigue is majorly setting in. Consumers don't want to cook, let alone deal with the hassle of planning, prep, and cleanup, and a recipe, alone, isn't enough to free them from the challenges of mealtime.

Brands must provide value beyond sustenance by showing consumers how their products make mealtime easier, quicker, and more rewarding. Empathizing with consumers' desires and reminding them of the roles the brand plays in the menu is integral to keeping the brand salient, and finding solutions to of-the-moment problems helps our brands stand out from the sea of other brands trying to make the basket.



BUILD HOLIDAY CONNECTIONS



With ongoing tension around group contact, most consumers are expecting the holidays to be smaller. Fewer gathering, less travel, and less excitement around shopping and hosting will leave consumers desperate for adventure and connection. Consumers are concerned about giving up certain holiday plans, but they aren't willing to give up the warm feelings each holiday brings.

Finding ways to make each holiday special, by helping consumers safely connect with one another over a meal, providing inspiration for showing love through food, or helping host memory-filled virtual get-togethers, could make a huge difference to those trying to make the most of their holidays and provide timely content for any holiday occasion that occurs prior to the existence of a vaccine.

SUPPORT THE NEW YEAR

COVID-19 has taught us consumers will shift quickly into new seasons. New Year's is going to be complicated because it brings with it an expectation that 2021 will be better. Consumers are expected to aggressively shift into wellness resolutions, but similar to other crazes, it should fizzle out quickly in favor of comfort foods as reality sets in.

Brands should strike an optimistic tone and avoid making fun of wellness expectations. Content should shift from supporting consumers wellness resolutions toward supporting a generally healthy lifestyle as we get a few weeks past New Year's.



BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP

Panic buys, spring stockpiling, fall stockpiling, casual hoarding, or, “just the amount of food it takes to home-cook my family’s meals for the week,” whatever you call it, there is a ton of food in consumers’ homes.

In this environment, brands must encourage consumers to use the products they’ve purchased and connect with them as close to the moment of consumption as possible. Even if the brand is currently out of stock, investing in the relationship between the consumer and the brand now will enhance memory creation and recall, which will pay off in the future.



PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT

People are exhausted and want something to make them smile. By now, most consumers have adapted to a new lifestyle, yet they're still trying to solve many of the same problems they had at the onset of the pandemic; passing time, combatting anxiety, and connecting with others. Many are turning to entertainment to settle these concerns and keep themselves moving forward.

Brands have the ability to give people the gusto that's needed to lift their spirits. This provides an opportunity for brands to deliver work that's outside of their normal boundaries, while finding ways to endear themselves to consumers. It's an investment in brand building, awareness, and love, even if it doesn't directly drive conversion.



SIMPLIFY CONSUMERS' LIVES

The pandemic gave new life to many digital tools and services, and people of all walks of life are now masters of the digital world. E-commerce, self-check, and QR codes have redefined shopping experiences, online games have gone mainstream, and everyone from toddlers to the elderly routinely connect over video calls.

Now vastly accepted as a way to simplify tedious tasks, technology can be used by brands to relieve points of tension in consumers' lives. Brands should find ways to replace in-person burdens with a technology solution, as well as streamline consumer journeys to free up time in their day.



RECAP



**SOLVE A
PROBLEM**



**BUILD HOLIDAY
CONNECTIONS**



**SUPPORT THE
NEW YEAR**



**BUILD THE
RELATIONSHIP**



**PROVIDE
ENTERTAINMENT**



**SIMPLIFY
CONSUMERS' LIVES**

RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

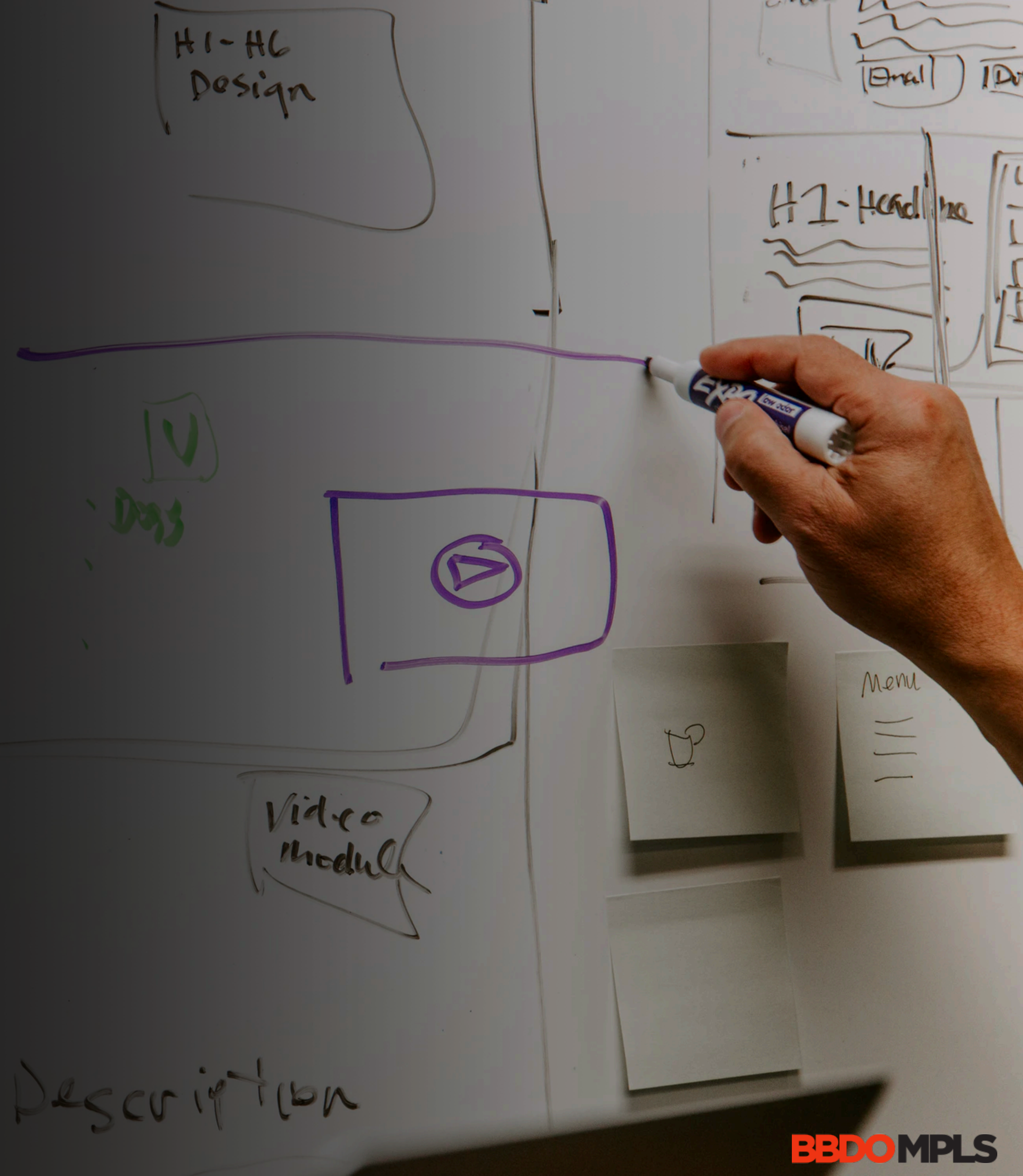
HUMAN NEED	SOLVE A PROBLEM	BUILD A CONNECTION	BUILD A RELATIONSHIP	SUPPORT	ENTERTAIN	SIMPLIFY
RELEVANT CHALLENGE						
BRAND ROLE						
IMMEDIATE ACTIONS						
FUTURE ACTIONS						

STRATEGY TEAM

While COVID-19 presents new challenges, brands can earn preference by having a purpose, adapting their business to provide ongoing, tangible value to struggling consumers, and communicating their intentions in an authentic way.

The BBDO MPLS strategy team is here to help take on these challenges, and we'll be working with brand teams to assess opportunities and develop plans for action.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with support or questions on how best to solve current or future consumer tensions!



FLARE STUDIO

A man and a woman are working in a home studio. The man is in the foreground, looking at a laptop. The woman is behind him, also looking at the laptop. They are surrounded by professional lighting equipment, including a large softbox and a Godox light. The background is a blue wall, and there are shelves with various items in the background.

Despite ongoing production challenges, our Content Creators are busier than ever. We are hard at work (from home), editing, concepting, writing, animating, and coming up with ways to create content for current and future client needs.

Our team is ready to fulfill your content needs!

DIGITAL STRATEGY AND E-COMMERCE

Consumers are evolving, and the way they shop online is too. We're here to help build brands along the digital path to purchase by creating integrated digital plans that pull consumers in along every step of the journey.

From quick projects like optimized Amazon page listings, to comprehensive digital go-to-market strategies, we're here to help.





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LET'S CHAT

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