

Brand Advertising in the Age of COVID-19

by Søren H Dinesen, CEO, Digiseg

Le Whopper

Have you been following Burger King's "De La quarantaine campaign"? I think it's kind of brilliant, and holds lessons for all marketers who want to ensure their brands remain relevant during the pandemic and, more importantly, once the quarantine is lifted and life goes back to normal. Staying top of mind is the very essence of brand marketing and for reasons I'll cover in this post, COVID-19 is an ideal time for branding campaigns.

Now that a large swath of the European public is under quarantine Burger King decided to present all the key ingredients of its signature sandwich so that people can make it for their families at home.

The "Quarantine Whopper," or "Le Whopper de la Quarantine," can be made at home using a variety of store-bought items.

Is it likely that people will go out and purchase all 9 ingredients? Maybe, maybe not, but that's not the point.



Clearly Burger King is telling its customers, “hey we know you miss us, and we you, but we’ll be here when this passes.” And if families decide to reproduce le whopper in their own kitchens as a coronavirus project, well that’s all the better for cementing a customer relationship.



That’s one reason why I think it’s brilliant. The second is because it recognizes that right now, the home is king. It’s where families now work, attend school, exercise, socialize, entertain themselves and prepare and eat every single meal. And it’s also the place where consumers will see and respond to brand engagements.

Digital Advertising is Now More Affordable

According to the IAB, spending on digital ads has plunged 33% (traditional media has fared worse, declining by 39%). This comes as no surprise, of course, as numerous sectors have been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Airlines, cruise lines, hotels, restaurants, destinations, conventions, and many others have pulled back their advertising as demand for their products and services have plummeted.

(If flying during the pandemic doesn't frighten you, now is a good time to fly—ticket costs are low.



Of course, you might need to allot the first 14 days of your trip to quarantine, depending where you go!

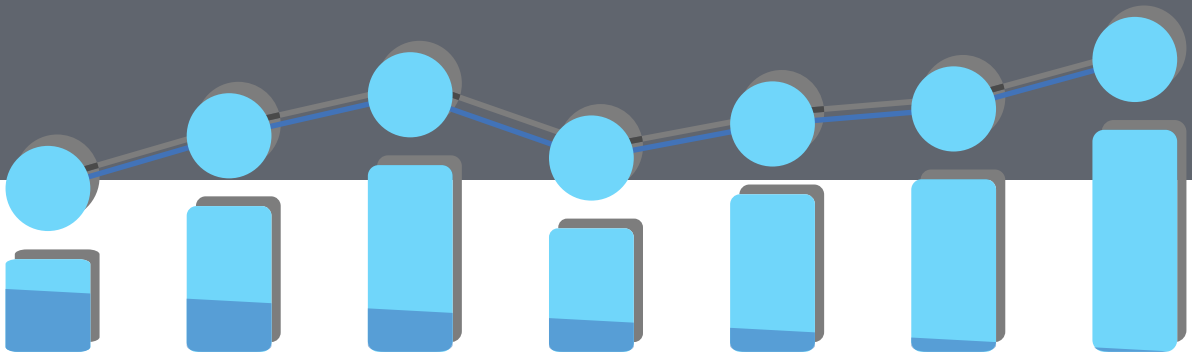
In the capitalist world of digital advertising, demand has a direct impact on supply. The fewer the advertisers, the more supply there is. The more supply, the lower the costs, which is exactly where we are today: across Europe, the cost of digital inventory is down 20%, even though consumers across the continent are spending more time online than ever before.

It seems to me that upper funnel, brand awareness campaigns are a really good idea at the moment because, like Burger King, it recognizes that while people can't go out and buy at the moment, it keeps their brands top-of-mind.

Household Targeting Trumps Behavioral Audiences

I'm not much of a fan of behavioral targeting for many reasons, but right now it feels exceptionally useless. In the span of two months the behavior of every family member has radically changed as a result of the quarantines, so how can it possibly help you find consumers who will be open to your brand messaging?

I much prefer targeting based on household characteristics: presence of children in the house, renters vs. owners, level to education, and so on. These are long-term characteristics perfect for upper funnel approach; not short term needs guessed at by a handful of online behaviors, like sites visited (assuming such campaigns can pass muster with the privacy regulators).



Household characteristics allow marketers to identify every household with consumers who are potential buyers for their products. Why spend money offering auto insurance to households that don't own cars? Targeting by household characteristic, at its essence, validates a consumer's need for a brand. If a household has children in it, at some point the parents will need to purchase children clothes, toys, school supplies, subscriptions to kids entertainment and so on.

As I wrote in a previous blog, "household characteristics validate whether a need exists before adding a particular audience member to the targeting pool." Marketers may not know whether or not a consumer is in market for children's clothes at the moment, but if she has kids, there's no question that at several points during the year, such purchases will be necessary. Brand advertising, which builds the upper funnel, is perfectly suited for this need -- and it happens to be cheaper than it has been in a very long time.

Home is King

In our free eBook, [The Digital Side Effects of Coronavirus](#), we note that home is now where we live, work, play and go to school, and that means we need services that allow us to continue our lives as best we can.

We need to shop, communicate, and plan for every potential eventuality that may arise from this pandemic. We also need ample entertainment opportunities for the entire family or we'll go insane with boredom.

Companies that can step up to provide these services to those sheltering at home will have a unique opportunity to build their brand's footprint.

The Digital Side-Effects of Corona

A Guide for Moving Forward



Okay, so you don't control your clients budget ...

If you're reading this, chances are you are a media buyer for your client, and you don't have control over their purse strings. Fair enough, but it's well worth point out the opportunities that are there for the taking:

- Consumer attention to online has never been higher (out of necessity)
- Inventory costs 20% less
- Companies that advertise during downturns outperform their competitors when the economy returns to normal

This brings me back to the Burger King campaign. While its restaurants are closed, Burger King is reminding people that its brand still exists, and is inviting them to participate in an activity that will entertain the kids and remind them why they love Le Whopper. Consumers will remember that once quarantine ends, and are likely to visit a restaurant to compare those sandwiches to the ones they made at home. It's a great way to turn lemons into lemonade, as they say.



Here's a list of 13 massive companies that started during a recession.

- General Electric
- FedEx
- General Motors
- Microsoft
- Electronic Arts
- IBM
- Disney
- Salesforce
- HP
- Google
- Hyatt
- Facebook
- Trader Joe's

[Source](#)

About Digiseg

Founded in 2015, Digiseg is the world's only provider of audience data that is inherently GDPR-compliant and 100% cookie free. Our audience segments and custom audiences leverage public, GDPR-compliant data available from national statistics offices and databases to segment the Internet into 39 audiences for use in online advertisement, such as household income, savings, and education levels, number of children or cars in the household, and other insights. Digiseg audience segments are the most comprehensive in the industry, covering 80% of the Internet. With clever traffic profiling and state-of-the-art machine learning algorithms we deliver outstanding results for advertisers and media agencies across Europe and the US.



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