

A Fresh Take On

Staying ahead of evolving dynamics in the marketplace and our culture

Mind, Body & Media

How Consumers and Brands Are Addressing Mental Health Together During COVID-19

About VAB's Young Leaders

The **VAB Young Leaders** is a group of rising professionals keenly focused on enrichment, growth and learning through teamwork. These bold thinkers are valued for their unique perspectives and insight.

Mind, Body & Media

This piece explores an important topic that has impacted both consumers and marketers during the COVID-19 pandemic: **mental health and wellness**. An issue that has been discussed frequently over the last year, Young Leaders decided to dig further and look at it through a media-driven lens.

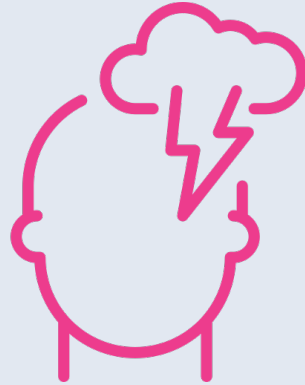
Read on to learn more about how consumers have turned to media to cope with mental health challenges during the pandemic and how marketers have learned to **adapt and engage authentically** in these trying times.



What You'll Learn...

- ▶ How mental health has declined during COVID-19 and the **implications for marketers**
- ▶ Which **platforms** and **programs** consumers are turning to during trying times and why
- ▶ What **marketers** are doing to meaningfully connect with consumers around mental health
- ▶ How marketers can **leverage the right messaging and platforms** to build brand favorability and establish long-term trust with consumers

The rapidness with which COVID-19 upended our daily lives, combined with the need to quarantine and social distance, has made **mental health** and **wellbeing** a **top concern** for both consumers and brands



Lockdowns, social distancing, changing norms and working from home have led to an increase of social isolation during trying times, which has led to increasing mental health concerns.

67% of workers are reporting **higher stress levels** during the COVID-19 pandemic than before.

31% of Internet users are concerned about COVID-19's **effect on their mental health**, more than their concern about access to a vaccine (**29%**).

Source: Statista, *Percentage of workers reporting higher, equal or lower levels of stress since the coronavirus outbreak in 2020*, 12/15/2020; Global Web Index, *10 mental health campaigns that are making a difference*, 11/4/2020.

A greater mental health crisis could potentially have a deep effect on **consumer behavior** and how brands approach **creative messaging** moving forward



McKinsey
& Company

June 2020

How COVID-19 is changing consumer behavior –now and forever

PULSE

May 13, 2020

How Brands Are Talking About Mental Health During COVID

nature

Feb 3, 2021

COVID's mental-health toll: how scientists are tracking a surge in depression

FIERCE
Healthcare

Oct 16, 2020

BCBSA: Millennials' mental health is on the decline—and COVID-19 is making it worse

Coping Devices

Understanding Where People
Turn During COVID-19

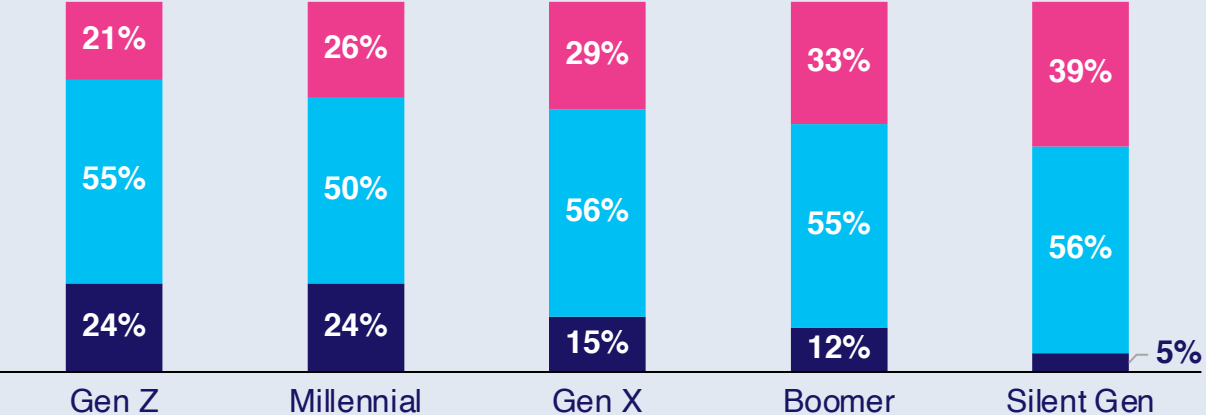


The pandemic has caused mental crises among people across generations, with Gen Z and Millennials having the **hardest time coping** with the impact

▶ As people look for ways to handle COVID-related restrictions, **72%** have increased their media usage since COVID-19 began

How well are you coping with the impacts of COVID-19?
% of respondents

■ Not well ■ Somewhat well ■ Very well



Source: VAB's 'As Time Goes By: How Media Consumption Is Helping America Cope'. VAB / Lucid 'Media Usage In The Time of COVID-19 Survey,' April 2020. Survey base: P18+ & household subscribes to cable, telco, internet TV or satellite TV (n=1,004). Q1: Overall, please choose the statement below that best describes your media usage since the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Edward Jones, Wave, The Harris Poll, *The Four Pillars of the New Retirement*, 2020. Base: U.S. adults by generation: Gen Z (18-23), Millennial (24-39), Gen X (40-55), Boomer (56-74), Silent Gen (75+).

Increased media usage during COVID-19 brought **TV to the center of the home**, providing an escape and keeping people connected

► Overall, **84%** of respondents say they have more time to watch/listen/read media since the COVID-19 outbreak

% of respondents who agree with the statement
P18+



83%

“I couldn't imagine not having a television set right now”



82%

“Watching TV helps me escape and cheer up”



78%

“Watching TV helps me keep in contact”



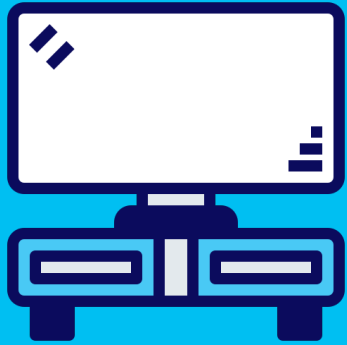
72%

“Watching TV or movies together as a family has become more common”

Source: VAB's 'As Time Goes By: How Media Consumption Is Helping America Cope'. VAB / Lucid 'Media Usage In The Time of COVID-19 Survey,' April 2020. Survey base: P18+ & household subscribes to cable, telco, internet TV or satellite TV (n=1,004). Q1: Overall, please choose the statement below that best describes your media usage since the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Q2: When thinking about how you've spent your time during the COVID-19 Pandemic, have you increased, decreased or spent the same amount of time with the following media? & Q9: Thinking of your behavior during the COVID-19 Pandemic, please indicate below how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Q7: Thinking of your behavior since the start of COVID-19, please indicate below how much you agree or disagree with the following statements & Q9: Thinking of your behavior during the COVID-19 Pandemic, please indicate below how much you agree or disagree with the following statements; VAB analysis of MRC 'COVID-19: Tracking the Impact on the Entertainment Landscape', 2020.

To help cope with stress and isolation brought on by the pandemic, people have turned to familiar, classic programs for **nostalgic comfort**

- ▶ There was a significant increase in 'throwback' TV shows and movies as people found an escape through media that made them feel like they were back in older, more 'normal', times



54%

of consumers **re-watched** episodes of an **old favorite show**

Esquire

May 15, 2020

I'm Stuck in the Quarantine Time Machine. So Are You. And That's Okay for Now.

There's comfort in throwback TV, movies, and music, because culture's past is safer than COVID's present. ▶

VICE

November 18, 2020

The Pandemic Is Making Us All Suckers for Nostalgia

During a time when no one knows what the hell is going on, turning to familiar TV shows and movies helps.

The New York Times

January 12, 2021

Viewers' Streaming Favorites? Old Network TV Shows

npr wNYC

April 15, 2020

Returning To Old Favorites? Comfort TV (And Books, And Music) Is A New Trend

POST BULLETIN

August 1, 2020

Classic TV comes to the rescue for pandemic-weary Americans

The New York Times

November 10, 2020

Go Ahead, Binge Old Movies and Jam Out to '90s Hits

Decades-old movies, songs and video games have surged in popularity over the pandemic. Psychologists say conjuring nostalgia during stressful times is a healthy coping mechanism.

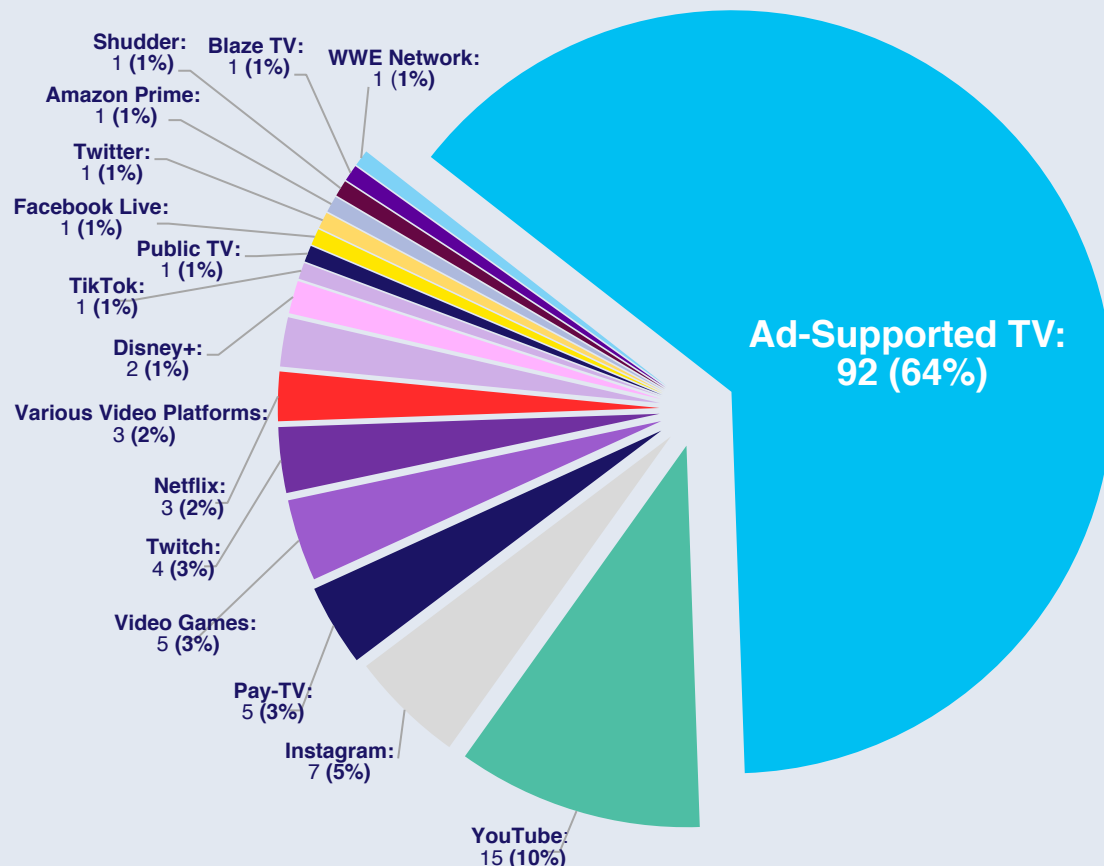
People have also found ways to stay connected and gather safely via online communities to discuss their **shared passion for video content**

- ▶ Video content had people convening together online, with over **144 different pieces** of content trending across genre, life stage and interests

Our analysis of the top 10 trending U.S. Twitter topics in primetime across six weeks during COVID-19 found that...

Video content accounted for 75% of the top 10 Twitter trending topics

% of Top 10 Trending Programs / Content by Platform



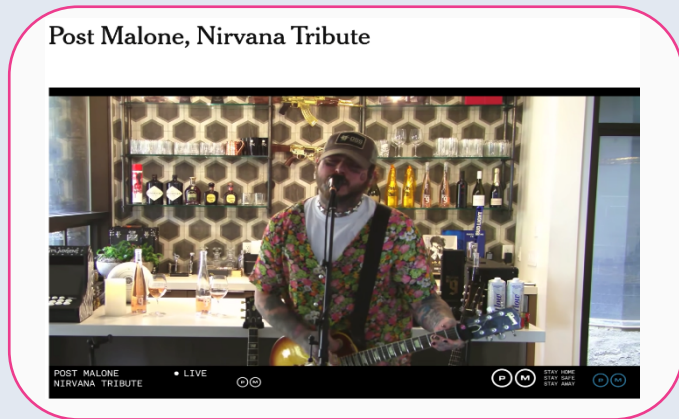
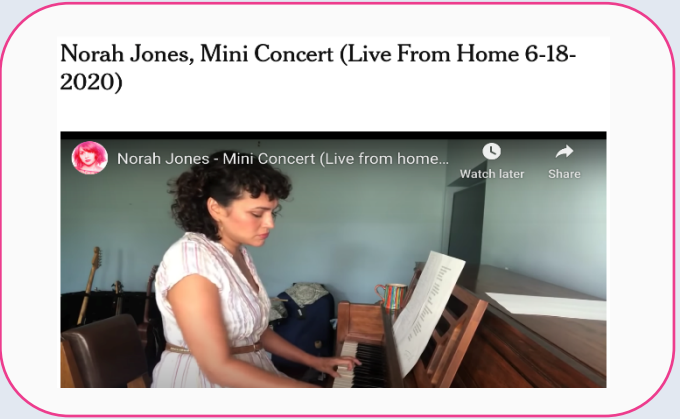
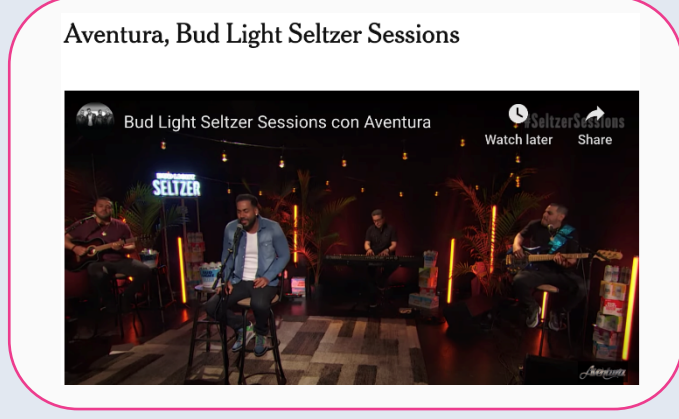
Source: VAB's [#AloneTogether: Culture in the Time of COVID-19](#), based on a VAB custom analysis of Top 10 trending Twitter Topics each night (9:30p & 11p) (3/16/2020 – 4/26/2020). Results include both 'direct' and 'related' topics. Various Video Platforms include Epic Games, and various concert streaming partners.

In addition to gathering online via social media, virtual concerts and events have become a haven for fans looking for ways to cope with feeling alone

- ▶ With live events canceled, people have turned to virtual events to get back the feeling of attending a live event and regain a sense of normalcy



31%
of people
Livestreamed
Concerts / Events



Source: VAB's [We're Going Live](#). VAB / Lucid 'COVID-19 Streaming Behavior Survey,' June 2020. Survey base: P18+ in households with access to streaming services and have viewed content on streaming services within the past seven days (n=1,000). Q14. When thinking about livestreaming, by which we mean: streaming a program online live as it happens (e.g., Concert - One World: Together at Home, Sporting Event - Virtual NFL Draft) - which of the following statements do you feel apply to you?



Summary: Coping Devices

- ▶ **Video has become the center of the home** as people seek distractions to help them cope and destress from the pandemic
- ▶ **TV, especially programs that elicit notes of nostalgia, is growing in popularity among viewers**
- ▶ **Virtual events, such as concerts, provide people with a way to gather safely and gain a sense of community**

Exercise In Empathy

Exploring the Impact of Compassionate
Brand Purpose and Messaging



Aside from turning to their favorite programs and platforms to help keep them upbeat, audiences are looking to brands to **aid in fighting** their quarantine blues

▶ From updated products to more compassionate brand messaging, there is a **clear desire** for brands to provide comfort and show that they understand the struggles consumers are facing, **especially among younger consumers**

83%

of consumers want compassionate connection, including brand messaging that communicates empathy and support with the struggles they face

Two in five young consumers appreciate brands that provide ideas to **improve mental health** during COVID



75%

say they are more likely to buy from companies that are concerned about their mental health and well-being

Source: Edelman, *2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Brands and the Coronavirus*. Q5. In the face of this coronavirus outbreak, how do you expect brands to react when it comes to the nature and tone of their communications with the public? 3-point scale; code 1, brands must do this; code 2, I hope brands will do this. Question shown to those who have heard of the virus (Q1/1). 12-mkt avg. Data collected between March 23 and March 26, 2020. Morning Consult, *Favorited or Forgotten? A Look at If & How Consumer Behavior Will change Post-Pandemic*, April 23, 2020. Ypulse, *COVID-19 Special Report: Marketing During COVID-19*, 2020.

Brands within the health and wellness space have worked to **provide relief** for those facing mental health struggles that were either **brought on or worsened by the pandemic**

▶ The surge in demand for mental health resources at the onset of the pandemic motivated companies to act with meaningful authenticity— some provided free access to their services, or partnered with brands to make it easier for burnt out employees to access proper resources, while others put out their own research to bring attention to the scale of the mental health crisis



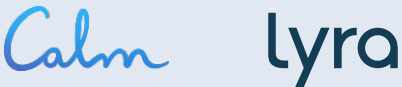
May 14, 2020

Headspace Announces Free One-Year Subscriptions for All Unemployed Americans

Leader in Meditation and Mindfulness Announces "The Headspace Promise," an Ongoing Commitment to Providing Free Mental Health Resources in Times of Crisis; Launches New Content Collection on "Living Through Unemployment"

"While meditation and mindfulness can't change our circumstances in life, it can help us change our perspective on those circumstances... As a company dedicated to improving the health and happiness of the world, we take our responsibility to help support people's mental health very seriously."

- Rich Pierson, CEO & Co-Founder, Headspace



October 20, 2020

Lyra Health and Calm Partner to Combat Stress, Burnout, and Support Resilience-Building in the Workplace

"Partnering with Lyra is a huge step in accelerating accessibility to mental health and mindfulness tools to employees everywhere. With Calm's robust content library and Lyra's unmatched evidence-based clinical support, together, we'll foster a stronger, more resilient workforce."

- Alexander Will, Chief Strategy Officer, Calm



February 1, 2021

Lululemon Establishes Global Benchmark for Wellbeing with New Report


"The events of the past year brought unprecedented challenges to the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of people worldwide... this research accelerates our efforts to support the wellbeing of the guests, employees and the communities we serve."

- Calvin McDonald, CEO, Lululemon

Additionally, brands across a range of categories, from backpacks to fashion and jewelry, are actively working to end the stigma around mental health by **sharing resources, forming devoted coalitions and **investing** in relevant organizations**

▶ Using the scale of their platforms, brands like JanSport, Kenneth Cole and Kendra Scott are helping to bring mental health to the forefront, regardless of industry, and using their power to advance the conversation at a critical time

KENNETH COLE



CISION PR Newswire May 15, 2020
 Kenneth Cole And An Alliance Of The Leading Mental Health Organizations Join Forces With Celebrities And Advocates To Launch An Unprecedented Coalition At A Critical Moment In Time

THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION INTRODUCES AN INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING PLATFORM TO START CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GOAL OF DE-STIGMATIZING ALL MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

*"This is a critical moment in time. The collective consciousness from **the pandemic** has **created an unprecedented urgency** to address the crisis now,"*

- Kenneth Cole, Chairman & Chief Creative Officer, Kenneth Cole Productions Inc.
 Founder & Chairman, The Mental Health Coalition




ADWEEK July 10, 2020
JanSport Aims to 'Lighten the Load' for Gen Z With Mental Health Resources

Campaign offers live conversations and a series of original films

*"We really didn't want to come out again and tell [consumers] that we have durable backpacks in every color of the spectrum. It was really important for us to let Gen Z know that we want to hear about them, **we want to know what they're going through**, and we want to **be an ally**."*

- Monica Rigali, Senior Director of Marketing, JanSport




5 NBCDFW February 10, 2021
Kendra Scott Focusing on Mental Health Philanthropy in 2021

The company announced a new partnership with Active Minds, the nation's leading nonprofit promoting mental health for young adults.

*"We know that mental health challenges have grown in number and severity for many of us in recent months and years. **Isolation worsens already-existing mental health conditions** and causes new ones to emerge... we are **investing in this grant with Active Minds to support mental wellness** at the college level,"*

- Kendra Scott, Founder & CEO, Kendra Scott

Celebrities and influencers alike have also joined in the battle to **destigmatize mental health** and promote self care via brand partnerships

- ▶ Health influencers have proved especially popular among younger generations, with **76%** of generation Z and **57%** of millennials found value in health influencers

Traditional Mental Health

July 8, 2020

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER **Calm**

Harry Styles Lends His Voice to New Calm App Story



"It's changed my life. I'm so happy to be collaborating with Calm at a time when the world needs all the healing it can get."

- Harry Styles

Self Care as Mental Health

Sept 9, 2020

AdAge



WHY CLEAN & CLEAR IS JOINING A GROWING BRAND MOVEMENT SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH



"The response on Instagram was a sure sign the timing was right... we really wanted to bring resources to learn how mental health and well-being can be beneficial self-care during these unprecedented times"

- Amrika Ganness, Group Brand Director of Clean & Clear

Estimated total ad spend on influencer marketing was expected to increase to \$5-\$10 Billion dollars in 2020

Source: The Hollywood Reporter, *Harry Styles Lends His Voice to New Calm App Story*, July 8,2020; The Advertising Research Foundation (ARF), *The Power of Influencer Marketing*, Nov 12,2020; Forbes, *Social Media Health Influencers Continue To Be Resource During Covid-19 Pandemic*, July 16 2020; Ad Age, *Why Clean and Clear is joining a growing brand movement supporting mental health*, Sept 9, 2020.

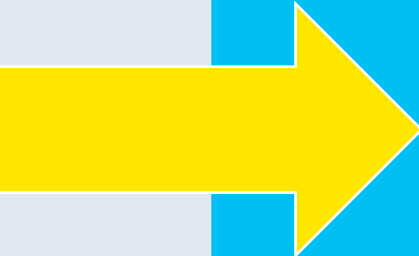
Overall, consumers' awareness of brands who were pivoting with purpose in mind is leading to greater long-term brand trust and loyalty

- ▶ Among nearly 1/3 of consumers (34%), knowing that a brand has pivoted their strategy to help during COVID instilled long-term trust that a brand will work to keep them safe



58%

of respondents could recall at least one brand that quickly pivoted to better respond to their needs during the pandemic



82%

said this led to them doing more business with the brand

Source: Deloitte Insights, 2021 Global Marketing Trends. The Global Marketing Trends Consumer Pulse Survey polled 2,447 global consumers, ages 18 and above, in April 2020. This survey was launched in the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, China, South Africa, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Forrester's Consumer Energy Index Online Survey, U.S. Consumers, March 2020.



Summary: **Exercise in Empathy**

- ▶ Brands who have adapted their products and messaging to showcase empathy are generating **greater engagement** among audiences
- ▶ Brands from across a multitude of categories, including fashion and retail, are getting involved in the mental health fight by **working to provide relief** for those struggling and by **helping fight the stigma against mental health**
- ▶ **Influencers** have been particularly helpful as a tool to reach Gen Z and millennial audiences because they create the feeling of **'one-on-one'** personal interaction and human connection
- ▶ During the pandemic, brands that pivoted their messaging and campaigns to **address mental health** establish long term trust and loyalty from their audience

Key Takeaways For Marketers



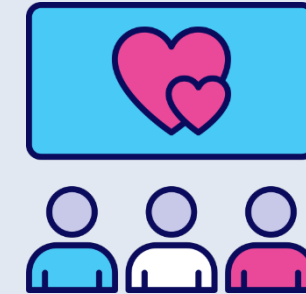
Connecting Virtually

With in person events canceled, the consumer need for connection has grown. A rise in video viewing and live events has allowed more like-minded people to gather in one place making it easy for brands to reach their target audience in an organic way.



Prioritize the Consumer

Incorporating relevant messaging and updating products and / or services that correlate to societal issues consumers may be facing can create long-term brand trust and loyalty.



Sending an Authentic Message

Addressing mental health by utilizing platforms and applications in an authentic and empathetic manner can not only build upon your current audience but also tap into a previously unknown audience across screens.

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We're Going Live
How Consumers are Living Vicariously Through Live-Streamed Events in the Time of COVID-19



A Sea of Change in Video Viewing
Helping Marketers Find More Fish in the Streaming Ecosystem



As Time Goes By
How Media Consumption is Helping America Cope



#AloneTogether
Culture in the Time of COVID-19

VAB Members, brand marketers and agencies get free and immediate access to VAB's content library. Get access at [theVAB.com](https://thevab.com)

About VAB

VAB is an insights-driven organization that inspires marketers to reimagine their media strategies resulting in fully informed decisions.

Drawing on our marketing expertise, we **simplify** the complexities in our industry and **discover** new insights that **transform** the way marketers look at their media strategy.

Simplify

We save you time by bringing you the latest data & actionable takeaways you can use to inform your marketing plans.

Discover

We keep you one step ahead with the latest thinking so you can create innovative, forward-looking strategies.

Transform

We help you build your brand by focusing on core marketing principles that will help drive tangible business outcomes.

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