

THE POST-COVID CONSUMER: HEDONISTIC OR MINIMALIST?

By Dr. Marc Schumacher

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Brands and businesses must prepare for polarised responses to the pandemic as established consumer paradigms are either accelerated or abandoned.



Shopify Hardware Campaign

‘ The question is whether people will maintain and internalise crisis-time behaviours or actively rebel against and reject them ’

— Dr. Marc Schumacher, managing partner, Liganova

As the **coronavirus crisis** continues to send shockwaves across societies and economies, everyone is wondering what the future will look like. Whatever unfolds, it's increasingly likely that there will be no return to the status quo.

Immediate responses to the pandemic have, understandably, been focused on the short-term, but in order to remain relevant, companies must also prepare for the future. For this reason, we have developed two scenarios that outline possible outcomes to help businesses get to grips with what lies ahead. These are built on fact-based, plausible assumptions about consumer behaviour, enabling brands to confront and respond to complexity, while avoiding uncertainty.

Bringing to life **two opposing sets of social realities**, the question is whether people will maintain and internalise crisis-time behaviours, or actively rebel against and reject them.

'Whether society tends towards an extroverted consumer culture, or turns collectively inwards, the landscape will be very different'

Scenario One: Hedonism, extraversion and exploration

In this scenario, fun and entertainment are assigned the highest value. After weeks or months in isolation, consumers strive for experiences that make the best use of their time. Sustainability is less of a priority than the **fulfilment of an individual's needs and desires**, and variety and diversity take the place of loyalty.

In the context of retail, this drive for self-realisation above all manifests in impatience with inefficient product availability. At the same time, hyper-fast delivery and the shopping experience are rewarded with euphoria, acting as a new seal of quality in both the digital and physical realms. Consumption is defined by enjoyment, joy and dynamic community affiliation. The experience economy grows exponentially, with people buying and gifting experiences that create long-lasting memories.



ROME - 3 MAY, 2020
THE SACRED POWER OF PRODUCING REVERBERATIONS

Therefore, I will abandon the worn-out ritual of seasonalities and shows to regain a new cadence, closer to my expressive call. We will meet just twice a year, to share the chapters of a new story. Irregular, joyful and absolutely free chapters, which will be written blending rules and genres, feeding on new spaces, linguistic codes and communication platforms.

And beyond. I would like to leave behind the paraphernalia of leitmotifs that colonized our prior world: cruise, pre-fall, spring-summer, fall-winter. I think these are stale and underfed words. Labels of an impersonal discourse that lost its meaning. Containers that progressively detached themselves from the life that generated them, losing touch with reality.

I believe that we can build our tomorrow also starting from a renewed capacity of denomination. Here comes the desire to baptize our new encounters by naming them after a language that has marvelously ancient roots: classical music language. Accordingly, there will be symphonies, rhapsodies, madrigals, nocturnes, overtures, concerts and minuets in the constellation of my creative path. Music, after all, has the sacred power to produce reverberations and connections. It travels beyond the borders, reconnecting the fragility to the infinity.

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Gucci announces a new approach to fashion by minimising to twice-yearly seasonless meetings, Gucci Instagram

Scenario Two: Minimalism, introversion and focus

This scenario corresponds in a broader sense to the trend of minimalism. Driven in part by fear and uncertainty, but also as a conscious commitment, the focus remains on the positive aspects of isolation. Quality is given priority over quantity, and **self-reflection comes before new experiences**.

Shopping is no longer a pastime and every purchase is carefully thought through, while possession is seen as a burden and status symbols are a thing of the past. A thriving 'share and repair' culture emerges, prolonging the lifespan of products. People spend **more of their time and money on hobbies and making things**, with DIY objects highly prized for their authenticity.

A wider a shift to localisation also means demand depends on supply. For example, food is bought seasonally for sustainability reasons, but also to ensure loyalty to the community. People only shop online when they can support local retailers and small businesses without physical outlets, or when items are not available locally.

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Embracing an uncertain future

Whether society tends towards an extroverted consumer culture, or turns collectively inwards and adopts a more reflective approach, the landscape will be very different from pre-pandemic times. Of course, the real outcome may lie somewhere between the two. In order to to plan, adapt and act dynamically, it's important to remain open to all possibilities and encourage candid discussion. However companies decide to respond, it's imperative that they act now to stay ahead of the curve.

*Dr. Marc Schumacher is managing partner at Liganova. For more, read its [**Consumer Post-Corona white paper**](#).*