Don’t stop, the future is now: Nearly a third of consumers perceive no news as bad news during the COVID-19 pandemic

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- **Global study of 13,000 consumers from 14 countries**
- **31% worry that when a business has gone quiet during the pandemic it is in financial trouble**
- **34% of UK employees worry about job security if the business they work for goes quiet**
- **Over a third (35%) stated that during the crisis, brands that inspire them and give them hope are the ones they want to spend money with in the future**

A new study by Arlington Research has found just under a third (31%) worry that the businesses who have gone quiet (with no news or content being shared) during the Covid-19 pandemic are in financial trouble and are not spending with them. This number rises to 39% in Italy and Spain, while 33% of the US and 27% of the UK agree.

Another perception consumers have is when their employer goes quiet; they worry is it is not good news for their job security. This is especially true amongst men (34%), and people living in cities (35%) are more worried than those in rural areas (26%)–despite it traditionally being easier to find work in big cities compared to rural regions.

Countries where agreement is highest are Japan (37%), US (35%), UK and Romania (34%), and France, Belgium and Spain (all with 33% agreement). Generation Z are the age group most concerned by a lack of communication (37% agreement), with nearly a quarter (24%) of baby boomers worried.

“It’s clear that without a clear communication strategy, you risk consumers coming to their own conclusions—and those conclusions might not even be right. Your business may be faring the storm, but your staff and/or customers don’t know it and may be reluctant to place that next order for fear you might not be able to fulfil it. Likewise, if we want to restore faith in our economies, it’s imperative we keep employees up to date on company news, changes and the future,” comments Paul Stallard, MD at Arlington Research.

Unsurprisingly, 46% of respondents surveyed said that their consumption of content had increased during the pandemic when compared to before. Much of this can, undoubtedly, be attributed to lockdowns with people spending the majority of time at home, online. The number is significantly higher amongst city populations (51% versus 38% for rural groups). Looking at the countries consuming more content than before the pandemic, Portugal is the highest (57%) followed by Spain (55%) Italy (51%) and the US (50%) and the UK (45%).

The research has also shed some light onto the topics that consumers are craving. Nearly half of all those surveyed (47%) agree they want to hear non-pandemic news, with just 20% in disagreement. This desire for non COVID-19 news is felt across the generations, ranging from 51% of millennials to 43% of the ‘silent generation’. Countries who are most desperate for ‘other news’ are Hungary (62% agreement), Austria and the UK (both 56% agreement), Germany (53%), and 47% in the US.

Consumers have also indicated what they want from brands in their communication. Over a third (35%) of those surveyed stated that during the crisis, brands that inspire them and give them hope are the ones they want to spend money with in the future. This is especially true of those living in cities (39%), with the greatest numbers agreeing to the statement in the US (45%), UK (41%) and Portugal and Spain (both 40%). Millennials take the lead generationally (42%) followed by generation Z (39%) and generation X (35%). While baby boomers and the ‘silent generation’ both stand at just under 3 in 10 agreeing with the statement (29% and 28% respectively).

“People want news and want to be inspired. The majority of respondents who took part in our survey, of which there were 13,000 consumers from 14 countries across the world, told us that how well a company responds to the coronavirus crisis will have a huge baring on the likelihood of buying from them in the

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future. Do not underestimate the ‘power of now’. Now is not the time to go stop your communications – the beginning is always today,” concludes Stallard.

Further findings from Arlington Research’s survey are available in the full Don’t Stop, the future is now report online and additional guides can be found via its market research blog.

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Research Methodology

The survey was conducted online between **23 April** and **19 May 2020**, surveying **13,000 respondents aged 18+** from a nationally representative sample for each country surveyed based on gender, age and region (+/-2%) from **14 different countries across North America, Europe and Asia**:

United States (2,500), United Kingdom (2,000), Germany (1,000), France (1,000), Italy (1,000),

Spain (1,000), Netherlands (1,000), Belgium (500), Austria (500), Portugal (500), Czech Republic (500), Hungary (500), Romania (500), Japan (500)

About Arlington Research

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Our director-level team will design your research from sample design to final reporting. Each piece of research is reliable, robust, delivered with a quick turnaround, and analyzed to ensure the research creates maximum impact. Our scope of work is broad, and we run research for leading brands and organizations from many different sectors. We are experienced in researching hard-to-reach audiences and markets and we would love to help bring your story to life.

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