

# Search trends in the time of COVID-19

Consumer shifts across Australia, Canada, UK and US



May 2020

As the world responds to the outbreak of COVID-19, our thoughts are with the people affected and the medical professionals working around the clock to help those most in need.

At Microsoft, we're working to do our part by ensuring the safety of our employees, striving to protect the health and well-being of the communities in which we operate, and providing technology, tips and resources to our customers to help them do their best work while remote.

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To learn more about Microsoft's response to COVID-19 and for more information please visit:

[aka.ms/RespondingTogether](https://aka.ms/RespondingTogether)



Introduction . . . . . 3

01 **Consumer trends** . . . . . 4

02 **Advertiser sentiment** . . . . . 13

03 **Marketing with Purpose** . . . . . 16

04 Conclusion . . . . . 20

05 Empowering you to achieve more . . . . . 21

About the Authors . . . . . 22



As we are all adapting during this time, consumer search behaviour is changing. We've seen increased desktop usage and observed strong growth in search volume. Let's explore some of the trends we are observing on the Microsoft Search Network.

# In these uncertain times, it's important to build a trusted relationship.

Over the past few months the world has gone through unprecedented times. We recognise everyone is stretched thin between new business demands, personal and family concerns and uncertainty about what's ahead. There are no playbooks or guidelines for what to do next — but what is certain is that consumer behaviour is shifting during this time and we need to be flexible to adjust our strategies with the changes that are happening almost daily.

At Microsoft Advertising we've heard from many of you on your business challenges, and we're here to help you in whatever way we can. Consumer behaviour is changing to adapt to this new situation. People are turning to search to stay up to date on the news, ask their important questions, find the supplies they need, and manage their work/life in a very different way. We are seeing these changes happening in real-time, every day across every vertical as consumers spend more time at home and on their computing devices.

We've compiled some key insights and industry trends to assist with your strategies to connect with customers in a relevant and supportive way.

## **Marketing with Purpose**

When people have a need and your brand is there to meet that need it creates a connection and builds trust. Never has that been more important than in a situation of uncertainty like what we are facing. Consumers expect brands to step up and support them and their community and brands that do that pave the way for a longer-term relationship.

To be successful in meeting peoples' needs, it starts with having a genuine understanding of what people value and determining where your brand purpose and their values align. Then you can be more thoughtful about how you engage with them, so you are there to meet their needs, when and where they need it, more authentically. Marketing with Purpose is a framework to help you connect more authentically with people and build trust and that drives greater business value.

01

# Consumer trends

Let's look at which categories have seen impacts in search behaviour as people adapt to the changes in daily life.

# How are consumers searching for . . .

We looked at some of the trends across the Microsoft Search network and in this section, we are highlighting how has COVID-19 impacted certain areas of consumer intent.

**Automotive** and **travel** industries have been amongst the most impacted from search volume perspective. Many countries shutting

down their borders, hotel closures and personal health concerns are the obvious factors behind lack of demand for travel. At the same time with declining consumer confidence and increasing unemployment rate forecasts, search volumes for cars have been going down in Australia and the UK.



## Automotive

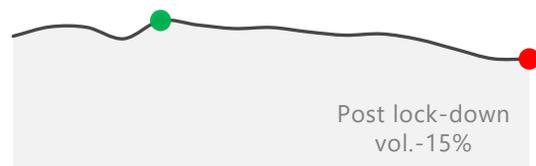
Search volume trend line (weekly)



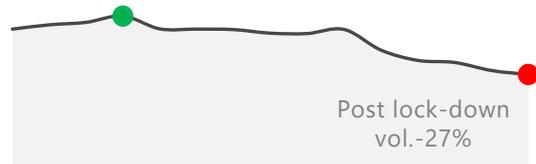
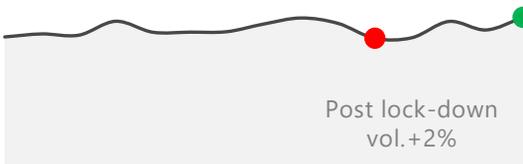
## Travel

Search volume trend line (weekly)

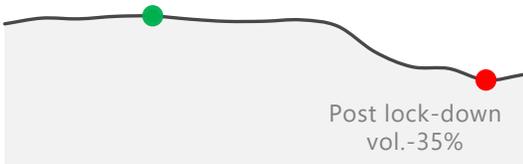
Australia



USA



UK



Canada



Jan 1

Apr 18

Jan 1

Apr 18

● Highest point (weekly) ● Lowest point (weekly)

## Consumer trends

Multiple retail categories have experienced a significant growth in search volume or even an explosion of interest. With many staying at home due to lock-down and limiting going outside to absolute minimum, searches for groceries, home & garden items and fitness equipment have surged.

**Home and Garden:** Volume increases have been driven by the needs of people working from home and setting up home office spaces, commencing renovations and

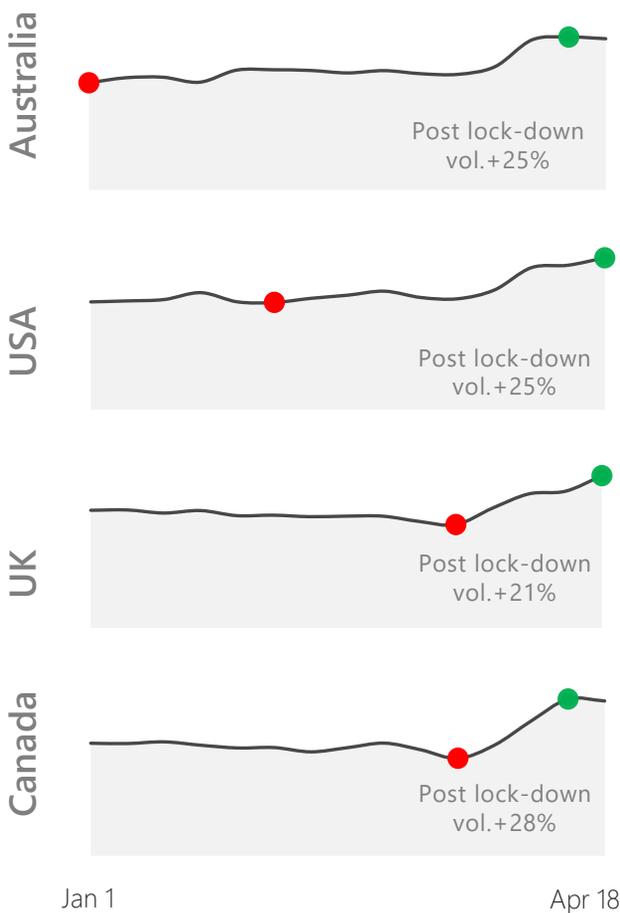
making staying at home more enjoyable.

**Food and Grocery:** Initially the trend was driven by people stocking up on household supplies and non-perishable foods. This trend has been easing recently and currently we are seeing heightened category volume being driven by online grocery shopping and delivery. Dining-in and restaurant delivery volume increased +21% after lock down in Australia.



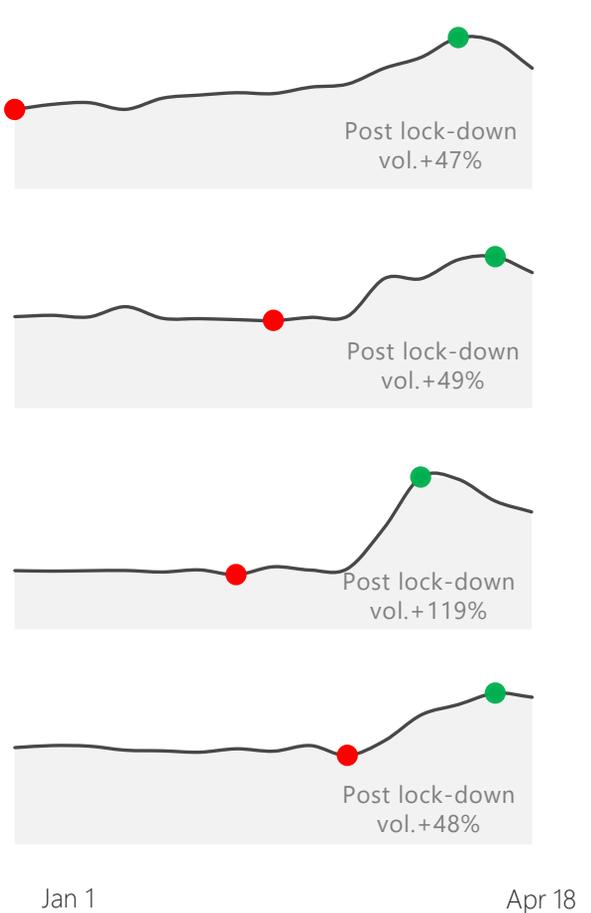
### Home and Garden

Search volume trend line (weekly)



### Food and Grocery

Search volume trend line (weekly)





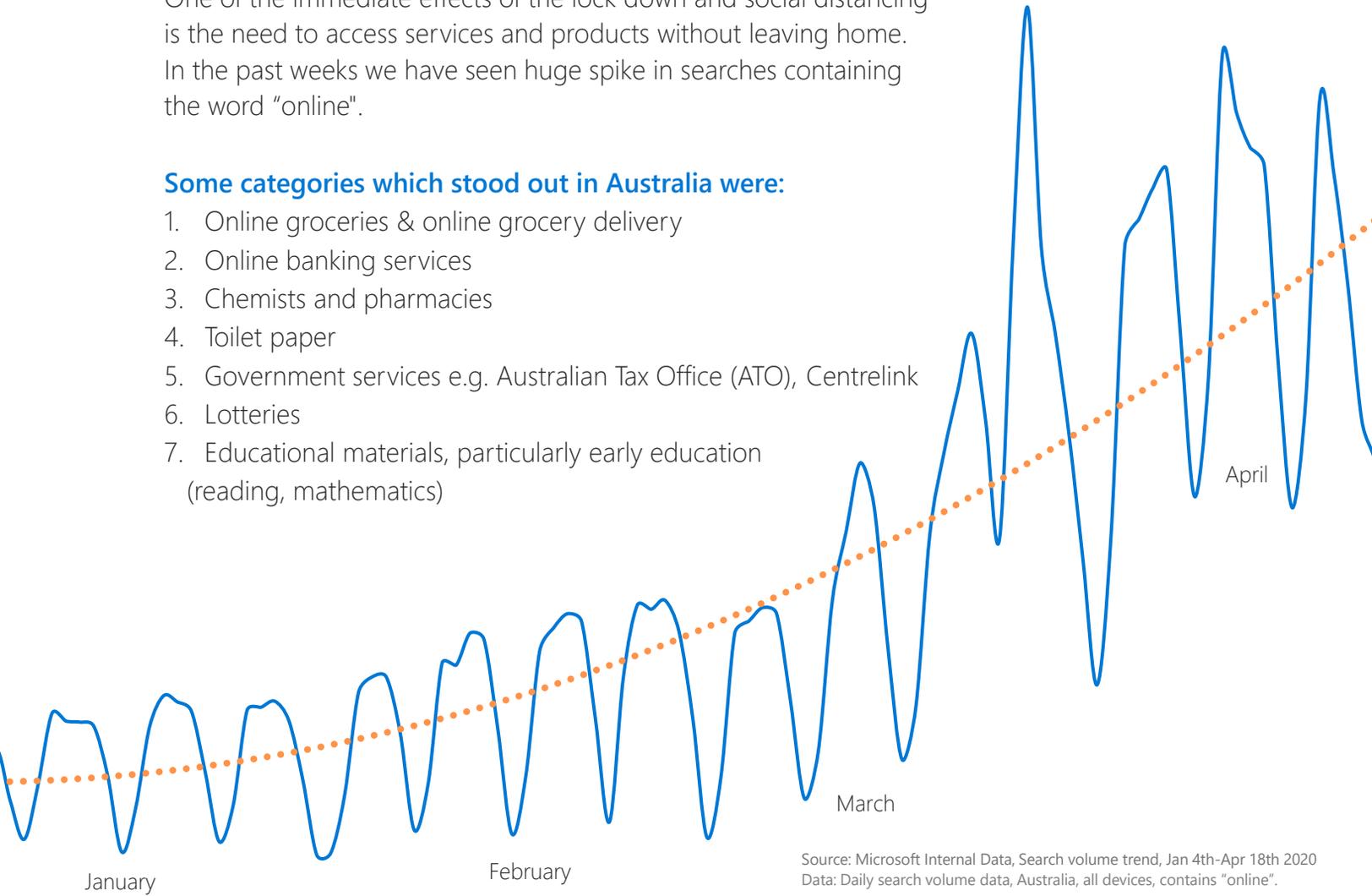


# Life and work 'shifting online'

One of the immediate effects of the lock down and social distancing is the need to access services and products without leaving home. In the past weeks we have seen huge spike in searches containing the word "online".

## Some categories which stood out in Australia were:

1. Online groceries & online grocery delivery
2. Online banking services
3. Chemists and pharmacies
4. Toilet paper
5. Government services e.g. Australian Tax Office (ATO), Centrelink
6. Lotteries
7. Educational materials, particularly early education (reading, mathematics)



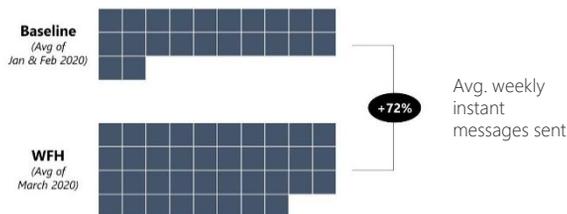
Source: Microsoft Internal Data, Search volume trend, Jan 4th-Apr 18th 2020  
Data: Daily search volume data, Australia, all devices, contains "online".



# Keeping us all connected

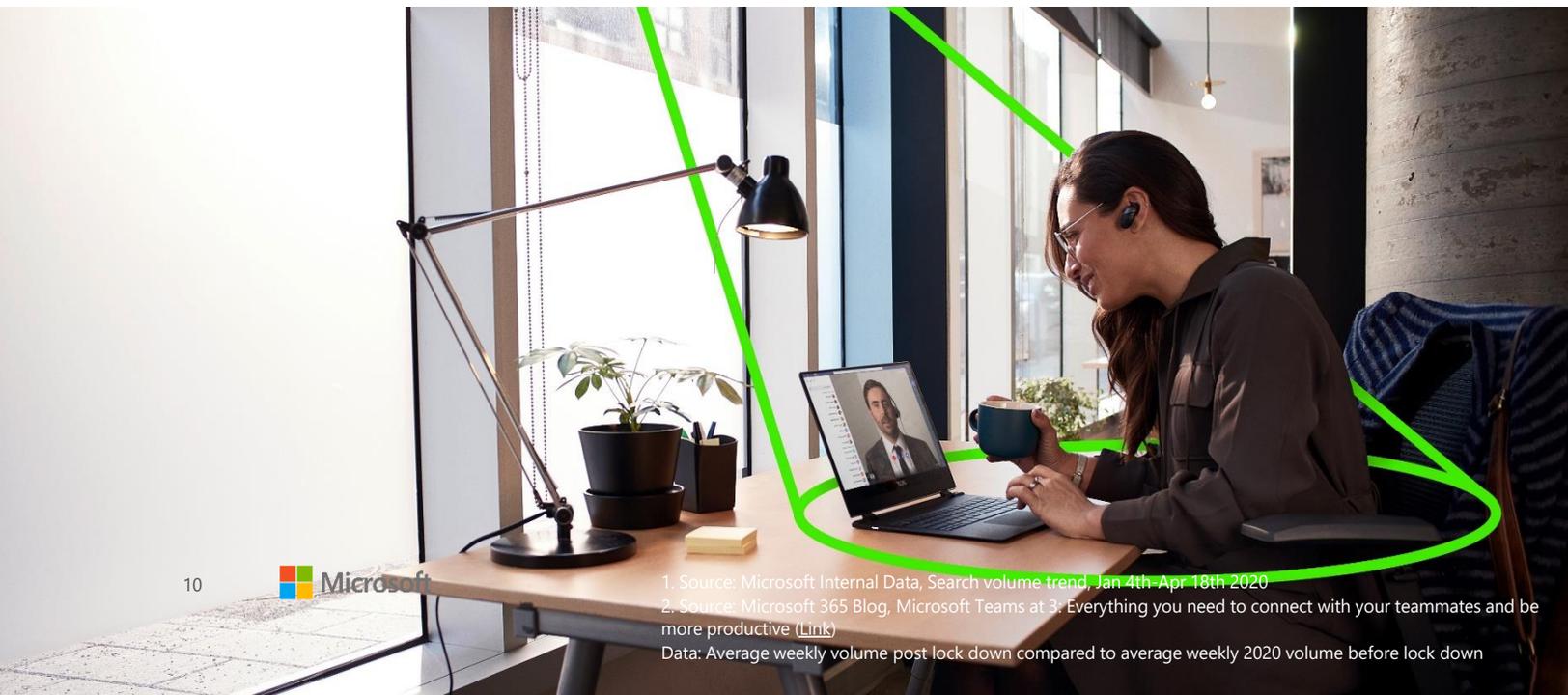
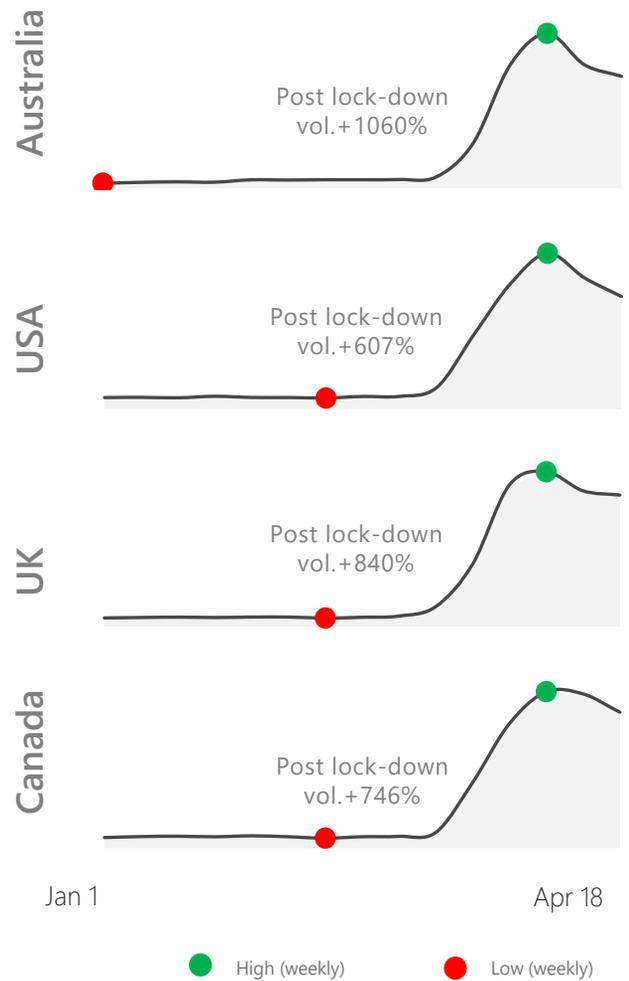
Demand for remote collaboration software skyrocketed once many companies shifted to working from home. Many markets saw as much as 10X increase in searches related to teleconferencing software.

Remote collaboration applications have proven critical not only in keeping companies connected but also helping families and friends stay in touch. Microsoft Teams has seen an unprecedented spike in usage, and now has more than **74 million** daily users <sup>1</sup> and still growing, covering both video conferencing and instant messaging.



## Teleconferencing

Comparing weekly high's & lows



# The increase of on-demand learning



Our friends at LinkedIn have shared some incredible insight into how they are seeing a rise of usage across the platform.

We have leveraged the data and insights available to us to better understand the sentiment of the 675M+ members on the LinkedIn Platform. People are using LinkedIn Learning to de-stress: over the past month, three-times as many people watched mindfulness and stress management courses on LinkedIn Learning than the previous

month. On the previous page we highlighted this from the Microsoft Search Network data, seeing the rise of teleconferencing software demand. People are also looking for how to be trained on that technology to be as productive as possible during the shift to more working from home.

## The top 10 LinkedIn Learning courses viewed in the past month (April) globally

Working Remotely	+7,536%
Time Management: Working from Home	+5320%
Leading at a Distance	+3008%
Microsoft Teams Essential Training	+376%
Mindfulness Practices	+271%
Strategic Thinking	+7%
Productivity Tips: Finding Your Productive Mindset	+3708%
Excel Essential Training (Office 365)	+62%
Learning Zoom	+2605%
Productivity Tips: Finding Your Productive Mindset	+8%

# Interest in remote jobs is skyrocketing

Not only do we see an increase in demand for online learning but due to the economic impact of this unprecedented time, the employment impact has been substantial. Recruiters are some of the first to feel the pressure.

For many of them, this has meant changes in bandwidth, commission structures, and even job security. The good news is that many organizations are hiring recruiters, especially those needing to fill roles in healthcare, warehousing, and tech.

 **+43%**

increase in use of the "remote" job filter

 **+42%**

increase in job searches using the terms "remote" or "work from home"

**+58%**

increase the use of remote job filters and keywords in cities significantly hit by COVID-19 e.g. SF, NYC, Seattle

**+26%**

increase the proportion of all job applications to remote positions increased

**+28%**

increase in the proportion of remote positions among all new job postings

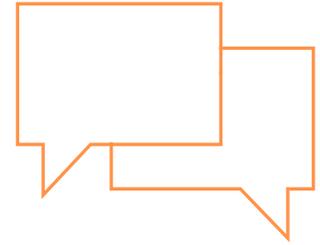


# Advertiser Sentiment

What is the advertising industry saying during these challenging times?



# Advertising during COVID-19: 7 in 10 consumers approve of coronavirus- focused advertising



50% still approve of “normal” advertising.

Globally, about 50% of consumers say that they approve of brands running “normal” advertising campaigns which aren’t linked to coronavirus; only around 20% express disapproval, with the rest being neutral. Australia numbers are in line with the global metrics.

Both GWI and Kantar studies confirm high approval scores for campaigns showing how brands are responding to coronavirus and talking “about how the brand is helpful in the new everyday life” and “inform about [the brand’s] efforts to face the situation.”

Consumer Sentiment	All	AU	CA	UK	US
Strongly approve	17%	15%	15%	13%	16%
Somewhat approve	35%	34%	28%	29%	32%
Neither approve nor disapprove	31%	34%	39%	39%	39%
Somewhat disapprove	12%	12%	13%	14%	9%
Strongly disapprove	6%	6%	6%	6%	4%

# As consumer demand increases, how are advertisers adapting their digital marketing investment?



According to a variety of industry sources the sentiment among marketers seems more pessimistic than among the consumers. A study by Advertiser <sup>1</sup> Perceptions revealed that 86% of US marketers foresee major impact on advertising this quarter (Q2) and 43% next quarter.

A similar study conducted by the IAB <sup>2</sup> in Australia across advertisers and agencies, reports 86% of brands have changed their digital ad investment over the last month, with more than half of brands reporting they are reviewing their advertising plans at least daily. While we're yet to see the full impact of the current circumstances on marketing budgets it is forecasted by eMarketer <sup>3</sup> that the US search market is to decline by approximately ~20% YoY Q2 (April-June).

At the same time, the Australian IAB study reports that according to local marketers Search is among the least impacted channels from digital ad spend perspective.

In an article within MarketingWeek <sup>4</sup> industry renowned Mark Ritson's perspective is that 'the best marketers will be upping, not cutting, their budgets.' During times of recessionary periods there is an opportunity for brands to look at longer term, brand growth strategies, potentially taking advantage of some brands 'reducing ad spend', providing opportunities to take market share.

The important consideration here is that advertisers balance their marketing investment alongside their core marketing objectives across their short, medium- and longer-term strategies.

# Marketing with Purpose

How can you earn trust, build loyalty and create business value

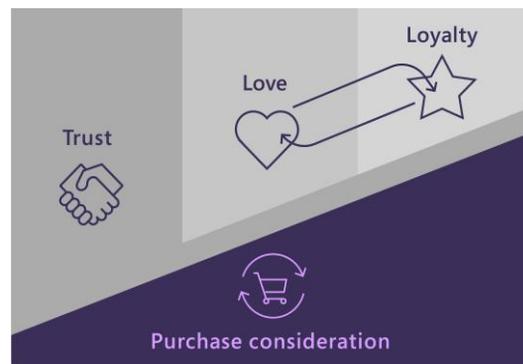


# 85% will only consider purchasing from a brand they trust

Building trust has never been more relevant than it is today. It's being stress-tested in how businesses operate, communicate, and respond. It's also an opportunity to re-examine the role that brands play in peoples' lives, and specifically the good you can do to counteract the uncertainty and disruption.

Through it all, we expect trust will emerge from the current situation as an attribute of even greater importance to people. It calls for our collective creativity across the industry to adapt to what's ahead, and a commitment to step up to show people they come first.

We found that trust is an attribute that can transform your return on marketing spend and build stronger relationships with your customers. Trust is highly correlated with brand love and loyalty, all of which drive purchase consideration. In fact, 85% of people in our study said they will only consider a brand that they trust.



Our research shows that to accelerate brand performance through trust, love and loyalty – there are several key trust drivers. Important to them in driving trust, love, loyalty are:

1. Delivers on the promises made in brand's marketing & advertising
2. Is for someone like them
3. Proactively solves issues if products & services do not deliver as expected
4. Stands for what consumers believe in
5. Respects consumer privacy

# Inclusive Marketing: Five mindset shifts every brand can make

Friendships take work. But most of us would agree that the best of them are not only worth our investment, they're invaluable. Having friends who empathise with us, consider our needs, have our back when the going gets tough, and who just "get us" is what makes life meaningful, right? Never has there been a more poignant time in the world to value one another when we're striving to stay connected while physically isolated in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Genuine care, support, and inclusion of one another, especially the marginalised, has never been more important to the survival of our human race.

We conducted a series of research studies to explore consumer psychology when it comes to inclusion in advertising as well as what it takes to build trust. And what we learned has led us to an inescapable conclusion: **We as brands should stop considering humans only in the context of business needs.**

Consider what people are experiencing in the world around them and what they value, then invite them to build a relationship with you with shared meaning and common values. That's genuine friendship. Consider how your brand purpose can serve and take action to make the world a better place in a way that's authentic to the brand. This is good for society and meaningful to people, who in turn can choose your products. By doing this, you can not only drive value in your business, you can shape culture, change communities, evolve with the world, and find long-lasting, meaningful relationships, both in business and personally. You're the catalyst for change.

**Five mindset shifts to get you on your way to an Inclusive Consumer Mindset**

-  1. People want inclusion—not just to be included.
-  2. People want positive-impact products—not cheap, unsustainable ones.
-  3. People want equitable experiences—not just compliance.
-  4. People want brands that take a stand, not just play it safe.
-  5. People want the truth.

# How we earn trust

Microsoft operates on a foundation of trust. We are working to earn your trust every day by focusing on six key privacy principles:

## 01. Control

We will put you in control of your privacy with easy-to-use tools and clear choices.

## 02. Transparency

We will be transparent about data collection and use so you can make informed decisions.

## 03. Security

We will protect the data you entrust to us through strong security and encryption.

## 04. Strong Legal Protections

We will respect your local privacy laws and fight for legal protection of your privacy as a fundamental human right.

## 05. No Content-Based Targeting

We will not use your email, chat, files or other personal content to target ads to you.

## 06. Benefits to You

When we do collect data, we will use it to benefit you and to make your experiences better.

You can find out more about our commitment to privacy at: [privacy.microsoft.com](https://privacy.microsoft.com)



# Marketing with Purpose makes a difference.

At Microsoft Advertising we're invested in helping our clients and partners to create brands that are welcomed into people's lives, as well as become a brand people rely on. That feels especially important during these challenging times, as services are disrupted, people learn to work productively from home and restrictions limit activities we all took for granted. In these critical moments, how you show up matters. We know there's uncertainty and with that comes a need to focus on what is most important. That applies to life in general but also how we help you focus to move your business forward. Our Microsoft mission of "enabling every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more" has never felt more important than it does today as we focus on helping you respond to today's environment.

There are a few important things that have taken place in our industry over the past several years. The decline of trust in the digital space. The increase in people's sentiment that the brands they welcome into their lives must provide value and align with their values. The opportunity and duty we have as marketers for making our Marketing inclusive and accessible. Our learning that as you build trust as a company, you increase

brand love which builds loyalty, and increases consideration.

Trust helps brands connect with people. It goes beyond protecting people's data. It's about understanding their values and making people feel recognised and respected. When you broaden your view on trust, you build loyalty and create business value. Especially in these challenging times, a trusted relationship for the long-term is paved with empathy, genuine service, and knowing your brand's purpose in the interconnected world.

That's [Marketing with Purpose](#).

## **Responding to COVID-19 together**

Now more than ever, we're experiencing challenges that bring to light the importance and significance of strong trusted relationships with people and organisations grounded in shared values and a sense of purpose. To learn more about how Microsoft can help you during this time please visit: [aka.ms/RespondingTogether](https://aka.ms/RespondingTogether).

# Empowering you to achieve more.

## Insights and blogs

### COVID-19 insights and resources for advertisers

As consumers remain home, search has grown in increasing importance. Our goal is to provide you with regularly updated insights and trends to allow you to make informed decisions for your business.

[Click to visit](#)

### Microsoft Advertising blog

A comprehensive range of blogs that discuss issues relevant to advertising, search and our solutions

[Click to visit](#)

### Strategies for unprecedented times

Here are a few strategic approaches, but with a fresh approach that reflects the "new normal"

[Click to visit](#)

### Adapting to a new way of doing business

While the situation continues to evolve, we're learning quickly and are focused on how we can support you to prepare for, and face the challenge of, working in different ways.

[Click to visit](#)

### Building Trust, Marketing with Purpose

As our world evolves, companies & brands are looking for new ways to connect with their audiences in more deep and meaningful ways.

[Click to visit](#)

## Marketing with Purpose

Trust, loyalty and love create a sweet spot for purchase consideration. Learn how you can drive business results by making people feel seen and respected through inclusive marketing and purposeful personalisation.

- ✓ Be a brand worth trusting
- ✓ Giving back is good for business
- ✓ Every human being is a unique story

[Learn more](#)

## Educational Resources

### Microsoft Advertising Learning Lab

A hands-on learning environment to help you understand the features and functionality of Microsoft Ads.

[Learn more](#)

### LinkedIn Learning

Develop talent and keep skills current with online learning.

[Learn more](#)

### Microsoft Learn

A hands-on learning environment to help you arrive at your goals faster, with more confidence and at your own pace.

[Learn more](#)

### Microsoft Trust Centre

Tips for how to build trust by focusing on data integrity, security, privacy & compliance.

[Learn more](#)

To learn more about Microsoft Advertising please visit:  
[www.microsoft.com/advertising](http://www.microsoft.com/advertising)

## About the Authors

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### Jagoda Sobolewska

Senior Program Manager APAC  
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With more than 12 years experience at some of the largest digital marketing companies in the world, Jagoda is part of the Advertising Analytics and Insights Group within APAC. A passionate, data driven marketer with a wealth of industry expertise, research and performance marketing experience.



### Adam Goodman

Regional Marketing Lead, APAC  
Microsoft Advertising

With experience covering three major continents Adam leads the delivery of the commercial marketing efforts for Microsoft Advertising in Australia and New Zealand. With more than 16 years of digital marketing experience including disciplines covering sales, analytics, marketing and end to end customer personalisation.

## About the Microsoft Search Network

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With one ad buy through Microsoft Advertising, in Australia, you can potentially reach:<sup>1</sup>

- 8 million unique searchers on the Microsoft Search Network who represent
- 146 million monthly searches
- 16% of the PC search market

More data available at the Microsoft Advertising Planning Tool [\(link\)](#)  
Source: 1. comScore qSearch, explicit core search (custom) market data for PC Users, Dec 2019

Microsoft Advertising. Intelligent connections

