

The Pulse of COVID-19:

Harris Takes a Look at the Trends of the Past Week

Did you know the Chinese phrase for ‘crisis’ is formed of two characters loosely referring to ‘danger’ and ‘pivotal point of potential opportunity’? This juxtaposition is how we are living our lives today. From reopenings to reconfigurations, we are desperately working to move forward without tumbling backward. So, how do we start building towards what’s next?

A huge and often difficult part of moving ahead is focus, prioritizing what you do and don’t need to pay attention to. A standout piece of leadership advice comes from **General Stanley McChrystal’s** on [Reid Hoffman’s Masters of Scale podcast](#), where he states, *“If you have twenty priorities, you don’t have any. If you’ve got three, you’ve got priorities. The real courage in a leader is not in telling people what to do. It’s telling them what it’s okay not to do.”*

As we learned during the 2008 recession, it’s not just leaders making priorities moving forward; it’s consumers as well. As people are forced to tighten their belts, they begin to reprioritize and reorient their spending around the things they love and that are most critical to their lifestyles. As we witnessed during the last downturn, brands that spent time deeply understanding their audiences paved the way for the rise of today’s billion-dollar brands like Glossier, Warby Parker, and Everlane.

With that in mind, we look into reopening strategies, tastemaker communities, and other rising trends that might provide sparks of inspiration, insight, and levity as we move ahead.

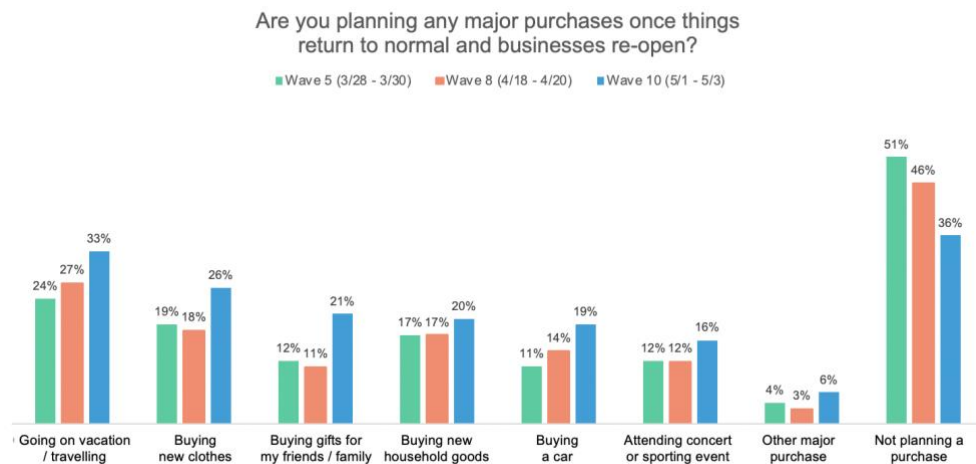
This week we’ve woven Harris’ latest data throughout the trends, highlighted **in green**.

Businesses In Beta-Configurations: Businesses and leaders start to perform massive social experiments and beta tests around what the reopening and reconfiguration of our daily lives will look and feel like. And this is just the beginning, as **Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella** recently commented, *“As Covid-19 impacts every aspect of our work and life, [we have seen two years’ worth of digital transformation in two months](#).”*

- A diagram of beta plans: **New Zealand Prime minister Jacinda Ardern** imagines a world of [“travel bubbles”](#) as a measured way of opening international travel restrictions, starting with their neighbor Australia. Meanwhile, **Quartz** features the [world’s best battle plans to overcome the economic crisis](#) to guide reopening strategies, and in the Netherlands, **McDonald’s** has created a [trial concept restaurant](#) adapted for social distancing. In the meantime, **Thai Airways** is [giving people airline miles for staying at home](#), using geolocation data to verify their claims.
- Sticking to contactless: Americans are looking forward to shopping after the pandemic but plan to keep it contactless. **Mastercard** reported that [contactless payments have jumped 40%](#) as shoppers fear germs on cash and credit cards. While our data shows **49% of Americans say they will shop online more than before the pandemic as their area reopens (compared to 15% who say they will shop more in-store)**. To help

businesses reopen safely and meet consumers' expectations, **Shopify** adds a curbside pickup option to their [revamped point of sale technology](#).

- Deploying testing & mask distribution: **Kroger** expands coronavirus testing for employees with [free self-administered kits and drive-thru appointments](#), while **Whole Foods** plans on handing out [free face masks to customers](#) to keep their employees safe. And, in Hong Kong, [free facemask vending machines](#) are being installed across the city.
- Sani-Lux expectations continue to rise: **As businesses reopen, more Americans say they would require extreme cleaning (57%, +4% increase), mandatory masks (50%, +13% increase), and mandatory spaced seating (46%, +11% increase) from 3 weeks ago, to feel comfortable returning to normal activities.**
- Car-as-a-sanctuary becomes a top priority: From [mental health technology to invisibility cloaks](#), **Bloomberg** examines how luxury automotive brands are responding to Covid-19. In our research we see **almost 1 in 5 (19%) of Americans plan to buy a car once things return to normal and businesses reopen. And to make Americans feel safe visiting a dealership, Americans expect dealers to sanitize vehicles between test drives (36%) and offer free, contactless delivery or pickup of the car (32%). Over 1 in 4 would like online-only interaction to negotiate financing and trade-in (26%) as well as virtual car showings (25%).**
- And finally, revenge spending is heating up across the board as consumers dream of a life outside of their homes:



Emerging Tastemaker Communities Bubbling Up: Living life in the long-tail, people are reorienting themselves around the little joys in life and connecting to like-minded passion communities across the social web and world.

- **Band of Bakers:** Sourdough isn't just a type of bread, it's a [serenity-now self-sanity movement](#). And chefs across the country are teaching everyone how to 'make loaves, not war.' In fact, this chef in DC [built a community around bread](#) by giving away 500 sourdough starters, while the [Phantom Baker](#) in San Francisco has given away over 650.

Even celebrities, from [Huge Jackman](#) to [Jake Gyllenhaal](#), are confessing their obsession with making their own bread. This is causing [grocery stores to portion out flour](#) from industrial-sized bags to deal with increasing demand and leading to new start-ups that are capitalizing on this emerging tastemaker community, such as **Sourd.io**, a [fitness tracker for your sourdough starter](#).

- **Urban Withdrawalist:** Once hardcore urbanites are starting to question their loyalty to big cities and imagining their lives elsewhere, not only for safety but also for newfound sanity as well. Our data, as reported in [Fast Company](#), **shows nearly 4 in 10 (38%) urbanites are considering moving to less densely populated areas in the wake of the pandemic. And 3 in 10 Americans say they have recently browsed real estate websites for homes/apartments to rent or buy.** The **NYTimes** questions if this follows a [deeper, more demographic trend](#), while we ponder what the future of home [remote self-sustaining homes could look like](#).
- **Consciously Cool Heads:** Finding positive, alternative, and spiritual ways to connect to like-minded people, many are moving through this pandemic while improving their mental health and overall collective consciousness: **Over 1 in 4 young Americans (18-34 yr olds) report meditating to cope with stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic (26%).** [This Buddhist teacher reminds us it's okay](#) to be okay during a pandemic, while [Astrology blossoms into a \\$2 Billion](#) coping mechanism. **Muji** is hosting [free online calligraphy and meditation classes](#) to help people find their zen, while this site lets you [write a letter to your future self](#) to reflect on this unprecedented downtime. For a different kind of reflection, [Ouija boards have staged a spirited comeback](#) during the pandemic.
- **Sound Soothers:** Sounds soothe the souls of certain audiophiles, from [Moe's ASMR queso relaxation](#) videos, featuring 8 hours of chip-dipping footage to listening to new apps bringing you the [sounds of busy coffee shops and restaurants](#) to fill the void. In our data, we see that **56% of Americans say they are listening to music to cope with stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic, including 67% of 18-34 year-olds.**
- **TikTok Tastemakers:** From TikTok dancers to push-up challenges, it's an addicting community of like-minded tastemakers wanting to create and share a point of view to the challenge collective. Recent examples include the Instagram [pillow challenge](#) with **Halle Berry** to this nail-biting challenge that encourages users to [give themselves bangs live](#) to Gen Z's [parents throwing caution to the wind and dancing it up for sweet bonding moments](#) with their teens. Even [pro-dancers are now joining in](#) and [teachers are getting involved](#), propelling **TikTok** into a new high of **2 billion downloads** this week.

Reconfiguring Entertainment For Release: As a culture, we've recognized we are going to be in some form of social distancing for a while, and people are starting to get creative and rewire entertainment around this new reality, finding joys and moments of levity in new outlets.

- Happy Cinco de Mayo: [Coronavirus pinatas](#) are the latest form of stress release.

- Social entertainment reimagined around the world: [The new Saturday night](#) shows how Americans are re-creating the weekend, while Madrid is opening [balcony cinemas](#) and the UK introduces the [first socially distant street orchestra](#). In Germany, sports fans [are placing cutouts of themselves to fill empty stadiums](#), while Japan has created [escape rooms for when you need a break from your significant other](#) and former Olympic athletes across the world are [holding pole vault competitions from their gardens](#).
- The curtain never closes: Broadway-bound musical [Sing Street' reinvented itself as a Facebook Live Zoom](#) experience. **Netflix** is releasing a [series produced completely remotely](#) and **CBS's** All Rise has become the first U.S. scripted television series to adapt the coronavirus pandemic by [producing an episode remotely](#).
- Podcasts are also having a moment, with [weekly downloads up 20% YOY](#) so far this year and **23% of Americans saying they are listening to podcasts more (+4% increase from 2 weeks ago)**. **Vox** [created podcast series just for kids](#) to explore today's new world from their perspective, warning "adults should listen at their own risk."

Moments of Relief

- **NYTimes'** [One Bright Thing: Reader Edition](#) in which 300 people sent in submissions of their own luminous moments. [USNS Comfort departed New York](#), **Michelle Obama** is hosting a [virtual graduation for the Class of 2020](#) featuring **Barack Obama, Lady Gaga, and Alicia Keys**.
- The largest Arctic [ozone hole ever recorded is now closed](#), while a new study points out that ['green recovery' methods can revive virus-hit economies and tackle climate change](#) at the same time. Meanwhile, **Tom Cruise** is [escaping planet earth to film his next movie with NASA](#).
- Parents are finding new inspiration to keep kids busy like [this mom's quarantine driveway workout](#), or this family that created a ['silly walking zone'](#) that inspired the whole neighborhood to be silly for a moment.
- In France, it's now a [patriotic duty to eat more cheese](#), while in Belgium it's their duty to [eat more fries](#). And in America it's our duty to just indulge in this Denver Zoo [baby rhino cam](#), enough said.

This week's mood is dedicated to parents, who have never appreciated teachers more. Happy Cinco De Mayo y'all. **25% of Americans say they are drinking more during the pandemic (+6% increase from 2 weeks ago)**.

That's it for now. Till next week.
Cheers,
Libby & Abbey