

Over the last few months, as **COVID-19** has impacted our health, our support systems, our economic security, our jobs, and our lifestyles, we have grappled to **adapt** and **adjust**. We watched as the virus impacted other countries and then our own. We stayed home, if we could, for two weeks, and then two more, until the weeks turned into months. We started to reopen in different ways, in different places with optimism and apprehension. We mourn the way life was, while we hope for a brighter future – one that takes the best and sheds the worst.

While we don't know when we will shed our masks, board another plane, or attend a conference, and economists are still debating what shape curve the recovery will take, we must start to plan for the next normal. Because if anything is certain, it is that **change is inevitable**, and, continuous.

In an effort to do just that – prepare for what's next – we've identified 15 consumer trends for "the next normal" across four major categories: **Food & Beverage**, **Consumer Lifestyle**, **Wellness** and **Work**. We identified these trends based on what consumer behaviors were developing pre-pandemic, as well as examining how consumer behaviors were impacted by other significant economic and cultural events including the Great Depression, 9/11, and the market crash of 2008. While no one can predict the future, the past offers insights and clues that will help us **emerge ready for our next reality**.

## THE NEXT **CONSUMER**

Two types of consumer behaviors will emerge post-pandemic and businesses and brands will either tailor products and services to both, or cater to one. As before, one-size-fits-all is rarely a good strategy.

**Safe & Save:** The *Safe and Saves* are those consumers who emerge post-pandemic more somber – impacted personally, emotionally, and financially by COVID-19, and humbled by it. They will be willing to alter their lifestyles to prevent further outbreaks. They will be looking to rebuild their savings accounts and plan for a future rainy day, making carefully considered purchasing decisions.



**Let Me Out & Live:** The *Let Me Out & Lives* are consumers eager to put the events of early 2020 behind them and make up for lost time. They are willing to take risks, socialize, and travel. These are the future luxury buyers as they react to the severity and scarcity of the past few months.





**1. Barn to Table and Grow Your Own:** Much like the Great Depression created a generation that reuses paper towels and saves plastic containers, the pandemic has created a group of people who crave self-reliance and independence from big food, chain stores, and unreliable supply chains. Similar to the Farm-to-Table trend, the Barn-to-Table movement will see growth in consumers who want to **buy** local. They want to know how their meat was raised and by whom. This trend is also fueled by the meat shortages caused by the pandemic. Likewise, we predict increased interest in backyard and container gardening, brought about by fear of scarcity at the start of the national lockdowns.



**2. Beyond Meat:** Also driven by the coronavirus crisis in meat processing facilities, plant-based meat alternatives will move from niche to mainstream. Once seen as just for vegans and vegetarians, Americans will look for new alternatives – as long as they are tasty.



**3. Self-Serve:** Craving social interaction, but respectful of social distancing, consumers will find a way to entertain and be entertained. Whether through front yard cookouts – where friends and neighbors can self-serve, stay outside and at a safe distance, or BYO Everything meals at home with carefully curated groups of friends, people will entertain, but it will look much different. The *Let Me Out & Lives* will return to restaurants, but most will favor at-home dining with their selected “bubbles” of friends and family.



**4. Beyond Bars:** As consumers heeded stay at home guidelines, alcohol regulations across the country silently shifted. Signatures on deliveries were waived in favor of contactless shopping, and open container laws were loosened while people partook in “walktails” or added a bottle of bubbly to their takeout orders. No doubt the quantity of alcohol consumed went up, but the quality is going up too. As consumers resolve to stay home more, they will look to expand their home-based bars with more creative cocktails and a broader range of choices.



**5. Home as Haven** With travel remaining unpredictable and consumers craving comfort and security, people will invest in their homes. Already sales are rising for retailers like Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wayfair. For the *Safe & Saves* this will mean smaller projects like painting and patios. For the *Let Me Out & Lives* it will mean indoor pools and remodels.



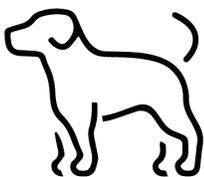
**6. Parenting by the Hour** Exhausted parents pulling double duty as parent and teacher will seek home-based activities that fill the day – hour by hour. School districts are still uncertain what a return to the classroom will look like and the CDC is cautioning we must prepare for extended closures at any time, so parents will look for help educating and entertaining their children.



**7. Casual Every day** The wall has officially come down between work and home. As people blend both, they will look for clothes that do the same. *Safe & Saves* will build capsule wardrobes that can serve multiple functions. Meanwhile, the *Let Me Out & Lives* will want to shed the austerity of recent months by going brighter and bolder. Luxury is not over; it's just more targeted.



**8. Deliver Me** Goodbye experiential retail, hello UPS. As disruptive as social distancing has been, it has also streamlined many inefficiencies in the way we shop. Consumers will take the best aspects of shopping during the pandemic and demand retailers maintain them – easy online ordering, efficient delivery, scheduled pickups, prepayments, and no crowds.



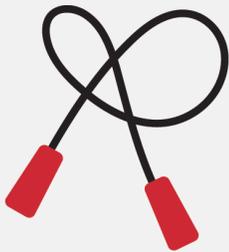
**9. Fido Fever** Our renewed interest in pets – for companionship, therapy, and support – will continue as the future remains uncertain and our confidence remains shaken. This will in turn drive a larger market for pet wellness and safety products.



**10. Together Alone** Desperate for fresh air, outdoors, and exercise, people will embrace activities they can do alone or together with minimal interaction. Already we are seeing a resurgence in golf, hiking, walking, and biking. This trend will continue and extend to all racket sports like tennis, badminton, and pickleball.



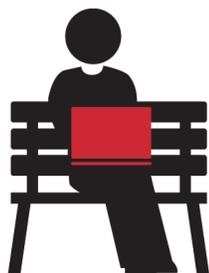
**11. Tele-Everything** Telehealth is another outtake of the pandemic that consumers want to keep. Where and when possible, consumers will opt for video and phone consultations over commuting and waiting rooms. We will also see more ongoing therapy and support move online.



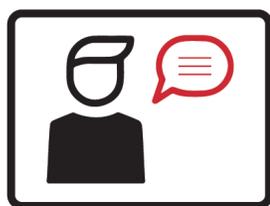
**12. Optimal Health** Sobered by the pandemic, and shaken by how much is truly out of their control, consumers will want to control that which they can and strive for optimal health. This will lead to an increased interest in health aides including fitness apps, home gym equipment, vitamins, and supplements.



**13. DIY Beauty** While the *Let Me Out & Lives* will return, regularly and frequently, to salons, the *Safe & Saves* will seek advice and products to continue grooming from home. Even those who do get professional treatments will look to spread out visits and perform maintenance at-home. DIY videos and tutorials, at home beauty kits, and house calls will all be in demand.



- 14. Work From Anywhere** Now that employees, and their employers, have confirmed that work from home does work, consumers will expand the walls of their offices to work from anywhere. Freed from the bonds of the corporate headquarters, they will work from the park, the coffee shop, even the beach.



- 15. Camera Ready** Now that Zoom has gone mainstream, look to consumers to find ways to improve the video conference experience. From online conferences that don't suck, to how to look your best on camera, consumers will improve and embrace their online images.

# WHAT THESE **TRENDS** MEAN FOR **YOU** AND **YOUR BUSINESS**

During the pandemic, people purged their email lists and realized which products and purchasing trends were superfluous. As a result, brands may emerge in the next normal with a smaller customer base albeit a more engaged one, or, with legions of new and eager followers.

## **Embrace that base with more targeted and relevant marketing.**

Also during the pandemic, we saw civil unrest and a movement toward equality that we have not seen at this sustained level in years.

Meanwhile, what has remained unchanged for people is a commitment to the environment. Your customer base cares about climate change and they want to know what you are doing to conserve energy, reducing package waste, and minimize your carbon.

Your customer base cares and they expect you to care too. Let them know where you stand. Messages must be meaningful, but actions always speak loudest.

**The bottom line:** build trust, embrace transparency and target your efforts to the people that matter most.

To build a communications plan that capitalizes on these trends and prepares you for the next normal, CONTACT US:

**Lee Caraher**  
CEO  
Double Forte  
lcaraher@double-forte.com  
650.302.3457  
www.double-forte.com

