

How are brands responding to COVID-19? A brand marketer survey across SEA market

By [Silverpush](#)

Brands have been profoundly affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Brands' response to the coronavirus pandemic not only impacts consumers' trust today, but it will also significantly impact future purchasing decisions. Moreover, brands could face irreparable damage to their reputation due to brand safety risks associated with COVID-19 related content.

To gain insight into how brands are responding to COVID-19 pandemic, [Silverpush](#) conducted a [survey](#) of 150+ agency heads, business leads in media, and brand marketers in the SEA region in April 2020.

The survey aimed to understand how brands are adapting their marketing strategies to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and how they are mitigating the very real brand safety risks the rapidly growing coronavirus related content consumption poses.

How are brands re-imaging and engaging consumers in light of the pandemic?

The survey found that in the light of the pandemic, brands are reimagining by adapting their marketing tone and initiatives to consumer expectations. Only 5% respondents reported no change in brand positioning pre and post COVID-19, whereas 95% reported a distinct shift that resonates with government policies, and responds to the new consumer expectation.

Ad spending poised to decline

The industries heavily impacted by coronavirus outbreak such as travel, hospitality, physical retail and more have and will continue to paused marketing initiatives. Only 16% respondents said these industries will protect marketing budgets for a stronger comeback later.

Moreover, the survey indicates that it is unlikely that the industries such as health and FMCG that are currently experiencing higher demand will increase marketing spend to capture the demand more aggressively. Even though past recessions have shown that aggressive cuts in ad spends can lead to longer recovery cycles.

Ad Spends are shifting to digital channels

Even with significantly increased TV viewership across SEA, boosted due to government-imposed lockdowns across the region, and various studies indicating curtailed TV ad spends can adversely affect brand health measures - only 2% respondents said brands are spending more on TV and mainstream media, and a large percentage indicated rapid shift to various digital channels.

Brand safety is a key concern, and is driving ad spend cuts

Industries, except few such as health, hygiene, pharma, etc., are stringently avoiding advertising across COVID-19 related content. Publisher news sites and news channels on platforms like YouTube are facing advertisers' block-lists due to coronavirus-related coverage.

A measure of advertisers' confidence on brand safety tools is depicted by how despite using third party tools to ensure safe ad placements, brands are reducing marketing budgets and pausing advertising specifically to avoid association with Coronavirus related content.

71% respondents reported brands are reducing marketing budgets ranging from complete halt of marketing spends leading to up-to 80% budget cuts, in order to avoid running ads across coronavirus related content

Can context relevance be the answer?

Emerging AI powered solutions are increasingly focusing on providing [context relevance](#), and are fast becoming an answer to brand safety woes. AI enables processing of large volumes of data at speed, with better context, at higher scale and improved targeting efficiencies.

However, most of these solutions still depend on use of NLP and semantic analysis, not truly understanding the sub-text, nuanced contexts, and complex relationship words have in written or spoken language.

AI powered computer vision can detect in-video contexts, offering a higher degree of context relevance that surpasses limitations of traditional keyword targeting and NLP based technologies. Offering unparalleled insight for advertisers to place context-relevant video ads and exclude unsafe content in a highly structured manner, and at the scale programmatic has traditionally offered



You can access the full report '[Brand Response to COVID-19 in SEA](#)' for detailed insights from the survey.

About Silverpush

Silverpush is an AI and applied computer vision company that is helping some of the largest brands in the world to discover and engage their most relevant audience, at the moment it matters the most.

Since 2012, we have been leading the industry in bridging the customer journey from TV-Search-Social-Mobile. Our mission is to offer data-driven solutions to complex client problems, using cutting edge technology. We are focused on developing proprietary metrics around advanced computer vision capabilities that can be applied to new use cases in the media industry.

With global presence in 12 offices across Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe, Silverpush continues to serve 150+ brands worldwide, including Unilever, Coca-Cola, Nissan, Mondelez, Nestle, Johnson & Johnson, KFC, Astro to name a few