

# Part 6: Earned media in a coronavirus world

We've noticed a slight shift in coronavirus-related conversation this week. While the Government's exit strategy is still very much a topic of great debate, there's been a heightened focus on education, with the pressure to reopen schools mounting.

But as the curve begins to flatten, and we become used to this lockdown as a way of life, it does appear our interest in coronavirus news has begun to wane. According to new figures from [Google News](#) searches, worldwide interest in coronavirus peaked on 12th and 14th March, but has since taken a dramatic downturn. By the end of last week interest in the UK was at its lowest since 22nd February, when the number of confirmed [cases in Italy hit 62](#).

This is a trend we're certainly noticing in the tabloids - while the first ten pages or so still tend to be filled with the latest coronavirus news, the remaining pages appear to be trying to reclaim some semblance of normality. Here's this week's update...

## NATIONAL: CONSUMER

Monday should have been the start of the school summer term; but as the school gates remain closed and the Government was unable to commit to a return date, it was no surprise that education was the topic at the heart of the papers. BBC Bitesize stepped in to help families in their home-schooling efforts and the likes of [Metro](#), [The Guardian](#) and [The Sun](#) all reported on the big celebrity names who will be offering their services as part of the 14 week programme.

The art world has done its best to try to distract the nation this week and keep spirits high. The [Evening Standard](#) reported that illustrator Sir Quentin Blake has offered his tips as part of a video series on [Isolation Art School](#); an Instagram account set up by former Turner Prize Winner, Keith Tyson, to help improve creativity whilst housebound. Meanwhile, [Damien Hirst created a butterfly rainbow](#) in support of the NHS – the artwork can be downloaded from his website for free so people can show their appreciation to frontline health workers. He also plans to raise money for the health service by selling a limited edition of the work.

As well as art, the world was united through music over the weekend - Lady Gaga's [One World Together at Home](#) saw six million Brits tune in as a demonstration of support. The show featured more than 100 musicians performing in their living rooms, and broadcast on TV and streaming services around the globe.

## NATIONAL: BUSINESS

The launch of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at the beginning of the week has kept the issue of furloughing top of the news agenda for the majority of the papers, including [The Guardian](#), [The Times](#) and [The Telegraph](#). However, some companies and in particular, CEOs, have faced a backlash for taking advantage of the scheme, with [Victoria Beckham's fashion label](#) being just one to bear the brunt. Indeed, the Director of Corporate Governance at Legal & General Investment Management has called on companies using taxpayer's money to survive the crisis to [slash bosses' pay](#) as well. Meanwhile, [Richard Branson continues to receive criticism](#) for seeking a bailout from the Government, causing him to publish an [open letter to Virgin employees](#).

## Part 6: Earned media in a coronavirus world (cont'd)

In other news, Twitter has become the latest platform to ban all tweets that encourage attacks on 5G stations, as the social media powerhouses face pressure to stamp out fake news. And Zoom remains under the microscope, with fresh reports of security and privacy issues, as NHS trusts become the latest to ban the use of the video conferencing tool.

Meanwhile, Admiral has gained brownie points as the first major UK motor insurer to offer its customers partial refunds, with many drivers stuck at home. And the stories of company's doing well amidst the nationwide lockdown continue in abundance, as Fevertree announces a 20 per cent year-on-year increase in sales amidst the lockdown, with off-trade sales soaring by a whopping 70 per cent the week before lockdown.

### LIFESTYLE

As previously predicted, the conversation around mental health has begun to take centre stage. With many people increasingly missing loved ones and feeling the impact of loneliness, advice and reassuring content is more valuable than ever. Grazia has a whole section on its website dedicated to mental health featuring articles such as, how to start therapy in lockdown and celebrity interviews with the likes of Emily Atack revealing how she's coping during quarantine. Stylist also published this article about how Zoom therapy has helped one writer cope with lockdown.

In fact research has shown many are turning to the lifestyle media for support and entertainment. TI Media's latest weekly insight findings show half of us are more engaged in our hobbies, with a third intending to spend more money on them in the coming weeks. Bauer Media also found 31 per cent of people claim to be reading more special-interest titles, including women's lifestyle magazines (up by 14 per cent). This is encouraging news considering all sectors of the press are under huge pressure to stay afloat.

With some degree of coronavirus fatigue setting in, many readers will have been relieved to have seen unrelated content making the cut across lifestyle media this week. Earth Day was big news and the majority of the lifestyle publications acknowledged the date in one form or another. Both Marie Claire and Glamour shared round ups of how to celebrate the environment whilst also making a difference, whereas GQ shared news of iconic fashion brand, Burberry's latest collection in honour of Earth Day.

### BROADCAST

Brands and personalities are taking advantage of our increased engagement in broadcast as a source of news and entertainment. Sonos has just launched a new radio service, which will allow consumers to tune into their favourite stations, as well as its own original content.

Louis Theroux has also launched his very first podcast, commissioned by BBC Radio Four. The national treasure and documentary maker appeared on The One Show revealing his motivation behind starting the podcast - he found himself at a loose end after having projects cancelled and wanted to make the most of his spare time. Grounded with Louis Theroux will see the broadcaster using the lockdown to track down some high-profile

# Part 6: Earned media in a coronavirus world (cont'd)

people he's been longing to talk to.

Yesterday the BBC aired [The Big Night In](#) - a night of entertainment, where Comic Relief, BBC Children in Need and BBC One collaborated to celebrate the people who are making a difference. The entire programme was recorded via Zoom and stitched together by producers at home.

Despite being able to produce some shows from home, the impact of many production studios having to down tools is now being felt by broadcasters. In an interview on [BBC Radio 2](#), the Director of Content revealed the BBC is undergoing major rescheduling. EastEnders is now airing twice a week to stretch it out for as long as possible while filming is on hold. We'll also be seeing an increase in repeats, such as The Royal Family, back on our screens.

## TRADES

Coronavirus stories continue to pepper the news pages of the trades. However, a number of titles, including [Information Age](#) and [TechCrunch](#), have now created a dedicated section of the site to host this content. This allows space for other stories on the homepage, including [the acquisition of Gekko by Accenture](#) and [Just Eat's merger with Netherlands' Takeaway.com](#).

That's not to say that homepages are completely coronavirus-free. If the story is relevant, it'll still get a mention; for example, the launch of [BrightHR's new Furlough Navigator tool](#) and the unveiling of [Google Meet's new layout to rival Zoom](#).

As discussion around [when construction sites will reopen](#) ramp up, the impact of coronavirus on the industry remains a dominant feature within the building and architecture titles. In fact, the likes of [Building](#) and [Dezeen](#) continue to publish a daily update for their readers. Meanwhile, The Lawyer continues to address the issue of mental health amidst the lockdown, with its regular [Law Against Loneliness](#) blog.

## OUTTAKES

It seems the dust is settling and consumers are suffering from coronavirus news overload. There's more opportunity for brands to engage their audiences in ways that aren't so directly related to the pandemic...

### 1. Fostering creativity

- As boredom takes hold opportunities are opening up to develop and hone our creativity. In a recent [Sunday Times Magazine interview](#) with self-help guru and author of bestselling creativity guide The Artist's Way, Julia Cameron shares her key steps to higher creativity. [The Financial Times](#) also shared first-person advice on how to tap into creativity during lockdown
- There's a crucial role for brands to play here, as there's a need to keep the country inspired. [Apple](#), for example, has centred its entire ad campaign around the slogan 'Creativity Goes On', positioning its products as key to facilitating self-expression

# Part 6: Earned media in a coronavirus world (cont'd)

## 2. Brands are stronger together

- Brand partnerships are a common emerging theme, as well-known companies join forces during the pandemic to leverage each other's clout and influence
- With more of us relying on delivery services than ever before, it's somewhat unsurprising that brand partnerships have emerged particularly in this sector. Dating app, Bumble teamed up with Uber Eats to offer a discount to its users, while Barcardi and Deliveroo have partnered to bring cocktails to your door from local businesses. We predict that more of these collaborations are likely to appear as the week's roll on.

## 3. Is education the new hand sanitiser?

- As education becomes the focus of public debate, we expect more brands will do all they can to help our nation's children - much like many stepped in to produce anti-bac in our time of need
- This week the V&A announced it would be making every lockdown Wednesday a design day for children. Aimed at seven to 11-year olds, it will be offering activities and challenges inspired by objects in its collection and around themes including theatre and recycling. Like the V&A, brands should consider what they can offer that will be genuinely useful to parents and children during this time

## 4. Lessons for 'after'

- India Knight in this week's Sunday Times Magazine comments how she's enjoying a less polished way of life - from 'wonky, scratchy TV and radio interviews' to conference call interruptions from children to the nation's obsession with banana bread. With the lockdown 'peeling away the layers of gloss from all areas of life', India notes there's a 'PR lesson in there somewhere for 'after''

## 5. Scrutinising structure

- The financing structure of struggling brands is being placed under close investigation amidst the public gaze. This is most prominent in the travel industry; airlines and travel companies are struggling to refund customers as they have already used this money to fund their business - something made possible because of how many holidaymakers pay upfront
- Companies must always balance the long term impact on their brand and reputation with the short term commercial survival strategies they are putting in place

## 6. Managing a crisis amidst a crisis

- Lululemon found itself in the headlines for the wrong reasons this week after an employee posted a racist T-shirt design on social media, making light of the global pandemic. However, the company's swift handling of the situation salvaged its reputation
- This demonstrates the importance of having a comprehensive issues & crisis management plan in place, ensuring that you are always ready to respond, even in the midst of a pandemic