

# The coronavirus pandemic is forcing brands to be more agile than ever - or die

By [Thembi Sehloho](#)

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The worldwide Covid 19 pandemic has had an undeniable impact on the value chain of many industries. For some, supply has completely dropped while others are struggling to keep up with the new and unprecedented levels of demand. It goes without saying that "business as usual" left the chat some time ago and marketers are faced with their biggest challenge ever in the face of the modern era's biggest pandemic. A new approach to existing marketing strategies is a necessity during these trying times.



Photo by [Retha Ferguson](#) from [Pexels](#).

Social distancing and the limiting of consumer presence in-store has resulted in many brands opting to focus their investment towards online sales as digital has suddenly catapulted from a support function to the star of the show. While this tactic has proved successful in international markets, it has not been the case in South Africa as access to the internet is still out of reach for the majority of the population due to high data prices.



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Even though many businesses have been lauded for their agility by moving toward delivery-based methods of providing their goods and services, it still leaves out the vast majority of the population who have informal living arrangements or do not even have smartphones.

## The new normal

As is the case with many developing nations, South African consumers have always been price-sensitive; and thus, brands have always prioritised offering the best value for money. The situation has become even more dire as economic activity has fallen drastically due to Covid-19, and many of our consumers can only afford only the most basic of necessities. As a direct response to this, brands have responded by shifting their focus from promoting premium products to everyday items that are kinder to consumers' pockets.

The reality that we need to accept is that all industries have been permanently changed by this pandemic, and the likelihood of consumers returning to the exact habits they had pre-Covid-19 is very low. Everything about the consumer landscape will be altered in this new normal; from what they find valuable, to their purchasing habits and most importantly, their spending power. The marketers who will flourish in this new reality are those who recognise this and are cognisant of their consumers' changing psyche.



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Looking at the socio-economic conditions of our country, it becomes clear that consumer brands need to have a more grass-roots approach to tackling this pandemic. The solutions that are required are ones that showcase a sensitivity to the challenges that consumers face. As marketers it is important to remain disciplined and not to overreact; we need to closely monitor the shifts in consumer behaviour and adjust tactics accordingly so that we can all make it through.

## ABOUT THEMBI SEHLOHO

Thembi Sehloho is an Acting Managing Director & Marketing Director: Rice & Pasta at Tiger brands and throughout the years she has been the driving force in many amazing campaigns that have come out of the organisation.

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