

Ray Poynter, 07 May 2020

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## Acquisitions Resuming

Although we are probably less than half-way through the pandemic and the recession has barely begun to bite, there are some encouraging signs of regular activity taking place in the insights and research world. There are too many to list, but examples include:

- AdWanted Acquires SRDS From Bain-Owned Kantar To Help Print Publications Do Data-Driven Ad Sales <https://www.adexchanger.com/data-exchanges/adwanted-acquires-srds-from-bain-owned-kantar-to-help-print-pubs-do-data-driven-ad-sales/>
- Evaluate Ltd. Acquires Black Swan Analysis <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/evaluate-ltd-acquires-black-swan-180400285.html>
- Medallia have followed their recent purchase of LivingLens with another acquisition, Voci Technologies (a speech to text company) <https://www.medallia.com/press-release/experience-management-leader-medallia-to-acquire-real-time-speech-to-text-platform-voci-technologies/>

Some of this will be changes that were in the pipeline before the crisis, some changes might be distress moves, whilst others will be a realisation that business needs to continue. My gut feel is that we will continue to see acquisitions, mergers, and divestments, as firms seek to 'right size'.

## Launching New Products, Services & Partnerships

One of the ways companies are responding to the pandemic crisis is the launching of new products and services, examples include:

- GfK and cross-device targeting specialist Dstillery have partnered to launch Auto Intender ad targeting models, built on the attitudes and behavior of people who specifically intend to buy a new car. <https://www.mrweb.com/drno/news29653.htm>
- Vision Critical Launches Patient Experience Package <https://www.mrweb.com/drno/news29652.htm>
- Ipsos MORI in the UK are working with the government on the new home testing programme for COVID-19 <https://www.mrweb.com/drno/news29648.htm>
- The MRS has created a list of over 50 companies that are providing insights into how people are coping with the pandemic. Some are UK focused, but many of them are international in their scope. <https://www.research-live.com/article/news/covid19-keeping-track-ofattitudes-and-behaviour/id/5067182>

I expect more products and services to be launched. Key areas will be a) supporting employees, b) changes to CX programmes, c) agile options, d) cheaper options.

## Ad spend is down

The annual ESOMAR Global Market Research Report shows that there is a close link between the level of ad spending in a market and the quantity of research conducted. The actual driver is probably the level of marketing activity, but ad spend is a good proxy for that

activity. So, a decline in ad spending (which we are seeing across most forms of media) is a bad sign for insight and research spending.

The major holding companies in advertising, e.g. WPP, Publicis etc are all reporting that March was a bad month (some of them had a good January and February). See <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/04/29/key-numbers-the-q1-updates-advertising-s-major-holding-groups>

Google is reporting problems too, in terms of ad words, see <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/apr/28/google-alphabet-revenue-coronavirus-us>

One exception is Amazon, whose retailing strength has pulled their ad revenue up, see <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/05/01/amazon-s-ad-revenue-defies-coronavirus-crunch-with-40-boost-39bn>

## **No! You can't stop research until things get back to normal. You need to utilise Scenario Thinking**

This NewMR blog (28 April 2020) has become very widely shared and cited in the research world. It makes the strong case that research can't be stopped just because now is not typical. You may find this article of value when promoting the case for research. The link is <https://newmr.org/blog/scenario-thinking/>

## **The Research Society**

One exciting development is that the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) has relaunched as The Research Society (in their 65<sup>th</sup> year), firmly nailing its colours to the mast in terms of what we do. They have a completely revamped website <https://researchsociety.com.au/>

## **How are Researchers Feeling?**

NewMR are running the second wave of a study looking into how market researchers are coping and what they need. The first wave was reported on 8 April and you can access the report at <https://newmr.org/blog/covid-report-wave1/>. The fieldwork for wave 2 will close end of business Friday 8 May. The report will be available the following week and we will be reporting the results in a webinar on 15 May <https://newmr.org/events/2020/insightshealth-wave2/>

## **International Market Research Day**

May 2<sup>nd</sup> is IMRD – an idea that was originally registered and developed by the Turkish research association and which is now heavily promoted by ESOMAR and several other national research bodies. This year there are two-weeks of activities, a chance for your brand to share in the attention? <https://www.esomar.org/international-market-research-day-2020>