

RETAIL

Most consumers believe post-pandemic normalcy is still months away

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COVID-19 has made people hyperaware of hygiene concerns and brands must respond to this in 2021. Image credit: Walpole

By KATIE TAMOLA

Even as COVID-19 vaccine distribution ramps up, many consumers believe a return to "normal" is still many months away, according to a new report.

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According to the latest pandemic-era consumer sentiment **report** from Resonate, almost four in 10 consumers believe it will be at least a year longer for life to return to normal. Although there is rising interest in returning to in-store shopping and travel, 11 percent of consumers believe that normal life will not return once the pandemic ends.

This latest Recent Events Connected Flash Study was conducted between Feb. 2 and Feb. 16, 2021 and was scaled to 200 million U.S. consumers. Participants were asked how their attitudes have changed since early January 2021.

Current outlooks

Sixty-seven percent of respondents are reporting that there are "some restrictions" related to the pandemic in their state. Eighteen percent report there are "many pandemic restrictions" in their state.

While 11 percent of consumers believe that normal life will not return once the pandemic ends, 38.6 percent of consumers believe it will take more than a year for normalcy to return. More than a quarter of consumers, 27 percent, believe it will take seven to 12 months for their lives to largely return back to normal.



More than 11 percent of respondents have reported that their companies have required employees work from home. Image credit: Knight Frank

The work from home landscape looks different for consumers for several reasons. Nineteen percent of respondents reported that the nature of their work does not allow them to stay at home, while 11.9 percent reported that their companies have required employees work from home.

Consumers' willingness to get the COVID-19 vaccine is spiking.

Forty-two percent of respondents reported feeling "completely likely" to take the COVID-19 vaccine after it becomes available to them, while 17.3 percent expressed they were "not at all likely" to take the vaccine. Of the consumers likely to get the vaccine, 31.6 percent said they will try to receive the vaccine within one week of its availability.

In terms of financial situations, 31.3 percent of respondents report that they are living comfortably. Twenty-two percent of those surveyed state they are "not at all worried" about their finances, while 19 percent report struggling to pay for necessities.

About 9 percent of consumers viewed the current quality of the U.S. economy as "good," 37.5 percent viewed it as "poor" and 39.3 percent reporting the current quality as "fair".

When consumers are considering returning to in-person shopping, the main precaution they desire is vaccines. Consumers also report they will still require social distancing and mask-wearing to feel comfortable in crowded settings.

Forty-nine percent of consumers state that in-store buying is their top shopping preference.

The change in administration indicated a sharp rise in consumers' trust of federal government and its ability to address crisis. The opinion of President Joe Biden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has also improved.



Facebook is the most-used social media platform around the world. Image credit: Facebook

In regards to media, 23.6 percent of respondents report that they believe that Facebook has a responsibility to identify and suppress fake news "to an extremely large extent." About one in five consumers, almost 20 percent, expressed that Facebook has a responsibility to identify and suppress false news "to a moderate extent."

According to the report, 46.2 percent of respondents noted that their likelihood to purchase a luxury product in the wake of the pandemic has stayed the same. About 31 percent expressed that their likelihood to purchase a luxury product has increased to a large extent.

About 38 percent of consumers reported that their likelihood to order food or takeout for delivery as a result of

COVID-19 has stayed the same. Nineteen percent reported that their likelihood to order food or takeout has increased to a small extent.

Moving forward

The COVID-19 pandemic still seems to be affecting consumers' willingness to travel.

About 31 percent of report respondents stated that they will not be traveling internationally at all until the COVID-19 situation is under control. More than 16 percent of respondents state they never travel and 4.2 percent are reporting traveling only once a year.

Affluents are anxious to travel, but hospitality brands may have to wait until the latter half of 2021 to see bookings rebound significantly. According to a recent report from online travel platform Tripadvisor, 77 percent of global travelers report they will be more likely to travel internationally if they receive the COVID-19 vaccine, including 69 percent of U.S. travelers ([see story](#)).

Luxury transportation and hospitality brands are being called to collaborate and lend a listening ear to consumers' concerns to better prepare for the post-pandemic traveler. According to the "[Future of Private Travel](#)" report from private aviation firm VistaJet, consumers are seeking excellent safety protocol implementation and customer service from luxury travel brands ([see story](#)).

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