

What role can a brand play during a global crisis of pandemic nature

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Corporates need to help communities heal, to get as close as one can get, after a pandemic, to business as usual

By Anirban Chaudhuri

What role can a brand play during a global crisis of pandemic nature? Display a mix of reflex actions with a conscientious mind that goes beyond the business-as-usual processes and means. It is more than activism; it is volunteerism.

Brands have globally volunteered their contributions to either promote the prophylactic actions that can help decelerate the spread of the virus, or pulled in their assets to augment the coping mechanisms adopted by people to cure the disease or the anxieties related to it and its aftermath.

Action-oriented approach

The brand volunteerism matrix with four distinct scenarios is a structured way to capture these activities and build blueprints for future action. In the first scenario, many brands globally have extended immediate support by extending their current business line and resources for promoting prophylactic actions. Closer home, the hospitality industry opened up about 4,500 rooms across properties owned by [ITC](#), Taj Hotels, Lemon Tree and others, to cater to the growing need of quarantining and accommodating healthcare professionals fighting to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Club [Mahindra](#), too, offered its resorts as temporary quarantine blocks. They also offered free meals to the essential services teams in health departments, hospitals and police forces. Lifebuoy, Dettol and other hygiene brands have made their products cheaper, sacrificing their profit margins, to ensure washing hands was easy for all. Scenario two is about brands that have identified ways of reinventing their capabilities or realigned their resources to find ways to contain the pandemic's spread. Louis Vuitton leveraged its perfume making facilities to produce sanitisers for the French authorities.

Alcoholic beverage manufacturers like Pernod Ricard, Anheuser-Busch, Diageo and others pledged to make or help make sanitisers, too.

The first two scenarios expand the brand actions for prophylactic purposes. The next two scenarios look at the brand's role in augmenting coping mechanisms.

Offering solace

The brand interventions in scenario three join volunteerism by extending their current business lines to help the world cope up with the outbreak. Reliance Jio came up with a double data offer for Jio Fiber customers to boost data requirements of a homebound nation. In certain regions in India, it offered a free basic broadband connectivity plan, albeit for the lockdown period.

In the USA, AT&T waived late payment fees for postpaid wireless, home phone or broadband residential connections. [Amazon](#) Prime Video is offering a special catalogue of children and family content, available free with an Amazon account, to ensure that parents find it easy to keep children glued to home during quarantine. Online learning portals like Coursera,

Udemy, Great Learning as well as Ivy League universities are doing their bit by offering a plethora of skill development courses, free.

The fourth scenario highlights the augmentation of the coping mechanisms by realigning the business resources and facilities. [Hero MotoCorp](#) recently doled out a financial package for dealers facing liquidity crunch due to the nationwide lockdown. It includes revised pricing for the post-lockdown business that offers better margins, easy financing support for interest on dealer stock, workforce wages, etc. Diageo announced a health insurance cover for bartenders associated with its in-house initiatives in India.

This fight is going to be a long one, with some indicating a time horizon of two to three years. Brand volunteerism will continue, too. Corporates need to help communities heal, to get as close as one can get, after a pandemic, to business as usual. Businesses cannot sustain without the societies in which they live in.

The author is associate professor – marketing, Great Lakes Institute of Management

The article can be read online [here](#).