

POINT OF NEW



**THE DDB POINT OF VIEW
AS WE ENTER THE JOURNEY
INTO THE NEW**



**‘IT TOOK MILLIONS OF YEARS FOR
MAN’S INSTINCTS TO DEVELOP. IT
WILL TAKE MILLIONS MORE FOR THEM
TO EVEN VARY. IT IS FASHIONABLE
TO TALK ABOUT THE CHANGING MAN. A
COMMUNICATOR MUST BE CONCERNED
WITH THE UNCHANGING MAN.’**

BILL BERNBACH

INRODUCTION

Moving forward can be such a compelling force that in its wake, we sometimes gamble with some basic foundations of life. That's when the fate of us all hangs - between blindly following the means that seem to move us forward and questioning if they truly do so. That is the point when one must reflect on some pertinent questions.



On a long weekend in March 2020, I was happy and excited. About a trip I was to take to Iceland with a friend from the Netherlands. It was a trip I'd spent a long time planning.

On the afternoon of my departure, my friend texted me. 'All set?', he asked. 'Ready as ever'. I replied. "Hmm, let's make the best of it!", nervousness palpable in the phrasing of his sentence. I asked him to explain. "Oh nothing... just this Coronavirus thing. They have found a few cases in the Netherlands and there is talk of some sort of restrictions!"

I spent the next couple of hours feverishly scanning every briefing document about the status of the virus across the world. To travel or abort mission? A travel junkie, travelling in alarming situations wasn't new to me. From travelling to nations smack in the middle of civil wars to finding myself in remote mountains despite dire warnings of nature's fury, I've always thrown caution to the wind when it comes to travel. Broken limbs, broken hearts, nothing deterred my travel plans.

No! I wasn't cancelling this trip. It's just a virus, I told myself and

2 hours to my flight, I reached the airport. As I proceeded to check-in, I stopped midway, turned around and went back home. Intuition, common sense, call it what you may - I sensed a big change on the anvil. A change big enough for me to cancel a personal travel plan. Trust me, this was existential disturbance.

That's the thing about change. It has a tendency to be noticed only when it disturbs your most natural behaviour. Until then, change is theoretical. For me, the fact that the world had changed registered in that moment.

That night as I came back home from the airport, I slept in one world. I woke up in another. A feeling I am sure everyone resonates with in 2020. It is the year the world changed. A year when disasters ripped humanity through to the bone and left it bleeding with gaping sores. George Floyd became a household name, the streets of Delhi burned with communal riots, Hong Kong went from a free state to one where freedom of speech was a punishable offence, fires burnt forests in the Amazon while part of an entire city was razed to the ground in Lebanon.



But nothing compared, neither in severity nor impact to Covid-19. An infinitely small, invisible enemy that brought human movement to a standstill. A virus forced the world as we knew it to a total shutdown and brought humanity to its knees, beckoning a re-opening to a “New World.” With new rituals, new codes, new values. A new order.

As it should be. As it has been. As long as we want to grow, we will keep adapting to change and keep shaping the new. Afterall, we are inhabitants of a world addicted to moving forward, in its path, constantly spawning new mechanisms and means. The world’s best inventions of all time, the wheel, the compass, internal combustion engine, the telephone, the lightbulb! Joined together by the itch to move ahead.

And that’s exactly the point where we must pause a little. Moving forward can be such a compelling force that in its wake, we sometimes gamble with some basic foundations of life.

That is the point when we must reflect, introspect.

What is the point of new? Which aspects of it open meaningful frontiers? Which could send us spiralling uncontrollably in all directions? How must we embrace the new for it to be newer but also nicer!

The more visible impact of the pandemic has been a series of new rituals that have infiltrated our everyday lives. From WFH becoming a permanent way of life to the

emergence of online as a ‘through-the-line’ mode of being. But beside these series of very obvious “new” codes, I think one of the greatest fallouts of the pandemic is that it has shone a glorious light to a series of ‘good olds.’

Early into this year’s stringent lockdowns, a friend said to me, ‘I never knew I was an outdoorsy person until I was forced to stay inside.’ Forced lockdowns have made us realise how we take our freedom for granted. And how fiercely we must protect it. The thin line between monitoring the disease and invading peoples’ privacy made us realise that one slip on the other side and we lose sight of what keeps humankind growing - the freedom to be, the freedom to question, wonder, wander.

Further, while the virus further fuelled isolationist ideologies, with nation states shutting borders and quickly getting into blame games, it has also forced the world to recognise that the only way to deal with this enemy is to present a unified human defence. That one-ness is the only vaccine that can redeem us.

As the pandemic progressed, it spawned more ‘good old’ realisations. That health is the only real wealth, that we don’t need as many things as we think we do, that the real problem with masks is not that they don’t let you breathe but that they don’t let the world see your smile.

As we prepare for a world that is slowly starting to re-open, it gives me great pleasure to share with you a series of essays - another ‘good old’ in a world used to bite sized reading.

These essays are not a mere documentation signs and trends that we at DDB have been collecting and analysing over the last decade and through the course of the pandemic. They are more.

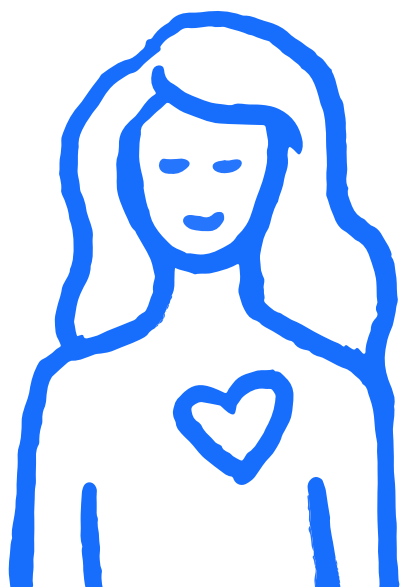
Modelled on key themes that keep the wheel of life in motion - Being, Belonging, Well-Being, Living, Work-

ing etc, these essays ask some pertinent questions that new rituals of the new world provoke. Should online schooling become a norm when one of the most important benefits of physical schooling is the social interaction it provides? What happens to the importance of social interaction in children’s development? Can businesses plug the gap? Should work from home become a permanent reality for us, when all creativity really is an emotional exchange which needs you to experience things viscerally? Should the lingua franca around which the new normal revolves be “social distancing?” Especially in a world already struggling with deplorable levels of casteism and racism, should the vernacular we adopt for a Covid appropriate social behaviour fuel social inequality and prejudices further?

As we near the beginning of the end of the pandemic, these essays beg some provocations as we write a new rulebook for a new world. Provocations, if we don’t ponder upon, we would have wasted the crisis that can either crush or resurrect humanity.

An infectious contagion has rendered all of us ‘untouchable.’ A true blue Gandhian, I cannot help but assert that the only way humans can survive this is through getting in touch with their humanity.

Amit Kekre
National Strategy Head
DDB Mudra Group



THEMES

01 : BEING



02 : GROOMING

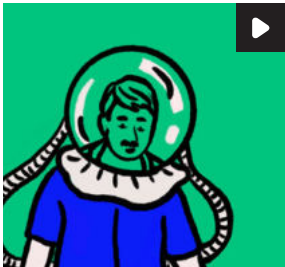


03 : CONSUMING



06 : UNWINDING

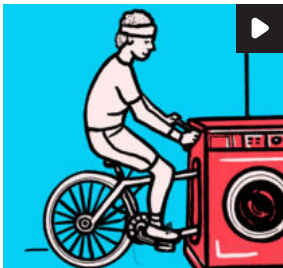
09 : PARENTING



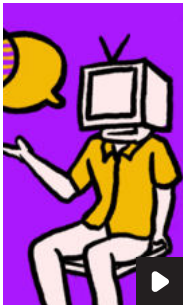
12 : MOVING



04 : LEARNING



07 : LIVING



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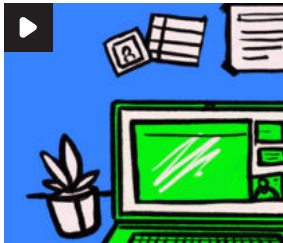
10 : DRESSING



11 : DINING



13 : EARNING



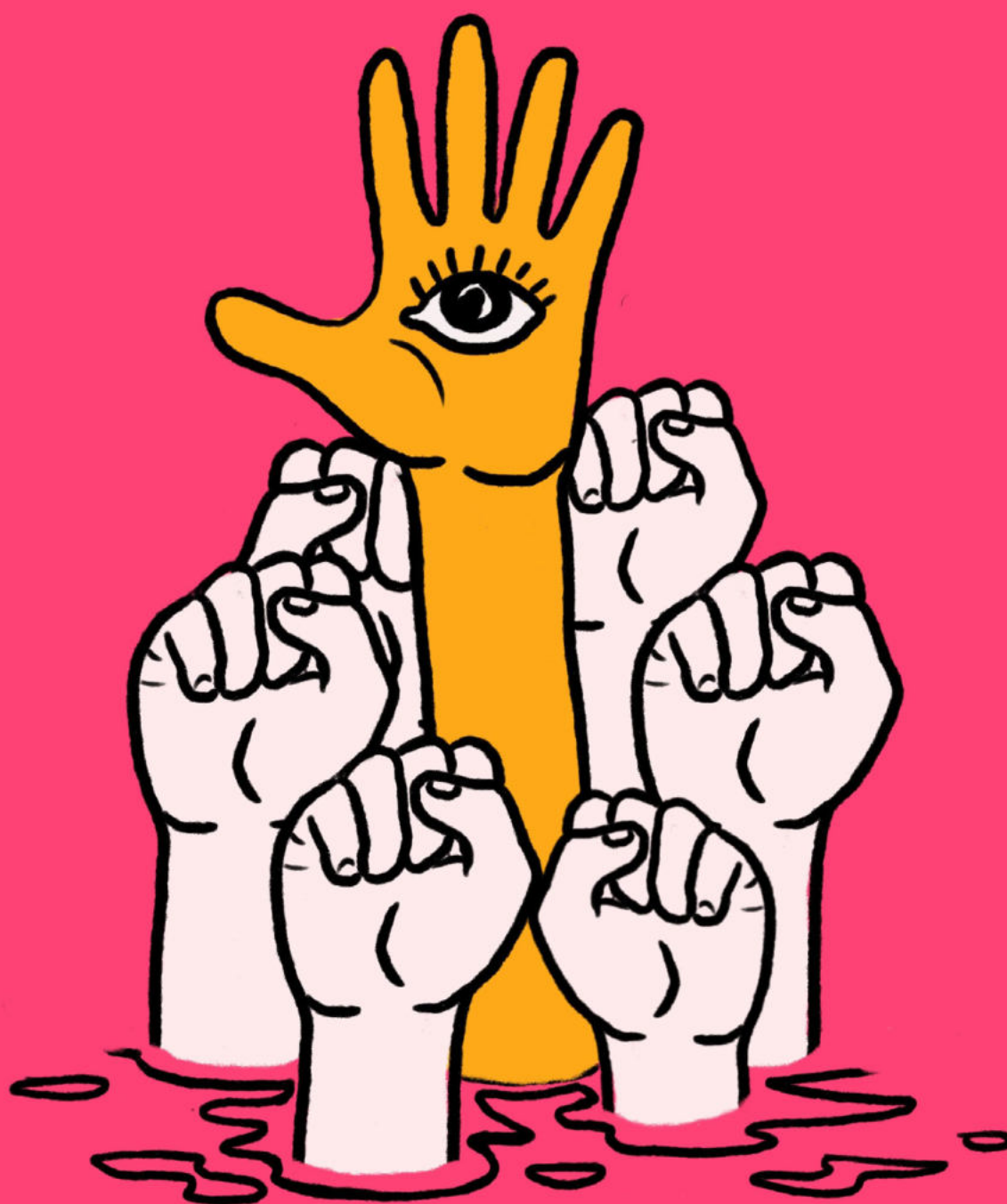
14 WORKING



15 : BELONGING

01 BEING

IDENTITY :
THE COMING OF AGE OF
INDIVIDUALITY





Our identity is defined by alligience to cultural, ethnic, linguistic, geographical, sexual or gender based markers. The problem with these markers is that they define themselves by antogonising the other. Ergo, North Indians are pitched as the polar opposite of people from the South, gay and straight become opposite ends of the spectrum and sadly, you reduce the idea of Hindusim to not being Muslim!

■ To be or not to be! The eternal question mankind has been asking itself long before its Shakespearean exaltation. It is not surprising that a calamity like Covid-19 has made this question even more relevant. What may be surprising though, is that the pandemic may have provided some answers to what makes us, us - an idea which we have spent ages constructing, perfecting and most importantly, denouncing.

Popular identity markers define themselves by antogonising the other. Ergo, North Indians are pitched as the polar opposite of people from the South, gay and straight become opposite ends of the spectrum and sadly, you reduce the idea of Hindusim to not being Muslim! Our process of ascertaining identity seems invariably dependent on calling out who we are not. Sadly, this reduces any discussion about identity to the process of 'othering' and exclusive.

As if to end the conundrum, it would seem that COVID - 19 has offered individuality - the virtue of just being your own person, as a force greater than and independent of conventional identity markers which are typically based on cultural, ethnic, linguistic, geographical, sexual orientation.

How so? If individuality is channeling one's own innate uniqueness and peculiarity, then Covid has made sure that any barriers that come in the way of actualising it are removed.

Firstly, Covid 19 caused a collapse of established ways of achieving anything. It has thrown the world

into a corner where no formulae work. Without accessible short codes, the only real option left is to apply oneself. The failure of prevailing methods saw people deploying their own uniqueness to spawn personal approaches. TikTok content creators personalizing 'challenge formats', news anchors like Faye D'Souza becoming vloggers, actors like Arunodoy Singh & John Kra-sinski becoming daily show hosts, everyone channeling what comes naturally to them into what they make of themselves.

COVID also acted as a filter - between authentic individuality and superficial display of personality. Mahendar Singh's Dhoni received flak for his 'tokenism' & virtue signalling around the Covid-19 issue, while on the other hand the world applauded real changes brought forth by people like Ayushman Khurana, Jack Black for their Covid relief efforts, where they channeled their natural flair for their craft into creating awareness of the pandemic. The likes and shares they garnered were not just for their craft but for the real impact they were able to create.

Lastly, a calamity of this scale, even in a karmic culture like ours where people's idea of time is limitless, was bound to have made people realise the finiteness of it all. That this could all end tomorrow! The recognition of this finiteness made people unleash themselves to the world with urgency and immediacy. Without the luxury of time one also is less worried about the fear of consequence. Content creators got braver and unafraid for their content to be 'imperfect'. The mantra

seems simple, when time is not on your hands, play with what you got now rather than wait for perfection. Think about the 'Daily Shows' sans the live bands and cued applause tracks, Chris Martin's 'barebones creativity' suddenly is not only appealing, but has brought people closer more than ever.

All in all, one of the collateral gains of Covid 19 may have been that it birthed the unleashing of mass individuality. It has made everyone realise the virtue of applying oneself, urgently and without the fear of consequence. In turn, also and perhaps unknowingly, creating an avenue for identity to be shaped by 'actualising self' - and freeing itself from the clutches of conventional identity markers that derive meaning by antagonising others

'(the joy) To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else' Ralph Waldo Emerson once said. He'd be a happy man today, for the one thing Covid-19 has taught us is that there isn't really a choice.

Amit Kekre, Savyasachi Hebbar, Aakarsh Sood

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Covid - 19 came like a tsunami – a wave that became bigger and bigger, close up . The continuing aftermath has provided an almost meditative pause for consumers to reflect about what's most important , increased their self-awareness , love for home and family and discover an urge to do more for the community and an appreciation for nature and sustainability. The shrinkage in their physical space has been offset with opening of their minds, physical distancing from other people has engendered a sense of being part of larger whole . The mindless and fatalistic optimism of the average Indian has now been transformed into thoughtful hope . We truly have started living in the moment and seem to be liberated from the shackles of the past (the 1962 loss to China , the imperialistic

hangover manifested as love for all things foreign, idolising of Bollywood) and are appreciating true performance, courage, community spirit . The impact for brands is to truly introspect on their relevance to consumers as human beings – how could they reflect and shine a torch on the values and needs that most matter to consumers at a time like this and Diageo brands are on a discovery journey to do just this – be it McDowell's No 1 which is celebrating the importance of being there for your friends, Royal Challenge which celebrates “Real Challengers” who are putting everything at stake to make a difference in their community or the very iconic Johnny Walker that exhorts consumers to Keep Walking in pursuit of their richest lives even in times like these .

Deepika Warrior
Chief Marketing Officer, Diageo India



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The one change Covid has triggered is that diversity and inclusion has moved from being the cherry on the cake to the entire cake itself – companies have realized that to create a better normal and not just a new normal, it is imperative that they include diverse people within their workforces, to better reflect, and serve the needs of society at large. As businesses go on in their inclusion journey, they must address intersectionality and recognize that the different dimensions of diversity and inclusion are inter-connected. The struggle for queer rights is connected with the struggle for PWD inclusion, is connected with the anti-caste movement, with black lives matter, with students, rights, with feminism, with so many social justice movements across the world. Build bridges of solidarity and love on your inclusion journey, both internally with your own employees, as well as externally with your customers and other stakeholders.

Parmesh Shahani

Author of Queeristan and Vice President at Godrej Industries Ltd.





WE ARE CHALLENGERS

Millennials are opinionated and involved while constantly driving culture to be progressive, bold, and inclusive. The intent to grow, do more, and do better for society has defined this generation. The questions that they grappled with, previously deemed niche, are now common in a world changed by the pandemic: What is my place in the world? How can I make a difference? What meaning can I create? As a collective consciousness dawns upon people to do better and give back more, the pandemic is a key catalyst in turning intentions to action.

Our work for Royal Challenge, recognises and tells the stories of those individuals who put people over self during Covid 19 – those whose being reflects the challenger spirit of the brand. We created a campaign that put our biggest assets: Virat Kohli and Royal Challengers Bangalore in the background and celebrated our Real Heroes. It reminded people to show their challenger spirit and encouraged them to find solutions when faced with adversity, by saying “We Are Challengers”.

02 GROOMING

**'BEAUTIFUL MINDS' -
AN IDEA WHOSE TIME
IS NOW**





But how exactly does beauty shape well-being and mental health? Indians have long-believed that health was a driver for beauty – the ‘internal’ could definitively influence the ‘external’. This time around, the ‘external’ (and therefore fleeting) is being seen as a powerful agent of internal change.

■ Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And to this end, we have continually sought approval about how we look, regardless of how we feel. We might talk about diversity, but in the age of filters, the pursuit of beauty is forced into a one-dimensional mould of physical enhancement. While perceptions of beauty vary widely across demographics and cultures, a recent survey by research firm Euromonitor revealed that although many consumers believed beauty is more than just skin deep, most people continued to link beauty with glamour, with social acceptance and status.

As with so many other things, the year 2020 has challenged and changed long-standing beliefs. In the pre-Covid world, beauty was often distorted and misunderstood as a tool for validation. We continued to strive for it, choosing to conform to beauty standards even as we spoke about how beauty enabled ‘inner strength’.

The year 2020 has been about limited mobility. Even as we come close to finding a vaccine, limited social interactions will still be the norm for the near future. And the question of who exactly does one look beautiful for, still persists. 2020 has given us ample time for self-reflection. Coupled with anxiety and loss of control, people have been grasping the importance of mental well-being. Looking good is increasingly being overshadowed by ‘feeling good,’ and the way we treat our bodies, minds and faces is becoming an imperative towards this end.

But how exactly does beauty shape well-being and mental health?

Indians have long-believed that health was a driver for beauty – the ‘internal’ could definitively influence the ‘external’. This time around, the ‘external’ (and therefore fleeting) is being seen as a powerful agent of internal change.

“I encourage clients to find meaning in makeup. A bold lip colour represents how powerful your words and thoughts can be,” shares eating disorder therapist and body image expert Temimah Zucker, LMSW.

In this year of uncertainty, make-up and self-care have enabled us to reclaim a sense of control. Taking a few minutes to apply kohl or mascara had become a part of ‘me-time’, a means to build confidence and was, possibly, the only demarcation between our personal and professional lives. This calmed jittery nerves, motivated us, and made us feel good. Once considered a ‘superficial’ layering that used to help us cope with characteristic insecurities, make-up has now become an emergent tool of personal power.

“Due to the lockdown, my acne-prone oily skin is not going crazy thanks to no pollution for one! But more importantly, I have been consciously tending to it and it has made a huge difference - it has become so smooth and healthy. It feels good to see that in a time like this, my conscious efforts have shown such great results – it’s empowering. All is not that bad when you see it in this light, you know!”
- Ayushi Teotia, age 26, Graphic Designer

All this has influenced people’s perceptions about what truly matters

when it comes to beauty products. The limited availability of desired products has reset our preferences, which are increasingly driven not by brands, but by specific solutions. A brand’s offering must be anchored in value and self-care. And we see that in the growth of sustainable beauty brands. In spite of all challenges in 2020, conscious consumerism has continued to grow within the beauty world, with consumers turning to brands that are purpose-led and sustainable.

As more and more brands and categories jostle for relevance and their ‘share of wallet,’ the way forward for beauty might lie in being a means to not just physical transformations, but to outside-in psychological transformations.

Is it perhaps time to move past the tired clichés of ‘confidence’ and ‘empowerment,’ and talk in specific terms about countering anxiety, enabling mindfulness and calm? Will beauty treatments will become a mainstream practice to treat anxiety and stress? Can they actually be ‘prescribed’ as coping tools? Can beauty finally transcend validation and become a means for looking more optimistically at the person in the mirror?

Natasha Bohra, Mallika Yamdagni, Aditya Banerjee

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Covid has caused a fundamental re-orientation of “self”. The pandemic has led to a tectonic shake up of the inner plates of wisdom, self-worth, identity and purpose. What it particularly means for brands in the area of beauty and fashion is to evolve the pay-off from “ how it makes me look” to “how it makes me feel”. Instead of building stereotypical allegiances, fashion statements and role models, beauty would need to pivot into celebrating individuality, serve the needs of self-acceptance, self-care and self-appreciation and appeal to the one who matters the most- “The Self”....With this one could expect to see an accelerated move towards natural, organic, healthier and even minimal as key pivots of self-care.

Anuja Misra

*Vice President and Category Head- Personal Care,
Godrej Consumer Products Limited*



03

CONSUMING

**SHOPPING OUR WAY
TO A MEANINGFUL
MAXIMALISM**





Consumption is so deeply linked to who we are, that we are not challenging or questioning consumption in & of itself. We are revisiting 'how much' we consume but we are not questioning 'why' we consume. We believe that consumption allows us to thrive, not just survive. And crisis or no crisis, we are committed to thriving, in more ways than one.

■ We've all been told – history repeats itself. Our world is not a stranger to pandemics, restraints or economic upheaval. Different generations have found ways to cope and survive with these catastrophes. And yet, as we look around and see how people are responding to the ongoing crisis, there's a sense that this time, a brand new story may play out.

Indians have historically grown up with a savings mindset, with lessons on how to conserve what we have. But as India opened up to the world in the 1990s, we also opened up to what the world had to offer. Pre-pandemic, Indians had reached a point where we'd built an easy-going relationship with consumption. Consuming had become our way of sampling the world – trying new ingredients, fusing global fashion with Indian tastes and so much more.

It helped that consuming was cheaper and easier than ever before - with a million deals released every day, coupled with a million more choices. In 2019, Amazon released data that showed that there was a 2X increase in the number of transactions from tier III cities and that three out of every four customers who availed financing options came from tier-II and III cities¹. Qualitative conversations with people across the country indicated that consumption had become our way to signal progress & openness.

Will the pandemic change the dynamics of this relationship? Yes. Will we hit pause and go back to factory settings? Maybe not.

Consumption is so deeply linked to who we are, that we are not chal-

lenging or questioning consumption in & of itself. We are revisiting 'how much' we consume but we are not questioning 'why' we consume. We believe that consumption allows us to thrive, not just survive. And crisis or no crisis, we are committed to thriving, in more ways than one.

Instead of putting a full-stop to consumption, we are expanding our definition of 'essentials' and redefining the meaning of 'more'.

'Essentials' are now being defined as products & services that help us live the life we had pre-pandemic – either by mimicking what we had outside the home or by helping us manage the tasks linked to our homes that we're now doing by ourselves. Which is why we're opting for food items that help us make restaurant type dishes, fashion that's comfortable but not 'homely', appliances and tools that save effort and time.

It's no surprise then that despite initial stumbles, the retail industry has experienced a quick recovery. The average bill value for essentials has gone up 1.5 times after the lifting of lockdown – from Rs 650 per basket in early March to more than Rs 900 per basket presently (as reported by Economic Times)².

We have also realised that having more is not as crucial as but having things that delight and 'do more.' And so, we're opting for economical sizes, choosing ingredients that multi-task, but still experimenting & learning new hacks to live well. Youtube, TikTok, Whatsapp are now peer-to-peer networks of knowledge sharing³.

An example of this was seen in the recent ecommerce sales. Post the

sales ecommerce platforms reported "more than half of all electronics goods purchased by consumers were in the work-from-home segment, with large-screen televisions, laptops, IT accessories and peripherals witnessing an increase of over 1.4x from last year's levels)⁴. Clearly, we as consumers may have steered our focus away from some categories, but we've definitely found compelling substitutes to engage us.

This resistance to limiting consumption is also a function of wanting to play a part in resisting the pandemic itself. Culturally, India has always been taught to step up in a crisis and take on a challenge. But this is the first time a crisis demands that we pause.

In this pause, limited by what they can do, people are linking consumption to contribution – to self, to the country and to the future. They believe that they are stepping up to consume in order to thrive as a collective. It helps that the Prime Minister too has put out calls to be 'vocal for local'. What's left to see is whether the key players that fuel consumption will also adapt at the speed of Indians. Will they manage to calibrate the sensorial with safety when it comes to shopping? Will they innovate in ways that genuinely add value? Will they find ways to ensure that local is unmistakably superior? If the answer to these questions is yes, they could be surprised by the degree of support they enjoy from increasingly discerning neighbourhood shoppers.

Sanchari Chakrabarty, Shesha Shukla

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The most important change is arising from the fact that for large swathes of the population, especially younger people, this is the first time that they are living in a heightened possibility of death on a continuous basis. It changes the way they have started looking at the past, the present and the future. All consumption choices are impacted by the balancing of present wants & future needs

Suparna Mitra
Chief Marketing Officer, Titan Industries



Wide range, great pricing, superb offers, a good shopping experience and you will never fail to draw crowds to the stores- a mantra I have learnt in my “teenage days” in the Indian retail industry.

This was challenged with Covid dragging along with its invisibility a visible fear of stores, malls and anything that drew crowds at large. The authorities were quick to declare fashion accessories, homeware and home linen as “non essentials”. And even essentials were made available without people not having to go to the store. But this wasn’t as smooth as we thought it would be.

Early into the pandemic, senior citizens expressed discomfort in ordering daily

groceries through the online app. I found the teams use a principle that will always stay for me - “follow the path of least resistance”. Teams at Big Bazaar picked up telephone calls for the senior citizens and routed them to place orders on WhatsApp for many and for some who were extremely old, took orders on pen and paper. The knowledge and expertise gained over many years was being flattened by the intuitive and ever evolving wisdom of every staff, every vendor, every shopper, and any citizen. From this vulnerability and ignorance emerged a new learning, a new credo which I would label as Everyone is right, Everything is possible!

Sadashiv Nayak
Chief Executive Officer, Future Group



BIG BAZAAR[™]

Making India *Beautiful*

RAMZAN

Festivals in India mark moments of high consumption.

The festive season is peppered with offers and deals and acts – all aimed at drawing consumers to your brand. But Covid and the restrictions

that came with it were going to redefine how people shopped, this festive season.

While we knew that notions around consumption were in a state of evolution (without coming to a standstill), we needed to assess what that meant for brands like Big Bazaar.

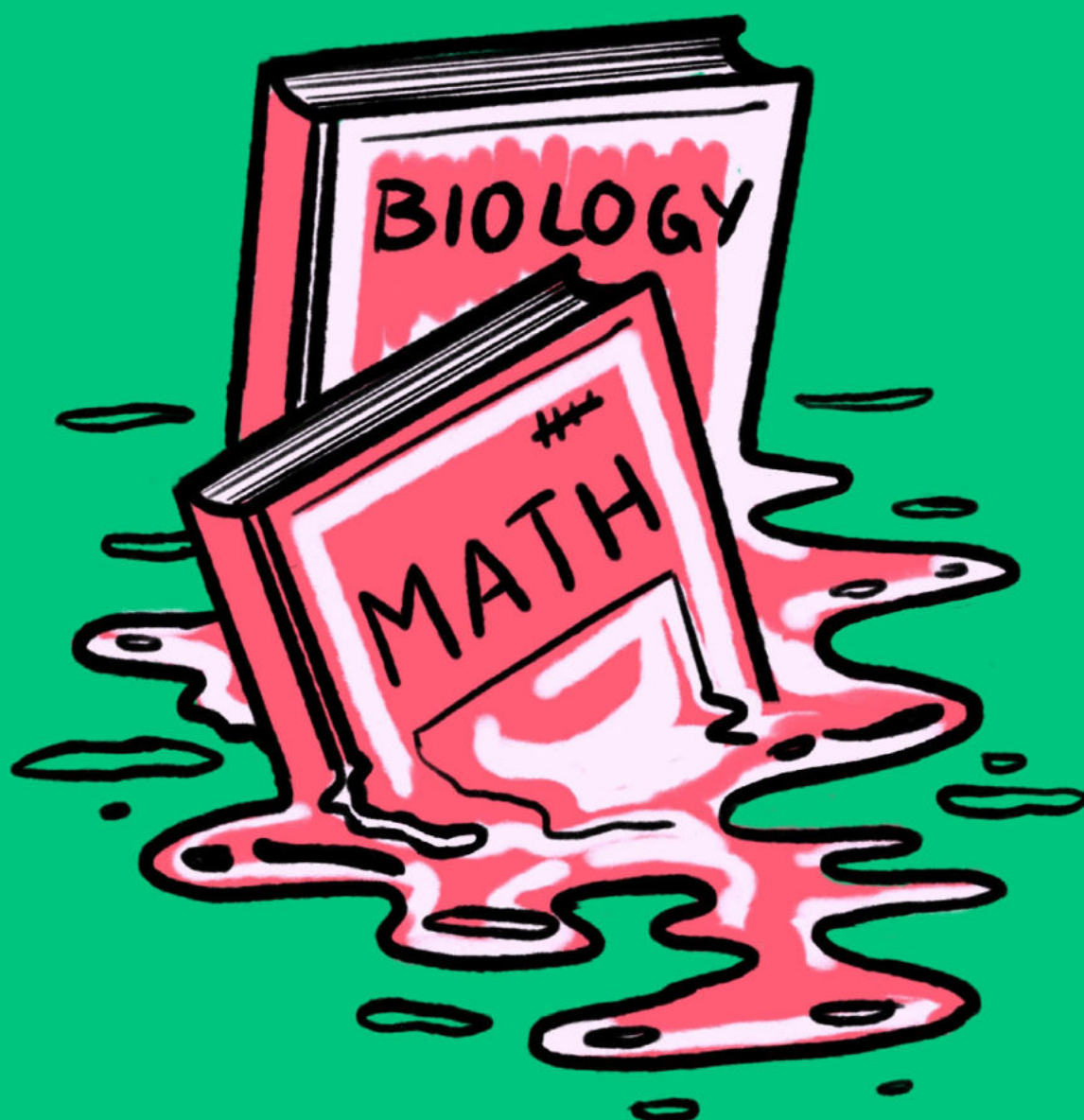
To express this evolution, Big Bazaar created a film that used cultural symbols of Ramazan to mark the holy

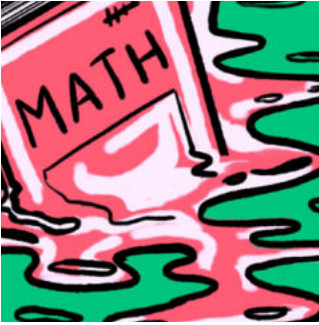
month. We created 'Ibaadat Bhi, Hifaazat Bhi' – a campaign that encouraged people to be safe and follow safety practices during Covid while Big Bazaar continued to help them consume in ways that were safe but delightful.

We reminded people that the true essence of the festival lies in prayer. And while the faithful committed themselves to the rituals surrounding the celebration at home, Big Bazaar was going to take on the complete responsibility of providing all the essential items needed to safeguard the festival, as well as their own health.

04 LEARNING

WE ARE ALL
STUDENTS NOW





While online classes are making enquiry and discovery the primary mode of teaching over instructions and lectures, they are also laying bare the digital divide within our nation. The myth of classrooms as being level playing grounds where merit will ultimately triumph is getting busted with multiple tangible and intangible differences exposing dormant privileges within our society.

■ India takes its education seriously – and surprisingly, it’s not just for engineers and doctors anymore. We’re slowly but surely breaking free from the comparison ideal colloquially known as ‘Sharmaji ka Beta’ and starting to think for ourselves. What do we want to learn and where exactly will classroom education take us?

Cut to 2020, and education as we knew it is undergoing a world of change. According to the latest figures released by UNESCO, 91% of students worldwide, around 1.6 billion children and young people, saw their education being impacted by the pandemic. Times of crisis have a way of leaving their impact on education, one way or another and the current pandemic is no different. Whether it is the dependence on age-old structures like the physical form of a classroom, the sage-on-stage model, the hierarchical teacher-pupil relationship - pedagogy is coming apart and we are seeing new influences seep in.

Know it or not, we are all students now.

Learning is a shared journey today where the teachers and pupils are all involved in the process of co-learning. The New York Times recently published an article about how teachers and students are creating meaningful connections during the pandemic. It described teachers as the original gatherers. They are in charge of bringing a group together and of thinking about how to create an experience for the whole, every single day. Students are finding new ways to measure up as well, by engaging, learning and sometimes even

teaching the teacher. The increasingly porous classroom environment leaves room for parents too. Instead of only checking in during a PTA conference, they are now taking on a more active role in their child’s education - and not that of the dreaded helicopter parent. A shift perhaps from the archetypical Kajol in Helicopter Eela to Sridevi in the latter half of English Vinglish. They’re wittingly and unwittingly part of the classroom experience, a change that comes with its own promises and perils. They have to supervise, participate and enable, while ensuring they leave adequate space for their children to learn at their own pace and in their own way – no mean balancing act.

The fact that formal education can even exist outside the confines of a physical classroom itself is a provocation that disrupts the classical education model. The University Grants Commission and Ministry of Human Resource Development are at the forefront of provisioning technology-enabled learning through audio-video mode or through e-books and journals.

While online classes are making enquiry and discovery the primary mode of teaching over instructions and lectures, they are also laying bare the digital divide within our nation. The myth of classrooms as being level playing grounds where merit will ultimately triumph is getting busted with multiple tangible and intangible differences exposing dormant privileges within our society. To cope with these, teachers are being encouraged to enrol themselves in workshops on e-teaching and students being encouraged to use virtual back-

grounds to imitate uniformity. While important questions about the access to data and devices continue being raised, answers are few and far between. This struggle to meaningfully bridge the class, geographic and privilege divide amongst us is what has perhaps led to the hasty reopening of a lot of educational institutions across the country. Unsure and agitated, students and teachers both have had to adapt constantly through this pandemic.

Delivering education in this dynamic situation has posed its own challenges. But democratizing it holds the key to not just students’ and institutions’ futures, but to that of entire nations – learning cannot be put on pause, and thinking for oneself certainly cannot afford to remain a privilege.

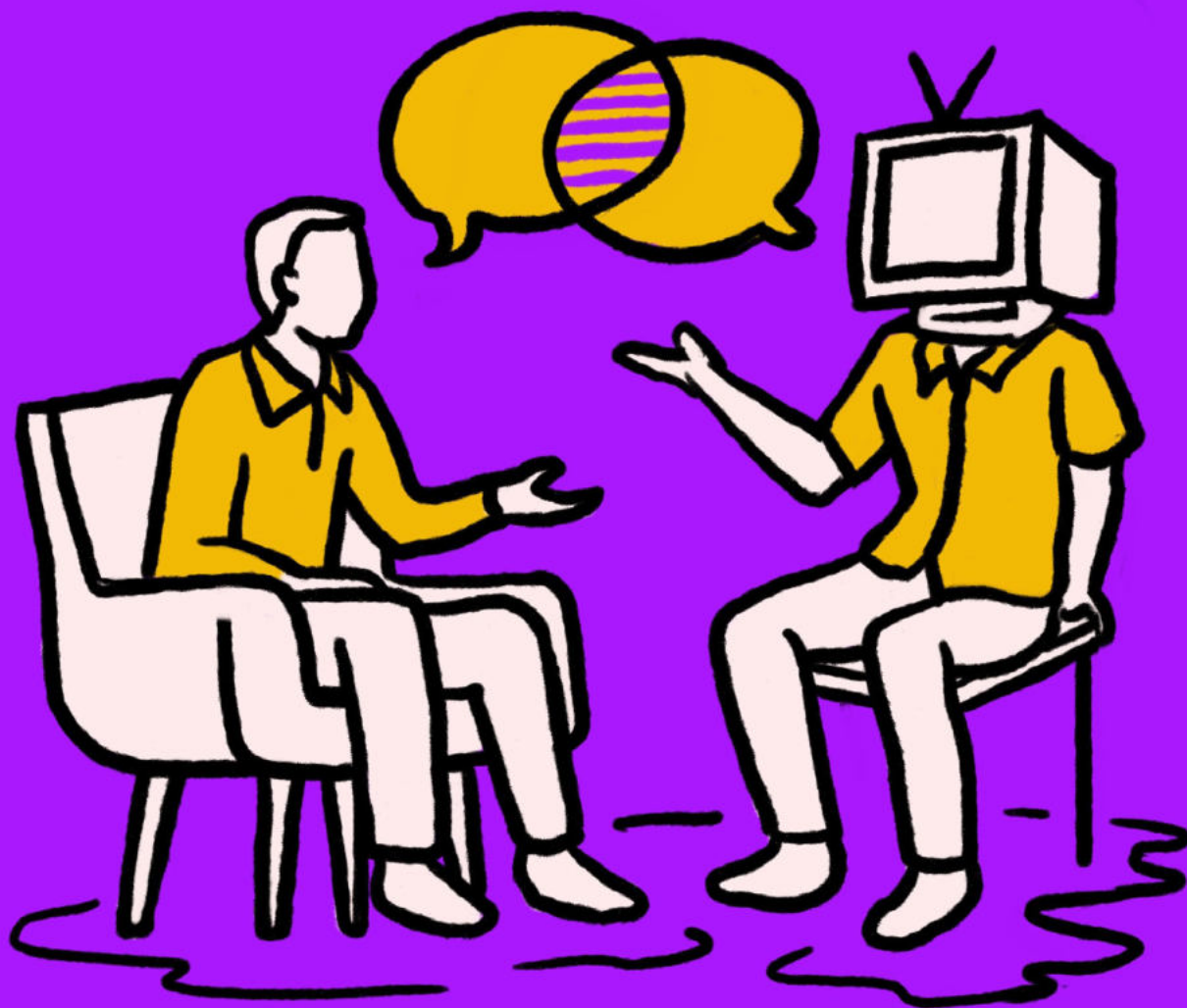
Somdatta Roychowdhuri, Nandan Majumdar

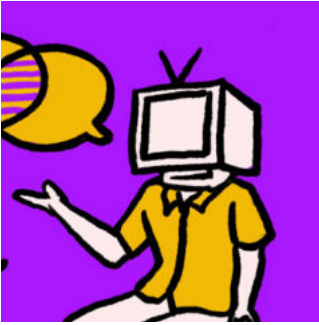
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05

VIEWING

**WHEN CONTENT
BECOMES CONNECTION**





All crises – revolutions, wars, economic collapses – seed their own stories, and this one is no different. What is unusual, perhaps, is the extent to which we have relied on content to cope - to establish connections, to remind us of what we enjoy, to express ourselves, to explore the world, and to make good memories in times that are extracting an enormous toll.

■ Indians watched the equivalent of 2.4 million years of content the week the lockdown was enforced. Only a few days later, we set a record of 1.27 trillion minutes of television viewed (in the week ending 3rd April, 2020)¹. People started spending an average of 4.8 hours daily in front of their television screens, flipping through more channels than ever before (23, data says)¹. The total TV viewership maintained a consistent growth even in week 33 (Aug 15) with daily average reach at 600 million - 7% higher than pre-Covid 2. Prime time became a day-long phenomenon, with OTT and streaming services also reporting their own surge in viewership.

It's easy to get lost in the abstract enormity of these numbers, which are truly staggering. It's equally easy to get caught up in stereotypes of screens accelerating social isolation in an already isolating time. Fortunately, the truth of content consumption in the lockdown and beyond, is much less clichéd and much more interesting.

Content (and conversations about it) were the domain of digitally savvy and relatively young demographics. Our lockdown learnings have put these assumptions to rest. As socialising has ground to a halt and 'lifestyles' remain constrained, content as conversational currency is filling the gaps in conversations even among seniors.

We've heard of a father of a 29-year-old discussing plotlines and reviews of a trending Netflix show 'Fauda' with his peers³, or a senior citizen in Noida, who is bonding with her grandchildren

over the summer by streaming the movie 'Angrezi Medium' on Disney+ Hotstar³, and parents relying on teenage children for recommendations on what to 'Prime'³.

What we're watching, how we feel about it, whether we'd recommend it – all of these topics are not just adding flavour to our conversations, but also has become integral part of our discourse and therefore our identity.

Think about the nanas & dadis making their TikTok and Instagram debuts; families rediscovering and debating the tropes of epics faithfully relayed on DD; the millennials bucking algorithms to seek out novelty and finding they enjoy Korean soaps as much as action movies. We're talking content, not just with friends, but with family – and we're on those journeys of discovery together.

Brands and platforms are responding to this appetite. Mubi, an OTT platform known for curation of cult and classic movies, have added 200 Indian films to its roster⁴, making regional stories accessible to all. Another example in this space is the launch of EORTV5, an LGBTQ focused OTT platform, which represents the stories and conversations from marginalized communities.

Meanwhile, those who are missing out on real life experiences, are finding ways to live vicariously, eroding lines between content and experience. The restart of the Bundesliga and Premier League to empty stadiums observed a resounding cheer from fans across the country⁶. 200 million people saw the 1st match

of the Dream11 IPL 2020 on TV and Disney+ Hotstar registering 1.7 million conversations across social media platforms in the 1st week².

People who looked askance at the 'make-believe' world of gaming are unknowingly embracing the same technology as they visit local and international heritage monuments - virtually. Google's Arts & Culture application organises 3D tours of globally acclaimed museums⁷, and Rough Guides partnered with Halo 5 to curate travel experiences embedded in the game⁸. People are coming away with conversations and stories from each of these experiences, and it seems to matter less and less (at least for now), that they're visiting new lands mentally rather than physically.

All crises – revolutions, wars, economic collapses – seed their own stories, and this one is no different. What is unusual, perhaps, is the extent to which we have relied on content to cope - to establish connections, to remind us of what we enjoy, to express ourselves, to explore the world, and to make good memories in times that are extracting an enormous toll. Content will continue to play this part in our everyday, and story-tellers of all kinds are well advised to design not just for ratings, but for facilitating the making of a social fabric.

Toru Jhaveri, Mehak Jaini, Abhishek Shastri

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hotstar

THE CONTENT COMARADARIE

In times when people are running out of conversations and therefore unable to connect with each other, content has emerged not only as a source of entertainment but also as a glue that brings people together. While formulating communication around the Premium content library on Disney+ hotstar, it was important to appeal to what the fans missed during the lockdown: their community.

So, in our film, influencers and their BFFs of the lockdown, represented by popular Marvel and Disney characters, brought alive the camaraderie among the fans by celebrating the shared fandom. This film served as a clarion call which galvanized the community over their mutual love for Disney+ content.



WORLD MUSIC DAY

We Indians, known for being extremely warm and a collectivist society, believe that spoken words aren't enough to connect. We love to express ourselves through meaningful gestures, which we know speak louder than a thousand words. With the rise of the WhatsApp generation, we've found another substitute for words with which to connect and express - emojis.

And for the pandemic-hit world that was running out of conversations, Spotify created a new experience to connect with each other. We created an engine, mapping the preferred mode of communication, i.e. emojis, to its playlists. There was a playlist for every single emoji which allowed fans to connect with one another, across the world from the safety of their homes.



06

UNWINDING

LEISURE IS
WHERE YOU FIND IT





Confined to our homes and stripped of our daily routines, time has become an amorphous thing that can't be defined by a calendar. Humans as creatures of habits have been dismantled and what was restricted to weekends now finds way into weekdays.

■ As travel plans have been put on hold, we would like to share these breath-taking wall murals from the Wanderlust range by Kumar which allow you to experience nature's beauties all in the comfort of your own home...These murals are easy to install & remove if you want a change of scene..."

Now, this is legit, an advertisement of a wallpaper provider in Germany.

Is this how we will experience leisure, going forward?

The lockdown inertia and inaccessible outdoors are making us re-imagine familiar spaces. Balconies, windows and terraces are being reutilised to give newer meanings to old spaces. Designing of new spatial experiences could be the next differentiator in leisure.

"Over the last two months, I've slowly turned my tiny living room into my home office, reading station and a workout center", says Ashmit.

Confined to our homes and stripped of our daily routines, time has become an amorphous thing that can't be defined by a calendar. Humans as creatures of habits have been dismantled and what was restricted to weekends now finds way into weekdays. Personal chores find their way into work-

hours as the day splits into shots of indulgences, like a quick catch-up of that next episode of Schitt's creek on Netflix over lunch. Conventional notions of peak-hour content consumption no longer apply.

Leisure as a shot of indulgence that now in character replicates the amorphousness of time has been best recently applied by Swiggy on its order tracking screen. The user can now utilise the waiting time to watch a Netflix trailer while waiting for his food to arrive. Staying indoors has been driving the adoption of leisure as a snackable indulgence that can now be experienced while on the wait.

"Virtual fitness classes are amazing. You can just shut down the computer within five minutes and jump on the zoom call, the shower's 2 metres away – all of it only takes me an hour." Says mother of three, Kaamna.

Digital leisure has surged, as technology appropriation has helped substitute outdoor thrills with comfort and convenience, diversifying leisure with the home as the hub. Be it the 50million sign-ups on the Houseparty app in lockdown or F1 launching the Virtual Grand Prix Series, leisure has pivoted indoors while unwittingly solving for the logistical nightmares of travelling and

socializing. The behavioural shift this has induced is no more about attending an online music concert but choosing which of the best online music concerts to attend from the comfort of home. From Ziro Music Festival to Jim Beam originals, the online experiences now free the enthusiasts from trade-offs one would have to make in virtual indulgences, particularly for those that were traditionally designed for physical experience.

The pandemic-induced temporal and spatial flexibility, and an enforced presentism in us promises to alter leisure across its multiple dimensions; a coping catalyst, an experience, a state of mind, a sense of time or even as a way of life. And while we continue to indulge, 'going-solo' in its literal sense, would never make more sense than now, would it?

Ellina Rath, Megha Kimothi, Sanya Sitlani

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DELHI **INDIRA GANDHI** INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

DELNavigate

The pandemic has sequestered people within the four walls of their home, putting an indefinite pause on all future travel plans, and the longer it lasts, the more we itch to travel. Delhi International Airport Ltd. (DIAL) saw an opportunity to lift the spirits of those facing a serious bout of wanderlust.

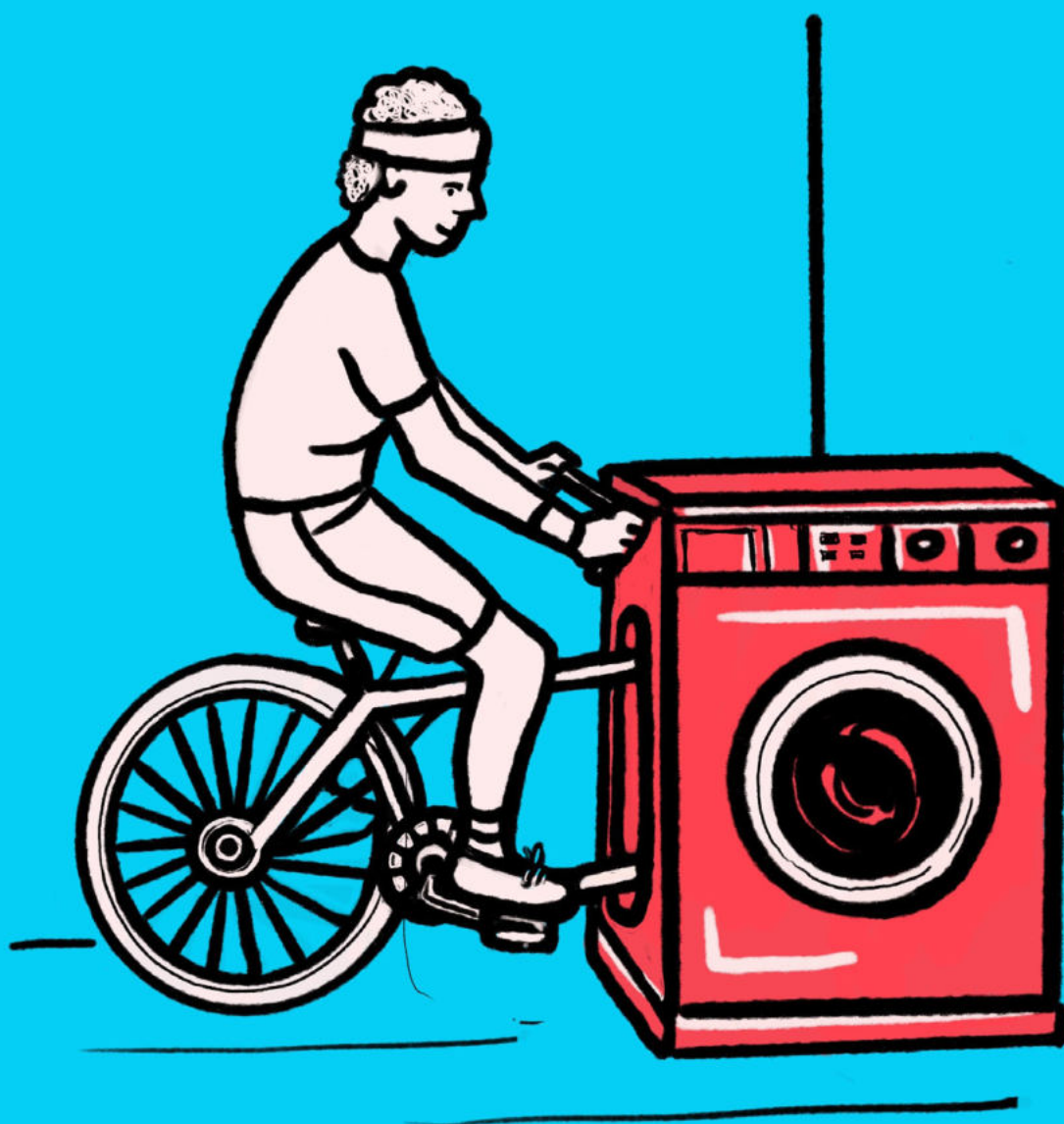
Our campaign, #DELNavigate enabled people to explore India from the safety of their homes, using a virtual network of accounts created on Instagram. With 4 zone-accounts, @DELtoNorth, @DELtoSouth, @DELtoEast, and @DELtoWest – which further connected to 4 accounts each, showcasing specific destinations within the regions – we created a virtual travel network.

Users could seamlessly navigate between multiple story highlights featuring breath-taking photography that was hand-picked for each of these locations. With digitally-encouraged travel, DIAL made a clear mark on people during troubling times and created a unique experience that let people travel without moving.



07 LIVING

**HOMES THAT
WORK HARDER**





Homes are being conceived of as separate zones that have to enable the performance of varied tasks by different members. Given how expensive actual physical transformations can be, people are also turning to influencers for advice on how to 'mentally' segregate spaces within smaller apartments.

■ A few weeks ago, the Mint (a leading business newspaper) ran a story about architectural practices being increasingly called on to design home offices for the country's corporate elite. The plans they were drawing up included not just dedicated (and aesthetic) workspaces, they also included conference rooms and meeting rooms in spaces formerly reserved for garages and backyard clutter. At any other time, it would be easy to dismiss these as evidence of conspicuous consumption – wealthy people finding one more way in which to signal status, bringing work into their homes instead of just going to the office, as everyone else is accustomed to doing.

But these aren't ordinary times. Because as the same article reports, requests for sound-proofed cubby holes, multi-modal furniture, larger windows and brighter lighting are streaming in from white-collar professionals and business owners across the board. So much so that one architecture firm in Bengaluru is now offering a WFH redesign 'package.'

Our homes, once built to be havens and to express our personal tastes, have become venues not just for work, but for exercise, for socializing, for schooling and for whatever leisure can be squeezed into our crowded routines. They are multi-tasking just as hard as their inhabitants.

This means that a certain functionality is now central to how they are being designed and redesigned. Age-old questions about storage and durability are just one part of the puzzle. Increasingly, homes

are being conceived of as separate zones that have to enable the performance of varied tasks by different members. Given how expensive actual physical transformations can be, people are also turning to influencers for advice on how to 'mentally' segregate spaces within smaller apartments. People are looking at adaptable layouts that can allow for them to host all the activities as mentioned above within the same space with minimal segregation.

Besides working for their inhabitants functionally, homes also are the single source of sanity through their sanitization capabilities and healthier planning. People are creating transitional spaces within their home, that would allow for them to take off shoes and etc, sanitize before they make their way inside the house. Not just sanitization sections, there is rise of installation of air purifiers at home. Since, most of us are spending most of our times indoor, it has become essential to breathe in healthier air.

Weeks of shouldering domestic responsibilities that were once easily delegated to domestic staff have people asking tougher questions not just of their space, but of everything that occupies it. Appliances are expected to work harder, to double and triple up. Can the fridge and vacuum cleaner truly handle everything being demanded of them, day in and day out? Can a dishwasher be accommodated in an already too-small kitchen? Can the washing machine wash and dry clothes out as more than a token gesture? People are looking for At the other end of the spectrum, can cleaning agents and detergents

smell good, look attractive in their packaging and go beyond simple cleaning, to completely disinfect surfaces?

It follows, then, that we're redefining what we think of as home essentials. Once indulgent home-cleaning 'robots' are now the need of the hour, with some families preferring to 'invest' in them over planned expenditures on soft furnishings. Whatever is simply decorative can wait. What frees up time and physical labour, needs to be acquired.

It's an interesting reversal in our relationship with what was once a private space meant to nurture our private selves, to cocoon us from the world. It represents a collapsing of all our selves, the blurring of lines between work and life, inside and outside. Homes that work harder means that we're all working harder, too. And while utility and functionality are clearly the need of the hour, we can only hope that we haven't spring-cleaned beauty entirely from the spaces where we're spending our time and our lives.

Toru Jhaveri, Atyukti Pachauri, Rimjhim Roy

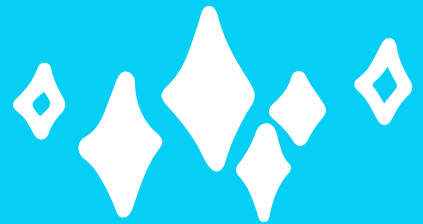
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One of most important changes that Covid - 19 has triggered is the pronounced bias for simplification. With people working from home and often balancing more than just work on their typical workdays, there is a strong desire across the board to simplify agenda and solutions, so that they can be assimilated by teams spread across. People are now quicker to “come to the point.” There are fewer deliberations and more time spent focusing on getting things done. The one watchout perhaps is to ensure that rightful time has been spent to ensure that the bias for action does not lead to suboptimal decisions. So, in the future, I foresee an increasing impact delivered by people who are able to take quality decisions and communicate them in a simplified way to drive agenda

Sudhir Shukla
Head of Marketing (Sports), Star India

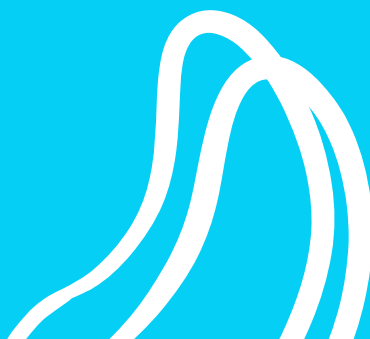




Through the pandemic humans retreated into this “safe” haven – homes, surrounded by family. But when we got to restarting our lives, post the lock downs, we have moved many activities, which were largely performed in other epicentres, into the “safe” environs of our homes. Technology has been an enabler in making this happen, but the larger theme has been, that human beings are likely to spend more time at home -it is safer and better.

This means that most goods and services that were hitherto being consumed away from home, will now shift to home consumption. This will obviously mean significant changes to the product/service, its delivery channel, pricing, promotion, and communication – most of which will be there to stay.

Raviganesh Venkataraman
CEO, Cloudnine Group of Hospitals



08

WELL BEING

ONCE A STATE OF MIND,
NOW AN AMBITION





'Well-being' before the pandemic, was largely interchangeable with the physical form and physical health. The pandemic brought well-being into the mainstream in its full glory, with not just physical health, but mental health also being spoken about and cared for.

■ For all the things that this pandemic will be remembered for, the most consequential will perhaps be that it forced us to stop in our tracks and take a long, hard look at how we think about - and treat - our bodies and minds, our overall health and fitness, and our beliefs about how all of these factors affect us in the long run.

'Well-being' before the pandemic, was largely interchangeable with the physical form and physical health. The pandemic brought well-being into the mainstream in its full glory, with not just physical health, but mental health also being spoken about and cared for.

What was a luxury and perhaps a higher order need, has now become an 'essential.' This is signalled by the rapid rise in relevance of mental health focused start-ups. Once somewhat on the margins, YourDost, Wysa, 1to1 Help, mind.fit all reported 30-50% rise in Indians seeking therapy through their apps. State and central government are making mental health their priority in policy making. Large scale private organizations are also acknowledging mental wellbeing as a part of their employee's personal growth agenda, offering access to counselling services, meditation classes and the like.

This multidimensional idea of well-being is also extracting and shaping its own multidimensional pursuit. From mini workouts between chores, to using household items for physical therapy, to a return to dadima ke nuskhe for building one's immunity, fitness and immunity building is perme-

ating our lives much beyond the occasional one hour of workout time. The government of India also doubled down on their emphasis on modes of medicine beyond allopathy that might provide some relief, via Ministry of Ayush.

'Self-care' is fast becoming an important aspect of our everyday lives – ritualised and normalised in the daily schedule. People are finding ways to do this through apps, games and virtual social interactions. Even as we slowly return to work, these are practices that will be carried forward into these spaces. Standing desks, stretches between meetings, morning yoga classes for employees are all ideas that are gaining steam across the world.

Being locked in our homes has also pushed us to look at sustained, long term well-being as a goal that's prioritised over instant gratification. This has thrown into sharp relief the ways in which we map our time, our careers, our lives. A generation that was hyper-focussed on constant productivity realized that life is for livelihood, not the other way around. Within just half a year of lockdown, we have moved towards the powerful idea of sustainable ambition - the pursuit of goals, without deprioritizing one's mental health.

People are thinking of their identity beyond the work that they do and spending time indulging in other activities beyond the workplace. Accenture's global consumer research during the pandemic showed that personal health and that of loved ones, financial security and friend-

ships are needs that have taken on a much greater importance in our lives right now.

The biggest endorsement of sustainable ambition as an approach is how the most demanding of industries have started to acknowledge the need for work-life balance, especially in these challenging times. Work life balance has sprung back into popular discourse as people are taking 'wellness' day-offs and are looking to restore their energies and strength rather than blindly participating in the rat-race.

The idea of a life well lived and what ambition should look and feel like has taken a completely different meaning – something that goes beyond periodic achievements and monetary success. Whether this new form of ambition is a temporary arrangement or a seismic shift in mindset remains to be seen.

After all, you can't alter ambition without also altering society.

Rimjhim Roy, Nandan Majumdar

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While the pandemic is definitely a challenge and one has to recognise the difficulty everyone has gone through, it has also brought to surface, the resilience and positivity of the human spirit. I think one of the things the pandemic has shown is that anything is possible. Often times, we limit ourselves from what we think we can do. But we can always try new things, nothing is impossible. This applies to people as well as brands. Take the refreshment category for instance. Most people think they need refreshment from physical fatigue. The pandemic has brought focus on other stresses of life that make need refreshment. Mental fatigue has become center stage, what can brands do here? There's a lot that beverages can! It's all about looking sideways and being open to new possibilities that the new world opens.

Vishal Kaul
Vice President, Marketing & Franchise, PepsiCo India





'IT'S JUST A PERIOD'



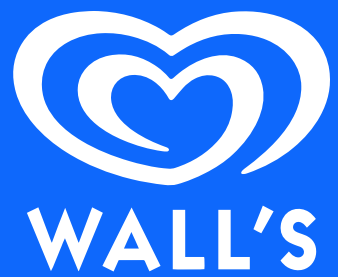
For women around the world, a positive menstrual experience is an integral part of their well-being. Unfortunately, for many of India's women, a difficult period experience is not just about the biological challenges and discomfort, but also about the emotional stress associated with 'bleeding,' given stigmas perpetuated within Indian culture and Indian households.

We realized that this challenging period experience was getting compounded for young women experiencing their first periods this lockdown. Their bodies and lives were changing, and it was happening in the line of sight of families who would prefer the period to remain invisible.



On World Menstrual Hygiene Day, we partnered Stayfree, in revisiting & redefining how young girls were going to experience their first period & all that comes with it – the shame, the hiding and the emotional pain. We challenged families, including fathers and brothers, to do their bit to make periods emotionally healthier for the women in their lives.



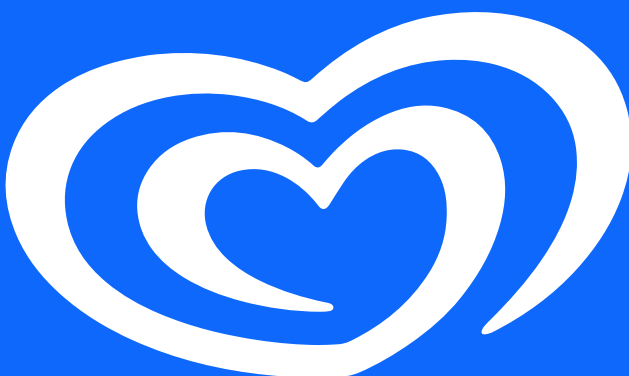


'HAPPINESS IS ESSENTIAL'

With eating out becoming a health concern strewn with dangers and pitfalls, treats and indulgences needed to articulate meaning 'inside the home.' Truth be told, in India, eating out or at home is ultimately an emotional experience – flavours and cuisines represent ideas we buy into, journeys we undertake.

What we eat sustains us and enriches us.

With Unilever's Kwality Walls, we launched the 'Happiness is Essential' campaign to capitalize on this very insight - within the home, constrained by circumstances, joy is as much a priority as hygiene and safety. We unveiled the role of ice-cream in a pandemic – the ultimate ambassador for bite-sized happiness, a sight that instantly turned a frown upside-down even in the most challenging of times.



09

PARENTING

A LESSON IN
PIVOTING





Covid - 19, however, has shredded that parenting manual to bits and taken pivoting to dizzying new heights. Parenting was hard enough as it is, but here we are! The pandemic has upended the lives of families and forced new parents to revisit the very fundamentals of what they know to be true of parenting.

■ 'They gave me a 1000 page manual for my picture-in picture TV but they sent me home with a baby... and nothing!' says Will Smith in the new documentary, 'Dads'.

Parenting has always been a personal journey of learning and un-learning, starting from scratch. You stumble along the path guided by those who'd done this before you, and course-correct based on your own experience. Just when you think you have something down pat, you realise it doesn't work that way anymore. 'Pivoting' is something parents have been doing well before Silicon Valley made it cool.

Covid - 19, however, has shredded that parenting manual to bits and taken pivoting to dizzying new heights. Parenting was hard enough as it is, but here we are! The pandemic has upended the lives of families and forced new parents to revisit the very fundamentals of what they know to be true of parenting.

The most significant evolution in parenting over the decades has been the emergence of a diverse parenting support-ecosystem. Everyone's always been told that 'It takes a village to raise a baby'. This ecosystem has been built painstakingly by generations of parents – the nannies, the day care systems where security has evolved, the maalis who find their way into homes across the country. It's a well-oiled structure that gives working parents the support they need. It's also a 'village' that stands decimated in the post-Covid world.

From delegating responsibilities, parents are now retaining authority. This is fundamentally changing the nature of parenting from something the mother led, to something the mother now does with her partner, the father. Covid has given birth to a generation of hands-on fathers exceling at baby care and not seeing it as part-time roleplay for when the mother is unavailable. This is particularly true when it comes to touch and proximity in a time of fear around the physical exposure of babies to multiple people and environments.

And this is not just about infants. Whatever your child's age, whether you've graduated from nannies to teachers and beyond – parents are feeling the pressure. No longer is the 'personal growth' of your primary school goer a shared responsibility between you and the school – as hard as teachers might try, ultimately only parents can be at home, supervising. Online coding coaching company White Hat Jr has seen 100% month on month growth post-Covid as parents take their child's growth into their own hands. Their recent advertisement featuring Madhuri Dixit urges more parents to do the same.

In India, 92% of parents were unwilling to send their children back to school as per a research conducted in mid 2020. Parents who regulated screen time for their children earlier have been forced to adopt to technology as the whole infrastructure of learning and childhood has moved online. They're leaning on technology now as one would

on an ally, that is not only helping them co-parent but also serving as a glue between their children and extended family members. Most grandparents are seeing their grandchildren grow on video calls, forcing them to navigate a world where digital connectivity is more critical than ever before.

With all generations under one roof for this long, there's also greater appreciation for each other's gifts. This is changing the dynamics within the family. Children, who were always expected to follow, are gaining the respect of elders by tutoring them on technology which is now fundamental to leading life in the new normal.

Covid has not only altered family dynamics, but also made parents reassess the values that they are inculcating in their children. The world is no doubt very different today from the start of 2020, and every day there's a new push and pull in the complex role that parents have to play. With growing uncertainty and a health crisis unfolding in new ways every day, parents are trying to inculcate self-reliance by encouraging them to participate in household activities. Assigning tasks is not just making them independent but also teaching them values like responsibility, patience and empathy towards those who often undertake these chores – like house maids who now on forced 'breaks'.

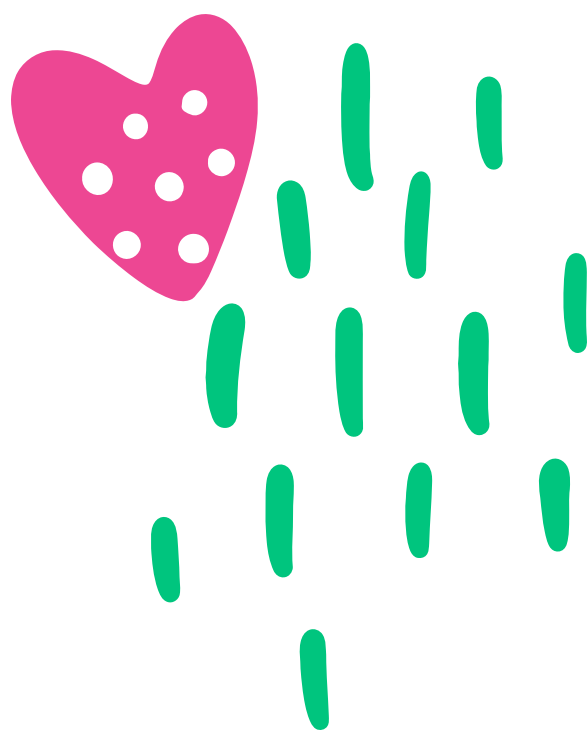
With so little of our lives under our direct control, parents have realised it is going to be critical for each person to look out for themselves. Therefore, they are inculcating importance of self-regulation in kids early on. Habits such as washing hands and feet after coming back home, wearing a mask outdoors, avoiding contact with objects outdoors are reinforced by parents by setting an example themselves or having conversations with their kids about the same. Unlike earlier, where habits were formed by rewarding behaviour, the newer parents are focusing on forming habits-of-mind so that children can gauge every situation and make choices that benefit them. Perhaps that is why a two year old starts

rubbing her hands together indicating handwash everytime she enters the house and a five year old asks his friend to cover his nose with his mask when he sees it hanging idly around his neck.

It took decades for the parenting world to evolve to working mums, and now in just a year everything has been open to question and everyone has been forced to pivot. Will Smith may not have been given a manual, but if the Covid parents were to write one, it'll be about raising an independent, empathetic and grounded generation of children and an open-minded generation of parents willing to partner each other and evolve every day in whatever direction necessary.

Rucha Nagavekar, Sonal Jhuj

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Parenting in the age of Covid has proven to be tough on most parents. Parents have had to juggle a hectic family life along with increasing work commitments. Due to the pandemic, children have seen their world shrink to the four walls of their homes, making them irritable and demanding. At a time like this, moms & dads have been facing the overwhelming challenge of keeping their children engaged. Far from being looked on with suspicion, parents have now embraced technology as an ally, setting aside their regulations on screen time. And we promise to have their back with family-friendly, entertaining and meaningful content that will get them the respite they so sorely need.



Johnson's®

Looking after a baby in infancy has always been considered a mother's domain. However, Covid and work from home culture gave the fathers an opportunity to experience fatherhood like never before. From changing nappies to knowing what to do when the baby cries, from feeding the baby to getting her to burp; this generation of fathers quickly moved from their traditional role of care-takers to becoming care-givers. The lockdown has accelerated the creation of the first generation of hands-on fathers in India, and Johnson's Baby celebrated this development in parenting in their Father's Day Campaign.



10 DRESSING

SARTORIAL STORIES
WE TELL OURSELVES





Fashion once left people paralyzed in front of their wardrobes every morning, unable to make a choice that would fit their fantasy of external validation. It has now become an exercise in preserving personal happiness.

■ To paraphrase Miranda Priestly from the hit 2006 film 'The Devil Wears Prada' - every sartorial choice can be tied back to the business of fashion – to the countless designers, style mavens and thought leaders who have shaped what we think and know about colours, textures and cuts. Fashion, as the saying goes, can be loved or hated – but never ignored.

Even in the current climate, with the business of fashion as we know it struggling to recover to pre-lockdown levels, the culture of fashion continues to evolve.

Prior to the lockdown, our attire comprised a primary aspect of how we wanted to reflect ourselves to the outside world. We chose each piece of clothing to make a statement about our personalities, opinions, choices and backgrounds. How does style manifest then, in a world where we have few places to go and even fewer people to meet?

With over 13 thousand posts under the hashtag #goingnowherebutfuckitimgettingdressed, people are redefining why fashion makes them feel good.

What once took hours of indecision every morning, in making a choice that would fit their fantasy of external validation, has now become an exercise in preserving personal happiness. We do not merely dress to impress, we dress to express, like the famous Indian designer, Sabyasachi very eloquently said, "I believe that clothes should just be an extension of one's intellect". In the absence of an audience, fashion is becoming a means for us to talk to ourselves about who

we are and what we aspire to be. We are constructing and consuming our own sartorial stories, and we're seeing ourselves differently as a result.

As people have adjusted to their work from home regimes, fashion has become a form of therapy. When the days all look the same, at least our clothes can be different, making the daily chores and cooking struggles slightly more bearable – all made possible by wearing a little 'hope from home.' Our client H&M released a piece of work titled 'Celebrate The New' to showcase the new rituals where clothes play a big role even within four walls. With trends taking a backseat, we can now mix and match whatever we like, shaking off the shackles of what is considered fashionable, what is indoor v/s outdoor wear.

While the pandemic has given rise to a new form of self-expression, it has also made us mindful about how much and what kind of fashion we purchase. Marie Kondo-ing our closets to pass the time, we have come to realize just how many clothes are lying around unused – seasonal, trendy or otherwise. Fast fashion was previously a way to keep up with the times, but our days indoors have led fashion revolutionaries closer home to adopt a mindset of longevity when it comes to our wardrobes. As time goes on, we are seeing thrift shopping take precedence as people set up accounts for their pre-loved, sustainable pieces on Instagram – a digital fashion garage sale of sorts.

For most fashion houses, the next big thing in fashion will lie at the intersection of what works and what

looks great. With athleisure and mask culture having their moment in the sun, scientists and designers are working on fabric innovations and fixtures that are safe, breathable, and convenient. Take for instance Aditya Birla Group's Grasim Industries, Mumbai-based textile company Ruby Mills and suitings brand Donear have launched anti-microbial fabrics meant to prevent the growth and settling of bacteria and viruses. This is just one in a series of 'functional' innovations that can be expected as our clothes begin to perform on multiple vectors – durability, protection and comfort being just some of them.

It is no mystery that the global pandemic will change how we perceive, purchase and interact with most categories. It is interesting to see that even as urgent questions around sustainability, functionality, longevity and value are asked of the fashion business, the power of 'dressing up' remains undisputed – even enhanced.

Somdatta Roychowdhuri, Niyanta Mirjankar

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11 DINING

EATING OUT :
WAS IT EVER ABOUT EATING?





We eat out to socialize, to discover something new, to be surprised; we eat out for adventure, to escape. And as with most adventures, some amount of risk is always lurking in the corner.

■ Why do humans consume food? Is it hunger? Psychology says that the act of eating was never about eating food alone. Especially when it comes to eating out of home, it involves a multi-sensorial experience of which food is a significant part, but not the only one.

We eat out to socialize, to discover something new, to be surprised; we eat out for adventure, to escape. And as with most adventures, some amount of risk is always lurking in the corner. We know very well that eating out also means walking on thin ice with apprehensions on hygiene, health and safety; yet we eat out. It took a pandemic to show us how thin the ice really was.

It is a well-known fact that with a thriving street food culture, most Indians have a convenient approach to hygiene when it comes to eating out. Take Abhishek Bachchan's character in Delhi 6, returning to his country after a long hiatus to be reassured that he has the gut for street food, even if he spent most of his formative years abroad. The average Indian uses their lackadaisical approach to hygiene as a display of bravado. Our immunity is strong enough for us to not be too fussy, most claim.

The pandemic has surely made a permanent dent in this confidence and may trigger an important behaviour change in people's relationship with food that is consumed out-of-home. And the eating out industry - both organised and unorganised will be left with no option but to make tangible and permanent changes to how they can reassure people on safety and hygiene.

That's the easier part.

The more difficult one will be to furnish an answer to the other aspect of eating out - socializing. In a world where physical distancing is going to be the norm, at least in the near foreseeable future, what happens to the physical experience of being in a place surrounded with strangers?

There are solutions, and there are solutions needed for Indian consumers due to the unique demography that we are. In India, a group of 6 is not really a large gathering, and social distancing doesn't have enough real estate. For a community-oriented country that India is, it will be a challenge to enforce restricted entry into restaurant spaces. With restaurants opening up at 50% capacity, most are seeing extremely restricted footfalls and are still largely reliant on delivery to stay afloat. However, a new kind of restaurant is rising to the occasion - noodle bars and smokehouses are offering the restaurant experience at home - without the hassle, with deliveries of uncooked resources that require restaurant-level skills. Deliveries have seen a meteoric rise in innovations this year. Every player in this business who wishes to survive is innovating for an in-home eating experience. Food ordering apps are also leaving no stone unturned in convincing the customers on the steps taken to maintain hygiene and safety of the food. While the wave of safety and hygiene measures started with makeshift ideas, we are starting to see scaled up innovations on delivering safe & hygienic food, spearheaded by the likes of our

clients like McDonald's who are actively investing into On The Go, a curbside pick up order mechanism that is putting a lot of their consumers at ease.

Is the future of eating out going to be inside the home, inside the car? Absolutely not. When the dark clouds clear, and when the world becomes a safer place to venture out, people will return not to eat out, but to be out with others, while eating. However what seems like the beginnings of a diner's code of conduct seems to be emerging as time goes by, wherein restaurants expect their diners to allow the process of eating out to be mutually beneficial by showing up for confirmed bookings and following masking policies so as to not appear tone-deaf at a time like this. How we and the eating out industry faces up to this challenge, only time will tell.

Jai Tekwani, Ronak Shah, Aditi Hariharan, Somdutta Roychowdhuri'

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One of the areas that could see a dramatic change in India is the increase in cooking repertoire of housewives. With out of home eating having almost come to a standstill, we are observing that moms are learning to cook new dishes . We see this both from the products they are buying in the market and the increased searches on digital recipe channels. While I think that eating out will be back with a vengeance the new dishes learnt may fundamentally change the Indian plate.

Sudhir Sitapati

*Author of CEO Factory, Executive Director,
Hindustan Unilever Limited*





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People have once again realized the joy of doing things together, even replicating outdoor activities such as work, entertainment, dining, and leisure within their own homes. Such behaviour has provided great impetus to businesses like ours who have always believed in the joy of home-cooked food. Food has always brought people together, but home-cooked food has brought families together and as a brand, it gives us immense joy to be a part of such dining table conversations.

Angshu Mallick
Deputy CEO, Adani Wilmar



McDonald's

GOLDEN GUARANTEE

People have always associated McDonald's with the joy of eating at its restaurants. But with dine-in shut & people wary of eating food that is prepared outside, the brand had to find a way to assure people that it was safe to order food from McDonald's.

We realised people weren't just craving food from their favourite joints, they craved normalcy and predictability. The pandemic has changed many of the everyday things we did Pre-Covid - the way we hang out, the way we enjoy our favourite food or even the way we recharge after a long day at work. With our campaign on Golden Guarantee, we highlighted McDonald's convenience channels – including contactless delivery, take-out and on-the-go, assuring people that even though the world around them had changed, they could still enjoy their favourite food the way they always have because McDonald's is still the same when it comes to taste, safety and the memorable moments associated with the brand.

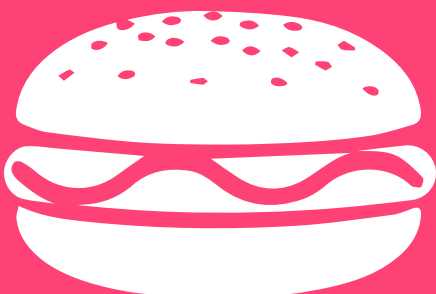
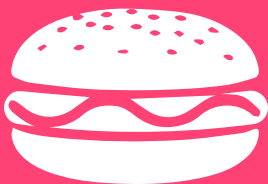


McDonald's

EatQual

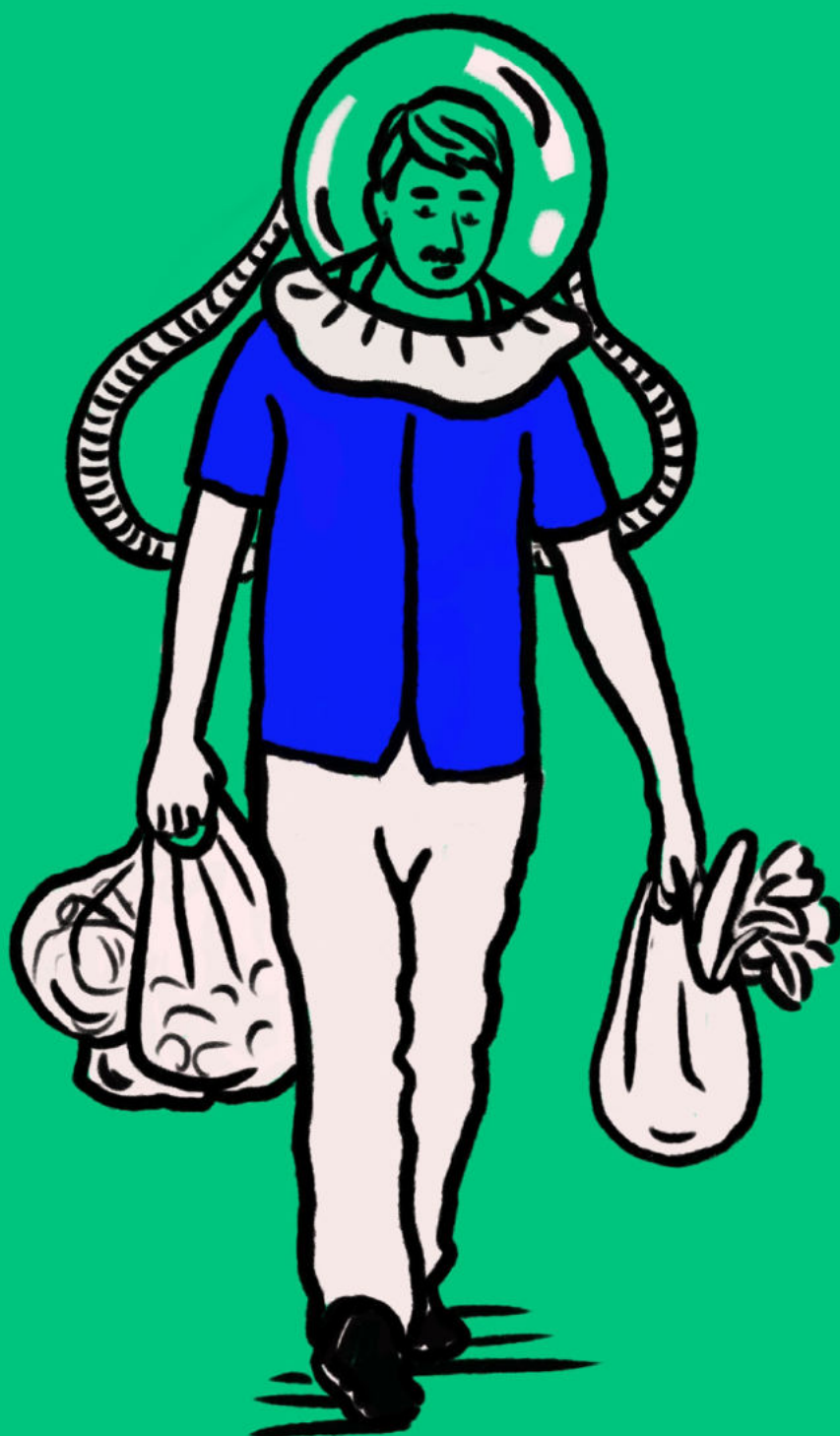
As the pandemic rages on, there is a heightened sense of duty and empathy within people. Losing access to the things we had enjoyed before, has opened our eyes to not just our own privilege, but also to those who have always lacked it. We now empathise more, we try to make things better for each other and we look to brands to do the same.

This is the fuel behind McDonald's EatQual initiative which aims to ensure equal access to something we had always taken for granted – a meal at McDonald's. Along with having ramps & disabled friendly washrooms across various stores, the initiative features a special packaging, designed in collaboration with an NGO, for people with upper arm movement disability. The new packaging stems from the insight that the current packaging requires customers to use both their hands to truly enjoy their burgers but it's not easy for those with upper-limb disabilities. EatQual ensures that everyone can bite into their favourite burgers just as easily, sending the message that inclusivity is not just about the big things but also about being able to enjoy the little everyday things like everyone else.



12 MOVING

WHEN PUBLIC
GOES PRIVATE





Pandemics make us think differently about our future and our choices. With the slowdown in vehicular traffic and all kinds of pollution associated with it, we have already seen healing effects on the environment.

■ It is surprising to look back and realize now that till only a couple of months ago, an average Indian spent around 2 hours in commute to work every day. Going by the amount of time we have worked from home this year, seems a tad bit unnecessary?

The paranoia associated with everyday chores are mounting every single day with the rising number of cases and new virus transmission modes being discovered. Amidst this and the constant updates on migrant tribes, those with the privilege of sanctuary of a home find themselves constantly challenging the very need to step out.

If one does need to venture outside their homes, the pros and cons are carefully reviewed and weighed against each other. This kind of control that one is not willing to surrender to shared spaces. People rejected public and shared modes of transport in the new order, the proposition of having one's own vehicle is becoming all the more popular. An Auto Survey report claims that 75% of the Indians said that they would prefer to buy a private vehicle in this new normal - even pre-owned is acceptable. Though that is a luxury only reserved for a few. There also lies a larger base that as the time progresses, is making use of public transport. For instance in Hyderabad, government has implemented stricter regulation on bus, train and metro to maintain social distancing while has dialled up the frequency, resulting in

people being open to public mode of transports. In a similar fashion, we can see largely in business districts of the country with higher workforce: Ola and Uber usage picking up. Not just for cabs as well as for Auto's. In fact auto's due to their open ventilation and screen surprisingly are giving people more assurance than the cab. It would be unfair to say that for players, it is business as usual. We can see the giants pitch their services harder to the consumer by talking about the sanitation process. Not just the communication, maintaining the sanitation and drivers safety has been a key issue for the players. It is not all gloom either. This new development of commute also provides them with new opportunities like: new real estate for media, e.g: the auto shield screens (Indian autos forever have been known for their décor more than the service), opportunity to venture out into new vehicular design as well.

In some cases, the fatigue from being indoors has also set in. Resulting in a rise in people preferring social bubbles to step out / hang out with. Homes offer complete control over the things and people you come in physical proximity to. Homes offer a productivity and comfort haven that makes long commutes and traffic seem completely avoidable. What they do not offer though in most cases is perhaps the much coveted 'me time.' As the lockdown continued, it became clear that people have to tune their minds with the mindset

of an ultramarathon. This resulted in evolution of daily schedules. One of the new activities that started picking up during this time was the faux commute. Where, people would step out of home for the time equivalent to their travel time for the much missed commute. Capitalising on this rising trend, Spotify created a faux commute playlist to keep people company for their before and after work commute. In cases like that, the time spent in commuting becomes a substitute for self-care and restoration. Micro-mobility and sustainable personal commute options offered by companies like Yulu, Bounce and others are being seen as a vital cog in the wheel while these transitions in mobility are being negotiated.

As things opened up more. And India started getting back to work. The ones travelling long distances are travelling in a way they never did before. Some have been brave to wander and explore after this long containment period. Most of the people are preferring spaces, that can provide exclusivity during their time of stay. While, people choose to wander or be it either go between cities, the real development that has happened is in the journey of the traveller. Today, with the mandatory web – checkin and digital check – ins, scans and record keeping of the traveller, there is a structure and rise of efficient traveller in the country. Decline of last minute travellers. Similarly, we see airlines and people going a step beyond with personal pro-

tection kits with screen, suit and more. From a time when there were doubts whether as to travel will resume to its previous standards or not, surprising, all that paranoia is wasted. Though airlines have incurred losses this year, they are also, witnessing a fast recovery. Infact, as a result of the pandemic, we see the rise of a new traveller by air all together. For many in India, they are on their first flight during this time. Future, holds an interesting time from the point of view of both the traveller as well as the sector. In the far future we might see private cabins in long distance flights as well as compartmentalized seating charts in economy.

The pandemic did make us think differently about our future and our choices. With the slowdown in vehicular traffic and all kinds of pollution associated with it, we have already seen healing effects on the environment. It remains to be seen whether we will take a cue from that and work towards more sustainable choices even when this pandemic is over, or whether we will go back to our old ways at the first opportunity.

***Atyukti Pachauri, Rimjhim Roy,
Aadya Sharma***

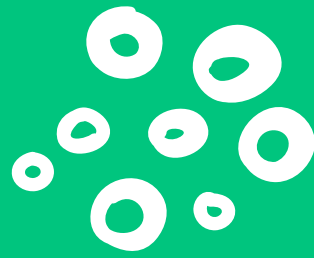
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Covid - 19 has redefined the category codes. It has given brands an opportunity to reimagine the customer experience and to find new ways to surprise and delight our customers. The one tip I would have for us all is to continue to be customer obsessed."

Sanjay Gupta
Marketing Director APAC, Uber



Covid has proved to mankind that in Nature Vs Human Ambitions, nature shall have the upper hand & in its own mystical ways shall undo all wrongs being inflicted on Mother Earth. Human-kind being the leaders need to give an actionable thought about all sharing the Blue-Planet.

“While nobody can be prepared enough for a pandemic, it is karma that the business has earned that will create resilience when faced with an adversary. Doing good cannot be an On/Off exercise but a perpetual one. Businesses of tomorrow must focus on creating solutions that nurture nature. That make sure they don’t damage the nature in their desire to move the world forward, something we are committed to doing at Blu-smart.

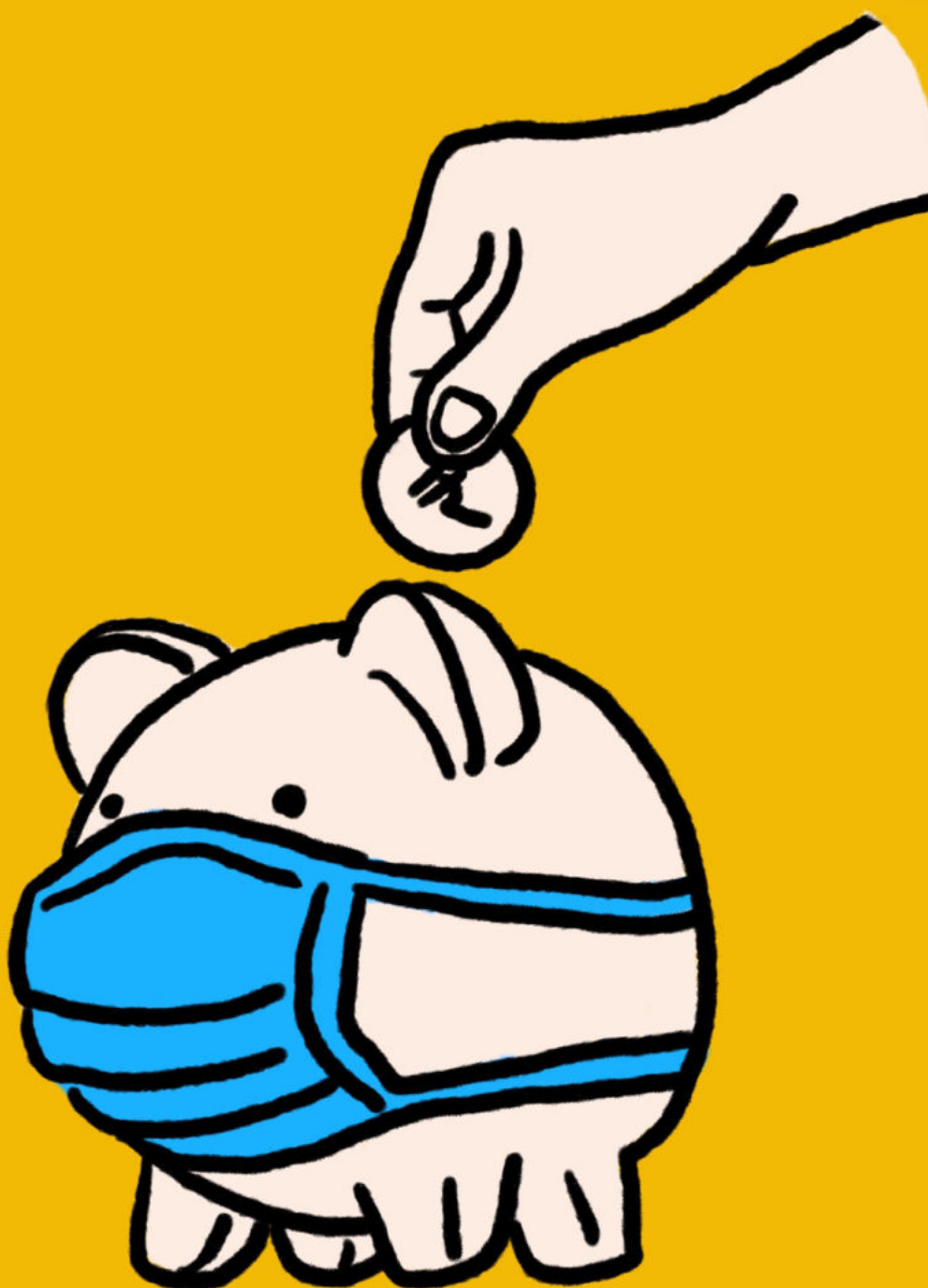
Anmol Jaggi
Co-founder, Blu-Smart Electric Mobility

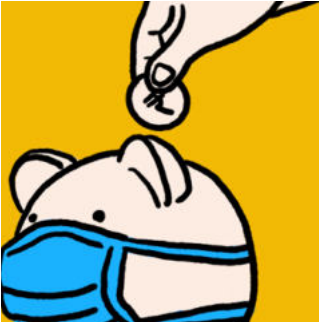


13

EARNING

**FINDING MOBILITY
IN STABILITY**





Pandemics make us think differently about our future and our choices. With the slowdown in vehicular traffic and all kinds of pollution associated with it, we have already seen healing effects on the environment.

■ Contemporary India's growth narrative (whatever one's views on the realities) has been one of movement and motion – upward mobility. Our emerging and established middle classes had grown into a powerful 'consumption class' that enjoyed the acquisition of brands, goods and increasingly, 'experiences.' Money management and financial planning were becoming an interest, if not a priority, for those who had the wherewithal to look past the binaries of saving & spending. Personal finance apps like Scripbox and ET Money played a key role in influencing financial behaviour towards investing.

When it came to the vast majority of less privileged Indians, one saw a concerted effort from policy-makers, the government, financial institutions and of course, the private sector, to encourage a shift in our culturally rooted savings mentality. Taught to hide away hard-earned money for emergencies (in trunks, jars, cupboards and safes), India's farm and blue-collar workers were being encouraged to make money work for them, whether through savings accounts or micro-credit schemes. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, and a host of other small finance banks who started as micro-credit companies took the lead in encouraging India's less privileged to start investing in formal savings and fixed deposit accounts.

Not investment alone. While, bankers look at the most difficult financial crisis ahead of them, they as well continue to offer more and more loan solutions to the Indian. With low rate of interest and other benefits. Keeping the current needs

in mind of healthcare, banks are also issuing Covid - 19 loans for the ones who seek financial support for the treatment.

Mobility was a journey everyone was supposed to be on, or at least aspire to. That is until Covid struck, exposing economic fault-lines. At one end of the spectrum, people experienced pay cuts, reduced work-hours and job losses, but could withstand at least some of this impact. At the other, generational gains in mobility were wiped out, with families and communities being pushed back below the poverty line.

How does a population that has been coaxed into understanding and appreciating mobility, contend with being forced to 'stand still' because of circumstances beyond their control? Covid is, after all, the black swan event no one anticipated. It is also the financial calamity our culture had always warned us to prepare for.

Even as the reverberations of Covid continue to be felt, with forecasts being drawn up, contractions being predicated and downgrades applied, at the individual level, those who are not completely bereft are finding ways to adapt and cope – opting for a resilient stability that feels like mobility in challenging times. UBS analysis suggests that savings could be going up in the formal sector on income continuity. Even those who are bereft, have found ways to continue to be mobile. The same analysis suggests that India's informal labour have continued to save despite reduced income, by reducing consumption.

Indians value liquidity – the proverbial bird being better in hand. The great Indian middle class withdrew Rs.53,000 crore in a fortnight just to keep precious liquidity close at hand. Financial columnists are suggesting a temporary de-prioritization of SIPs. Even the country's wealthiest man, Mukesh Ambani, sold billion-dollar chunks of Jio at blue-chip valuations to eliminate debt. The sense of access to one's finances and savings feels like progress in and of itself – a symbol of one's hard-won prosperity and the capacity to protect oneself from some of the risks around the corner.

Speaking of risks, banking sector of the country had already been on a decline in the pre - virus period. With Indian banking assets being lowest as against the loans. With the onset of pandemic, this journey only seems more challenging than it did before. Unless the economy recovers at a rapid pace. The same is confirmed via the evaluation by a rating agency called Standard & Poor's that confirms that Indian economy is likely to recover post 2023 compared to even markets like Mexico and South Africa. This puts in front of the banks a severe situation of raising cash / funds from keeping the system crashing. Unfortunately, as per the recent team as set up by the RB governor's office, indicates that the only solution of raising cash funds might result in the domination of the sector by private players as opposed to state players. This basically means going back in the time of 90s of banking in the country when the growth came but at the cost of exploitation of the common man. Driving a paranoia in minds



of many, this is resulting in rise in low trust towards the system while increase in trust among the connected circles as well as old ways of presevation like liquidation.

That instinct to preserve and protect one's principal is also evident in the surge of investment in fail-safe investments like gold. As a recent article on personal finance for millennials suggested, "the more boring personal finance is, the greater the chance of making money." Interestingly, Indians are relying on community financial networks – investing in small businesses owned by one's ethnic or caste counterparts, parking funds with community 'bankers' and 'accountants,' – giving one the sense of ploughing back and investing in one's people. Social connections and the threat of community sanctions lower risks, and lower returns are an acceptable trade-off.

The balance between stability and a perceived or felt mobility is also apparent in how we're spending. Middle-class Indians have cut back on discretionary expenses and reimaged what count as essentials. Tax calculators are amongst the highest-searched keywords on Google. Data from Google Trends suggests that tax calculator keywords are again on an upswing, thanks to return filing season. today,

with Young Indians are moving back home, setting off the early stages of a 'reverse migration.' As health and hygiene concerns grow, many Indians are borrowing from home-makers' playbooks to repurpose resources and make things – meals, toys beauty products – at home. Our entrepreneurial streak is also evident in 'side-hustles' and hobbies becoming a second revenue stream for individuals and households. This income now seems to be getting prioritised towards health and securing retirement, instead of acquiring assets, according to BankBazaar.

As mobility in the conventional, literal sense encounters real challenges and limitations, Indians are finding ways to reimagine what counts as growth. Whether it is making money work harder, finding new ways to save and fewer ways to spend, keeping money close at hand, being disciplined about protecting it and preventing an erosion in its inherent value – what looks like staid risk-aversion is actually resilience and inventiveness in action. This is a new kind of mobility – a dynamic stability that is experienced as a felt mobility for uncertain and alarming times.

Toru Jhaveri, Phalgun Polam, Atyukti Pachauri

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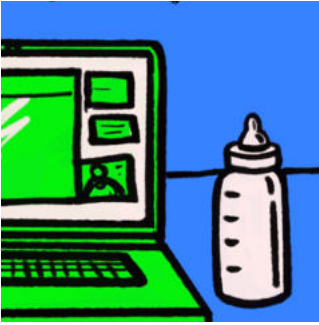


14

WORKING

CAREERS BEYOND
LINEAR GROWTH





The ensuing lockdown afforded people more time and less supervision than they'd had in a long time, which perhaps led to a much-needed degree of reflection, questioning and reprioritization.

■ Among the many profound changes that Covid - 19 has caused in our lives and times, its impact on our work and careers simply cannot be overstated. There are obvious changes in how the pandemic has shaped the nature of work life, but its influence runs many levels deeper.

For generations, our work and careers have been the primary engine for personal mobility since they offer a very visible and socially recognized form of growth. The promise of validation, an enhanced ability to consume, and accumulation of power has meant that culturally, work became our primary pursuit, and everything else was either sidelined or done in its service. Working culture had become a reflection of this ethic – one that worshipped individual efforts, provided individual recognition and fetishized making personal sacrifices for the sake of the job.

In this context, the pandemic came as a sharp contradiction to everything we had accepted as a given. For one, it demonstrated indisputably how we were all part of a much larger collective and that our fates are intertwined. Secondly, the ensuing lockdown afforded people more time and less supervision than they'd had in a long time, which perhaps led to a much-needed degree of reflection, questioning and reprioritization.

At a personal level, the place of work in the definition of self seemed to shift. Visible in the emergence of first-time home chefs, musicians and artists, people focused their attention on pursuing passions, catching up on personal goals and exploring new forms of self-expression. People whose first priority was their work, dared themselves to reimagine growth based on the breadth of experiences they had under their belt, rather than a linear growth trajectory.

A similar re-evaluation was witnessed at the level of the collective, with working culture becoming far more inclusive, compassionate, and uplifting. The pandemic led us to witness job opportunities among freelancers being distributed instead of cornered, accrued experiences and wisdom being shared over video masterclasses, and an acquiescence to wage cuts – as exemplified by Mr. Mukesh Ambani – in an effort to prevent furloughs of staff.

Working from home meant mastering a balancing act that few of us were equipped to handle; we quickly realized that work and home chores could fuse insidiously to create an oppressive environment of incessant toil. This led to a revival of following a regimented 9.30-6.00 workday, taking a disci-

plined hour of personal time for lunch, and a collectively respected 'end of day'. Liberties that we once took in service of prioritizing work were paused and the home was given the place it deserved on our job lists.

Covid - 19 provoked us into not just redesigning the means of working, but also into reimagining the meaning of work. For a brief period in time, work was no longer the end to which our operations were focused, as we allowed ourselves space to explore for the sake of exploration, collaborate without hungering for recognition and maintain homes we could be proud of. It is a once-in-a-generation, or perhaps even rarer opportunity to revisit how work encounters the job of living, and how to extend these privileges far beyond the white-collar professionals with safety nets who are getting to enjoy them today.

[Shashvat Shukla](#)

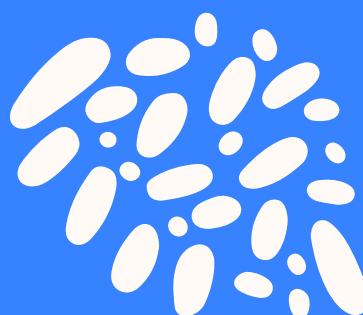
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The most important change that Covid - 19 has triggered is that it has made us flexible, question everything that we did before and planned to do and is making us more agile. All businesses must recognize the need for reinventing themselves constantly and not necessarily wait for a pandemic.

Chandru Kalro
Managing Director, TTK Prestige Ltd.



15

BELONGING

**'THE VACCINE
THAT WILL SAVE US'**





The lockdown has taught and offered togetherness as the panacea for the problem it poses. Almost as vaccine that can save the world from marching down its self-annihilating course of isolationism, a virus has whispered 'you are better together' in humanity's ears.

■ Among the many profound changes that Covid - 19 has caused in our lives and times, its impact on our work and careers simply cannot be overstated. There are obvious changes in how the pandemic has shaped the nature of work life, but its influence runs many levels deeper.

For generations, our work and careers have been the primary engine for personal mobility since they offer a very visible and socially recognized form of growth. The promise of validation, an enhanced ability to consume, and accumulation of power has meant that culturally, work became our primary pursuit, and everything else was either sidelined or done in its service. Working culture had become a reflection of this ethic – one that worshipped individual efforts, provided individual recognition and fetishized making personal sacrifices for the sake of the job.

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At a personal level, the place of work in the definition of self seemed to shift. Visible in the emergence of first-time home chefs, musicians and artists, people focused their attention on pursuing passions, catching up on personal

goals and exploring new forms of self-expression. People whose first priority was their work, dared themselves to reimagine growth based on the breadth of experiences they had under their belt, rather than a linear growth trajectory. Many have used to this pandemic to re-evaluate their professional choices and embark on a second career which promised a more meaningful kind of work and a higher sense of achievement.

A similar re-evaluation was witnessed at the level of the collective, with working culture becoming far more inclusive, compassionate, and uplifting. The pandemic led us to witness job opportunities among freelancers being distributed instead of cornered, accrued experiences and wisdom being shared over video masterclasses, and an acquiescence to wage cuts – as exemplified by Mr. Mukesh Ambani himself – in an effort to prevent furloughs of staff. Organizations stepped out and took cognizance of the immense toll that employees had had to cope with by instituting policies and support systems to help ease some of the anxiety. Working from home meant mastering a balancing act that few of us were equipped to handle; we quickly realized that work and home chores could fuse insidiously to create an oppressive environment of incessant toil. This led to a revival of following a regimented 9.30-6.00 workday, taking a disciplined hour of personal time for lunch, and a collectively respected 'end of day'. Liberties that we once took in service of prioritizing work were paused and the home was given the place it deserved on our job lists.

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Amit Kekre, Ketan Rambhia, Rimjhim Roy

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One of the key changes it has triggered is the ‘re-assessment’ of priorities for people. I think at a fundamental level, the pandemic has given people the time to reflect on what’s important in life. I believe the ‘good mental & physical health’ & ‘power of having meaningful connections’ are emerging as focus areas for a lot of people & communities. It’s also a time when businesses and brands have a responsibility to create positivity, hope, & be more empathetic.

Amarpeet Anand

Executive Vice President, Diageo India





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Until March 2020, we the human race have been an inward looking lot, focusing on self and barely thinking beyond “I, me and myself”. Having experienced the pandemic “up, close and personal” I feel that the “power of togetherness” has made its realization in our lives, where we cannot sustain on our own. The power of our loved ones and of complete strangers coming together has made our world a much better place.

There was a time when “saving for a rainy day” an old saying was limited to individuals and families. Today this thought has captured the imagination of the corporate world as well. Companies that kept aside a part of their earnings for eventuality will have a better chance of surviving this deep depression. Such organizations will manage to channelize those resources to keep their most valuable asset, its people, employed and secure. This is one key learning among the many others.

Vishal Kaul
Vice President, Marketing & Franchise, PepsiCo India





The pandemic has brought purpose back at the centre of debate. Economies will recover, companies will turn around, however, there will be individuals and communities who will continue to feel the impact. Sense of empathy, commitment to sustainable growth, and not just profitability; is what people and communities will respect and rally behind. This is an opportunity for organizations to re-think and redefine “the new normal” - in terms of sustainable and inclusive growth and not just “work from home,” “agility” and “digital transformation.” Organizations which successfully pivot, will be the top brands of the coming decade.

Sanjay Sahay

Associate Vice President, Marketing, Infosys





'LOVE WILL FIND A WAY'

Our exploration of 'togetherness' in the lockdown, gave us many surprising insights into the human psyche, especially when confined to a limited space, but none as potent as the loneliness our younger generations were feeling. Dating had come to a standstill, with physical meet ups becoming a distant dream. App users were feeling hopeless and confused about new virtual dating rituals.

Someone needed to remind the world about the power of human connections, love, and its inexplicable perseverance.

So we did just that.

Bumble India, with DDB's help, released a beautifully written and visualized film that captured the raw emotions of joy, fear, loneliness, even apathy, and the need to hold onto love in times of crisis – while celebrating couples who do. The resilient message of 'Love Will Find A Way' paved the way for dating in the new normal.



CULTURE @ DDB MUDRA

■ Culture. Seven innocuous letters and two syllables that contain a world of meaning.

So, what do these letters and syllables mean to us at the DDB Mudra Group?

At DDB Mudra in particular, and in the DDB network more generally, we have long had a shared understanding that consumers are, in fact, people. And these people – like all people, including advertising and marketing professionals – live in the world, not in categories and definitely not in cohorts. As people inhabiting a dynamic, often chaotic world, they are perhaps less interested in the matters of our brands and businesses than we might like. What they are interested in and influenced by, is how they feel about things, what they believe about the world and their place in it, and what their instincts are telling (or urging) them to do.

Culture is the force-field that shapes these feelings and doings, a force-field that can be both invisible (hullo, social conditioning) and visible (popular culture being the go-to example). Our work at the Group calls on us to create visible or at

least felt cultural content, delivered in ways that trigger emotion and action, all ultimately adding up to impact for our clients.

One way or another, everyone at the DDB Mudra Group is in the business of moving people. And the most compelling way in which to move people is to leverage the power of the visible, invisible, shape-shifting force-field that is culture. It's how we create the emotional advantage that help our brands compete and succeed. All of which is why we see culture as data and intelligence, not simply as inspiration or a narrative to participate in. We don't just romanticize culture, we work with it every single day.

Teams across the DDB Mudra Group have spent the past decade collecting over 20,000 cultural signals and outliers. We have used our powerful proprietary tool, DDB Signbanking, to translate these observations into something that's greater than the sum of its parts, discovering patterns and crystallizing them into actionable implications. And we're consistently able to do this – years before these cultural shifts hit the mainstream.

It's why our teams are encouraged to draw on interests ranging from doodling to theater for inspiration, why we exchange notes on mythological shows and K-Pop, why we constantly cross-pollinate ideas heard at TED talks, message boards and always bubbling Whatsapp groups. It's why we listen to the listeners, connecting with cab-drivers, bartenders and salon-wali aunties who spend every single day talking to and commiserating with more people than we could ever hope to meet in focus groups.

Our views on what's interesting in culture and why it should matter to you are wonderfully conveyed by these essays and our creative work. More importantly, we share our ideas and observations in shorter, snackable snippets every week on Twitter - @ddbsigns and on Instagram - @ddbearshot. Do stop by and let us know what you think.

Toru Jhaveri,
Vice President & Strategy Head
DDB Mudra West

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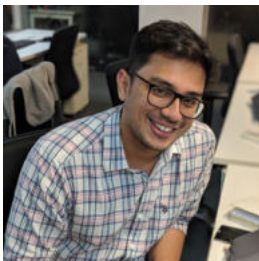
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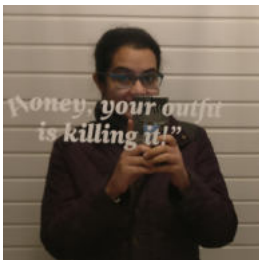
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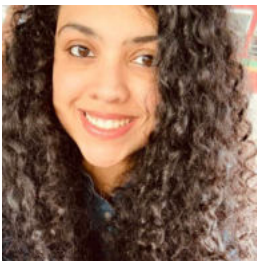
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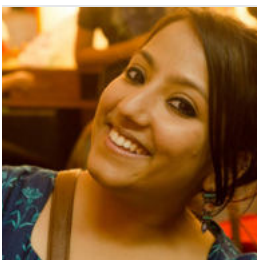
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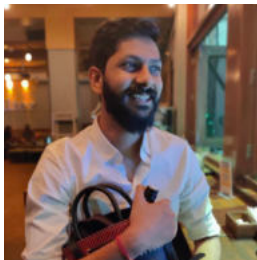
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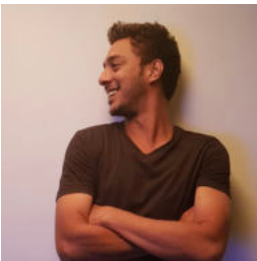
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AFTERWORD

Thank you for making the time for these essays.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Culture is notoriously hard to shape. But this has been a seminal year. As the dust settles, we can start to make sense of the changes - beyond the numbers, beyond the technology - reflect on how we have dealt with things as people, societies and communities.

This series is a study of behaviour. Not what people say but what they actually do. Thousands of signs accumulated over the last decade married with the recent evidence from our work post-Covid across over 100 categories. Our strategists had a lot to plough through to place the changes we see around us in the context of enduring cultural values that guide all aspects of how we live, learn, work, socialize, buy and enjoy our time on the planet.

We have abandoned the presumed certainty of a business report with the quiet confidence of deep reflection and an analysis of human behaviour as seen through the lens of culture. We are guided by the belief that nothing speaks louder than actions. And that the signs that emerge from them are the surest indicators of real change.

This is a tribute to the Unchanging man (in the words of Bernbach - the B in DDB) as much as it is to the disruption that Covid has brought to our lives.

A big thank you to our strategists and our clients who have contributed with their thoughts on this most extraordinary of years.

Here's to the thrilling tango of change and permanence that makes culture such a joy to watch.

Aditya Kanthy

