

# Brand Intent: The Post Covid connect

As consumers become more demanding in a post covid era, brands will need to go beyond visual positioning and promises...

By [S Ramesh Kumar](#)

Cristina [Ronaldo](#)'s brushing aside of [Coke](#), in the place of water in a press conference at Portugal that brought down [Coca Cola](#)'s share price, instantly from \$56.10 to 55.22 (reported in Guardian) may not be [covid](#) related; but speaks volumes of how the rapid changes in the environment (covid included), will force marketers re-think their strategies.

Much has been written about brands and covid and the focus henceforth, will be on post covid implications for brands, presuming we have seen the worst of the covid phase. Marketers have always been interested in the intent of consumers; now it is the turn of consumers to explicitly, expect the intent of a brand's promises- "What can a brand do for me?" in the post covid recovery phase. Would consumers' be much more than their 'usual self', generally associated with benefits of the brand, iconic celebrity associations and advertising blitzkrieg. The article looks at possible ways in which brands can go beyond their usual propositions and promises.

## Need for action and enhancing the brand's value, to the consumer

Communication alone is not adequate, but brand initiatives may be required.

Warning consumer about covid or lack of vaccination or having an association of [CSR](#) activities are useful but post covid requires a different perspective to make an impact on consumers. Brands should avoid cliched type of communication, that was common during times of the covid.

Brands need to get into action -an antiseptic brand can provide establish small kiosks, educating consumers on overall hygiene, not just on washing hands; a premium edible oil brand associated with health and fitness can provide customized information on post covid diets.

Value to be emphasized depending on the type of brand -a brand competing in the commodity type of market, is different from an organic brand offering in the food category; A brand like 24 Mantra, will have an opportunity further elaborate on the quality of organic grains to strengthen its brand proposition. A luxury brand in the category of apparel, needs to not just highlight the symbolic status appeal; the brand may like to have localized events (in accordance with the target segment) with appropriate "local heroes" or any other brand endorser as appropriate (for example, a well-known corporate personality).

A brand in the sensual consumption sphere (for instance ice cream), may have to emphasize the pleasure of consumption as a kind of celebration of the return of normalcy and perhaps initiate a social event with an appropriate contest involving the brand (several themes and variations can be worked out for such alternative depending on the type of

product category). A brand of milk additive (both for kids, adults, or senior citizens) needs to relaunch /add a variant that emphasizes specific immunity boosters and perhaps a call line for customization of the usage of the brand, in line with the daily activities of the consumer. The trust factor is important and if the consumer lifestyle demands a better alternative than the brand, the brand should reflect the sincerity in its suggestions.

### **Moods and emotions**

Several studies in the consumer behavior research literature have shown strong linkages with brands. There are two ways to approach the buyer's perception of brands. One, is to highlight the problem solving associated with the brand and another is to reflect the enhancement of consumer's daily life. As far as possible, it may be appropriate to use the latter appeal in the post covid era, depending on the product category. This is not a blanket approach, and a brand should consider its past communication, strength of differentiation with other brands in the category and the motivation of consumers. The idea, of this suggestion, is to imply that happy emotions are more appropriate, after consumers have visually experienced negative emotions in almost every news channel.

### **Digital initiatives**

There may be several digital initiatives, other than the run of the mill communication that is ridden with visuals. Savings, and thriftiness will have a significant meaning post covid and brands will have the opportunity to use the occasion as appropriate. A bank in a developed market has introduced a mobile app, that enables a consumer to press a key to save any amount, however small it may be -the sheer convenience of saving converts the intent into action). In an emerging market like India, with millions of consumers in the "savings" mindset, especially after the pandemic will be interested in such an app. Besides the utility, there is also a sense of experience associated with the feature. Tissot has used augmented reality in the UK, to literally enable the window shopper to try out the brand using a digital band, send it to friends and then decide on the purchase. Such an initiative by an early mover brand can create excitement, among consumers, especially after being locked up indoors during the pandemic.

A super- market in Germany has introduced an incentive to every consumer who takes a photo of his /her choice of product in the store, using the mobile app. While these initiatives may not be post covid initiatives, in the respective, countries, they may be very appropriate in a market like India, given their novelty appeal in the given scenario to generate joy among consumers. Brands will benefit, if they study the digital applications of brands in developed markets and adapt them (as appropriate) to the home markets as consumers (mass markets included) are emotionally linked to mobile phones.

Post pandemic offers brands an opportunity to integrate brands and technology as applicable to the Indian context, and brands should consider the new measures as an investment in the brand.

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