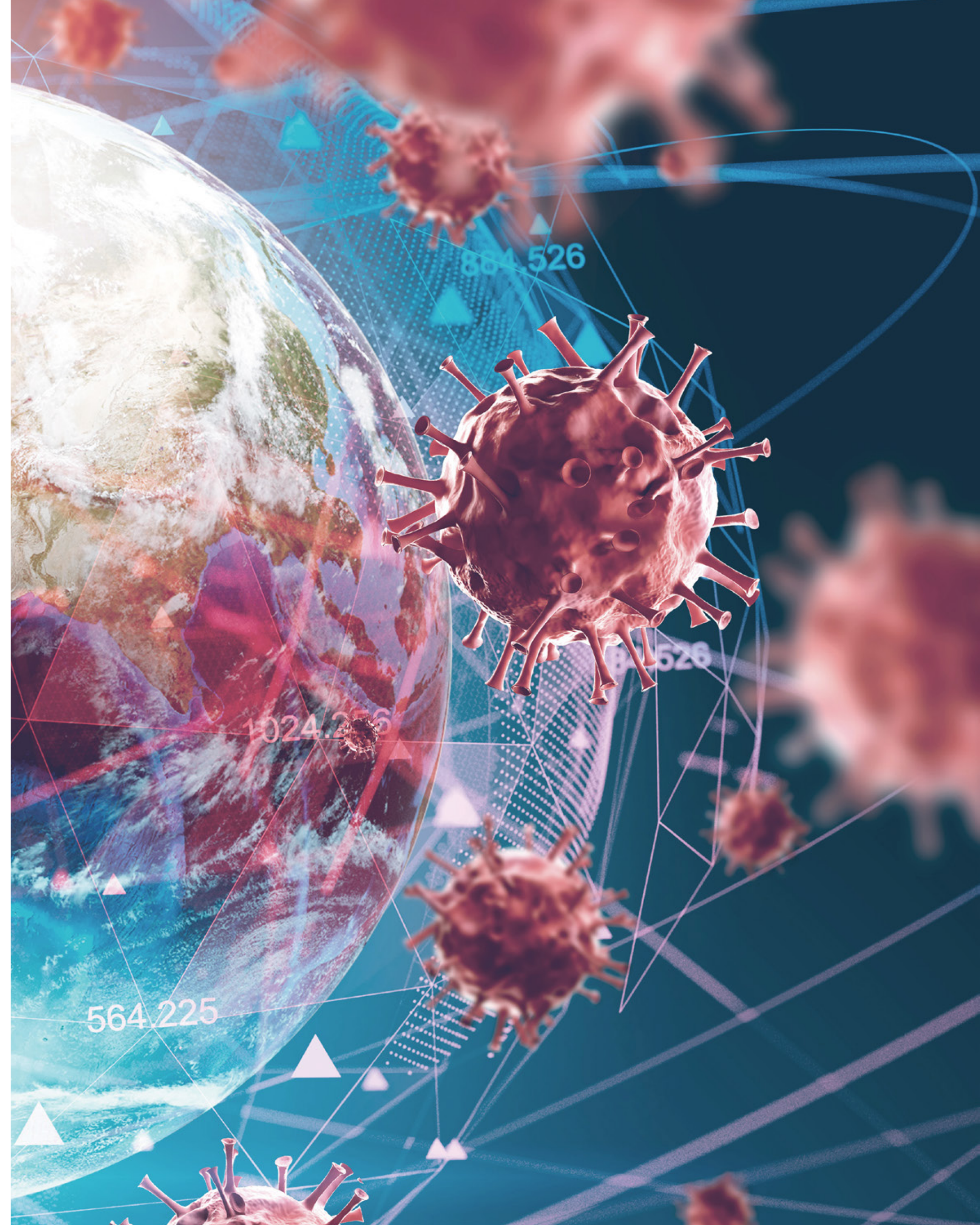
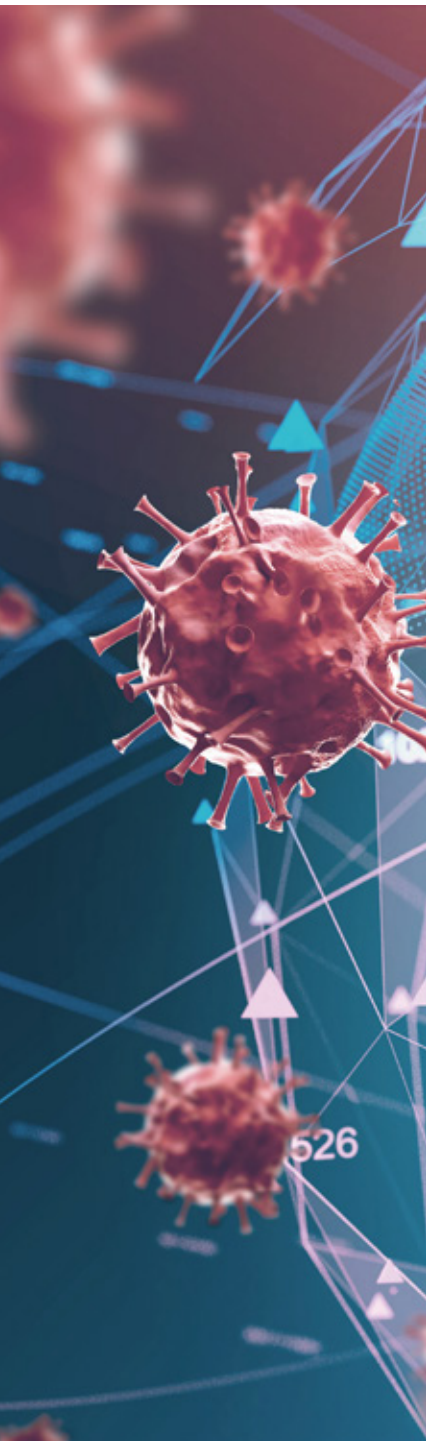


Craft Your Brand Comeback COVID-19

Marketing Strategies for
Today's Changing Landscapes



Marketing your brand in today's changing landscapes



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Road To Comeback

Where disrupting the status quo is the new normal.



Let's be real, COVID-19 needs no introduction. The virus has been dominating the headlines, affecting businesses and disrupting lives worldwide.

As marketers, we're often known for our agility in navigating through various scenarios. However, in these unprecedented times, brands may hesitate in terms of how to best respond and communicate with their consumers.

This brand guide is designed to help brands navigate the shift in consumer behaviours, with specific marketing strategies for different brands.

Ready? Let's go.

Essential or Not

There's a strategy for every brand



Essentials

When you're earmarked for success, step up and into the spotlight

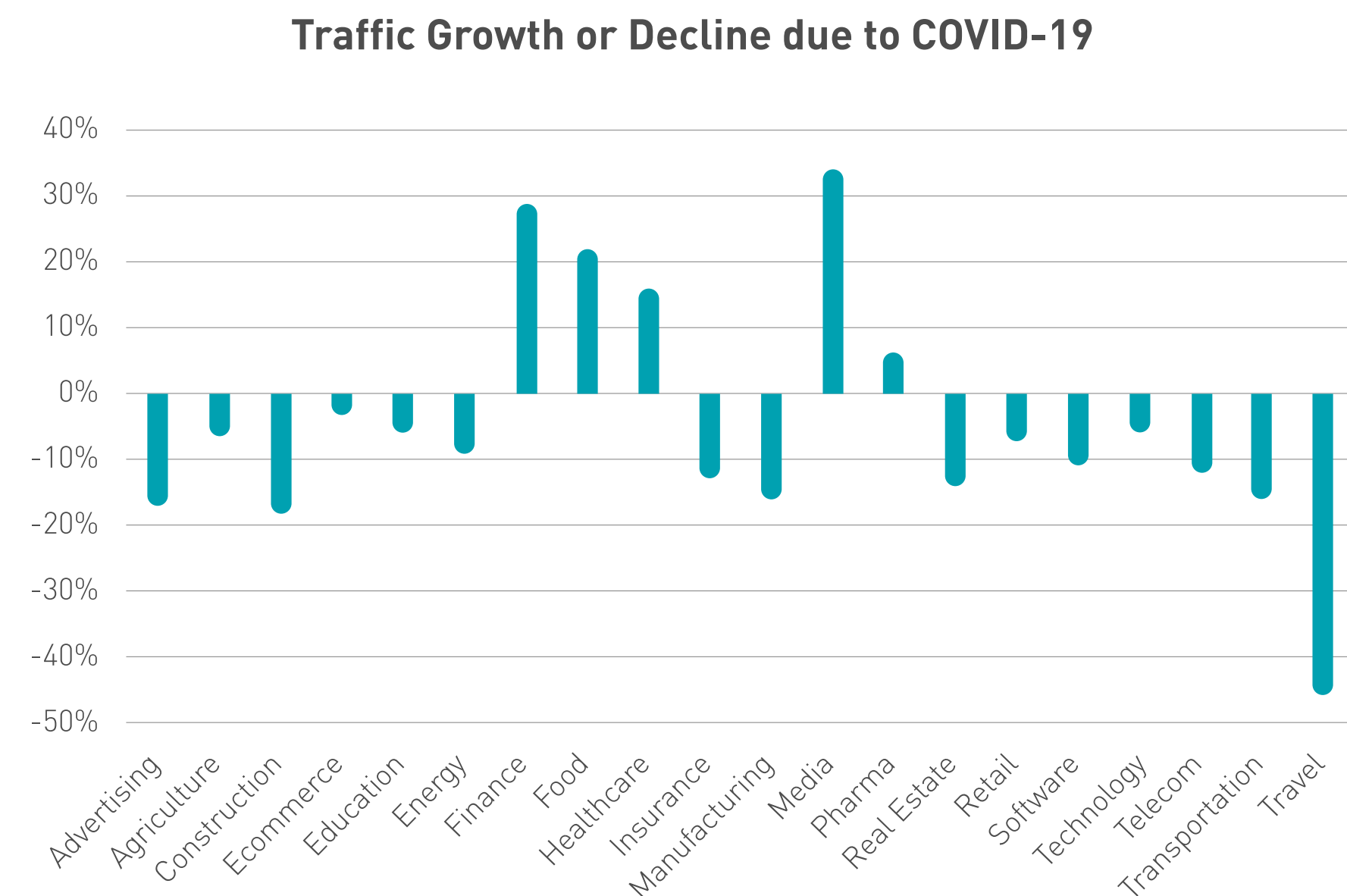
It's no surprise to see that many industries have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and traffic growth has taken a tumble. Not many consumers are willing to spend on expendables and not many brands are able to respond with an agile, strategic approach to navigate the course of the pandemic.

POINTS OF ACTION

Healthcare, media, pharma, finance and food are the few fortunate industries that saw positive growth in traffic. These are industries that consumers have earmarked to be essentials. If you're in industries that are seeing a boost in sales, find creative ways to value add to your consumers.

If you're a media company, create & air content that consumers are most likely to be most interested in – such as homecooking or pandemic topics.

Giving a financial webinar on investment? Keep interactivity high with polls through the session to keep interest at a high.



Non-Essentials

Investing in consumers’ interests goes a long way to build affinity.

Don’t fret if your brand does not fall into these ‘essentials’ - tailor your content smartly, and your brand may well be in consumers’ spotlight.

Staying home and restricted movement give consumers the power of time. More time for consumers mean more time for them to invest in interests that alleviate their mood, purpose and self-actualization.

POINTS OF ACTION

Be the brand that make consumers go, **“WOW, these brands get me!”** by aligning your brand to their interests.

Craft company? Consider providing DIY home kits that consumers can jump right into from the comfort of home.

Fitness studio? Have your instructors stream live, and interact with participants by naming them during class.



HOME & LIFESTYLE



INVESTING & CAREERS



E-COMMERCE



HEALTH & FITNESS



RECREATION



ENTERTAINMENT



Changing Consumer Behaviour

Hello, Online!

Hello Online, Goodbye Offline

(for now, at least)

The situation has changed, we're all in a digital sphere that connects us to boundless of opportunities and brands. This not only gives us the power to stay comfortable at home, but also a convenience that we all sought for.

With lockdowns, travel restrictions and quarantines implemented across the globe, more consumers are spending more time at home. Taking a break from the offline reality means less movement outdoors and more time indoors, with a smart device or more.

KEY INSIGHTS

Mixing the idea of no window shopping and the convenient way of just face-scanning to check out, it's a wonderful recipe more money spent online. And with more time on their hands, consumers become social justice warriors for brands' actions or inactions. So brands, do more good and share 'em efforts!

49%

do not plan to head
out to eat

27%

of the 49% would
order food delivery

44%

are not comfortable
going outside for
non-essential items

37%

are buying their
essentials and items
online

40%

would like to hear what
brands are doing in
relation to COVID-19

56%

are happy to hear
about brands doing
their part to help
communities

Knocking on the right door where your consumers are,

BUT ONLY IF IT CALLS FOR IT

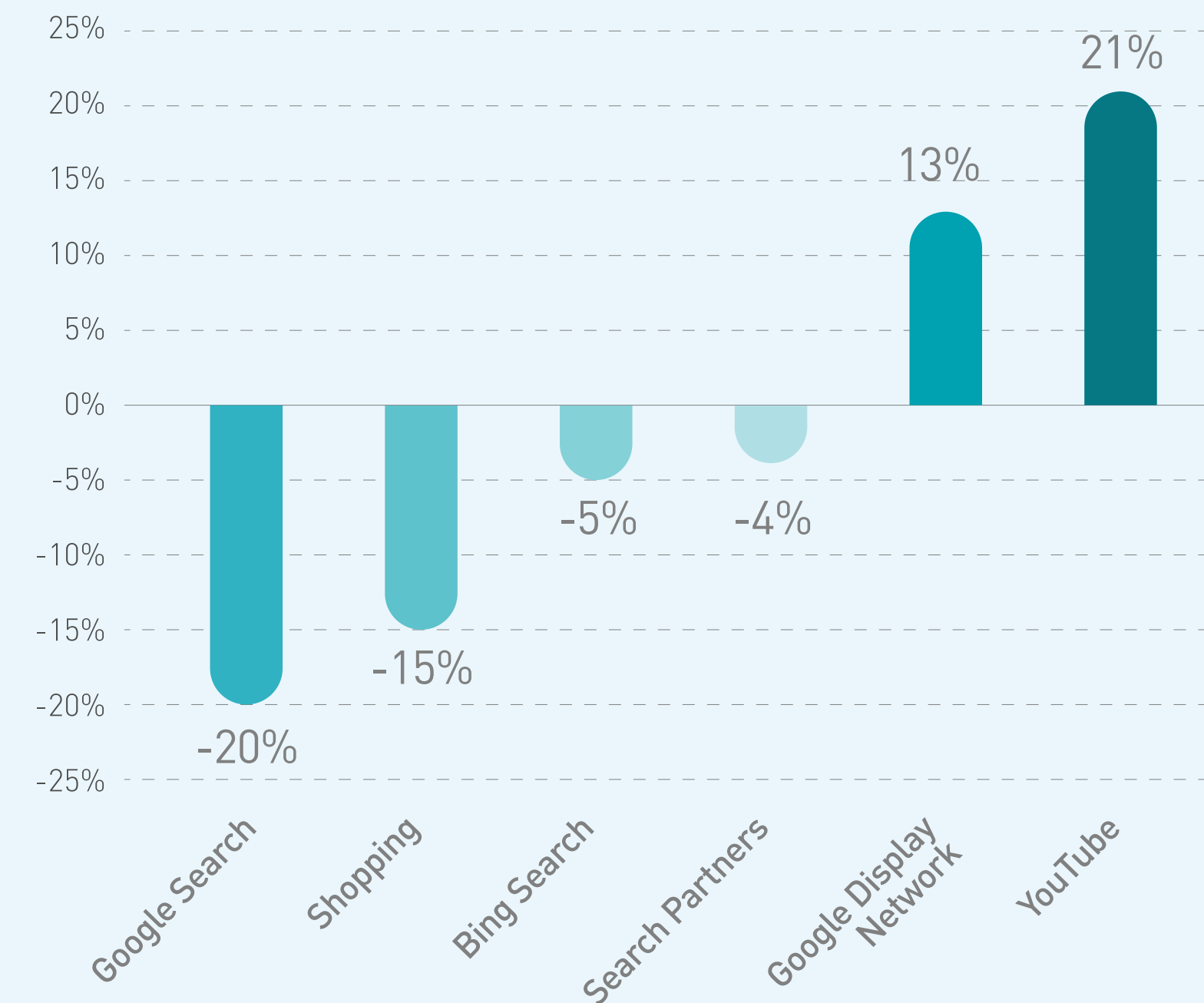
With majority of consumers worldwide staying home, the obvious choice for brands is to go digital in their outreach – but note to brands: don't advertise on digital just because everyone's doing it. It doesn't hurt to observe and just be there for your consumers if there's no right message to be advertised or communicated.

KEY INSIGHTS

If your brand has a strong and relevant message to put forth, select key channels like GDN and YouTube where consumers are already on to optimise your budget. Bombarding your consumers on multiple platforms during these times will leave a bad taste on your customers, especially with overly tactical ads.

Remember, it's all about the right message to the right audience, on the right platform at the right time.

Change in Ad Traffic Since Beginning of March due to COVID-19





Brand Trust in Uncertain Times

Trust

So hard to earn, but so easy to lose

If you have been building your brand's trust all these years, congratulations, you've won half the battle. Maintaining this trust is the real challenge – consumers are quick to cut you off if they sense you're not doing the right thing. And remember what's the most effective way to get customers? Word-of-mouth. That's also the easiest way to lose customers. Ruthless? We think so too.

KEY INSIGHTS

Where everything around the consumers become unpredictable, your brand must remain their constant. Let consumers know you're here for them, as they were there for you. Again, show empathy and respond positively to deepen brand trust and cement new customers. Formulating marketing strategies to maintain brand trust by adopting brand roles that aligns with your brand's positioning is the way forward.

81%

stated that they must be able to trust a brand to do what's right

33%

convinced people to stop using a brand after feeling that the brand wasn't acting appropriately in response to the pandemic

60%

turned to brands that they can fully trust in these times

37%

recently started using a new brand because of its innovative or compassionate way in response to the pandemic

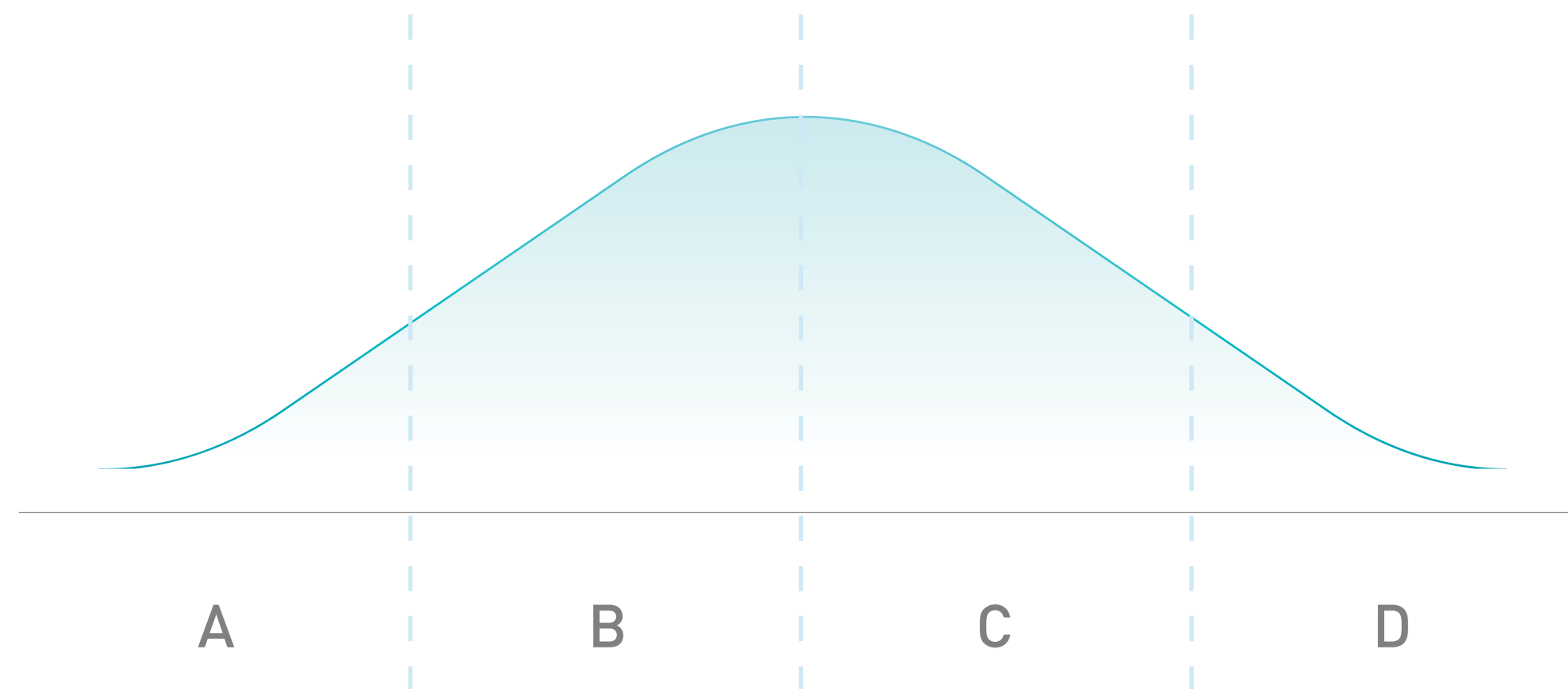
65%

Indicated a brand's response will have a huge impact on their future purchasing decisions



UN-folding the Pandemic Phases

Every up has a down, and every down has an up



Nothing stays up and nothing stays down forever. 4 distinct phases on the pandemic have been carved out. Each phase calls for a different action, and these actions depend on the role and strategy that brands adopt.

PHASE A | THE PANDEMIC KICK-IN

The start of it all – brands and consumers' worries are heightened and panic starts kicking in.

PHASE B | ITS PEAK

The darkest days – brands and consumers are concerned with their health – financially, physically & mentally.

PHASE C | FUNNELLING PANDEMIC

Stabilizing of the situation – brands and consumers are wary yet hopeful in terms of seeing the light of the tunnel.

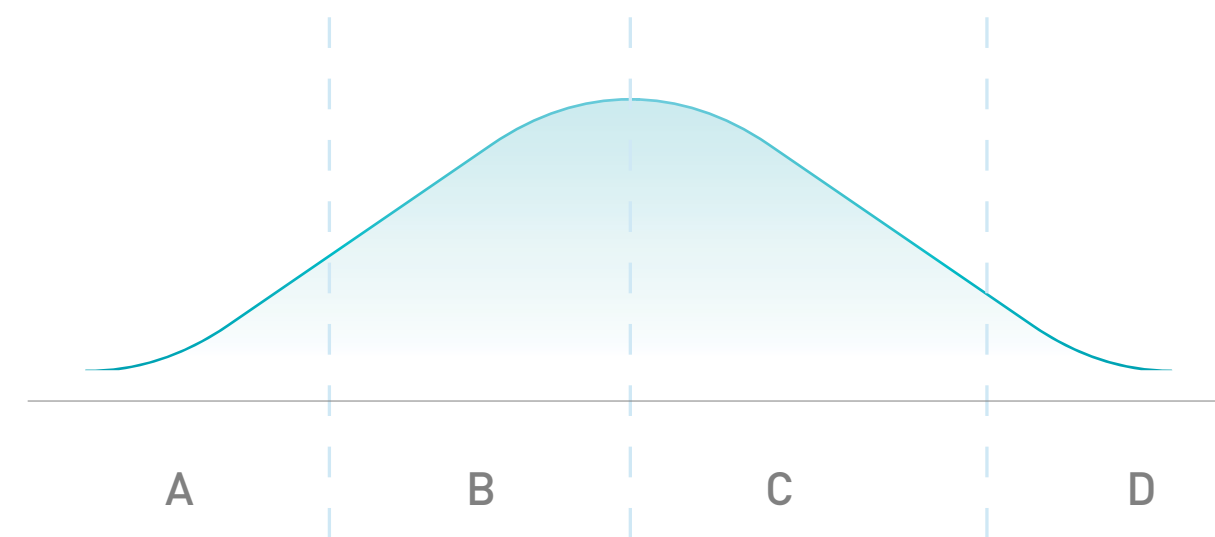
PHASE D | THE TAPERING DOWN

Brands and consumers hit the restart button for life to go back to normal, still wary but celebratory. Consumers can't wait to get things back to normal. Question is, will it?



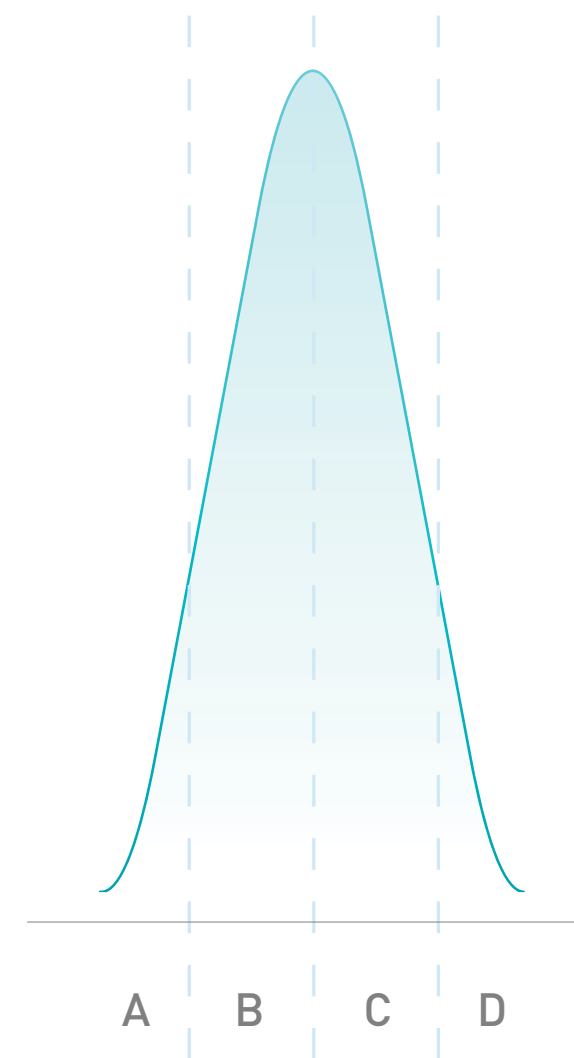
3 ways the pandemic could UN-fold

While every pandemic runs its own course, there are 3 similar scenarios identified to be possible outcomes for different countries and regions.



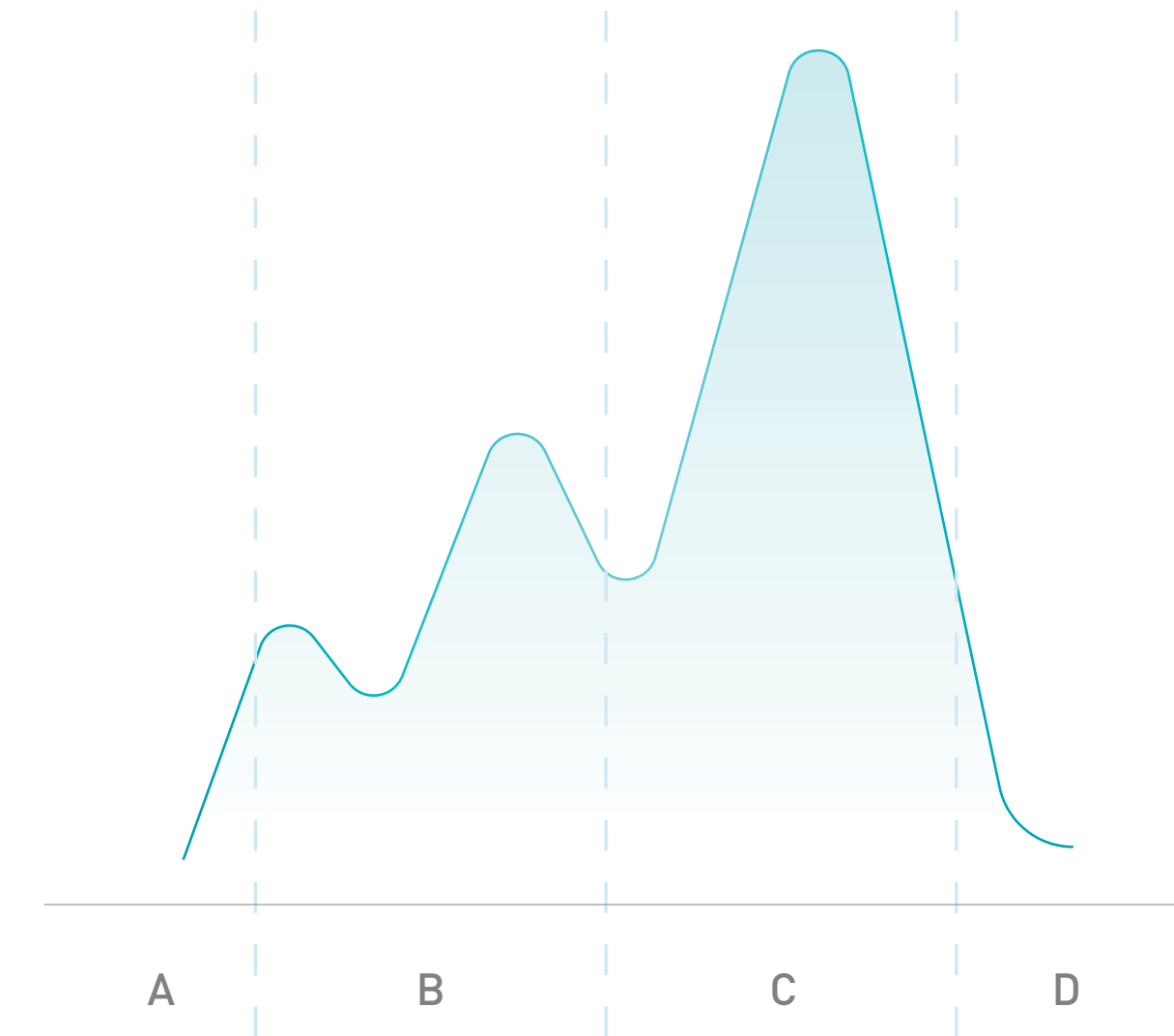
SCENARIO #1 | UN-DISRUPTED

The pandemic runs its course in the most ideal way – no spikes or steep slopes.



SCENARIO #2 | UN-CONTROLLED

Boom in the numbers within a short period of time, rising beyond actual care capacity from the government and hospitals.



SCENARIO #3 | UN-SETTLING

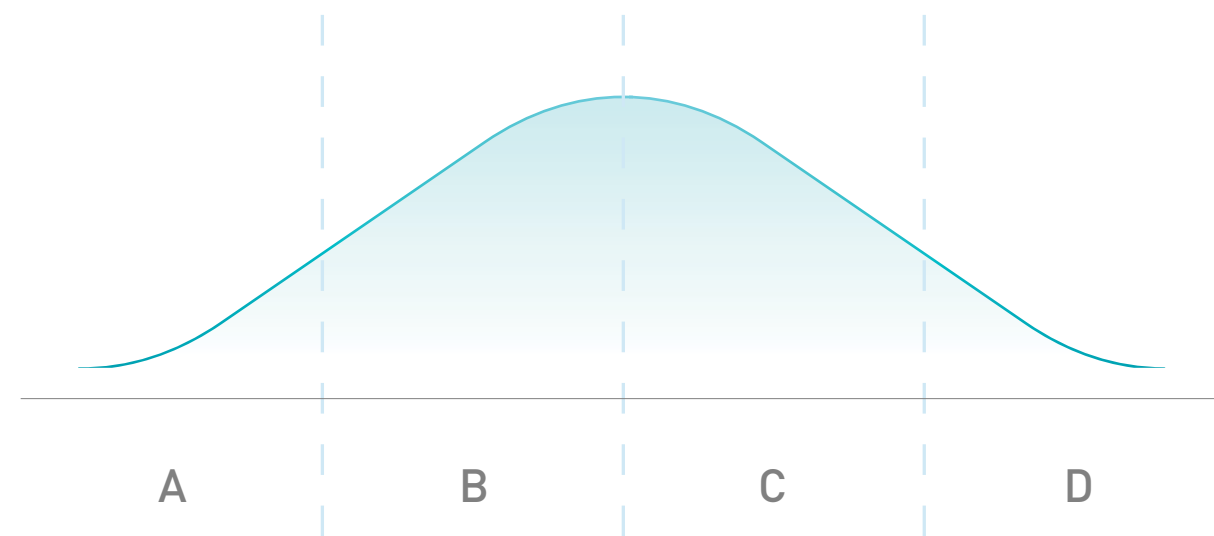
Unpredictable courses of spikes where false hope could be evident in certain periods.



Scenario #1

UN-DISRUPTED

“Let’s be patient and let it run its course”



Measures in this scenario are implemented and the consumers have accepted the new normal – starting from Phase B.

IN THE MINDS OF CONSUMERS

“What’s the first thing I’d do when freedom is here again?”

“When life gives you lemons, make lemonades” captures the essence of consumers accepting the new normal and begin to plan ahead. Spending time with friends & extended families will definitely be top of their lists.

THE BRAND MOVE

Giving them something to look forward to

What a better way to be cautiously optimistic about the situation, and helping consumers cope with their quarantines. Let them know that you’ll be excited to see them back around town, and start the conversations rolling on the plans post-quarantine and pandemic.

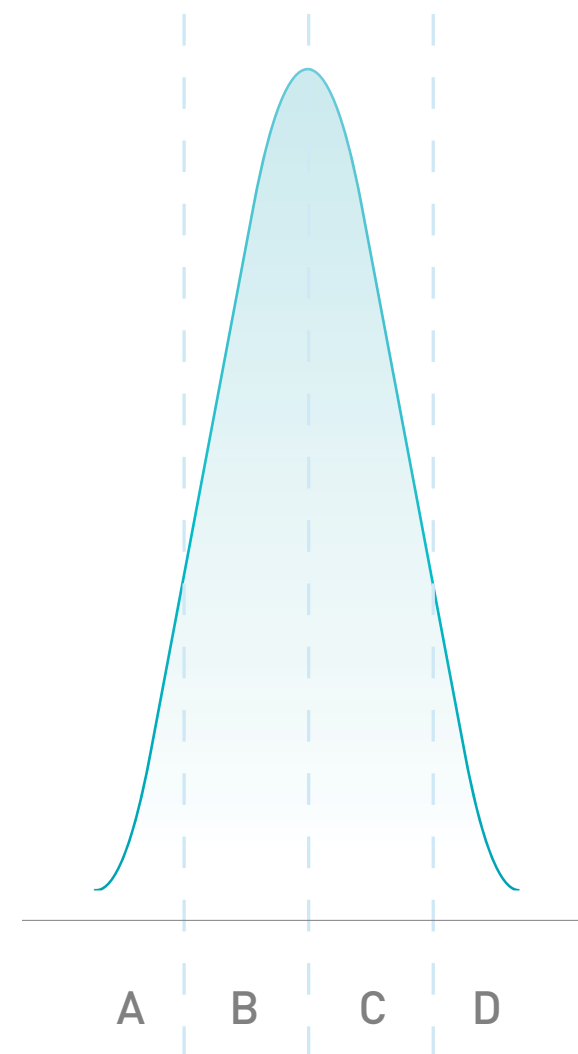
From travels to food, give them something to look forward to when all these are over. Share health tips and things they could do during isolation – that’s the way for consumers to keep their sanity.



Scenario #2

UN-CONTROLLED

“Life’s getting tougher”



While measures are being implemented, the rate of infections indicate that these measures are ineffective, resulting consumers being panicky about the situation.

IN THE MINDS OF CONSUMERS

“What’s going on? Am I going to survive this?”

Anxiety and fear start to kick in for consumers. Their actions are panicky – affecting the purchase of essentials and relaying more misinformed news to their friends and families.

THE BRAND MOVE

Eliminate their anxieties & being there emotionally for them

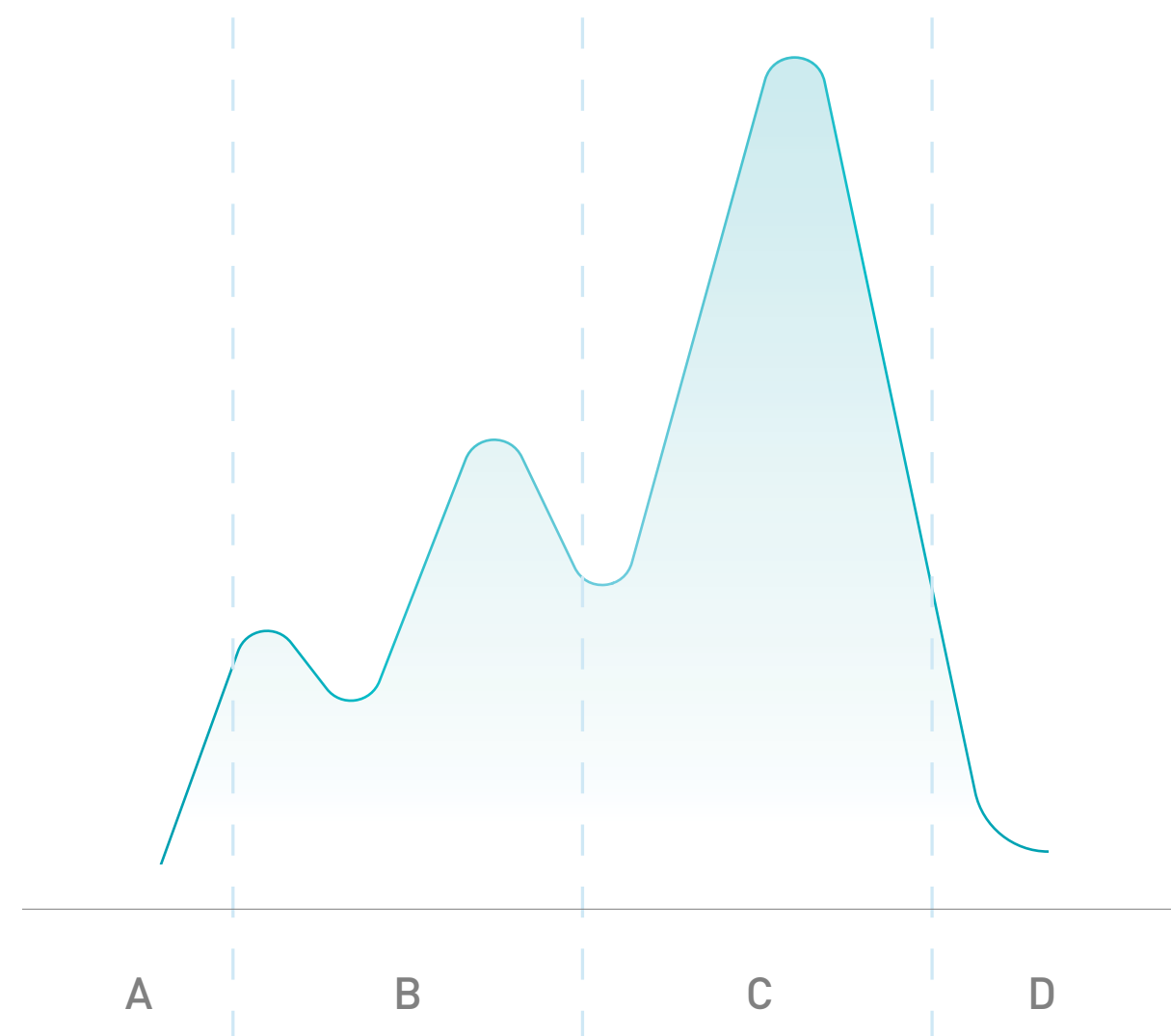
“Stay calm and carry on” has got to be the communication that brands should put out in these times. Reassure your consumers that you’re with them through and through, but never to overpromise on items that the brand aren’t able to deliver. Be transparent, accurate and empathetic in what you do, because ultimately, consumers will judge you based on how you respond to the pandemic. Remember, brand trust is crucial so give them a reason to believe.



Scenario #3

UN-SETTLING

“We all thought it was ending”



What's consistent for this scenario is the inconsistency of the virus' trends. These spikes alleviates the concern, while also giving a (false) renewed sense of hope to consumers.

IN THE MINDS OF CONSUMERS

“When will this end? I'm tired of the ups & downs.”

Nothing's worse than having false hopes. Consumers are immune to the consistently unsettling of the virus – they feel discouraged and see no light at the end of the tunnel.

THE BRAND MOVE

Be the pillar of strength

“It's never over until it's fully over” – keep this in mind when you see a spike after a good period of downhill cases. While being positive will always do brands some good, never promise that all will be back to normal soon.

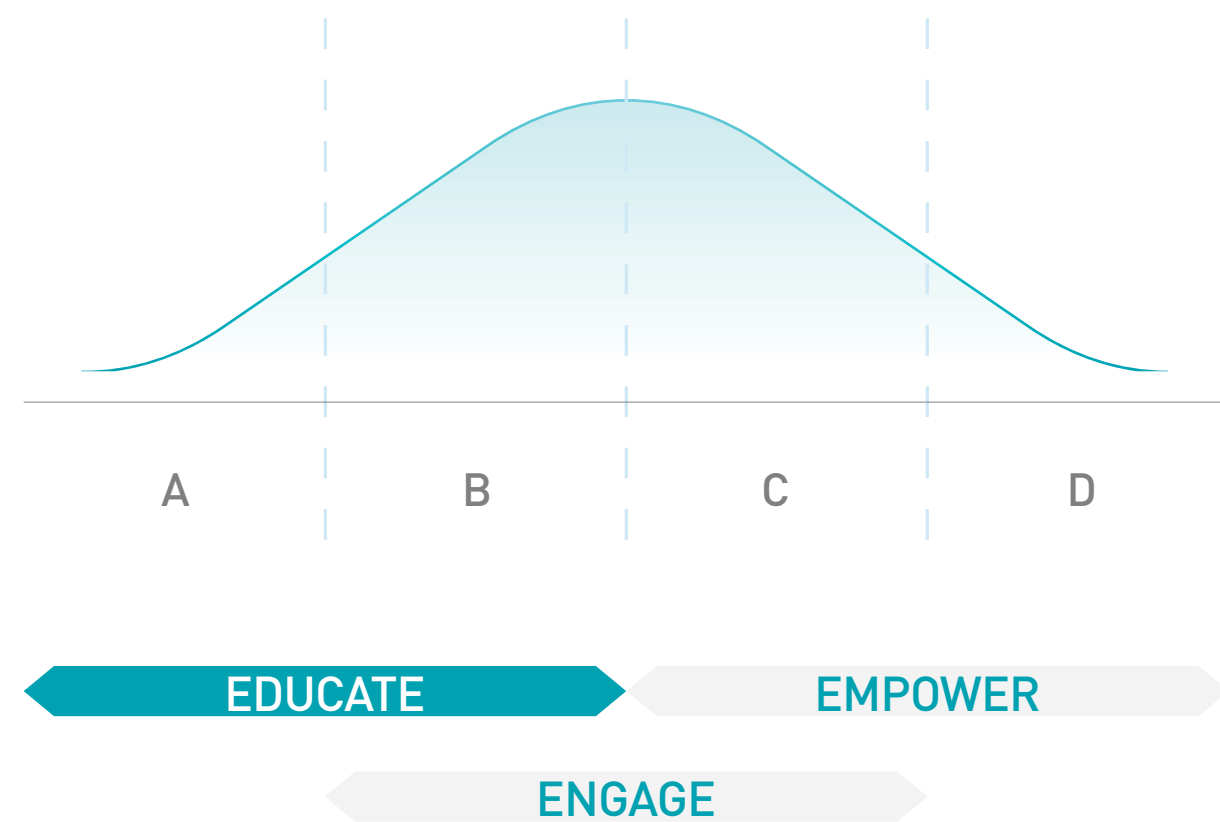
What consumers need from brands is for them to show their resilience and continue fighting, together with them. Be understanding of the situation by relating as a consumer. Share your disappointments but wrap it in a positive light.



Creating Content in 3Es



The 3Es to Your Content Strategy

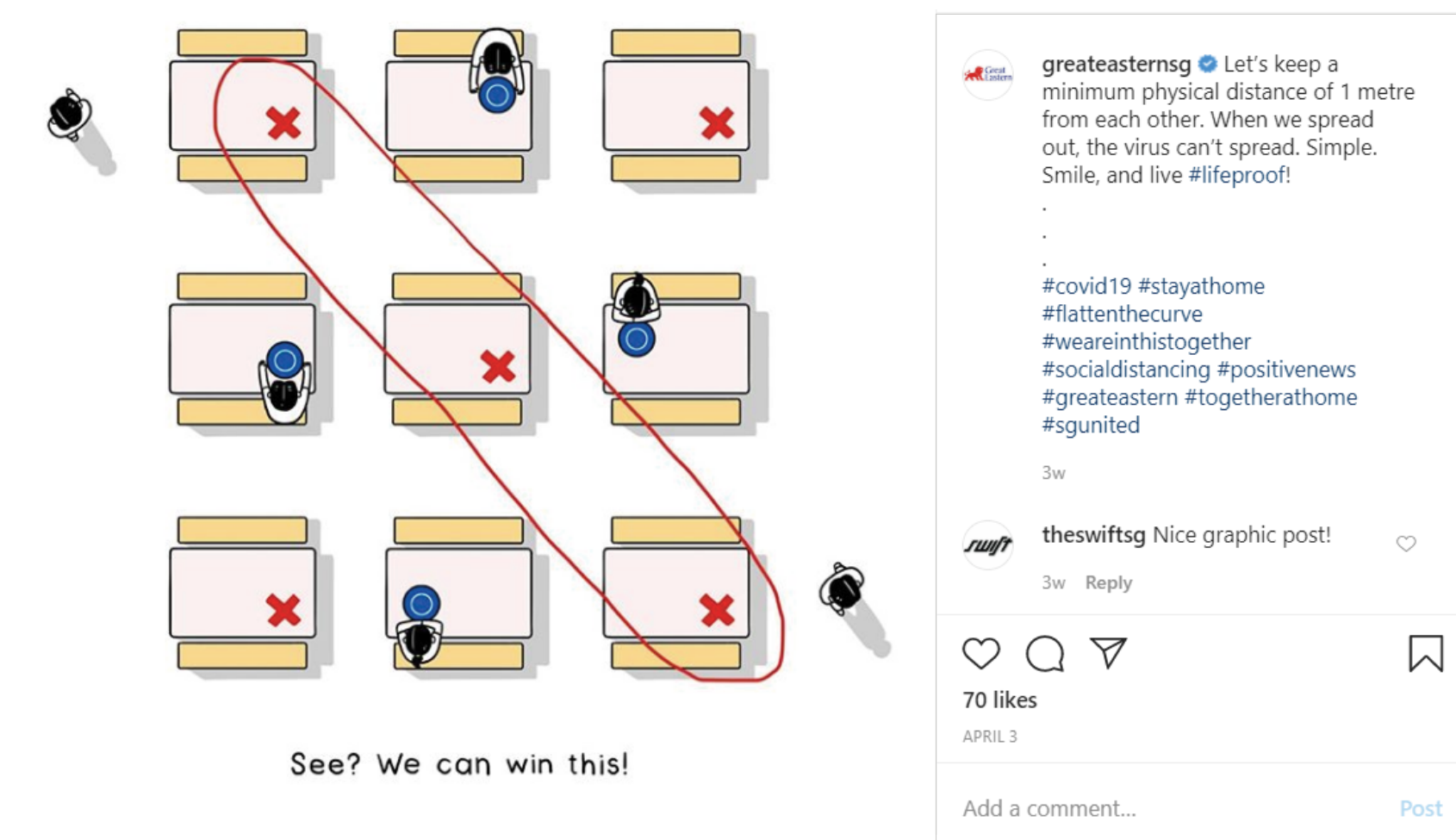


As many marketers tell you, there's no one size fits all approach when it comes to content or marketing in general. What we can help with is the general content direction that brands can take in each of the phases, and what consumers are expecting to see – starting from educating.

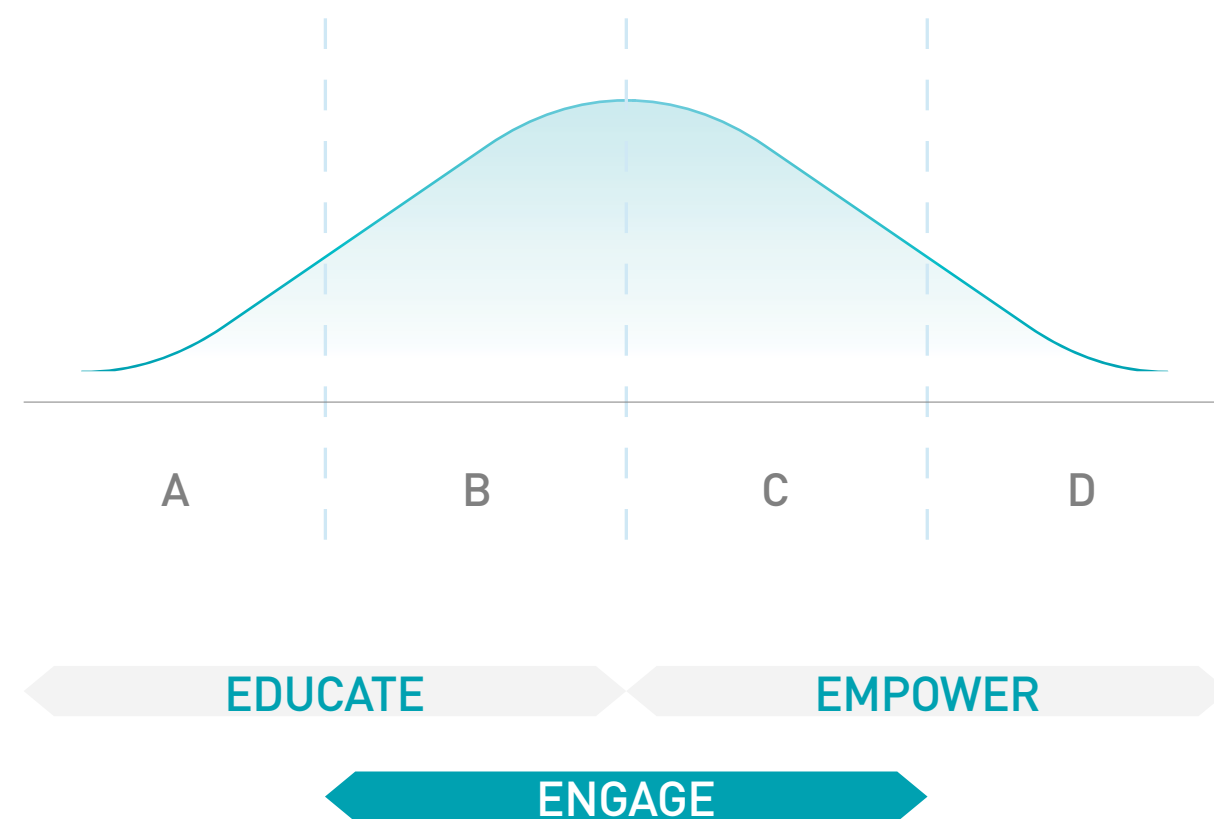
EDUCATE

The start of a pandemic causes the most uneasiness and consumers are out there wanting to know what's going on. Educating with accurate information – from letting them know what they need to do to stay safe to what you'll be doing to help communities present a calm presence that consumers need in these times.

Example of educational content



The 3Es to Your Content Strategy



The peaking of the pandemic means more measures for the consumers to stay home and possibly with strict quarantine implementations. After much needed clarity, start the ball rolling with content that engages – this could be interesting games and interactive posts (e.g. 360 posts, 3D GIFs, etc.).

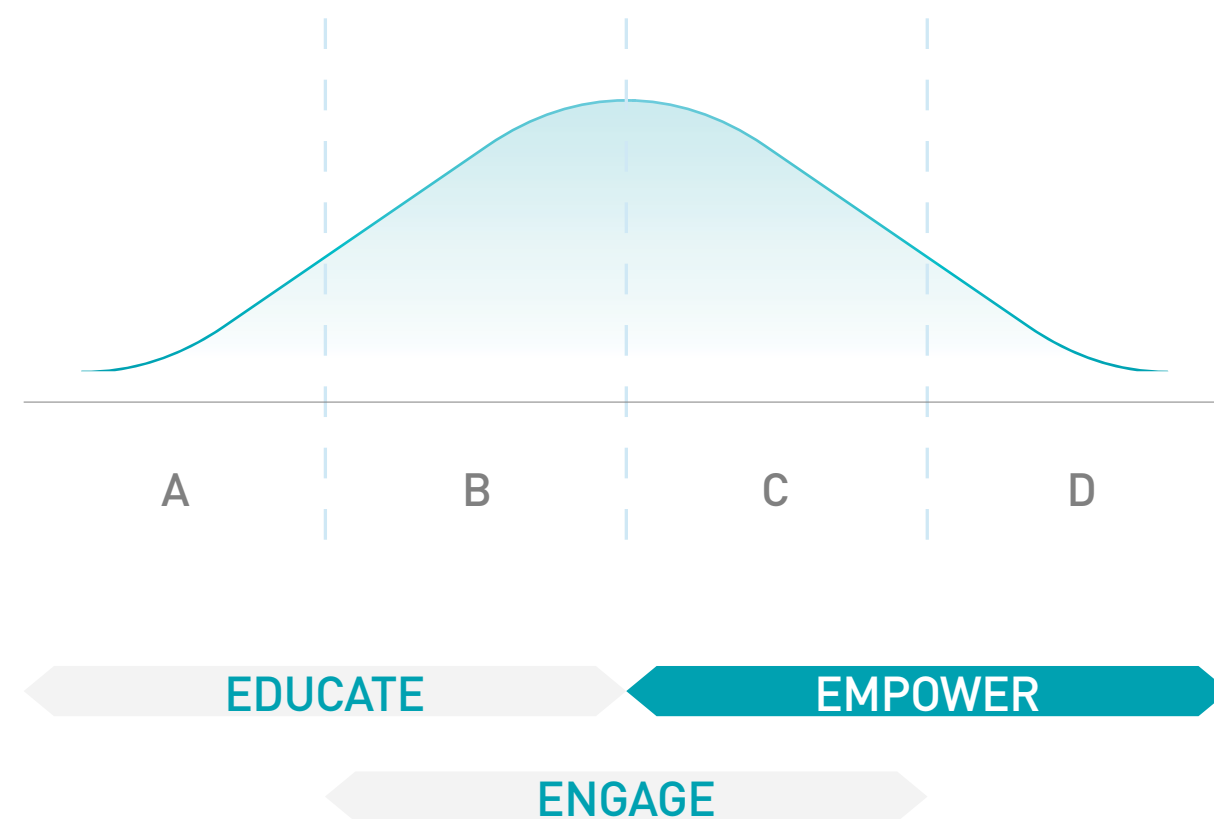
ENGAGE

Staying home for almost 24 hours a day during quarantine can be extremely boring for consumers (and for the everyday people like us!). This presents the perfect opportunity for brands to create content that entertains and keep the spirits up for consumers. Start some mini challenges, share some interesting stories of your brand or simply go live with Q&A for consumers to know your brand a little better – that won't hurt!

Example of engaging content



The 3Es to Your Content Strategy



Once there's calm and consumers are getting way too bored even with the content that they are seeing online, go one step further to show them they can be achievers. Consumers doing something good and productive during this time with your brand could be the start of something new.

EMPOWER

With the pandemic fears slowly easing and boredom at an all-time high, consumers just want to feel good about themselves again. No more “what to catch on Netflix” (running out of shows to watch is a first-world problem indeed) and more of “what can I do with the remaining time to better myself”. Empowering content engages their mind, body and soul and if done right, positive brand image and brand trust could be skyrocketed. So brands, let's start empowering.

Example of empowering content





Finding Your Brand Role

4 Strategies

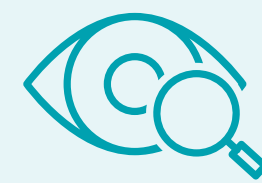
Put On Your Hat to One of These Roles & Get to Work

There's a role for each brand to play in the pandemic – observers, solvers, engagers & educators.

While some roles may seem to reap more rewards, for instance, the solvers may be hailed as heroes for their efforts, it is imperative that brands should only adopt roles

that they are able to deliver accurately, sensitively and aligns with their overall brand positioning.

There's no one best role for brands, it is all about understanding what value you can bring to your consumers in these times.



THE OBSERVER



THE SOLVER



THE ENGAGER



THE EDUCATOR

Role & Strategy #1

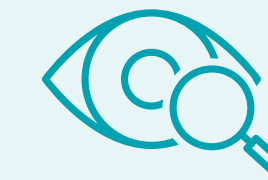
THE OBSERVERS

Watch before taking action

This strategy looks to continue the brand's operations, while being sensitive to what's happening.

Step 1 for observers is to always, always, always acknowledge the situation before going on with their business as usual. Keep communications simple and straightforward and let your consumers know that you're there can be enough to maintain your brand trust. One thing that's ultra important – be sensitive in whatever you communicate to the public.

In most cases, observers are those who benefits from the situation or they may not have the financial capacity to create tear-jerking or rally-like campaigns.



THE OBSERVERS

Brands/ industries that fall into this role:

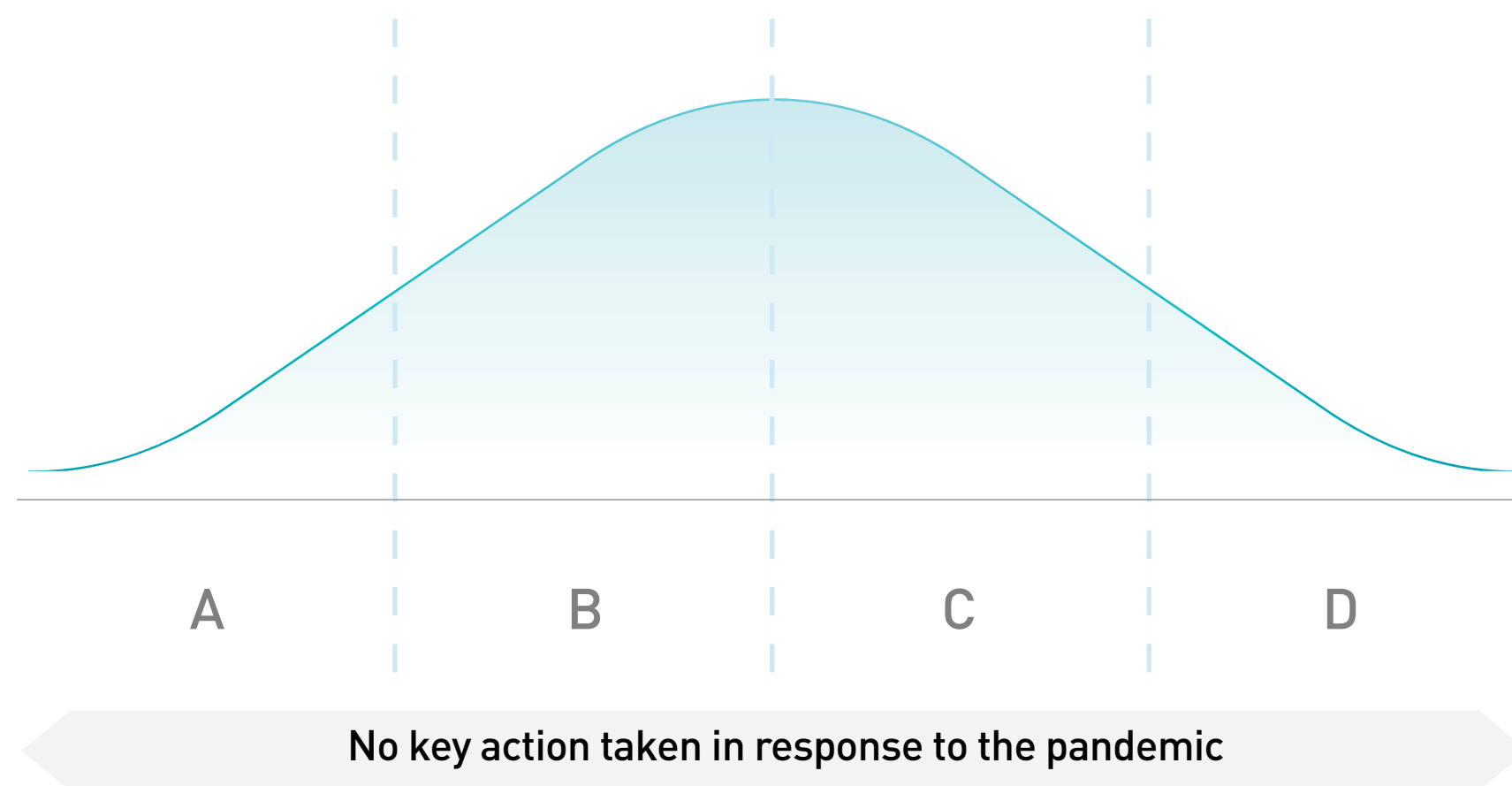
- ▲ SMEs/ start-ups with limited financial capacity
- ▲ Brands who have been hit badly by the situation
- ▲ Brands who have benefitted from the situation – e.g. Dettol (healthcare brands), GNC (supplements brands)
- ▲ Brands who provide essential services – e.g. Foodpanda (food delivery brands), Redmart (online groceries)

***Note:** This is a general guide – ultimately the brand itself has to decide on the role and if it aligns with their overall brand positioning.

Be A Keen Observer & Be Sensitive

There's no need for any key actions during the course of pandemic for observers. Keep posting evergreen content that's already been planned months ahead, but always check if the content is sensitive to the situation. If your plan for the period is aggressive, remember to alter and keep it simple when it comes to communications.

Observers key actions to take in the 4 phases



***Note:** Key actions for each phase remain the same for the 2 other scenarios.

Here are 3 things observers got to do:

- 1 Pause ads that are scheduled to go live that may seem insensitive in this period (in terms of visuals & copy)
- 2 Shift all messaging to be customer-first, and empathising with their situation
- 3 Limit all communications where necessary, only share information that are valid and accurate that value-adds consumers

Role & Strategy #2

THE SOLVERS

Leading the way

This strategy aims to provide solutions and services that will have an impact on consumers' lives – one way or another, through advertising & PR.

Solvers take the lead in understanding consumers' pain points during the pandemic and find ways to deliver solutions. The heroes of the pandemic basically – they are often seen to support consumers and businesses tide through the storms.

One thing for the solvers to note – never look opportunistic in whatever you do. Put the sole focus on the people, doing good for the economy & society and not for a better brand image (although it usually comes along with it!).

Remember, authenticity and genuine intentions are what takes relationships to the next level – even for individuals!

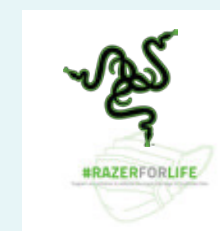


THE SOLVERS

Brands/ industries that fall into this role:

- ▲ Luxury brands with strong financial capacity – e.g. Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana
- ▲ MNCs or large organisations with the resources to make a difference – e.g. Razer, StarHub

Solvers actions/ campaign examples:



Launched #RAZERFORLIFE to manufacture masks due to the shortage of masks in SEA



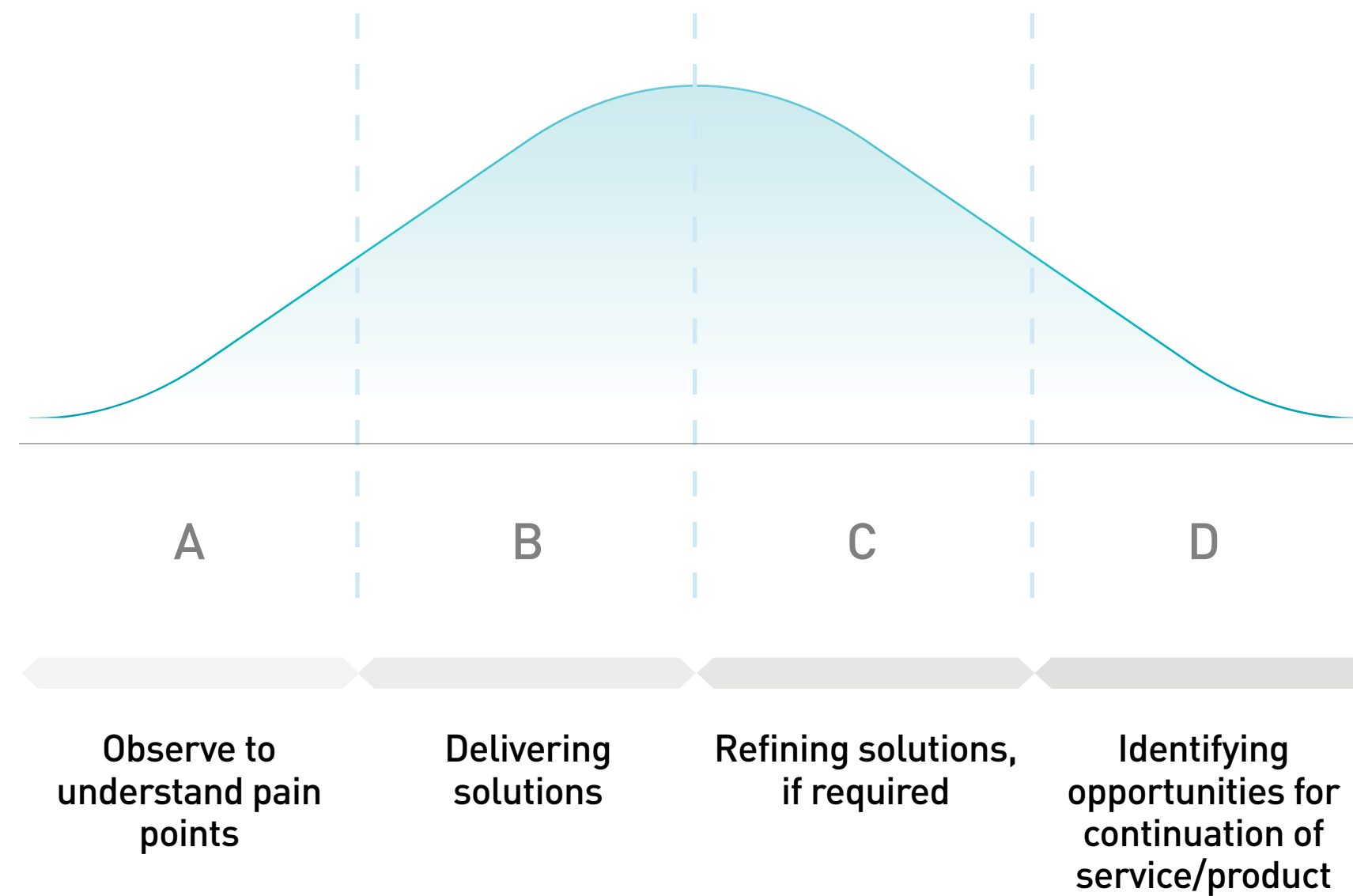
Developed & supported businesses with their BCP Support Programme, given that most SMEs will be going through monetary or WFH challenges

***Note:** This is a general guide – ultimately the brand itself has to decide on the role and if it aligns with their overall brand positioning.

Leading the Day in Many Ways

Not all solvers really solve, literally – beyond just providing or creating solutions.

Solvers key actions to take in the 4 phases



***Note:** Key actions for each phase remain the same for the 2 other scenarios.

Here are some ways that solvers exist:

- 1 Developing and creating products and/or services that can bring convenience or satisfaction to people's lives
- 2 Donating for a greater good
- 3 Volunteer for social causes with the brand's manpower

Each phase calls for a key action. In funnelling phase, brands can start to refine their solutions (e.g. instead of donating, brands can opt to volunteer if the community needs manpower) and in the flushing phase, brands can start identifying opportunities to solve beyond the pandemic to continue establishing themselves as a solver.

Role & Strategy #3

THE ENGAGERS

Positivity makes the day

This strategy brings brands closer to consumers by sharing and engaging with them on a regular basis, in the efforts to distract from the pandemic with positivity.

The easiest and most common role out there, engagers are the ones who communicate in a positive and sometimes heart-warming attitude that helps consumers to keep it going and keeping them sane.

While it's always great for brands to approach the pandemic in a positive manner, being sensitive in the way you communicate can make or break how consumers perceive you. Make sure that your content really engages without falling flat – the last thing you want is a spiralling brand trust.



THE ENGAGERS

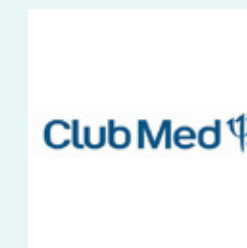
Brands/ industries that fall into this role:

- ▲ SMEs/ start-ups that are able to develop content suited to the interests of the consumers
- ▲ Brands that already have a strong presence on the social sphere, across all industries

Engagers actions/ campaign examples:



CapitaLand's Ascott launched a campaign that invited the audience to #StayHomeWithAscott, engaging them through foodies & encouraging them to post their recipes online



Launched #ClubMedatHome series where Club Med developed content that provided tips, employee features, kids yoga sessions, etc.

***Note:** This is a general guide – ultimately the brand itself has to decide on the role and if it aligns with their overall brand positioning.

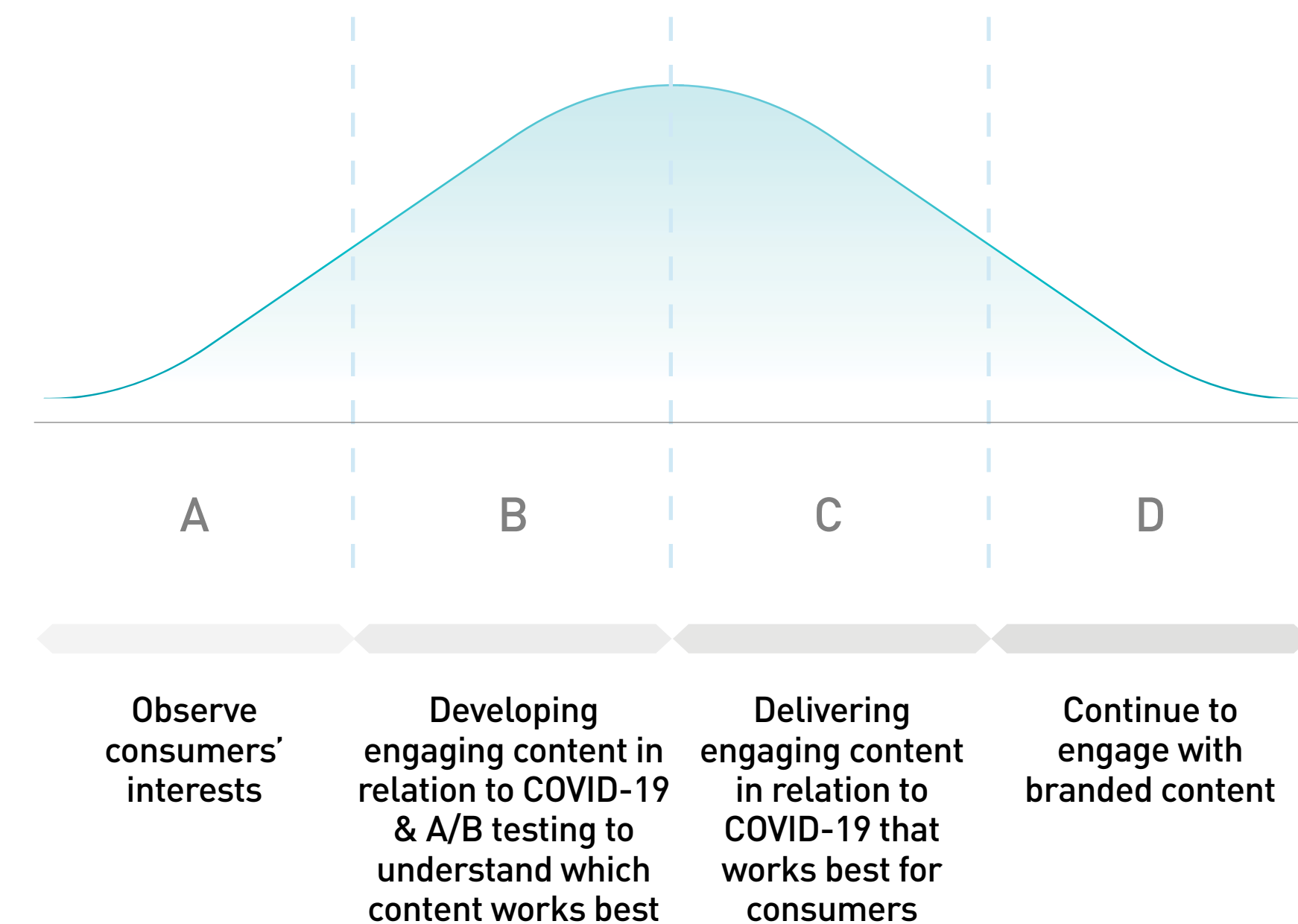
Add Cheer with Positive, Engaging Content That Resonates



There's no correct way when it comes to developing and creating engaging content – what works for one brand may spell trouble for another. What's important for engagers is to understand what consumers are interested in and how you can position your brand to target this interest.

Combining what you can offer and what consumers are interested in during these times makes a great pairing. It's always wise to test your content to see if it resonates with your intended audience so A/B testing could be a gamechanger, especially with more brands fighting to get the same audience's attention.

Engagers key actions to take in the 4 phases



***Note:** Key actions for each phase remain the same for the 2 other scenarios.

Role & Strategy #4

THE EDUCATORS

Steering the truth

This strategy aims to put brands in a space of reliability with the sharing of trustworthy information.

Not all brands can be an educator, and most brands try to steer away from being one. Imagine adopting the role of an educator and relaying false information about the situation. The risk is high for brands, and brands without clear credentials should stay away from doing so – because why give more opportunities to a potential broken brand trust?

Educators got to step it up and fully understand what's going on and internalise these government regulations before sharing them to their consumers. That's the basic of it all.



THE EDUCATORS

Brands/ industries that fall into this role:

- ▲ Professional and reputable health-related companies – e.g. Johnson & Johnson
- ▲ Government bodies and organisations – e.g. Singapore Discovery Centre, NEA

Educators actions/ campaign examples:



As part of their #LifeProof campaign, Great Eastern shared some educational materials that aim to engage and educate



Constantly sharing government-related news in bite-sized and entertaining content that educates

***Note:** This is a general guide – ultimately the brand itself has to decide on the role and if it aligns with their overall brand positioning.

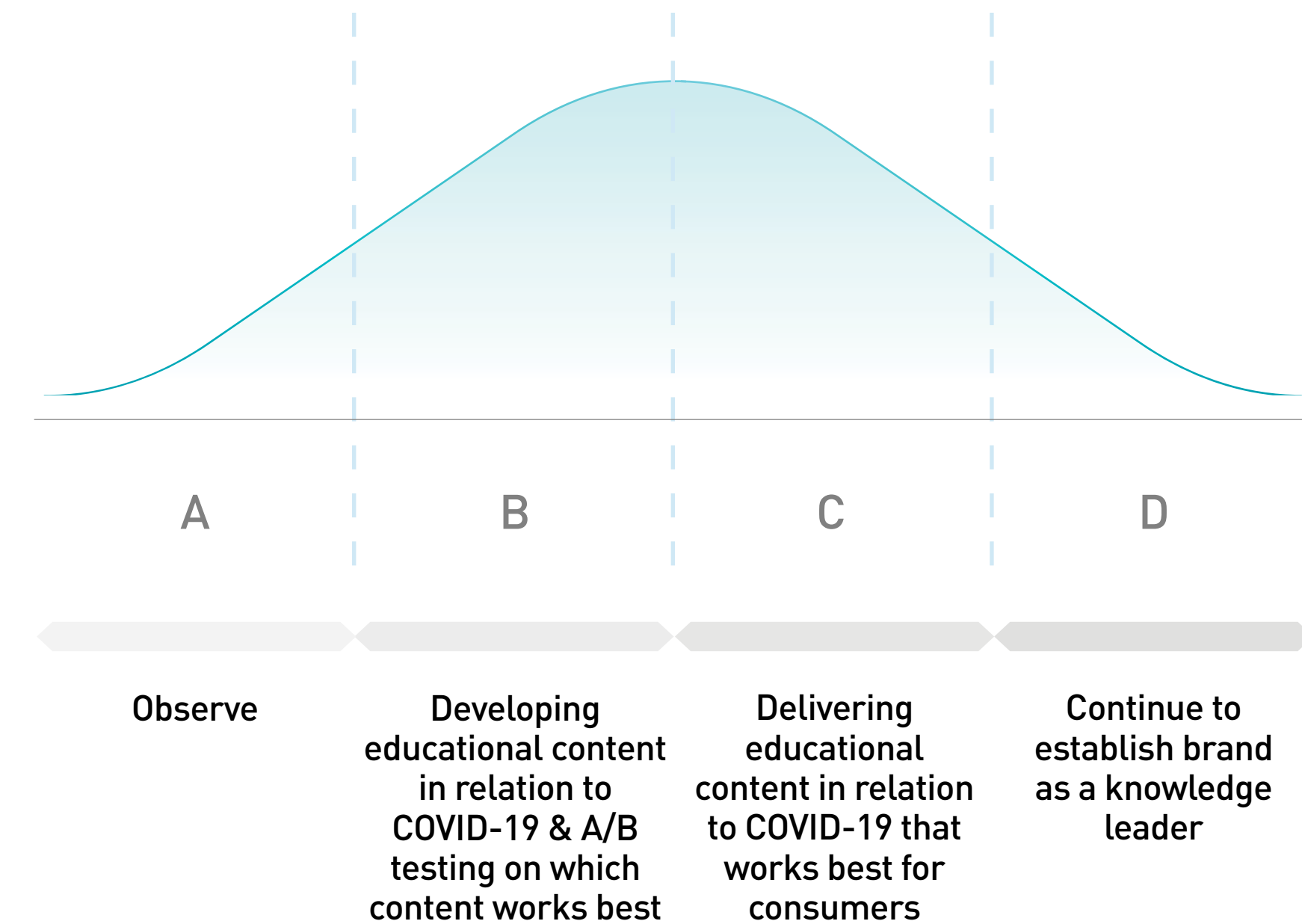
Steering The Truth When Misinformation Are Aplenty



It's safe to say that with the increasing false information spreading like wildfire from boomers in WhatsApp groups, a truthful presence will always be greatly appreciated.

Less is more when delivering truths – the more input in your content, the higher the chance of getting it wrong. Concise and accurate messages are key to being an educator. Keeping it short and sweet will minimise any miscommunication.

When it comes to educational content, it can get a little too dry or boring so playing with content formats and doing A/B testing will shed light on what content formats work best to convey your messaging effectively.



***Note:** Key actions for each phase remain the same for the 2 other scenarios.

The 3R Approach

Ready For Comeback?

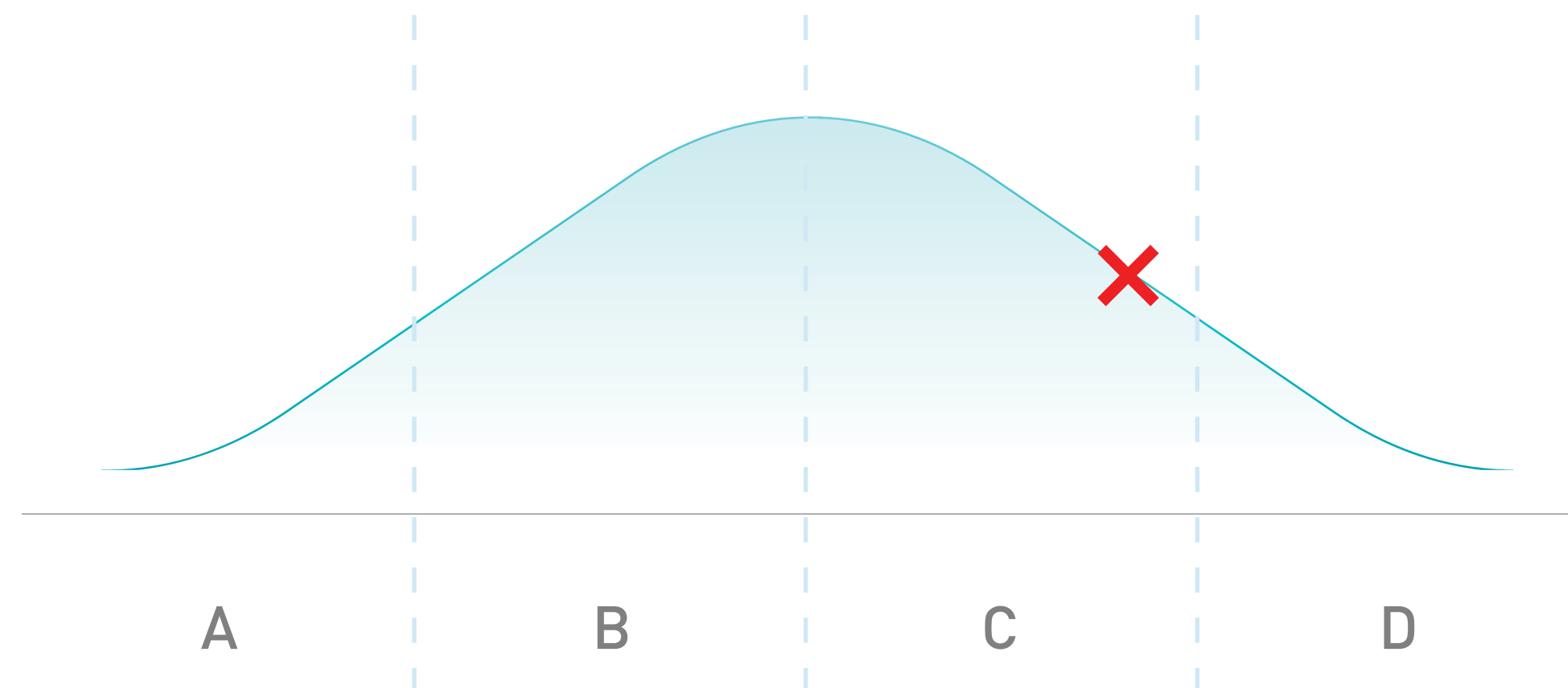




The Strategy To Coming Back Stronger

Hailed as the most exciting part of a pandemic for any brand, the comeback is what makes or breaks the brand once the virus dies out. Questions brands ask are:

- 1. When should I start preparing for my comeback?**
- 2. How should I go about doing so?**



✗ marks the spot for when brands should start their comeback strategy

Finding the right time to start and plan for your comeback is like making a perfect poach egg on your first try. While there's no definitive time to start our comeback strategy, starting earlier is much better than being late (although better late than never)! Starting earlier means you have the skeleton of your strategy up and running, and all you need to do is to adapt and refine as time passes.

THE COMEBACK STRATEGY

Review | **R**efresh | **R**emarket



The 3Rs To Your Comeback

No matter which role brands adopted for your in-pandemic strategy, every brand comes into a clean slate for comeback and these 3Rs are crucial for a comeback that will make a mark – starting from reviewing.

REVIEW

The first step to making an impactful and successful comeback is to review your brand's positioning. Conduct a thorough market analysis on what happened during this period and how competitors have evolved through the pandemic. See if there's anything opportunities you can take advantage of or a segment you can own, especially after your efforts in being an engager, educator or solver.

Questions brands need to ask:

- ? What have my competitors been doing
- ? Are there any opportunities available to reach a new segment or develop products that may be useful for consumers
- ? How can I position my brand to reach the new changed consumer
- ? What will my brand's competitors do post-pandemic
Will they slash price to make their comeback or increase price to make up for the loss of profits



The 3Rs To Your Comeback

Now, it's time to translate your excitement for a comeback to consumers' excitement for your comeback.

REFRESH

Identify opportunities that could alleviate the current status of your brand through collaborations or new exciting things that consumers can expect. Execute these opportunities and tease your consumers of what's coming up for them once the pandemic is over.

Questions brands need to ask:

- ? How can I make my brand exciting?
- ? Are there potential collaborators that will increase desirability for my brand, especially post-pandemic
- ? What do consumers want to see my brand as
What's the perception of my brand now
- ? Do I want to take this time as an opportunity to reposition my brand



The 3Rs To Your Comeback

The pandemic's over (or almost!). The most important part of it all – to get back running on online and offline channels.

REMARKET

Integrate offline and online communications to tell a consistent story. Remember, this is the first touch point post-pandemic so make an impression! With the lockdowns lifted, people are excited to leave their homes to spend time with their friends and families so it might be useful to hit these offline touch points to drive brand recall.

With this step, you're all set & ready to go!

Questions brands need to ask:

- ? Where would my consumers be/ go after the pandemic
- ? What channels should I focus on
- ? What is the key message that I should put forth that resonates to my consumers
- ? Is my target segment saturated? Will there be lots of competition for this target segment? Which segment could be an upcoming segment post-pandemic

We Are HEA About Us

HAPPILY EVER AFTER for every brand story

So that's what H.E.A stands for

Named The Next Big Thing by Marketing Magazine, H.E.A believes in storytelling as an essential to today's campaign success. From integrated 360 year-long campaigns to brand repositioning exercises, H.E.A has consistently delivered and won awards for our innovative strategies and campaign executions. **Find out more here: www.wearehea.com**

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IN MARKETING
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MARKETING MAGAZINE'S
AGENCY OF THE YEAR AWARDS
THE NEXT
BIG THING 2017

& here are some of our clients

Club Med

StarHub

DBS

Hilton

Shell

ST Kinetics
A company of ST Engineering

CIMB BANK

NUS
National University of Singapore

dynabook
POWERED BY SHARP

MARRIOTT



Feel free to reach out for a chat on your brand strategies.

We'd be happy to join you over a virtual coffee.

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