



REVIVAL STRATEGIES:

COVID-19 RECOVERY PLANNING FOR BRANDS

SINCLAIR | 16 MARCH 2020



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Wēi jī
危机

DANGER

OPPORTUNITY

COVID-19 is a global humanitarian, health and economic crisis. In this report, we present a roadmap towards recovery. We map expected consumer sentiment at each phase along with considerations and communications strategies for brands. We take learnings from the China market which, as the epicentre of the outbreak, is now ahead on the recovery curve.

This is an unprecedented global crisis, and brands need to consider an unprecedented response. Working alongside government efforts and supporting their stakeholders and communities, brands have the opportunity to respond with purpose and humanity. Actions taken by brands during difficult times will be remembered for years to come, and we encourage brand leaders to be brave in their response to COVID-19.

While protecting brand reputation is critical, this is also a time to think about opportunity. In Chinese, the word 'crisis' is made up of two characters: *danger* and *opportunity*. The characters symbolise the resilience and optimism of the Chinese people, and their ability to quickly pivot in times of uncertainty and change. This is a learning that brands around the world can take to heart.



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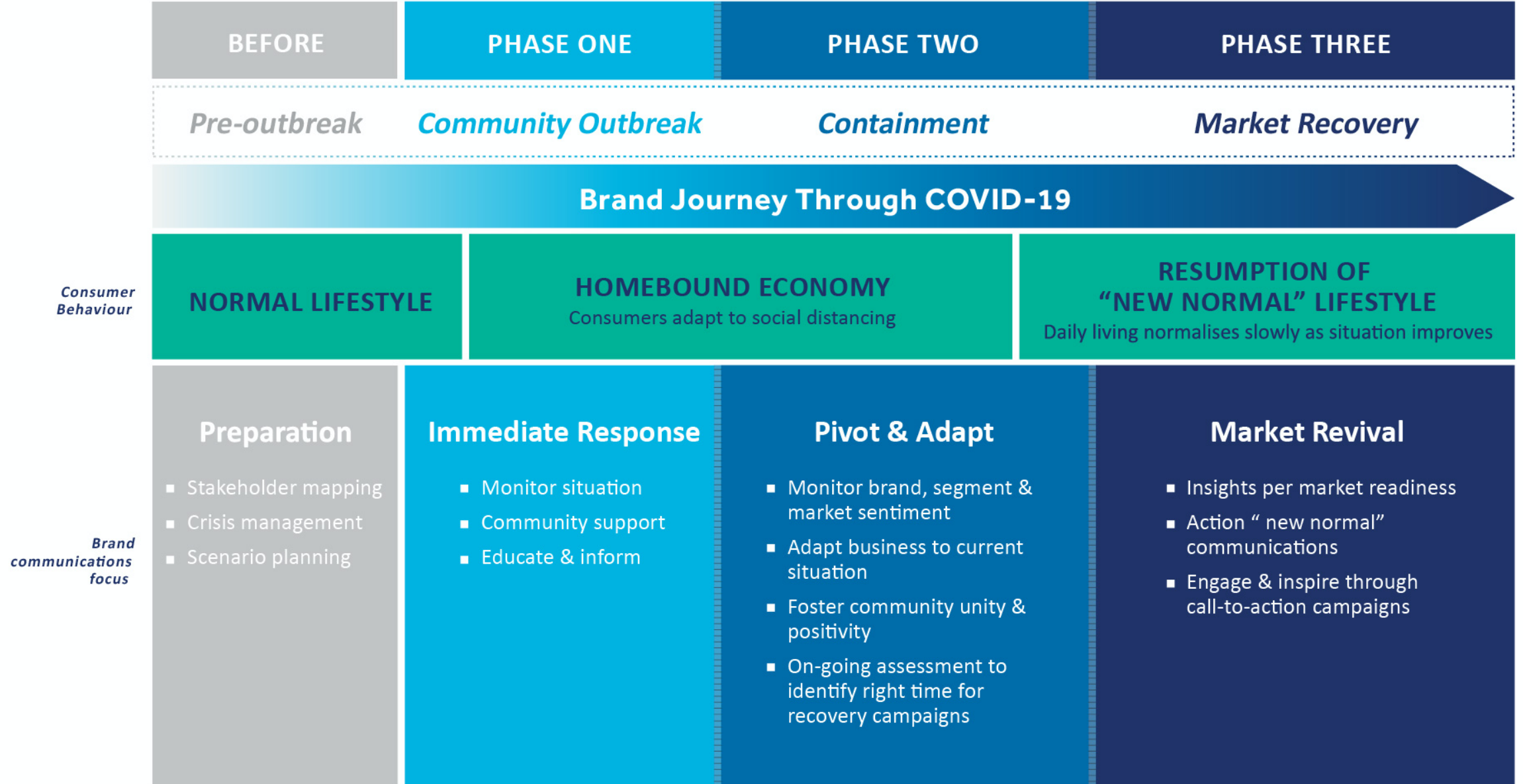
“

The path towards recovery is a journey. We do not just resume where we left off before COVID-19. We've been through an emotional experience together. We have grown and changed; our perspectives are altered.

Brands that acknowledge and embrace this sentiment through their communications strategies and recovery planning can win hearts and minds as we move towards the new normal.

”

A ROADMAP TO BRAND RECOVERY



PREPARATION

Prepare for a potential community outbreak in each of your markets.
Assume it's not if, but when.

Brand Focus

- Develop business continuity plan and ensure communications teams are updated
- Review and update Crisis Management Plan
- Consider lessons from past experiences such as SARS and MERS
- Scenario planning across all business operations
- Stakeholder mapping and contingency alignment
- Review internal and external communications channels , content pipelines and campaigns for language and tone appropriateness
- Prepare communications team and agencies with action plans



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

PHASE ONE

During a community outbreak, brands should demonstrate their corporate social responsibility by being of service to their community. This is a time to understand the needs of employees and key stakeholders, support local efforts to contain the spread and follow local government guidelines on social distancing.

Brands can be proactive changemakers in their community by taking positive actions and stepping up to the challenge.

Consumer Sentiment

- Anxiety and fear
- Safety and hygiene become the top priorities
- Seek reassurance
- Consumed by latest updates on news platforms, social media and messaging apps
- Look for “trusted” information sources
- Homebound economy as people practice social distancing
- Consumer stockpiling
- Reduce spending, except in sectors considered essential
- Feeling of community resilience emerges

Brand Focus

- Actively monitor latest government announcements, sector competitor and stakeholder updates, and inform senior management
- Increase brand and customer sentiment analysis
- Internal communications to ensure business continuity plans are understood throughout operations
- Employee engagement to assist, inform and reassure
- Stakeholder engagement and support
- Incident response plan based on transparency
- Collaborate with industry and segment to align in support of the wider community
- Be of service to the community to support containment

Share Compassion & Care

Case Study: Estee Lauder

ESTÉE LAUDER
雅诗兰黛

身处严寒，心向璀璨
雅诗兰黛携手明星与你一起
同心聚力，为爱坚守
静待云开春暖，繁花灿烂时

杨幂

“没有人生来勇敢，只有不平凡的守护”



雅诗兰黛集团将向中国红十字会总会
捐款贰佰万元

雅诗兰黛集团决定向中国红十字会总会
捐款贰佰万元人民币，以支持抗击新型冠状病毒肺炎。

雅诗兰黛集团
2020年1月26日

ESTÉE
LAUDER
COMPANIES



Estee Lauder was swift to respond with care and compassion by taking community action and making a donation to a charity focused on assisting the frontline in Wuhan.

Their brand ambassadors for the Asia-Pacific region Li Xian and Xiao Zhan shared good health related messages. Global brand spokesmodel Yang Mi also shared positive support and encouraged audiences to get through the current situation together.

LEARNINGS

*This is not a time to sell;
it is a time for community support.*

Situation Monitoring

- Realtime monitoring of local situation across media and social media channels
- Follow official government and CDC channels for first-hand information and updates

Brand Monitoring

- Activate social listening to understand what people are talking about

Sentiment Analysis

- Attentive to people's current mood and needs
- Analysis across key consumer segments to understand differences

Response

- Don't be silent
- Proactively engage with audiences
- Use simple messaging that shows care and support
- Notify and educate about measures taken in response to the outbreak

BRAND STRATEGY

Informative

Keep stakeholders updated

Supportive

Help those most in need

Sincere

Assist without a hidden agenda

Sensitive

Consider risks and consequences before actions or words

Transparent

Communicate prevention and safety measures

Educative

Use brand power to help spread important messages

Service

Share useful information and tools

Generous

Give and give back to customers

PIVOT & ADAPT

PHASE TWO

As social distancing is implemented across society, compulsory and self-quarantine, and work from home and school from home have become a reality for many.

Brands pivot to adapt to the homebound economy. Healthcare, wellness, hygiene, FMCG and insurance brands are in high demand.

The experience of the homebound economy in China propelled the online commerce, education and entertainment industries, amongst others, to adapt to digital like never before.

It's important that brands understand constantly shifting audience perceptions, while taking the opportunity to find white space that showcases their brand's unique response.

Consumer Sentiment

- Home-based and active
- Reduce spending on non-essentials, especially luxury and lifestyle, as economic impact realised
- Looking for new styles of at home entertainment
- Responds well to positive messaging and encouragement from brands that offer support

Brand Focus

- Business impact analysis
- Monitor brand and consumer sentiment to understand pressure points
- Pivot business model, keeping in mind brand values and mission
- Adapt business operations to enable offerings that are compatible to the homebound economy
- Outreach to suppliers and stakeholders
- Be mindful of government guidelines
- Start planning for recovery campaigns and initiatives

Sectors Most Affected

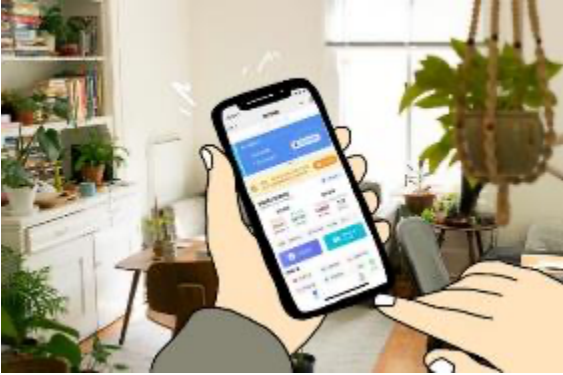
Decline

- Travel and hospitality
- Amusement and theme parks
- Out of home dining
- Luxury
- Fashion and retail
- Beauty
- Automobile
- MICE market
- Live sports and entertainment
- Transportation

Growth

- Health, hygiene and cleaning products
- Social networking, gaming and online video apps
- Insurance
- E-commerce
- E-learning
- Online shopping
- Food delivery
- Work from home tools
- Hobbies – cooking, cleaning, home decorating

Rise of Homebased Activities



Constantly monitor real time updates via social media, messaging and news apps



Remote working and learning is becoming second nature

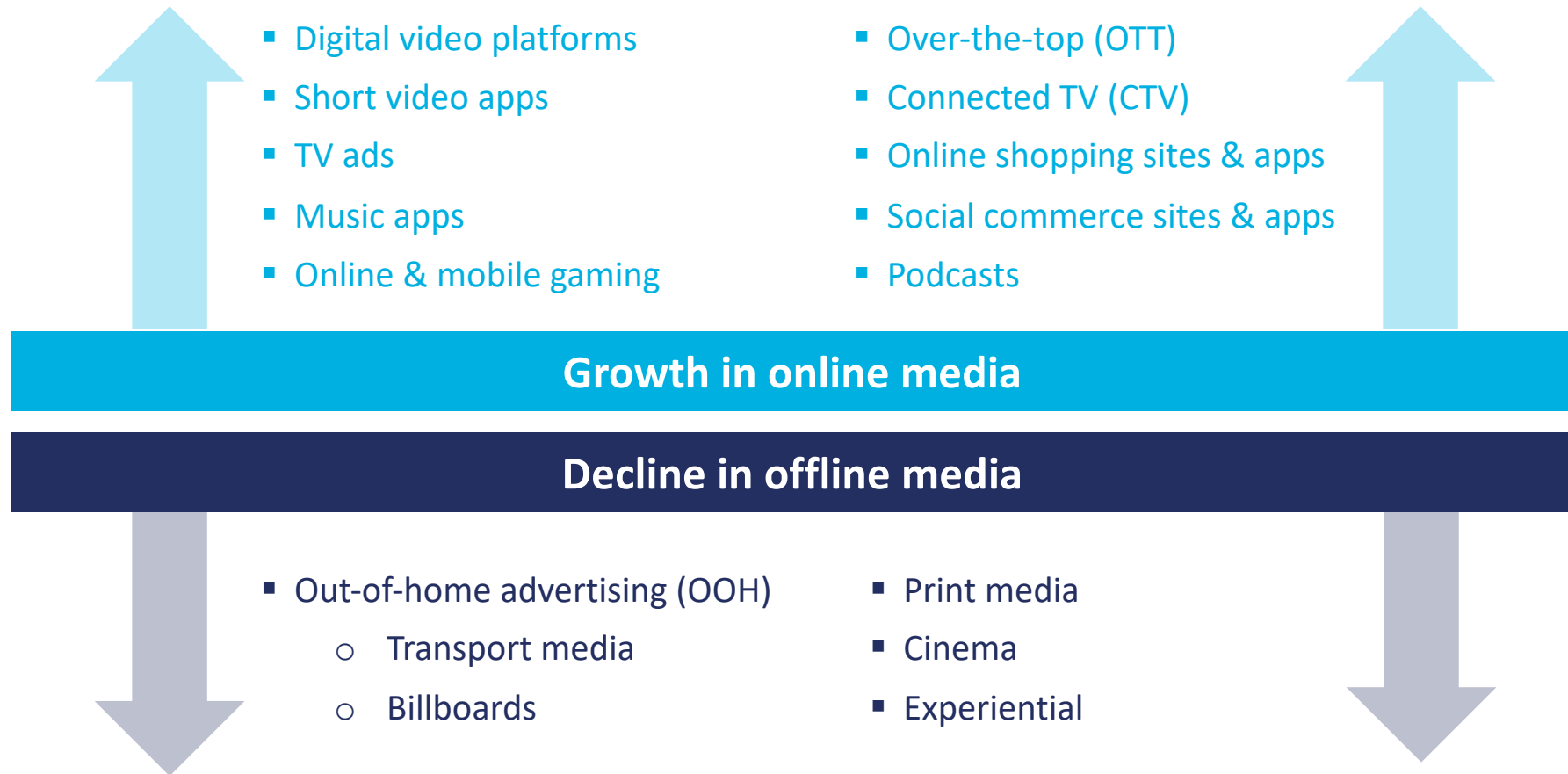


Stock up food supplies and take up cooking for both necessity and as a hobby



Gaming, long videos, short videos are key forms of entertainment

Shifting Consumer Touch Points

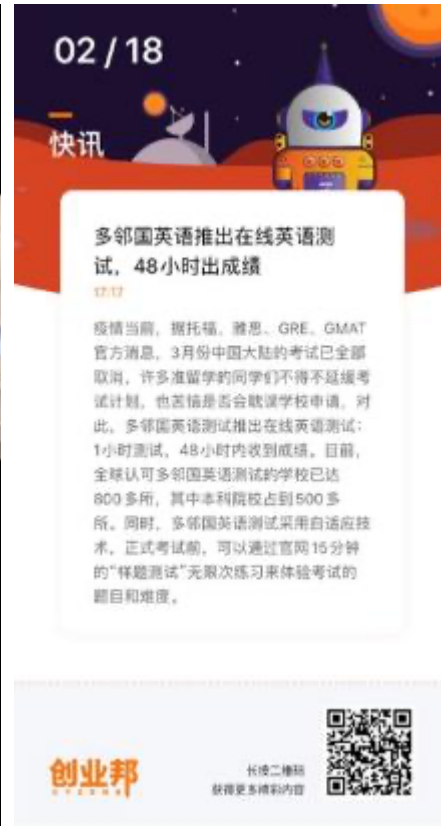




BRANDS PIVOT QUICKLY TO MEET CONSUMERS' NEW REQUIREMENTS

Here is a sector overview of how brands responded in China

Education, Learning & Wellness Brands Pivot Content



Following the cancellation of IELTS and TOEFL exams in China in February and March, language learning app Duolingo responded with a campaign to share their DET online English exam as an alternative. Accepted by top US universities, they reached out through an integrated PR, social and influencer campaign to fill the market gap.



Yoga and activewear brand Lululemon and gym brand Supermonkey launched video livestreaming yoga and gym classes suitable for audience participation from home.



Offline Retail Goes Online



Wanda Mall communicated online sales through a dedicated WeChat mini-program



Max Mara engaged through its customer WeChat group



MU live-streamed on Douyin to share their message

With customers predominantly at home, online shopping becomes a pastime, even though logistics and delivery services were yet to resume full operations.

Fashion brands like Max Mara created WeChat groups for community engagement. Designer label MU launched live-streaming sessions in addition to WeChat groups to boost sales during the quiet periods for their brick-and-mortar stores.

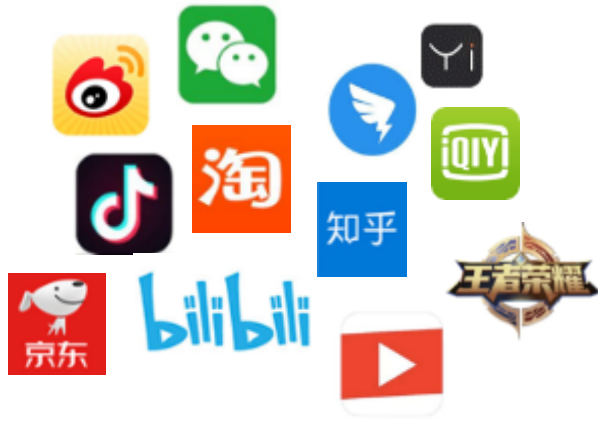
The creation of new brand communities that leveraged their existing customer base, shows how brands adapted quickly to the ever-changing situation to ensure continued sales channels.

Contactless Delivery: Highly Sought-After New Service Offerings



Demand for home delivery of food, groceries and supplies surged. Brands responded by creating new “contactless delivery models” to allow for social distancing and reduce the risk spread. Brands like Hey Tea and Meitun launched online advertising campaigns promoting these new services across social media. Starbucks launched a new “Starbucks Delivers” programme in response to demand.

E-Commerce, Social Media, Video & Gaming Apps Boom



At home and looking for entertainment, work from home and education tools, Chinese consumers turned to OTT, gaming apps and video platforms in larger numbers.

Consumers engaged with e-commerce apps such as Taobao and JD. Social apps like WeChat and Ding Ding launched new functions to accommodate public needs during the outbreak.



Douyin's mother company Toutiao broadcast their Chinese New Year movie "Lost Series" on their apps for free when cinemas shut down so that no one had to miss out.



WeChat launched a health function to provide real time updates on COVID-19 and provide online health consulting.



Alibaba's instant messenger app for corporate communications, Ding Ding, was widely adopted by students for e-learning.

LEARNINGS

Understand the new reality

The economy is slowing down. Travel is restricted. Events are cancelled. People are confined at home.

Nevertheless, they are actively looking for online entertainment and learning to keep them occupied.

Assess business impact

Anticipate how this new reality will impact your business model. Which areas are most affected, and which require new levels of service or support.

Adapt business model & operations

Based on your analysis, adapt your business model. This requires quick business-wide operational changes. Reshape policy and measures, adapt your communications model and channel mix as necessary.

BRAND STRATEGY

React quickly

Speed is the most important commodity in times of crisis. Don't wait and risk missing the opportunity.

Adapt to new reality

The homebound economy requires a different service operations and engagement, adapt now.

New formats

Consider live streaming, community messaging groups, online events and experiential online activations.

Engaging & active

Stay connected with your audiences, they want to hear from you with relevant content.

Leverage the power of community

Empower your community with new tools, new ideas and creative concepts.

Stay positive

Show community support through positive messaging and actions.

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city street intersection. The street is paved with dark asphalt, and a large crosswalk is marked with wide, white diagonal stripes. Several pedestrians are walking across the crosswalk, their shadows cast long and dark on the pavement. The lighting suggests it is either early morning or late afternoon. The overall scene is busy and urban.

MARKET REVIVAL

PHASE THREE

As the number of new cases begins to decline and the recovered overtakes the current cases, it's time to consider launching your brand recovery plan.

Although the outbreak is largely contained, society and individuals will still need time to trust the recovery. Consumers may still avoid going out too often, consciously and unconsciously spending more time at home or in environments considered safe.

Not only are brands in recovery, consumers are too. There are likely to be changes reflected in people's daily habits and consumption patterns.

Consumer Sentiment

- Post-recovery release
- Pent-up consumption
- Excited to be back to normal
- Cautiously optimistic
- New learned behaviours

Brand Focus

- Use positivity and optimism as a business communications tool
- Capture opportunities for business growth
- Creative campaigns to re-engage consumers

Sectors on the Rebound



- Travel and tourism
- Dining out
- Live entertainment and sports
- Beauty and skincare
- Wellness, gym and active lifestyle
- Brick-and-mortar retail
- MICE market



Immediate Return to Growth

Emerging Trends

- **Surge in healthy living** and balanced lifestyle will reshape consumer decision-making and buying behavior across sectors over the next year
- **Unmanned retail** and driverless cars advance smart city technology and digital automation as people have adapted to new models and ideas
- **The great work at home experiment** leads to growth in tools and technologies that enable remote working
- **After months of online schooling**, adaptation to e-learning sees a surge in education technology and pick up of online courses
- **Hospital and healthcare** understand new needs and work to update their facilities and work practices following this experience
- **Silvers segment**, who were forced to adapt to digital solutions, are a new force of online consumption

Brands that prepare for recovery will build strong foundations for future growth.

Recover planning takes time, insights, creativity and business-wide commitment. Start early and include a variety of business functions when brainstorming ideas to revive your brand.

As the market rejuvenates, remember to celebrate with your teams, your stakeholders and your customers. We got through this together.

BRAND STRATEGY

Plan ahead

Create campaigns to capture the consumption power of consumers and offset business losses.

Recovery is a journey

Be alert and mindful of sentiment as markets and consumers move through the recovery journey.

Be ready

Ensure all aspects of your campaign are ready to launch once insights show market readiness.

Speak to the heart

Weigh in on consumers' emotional needs and bonds, they were confined at home with minimal social contact throughout the outbreak.

Think bricks-and-mortar

When the time is right, create immersive experiential activations that bring people back to physical locations. Consider pop-ups.

Map calendar moments

Map key calendar moments that allow brand storytelling to shine. Align campaigns with moments of celebration.

Don't dismiss digital

Online to offline is a relevant and important part of integrated communications. Learn from recent experiences in digital activations.

Prepare for setbacks

There will be setbacks along the recovery journey. Don't let them surprise you and take you off track.

Recovery Planning Considerations



Strong call-to-actions	Make an emotional connection	Take experiential to new levels	Don't forget the new channels created during the outbreak	Reassurance and inspiration
Work with influencers to power content	Double down on being active across channels	Reward loyalty	Collaborate within your industry	Competitive offerings and promotions to lure consumers back
Get creative	Ask, what really matters to consumers?	Consider key calendar dates	Online to offline activations	When the time is right, celebrate

When this passes, which it will, we have the opportunity to come back stronger and better. As communications marketers, let's lead brands into the new normal with creativity, empathy and bravery. Start crafting your roadmap to brand recovery now. When the time is right, be ready to launch and be ready to prosper.

WE'D BE DELIGHTED TO SUPPORT YOU WITH YOUR RECOVERY STRATEGY AND PLANNING

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About Sinclair

Sinclair is a multi award-winning independent PR, digital, experiential marketing communications agency.

We work across industry and sector with one goal in mind – to create business impact for our clients through persuasive storytelling. Our ability to embrace new technologies and our bold approach to brand communications builds value, inspires action, changes opinion and grows reputation. Our expert team of strategists deliver seamlessly integrated PR programmes that ensure brands are shaping the conversations that matter.

We influence.

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THANK YOU

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