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**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**

**THE IMPACT OF COVID RESPONSES ON BRAND PERFORMANCE**

A Thesis Submitted by

Emy Nabil Rezkalla

to the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication

under the supervision of

**Dr. Ahmed Taher**

**(May 2021)**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before I end my journey through this amazing experience, I would like to highlight a few important points. It seemed so far away from having my master's degree from AUC, one of the best universities, but truly time flies when you work with passion, when you give your best and when you take things one step at a time. I believe it all starts with believing in yourself, and you'll be amazed how everything falls into place so smoothly.

Believing in yourself is always easy when surrounded by people who shower you with positivity and have true faith in you. I want to thank Dr. Ahmed Taher for his support and guidance during this research project, my family for always encouraging my friends and me to push me forward, and reminding me of my passion and why I started this journey.

I have learned a lot from this journey, far more than academics. I feel now I have an experience that can make me break through all walls and barriers. My journey made me strong, grateful, and keen for more success

**Cordially,**

Emy Nabil Rezkalla

## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to understand and evaluate whether COVID responses have a significant positive impact on brand performance. Accordingly, the proposed conceptual model focused on the top four COVID-19 responses: donations in cash, donations in kind, customer service, and employers/suppliers and evaluated the impact of each proposed response on brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking in 2020 versus 2019.

The research question of this paper is, Do COVID responses (customer service, employers/suppliers, donations in kind, and donations in cash) have a significant positive impact on brand performance (brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking vs. 2019)?

In order to answer the research question, secondary data methodology was used focusing on the responses of the top 100 brands announced in 2020 by Interbrand. The responses of each brand were analyzed based on different websites and online pages. Moreover, to validate this data, three in-depth interviews were conducted with brand managers across three companies: Nestle, Unilever, and P&G.

The findings showed that none of the four COVID responses significantly and positively impacted brand value and brand ranking in 2020 versus 2019. However, customer service and donations in kind were the only responses that showed a significant positive impact on brand growth. Moreover, the brand managers agreed on the results stating that any branded activity that affects the customer directly has a significant positive impact compared to indirect and unbranded activities or services.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

“Disasters amplify the inequitable aspects of the world we live in” (Time to Say Goodbye to “Natural” Disasters, 2020). In the past decades, the world witnessed multiple disasters, including natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes. Disasters can also be in the form of wars or pandemics. The world previously suffered from several pandemics like the SARS, Cholera, H5N1 influenza and the pandemic H1N1. A pandemic is any widespread infectious disease with broad geographical coverage causing political, social, and economic disturbances. Moreover, a pandemic affects many people by causing death and illness (Qiu et al., 2017, p. 9).

The world is currently facing one of the most challenging pandemics in the modern era, COVID-19. This deadly virus has rapidly impacted the core aspects of people’s lives which are the healthcare, social life, and economic sides. Concerning healthcare, the world is now losing thousands of people every day due to widespread this virus across different countries. The virus affects people in different ways. However, common symptoms are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. The World Health Organization reported over 2.9 million death cases and more than 7.8 million people who have been affected by the virus since the pandemic hit the world (WHO, 2021).

In addition to the dramatic loss of people every day, social life has been impacted negatively. Since the beginning of the virus, people started to self-quarantine in their homes to prevent spreading the virus, which took a toll on people’s mental health and caused severe stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, the pandemic negatively impacted daily life activities. In the education field, schools and universities closed down during the lockdown, and most

institutions the world over have resorted to online learning to abide by social distancing precautions.

As for the business world, millions were forced to work from home, and small businesses and shops shut down, enduring travel restrictions everywhere. All these restrictions would negatively impact the economy. Moreover, unemployment rates across the world have been on the rise as many lost their jobs. Brands and companies have been struggling to survive the pandemic.

Customers also are facing challenges as there has been a huge change in consumer behavior, lifestyle, and daily routine habits. The majority of people started to believe they should try to lead a healthy life, take up some healthy habits, and give up the things that affect their immune systems badly. Maintaining good health is directly related to psychological comfort as this reduces the fear factor of contracting the disease. It also helps in staying in touch with friends and relatives, which positively affects mood.

Not only are customers, but also companies are facing challenges in the pandemic. Companies had an important question as to what needs to be done differently in the current challenging circumstances. During the pandemic, some brands did well and showed professionalism in serving the community while also caring about the customers and employees alike during crisis time. Accordingly, this led to a growth in their market shares and positively impacted their brand growth.

As observed, some brands supported their employees by applying strict health precautions while also making available work-from-home solutions. On the other hand, customers were the priority for some companies. They started to implement new services to better serve customers'

needs in alignment with these challenging times. They provided delivery services, offered free online solutions, or facilitated online payment methods. They also introduced drive-through options, a very common service for customers during the pandemic (Mahmud et al., 2021, p.5).

Donations in cash have been the top initiative that has been taken up across some brands since the pandemic hit the world. For instance, Johnson & Johnson donated \$100 million to fund frontline healthcare professionals battling COVID-19, including doctors, nurses, and community healthcare personnel who are constantly working to provide services to patients across different countries (Mahmud et al., 2021, p.11).

(“Intel CEO: Bad Companies Are Destroyed by Crises . . . Great Companies Are Improved by Them,” 2020). This thesis focuses on the Interbrand top 100 brands in 2020 by analyzing the COVID responses of each brand and the impact of each response on brand performance.

The main objective of this study is to understand and evaluate whether COVID responses have a significant positive impact on brand performance. Accordingly, the proposed conceptual model focused on the top four COVID-19 responses: donations in cash, donations in kind, customer service, and employees. The conceptual model evaluated the impact of each proposed response on brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking in 2020 versus 2019.

The research question of this paper is, Do COVID responses (customer service, employees, donations in kind, and donations in cash) have a significant positive impact on brand performance (brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking vs. 2019)?

In order to answer the research question, secondary data methodology was used focusing on the responses of the top 100 brands announced in 2020 by Interbrand. The responses of each

brand were analyzed based on different websites and online pages like Facebook and twitter. Moreover, to validate this data, three in-depth interviews were conducted with brand managers across three companies: Nestle, Unilever, and P&G

## **Thesis Structure**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction to the thesis. Chapter two provides the literature of the research covering different aspects: starting from defining the term “pandemic,” exploring different pandemics throughout history, and focusing on the newest pandemic by exploring the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and companies’ role in this time of crisis via identifying how brands responded to COVID-19. After that, chapter three explains the conceptual model of the research. Chapter four presents the research questions and hypotheses. Next, chapter five introduces the method used in this study, while chapter six provides the results and findings. Finally, chapter seven includes the discussion and concludes this thesis by summarizing the main findings, focusing on practical implications, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.0 The Definition of Pandemic**

The world is facing a massive outbreak of COVID-19 that reached the pandemic level. A pandemic is an epidemic that spreads through the human population, impacting many people, the major part of a nation, an entire nation, continent, or part of the entire world (Samal, 2014, p. 165). Not every disease is a pandemic because a pandemic causes death and has to be infectious to be called a pandemic. Other than being infectious, a pandemic has other key features. For example,

it has to spread across a wide geographic area, attack the immune system, and increase death rates on a global scale (Qiu et al., 2017, p. 3).

There were several debates around the definition of pandemic and epidemic, an epidemic is an outbreak that occurs over a wide geographic area like the Ebola virus epidemic, and a pandemic occurs when an epidemic spread to several countries or regions of the world. Moreover, the highest degree of global health emergency, pandemic, refers to severe outbreaks that impact various regions of the globe (Fischer, 2020). Many researchers debated whether the influenza disease should be defined as a pandemic or not. Surprisingly and after ten years of facing infectious diseases, there is no formal definition of pandemic influenza (Briand et al., 2011). However, the World Health Organization has announced a standard definition of a pandemic as “a situation in which a new and highly pathogenic viral subtype, one to which no one (or few) in the human population has immunological resistance and which is easily transmissible between humans, establishes a foothold in the human population, at which point it rapidly spreads worldwide” (Kelly, 2011, p. 540).

## **2.1 Pandemics History**

In modern history, the world has witnessed major outbreaks, including the hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, SARS, H5N1 influenza, Middle East respiratory syndrome, H1N1 influenza. (Qiu et al., 2017, p. 9). Severe influenza could lead to death as researchers stated that it is a transferrable disease in birds and mammals. Moreover, some defined it as an infectious respiratory illness, and its common symptoms are fever, runny nose, and sore throat, and it can affect the lungs. Furthermore, symptoms differ across people. Some suffer from coughing and

fatigue, while others could suffer from severe symptoms, and sometimes it can lead to death (Samal, 2014, p. 168).

In 1918, the world faced deadly influenza, which is the Spanish flu that is considered the most radical pandemic in modern history. The virus is also known as “La Grippe.” At that time, some researchers and historians stated that the virus first originated in China, and others argued that it existed in the USA or France during World War I. The pandemic occurred in three waves. The first wave started in 1918 in the United States and affected 500 million people. Followed by a second wave in September to November of the same year, over 20 million people died from the virus across Asia, Europe, and the US. Finally, the third wave took place in 1919, impacting millions of people across Spain and Australia (Phillips, 2014).

Another severe virus is H1N1 or the swine flu, a well-known virus that first appeared in the United States in April 2009. This virus impacted the lungs and respiratory systems and led to the death of millions of people. The article “A Historical Exploration of Pandemics of Some Selected Diseases in the World” mentioned that researchers estimated that H1N1 caused death in 80% of people younger than 65 years of age, and this differs from typical seasonal influenza epidemics where 80-90% of deaths are estimated to occur in people 65 years of age and older. Moreover, 151,700 to 575,400 people died from the same disease across different countries

Sl No.	Name of the Pandemic event	Year of the Event	Place of the Event	Catastrophe
INFLUENZA				
1 <sup>(17)</sup>	Russian Flu	1889-1890	Uzbekistan and other parts of North America	About 1 million people died in this pandemic
2 <sup>(18)</sup>	Spanish Flu	1918-1919	Worldwide pandemic of all continents	500 million people were affected
3 <sup>(19)</sup>	Asian Flu	1957-1958	Started in China and then other parts of the globe including US	2 million deaths globally
4 <sup>(20)</sup>	Hong Kong Flu	1968-1969	First detected in Hong Kong and then disseminated to other parts of the globe	Killed one million people worldwide
5 <sup>(23)</sup>	H1N1	2009	Many parts of the globe	151,700 to 575,400 people perished from world and a disproportionate number of deaths occurred in Southeast Asia and Africa

Table 1 . Influenza pandemic events that occurred worldwide. (Samal, 2014, p. 168)

## **2.2 The Latest Pandemic in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (COVID-19)**

In 2020 the world faced a virus that has impacted millions of people called “COVID-19.” It is considered the fifth documented pandemic since the 1918 flu pandemic (Liu et al., 2020, p. 332). It all started in China in Wuhan city in wholesale markets, which are well-known markets in China known for selling wild animals like snakes, bats, and chickens. Scientists agreed that the virus was transmitted from animals to humans and then from humans to other humans. Symptoms and cases started to appear, and the numbers started to increase dramatically. On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization named the virus severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) and coronavirus disease. Globally the number of cases reached more than 600,000 million cases, with death rates reaching 183,803 people, while COVID-19 patients who have recovered till now are recorded as 674,413 people (Muttaqin et al., 2020, p. 1030).

## **2.3 Impact of COVID-19 on Community and Business**

It is noticeably clear that every disaster has its consequences. The world’s economy has been impacted negatively. Many factories and supply chains shut down. Many companies closed down, especially entrepreneurial and small businesses, in addition to many people being forced to leave their jobs. According to Statista (2021), in 2020, the global unemployment rate amounted to 5.42%, which means that over 1.72 million people were unemployed.

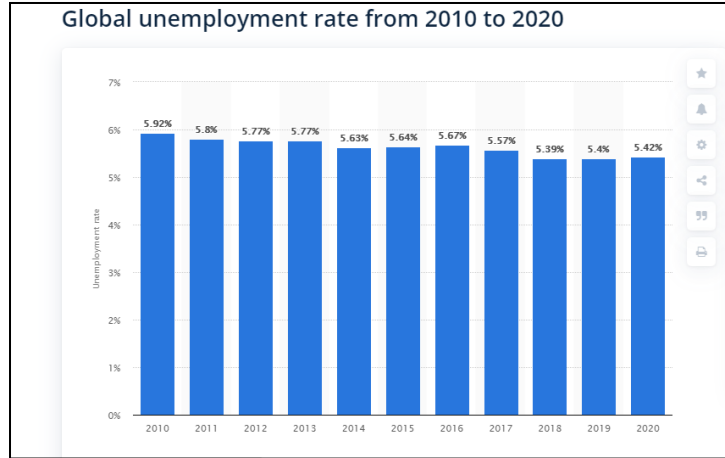


Figure 1. Show home-based work estimates (International Labour Organization, 2020)

In addition to many unemployed people, numerous activities and events were canceled, especially religious events. Also, sports activities and many other cultural activities across different countries were canceled as per the strict rules applied by most governments worldwide to prevent spreading the virus between people.

In the current situation, the unstoppable impact of the coronavirus pandemic has debilitated the businesses and projects of big brands and entrepreneurs to the point of causing excessive losses. Consequently, many companies have implemented work-from-home solutions for their employees. In contrast, other brands and companies took advantage of the current situation and showed their support for their communities and people by offering different services.

## 2.4 Role of Companies in Time of Crisis

The moment the pandemic hit the world, businesses and customers faced difficult challenges and became uncertain. All brands face the same challenge and are trying hard to sustain



their businesses against the competitors. Many questions were raised regarding the role of companies during the pandemic. Do companies have a certain role in addressing the pandemic? Shall they focus only on sustaining their businesses and increasing their market shares? How about employees, customers, and community; should they support them during the pandemic, and if yes, how? The situation was incredibly challenging for some brands that kept wondering what could be done differently in the current challenging circumstances that could support their businesses and sustain their positions and sales in the market. On the bright side, some brands prospered in the pandemic due to the outstanding performance and magnificent services and activities they presented to the community and employees in the time of crisis.

According to the top 2020 global brands article that was published by Interbrand, the article stated that Apple, Amazon, Google, McDonalds, Disney, and other companies were among the top 100 brands. Interbrand serves as a main model for this research paper. The website approach aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of global brands, including a clear view of how each brand contributes to market success today, as well as a roadmap of activities to ensure that it continues to thrive in the future. Moreover, each year, Interbrand is responsible for publishing the World's Most 100 Valuable Brands list. The brand performance is based on three key indicators: brand growth, brand value, and brand ranking compared to 2019 (Best Brands, 2020).

Some of the top companies like Microsoft shouldered the responsibility of protecting the health of their employees during work by applying strict rules like work-from-home solutions. Large companies have implemented dedicated responses with medical screening, surveillance, and care, including psychological support. On the other side, some companies supported their

communities by donating money to non-profit organizations or people impacted by the coronavirus.

Regarding working from home, 18% of workers work in different sectors worldwide with the infrastructure that would support them to work from their homes (International Labour Organization, 2020) effectively. Although this number is increasing, there are core factors that should be considered across different countries, including the differences across regions in term of the income level of each country, environmental factors, such as access to broadband internet and probability of having a personal computer, type of work, and flexibility of the company itself (International Labour Organization, 2020)

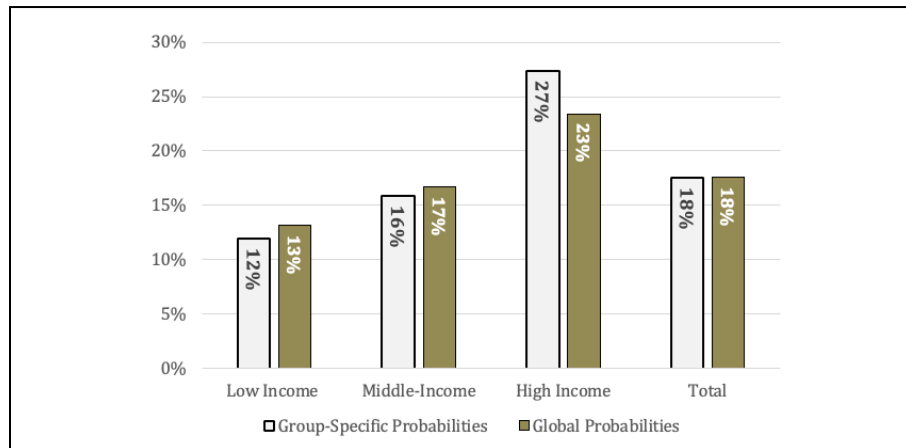


Figure 2. Show home-based work estimates (International Labour Organization, 2020)

## 2.5 How Brands Are Responding to COVID-19

Supporting the customers, employees, and community during the pandemic seems particularly important. The brands' reaction towards the coronavirus is considered a crucial topic for the customers and the employees.

Some customers raised some concerns against certain companies and brands due to the careless attitude and lack of communication during the pandemic. Based on a study conducted in March 2020, Chinese customers (76%) and Indian customers (60%) were the biggest nationalities that took action and wrote negative reviews about the brands that acted unprofessionally concerning the issue. In contrast, 16% of German customers convinced others to stop using some brands because of the poor responses and action in the coronavirus crisis (Guttman, 2020).

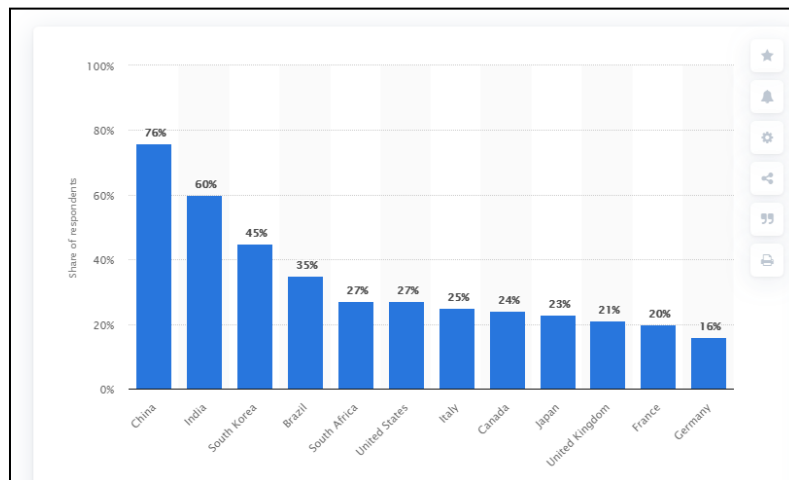


Figure 3. Countries that negatively reviewed brands that acted unprofessionally during the pandemic (Guttman, 2020).

However, many brands have shown their support of people who have been impacted by the crisis differently. One popular way to do so is by donating money to charities or non-profit organizations. Forbes stated that some brands took advantage of their customers' purchases by

giving back to society, which can assist in sending additional cash or producing products that could serve people in a way or another in fighting COVID. Moreover, donations in kind are another method of giving back during the COVID-19 crisis. A donation in kind means that instead of giving money to those who need it to buy the necessary goods or products, the goods and services themselves are given to them. Forbes mentions more than 20 brands currently applying this method, including Nike, which donated all of its current inventory of Air Zoom Pulse to frontline healthcare workers who are helping people who have been impacted by the crisis (Snowden, 2020a)

## **2.6 Role of Companies towards Employees and Society during the pandemic**

As stated by Owens Corning's representative, "these are extraordinary times that remind us of the power of the human spirit and how much we can overcome when we come together. And together, we will get through this." Countries have united together to fight the pandemic. Meanwhile, companies have had a core role in showing support towards the community. Due to a clear commitment to safety level, all companies have implemented specific procedures towards three core segments: employees, customers, and community. Starting with the employees, many companies have applied different solutions to support their employees, as mentioned in the mechanism for employee protection diagrams, such as working from home, wearing masks, social distancing, and others. Moreover, nearly 60% of companies have applied the working from the home technique. Other companies adhere to hygiene precautions, apply health duties before entering the office, and mandate social distancing practices and travel restrictions (Mahmud et al., 2021, p. 8).

Moreover, 16% of companies offer a bonus in salaries to all employees, especially across workers whose work requires a lot of face-to-face communications and supervision. One of these companies is Campbell Soup that has shown support for its employees working in critical positions in response to the current pandemic, such as a \$2 per-hour premium payment. Also, General Mills has declared bonuses for plant employees and officials to offer to work at manufacturing plants during the COVID-19 outbreak (Mahmud et al., 2021, p. 8).

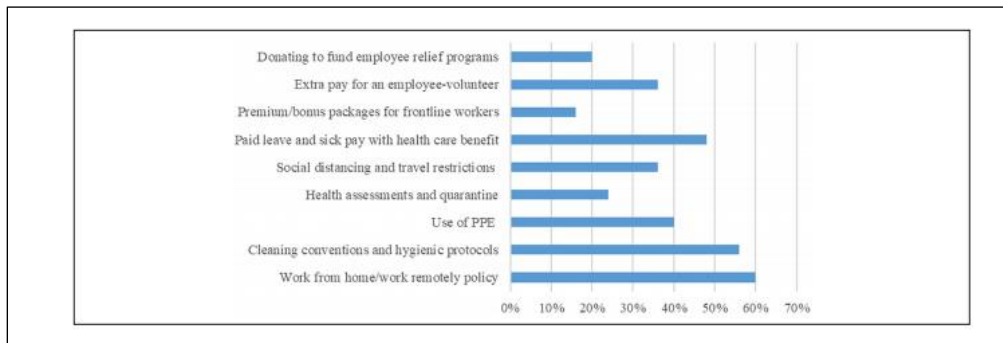


Figure 4. The different services and activities presented to the community during the pandemic (Mahmud et al., 2021, p. 8).

The serious situation that hit the world notwithstanding, customers are considered a significant factor across different companies. For instance, Johnson & Johnson and Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies started to create and invent a possible preventive vaccine against COVID-19. Also, on January, 3M produced N95 with an average of 100 million distribution per month.

Other than the care and support shown by different companies, donations, either in kind or in cash, are considered a common mechanism applied by many brands. For example, General

Motor produces respiratory products with special features that have personal protective equipment (PPE). General Motor succeeded in distributing 50,000 face masks daily or 1.5 million a month (Bala et al., 2021).

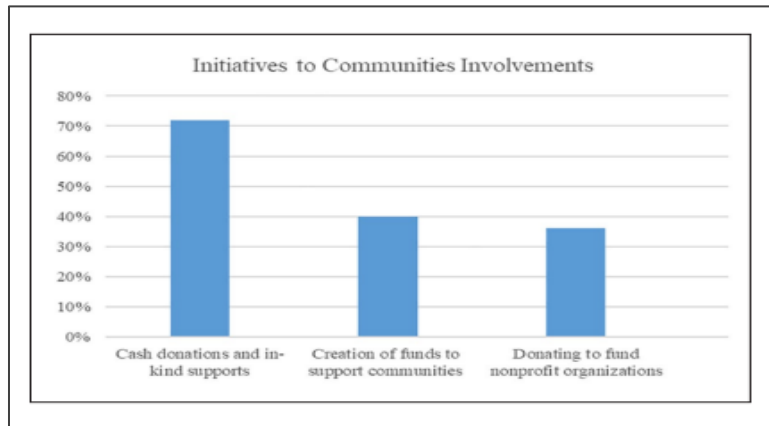


Figure 5. The different services and activities presented to the community during the pandemic (Mahmud et al., 2021, p. 9).

## 2.7 The effect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand performance

Co-creative interactions between the brand and its stakeholders generate brand equity. The more the stakeholders' needs are met, the higher in importance brand equity becomes. One of the most often suggested need is socially responsible behavior. Based on previous studies, CSR and corporate reputation, both have positive effect on industrial brand equity and brand performance. Additionally, Corporate reputation and industrial brand equity also have partial mediating effects on the relationship between CSR and brand performance (Lai et al., 2010).

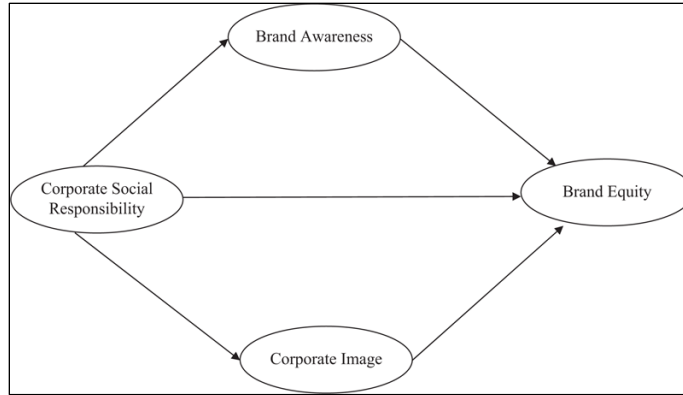


Figure 6. The impact of CSR on brand awareness and brand equity (Lai et al., 2010).

CSR has a direct positive impact on the brand image and brand reputation. Furthermore, previous studies showed that the relationship between CSR and corporate reputation is mediated by corporate brand credibility. The acts and attitudes of a company's management determine its corporate image, and CSR involvement can be the most successful way to achieve a competitive advantage. As a result, many businesses justify CSR initiatives by claiming that they would boost their brand image and create a positive reputation (Hur et al., 2013).

## 2.8 The impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand value during time of crisis

CSR (corporate social responsibility) has long been regarded as an important factor in business performance. Another advantage of CSR initiative is the opportunity for businesses to distinguish their products. Brand differentiation is critical in time of crisis because it establishes entry barriers, improves consumer loyalty, and increases purchase frequency. “Branding is about being different” so that customers can distinguish between goods and services and make informed purchasing decisions. In fact, previous research has suggested that companies can distinguish their brands by investing in CSR, and that these CSR investments become even more important for a

company's financial results as competition grows. As a result, CSR is an important part of a company's differentiation strategy and a form of strategic investment under management's control, similar to advertising and R&D (Bhattacharya et al., 2020).

CSR practices may be viewed as a deliberate effort to set the company apart from its rivals. As a result, CSR initiatives during crisis time can be a good predictor of future brand success.

Managers, on the other hand, would be unwise to devote limited resources to CSR programmes during times of crisis.

## **2.9 The impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on Consumer behavior during the pandemic**

Consumers are considered one of the significant stakeholder group that tends to be vulnerable to a company's CSR initiatives; previous surveys show that there is a positive connection between a company's CSR activities and consumers' reactions to the company and its product. According to Cone Communications' 2002 Corporate Citizenship survey, "84 percent of Americans claim they will be willing to switch to brands that are associated with a good cause, if price and quality are comparable." (C. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

Consumer's awareness of a company's CSR activities is important for positive responses to such activities. Previous studies indicate that there is substantial variation among consumers in terms of awareness and knowledge of companies' products and services. There is a phenomenon called "consumer-company identification"—is a significant internal consumer response to CSR initiatives. Individuals' needs for self-definition and social identity motivate them to create a sense of attachment, and this identification is a powerful state (C. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).



## Chapter Three: Research Framework

### 3.1 Conceptual Framework

This exploratory research is trying to answer several questions. What are the top 100 brands that are still growing despite the pandemic situation? How are these 100 brands responding to the pandemic crisis? What is the impact of COVID responses on brand performance, including brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking compared to 2019?

Answering these questions is especially important. To reach answers, the researcher implemented a conceptual framework to show the top 100 brands that were selected by Interbrand and the four types of brand responses that were chosen based on the literature review. The four types are donations in cash, customer service, employers/suppliers, and donations in kind. The framework also includes the impact of each response on brand performance across three main dependent variables: brand growth, brand value, and brand ranking compared to 2019.<sup>1</sup> The detailed Interbrand methodology is available at Interbrand (Inter Brand Best Global Brands 2020, 2020).

As explained, brands have the most critical role in showing their support during the pandemic. People are expecting a lot because of their loyalty to and familiarity with their brands. Based on the literature review, it has been revealed that the brands' responses during the pandemic are different and extremely critical across different values, including the community, customers, and employees. So, let us explain each one in detail as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> The detailed methodology of Interbrand is available at the following link  
[https://learn.interbrand.com/hubfs/INTERBRAND/Interbrand\\_Best\\_Global\\_Brands%202020\\_Desktop-Print.pdf](https://learn.interbrand.com/hubfs/INTERBRAND/Interbrand_Best_Global_Brands%202020_Desktop-Print.pdf)

## **Donations in Cash**

Many brands applied the easiest solution. They donated money to different charities or organizations impacted by the coronavirus. One of these brands is Johnson & Johnson that donated \$100 million to fund frontline health professionals battling COVID-19, including doctors, nurses, and community health care personnel, who are working tirelessly to serve patients across different countries (“The More You Have, the Less You Give? Prospective Donation Behavior for COVID-19 Causes,” 2020).

## **Customer Service**

Brands are going through a challenging time to adopt new methods to protect their customers and sustain their businesses is considered a challenging transition for many brands. However, many succeeded in implementing new methods that could fit with the current situation. For example, BMW Group has presented its customers with strict procedures during the pandemic, such as an extension of warranties from new vehicle sales and extension of maintenance intervals (The International BMW Website | BMW.Com, 2020). Also, many brands have transferred their payment methods to be online to make it easier for customers to make contactless purchases.

## **Employees**

Since the pandemic hit the world, different brands offered different services and facilities to employees to facilitate their work routine during the pandemic, like providing work-at-home solutions. Moreover, some brands offered benefits like extra days off.

## Donations in Kind

Another type of donation is called “donations in kind”. Instead of giving money away to buy the needed goods or products, the needed goods or products themselves are given away, which is what brands have done during the pandemic. Based on the in-depth interviews conducted with brand managers, Colgate is currently producing new soaps to overcome the virus. Special instructions were written on the package on proper handwashing to strengthen the World Health Organization (WHO) #SafeHands message.

The conceptual model will explore and unearth different insights and answer the paper’s main objective, whether the four proposed responses significantly influence the dependent variables.

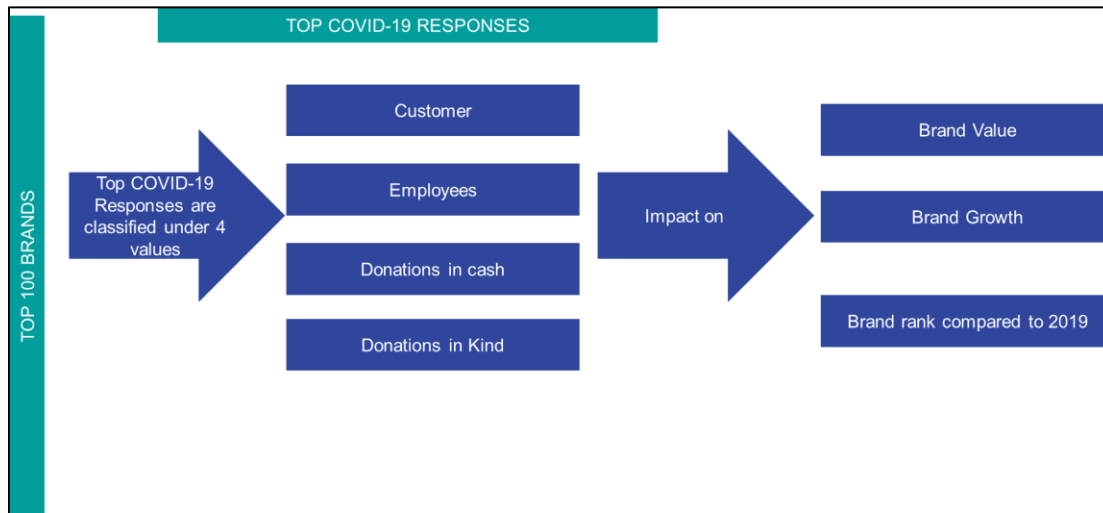


Figure 7. The conceptual framework explaining how the top COVID-19 responses are classified under four values and their impact on the three main brand performance parameters

### 3.2 Hypotheses and Research Question

Based on the literature analysis, people all over the world are afraid of losing relatives and friends as a result of the corona virus. Everyone is trying to help each other solve the current challenges. Nevertheless, companies have no choice but to assist and think of different initiatives to help their internal and external stakeholders.

When we talk about stakeholders, we should first understand what we mean by internal and external stakeholders? And what are their main role? Based on the stakeholder theory that Dr. F. Edward Freeman executed, he stated that the company should achieve its mandatory organizational goals and voluntary social welfare motives. A corporation should protect the interests of all stakeholders who may influence or are affected by the company's operations. Moreover, Freeman (1984) explains the definition of the stakeholder, a person or a member of a community who can influence survival and progress.

Stakeholder theory illuminates the central theme of the relationship between the company and three main pillars; customers, employees, community, and overall social welfare (Mahmud et al., 2021). Also, based on different studies conducted, it has proven that employees (an internal stakeholder group) and customers and societies (two separate external stakeholder groups) are the most relevant stakeholders for businesses. These stakeholder groups reaffirm the core features of all CSR studies, as they are critical stakeholders for a company's long-term success and sustainability in society (Barnett, 2007).

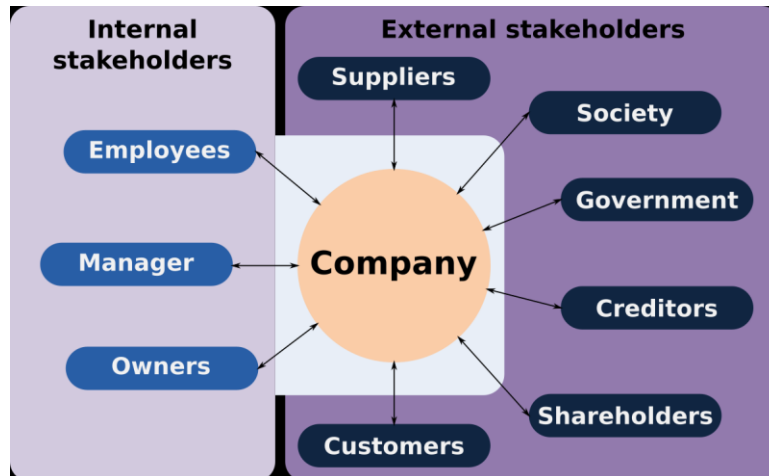


Figure 8. The stakeholder theory diagram shows the difference between the company's internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. Adapted from Freeman (1984 and Barnett (2007)

The stakeholder theory shows that employees, customers, and community are critical and key stakeholders for a company's long-term success and sustainability. Therefore, during any crisis, an organization owes its stakeholders, such as staff, customers, and societies, duty and transparency. In this research study, we propose that companies should help society and its vital stakeholders such as employees, consumers, and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic era, based on the prescriptions of stakeholder theory and CSR theory (Barnett, 2007).

As explained in the literature review, different studies showed the company's responses during the pandemic, and the type of responses was different based on the stakeholder. As shown company's most powerful stakeholder is its employee. Employees' positive contributions to a company's brand image, market growth, corporate integrity, the company-stakeholder relationships, community development, and social welfare are critical for the company's overall economic, environmental, and social objectives to be met sustainably.

Hundreds of millions of part-time and full-time workers have already lost their jobs around the world. According to reports, frontline workers in critical industries such as hospitals, grocery stores, and transportation have a higher risk of contracting the virus because they frequently operate with little to no defense during the COVID19 pandemic. During a crucial time such as this, employers and workers should develop better relationships than ever. Work-from-home policies, sanitation conventions and hygiene procedures, personal protective equipment (PPE), wellness tests and quarantine, social distancing activities, and travel restrictions are all used by various organizations. Other supportive measures include providing paid leave and sick pay with health insurance coverage, premium/bonus, employee volunteerism participation benefits, and employee relief initiatives (Asante Boadi et al., 2019).

Moving to the external stakeholders, Customers are an important pillar in any company, and tens of millions of customers around the world are forced to stay at home due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Hasbro, a global pioneer in the entertainment industry, has announced the launch of “BringHometheFun,” a campaign designed to help children and their parents make the world a better place. Customers are encouraged to participate in the conversation and interact with other families. Also, another example that shows the key actions that were taken for the customers during the pandemic is Gap Inc. It supplies tens of millions of much-needed medical supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, protective gowns, and special goggles for health professionals and hospital workers (Bala et al., 2021).

Another type of external stakeholder is society; multinational corporations partner today with the largest broad-based global and local foundations and non-profit organizations to improve communities’ health and safety networks during this crisis. Different research studies agreed that many companies provide charitable contributions to society, such as giving donations in cash or

donations in-kind services to social activities. For example, “Puget Sound’s COVID-19 Response Fund” has received a \$1 million donation from Microsoft. Businesses and local authorities in Puget Sound are taking appropriate and required measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and protect public health as the world deals with COVID-19. On the other side, Cisco has set aside \$210 million in-kind and \$8 million in cash for this endeavor. A portion of the money will go to “the United Nations Foundation’s COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund,” which will assist “the World Health Organization’s (WHO) worldwide efforts” to avoid, track, and control COVID-19 (Robbins, 2020).

After delving into the brand responses, all the studies focused on four types of responses presented during the pandemic: customer services, Employees/suppliers support, donations in kind, and donations in cash. So, in this chapter, the research question is discussed and unearthing the four hypotheses proposed to answer the research objective.

**RQ:** Do COVID responses (customer service, employers/suppliers, donations in kind, and donations in cash) have a significant positive impact on brand performance (brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking vs. 2019)?

Previous studies showed that some brand responses during the pandemic, including customers and employees, positively impact brand performance in general in terms of brand loyalty, brand equity, brand awareness, and brand image (Shin et al., 2021). Moreover, few studies stated that customers and donations in kind during the pandemic are considered a great opportunity for brands. Donations create value through proactive partnership and cooperation with other related players and stakeholders, which will almost certainly improve their familiarity and reputation, and therefore, their long-term profitability and brand value (Salinas, 2020).

Considering this, it is hypothesized that **H1**: Donations in kind will have a significant positive effect on brand performance in terms of

- a. brand value.
- b. brand growth.
- c. brand ranking in 2020 versus ranking in 2019.

**H2**: Donations in cash will have a significant positive effect on brand performance in terms of

- a. brand value.
- b. brand growth.
- c. brand ranking in 2020 versus ranking in 2019.

**H3**: Customer service will have a significant positive effect on brand performance in terms of

- a. brand value.
- b. brand growth.
- c. brand ranking in 2020 versus ranking in 2019.



**H4:** Employers/suppliers will have a significant positive effect on brand performance in terms of

- a. brand value.
- b. brand growth.
- c. brand ranking in 2020 versus ranking in 2019.

**The RQ** explores whether the four proposed responses of the brands during the pandemic will significantly positively impact the brand value or brand growth and place the brand in a better ranking position in 2020 compared to 2019.

**H1** predicted that donations in kind have a strong and positive impact on brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking in 2020 compared to 2019. **H2** predicted that donations in cash positively impacted brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking in 2020 compared to 2019. Moreover, **H3** predicted that customer service has a significant positive effect on brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking in 2020 compared to 2019. Finally, **H4** predicted that employers/suppliers have a significant positive impact on brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking in 2020 compared to 2019.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the method used in this study to measure the findings.

#### **Methodology**

The methodology used in this paper is secondary data and a qualitative approach to answer the research question.

#### **Sample**

The year 2020 is where the world is still calculating the effects of a year of turbulence that was seismic in magnitude and rapid in impact. The value of the Top 100 Best Global Brands has increased by 9%, with a combined brand value of over \$2 trillion. As a result of the COVID effect, strong brands have grown even stronger, strengthening big tech supremacy. But what does this mean for brands right now and in the future? Could we be entering a new decade of opportunity after a period of anxiety?

Interbrand answered all these questions, and this source serves as a model for this research paper. Its approach aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of global brands, including a clear view of how each brand contributes to market success today, as well as a roadmap of activities to ensure that it continues to thrive in the future. Moreover, each year, Interbrand is responsible for publishing the World's Most 100 Valuable Brands list. The brand performance is based on three key indicators: brand growth, brand value, and brand ranking compared to 2019.

The Covid response data for each of the 100 brand we investigated from all official internet sites for the brand including websites, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In those sites the brands describe and report their responses to the COVID-19 crisis. From the report and description, we were able to classify the responses under the four categories (customers, employees, donations in cash, and donations in kind). The four categories were derived from previous research and this was explained earlier in the literature review.

There were other responses also reported in the literature review but after investigating the 100 brands in our research we did not find evidence of such responses example: Zara brand paid for all orders with suppliers, whether finished or in production.

01  +38% 322,999 \$m	02  +60% 200,667 \$m	03  +53% 166,001 \$m	04  -1% 165,444 \$m	05  +2% 62,289 \$m	26  -9% 18,603 \$m	27  +41% 18,206 \$m	28  +0% 17,961 \$m	29  -30% 17,961 \$m	30  New 17,328 \$m
06  -10% 56,894 \$m	07  -8% 51,595 \$m	08  -3% 49,268 \$m	09  -6% 42,816 \$m	10  -8% 40,773 \$m	31  +2% 16,552 \$m	32  -2% 15,675 \$m	33  -3% 15,606 \$m	34  -4% 15,073 \$m	35  -13% 14,862 \$m
11  -4% 39,756 \$m	12  -8% 36,971 \$m	13  -12% 35,178 \$m	14  -14% 34,885 \$m	15  +6% 34,388 \$m	36  +1% 14,295 \$m	37  -14% 14,008 \$m	38  +2% 13,900 \$m	39  +7% 12,935 \$m	40  New 12,785 \$m
16  -4% 34,119 \$m	17  -2% 31,720 \$m	18  +12% 28,011 \$m	19  New 26,060 \$m	20  -11% 21,694 \$m	41  +41% 12,665 \$m	42  -12% 12,568 \$m	43  +8% 12,553 \$m	44  -2% 12,428 \$m	45  +15% 12,397 \$m
21  -4% 21,203 \$m	22  +6% 20,220 \$m	23  -10% 19,458 \$m	24  +6% 19,161 \$m	25  +3% 18,870 \$m	46  +2% 12,277 \$m	47  -5% 12,267 \$m	48  +3% 12,211 \$m	49  +7% 12,129 \$m	50  +1% 12,070 \$m

Table 2. Interbrand top 100 brands (Inter Brand Best Global Brands 2020, 2020).

51  +14% 12,010 \$m	52  -6% 11,936 \$m	53  +0% 11,671 \$m	54  -16% 11,578 \$m	55  -3% 11,301 \$m
56  -5% 11,246 \$m	57  +17% 11,055 \$m	58  +34% 10,755 \$m	59  -8% 10,553 \$m	60  +38% 10,514 \$m
61  +2% 10,512 \$m	62  +4% 10,340 \$m	63  +8% 10,252 \$m	64  -14% 10,118 \$m	65  -11% 9,740 \$m
66  -8% 9,547 \$m	67  +4% 9,409 \$m	68  +6% 9,345 \$m	69  +8% 8,865 \$m	70  +52% 8,389 \$m
71  -15% 8,057 \$m	72  +9% 7,535 \$m	73  -9% 7,494 \$m	74  -12% 7,474 \$m	75  +5% 7,367 \$m

76  +31% 7,296 \$m	77  -16% 6,654 \$m	78  +3% 6,563 \$m	79  -1% 6,379 \$m	80  -9% 6,301 \$m
81  +5% 6,289 \$m	82  -1% 6,268 \$m	83  -1% 5,988 \$m	84  -14% 5,855 \$m	85  -6% 5,844 \$m
86  -9% 5,830 \$m	87  +1% 5,764 \$m	88  -2% 5,520 \$m	89  -9% 5,367 \$m	90  +8% 5,210 \$m
91  -3% 5,123 \$m	92  -7% 5,111 \$m	93  -13% 5,077 \$m	94  -7% 4,966 \$m	95  -10% 4,965 \$m
96  -13% 4,942 \$m	97  -8% 4,809 \$m	98  New 4,555 \$m	99  -6% 4,495 \$m	100  New 4,481 \$m

Table 3. (Inter Brand Best Global Brands 2020, 2020).

### Classification of brand responses during the pandemic

Since the researcher would like to analyze COVID responses across the top 100 brands and the impact of each response on brand performance in 2020, the researcher studied the brand value, brand growth and brand ranking vs 2019 of the 100 brands mentioned by Interbrand.

As mentioned in the literature review and based on previous studies, the researcher agreed that brand responses during the pandemic fall under four categories as follows: employers/suppliers, customer service, donations in cash, and donations in kind.

## Response Orientation Scores

Each company now has four scores indicating how many of its values are classified under each of the four response orientations (RO). Then those scores were normalized as RO scores (percentages) using the following normalization formula:

$$RO\% = (RO \text{ score} \times 100) / (\text{sum of RO scores}).$$

Therefore, if a company had three responses, then each score would account for a 33.3% RO score, but if the company had four responses, then the score would account for a 25% RO score. For example, a company declaring two responses may have a tally of 50% employees, 50% donations in money, 0% customer service, and 0% donations in kind

## Analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to see if any of the standardized value scores as an independent (predictor) variable have a significant positive impact or relationship with any of the response indicators as a dependent (predicted) variable. In this case, there are three brand performance indicators given by Interbrand 100: brand growth, brand value, and brand ranking in 2020 versus 2019.

The three response orientations were each regressed on each of the four responses.

Three regression models were run to test the whole set of possibilities (see Table 2).

$$Y_{(1-3)} = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4$$

Where  $Y_1$  is brand value,

$Y_2$  is brand growth, and

$Y_3$  is brand ranking in 2020 versus ranking in 2019,

$a$  is a constant

$b_1, b_2, b_3,$  and  $b_4$  are the regression coefficients

$X_1$  is the response orientation customer service

$X_2$  is the response orientation employers/suppliers

$X_3$  is the response orientation donations in kind, and

$X_4$  is the response orientation donations in cash.

## Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, the results and findings of the research question are reported. The main research question of this paper is the following:

Do COVID responses (customer service, employers/suppliers, donations in kind, and donations in cash) have a significant positive impact on brand performance (brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking vs. 2019)?

The findings evaluate the impact of the independent variables: employers/suppliers, customer service, donations in kind, and donations in cash on the dependent variables: brand value, brand growth, and brand ranking compared to 2019.

### 4.1 The impact of COVID Responses on Brand Performance

As seen in model 1, the coefficients show that (x1, donations in cash) scores.518 are closer to the desired results but still not important compared to the other predictors. As a result, the four COVID responses (x1, x2, x3, and x4) have no significant impact on the brand value.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	49190.275	42965.201		1.145	.255
	X1 Donation in Cash	-.282621-	.435289	-.307-	-.649-	.518
	X2 Customer Service	-.173463-	.425915	-.143-	-.407-	.685
	X3 Employer/Supplier	-.186143-	.407280	-.114-	-.457-	.649
	X4 Donation in Kind	-.341974-	.444833	-.245-	-.769-	.444

a. Dependent Variable: Y1 Brand Value

Table 4. Model (1) shows the impact of COVID responses on brand value

Model 2 results are close to Model 1, and none of the four Covid responses have a major positive impact on brand ranking in 2020 compared to 2019.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.065	6.494		1.396	.166
	X1 Donation in Cash	-.097-	.066	-.689-	-1.467-	.146
	X2 Customer Service	-.091-	.064	-.464-	-1.414-	.161
	X3 Employer/Supplier	-.096-	.062	-.397-	-1.551-	.124
	X4 Donation in Kind	-.109-	.067	-.527-	-1.628-	.107

a. Dependent Variable: Y2 Ranking Compared to 2019

Table 5. Model (2) shows the impact of COVID responses on brand ranking in 2020 versus 2019

As shown in table 3, customer service is .023 significant and donation in kind is .033, indicating that customer service and donation in kind are the only two responses that have a major positive impact on brand growth. As a result, the model demonstrates that any branded activities that directly affect the consumer significantly impact the brand.



Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	32.591	15.467		2.107	.038
	X1 Donation in Cash	-.289-	.157	-.846-	-1.844-	.069
	X2 Customer Service	-.354-	.153	-.741-	-2.314-	.023
	X3 Employer/Supplier	-.248-	.147	-.420-	-1.681-	.096
	X4 Donation in Kind	-.347-	.160	-.686-	-2.169-	.033

a. Dependent Variable: Y3 Brand Growth

Table 6. Model (3) shows the impact of COVID responses on brand growth

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the findings, explains their roots in the literature, and draws the conclusion followed by the limitations and recommendations for future research.

### **5.1 The Four COVID Responses and Brand Performance**

The study's overall objective is to understand the impact of COVID responses on brand performance, including brand growth, brand value, and brand ranking in 2020 versus in 2019. The sample chosen was analyzed based on the top 100 brands in 2020, according to Interbrand. The results in the study show that, across the four COVID responses (customer service, donations in kind, donations in cash, and employers/suppliers), all COVID responses did not have any significant positive impact on brand value and brand ranking in 2020 versus in 2019. However, when it comes to brand growth, customer service and donations in kind are the only responses that showed a significant positive impact.

### **5.2 Direct and Branded Activities Affect Consumers More**

When analyzing the reasons that caused customer service and donations to have a more significant effect on brand growth, unlike other responses, any branded activities that affect the customer directly will have a significant positive impact on brand growth. Moreover, donations in kind always remind the customer of the brand itself, and, therefore, they have a significant positive impact on the brand. On the contrary, employers/suppliers have an internal impact only on the brand. Simultaneously, donations in cash are neither a direct activity nor are they branded, and, therefore, these do not have a significant positive impact on brand growth.

### 5.3 Managerial implications

Based on the proposed sample and prior studies, which can help companies navigate and recover from any crisis. In this section, we discuss some theoretical insights and managerial implications relevant to the ongoing coronavirus epidemic. Also, the steps that each brand can take to keep its business afloat in the event of a crisis. 3 In-depth interviews were conducted with brand managers across three multinational companies; Unilever, P&G, and Nestle. As mentioned above, this aims to establish more informative, competent managerial implications from theories to educate practitioners.

Yasmeen Nassar, Sunsilk brand manager in Egypt, stated that “We launched a series of initiatives to support global and national efforts to help combat the spread of Covid-19 shortly after the World Health Organization classified it as a pandemic”. One of these initiatives contributes €100 million in soap, sanitizer, chlorine, and nutritional contributions and provides €500 million in cash flow relief to small and medium-sized manufacturers and consumers.

In the response of COVID-19, Lifebuoy is considered one of the first brands that launched a public awareness campaign to remind people of the importance of hand hygiene and how it can help prevent infection spread. Moreover, she stated that Unilever’s mission is that “everyone needs access to life’s necessities.” Unilever’s vital goods have been helping thousands of organizations and hundreds of thousands of needy people throughout the UK across 2020, whether it’s ambient food, hot beverages, personal care, or household objects. During the current pandemic, their unwavering support has meant even more.

On a spontaneous level, she noted that customers and employees are their top priorities. Even though they have faced significant challenges in increasing sales across specific categories, especially across the hair care category, by 2020, they have done a lot for their internal and external stakeholders. Consumers have received cleaning products, and money has been donated to non-profit organizations. On the other hand, they implemented a work-from-home policy for their workers and took the utmost care, close to what P&G did for their employees.

The brand manager at P&G stated that “We’re responding to the call to do even more during the pandemic, led by three core principles: protecting P&G people’s health and well-being; serving customers around the world who rely on our brands and the benefits they provide; and supporting governments, aid agencies, and people on the front lines of this global pandemic.

On the other side, Seif Abdo, Nesquik brand manager at Nestle, agreed that COVID-19 might indicate a disruption in ingredient and material supplies. The current situation has made obtaining raw materials and packaging materials more difficult.

Zooming in on the results, the only answers that had a substantial positive effect on brand development were customer support and donations in kind. Furthermore, the findings were decided upon by the brand managers, who stated that any branded activity that directly affects the consumer has a substantial positive effect instead of indirect and unbranded activities or services.

## 5.4 Limitations

The sample and data collection in this study were very limited, when it comes to analyzing the top 100 brands in 2020 this study depended only on one source which is the Interbrand website. This source aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of global brands, including a clear analysis on the brand performance. The brand performance according to Interbrand is based on three key indicators: Brand Growth Brand value and brand ranking compared to 2019.

Moreover, the classification of the responses was limited under four categories; Donation Kind, Cash Donation, Customer service and employees. Due to the limitations of the preliminary studies covering the brand responses during the pandemic.

Additionally, some exterior factors affected the results of the research (statistical noise) specially brand performance. The first factor is the industry including electronics, media technology, beverages and FMCG. The second factor is the global expansion. Moreover, there are 5 new brands added to the list and they are considered as missing data for the rank change. The previous factors have affected the brand performance and accordingly the results of the study.

## 5.5 Directions for Future Research

Imagine how much healthier the world will be due to corporate giving schemes if brands had the potential to change the world on a grand scale. Giving back has other advantages for brands besides making the planet a better place. One of the critical things that this research paper focused on is that customer is the most important aspect of any business, regardless of what industry you're in or what goods and services you offer. There are no sales without the consumer. Your marketing

plans will inevitably fail if you don't consider the perspectives of your customers. Customers want to see the effect they've had by buying from you.

On the other hand, Non-profits and charities depend on donations to survive. But donations in cash aren't the only thing that counts; donations in kind are also important. The benefits of an in-kind donation can be enormous for both parties involved. It could be an incentive for the donor to give away excess products that would otherwise be costly to dispose of. It helps the non-profit to obtain items that they need without depleting their operating budget. This allows both sides to have a bigger effect at a lower rate.

Donation in kind, particularly if it is a branded service, is regarded as a direct service that allows the customers to remember the brand quickly. It also demonstrates how the brand has a significant effect on the world, unlike donations in cash

Future research is needed to understand the relationship between customers and brand growth, and donations in kind. There have been preliminary studies to understand the effect of these factors on brand performance, especially during the pandemic.

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## Appendix

### Interbrand Full Methodology

# Methodology



Interbrand's brand valuation methodology seeks to provide a rich and insightful analysis of your brand, providing a clear picture of how your brand is contributing to business growth today, together with a road map of activities to ensure that it is delivering even further growth tomorrow.

Having pioneered brand valuation in 1988, we have a deep understanding of the impact a strong brand has on key stakeholder groups that influence the growth of your business, namely (current and prospective) customers, employees, and investors. Strong brands influence customer choice and create loyalty; attract, retain, and motivate talent; and lower the cost of financing. Our brand valuation methodology has been specifically designed to take all of these factors into account.

Interbrand was the first company to have its methodology certified as compliant with the requirements of ISO 10668 (requirements for monetary brand valuation) and played a key role in the development of the standard itself. There are three key components to all of our valuations: an analysis of the financial performance of the branded products or services, the role the brand plays in purchase decisions, and the brand's competitive strength. For a more in-depth view, visit [bestglobalbrands.com](http://bestglobalbrands.com).

#### Financial Data:

REFINITIV 

Refinitiv, company annual reports, investor presentations and analyst reports

 infegy

Social Media Analysis:  
Text Analytics and Social  
Listening by Infegy

# Brand Strength Factors →

## INTERNAL FACTORS

### Leadership



#### Direction

The degree to which there is a clear purpose and ambition for the brand, a plan to deliver on them over time, and a defined culture and values to guide how those plans should be executed.



#### Alignment

The degree to which the whole organisation is pulling in the same direction, committed to the brand strategy and empowered by systems to execute it across the business.



#### Empathy

The degree to which the organisation is in tune with customers and wider stakeholders, actively listening to and anticipating their evolving needs, beliefs and desires, and responding effectively and appropriately.



#### Agility

The speed to market that a company demonstrates in the face of opportunity or challenge, enabling it to get ahead and stay ahead of expectations.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

## Engagement



### Distinctiveness

The existence of uniquely ownable signature assets and experiences that are recognised and remembered by customers and difficult to replicate.



### Coherence

The degree to which customer interactions, whilst varying depending on channel and context, remain authentic to the brand's narrative and feel.



### Participation

The degree to which the brand has the ability to draw in customers and partners, create a sense of dialogue and encourage involvement and collaboration.

## Relevance



### Presence

The degree to which a brand feels omnipresent to relevant audiences, is talked about positively, and is easily recalled when a customer has a need in the brand's category.



### Trust

The extent to which a brand is seen to deliver against the (high) expectations that customers have of it, is perceived to act with integrity and with customers' interests in mind.



### Affinity

The degree to which customers feel a positive connection with the brand, based on the functional and/or emotional benefits provided, and/or a sense of having shared values.

Brands	COVID Responses				Brand Value	Ranking Compared to 2019	Brand Growth
	Donations in Cash	Customer Service	Employee	Donations in Kind			
Apple	25%	25%	25%	25%	322999 \$m	0	38%
Amazon	33.30%	33.30%	33.30%	0%	200,667 \$m	1	60%
Microsoft	100%	0%	0%	0%	166,001 \$m	1	53%
Google	50%	50%	0%	0%	165444 \$m	-2	-1%
Samsung	100%	0%	0%	0%	62289 \$m	1	2%
Coca-Cola	0%	50%	50%	0%	56894 \$m	-1	-10%
Toyota	0%	50%	50%	0%	51595 \$m	0	-8%
Mercedes Benz	100%	0%	0%	0%	49268 \$m	0	-3%
McDonalds	50%	0%	0%	50%	42816 \$m	0	-6%
Disney	0%	100%	0%	0%	40773 \$m	0	-8%
BMW	33.30%	33.30%	0%	33.30%	39756 \$m	0	-4%
Intel	100%	0%	0%	0%	36971 \$m	1	-8%
Facebook	100%	0%	0%	0%	35178 \$m	1	-12%
IBM	0%	100	0%	0%	34885 \$m	-2	-14%
Nike	0%	0%	0%	100%	34388 \$m	1	6%
Cisco	50%	50%	0%	0%	34119 \$m	-1	-4%
Louis Vuitton	0%	100%	0%	0%	31720 \$m	0	-2%
SAP	100%	0%	0%	0%	28011 \$m	2	12%
Instagram (New in the list)	0%	100%	0%	0%	26060 \$m	NA	NA
Chanel	50%	50%	0	0	21203 \$m	1	-4%
J.p. Morgan	100	0	0	0	20220 \$m	3	6%
American Express	0	100%	0	0	19458 \$m	0	-10%
UPS	0	50	50	0	19161 \$m	3	6%
IKEA	0	50	50	0	18870 \$m	1	3%
Pepsi	100%	0	0	0	18603 \$m	-2	-9%
Adobe	0		100%	0	18206 \$m	12	41%
Hermes	0	50	50	0	17961 \$m	0	0%
GE	0	0	100	0	17961 \$m	-10	-30%
YouTube	0	100%	0	0	17328 \$m	NA	NA
Accenture	0	100%	0	0	16552 \$m	0	2%
Gucci	100%	0	0	0	15675 \$m	1	-2%
Budweiser	100%	0	0	0	15606 \$m	-1	-3%
Pampers	0	50	50	0	15073 \$m	0	-4%
Zara	0	0	100%	0	14862 \$m	0	1%

Figure 9. The Covid Responses Data

Hyundai	0	33.3	33.3	33.3	14295 \$m	0	1%
H&M	50	0	0	50	14008 \$m	-7	-14%
Nescafe	0	50	50	0	13900 \$m	0	2%
Allianz	0	100%	0	0	12395 \$m	4	7%
Tesla	100%	0	0	0	12785 \$m	NA	NA
Netflix	100%	0	0	0	12665 \$m	24	41%
Ford	0	100%	0	0	12568 \$m	-7	-12%
L'oreal	50%	0	0	50%	12553 \$m	8	8%
Audi	0	100%	0	0	12428 \$m	-2	-2%
Visa	0	50	50	0	12397 \$m	10	15%
E bay	100%	0	0	0	12277 \$m	-2	2%
Volks Wagen	100%	0	0	0	12267 \$m	-7	-5%
AXA	100%	0	0	0	12211 \$m	-2	3%
Goldman Sachs	100%	0	0	0	12129 \$m	4	7%
Addidas	100%	0	0	0	12070 \$m	-5	1%
Sony	100%	0	0	0	12010 \$m	5	14%
Citi	100%	0	0	0	11936 \$m	-11	-6%
Philips	100%	0	0	0	11671 \$m	-4	0%
Gillette	100%	0	0	0	11578 \$m	-17	-16%
Porsche	0%	0	100%	0	11301 \$m	-5	-3%
Starbucks	100%	0	0	0	11246 \$m	-8	-5%
Mastercard	100%	0	0	0	11055 \$m	5	17%
Salesforce	100%	0	0	0	10755 \$m	12	34%
Nissan	100%	0	0	0	10553 \$m	-8	-7%
PayPal	100%	0	0	0	10514 \$m	12	38%
Siemens	100%	0	0	0	10512 \$m	-3	2%
Danone	50%	0	0	50%	10340 \$m	-3	4%
Nestle	0	0	50%	50%	10252 \$m	-3	8%
HSBC	100%	0	0	0	10118 \$m	-17	-14%
HP	0	50%	50%	0	9740 \$m	-11	-11%
Kellogg's	100%	0	0	0	9547 \$m	-9	-8%
3M	0	0	0	100%	9409 \$m	-3	4%
Colgate	0	50%	0	50%	9345 \$m	-2	6%
Morgan Stanley	100%	0	0	0	8865 \$m	0	8%
Spotify	100%	0	0	0	8389 \$m	22	52%
Canon	100%	0	0	0	8057 \$m	-10	-15%
Lego	100%	0	0	0	7535 \$m	3	9%
Cartier	100%	0	0	0	7494 \$m	-5	-9%
Santander	100%	0	0	0	7474 \$m	-7	-12%
FedEx	0	0	0	100%	7367 \$m	-2	5%
Nintendo	100%	0	0	0	7296 \$m	13	31%
Hewlett Packard Enterprise	0	0	0	100%	6654 \$m	-6	-16%
Corona	100%	0	0	0	6563 \$m	1	3%
Ferrari	50%	0	0	50%	6379 \$m	-2	-1%
Huawei	100%	0	0	0	6301 \$m	-6	-9%
DHL	0	0	0	100%	6289 \$m	2	5%
Jack Daniel's	100%	0	0	0	6288 \$m	-2	-1%
Dior	0	0	0	100%	5988 \$m	-1	-1%
Caterpillar	50%	0	50%	0	5855 \$m	-8	-14%
Panasonic	100%	0	0	0	5844 \$m	-4	-6%
KIA	50%	50%	0	0	5830 \$m	-8	-9%
Johnson & Johnson	100%	0	0	0	5764 \$m	-1	1%
Heineken	0	33.3	33.3	33.3	5520 \$m	0	-2%
John Deere	100%	0	0	0	5367 \$m	-5	-9%
LinkedIn	0	100%	0	0	5210 \$m	8	8%
Hennessey	100%	0	0	0	5123 \$m	4	-3%
KFC	0	0	0	100%	5111 \$m	1	-11%
Land Rover	0	0	100%	0	5077 \$m	-8	-13%
Tiffany & Co.	100%	0	0	0	4966 \$m	0	-7%
Mini ( Same as BMW)	0	50	0	50	4965 \$m	-5	-10%
Uber	0	0	0	100%	4942 \$m	-9	-13%
Burberry	0	0	0	100%	4809 \$m	-1	-8%
Johnnie Walker	100%	0	0	0	4555 \$m	NA	NA
Prada	100%	0	0	0	4495 \$m	1	-6%
Zoom	0	100%	0	0	4481 \$m	NA	NA

Figure 10. The Covid Responses Data



# Understanding the impact of COVID responses on brand performance

## INDEPTH INTERVIEWS

45 MINUTES

### Objective of the Study

The main objective is to analyse the impact of the COVID responses on the brand value, brand growth and its 2020 ranking vs 2019 during the pandemic.

### Sample Design - 4 Online In-depth Interviews with brand managers

#### Sections Covered in the Discussion Guide

Section Title	Duration
Warm-Up & Introduction	5 minutes
A. Exploring the COVID responses across each brand	10 min
B. Understand their expectations towards these responses on the brand performance	15 min
C. Understand their reactions towards the research findings	15 minutes
D. Identify different decisions they would take based on the discussion	10 minutes

#### Warm-Up & Introduction (5 minutes)

We have invited you here/this project to discuss and analyze the impact of COVID responses on brand performance

- Ensure that there are no right or wrong answers; their honest views are encouraged
- Reiterate importance and value of participant's contribution
- Explain the need for audio/ video recording
- What is your name, education and occupation and years of experience?

#### A. Exploring the COVID responses across each brand (10 minutes)

- IF I tell you the word "COVID-19" what are the top things that come to your mind in terms of the words, emotions, images...etc.

**Moderator please get spontaneous reactions and probe on the below:**

- Can I know how (mention the brand name) reacts towards COVID-19?
- What the brand did exactly? Probe on the following

- Customer service
- Employees
- Donations in cash
- Donation in-kind
- Let's move to other Global brands and their COVID responses? tell me what did they do? and how do you find their responses? Do you like it or now? Why?

#### B. Understand their expectations toward these responses on the brand performance -15 minutes

- Is there any link between what your (mention brand name) did during the pandemic and its overall performance? How? Tell me more?  
**Moderator get spontaneous reactions and please focus on FUNCTIONAL AND EMOTIONAL ATTRIBUTES**

Then please probe on the following if mentioned by the respondent:

- Impact of CS on Brand performance
- Impact of Donations in kind on Brand performance
- Impact of Donations in cash on Brand performance
- Impact of employer/supplier on brand performance
- What are your expectations in general towards your (Mention brand name) performance? How? Tell me more about it?

#### C. Understand their reactions towards the research findings – 15 minutes

**Moderator please discuss the findings and explain it to them and get their spontaneous reactions then ask the below questions:**

- How do you find the findings?
- Did it meet your expectations? How? Tell me more about it?
- if you compare it with what you have said, what are you going to tell me?
- Do you want to add anything?

#### D. Identify different decisions they would take based on the discussion – 10 minutes

- Based on our discussion are there anything you will consider related to your (mention brand name) that could impact the brand performance
- How about the future actions? Tell me more?
- Do you want to add anything?

**THANK THE RESPONDENTS AND END THE DISCUSSION**