

Brand Leaders: Inc Impact of COVID-19 - UK - December 2020

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on attitudes towards brands
- Leading brands across the brandscape on different metrics
- A review of leading brands in different categories

Although the upcoming economic slowdown will inevitably put consumer spending under the microscope, there is still room for brands to push their quality credentials, even though it may seem counterintuitive at a time where people are financially stretched. This is particularly true when it comes to anything with perceived health benefits: 37% of UK adults said that in the light of COVID-19, buying higher quality food products will be more important to them in the future.

COVID-19 has impacted brands differently according to the category they operate in. Some brands have been able to improve their brand image during this period, while others – particularly in foodservice, leisure and retail – will have struggled to create as many touchpoints, potentially undermining their salience. The brands that will benefit most will be those which have been able to assist consumers in keeping their lives on track – either by helping people adjust to new habits, such as technology brands' role in keeping people connected; or by helping people access the bare essentials, such as the way supermarkets and other retailers have adjusted their distribution models to support house-bound customers.

Despite the focus on quality among consumers, branded products are at risk from value-focused consumers seeking to cut their spend. In FMCG categories consumers have the obvious choice to trade down to lower-priced products or own-label options, which continue to improve their offering. In other categories, like foodservice, travel or technology, consumers will have the option to cut their spending by holding back purchases until the financial situation improves.



“The COVID-19 crisis and the consumer response underlines the purpose of creating a strong brand image. The trust in big name brands has drawn consumers towards them at a time when consumers have been looking for reassurance.”

– Richard Hopping, Senior Brand and Household Analyst

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The pandemic will offer an opportunity for brands to return to basics and demonstrate the value they provide to consumers. This will be easier for brands with tangible benefits than those relying on emotion. However, there is still plenty of scope to focus on "softer" qualities, such as a commitment to ethics and the environment, which have both moved up consumers' agenda since the previous recession.



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