

COVID-19: Adapt & Respond

# Going Back To Nature





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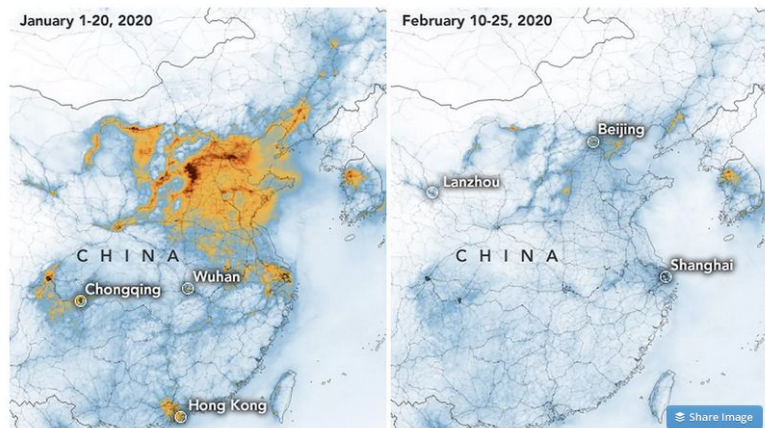
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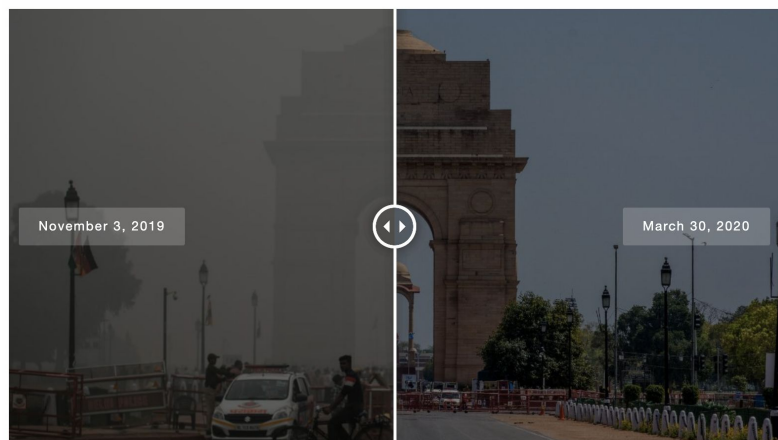
# Introduction

As we face this global pandemic together, it is essential we explore the implications for the natural environment. Covid-19 started with nature, with the transfer of the virus from animal to human. To curb the spread of the virus, lockdowns have been implemented across the globe, and in an unexpected consequence, nature has been given a chance to recover. The skies are clearer with better air quality all over the world, and the usually murky water of Venice Canals has been clear enough to see marine life.

This report has been developed using data from social media, focusing on three topics: pollution and energy, plastic usage and food waste, and debunking fake news.



Satellite images showing the mean tropospheric nitrogen dioxide density changes over China. Photo: NASA




# Pollution And Energy

Lockdowns in cities across the globe mean there are fewer people out and about, which has resulted in less air, water and land pollution. The question when this is all over; will we be able to sustain the reduction in pollution?

Based on Isentia's research, there are three trends emerging out of the numerous conversations on social media around the topic of pollution and energy during the COVID-19 outbreak.

## i) Improvements in air quality and visibility as pollution drops.


News on improvements in air quality and emission reductions across the world was widely shared, as it garnered popularity and interest. Netizens saw this as a positive outcome of the virus outbreak. They also hoped for a possible scenario where emissions are cut back long-term and worked to raise more awareness about the importance of slowing down climate change.

 **Hygenia Lobo** Mother Earth breathing again. Himalayas so beautiful, hopefully she continues to be seen in all her glory. Human race has a lot to consider about our earth from here on.

Like · Reply · 2w


15

1 Reply

 **Joy Tan** If we do reflect on this, there were a lot of positive outcomes. It makes us realise how much we have neglected and abused our environment. To finally see the beauty hidden behind the clouds of money building. This is what we need to work towards moving forward.

Like · Reply · 2w

25

 **Bronwyn Berman** Hopefully this can act as a glimpse of the possible, the experience of what clean air looks and feels like becoming something known to work towards when the lockdown ends and industry resumes.

Like · Reply · 2w

20



## Netizens want to see a silver lining amidst constant bad news surrounding COVID-19.

Brands can inspire consumers to make a difference to preserve the world we live in. For example, in commemoration of Earth Day, Hyundai partnered with popular K-pop group BTS for a new video that reaffirms their commitment to a sustainable future, by showing the pop stars in various landscapes that showcase the diverse beauty of the Earth. This video was launched to inspire customers and fans to take care of our planet.

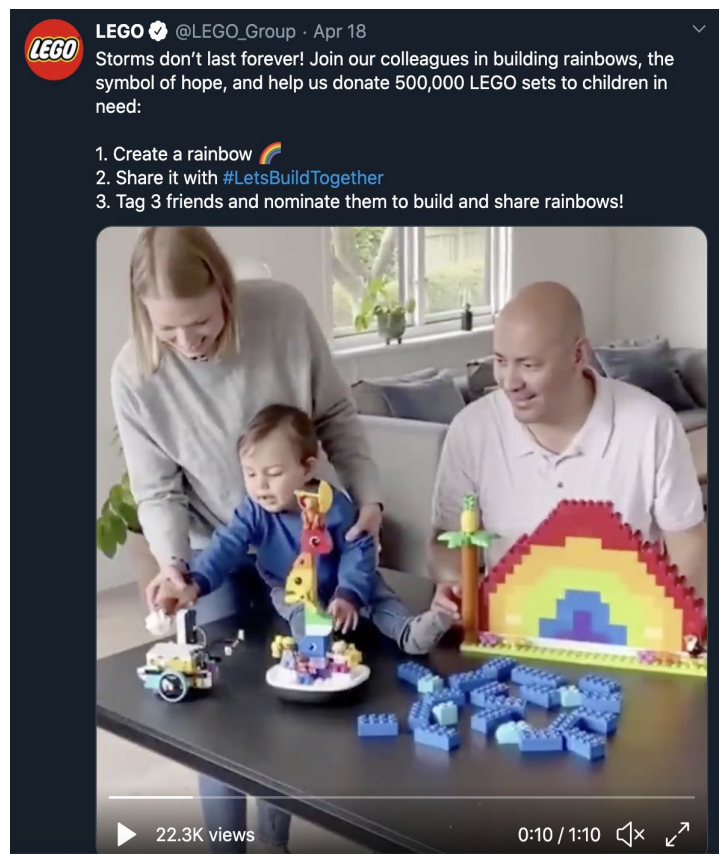
## ii) The increasing use of humour or entertainment to lighten issues like climate change.

Netizens are using humour to lighten the mood and cope with the anxiety surrounding the uncertainty of the outbreak.

Brands can build on the global shared experiences and bring back some positivity by creating content netizens can relate to. This style of content would help brands provide comfort during these tough times, improving brand reputation, relatability, recall and equity. For example, NASA has partnered with LEGO to develop a special challenge for LEGO's #LetsBuildTogether campaign, which calls on all creators to build rainbows, the symbol of hope, using LEGO blocks. This challenge encourages families and friends to celebrate Earth while at home and apart, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### iii) People now want to do more for climate change as awareness grows.

Reports of reduced emissions have shown the public how climate change can be dealt with and led to increasing awareness about climate issues. It has become very apparent how much everyday people contribute to pollution through emissions from air travel, driving to work, or simply switching on the air conditioner in offices. Brands can help and cut down on their carbon footprint as an example, or pledge to work towards combating climate change continuously. For example, on Earth day, Timberland pledged to plant 50 million trees by 2025 and to host 25 service events to better Earth once the pandemic is over. The brand also launched a global video campaign by sharing an emotional letter to nature that is being shared on its websites and social media channels.



# Plastic Usage & Food Waste

With more people staying home, there is an increased demand for food and grocery deliveries, as well as panic-buying in supermarkets in some cities. These behaviours have the potential to increase plastic consumption and food wastage. Some consumers have refused to use reusable bags or containers, afraid that the virus will stay on surfaces and opted for disposable plastics where they can throw out.

**Ken Hon** Even your container is clean, some hawker will just put their thumb inside when they are holding it and scooping the dishes for you. The most upsetting is when they are doing the same thing even you use a container with a handle. THEY STILL PUT their thumb inside the container!

**SJ Liew** stupid idea, someone whom is sick and bring a contaminated container and contaminate the entire shop and trasmit them to all who came for the takeaway.....no brainer!!!!

Like · Reply · 2w

**Florence Chew** Good point. Containers can be contaminated by THE VIRUS. Write your name on the container. But if the staff handled the contaminated container before you, your container will also kenna. 🤔

Like · Reply · 2w

The war on plastics is put on hold as the battle to contain the COVID-19 outbreak ramps up. Based on our research, here are three trends that have been emerging on social media around the topic of plastic usage and food waste.

**i) Netizens urge everyone to use reusable containers and to reduce disposable cutlery usage,** despite concerns over cleanliness of reusable containers and fear of contamination. Consumers are aware of their contributions towards plastic waste, and some are actively trying to cut-back.

However, for some, the possibility of contracting the virus still takes priority over going green. Recommendations to wear disposable gloves to tackle the spread of the virus, appear to be a backwards step in addressing single-use plastics. But there are opportunities for a considered response. For example, food delivery companies have an 'opt-in' feature for disposable cutlery. This initiative started a few years back, but it's now critical to continue these efforts with the increase in food delivery. Another example, to mark Earth Day amidst the Covid-19 chaos, SodaStream (acquired by PepsiCo) unveiled its commitment to reduce single-use plastic waste by around 65 billion bottles by 2025, by switching all their flavours from plastic to metal bottles.



**ii) Companies and brands forced to shut down found ways to prevent food wastage.** For example, Disneyland California and Resorts World Sentosa in Singapore started to donate food following the announcement of their closures. This received positive feedback from the public as these brands are doing their part to be environmentally and socially conscious.



**iii) Concerns over food wastage and scarcity heighten due to hoarding at supermarkets.**

Netizens urged everyone not to waste food. Brands can highlight this issue and initiate efforts to prevent food scarcity and wastage to ensure that people in need will also have the necessities they need. For example, InterContinental Hotels Group announced global partnerships to support food banks and other food provision charities assisting those in need during Covid-19, and this initiative will be supported in more than 70 countries.

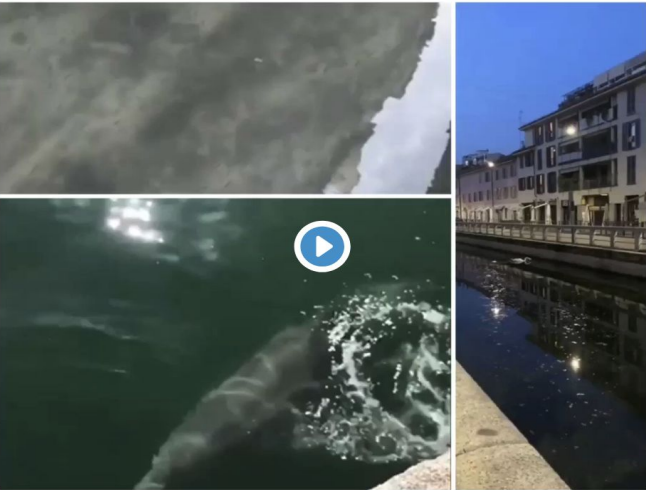
IHG is also using artificial intelligence technology across its restaurant and bar operations in a bid to achieve a 30% reduction in food waste. By installing technology that uses cameras and smart scales to analyse ingredients during food preparation, this AI technology is then used to assess which food items are most wasted. The data will help to inform buying decisions, improve food preparation practices and inform food menu options with the aim of less food waste.

# Debunking Fake News

Many of the news and social media posts surrounding extreme changes in nature and animals are over-exaggerated or fake. For example, dolphins have not returned to the Venice canals (the footage was taken in Sardinia), elephants have always grazed the fields in Yunnan, China, and did not get drunk on corn wine. The viral TikTok video of the Eiffel Tower being seen from London was fake. The tower that was seen, was an antenna in London that resembled the Eiffel Tower and netizens are posting these both in the pursuit of exposure, but also because they hope to find some positivity in the current circumstances.

**Luca Santis**  
@lucasnatch

Venice hasn't seen clear canal water in a very long time. Dolphins showing up too. Nature just hit the reset button on us



37K 6:37 PM - Mar 17, 2020

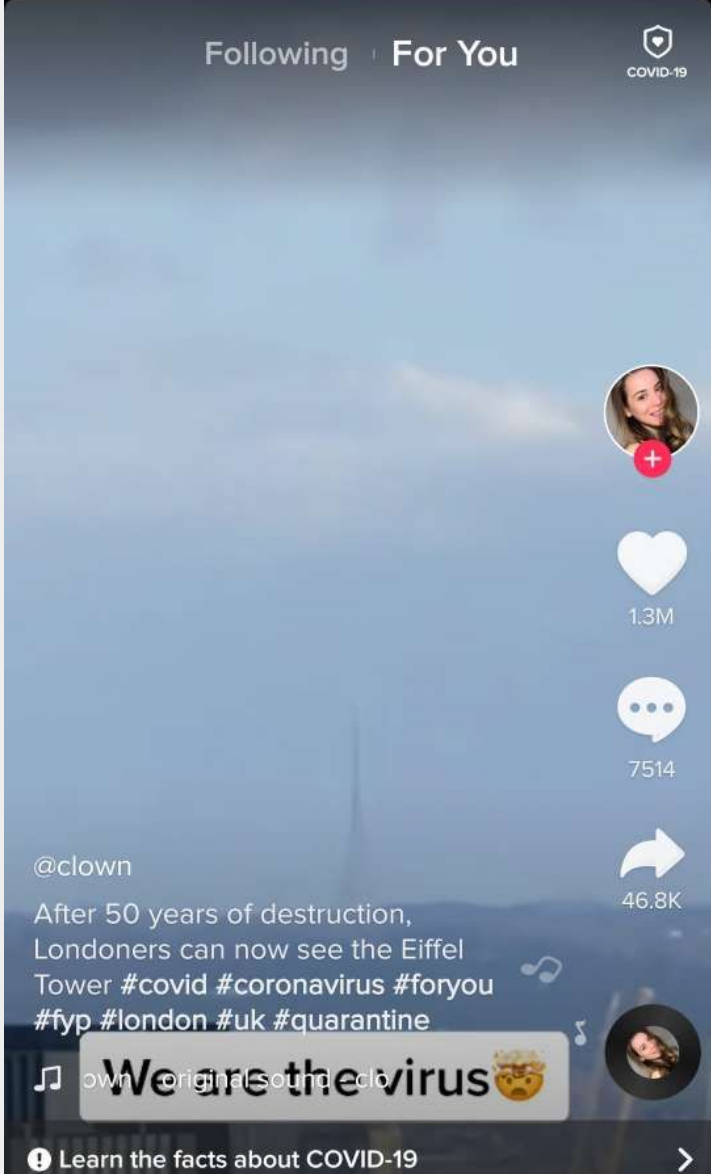
**Corono she better dont**  
@Spilling\_The\_T

While humans carry out social distancing, a group of 14 elephants broke into a village in Yunan province, looking for corn and other food. They ended up drinking 30kg of corn wine and got so drunk that they fell asleep in a nearby tea garden. 🤣



974K 5:21 AM - Mar 19, 2020

Following For You COVID-19



@clown  
After 50 years of destruction, Londoners can now see the Eiffel Tower #covid #coronavirus #foryou #fyp #london #uk #quarantine

We are the virus 🤪

Learn the facts about COVID-19

1.3M  
7514  
46.8K



# Earth's reset

Eventually, when we return to normalcy, how we emerge from this pandemic is crucial, as this gives us the opportunity to bring ourselves into a more sustainable future. To be able to sustain the Earth's 'reset', brands and governments would have to actively work together towards change on an ongoing basis. We have a long way to go, but this is a good start.





Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us  
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