



Rebranding in Crisis: How and Why Companies Transformed Their Corporate Identities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis compelled brands globally to alter their corporate identities in response to shifting market uncertainty and consumer emotions. This study examines why and how companies rebranded during the crisis, focusing on visual identity (logo) evolution, empathetic communication, and strategic positioning. Drawing on Situational Crisis Communication Theory and Corporate Identity Theory, it analyzes global and local case studies to disclose trends such as minimalist design, socially responsible messaging, and calm color palettes. The findings focus on how rebranding during COVID-19 extended beyond aesthetics, and it functioned as a strategic tool to convey trust, resilience, and unity amid global disruption.

Keywords: Corporate Identity, Rebranding, COVID-19 Pandemic, Crisis Communication, Visual Identity, Brand Strategy, Minimalist Design, Empathy in Branding



1. Introduction

The very first image of corporate identity emerged in the 1950s (Bick, Jacobson, & Abratt, 2012). Many academic disciplines have observed these concepts in various disciplines like business management, advertising and marketing, and visual communication as well. Consultants and academics began to observe this topic more deeply. Evidently, in 1996, the International Corporate Identity Group (ICIG) was formed, under the supervision of the House of Lords at the Palace of Westminster in London (ICIG, 2016). Consultants and professors from academics have come to gather on this point that outlining one's identity can be very stimulating and challenging. Academics from Strathclyde, Harvard Business School, and Erasmus with the collaboration of leading consultants, have an unambiguous understanding that giving definition to corporate identity cannot fulfill the whole requirement; rather, an explanatory statement will distinguish it from the multidisciplinary nature of the area of brand management (Riel & Balmar, 1997). Later, the corporate sector identified the importance of the corporate identity (Bick, Jacobson, & Abratt, 2012). Managing a company's reputation and personality and its branding is extremely important.

1.1. Corporate Identity Definition

Corporate identity has many definitions (Riel & Balmar, 1997). Identity is the introduction and an identity of a person, which helps to differentiate each other. In corporate sector, identity is used as the corporate identity, which helps organizations to make themselves different from others. Different icons, symbols, and colours made a corporate identity, which is known as a logo of that company. The logo can be seen or used in the advertising materials like ads, TVCs, posters, products, services, and other promotional items. These things are used to show and create an image of the company in public. A company uses logo design in the visual communication to achieve the goals and to communicate with the consumers. Nothing is more important than a company's logo, as it is the face and identity of that company on every print and online material. Requirements and trends always have been changing in the corporate identities, and companies do follow those trends to stay on trend and to be remembered as trendy and up-to-date brands (Gratton, 2025). Drastically altering a company's visual identity will mislead consumers and raise questions about its value and stability. However, in some situations, changing the visual identity is very much essential. Corporate identity helps the brands to build their images, which can be remembered and recognized easily.

1.2. Corporate Image Definition

In 1989 Russell Abratt (Adebayo & Abdulwasiiu, 2025) made a remarkable comparison between corporate image and human personality image, which changed the image of corporate identity forever (Adebayo & Abdulwasiiu, 2025). Companies spend most of the budget on advertising and marketing to build a good image of the company in the consumer's mind and to keep a recognizable place in the market. With the help of media coverage, advertising, and other promotional tactics, the company's name raises up images in the consumer's minds. A company's reputation or goodwill depends on the public perception rather than its actual situation. It can also shift to negative or neutral from positive in an instant. That's the major reason companies spend a huge amount of their budget on advertising. However, the identities of companies must be clear, communicative, consistent, and concise. A company's logo is its visual identity, which should be consistent or must sustain any icon, symbol, or style while evolving into a new identity (Mohamad, Abd Rahman, & Bakar, 2007).



1.3. Corporate Identity and Image

In the corporate world most of the people agree that identity is a strategic instrument that gives the advantage in today's market (Schmidt, 1995). The clearer brand identity helps companies to make their strong place in the market and attract more investors. A study by UUM identifies the link between reputation and corporate identity; they identify this study with the feedback of the consumer (Mohamad, Abd Rahman, & Bakar, 2007). To develop a corporate identity, many skills and methods are required. It is important to control perception for developing or maintaining a good corporate identity. A company's target is to align image and corporate identity so consumers see it as intended.

1.4. Corporate Identity and Alteration

Companies evolve, upgrade, or change their logos under different circumstances; for example, new investors get involved, any change happens within the company, or a trend occurs in the corporate market. A major shift can be seen in the logos' designs; many companies are inclined towards the simplified logos rather than the complex logos (Jenkin, 2025). Sometimes companies change their logos temporarily to support any event or to raise any awareness about any social issue or global issue. These upgrades in logo designs mean adding or removing any element and adding a feature that indicates the specific reason for whom the company is changing its identity. It is important to retain maximum features of the actual identity so it doesn't look utterly dissimilar from it. However, this change is not permanent; these redesigned or updated logos replaced the ongoing event campaign and awareness campaign. The purpose of redesigning the logos is to link with the consumers and community. These kinds of changes reflect to the audience that their trusted brand does care about these things, and they link more with the brand. COVID-19 was a major event that occurred on the global level where these changes can be seen. The objective of this study is to answer the following research question:

- a). How did companies change their corporate identities during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- b). What communicative and visual strategies did businesses use to adapt their brands during the pandemic?
- c). What role did safety, social, and empathy responsibility play in their rebranding efforts?
- d). How did these changes impact brand perception and consumer trust?

The COVID-19 pandemic unsettled not only global economies but also the very foundations of communication and brand identity. As consumers faced isolation, fear, and uncertainty, companies were obliged to reshape how they showcase themselves, both emotionally and visually. This study sightsees the multidimensional procedure of rebranding during the pandemic, concentrating on how corporations altered their logos, strategic positioning, and brand messages to align with the evolving economic and social environment. By analyzing a selection of local and global case studies from diverse industries, such as clothing, retail, and technology, the research classifies patterns of identity transformation, including the shift toward minimalist design trends, empathy-driven messaging, and digital-first strategies. The study also aims to interpret *why* these revolutions occurred, linking them to theories of crisis communication, corporate identity, and consumer psychology. Ultimately, the paper contributes to understanding



how brand identity evolves in times of crisis and how companies can sustain authenticity and trust in the aftermath of global disruption.

2. Literature Review

The idea of an individual identity is connected to the question, 'who am i?' and for an organization the question is 'who are we?' (Alvesson, Hardy, & Harley, 2008). An individual's identity and answer to the question 'who am i?' may be linked to their social and cultural background and their individual categorization, like as a politician or as a doctor. However, in the case of 'who are we?' the answer may be in the organizational life, the answer may be situated in organizational or management discourses regarding the 'appropriate' employee, or it may come from contestation over the meaning of shared values and ways of being (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Different theories existed in the past that mentioned that keeping the positive brand image of a corporate sector is very important. This research is focusing on the identity of an organization and its perception of the consumers.

In the corporate world, branding and brand image are very important to shape the external perceptions. The identity of a brand is most visible when used strategically to highlight a specific brand image. In the corporate sector, identity inclines to become most visible when it feels difficulties. In corporate identity threats, uncertainty and distrust may arise from the outside perception of the brand image (Brannan, Parsons, & Cinzia, 2011). Which may cause damage to the image of a brand. Keeping the good and positive image in the perception of consumers is very much necessary to keep the brand alive (Frandsen, Finn, & Johansen, 2016). A negative corporate sector image is the threat to the economic circumstances for a company. In one of the recent studies, (Karreman & Frandsen, 2020) mentions that maintaining a good and positive image is utterly important to keep the business and brand alive. Further, it mentions that if a company has a positive image in the external world in the perception of consumers, then the company's internal atmosphere stays healthy and productive. Employees or other allied external links own the relation with that company or brand. Upholding a positive brand image is very important for a brand to attract consumers. As consumer perception plays a pivotal role in the success journey of a brand.

2.1. Brand Image and Perception

Perception of a consumer plays an important role in the development of a brand, as it leads to brand loyalty. There are many factors involved in developing a brand perception, such as marketing and advertising campaigns and social influences. Brands often devote their maximum resources to developing a good brand image via advertising and supporting ongoing events in the society to show their support for their consumers. Prior practice of brands shows they also change their identities just to support the audience and society. Moreover, brands leverage the power of visual communication to influence consumer perception. As the positive perception among consumers makes them loyal advocates of the brand and makes them repeat the purchase.

These tactics achieve brand loyalty, which is an essential element for a brand to sustain their consumers. This strategy is an effective one to create a positive image for a brand, and this strategy is called corporate social responsibility (CSR). For a brand to be actively engaging in environmental causes, social crises, or any global crisis shapes a positive ethical perception among consumers. To respond during the crisis helps the brand economically as well. As Jeff Bezos said, "Branding is what people say about you



when you're not in the room" (Agency, 2018). Furthermore, managing director Mark Bower (Agency, 2018) stated, "Your brand identity is how you project yourself to—and how you want to be seen by—the outside world."

KAPFERER'S
BRAND IDENTITY
PRISM

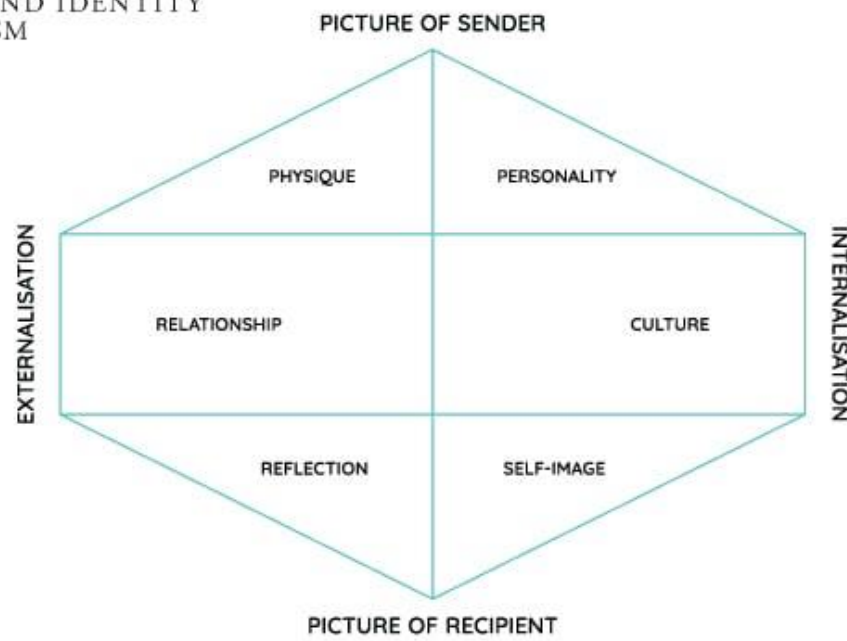


Fig. No. 1: Kapferer Brand Identity Prism, Source: Woven Agency, "What is the Kapferer Brand Identity Prism?," WOV&N (blog), woven agency, 6th April, 2018, <https://woven.agency/insights/what-is-the-brand-identity-prism/> (accessed on 10 October 2025)

Kapferer's brand identity prism is a helpful model for brands and businesses to develop strong and persistent brand identities to reflect their core values (Fig. 1). Every element in



this prism guides the brands to achieve consumer loyalty. Physique is an iconography of a brand. Iconography for a brand is its logo design. A brand's logo is a clear visual representation of a brand's objectives and how they wish to be perceived by their consumers. For example, Apple's sleek and stylish logo. Personality is the second element of the prism, which reflects how the brand communicates with the external world. Its way of communication expresses visual tone of voice, its copywriting, and design. Coca-Cola has a playful, happy, and bold persona, which is expressed via its choice of scripted font, bold colour, and its tagline, which communicates having a great time with friends and family. Other elements from the prism, like culture, relationship, reflection, and self-made, boost the brand's image in the consumer perception and have positive effects on the consumer buying behaviors. Brand loyalty plays an important role in the buying behavior of consumers.

2.2. Brand Communication and Crisis

In the past many brands have been using this prism to develop their strategy for successful communication. Brands do alter or change their logo design to support an event or to encourage and support the consumers. These alterations are not meant to be permanent; instead, they are temporary. For example, in 1929 or the early 1930s, the Great Depression (Pells & Pells, 2025) loomed over the decade and cast its shadow over the economy, with the aftereffects on many fields, including industrialization, art, and design. The Great Depression brought the chaos and tension, which created a ripple in the market, including the corporate sector, banking, the gold market, the printing industry, and the artists and designers as well.

Artistic expression shifted from symbolism and curvature into statement and command (Jaffar, 2022). The artistic expression shifted from design and branding into poster design. Bold, dominated, capitalized, and italic fonts stressed the design layout, message, and each word. For example, Bovril, a savory meat extract product, could be used as a beverage and as a spread as well. They used to advertise themselves by showing colourful illustrations and product images (Fig. 1).



Fig. No. 1: Poster design of BOVRIL, from the 1920s before the Great Depression.



Fig. No. 2: Poster design of BOVRIL, from 1930s during The Great Depression.

An enormous shift can be witnessed in the 1930s advertising, where the colourful illustrations, product images, and stylized fonts are replaced by bold and strong typography. This shift completely changed the look and feel of the visual message. Instead of soft selling now, it's commanding. Consumers were addressed and told by the brand to buy this product not just for their own personal benefits but rather for the betterment of the nation (Fig. 2).

Eastman Kodak Company, normally known as Kodak, is a photographic-related material company. This company was founded by George Eastman in 1888, and it has achieved iconic status in the industry of the photography (Ray, 2018).



Fig. No. 3. Eastman Kodak Company logo, before the Great Depression.



Fig. No. 4. Eastman Kodak Company logo, During the Great Depression.

The very first logo adopted by the company was in the lettermark form, designed with the initials of the company in the symbolic manner (Fig. 3). During the Great Depression period, the company changed its logo to wordmark type, with a bold and thick font and with a high-contrast colour scheme (Fig. 4). During the Great Depression, bold and huge-sized typography became the main part of designs. After the Great Depression, the Kodak



company chose to sustain the colour scheme and changed the logo into a stylized form (Fig. 5).



Fig. No. 5. Eastman Kodak Company logo, post-Great Depression design.

After the Great Depression, another global catastrophe occurred, which was World War II. This incident also changed the economic state of the world. And companies strove to survive. In Germany, during World War II, many brands altered their logos to show their support for Hitler and the Nazis. Hugo Boss is globally known as a luxurious clothing brand. At the time of World War II, Hugo Boss showed its support via designing the new uniforms for Hitler Youth in their advertising. (Fig. 6)



Fig. No. 6: Uniforms made by Hugo Boss for the Nazis, Hugo Boss newspaper ad, published in 1934.



This change was a setback for the company, as after the war, during the denazification progression, Hugo Boss was severely penalized, which resulted in the ownership change, and to date, Hugo Boss cannot discuss its prewar history and celebrate its founder. Another company named Volkswagen, founded in 1930, evolved its logo into a swastika design. In Germany, the automobile industry was pitched towards luxury cars.



Fig. No. 7: Evolution of the Volkswagen Logo.

In 1933, Nazis came into power, and Hitler jumped on the automobile industry and started producing cars in the state-owned factory. During World War II, the company used to make military cars. After the war, the company reoccupied its civilian production. As its reputation and brand image were associated with the Nazis and the logo was supporting Nazis visually, after the world war was over, no country accepted the offer of buying the company, including Ford, American and British car manufacturing companies.

Crises are considered a threat to an organization's reputation. Crises can damage or boost an organization's reputation; it depends on how stakeholders interact with the organization. Case study dominates the field of crisis communication. End results will show how stakeholders counter crises or how crisis-responsive strategy is used to manage crises (Mafael, Raithel, & Hock, 2022). Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) stipulates an evidence-based structure for better understanding to maximize the reputational shield afforded by post-crisis communication. SCCT provides guidelines for stakeholders to manage the crisis and to protect the reputation of an organization (Fig. 8). It's a person's characteristics and their responsibility towards an event to experience some reaction and go through some emotions. In the attribution theory sympathy and anger are the core emotions. Actions are the reaction of emotions. Behavioral reactions are positive when a person is judged not to be accountable and sympathy is evoked. Anger is evoked when behavioral responses are negative and the person being judged is held accountable.

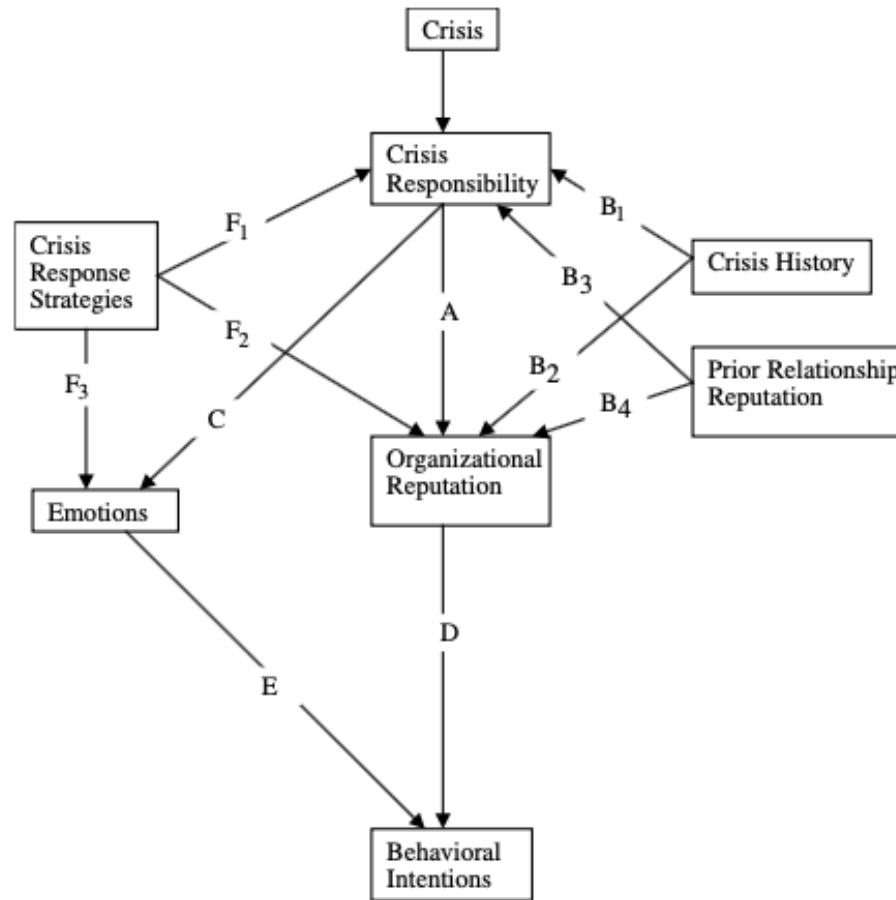


Fig. No. 8: Crisis Situation Model of SCCT, presented by Coombs, 2007.

Whenever any global crisis occurred, many aspects of life got affected, including the corporate sector, economy, and lifestyle of consumers. In every catastrophe, stakeholders of the corporate sector behave differently according to the economic situation of the organization to support the economy of the nation. During the Great Depression economic crises were at their peak; thus, the corporate sector strategies shifted their communication and identities into authoritative mode to save the economic situation of the nation and to provide a source of income to the people. On the other hand, during World War II, corporate sectors changed their logos to show their support for their belief despite right or wrong. These shifts brought new trends that also changed the consumer behaviors.

2.3. COVID-19 Pandemic and Market Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic was another global-level disruption. COVID-19 reverberated in the corporate sector, including the marketing and advertising field. It has a profound impact on the corporate sector. Due to the uncertainty and unprecedented challenges, businesses were forced to adjust their strategies rapidly to align with the evolution of consumer buying behavior (Sharma, Leung, Kingshott, Davcik, & Cardinali, 2020). Because of the physical interaction and quarantine restrictions, businesses have transferred towards digital platforms, depending and pondering on e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and online presence (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated the economic crisis on the global level, so companies have rushed to the digital platforms to survive. Businesses have to summarily acclimate to a new



strategy to maintain their businesses as quarantine or lockdown forces social distancing measures and physical location to limit or close operations. This pandemic obliged as the dynamic force for digital transformation. And constrained the business to rapidly adjust and enhance their digital footprints. Businesses across the corporate sector embraced the digital platforms and technologies to ensure their reach to consumers and to maintain their operational system (Pascucci, Savelli, & Gistri, 2023). With lockdowns and social distancing and isolations, consumers became more stressed, and their priorities changed. They shifted to the internet for social interaction, entertainment, and fulfilling shopping needs. Brands swiftly responded by storming to e-commerce, ramping up their online presence on social media, and developing new digital marketing strategies. They develop a new strategy to stay connected in this difficult time with their consumer with visual representation of necessary prevention to stay safe and stay inside. Businesses changed their logos into minimal ones to make them louder and clearer to show their support and to spread the awareness among the consumers to keep a safe distance and stay safe.

This research paper will focus on the hypothesis that during the COVID-19 pandemic, companies primarily redesigned their brand identities (logos) to express safety, adaptability, and empathy to strongly lead their consumers, to engage them, and to renew trust. However, those brands were more successful in sustaining consumer trust and brand loyalty than those companies that relied on sales-driven approaches.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative multiple case study design to investigate, during the COVID-19 pandemic, why and how companies transformed their corporate identities. This qualitative approach stretches the freedom for an in-depth understanding of communicative, strategic, and visual identity changes within specific cultural and organizational contexts.

Method	Description	Expected Output
Content Analysis	Collect logos, campaigns, social media posts (2020–2022)	Identify design and message shifts
Comparative Study	Case Compare 2 global vs. 2 local companies	Determine cultural/contextual differences
Interviews/Surveys (optional)	Talk to marketing/design professionals or analyze consumer feedback	Insight into motivations and perception

Table 1: Theoretical Framework

As case studies, five different companies from different businesses were selected: three global companies (McDonalds, Audi, and Coca-Cola) and two companies from Pakistan's corporate sector (Foodpanda and Khaadi). These case studies between regional and international branding will provide a comparative perspective.

Data collection built on secondary and primary sources, including corporate statements, social media communication, brand campaigns, visual identity updates, and media reports constructed between 2019 and 2022. Moreover, blogs, newspaper articles, and semi-structured interviews with design or marketing professionals are used to complement secondary data.



To analyze the data, we use the thematic content analysis framework, concentrating on three key dimensions of identity alteration: (a) *strategic repositioning*; typography, alteration on logo designs, or colour schemes (b) *visual identity adaptation*; target audience engagement, modification in brand purpose, or CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives; and (c) *brand communication tone*.

Data analysis tracks a thematic content analysis method, allowing for both interpretive and descriptive examination of identity transformation. Each brand's data set is first coded, giving verbal, key visual, and strategic elements identified during data collection.

All cases are examined respectively through the lens of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007) and the Corporate Identity Theory (Balmer, 1998) to interpret the fundamental motivations and the communication strategy that occurred during the identity changes. A relative's synthesis of findings identifies common themes, regional differences, cross-industry patterns, and paying to a broader understanding of corporate identity evolution in periods of global crisis.

After every separate case analysis, a cross-case comparative synthesis is achieved to identify shared strategies, dissimilarities between global and local brands, and primary motivations behind identity alteration. This study delivers a complete understanding of how corporate identities evolve under global crisis situations and what strategic modules can be derived for future branding pliability.

4. Case Studies Analysis

These case studies investigate the leading brands from around the world and from the Pakistani corporate sector and how their decision-makers maintain their consumers' trust in the brand with the help of changing their visual identity (logo) during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The study focuses on the updated logos and the campaign launched between 2019 and 2022, studying the design strategies that highlighted solidarity, calmness, and human connection.

Through content analysis of logo designs, messages, and campaign visuals, the research shows how minimalist aesthetics, inclusive imagery, and icons or symbols contributed to emotional engagement. The findings of this study contribute to the wider discourse on visual identity design as an instrument for brand resilience and crisis communication.

4.1. McDonald's

McDonald's is a well-known brand and a pioneer of fast-food chain restaurants. McDonald's has a global influence on the fast-food industry; it stimulates a sense of comfort and nostalgia that connects millions from the globe. It is a symbol that transcends geographic and cultural boundaries, making it not just a restaurant but a familiar destination for almost everyone in everywhere.



Fig. No. 9: McDonald's Logo, published in 2018,

McDonald's logo (Fig. 9) with yellow arches against a bright and fresh red colour, is incredibly well known and famous and brings joy to people around the world. McDonald's is not only famous for its quick food service but also for joyful times; it connects people with emotions and brings back fond memories whenever one sees it (Avison, 2019). McDonald's logo simplicity makes it memorable and recognizable and makes it stand out visually. The yellow 'M' letter written in arches style is a crucial part of its identity, which is helping it to remain a favorite around the world.





Fig. No. 10: McDonald's updated logo during the COVID-19 Pandemic, published on Facebook, March 2019.

As it's a pioneer in fast-food chain restaurants, McDonald's keeps its legacy, and it is one of the first brands that responded during the crisis through their social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. McDonald's Brazil uploaded an image of their upgraded logo on their official social media platform, i.e., Facebook. They surprised their consumers by making the famous yellow arches pulled apart. They communicate a very clear and loud message to maintain the social distance through this strong depiction in their logo, and they also support their image with a caption, "Separated for a moment so that we can always be together" (translated from Portuguese) (McDonald's, 2019). In the subcontinent, India, McDonald's posted another post on Instagram (Fig. 11), which was accompanied by the following caption: "There is no distance from your favorite food! It's why we've taken every measure to ensure that your favorite food reaches you in a safe, contactless manner." (McDonalds, 2020)



Fig. No. 11: Screenshot of McDonald's Post, McDonalds_India, 21 March, 2020

In this post McDonald's is also promoting and communicating their home delivery services and communicating that they have kept in check all the safety measures to keep their consumers safe.

4.2. Audi

Audi is a German automobile company; it is known for its iconic brand logo. Its logo contains an icon of four interwoven circles, which represents the partnership and union of the four companies that united to establish Audi. (Fig. 12)

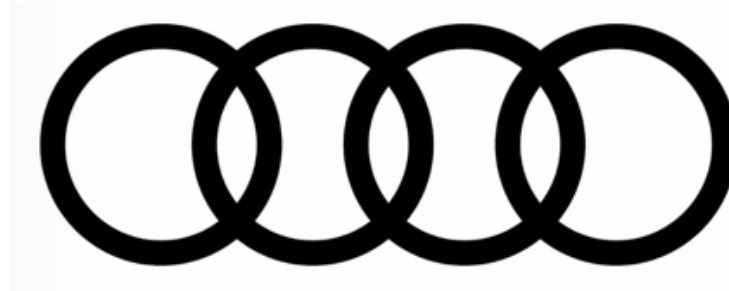
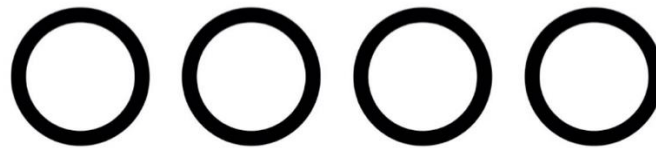


Fig. No. 12: Audi Logo, last modified in 2016.



Audi. Keep distance.

Fig. No. 13: Redesigned Audi logo, last modified in March, 2020.

Audi's logo is a symbolic representation, which is following the minimal approach (Fig. 13). This minimal design approach makes this logo more well-known and a memorable logo in the automobile industry. During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, Audi alters its logo. The Audi company separated the rings in the logo to communicate with the audience in the simplest way. It uploaded its logo with the tagline, "Keep distance, stay together." With the electronic communication with the author, the creative director of NRG Brands, the Bulgarian advertising agency, he explained the concept behind this change: that Audi altered the logo to encourage and promote social distancing and to convey the message to their consumers to "take care of each other now more than ever, just by doing one simple thing—keeping distance" (Author, 2025).

4.3. Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola is one of the oldest companies among the beverage companies. It has a very iconic logo design with a cemented red colour which is the core element of the logo. It is one of the most famous logos in the history of the corporate sector. Coca-Cola uses the scripted font in its logo, and it always conducts various experiments with its logo in campaigns. As consumers are well aware of the corporate logo, it is well registered in the minds of consumers. Coca-Cola uses simplicity in the logo design with bold color which makes its logo recognizable in every corner of the world (Fig. 14).



Fig. No. 14: Coca-Cola Logo, Last updated in 2007.



Fig. No. 14: Updated Coca-Cola Logo during COVID-19, Last updated in 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis Coca-Cola altered its logo and presented it in Times Square, New York, on the running billboard, where each letter gets separated in the logo with the message “Staying apart is the best way to stay united” (Molina, 2020).

4.4. Food Panda

From the local corporate sector, the author chooses Food Panda. Food Panda is one of the leading and most efficient food delivery services. Food Panda’s logo is a simplified representation of the panda animal, which makes it friendly and memorable. Its bright fuchsia colour captures the consumer’s attention and evokes the sense of playfulness and delight (Fig. 15).



Fig. No. 15: Logo of Food panda Company, last updated in 2017.



Fig. No. 16: Updated Logo of Foodpanda Company, last updated in 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, just like other companies, foodpanda also changed its logo (Fig. 16). Foodpanda added an element in the icon of their logo; they show the panda wearing a mask. They post this logo and deliver the message to their consumers about safety and precautions. From foodpanda Karachi, Pakistan, a post was uploaded on its official Facebook page with the caption “foodpanda is taking every measure to ease the lives of our rider heroes and their families. We strive to make a difference while doing what we do best—delivering food and more.” (Asad, 2021)

4.5. Khaadi

Khaadi is a clothing brand that deals in women's formal clothing and day-to-day wear. Its logo is a very simplified symbolic representation of two hands of a weaver holding a loom. Khaadi's logo signifies the brand equity and reflects the innovation, craftsmanship, creativity, resilience, and perseverance (Fig. 17) (Bibi, 2025).



Fig. No. 17. Logo of Khaadi, Pakistan.

During COVID-19, Khaadi didn't change its logo, although it delivered its message through a digital campaign, which was published on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

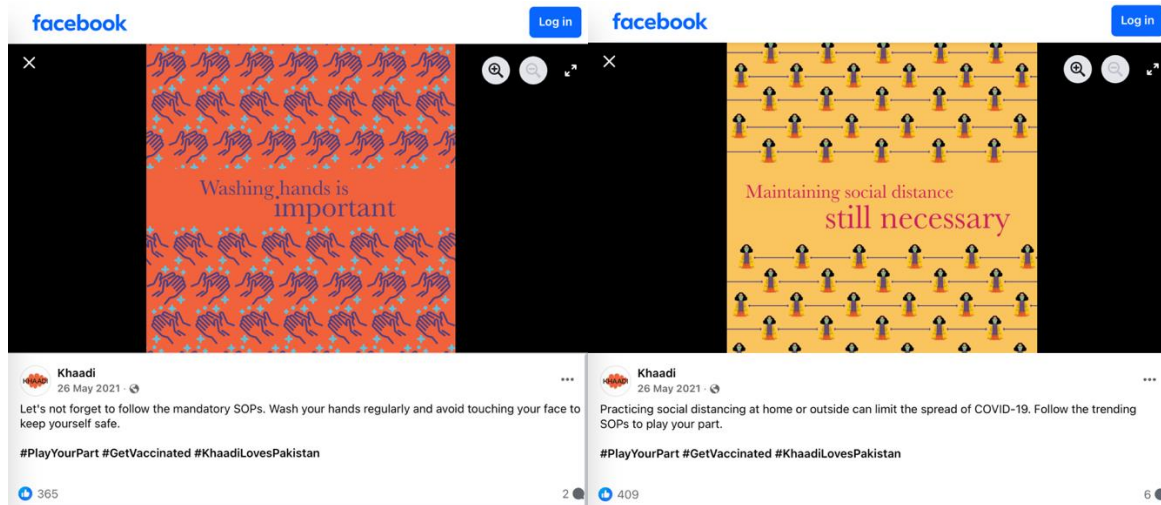


Fig. No. 18: Screenshots of Social Media Posts from Facebook, May 2021.

Through these posts, the brand is communicating with its consumers and educating them on how to prevent this virus and how to stay safe during this crisis time.

4.6. Case Study Summaries

The analysis of three global and two local case studies discloses how brands across diverse regions strategically alter and adapt their visual identities to reflect safety, social responsibility, and empathy during the COVID-19 crisis. Global companies applied design minimalism, separation, and corporate colour palettes to symbolize collective care and social distancing, while local brands stressed community solidarity and cultural significance through relatable visual cues.

Together, these case studies establish that logo alteration during the pandemic was not simply a cosmetic change but a thoughtful communication strategy meant to maintain emotional connection and consumer trust. The fusion of global and local practices emphasizes that effective visual identity in times of crisis be contingent on balancing universal values with circumstantial sensitivity. These findings reinforce the study’s vital argument that design, even in its simplest form, functions as a vital language of empathy, unity, and resilience during global uncertainty.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings reveal how companies across numerous industries redefined their corporate identities during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain resilient, relevant, and emotionally connected with consumers. By analyzing selected case studies, five key themes emerged, each reflecting a distinctive strategic and communicative adaptation to crisis conditions. These themes are summarized in the table below.

Emerging Theme	Description	Linked Theory
Empathy and Humanization	Brands shifted toward emotionally resonant narratives emphasizing care, unity, and resilience. Communication became centered on empathy and social responsibility rather than sales promotion.	Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007)
Minimalist and Calm Identity	Many companies adopted simplified logos, muted color palettes, and decluttered design to convey safety, clarity, and composure amid	Corporate Identity Theory &



Emerging Theme	Description	Linked Theory
	uncertainty.	Soenen, 1999)
Digital-First Repositioning	With physical interactions limited, brands redefined their identity through digital platforms, strengthening online presence and customer engagement as a primary brand experience.	Corporate Identity & Brand Image Theories
Purpose-Driven Communication	Companies reframed their brand purpose around sustainability, well-being, and community support, aligning corporate identity with moral and ethical values.	Corporate Identity Model (Balmer, 2001)
Localization of Global Narratives	Local brands contextualized global crisis messages into culturally relevant communication, reflecting adaptability within regional markets.	Glocalization Concep

Table. 2: Emerging Themes of Corporate Identity Transformation During COVID-19

5.1. Discussion

The findings suggest that the COVID-19 crisis operated as a substance for accelerated brand transformation, compelling companies to reconsider their identities in both strategic and visual terms. The appearance of empathy-driven communication supports Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007), which suggests that trust and transparency are analytical in managing stakeholder relations during a crisis. Brands that established social awareness, compassion, and a sense of shared struggle succeeded in upholding to their customer loyalty and reliability.

Likewise, the trend regarding minimalist and calm visual identities can be construed through the lens of Corporate Identity Theory (Balmer & Soenen, 1999). Simplification of logos and adoption of impartial color palettes imitated a desire to communicate clarity, values, and stability in the critical times of uncertainty. These visual changes also functioned symbolically, signifying emotional grounding and reassurance.

The shift toward digital campaigns and branding underlines the growing importance of online engagement as a module of corporate identity. In line with Brand Image Theory, the digital interface became the primary environment through which audiences experienced and interacted with brand values, strengthening identity through accessibility and immediacy. Finally, localization of global narratives mirrors the ongoing process of glocalization, where global themes of care, unity, and safety were adapted to fit regional linguistic and cultural shades. This adaptation not only improved relatability but also reinforced cultural significance, proving that effective identity revolution balances global consistency with local sensitivity.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply reshaped the global corporate landscape, persuading brands to reconsider not only *how* they communicated but also *who* they were in the eyes of their consumer. This study originates from the idea that companies actively altered their corporate identities by espousing empathy-driven communication, simplifying visual aesthetics, and repositioning themselves within digital and socially mindful frameworks. The analysis disclosed that successful identity alterations were not superficial design turns but deeply strategic efforts grounded in human adaptability, connection, and authenticity.



These alterations aligned meticulously with established theoretical viewpoints such as *Corporate Identity Theory* and *Situational Crisis Communication Theory*, which highlight coherence, stakeholder trust, and translucent engagement during periods of unpredictability. In core, the pandemic accelerated a long-term evolution toward digital-first and values-based branding. Companies that acknowledged the social, emotional, and cultural realities of their consumers were able to strengthen brand equity and maintain steadiness despite global disruption. The findings emphasize that corporate identity is no longer static; it is a dynamic construct shaped by technological change, social context, and collective experience.

6.1. Recommendations For Future Research

1. Comparative studies could show how identity transformation varied across industries (e.g., hospitality vs. tech sectors).
 2. Further work could integrate consumer perception analysis, measuring how audiences interpret rebranded identities after crisis events.
- Cross-cultural examinations could disclose how local identity expressions differ within the global rebranding landscape.

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