

COVID-19 – The positive insights

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Abstract

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 is currently affecting 210 countries and territories and 2 International conveyances¹ with more than 2 million cases worldwide and one-third of the global population² on a Coronavirus national quarantine (lockdown). The present global population is swarmed with information and details centered on negative impacts of the pandemic, the upcoming challenges and how the economy will be heading to a recession in the coming 12 months³. However, where such a dark situation is going on, we forget to look at what could come as a ray of hope from such trying and testing times. The paper tries to look out for all the avenues which maybe benefitting from the pandemic and points out the positive insights to look forward to after the pandemic is over or controlled.

Keywords: pandemic, quarantine, positive insights

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1.Introduction: WHO made a formal declaration of public health emergency on January 30, 2020 and the world has been trying to absorb, adapt and react carefully to the pandemic taking into consideration the unmitigated epidemics spread projection of 7 billion infections⁴. The countries are trying to contain the spread by implementing social distancing and national quarantine. Where nothing can be ascertained regarding the containment of the pandemic, the side effects of the lockdown situation are enormous and visible. The disruption of daily life, undoing the established social and economic habits of nations, fall in the GDP growth to zero percent⁵, fall in stock-markets

¹ Worldometers.info coronavirus Update April 17, 2020

² Businessinsider.com April 16, 2020 Article by Juliana Kaplan, Lauren Frias and Morgan Johnsen

³ Bloomberg.com April 8, 2020 Article by Reade Pickert, Yue Qiu and Alexander McIntyre

⁴ Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team statistics

⁵ Barclays' prediction on India's GDP growth for 2020

featuring the second biggest drop since World War II⁶, increased infusion of Government-aid to push liquidity⁷ and implement quantitative easing. According to a recent scenario modeling by the Boston Consulting Group, India will reach its peak cases in the third week of June however it is not viable to impose complete lockdown till then as per the latest arguments by the economic experts. Considering the unprecedented times it may not be too unrealistic to find a silver lining in the black pandemic. The aim is to understand the different business opportunities which may arise out of the current state of affairs and also enlist the benefits of the lockdown on the environment.

2. Related Literature: In a study conducted by the Australian National University, McKibbin and Fernando (February 2020) try to evaluate seven scenarios impacting the macro-economic after the pandemic stating that the human state of affairs is better than that after SARS as people are ready to bear the cost of prevention rather than treatment. Another notable point is that open economies are more susceptible to an economic crisis but may have the advantage of a quicker recoupment also. McCloskey, Brian and Heymann, David L. (2020) have compared the old lessons to the new lessons during different pandemics that our major focus must be on effectively balancing the costs and benefits from such occurrences. Isaifan (March 2020) in a study under sustainable development has pointed that the lockdowns implemented by COVID-19 have resulted in saving more lives by preventing the ambient air pollution than by preventing the infection. Tashanova et al. (March 2020) conduct an industrial analysis to find out the sectors that have gained during the pandemic and will be growing in the near future. They focus on devising strategies to gain by investing in such sectors. Peterson Ozili (2020) studies the way policy making can be centered to benefit certain basic needs capacity enhancement programmes to create sustenance in the Post-Covid-19 era. Feng et al. (March 2020) tried to build strategies to generate positive return under economic stagnation by comparing the media and biotech industry and concluded the biotech and pharmacy have a strong resistance against the economic breakdown due to the pandemic. Towards Data Science (March 2020) has conducted a study to analyze how the Lockdown has positively impacted the environment as the AQI levels have never dropped so low in the recent times. Naomi Klien's book, *The Shock Doctrine – The rise of disaster capitalism* shows how the previously unthinkable becomes a reality in times of a disaster.

3. Objectives of the Study

⁶Freakonomics Podcast Professor, Nicholas Bloom Stanford University

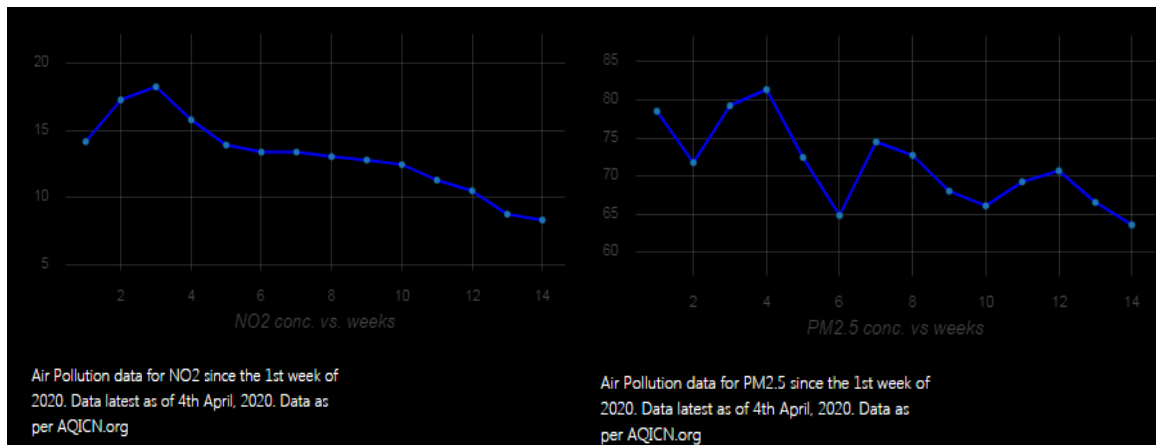
⁷Rbi.org.in announcements April 17,2020

- To understand and analyze the positive impact of lockdown on environment and sanitation habits.
- To understand the upcoming business and investment opportunities in the Post Covid-19 economy.

4. Methodology

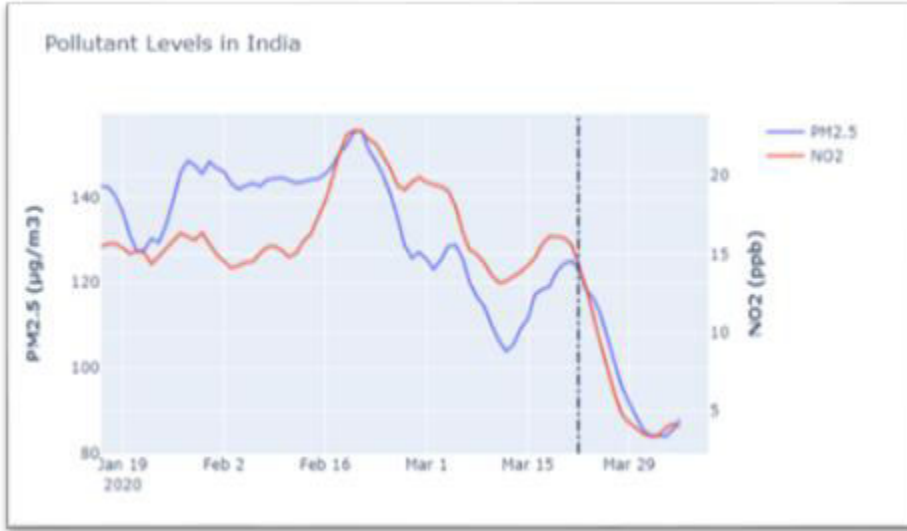
To write an exploratory research paper using secondary data published in the form of reports, surveys, interviews, graphs, charts, facts, articles, blogs, and news talks for the purpose of understanding the scenario.

5. Understanding and analyzing the positive impact of lockdown on Environment and sanitation habits: Air Quality Index has been found to be a pretty robust metric that reflects the air pollution levels and therefore is a very important parameter to understand the level of air pollution. The AQI levels in the world since the first week of 2020 can be seen in the graphs below. The drop in the curve of NO₂ in the air and PM maybe attributed to the Lockdown situation with practically no cars on the roads and very few industries opening up. It is very surprising to see how the atmosphere can heal itself during inactivity of such durations.



Studying the same deeper for India can be represented as follows:

⁸ Image and information source : aqicn.org



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The COVID crisis teaches us for a fact that if climate changes are ignored the next crisis may as well be Climate related. Even though Lockdowns may not be the appropriate way to bring down the air pollution levels, it clearly signifies that air pollution is manmade and there could be investments in cleaner sources of energy in the coming future. According to the environmental activists it is more like a wake-up call to stop exceeding the limits of the planet. It may be a good idea to redirect funds towards greener sources of energy. The skies are clear; the Himalayan mountain range is visible from Northern India, the Okhla barrage has clean waters after decades, the Ganges' water has been declared 'safe to drink' from 'unfit to bathe in'.

One of the most sought after strategies to contain the virus is by a WASH response i.e. water, sanitization and hygiene. According to WHO, many co-benefits will be realized by safely managing WASH services and applying good hygiene practices. Such efforts will prevent other infectious diseases, which cause millions of deaths each year¹⁰

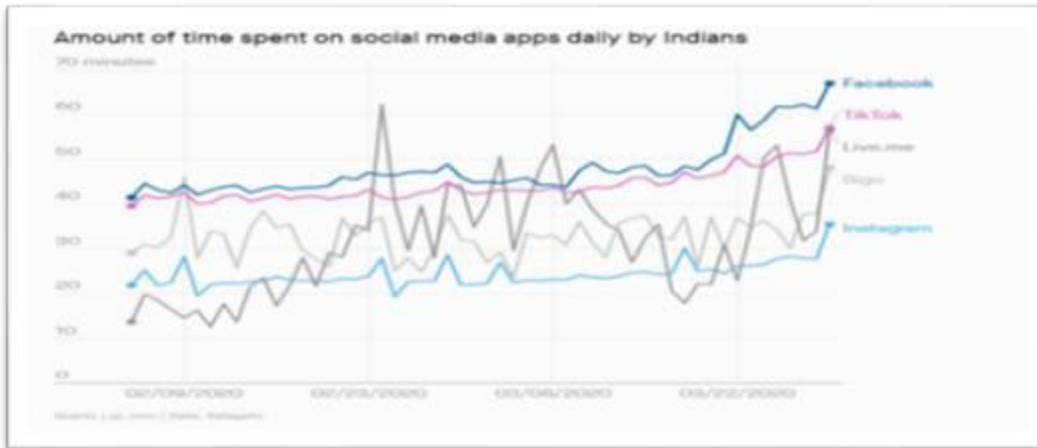
6. Understanding and analyzing the upcoming business and investment sectors which will thrive in the Post Covid-19 Economy:

⁹ Image and information source : aqicn.org

¹⁰ WHO's #WASH response to #COVID-19

Social Media surge: According to a study conducted by the marketing research firm Nielsen the social media volume has experienced a 50X surge between January and March in India and the total volume of Covid-19 related conversations reached 22.3 million by March 24 in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. This clearly indicates how the social media industry is surging during the pandemic. In a consumer survey conducted by Hammerkopf Indians spent more than four hours every day on social media which is an 87 percent increase from the week before the Lockdown.

The data can be seen as follows:



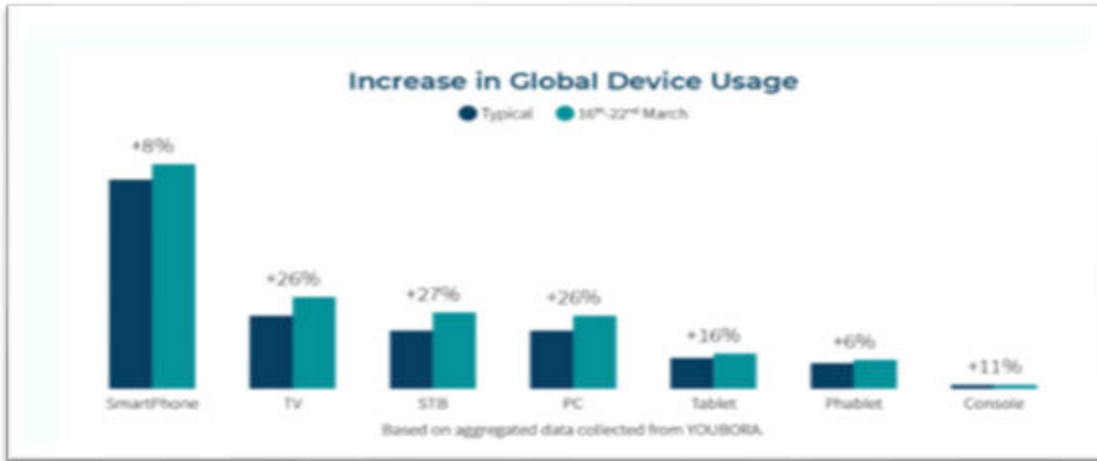
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Streaming, gaming and video content platforms:

Video streaming sites like Netflix, Disney+, Hotstar, Zee5, Hulu, HBO NOW, Amazon Prime, Twitch, have racked up surge of millions of subscribers in less than a week. Increase in global device usage for streaming content can be seen in the table below. According to the Nielsen data, the pandemic maybe Godsend for the video streaming

¹¹ Image source: Quartz India, data source: Kalagato
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industries.



According to statista.com the COVID-19 pandemic may also arise as a threat to the entertainment industry. From March 16-22 2020, a total of 4.3 million games were sold worldwide.¹²

Online Services: E-Commerce saw a surge when it comes to the online delivery of groceries to avoid large supermarkets and crowded places. The Statista Research Department 13 percent more sales than last year in France alone. In another article published by liveMint, the digital payment giant Paytm witnessed a 20% increase in the user base.

Video Conferencing and collaborations: The stock price of Zoom video communications skyrocketed to over 150 US dollars on March 23,2020.¹³ Zoom generated close to 190 million U.S. dollars in the fourth quarter of 2020, which is an increase of 83 million from the fourth quarter of 2019. As of March 31st, 2020 ZOOM was ranked the top business app by iPhone daily downloads in 141 markets.¹⁴ Houseparty, the app that focuses on socializing grew 735x from the week prior on March 15th, 2020. Undeniably the coronavirus outbreak has caused seismic shifts in the way consumers and businesses operate and interact.

Cloud computing: The pandemic has sent millions of student's home worldwide and millions of employees to work from home, because of which cloud companies have surged as the backbone of the global virtual learning and the

¹² Statista.com April 7,2020 a report by Christina Gough

¹³ Statista.com April 6,2020 a report by ShanHong Liu

¹⁴ Insights from APPANNIE

current disaster won't have been scalable without the prevalence of cloud services. It has been noticed that the demand of cloud services by Microsoft are up by 775 percent owing to COVID-19.¹⁵

Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology: The basic-needs companies, the Biotechnology companies, and companies innovating for medical technology. The companies like Kimberley-Clarks saw a surge in the sales due to the excessive buying of sanitizers, Gilead Sciences and Moderna, the two companies which have been trying to develop a vaccine, have seen a surge in the Stock prices in the past few weeks. The times of the pandemic has increased the emphasis on the need of medical technology to harness the speedy solutions in the future. These companies can serve to be good avenues to invest money.

7. Conclusion: The paper concludes that all pandemics come with shocks, but the need is to understand the darkness of the situation while keeping a pragmatic approach at bay. Such pandemics make us realize the need to be more planned and equipped. The impact the lockdown has on the environment is commendable depicting nature's ways of detoxifying itself, and how man has impacted the environment adversely through his activities. The business opportunities and investments that can be lucrative can help us plan our finances better. Not just the finances, an approach to harness such opportunities maybe captured at the right time.

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