Embracing The Un-normal

Webinar 4:
"How Indonesian Brands Communicate During Covid19"
Using semiotics analysis to create distinctive brand communication

11 June 2020

A Member of **PERPI** | **ESOMAR'18** corporate | **iris** THE INDEPENDENT RESEARCH INSTITUTES NETWORK

illuminate
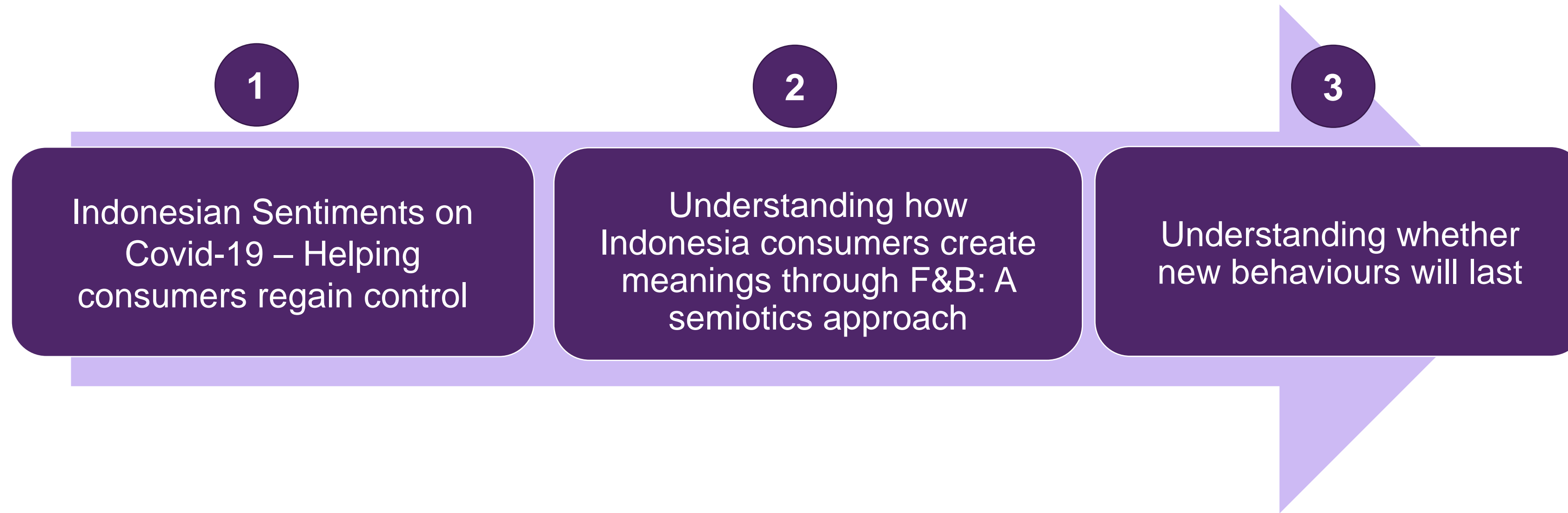Strategic Insights Consultancy

The global pandemic has affected how people think and behave in their daily lives - within a short period of time, a lot of things have changed

At Illuminate Asia, we wanted to understand how people are coping and adapting and also to help our clients & their brands make sense of it all…
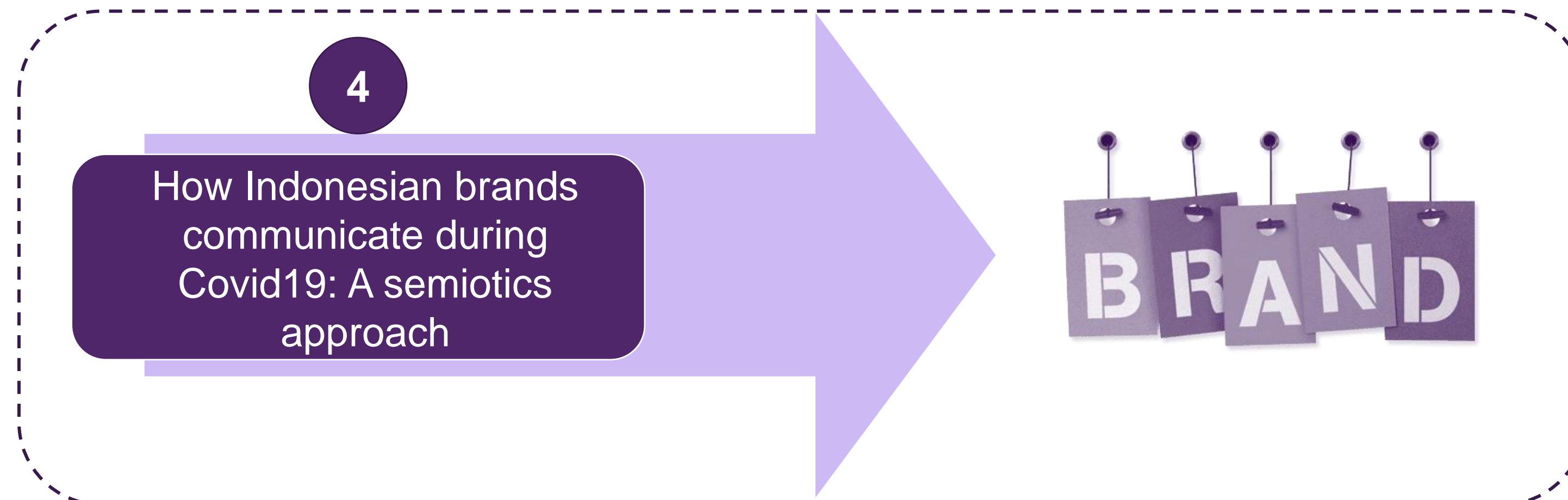
What we have covered so far…

OUR PREVIOUS WEBINAR TOPICS….

1 Indonesian Sentiments on Covid-19 – Helping consumers regain control

2 Understanding how Indonesia consumers create meanings through F&B: A semiotics approach

3 Understanding whether new behaviours will last

CONSUMERS

4 How Indonesian brands communicate during Covid19: A semiotics approach

BRAND

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

The application of semiotics in branding

Semiotics looks into how culture affects the way brands represent themselves

CULTURE

SIGNS

BRANDING

By understanding the meaning of signs and symbols within the relevant cultural context, semiotics can increase brand's relevance

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

# Why is semiotics important for brands & marketers?

- Semiotics offers an outside-in (cultural signs and symbols around us) approach as opposed to the typical qualitative methods which looks at things from an inside-out approach (consumers' perspectives)

- We analyse the signs that consumers are exposed to, which in turn shapes consumers' understandings of the world around them

- The key benefit of applying semiotics is that it is rooted in consumers' everyday experiences. Hence, it helps marketers create communication or branding strategies that are meaningful for the consumers.

BRANDINGS

COMMUNICATIONS
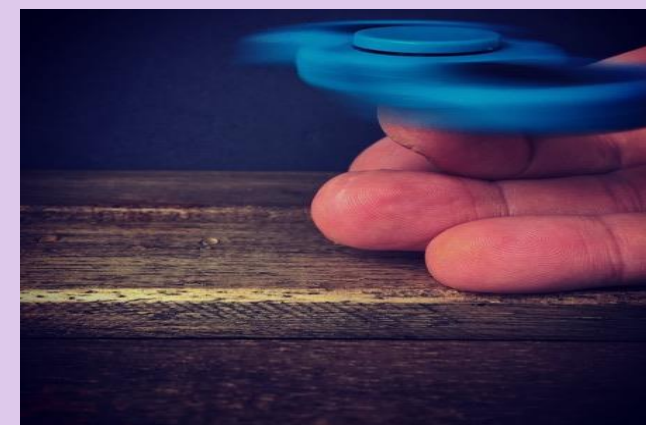
TRENDS

INNOVATIONS

At the end of the day, consumers buy the meanings that are attached to brands and not the products themselves

Core elements of semiotic thinking

SIGNIFIER

- Any elements that indicates certain things.
- Examples:
  - Words on a page
  - A facial expression
  - An image, colour
  - A sound

SIGNIFIER
The physical existence: sound, words, images, colour, shape etc

Green, triangle, leaves, pine tree
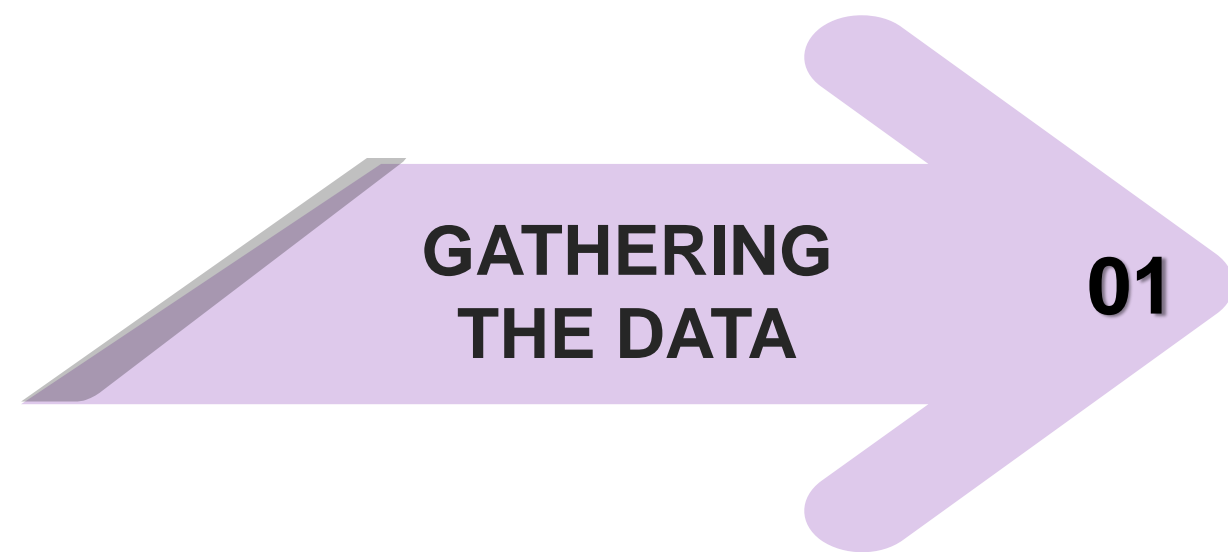
SIGN
The object or thing

=

SIGNIFIED

- The meaning behind the signifier
- It is created within the indivudal who perceives
- signified can vary between different cultures and contexts

SIGNIFIED
The mental concept

Alpine, fresh, healthy, natural, clean, environmental

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

So how exactly did we use semiotics to analyse brand communications?

GROUPING AND MAPPING THE THEMES 03

IDENTIFYING THE THEMES 02

GATHERING THE DATA 01

We gathered and analysed 40+ samples of brand communications that are strictly related to the coronavirus pandemic from ads and social media posts

In order to identify the themes, we deconstructed elements from each sample, such as the tone of message and how it is executed

To discover a broader theme that is used by brands to communicate, consistent themes that emerged across all samples and categories were then grouped into certain codes

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

7

Example of how we decode

A Brand in Control / Social Responsibility

Behind the scene - words and visual emphasize a **brand that takes action**

Words used indicate **appreciation and collective spirit** e.g. 'salute' , 'dedication,' 'commitment'

Real photo of a person in Face mask and gloves, showing **compliance with covid-19 SOP**, thus being a responsible brand. Also connotes **medical, clinical** production
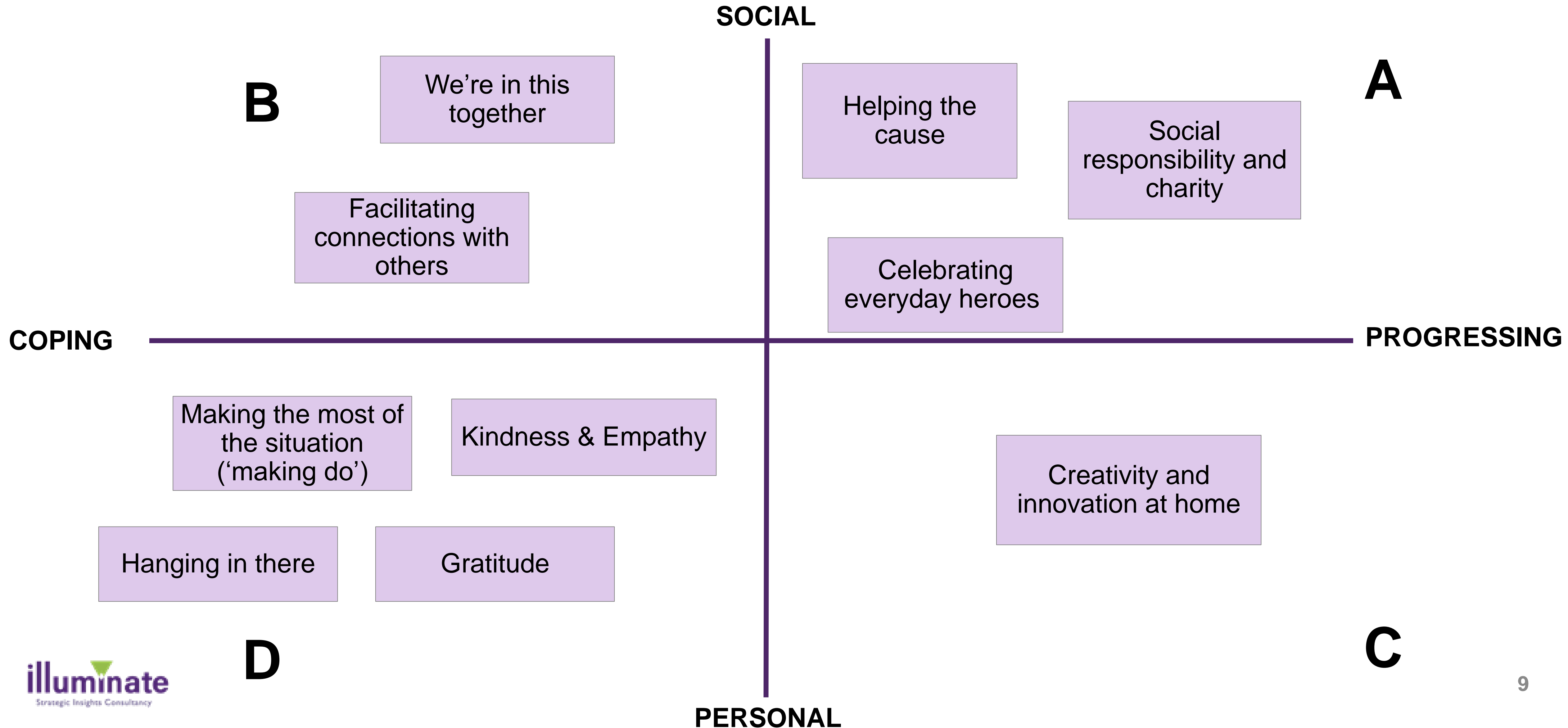
Dominant white and blue which are traditionally associated to **hospital, clinical, medica**l. White attire, signalling health-related attire and sanitized environment

#loreal takes part - promoting brand values i.e. a **socially-responsible brand**

L'Oreal Indonesia show their support for frontline workers by donating free hand sanitizer

The codes that we've discovered

There are 10 codes that emerged from our analysis of brand comms

SOCIAL

B

A

We're in this together

Helping the cause

Social responsibility and charity

Facilitating connections with others

Celebrating everyday heroes

COPING

PROGRESSING

Making the most of the situation ('making do')

Kindness & Empathy

Creativity and innovation at home

Hanging in there

Gratitude

D

C

PERSONAL

Social responsibility and charity

Function: Showing the spirit of support to the community

- The brand undertakes a more **serious tone**, but its voice emphasises **caring and generosity**.

  - e.g. by donating food, sanitizers etc. as a way to acknowledge the efforts and sacrifices made to keep the country safe.

- Brands **mobilize their teams and facilities** to show support for the community.

- Showing **category authority** – brands leverage their category expertise to extend their contribution

  - e.g. personal care brands such as L'Oreal use their facility to manufacture sanitizers.

L'Oreal Indonesia show their support for frontline workers by donating free hand sanitizers

Unilever's employees donate their lunch to the healthcare workers

Categories communicating in this space: Personal care, Corporate level etc

Helping the Cause

Function: Brands showing their solidarity with the fight against Covid19

- **Helping frontline workers** – brands provide ongoing support to health workers and other essential workers:

  - Providing coffee, food, products.

  - Helping to supply workers with essential medical equipment such as protective equipment, masks.

- **Encouraging citizens to follow the rules** – reminding people to social distance (stay at home, work from home) and continue with hygiene habits.

  - Encouraging people to not participate in mudik (going back home to their hometowns at the end of Ramadhan and before Lebaran).

Categories communicating in this space: Retail, F&B, Logistics, Personal Care etc

Kopi Kenangan gives free hazmat suits for frontline workers (1 repost = 1 hazmat suit). 'Lindungi Pahlawan' (protect heroes). Also, free coffee to workers giving rapid tests.

Go-Jek's #janganmudik campaign, educating consumers on how to keep safe a by not returning to their home village for Eid Mubarak.
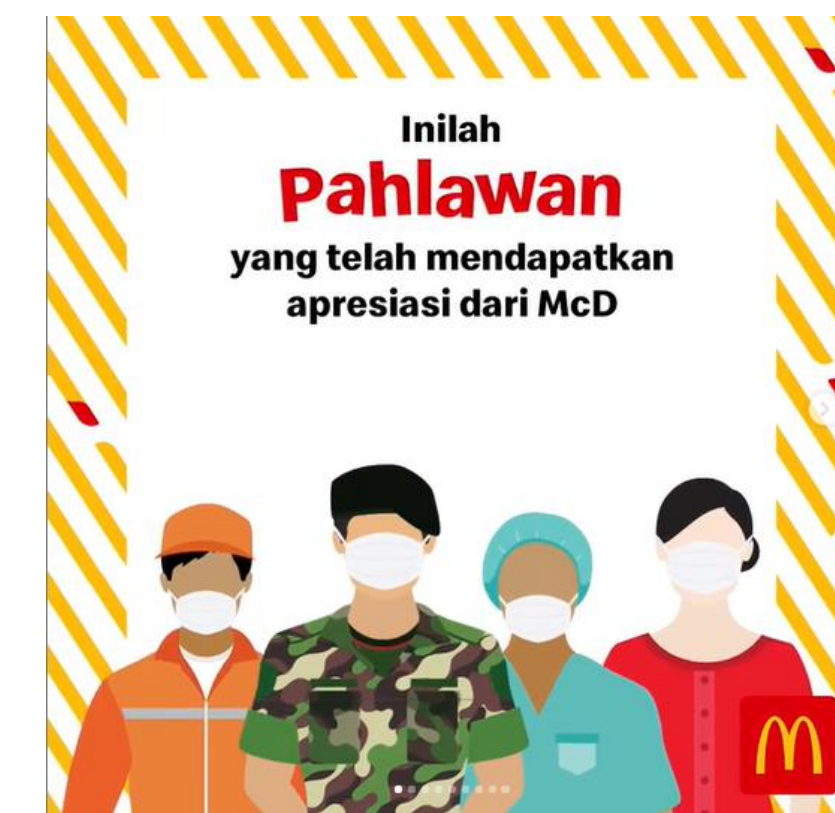

Indomie's #idontmudik campaign - Kardus Tenkyu, a supply for those choosing not to mudik this year.

Department store Matahari and Japanese fashion brand Uniqlo donate masks for frontline workers to show their support.

Nivea Producing hand sanitizer and giving for free to medical workers.

McDonald's gives a token of appreciation to thank frontline workers – free masks, PPE, free food – nominated by Instagram users.

Celebrating everyday heroes

Function: Placing front-liners and essential workers on the centre stage for risking their lives in order to keep society going

- **The new role model** – Brands and media across the globe give essential workers (I.e. ride-hailing drivers, healthcare workers, grocery workers) credit by portraying them as our new role models and heroes

  - For example, they do this by placing essential workers on the cover of magazines or making them as stars of ads. They are now front and centre.

- **Tone and execution** – Appreciative, expressing gratitude, glamorizing

  - Terms that are often used include "heroes", "pejuang hidup" (warriors of life)

Categories communicating in this space: F&B, Logistics, Vitamins etc

Gojek - shows gratitude for ride-hailing drivers who have made it easier for citizens to enjoy being at home

Aqua - healthcare workers reading bizarre tweets from people, as if they're celebrities reading mean tweets about themselves

Fatigon shows appreciation for essential workers (I.e. nurses, ride-hailing drivers, policemen) from a child's perspective

We're in this together

Function: Collective spirit to rise above – a reminder that we are not alone; that together we can get through this

- **Togetherness** – Communicates that everyone is together and to reassure consumers that though things are tough for everyone, we will all get through it eventually
  - Reminiscent of frequently used advertising code around "Kita Bisa" ('we can'), previously used to communicate national spirit

- **Uplifting and optimistic tones** – positive community spirit to overcome difficulties
  - Use of terms "together", "kita" ('we')

Categories communicating in this space: Telcoms, Personal Care, Logistics etc

Telkomsel released a song conveying the spirit of togetherness, encouraging people to be there for each other

IM3 collaborated with young musicians to make a song "Ramai Sepi Bersama" ("Crowded, Quiet, Together")

Grab's #KitaVsCorona campaign, encourages consumers to keep spreading kindness and staying optimistic to get through the pandemic

Wardah's animated ad shows message that we're not alone even though we may be apart from our families

13

Facilitating Connection with Others

**Function: Brands helping Indonesians engage in social interaction even when physically apart**

- **Beyond Borders** – Tapping into and encouraging creative ways to socially interact, even with the restrictions of quarantine:

  - E.g. via music videos and collective 'challenges'

  - Silahturahmi from Home – Brands are encouraging consumers to engage in social religious habits and practices with others from the safety of their home

- **Online interactions are key** – Brands, especially telecommunications brands, are facilitating this through their products and communications

  - Strong use of devices, but also highly interactive, showing split screen, video calls and ways to interact virtually

Categories communicating in this space: Telcos mostly (few F&B) etc

XL created a video in a video-call styled format that shows Indonesians connecting online for Lebaran.

Telkomsel's video showing different ways you can interact with each other during Ramadhan, all involving a data connection
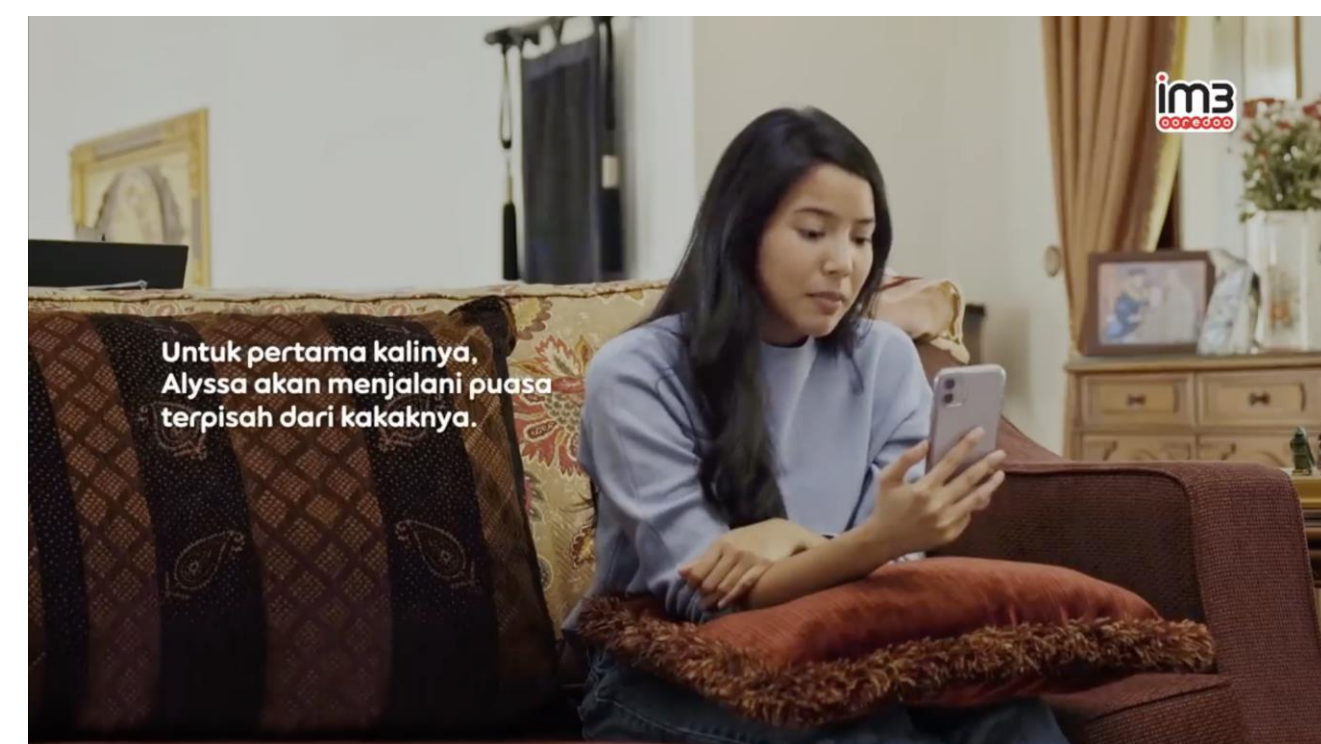
IM3's music video with popular musicians showing how Indonesians are connecting for Ramadhan festivities at home

Fore's #PassTheCoffee challenge - a creative way to spend time at home, it also simulates social interaction with others

Creativity and Innovation at Home

Function: A means of staying entertained and encouraging people to create and channel their talents.

- **DIY** – Do-it-yourself mentality where consumers and brands innovate within the limits of their own homes

  - Brands using a DIY aesthetic in their communications – as if the ad could be made by someone in their own home e.g. use of sock puppets or in-home videos etc. This encourages Indonesians to also create from home

- **Having Fun In A Different Way** – Brands create interactive challenges as a collaborative form of creativity for consumers to participate in

- **Ramadhan At Home** – Many brands create communications that offer activities that consumers can participate in as alternatives or reinterpretations of activities they normally do during Ramadhan
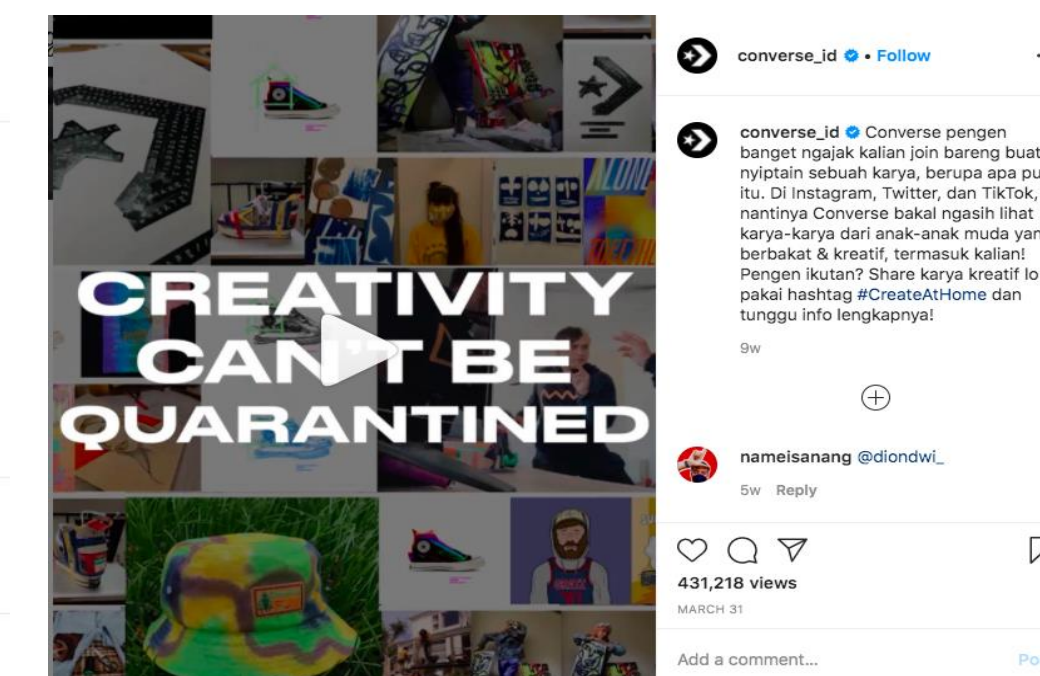

Grab Indonesia's video with sock puppets and a very DIY aesthetic made from home

XL's video featuring "Full Faedah" activities you can engage in at home, with a DIY video aesthetic made from home.
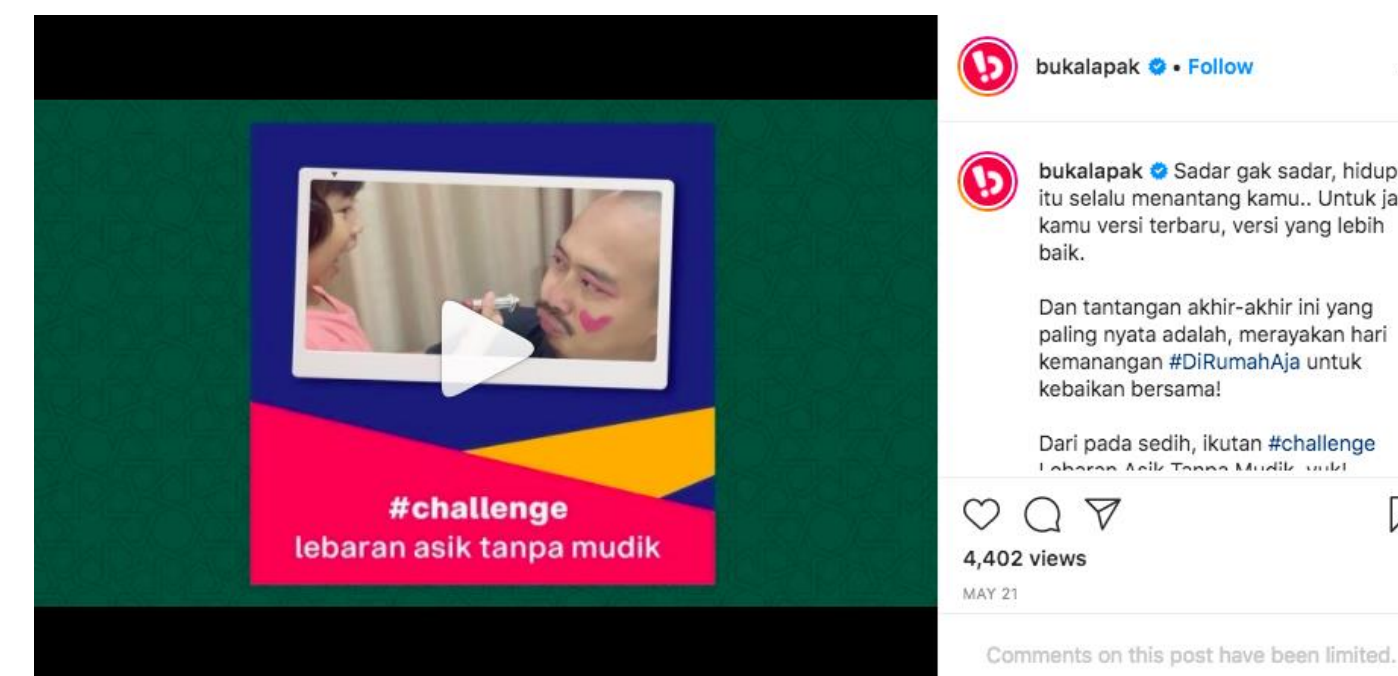
Bukalapak's challenge during Eid Mubarak to post photos/videos that capture their experience of celebrating the end of the holy month at home

Converse's "Create at Home" campaign encouraging young people at home to share work to be selected and posted.

Categories communicating in this space: Logistics, Telco, Apparel etc

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

15

Kindness and Empathy

Function: Reminding people to be selfless and aware of others' well-being

- **The spirit of kindness –** tapping into the spirit of kindness by encouraging people to be more considerate and do more good deeds for others

  - Communications tend to have a warm and friendly tone

- **Supporting causes –** Brands bring attention to the minorities who are often left unnoticed and take action to support them in these difficult times

  - E.g. making masks for deaf people

  - E.g. Supporting animals – Brands pay attention to the well-being of animals that are being affected by the pandemic.

Kopi Kenangan cooperates with Kitabisa (crowdfunded platform) to give financial aid to zoos, as COVID-19 has reduced zoos' income significantly and therefore lives of animals are endangered

Telkomsel Bringing attention to the deaf who have problems communicating during the pandemic, Telkom donates special masks, as regular mask prevents them from reading lips to communicate.

L'Oreal Indonesia released an #ActofKindness campaign to encourage people to show kindness to people those them. One way to show this is by giving appreciation to waste collectors who are still working to clean up the environment.

Categories communicating in this space: F&B, Telco, Personal Care etc

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

16

Making the most of the situation ('Making do')

Function: Encouraging people to look at things in different perspectives, making the best of the situation and being resourceful

- **Encouraging people to use their time at home or current limitations, to be more resourceful** i.e. making use of what they have around them

- **Innovative engagement** - The lack of physical presence does not stop some brands from `entering' the homes of the consumers

- Light-hearted and positive tones; the use of animations, home-made videos and raw footage helps encourage home-gown resourcefulness

Clear shampoo released #14daysresiliencechallenge campaign to encourage people to make the best of the situation, being resourceful with what they have at home in order to come back stronger in the pandemic situation

Categories communicating in this space: Start Ups, Personal Care etc

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

17

Expressing Gratitude

Function: Encouraging people to be grateful in the middle of the pandemic

- **Counting your blessings –** Reminding people to look at the positive things in their lives and acknowledge their fortune during times of crisis

- **Gratitude for what others have done** – Highlighting the hardship and challenge faced by medical workers while fighting against the virus, telling people that they should be grateful that they do not have to experience it themselves and just need to stay at home

Categories communicating in this space: F&B, Medical, Personal Care etc

Wardah constantly reminds people to be thankful everyday during these difficult times to help people stay positive.

AQUA's campaign to remind people change their negative perception and instead be grateful for not having to risk themselves on the front lines


KlikDokter's video of medical workers explaining their the hardship and challenges they face in fighting the virus, asking people to help them by staying home

Hang-in there

Function: Providing ways of coping or surviving through daily challenges

- **Resilience** – instilling the value of resilience by motivating consumers to persevere and remain strong even though times are tough.

- **Escapism –** helping consumers cope by creating narratives to allow them them escape from the current situation.

  - E.g. the use of nostalgia to reflect on the old days or to reminisce the good times help distract consumers from the current crisis.

- **Calm and reassuring tones** used - phrases such as "hang in there", "be patient"

  - Reflective, emotional, triggering warmth, comforting, using personal storytelling or real-life experiences.

Categories communicating in this space: Travel, F&B etc

i
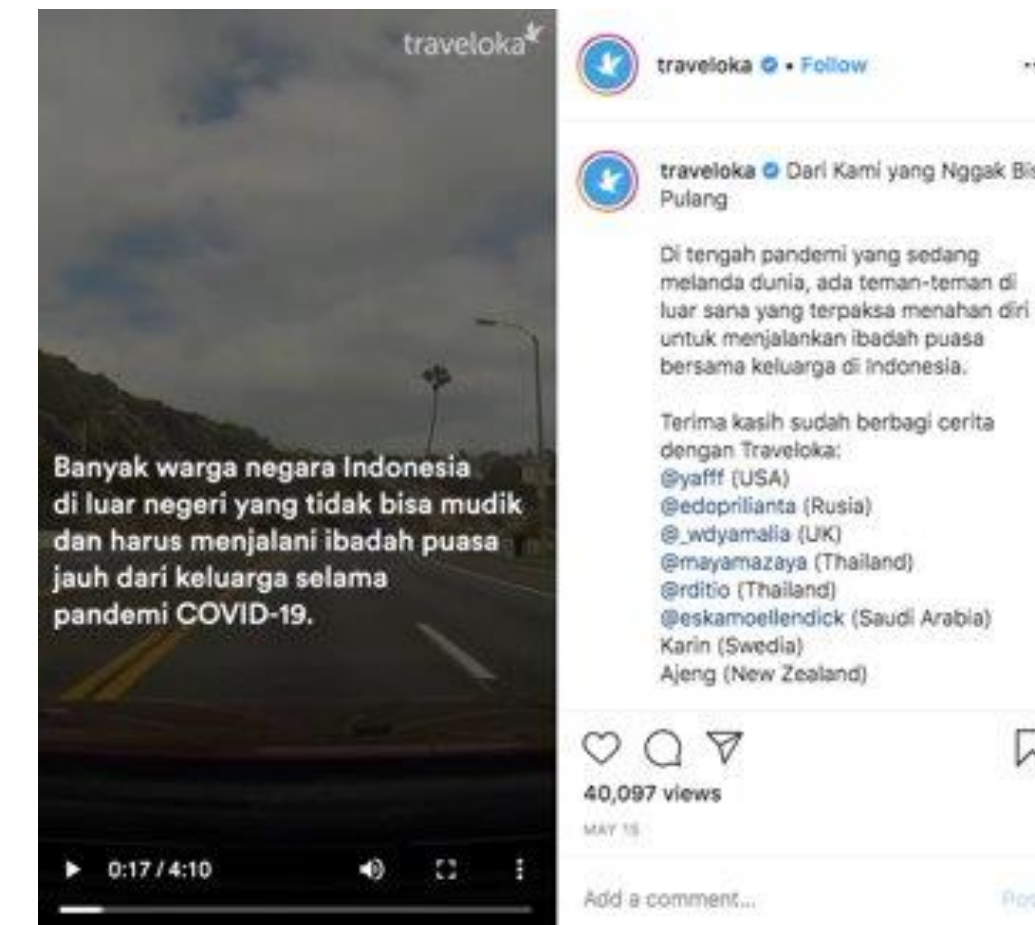
Traveloka – asks Indonesians who are stuck abroad and can't go back home about their experiences

Tiket.com - showing the difference between the old and the new normal

Kopi Janji Jiwa shared a message in a few local languages, encouraging consumers to hang in there and be resilient

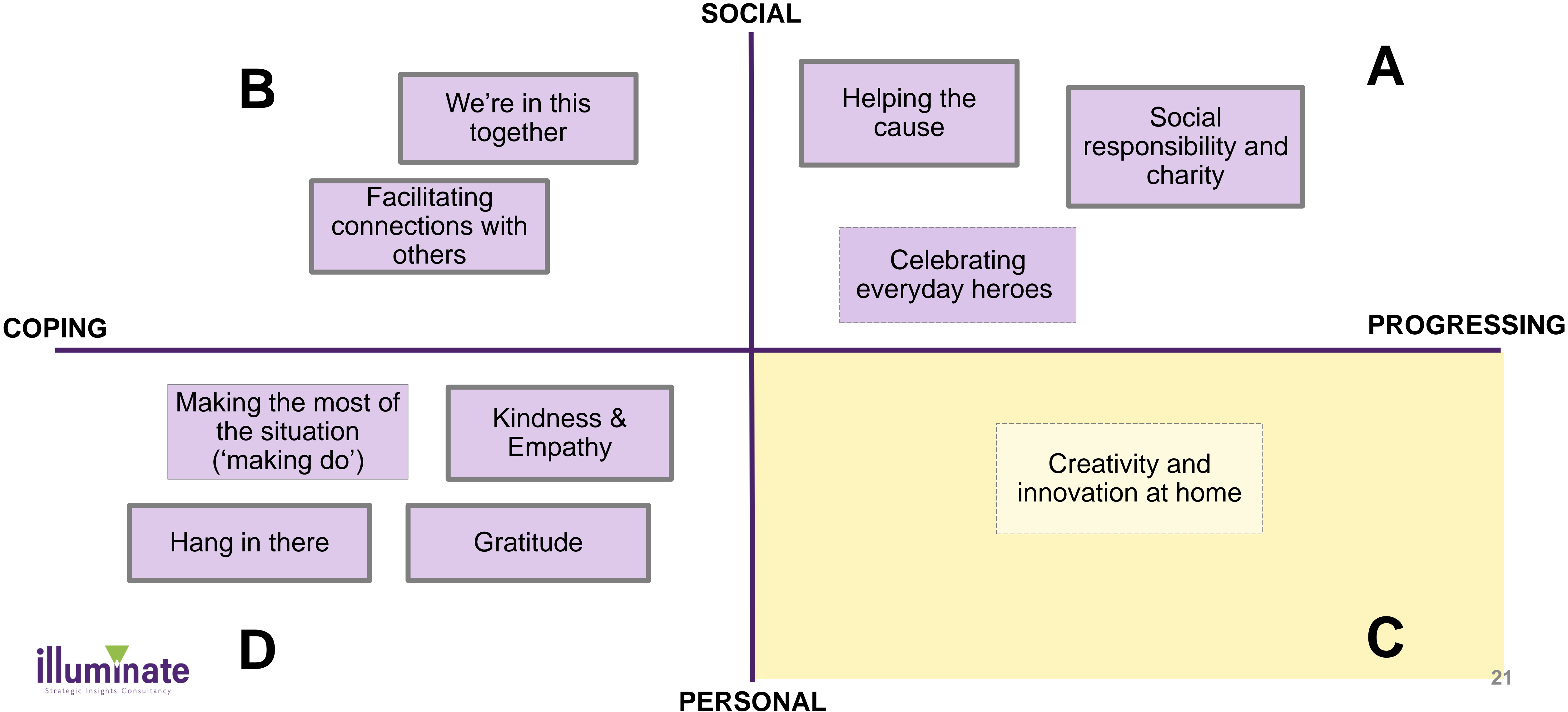*Khong Guan biscuits made an animation ad showing a family reminiscing about the sweet memories they share together*

Conclusion – What does this all mean for brands?

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

Let's consider our map again..

Which are the most common / dominant codes that brands use in communications at the moment in Indonesia?

SOCIAL

B

A

| We're in this together |
| Helping the cause |
| Social responsibility and charity |

| Facilitating connections with others |

| Celebrating everyday heroes |

COPING

PROGRESSING

| Making the most of the situation ('making do') |
| Kindness & Empathy |

| Hang in there |
| Gratitude |

| Creativity and innovation at home |

D

C

PERSONAL

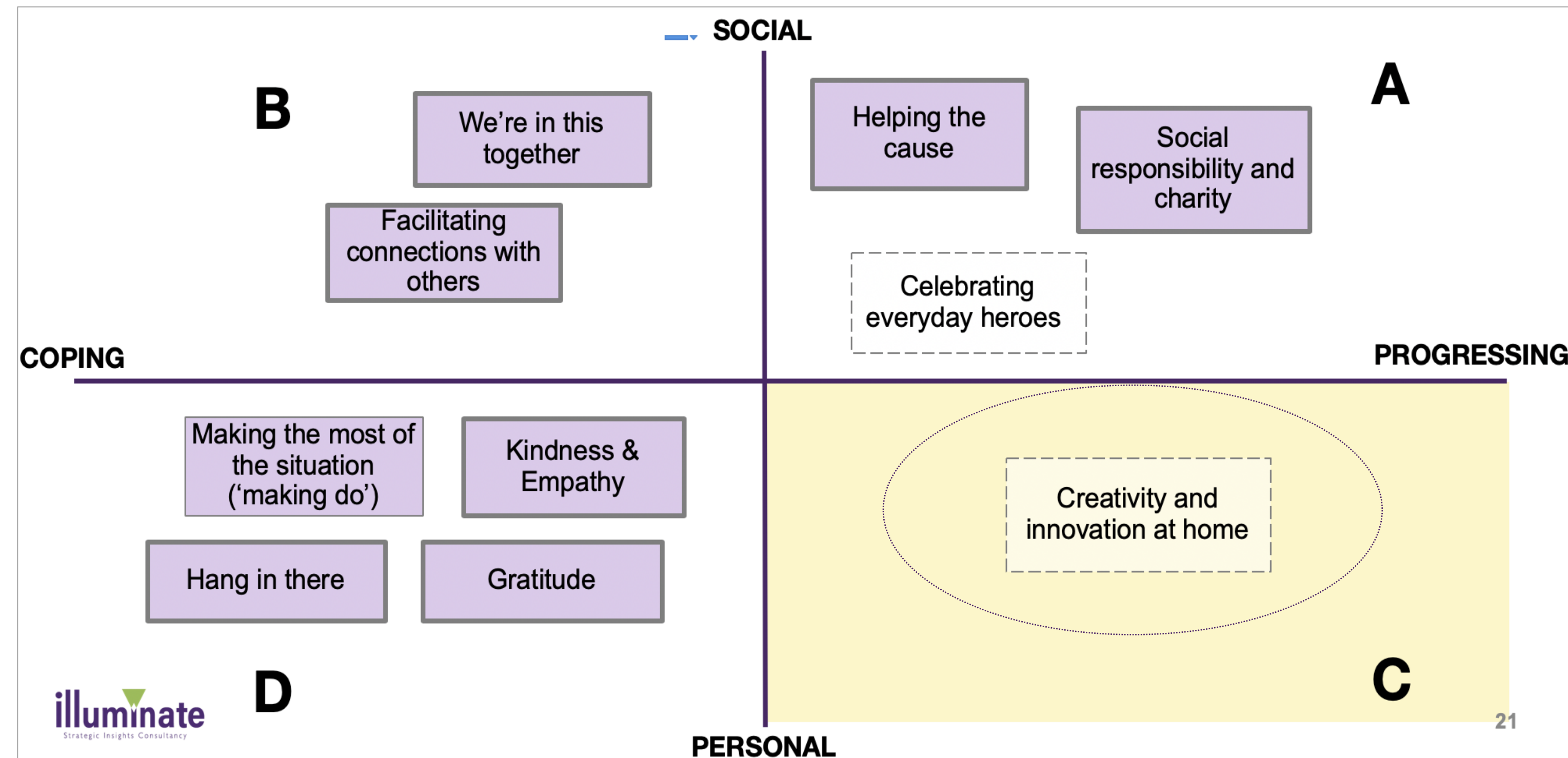illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

Opportunity – Tapping into white space of Personal - Progression

1 **TAP INTO WHITE SPACE WHERE FEW BRANDS SITS CURRENTLY**

- The quadrant of "Personal-Progressing" is less cluttered than other quadrants
- Brands can help people to progress in many aspects of their life, i.e. Health, wellness, education, work, etc.

SOCIAL

B

We're in this together

Facilitating connections with others

Helping the cause

Social responsibility and charity

Celebrating everyday heroes

A

COPING

PROGRESSING

Making the most of the situation ('making do')

Kindness & Empathy

Hang in there

Gratitude

Creativity and innovation at home
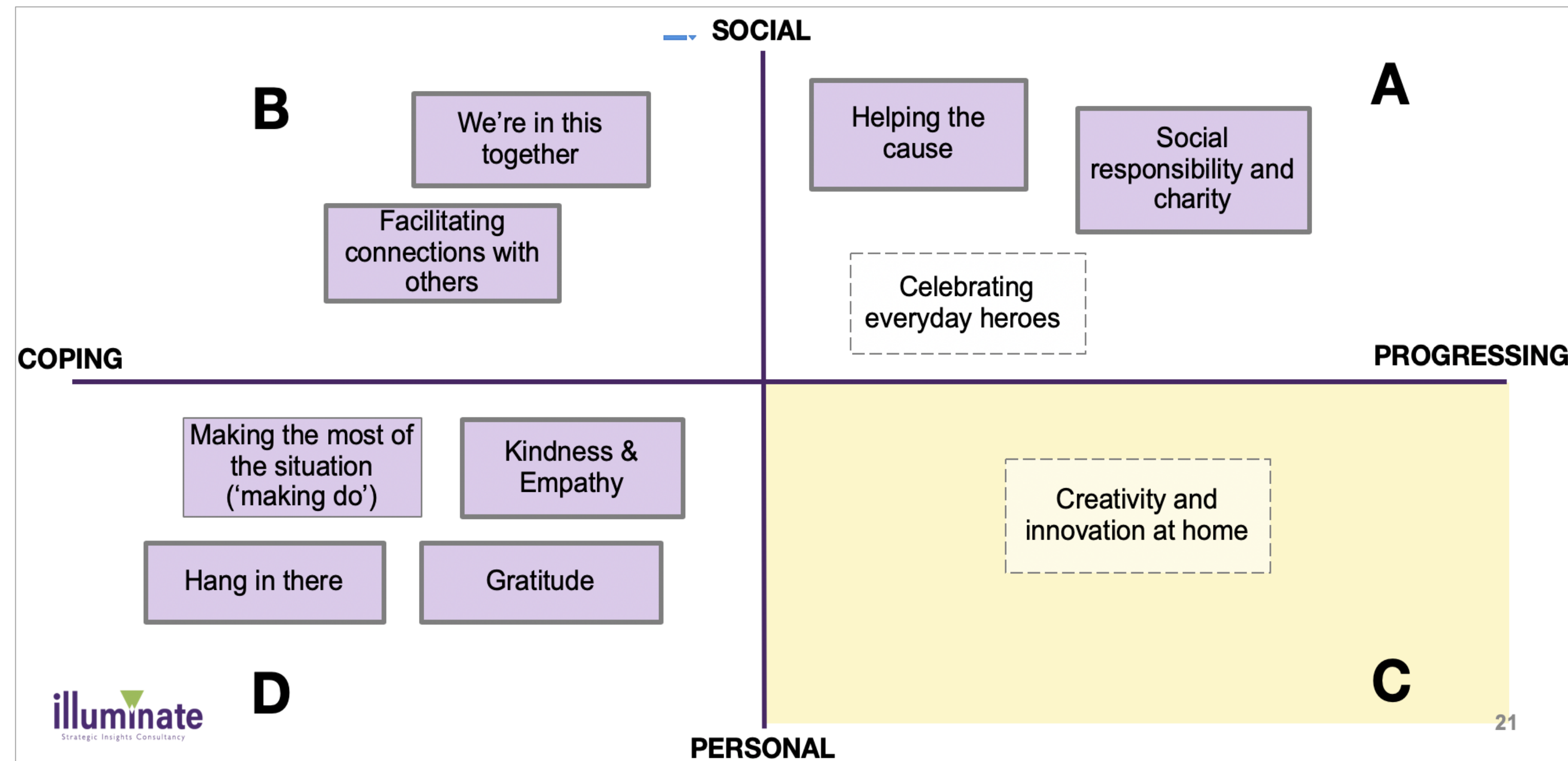
D

C

PERSONAL

Opportunity – Use different approach when talking about cluttered codes

2

USE BINARY OPPOSITES TECHNIQUE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT APPROACH

- Usually there is a dominant tone or idea when brands are communicating on the same codes
- By using binary opposites, brand can create a differentiating way to rise above the clutter

SOCIAL

B
We're in this together
Facilitating connections with others

Helping the cause
Social responsibility and charity
Celebrating everyday heroes
A

COPING

PROGRESSING

Making the most of the situation ('making do')
Kindness & Empathy
Hang in there
Gratitude

Creativity and innovation at home

D
C

PERSONAL

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

21

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

Example – using binary opposites in communication

Common approach in executing the code "Celebrating Everyday Heroes":

Example – using binary opposites in communication

Opposite approach in executing the code "Celebrating Everyday Heroes":

THANK YOU!

See you in Webinar 5!

PT Illuminate Research Asia
Graha Indomonang 2nd Floor
Jl. Mampang Prapatan Raya No. 55,
Jakarta Selatan 12760, Indonesia
P. +62 21 798 1148
www.illuminateasia.com

in Illuminate Research Asia   @asia_illuminate   @illuminateasia

illuminate
Strategic Insights Consultancy

A Member of   PERPi   ESOMAR '18 corporate   iris THE INDEPENDENT RESEARCH INSTITUTES NETWORK