

A microscopic image of several coronavirus particles, which are spherical with a textured surface and a distinct outer layer. The particles are colored in shades of red, orange, and yellow, set against a dark blue background. In the top left corner, there are diagonal stripes in teal and dark blue.

AWARENESS OF AN IMMINENT THREAT: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL CONVERSATIONS ON CORONAVIRUS IN INDIA

Part -2

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GAME CHANGERS





A fifth of the world's population is under lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. 1.5 million are infected and the fatalities will soon breach a hundred thousand. And yet the gravity of this crisis has dawned on us Indians only now. This write up is the second in the series of analyses on social conversations related to Covid-19.

The Trend

Indians first took notice of the Coronavirus epidemic in China late in January 2020, when Indian government stepped in to evacuate its citizens stranded in Wuhan. The conversation then went into a lull all through February. Local events like CAA protests and the Delhi riots pushed the Covid-19 issue out Indian mind space. After a gap of four weeks the issue gained attention again when PM Modi called of his Holi-Milan engagements. Early in March the crisis spread through the world and was declared a Pandemic by WHO. The very next day India recorded its first fatality. Conversations surged to a new high in following days. But it was the 'Janata curfew' announcement and the lockdown that followed that pushed the conversation volumes to its crescendo.

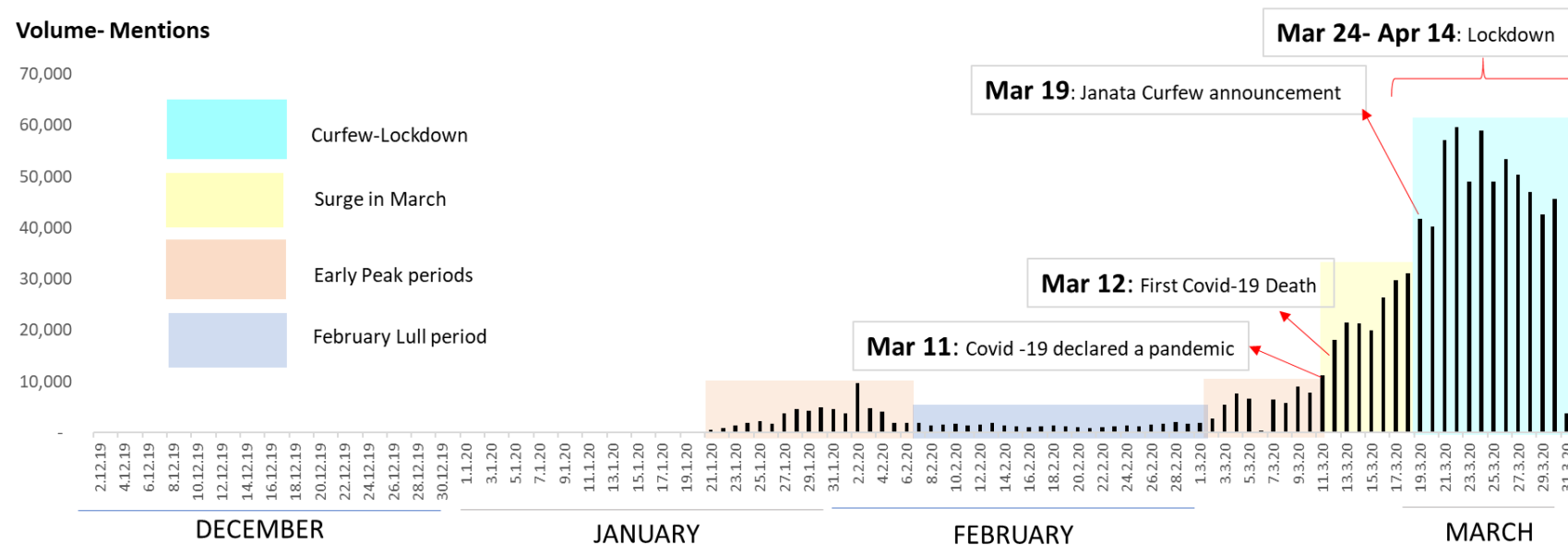


Fig 1: Trend of social media conversations on Coronavirus related themes

Though the Covid-19 crisis had been trending in the mainstream media since mid-January, it is only in the recent weeks that it has drawn the spotlight it deserves. The volume of conversations about Covid-19 in the past fortnight is nearly twice as much as the entire period of three and half months preceding it. Even though the conversation trend is aligned to the rising cases numbers detected in India, the social conversation volumes lead the trend. The surge in conversation caused by the curfew and lockdown is a tsunami when compared to the jump seen when the contagion was declared a pandemic.

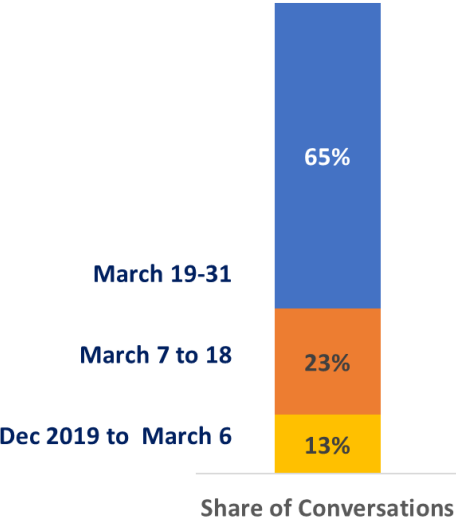


Fig 2: Conversation Build up

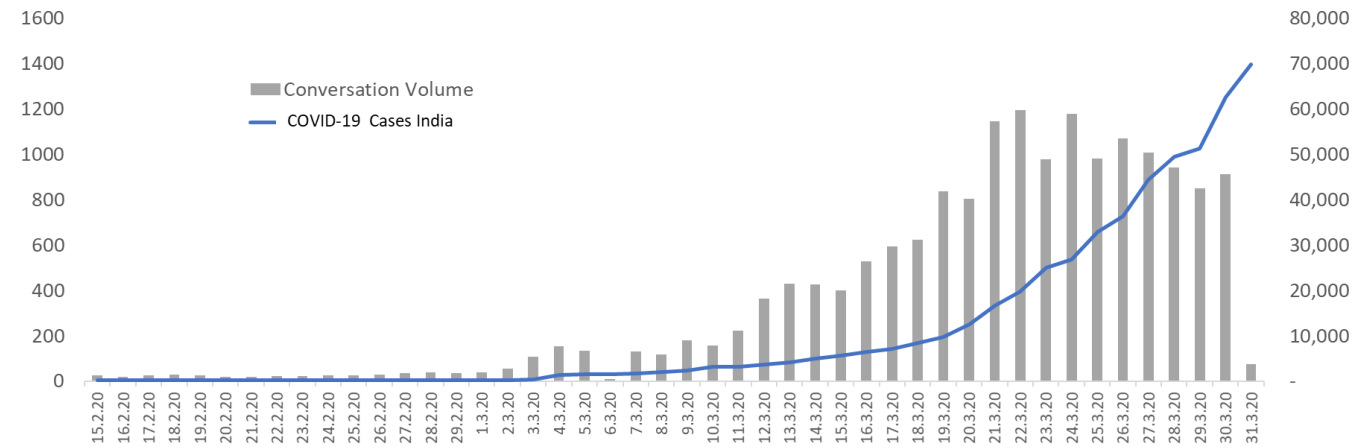


Fig 3 : Trend of social media conversations vs Reported Covid-19 cases in India

Key conversation topics

Conversation at present is dominated by remarks and opinions on the lockdown and Janata curfew. Topics seen in the previous round like China, Government health measures, Travel, Masks & Sanitizer continue to trend. Newer topics relate to all the incidents and contingencies brought about the lockdown. The impact of the lockdown on life has prompted a lot of conversation on availability of groceries, working from home, remote learning and postponement of exams. People have also shared their views on incidents like the Migrant crisis, Police excesses during the lockdown and the Nizamuddin contagion.

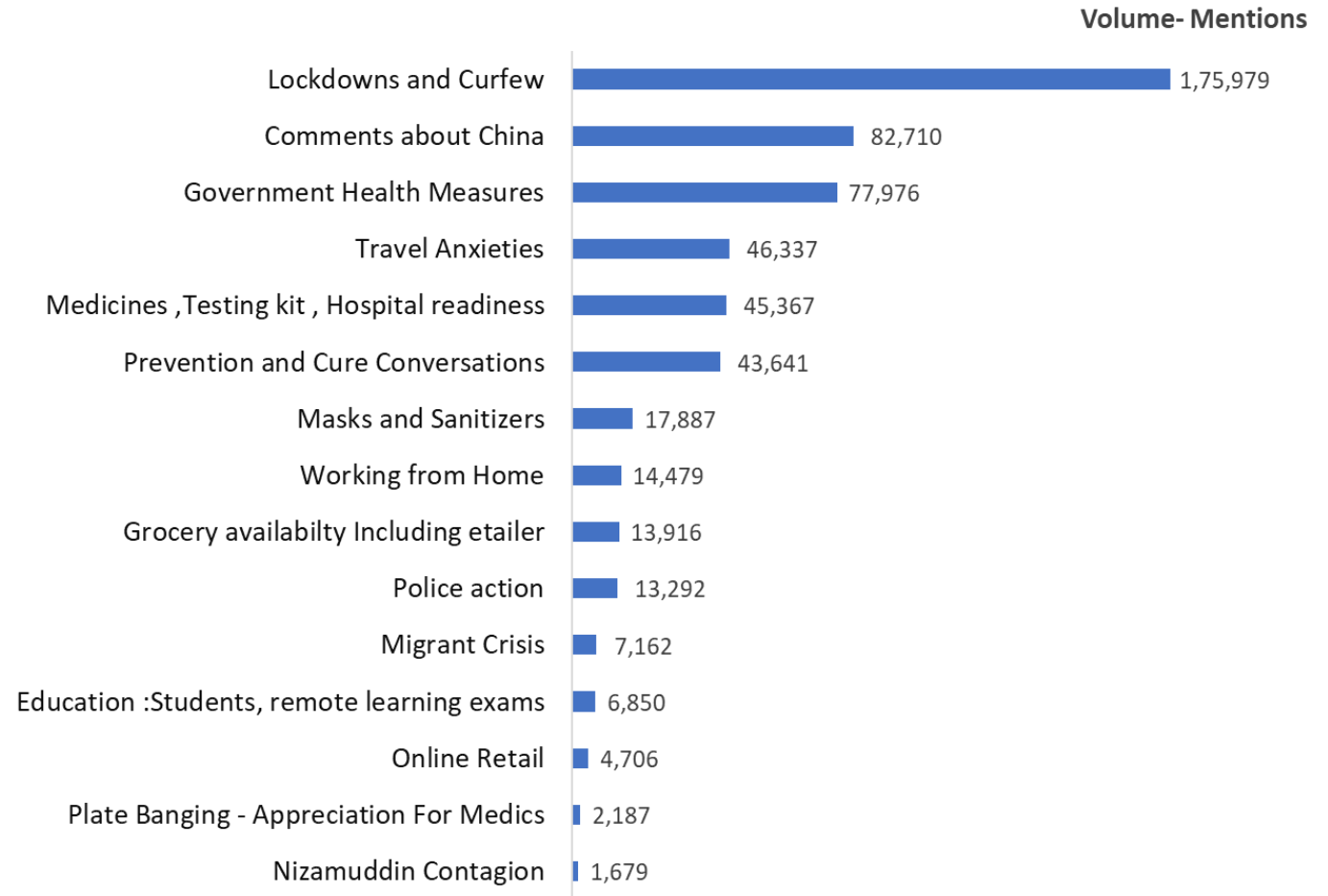


Fig 5 : Key topics of conversation

In the recent weeks, social conversations have taken on a trend that does not seem to be propelled by mainstream news reporting. Comparison of key topics between these two data sources makes this clearer. Media report by their very nature have a wider coverage of issues and one would have expected to see volumes on most topics to be higher from mainstream media. But there is a sharp difference in the topics that dominate mainstream news reporting and social conversations. Mainstream volumes are skewed towards government health measures and information on medical facilities and readiness of the health infrastructure to tackle the crisis. Social conversations have been focussed on the lockdown situation.

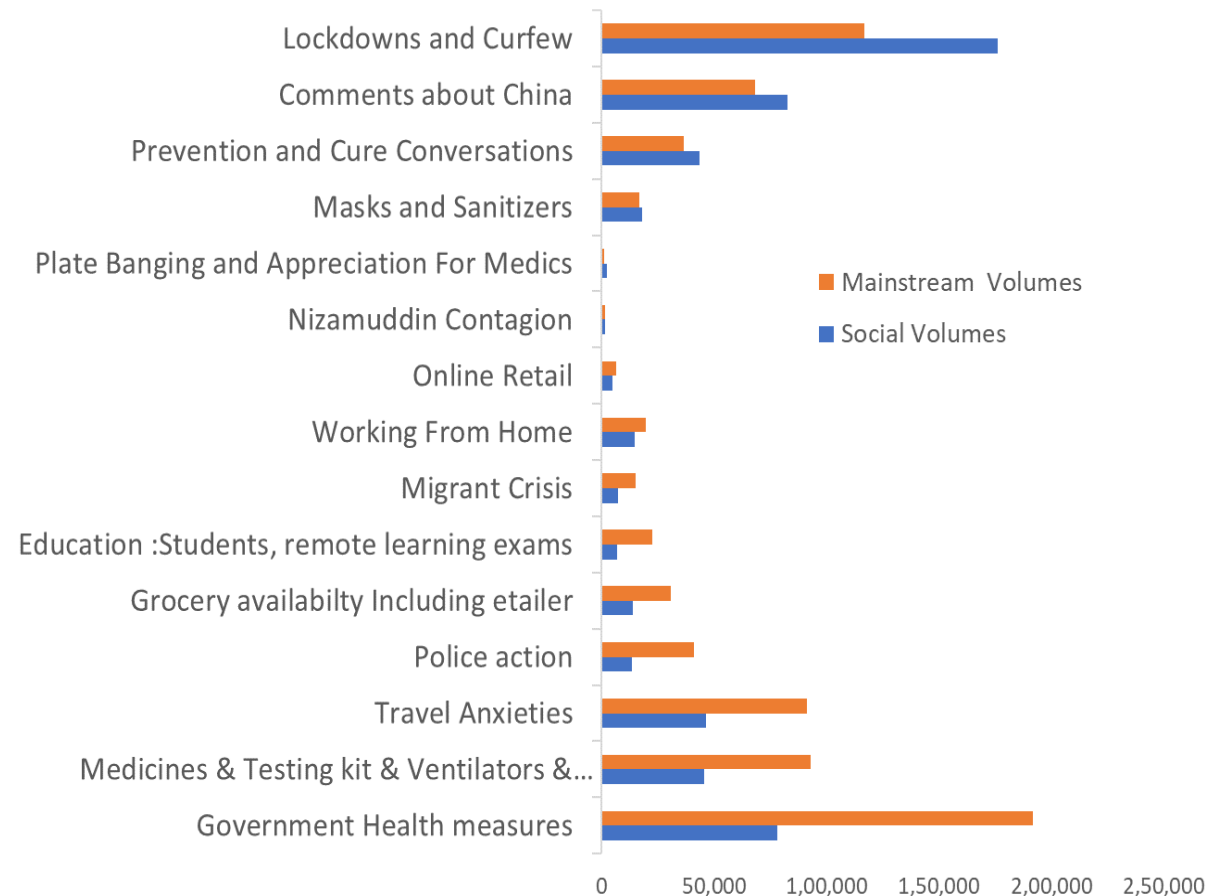


Fig 6 : Key topics – Social Conversations vs Mainstream media reporting

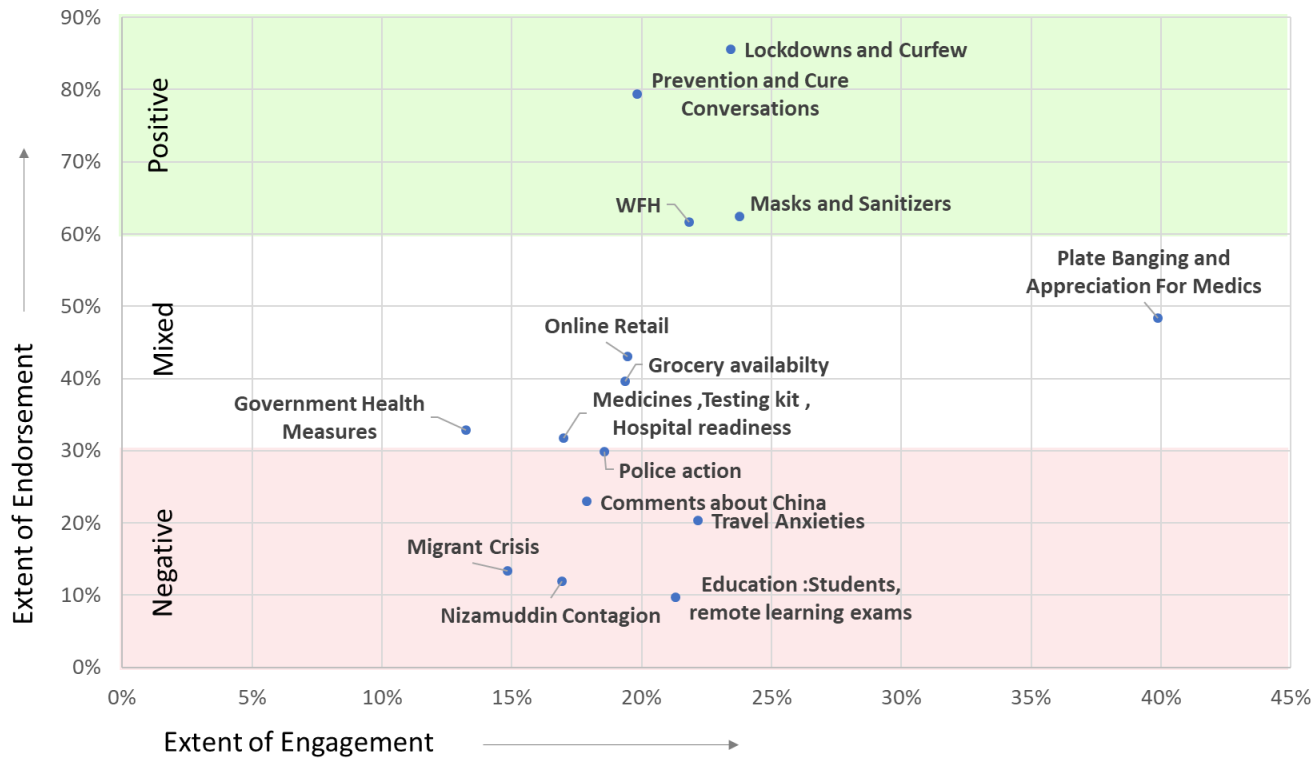


Fig 7 : Key topics – Engagement vs Approval

Sentiment analysis

Examination of sentiments expressed in these conversations shows the variation in public opinion across different topics. Most of the conversations were largely sharing of news and developments, therefore neutral sentiment tends to dominate. Analysis of the non-neutral conversations (Fig 7) can reveal both the extent to which the topics have evoked an emotional reaction (engagement) and the valence of these emotions. This analysis shows that that people have responded positively to the lockdown situation and are coping well with working from home, are quite concerned about the impact on education and have had mixed experiences with procuring groceries. Nizamuddin contagion and the migrant crisis expectedly evoked negative reactions. Comments on China continue to be adverse. The mixed sentiment on the “ThaliBajao” occasion (Plate banging – appreciation for medicos on March 22nd) is somewhat unexpected.



Lockdown /Curfew

The announcement of the lockdown and one day curfew prior to that mainly drew appreciation. It invoked a sense of solidarity against an indiscernible enemy. The conversations were mainly citizens urging each other to abide by the regulations imposed and in effect relaying the message conveyed by the Prime Minister. There were a few comments of relating the current situation in India to one that Kashmiris were enduring for a long time and some voiced concerns for the daily wage earners.



I whole-heartedly commend fellow citizens for spiritedly responding to [@PMOIndia](#)'s call& making [#JanataCurfew](#) a success. This shows our resolve to contain [#Covid19](#) spread and emerge from the crisis as a stronger nation





‘Thali-bajao’ - appreciation for medicos

The five-minute ovation for medicos on the day of Janata curfew drew mixed responses, though it was the topic that evoked the highest emotional engagement.

Many of the comments were emotional tributes to the medical professionals and others who kept the citizens secure in such times of crises. The negative comments related to the anger and utter disbelief at the processions seen in some parts of the country, which defeated the very objective of the curfew. There were comments from some vigilantes who observed people in their communities and neighbourhood flout the regulations.

Coping with the lockdown

Lockdown also meant that people had to rapidly adjust to the restriction imposed and many were ill-prepared. This evoked some panic about access to groceries and other necessities. There were many complaints about delivery issues and profiteering. People also reported how they were coping with working from home and many of these comments were positive and laced with humour. Conversations about education were mainly about postponement of exams and related concerns.



Where is the essentials open?? The delivery should be open how are we going to buy necessary stuffs it's not just foods even bb is closed delivery are supposed to be open its open in other countries! We want online shops open !! If not we ll struggle more pls

Online grocery not working, PM has imposed complete lockdown so how the hell are people going to buy food????? People will run to grocery stores in droves, thus increasing the chance of contamination No plan at all

Q: Name one of the big challenges you faced during OVID lockdown.

le: Explaining to my 2-yr old why I need to go and be a panelist on a Zoom webinar instead of playing building blocks with her.

You should see the look on that face when I say "Bye, Appa is going to work". 😊



As govt has advised not to hold public gathering i am worried about ongoing ssc cgl exams conducted all over delhi where large no of students will be writing the exams everyday. [#CoronavirusReachesDelhi](#) [#coronavirusinindia](#) @PMOIndia @drharshvardhan @narendramodi



Just got [#ripped](#) at the local [#kirana](#) store. Purchased [#Cumin](#) usually costing Rs.30-35/100g for Rs. 50. A [#hike](#) of 43% in prices. [#CoronaVirus](#) [#21daysLockdown](#)



Coronavirus made by China has caused as much loss of life in the world . All countries should compensate by taking action against China.



After#Covid19 #Coronavirus Pandemic China has developed a new virus called #Hantavirus . In Wuhan institute of Virology success., China has banked 1500 different types of #Chinaviruses !!!.

Perceptions about China

Though the lockdown brought the focus of conversation closer home, comments relating to China continued to build up. Most of these were adverse and lay the blame of the pandemic on China. There was also some alarm at the reports of a Hantavirus epidemic originating from China.

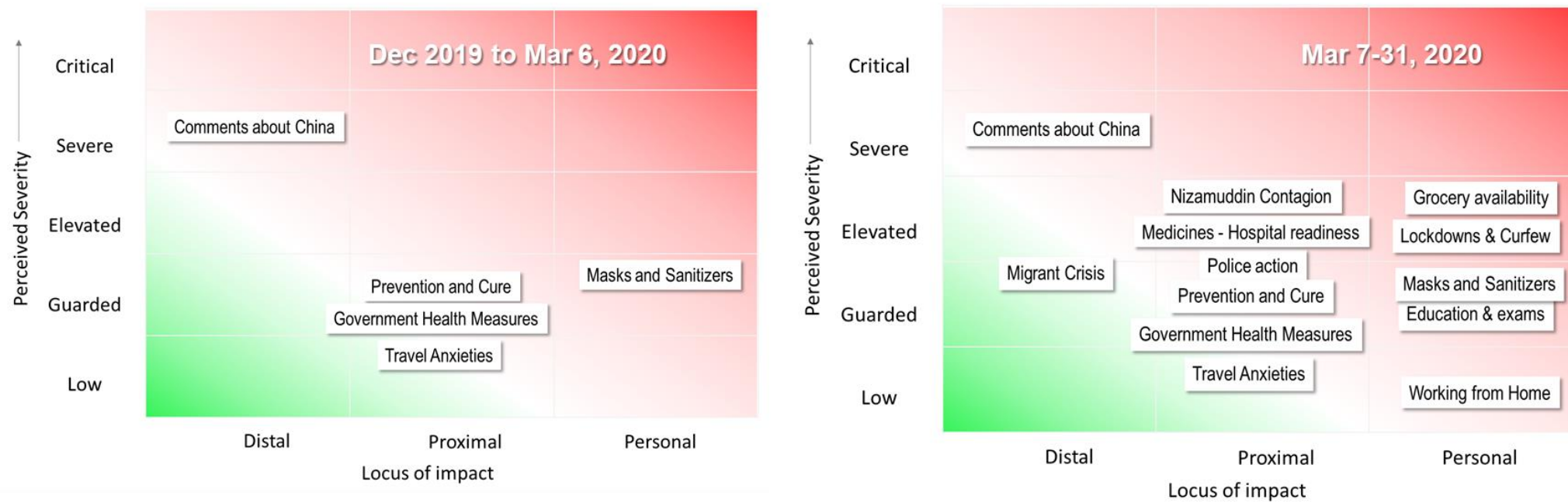


Fig 8 : Threat perception analysis

In Sum : Threat perception

By analysing the tone and content of these topics we can also infer the perceived severity of the crisis and the proximity of the impact. The severity ranges from low, in case of topics such as working from home, to near critical in case of many of the comments about China. The lockdown has brought a distant vaguely perceived issue right to our doorsteps. The panic sensed in the comments relating to the availability of necessities is an evidence of this. However, there are no topics yet where a personal impact is severe or critical. The success of the containment in the coming weeks and months will be reflected in social conversation staying in the guarded-elevated threat zone, and not moving to a zone where clear and present danger is sensed.

For further information on this study or for Social Listening Insights:

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