THE NUPTIALS OF SOCIAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA – WHY THIS SOPHISTICATED MIXED MARRIAGE IS WORTH MONITORING IN THE LONG-TERM

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ABSTRACT

For companies in Malaysia who want to stay ahead, monitoring their traditional media is no longer an only option. It is imperative that attention is paid to the implications of the heavy activity on the Internet via portals and social networking sites. Neglect would lead to a handicap of a swift response in real time which is a necessity in this age of nanotechnology. Integrating traditional and social media monitoring elevates management of information to a level that allows organizations to document, analyze and place a numeric value to their public relation efforts. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to highlight the activities reflecting the media monitoring based on a few samples of case studies and at the end emphasizes on the worth of mixed marriage of traditional and social media.

Keywords: Mixed marriage; traditional; social media; monitoring and social sites.

INTRODUCTION

This country has been advocating mixed marriages since Adam. We marry the Malay and

English language to make *Manglish* – much to the dismay of the English Language

purist. We marry a plethora of food, customs and traditions to create the unique

Malaysians we are today. It should not come as a surprise that there is an important

public relations marriage quietly being negotiated in the media arena that we need to be aware of. Today, I choose to put forward The Nuptials of Social and Traditional Media – Why This Sophisticated Mix Marriage is Worth Monitoring for Malaysia in the Long-Term.

A long time back, media monitoring in public relations meant cutting out news paper clippings and filing them in a folder for reports on the maximum number of clips generated. Relevant news on television or radio were taped and stored to add to the many compiled reports. Presently, many Malaysian organizations are still collecting their print and broadcast depiction and those which are relevant for their future planning or archives. Now, pressure mounts on organizations having value and context placed upon their public relations efforts. Has the news been positive or negative? Has it improved public perception and has it been translated to a significant increase in customers? With all the PR exercises, have they achieved a greater share of voice against their competitors? Are they quick enough to respond given an influential change in opinion, market conditions or policy? With the growth spurt of the Internet and now, social networking sites, companies now need to have an extra eye for this medium that has taken the world by storm just before the turn of the millennium (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). What is being posted and discussed about their product and services and related matters can help them keep them one step ahead of their competitors.

By definition, media monitoring service "provides clients with documentation, analysis, or copies of media content of their interests…" and media monitoring "continuously gathers information and tailors it according to any clients' needs (Khan, 2010). From this we understand, that in order to increase productivity for media monitoring and coverage, management of information needs to be taken as a top priority.

MEDIA MONITORING CASE STUDY

Background Information

To exemplify the concept of media monitoring, I would like to put forward a case study of an international bank. This leading British bank with a long presence in Malaysia wants to continuously see the results of its voluminous media and public outreach efforts to ensure that their communication and messaging constantly fine-tuned to the optimum.

Description of Presenting Problem

The bank's coverage in the media was portrayed from various angles – local and international business, Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns and sponsorship programme. There also wanted to be kept abreast of their competitors' activities and the key trends and policies in the local and international arena.

Prescription

To achieve this goal, the media analytics team of Essence Communication (EC) pioneered a media solution that is able to:

Track daily key topics

For instance: what are the opinions of market experts of the exponential increase of the price of gold? What are the repercussions of Asian markets when Standard and Poor downgraded the credit rating of the U.S.A.?

Tone and manner of news

What kind of news is written on and about the bank in print and on-line? Was the outlook positive, negative or neutral? How is it affecting their credibility as one of the largest banks in the world?

Share of voice (SOV)

What is the percentage for the bank's generated news that was picked up by the media against its identified competitors?

Track key industry trends

Are people more inclined to use a credit card, debit card or charge card?

Filter and flag the bank's in-house team on developments that can be utilised to further their communication objectives

If there is a complaint in print on the bank's product or services, the Customer Service Department would be alerted right away and the matter would be dealt with within the same day.

Numerate their advertisement value (Ad Value) and Public Relations Value (PR Value)

during a sponsorship or corporate social responsibility (CSR) exercises

When Liverpool descended in Kuala Lumpur recently, the bank was able to calculate

their Return of Investment based on print and on-line publicity that surrounded the

English Premier League Club whose Malaysia tour was sponsored by the bank.

Outcome

Every work day, the bank receives an executive news summary that clearly depicts the

source in print or online. Attached to the company news are the Ad Value, PR Value and

Tone of the article (Essence Communication, 2011).

This analysis allows the corporate affairs and communications team to tabulate

recommendations to maximize benefits from a current trend or to minimize impact from

a particular trend that can progress to decision making in the boardroom.

The bank case study shows how print media is still prevalent, that eleven years after the

millennium, depending on coffee and the morning paper is as important as checking the

latest updates on Twitter and *Facebook* these days. Bosses, parents and spouses of our

country would be raising their collective eyebrows at how affable and keyboard-happy

Malaysians have the most number of friends on social networking websites like

Facebook, incepted in 2006 (Boyd & Ellison), according to a survey conducted by

international firm TNS (The Star, 2010). A Malaysian has an average of 233 friends in

their social network, followed by 231 in Brazil and 217 in Norway; Japanese users had

the least number of friends, averaging just 29.

"Malaysians also spend the most hours per week on such sites. The survey was based on

recent interviews of 50,000 consumers in 46 countries. In terms of hours spent on social

sites, Malaysians spent nine hours weekly. Next were the Russians, with an average of

8.1 hours per week online while those in Turkey spent 7.7 hours a week." (The Star,

2010)

The Malaysian numbers in relation to other developing countries are phenomenal – a few

unsatisfied customers cum chat room users could create a mob effect on the Internet and

the results could be disastrous. With a few words of disgust and a click of a key, the

nation can be in the know of happenings and if it sparks interest, or anger, the situation

can go viral.

**WHEN SOCIAL MEDIA BLED INTO PRINT – A CRISIS MANAGEMENT
CASE STUDY**

Background Information

An important case study is the Energizer Night Run. Social media networks went berserk

when the event, sponsored by this leading battery producer, was marred by a skirmish

over distribution of headlights before the run and goodie bags, post-run. A stuffy tunnel

which acted as a funnel and holding area for runners and haphazard flag-offs to the various races led to disgruntled runners spark a Twitter frenzy amongst the present runners and their cyber acquaintances.

Description of Presenting Problem

The dissatisfaction electrified social networks to the point it struck most conventional media like a bolt of lightning. In less than 24 hours, the company bore the brunt of a run badly managed. Newspapers picked up this ruckus that took place at the *Sepang F1* venue. Within 24 hours, all the Kuala Lumpur dailies were covering it. This is a classic example how social media can bleed into traditional media.

Venting virtually gives people a sense of security but the negative statements can have detrimental effects on the company or organizer that people are venting their frustration upon. Title sponsor Energizer even received threats of an organized boycott of its products (Wong, 2011).

Prescription

Damage control was quickly deployed where Energizer took ownership of the mistakes and began refunding the runners as first steps to address the upset. By monitoring social media tweets and updates to understand the run participants' grouses and took on suggestions to rectify the situation. As in most networks, key players were identified as they were influential in their opinions in the social network - these individuals were

mostly hardcore runners from running groups rather than the vocal casual participants of the run but theirs were the cooler heads that prevailed.

To respond to the grouses, statements were crafted for online social media to ensure accurate information was about disseminated receiving refunds, run participation certificates and goodie bags. Through active listening and relationship building, a run was organized where key opinion shapers and runners alike got to air their opinions and gave ideas on how to improve management and organization of future runs. This was then topped off with a ceremony where winners received what was due to them – redemption, compassion as well as recognition for their efforts, apart from medals and goodie bags.

Outcome

Energizer managed to navigate itself from negative to neutral point territory within six weeks (Essence Communication, 2011). Sales of their batteries remain unchanged. This scenario shows the importance of monitoring social media networks during crisis management and bridging the connection from the virtual to face to face activities. Attending to key players on networking sites and responding to them in real time and the real world turned the tables for Energizer. The need to be nimble for companies is as real as it gets because once virtual negative talk penetrates the real print and broadcast world, it can affect the credibility of a product or service of a company.

NETWORKING TO REACH OUT –MIRACLE OF LOVE CASE STUDY

Background Information

Conversely credibility was built via social networking sites for a milk product for expectant mothers in the next case study. The producer, wanted to move away from the hard sell of traditional advertising that yells out one's unique selling point (USP) like a loud hailer.

Description of Presenting Problem

Given the sophistication of its target market who mostly had access to the Internet, they wanted to go one step forward to assist pregnant mothers to answer questions about their coming bundle of joy, to share their experiences and concerns of their impending birth and to obtain essential information in words and visuals.

Prescription

The client with EC fashioned a one-stop on-line social networking site that gave an A-Z pregnancy guide that tracks foetus development from conception to birth. By logging on to the site they would have access to Miracle of Love – a series of footage by Discovery Channel that depicted the growth of the fetus, pre-birth paired with commentary from Malaysian experts. It allowed mothers to build an emotional connection, analyse and learn about issues during pregnancy and also to prepare siblings for the latest addition to the family.

Outcome

In the virtual world in gave expectant mothers to opportunity to share their pregnancy experience shifting the sentiment online resulting 1 in 4 online communications to be favourable. The online guide also managed to increase the number of LIKES in the brand's Facebook page, (Essence Communication, 2011). In the real world, the site was launched and due to its human interest was covered quite extensively in print and broadcast media. It eventually created greater awareness of the brand and later translated to increased sales.

THE MAKING OF THE GREATEST MARATHON IN MALAYSIA – A CASE STUDY

Background Information

As in the case of the milk company, audience become more refined, a more sophistication is needed for companies to stay ahead. Broadsheets may be limited to the local front, but, with worldwide access of the Internet, social media networks is the ultimate tool for companies to create awareness of their campaigns and events and build their credibility at an international level. Such is the case study of the Kuala Lumpur marathon, a run which is only three years old in Malaysia.

Description of Presenting Problem

The title sponsor wanted to elevate the Kuala Lumpur marathon to same status as marathons in other countries that enjoy its sponsorship like Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok. These countries garnered 65,000, 60,000 and 50,000 participants respectively, last year. Last year, the KL Marathon received 17, 500 applicants (Utusan Melayu, 2011).

Prescription

To achieve this goal to make KL Marathon the greatest race in Malaysia and a target of PR value worth RM15 million (US$5 million), one-one interviews were set up with organisers and sponsors. To create a CSR angle, the "Run for a Cause" charity programme was launched where six charities would benefit from the run collections. Human interest stories especially those focusing on blind runner, Henry Wanyoike and his guide Joseph Kibunja in the Men's Half Marathon Open category were put forward. They were also extensively covered when they ran alongside Malaysian Institute of the Blind members in the "Seeing is Believing" blind run. Broadcast media were also engaged and played a major role in fanning the enthusiasm before, during and after the SCKLM. As the marathon drew nearer, a 'Meet the Athletes' press conference was held with elite Kenyan and Malaysian athletes. Blogs and runner sites were also monitored to obtain insights of issues facing runners post-run.

Outcome

The result of PR exercise, via traditional and virtual mode saw an increase the number of runners this year to 22,000, garnered 66 press attendance (Essence Communication, 2011), accumulated RM486,668 for the "Run with a Cause" CSR campaign (Standard Chartered Kuala Lumpur Marathon, 2011) and reaped a total PR value of RM32 million (US$10.9 million), doubling the actual target.

Why do we need social media conversations?

Assess overall sentiment.

In the main, do people know what your organization is about? Do they like your goal but not how you're going about it? Do they love your platform but don't connect emotionally to your cause? Take the temperature of the room!

Target new stakeholders.

Can you do a better job getting one of your offerings across to a new audience that's only loosely connected with your organization? What are their particular interests and motivations? Is there a potential to build a new vertical or niche community around your service or cause?

Identify your champions.

Do you know who your brand's strongest advocates and evangelists are? How are you rewarding or engaging with them? Particularly with a new brand or campaign, you'll want to reach out to these leading voices and influencers who can help spread an opinion about a brand faster than your own website can.

Identify your critics & fend off crises.

Your reputation could be jeopardized by criticism — warranted or not, true or not — taking place on the social Web. You need to swoop in and respond in a positive manner, correcting any errors of fact and demonstrating problem-solving abilities, before misperceptions harden into negative sentiment. This is also a critical step in warding off PR disasters. And your critics aren't always wrong. Adds Liz Strauss: "Listen for the things that you don't want to hear" and learn from them.

Audit your efforts.

At some point you'll want to step back and do an assessment of your social media channels. What's working? What's not worth the staff's time?

Study the success stories.

What resonates with your users? Do you have a good sense of what pages on your site, which blog posts, which Facebook postings, Flickr sets or YouTube videos — by your

team or by others in your sector — are causing the most stir and generating the most interest? Track what's working and emulate the best features.

Identify new program or product opportunities.

Brands are beginning to realize the value that users can offer about their programs, products, services and campaigns. To some extent, the social Web is the new focus group — only free, larger and instantaneous. Social media can help you to stay abreast of the latest development in your sector and to use that business intelligence to inform your organization's product or program roadmap.

Identify ways to lower costs.

Business development and sales teams are increasingly turning to the social Web for sales leads and business prospects or crowdsourcing. Nonprofits are beginning to use social media to track potential donors and new sources of funding. Businesses, meantime, are reducing internal costs by employing online services that save time and effort.

Keep tabs on competitors.

What's the competition up to? Today it's easier than ever to monitor your sector or industry to find out about a new competitor, to get an early warning about competing brands' strategic moves or to take advantage of the public's dissatisfaction with a competitor's product or service.

Improve your campaigns and programs.

Are you launching focused efforts to move the needle for your organization? Track the mentions of your brand on social networks before, during and after a campaign to see what's resonating. Use social media's feedback loop to improve implementation of your programs. (Lasica, 2011)

CONCLUSION

As the Malaysian audience become more sophisticated in their possession of gadgets, ability to surf on-line with no censorship, companies and organization need to be more nimble in meeting situational requirements. The blanket of security that one gets from posting and chatting on-line with minimal repercussions to the user, shows how we have morphed from a relatively reserved and subdued community to an open and friendly one that wants to know and do more. Our nation's fixation with the Internet and social networking (The Star, 2010) tells us that monitoring print and broadcast media alone are tantamount to selling a company short. Conversely, a short term or ad hoc arrangement to traditional and social media monitoring, would give little strength to this intertwining marriage of the old and new way people and companies communicate.

Corporations and organizations that want to stay ahead must monitor traditional and social media channels as the Malaysian market has complex interconnecting networks of communication. Media analytics is the way forward to constantly monitor trends in the social and traditional media that gives companies that extra edge that they are looking

for. It allows and organization to track the views and thoughts of consumers and stakeholders, obtaining feedback, monitor trend and ideas (the international bank's media monitoring), identify key influencing factors, gauge the success or failures of campaigns (Miracle of Love and KL Marathon), products or services, build enhancing relationships, targeting advertisement triggers, observe other players with a competitive eye, awareness of political affiliation and most importantly in the period of crisis management (Energizer Night Run).

For Malaysia the long-term benefits of media analytics is immense. Daily, the temperature of stakeholders can be gauged from broadsheets to comments in real time. Key messages can be transmitted in the blink of an eye to influence perceptions, trends and respond quickly in the market as with Miracle of Love and its. In the long run, companies can add pertinent information on demand in actual time as this would take the nominal effort of a click of a button.

Information that has filtered, analyzed, disseminated virtually and traditionally can be translated into feedback. This can facilitate companies to adapt and move away from a negative situation to a neutral or positive one citing the Energizer incident. Threats, boycotts, impending downturns or loss of employment can be curbed during serious situations.

A measurable value of Ad Value and PR value can be calculated to depict ROI – an obvious interest to management's diligence for a positive bottom line (SCKLM). Public relation status against allies and competitors can be measured to maintain or elevate standards (the international bank's media monitoring). From these two, on-going statistical analysis can be tabulated to benchmark their PR performances annually and in relation to competitors.

The vigilance of monitoring the mix marriage of conventional and social media gives companies and the opportunity to be nimble, hands on and be able to change messages and respond in real-time. For them, this certainly would give the term competitive edge a whole new meaning.

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Elliza Abdul Rahim has over 10 years of experience in PR and is senior manager at the PR division of Essence Communications. With solid knowledge on the workings of the media regionally and in Malaysia, she is able to develop out-of-the-box ideas and valuable point of differentiation that most clients seek. Although educated in Malaysia, she been involved in public relations at both regional and domestic markets having been based in Singapore previously. She has lent her PR expertise to clients in almost every area of industry including Corporate Communications, FMCG, technology, healthcare, logistics and lifestyle brands. She has also been a part of the crisis team for the pharmaceutical industry. She oversees the corporate PR accounts at Essence and is directly involved in Cyberview Sdn. Bhd, Colgate, DHL and Unilever accounts.