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NO MONEY NO PROBLEMS: THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Macey Reed

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NO MONEY NO PROBLEMS:

THE RISE OF SOCIAL

MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

by

MACEY REED

Presented to the Faculty of the Honors College of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

HONORS BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my mom for pushing me to complete this project. She motivated me to look into the history of public relations and earn my honors degree. Thank you to Professor Little, who has been there for me every step of the way upon graduation and earning this degree. Her help and continued guidance allowed me to become a better and more equipped public relations major.

April 12, 2019

ABSTRACT

NO MONEY, NO PROBLEMS:

THE RISE OF SOCIAL

MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Macey Reed, B.A. Public Relations

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2019

Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Little

Social media campaigns are on the rise as they prove to be cost effective, efficient, and functional. One of the greatest advantages of social media is its ability to reach a large, mass audience nearly instantly and have direct, two-way communication with consumers. This work presents examples of successful campaigns that relied on social media to share the brand's message. Goodwill, The Romanian National Institute, and Truth Initiative are three campaigns that exceeded company goals and provided strong examples of social media communication. Each campaign utilized public relations tactics and engaged with audiences while leaving a lasting impression. Overall, it is proven that having a strong message, creative strategy, and selling an idea or story rather a message, will draw in the audience, formulate a connection with the product or message, and drive results.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of social media, just about every industry has been affected including the public relations field. Public relations professionals have increased strategies to remain engaged with their audience and there have been countless positive effects. Because of social media, companies are able to have direct two-way communication with consumers. The majority (78%) of consumers want brands to connect with them through social media (Carter). Understanding consumers allow for improved customer experience with the brand, in areas such as the creative aspect of brand content or understanding product feedback. Social media has also been used to recognize new market opportunities, make faster business decisions, and take unexpected risks by managing crisis more effectively.

Social media supports companies in tracking and increasing awareness and engagement metrics. Awareness metrics include website visits, impressions, followers, subscribers, and reach. Engagement metrics include likes, comments, retweets, and mentions (Chow). Successful campaigns are often determined based on an evaluation of these awareness and engagement metrics. To increase the metrics mentioned, brands aim to have constant engagement with customers. The job of many public relations professionals consists of ensuring the company is continually posting and engaging with followers to increase consumers' perception of the brand.

A positive effect of social media is the ability to reach a large, mass audience that can be executed with a low, minimum budget. Companies have taken advantage of the

opportunity, increasing awareness of brand campaigns and creating social media movements. There are a few organizations in particular, that had campaigns that reached far above, exceeding expectations, and reached high levels of engagement.

This research will examine how three organizations created renowned creative social media campaigns. They each revolved around pushing a message to their target audience while having a low budget and surpassing the organization's goal. It explores the opportunities of brands and businesses that used public relations tactics to relay a message effectively and creatively. This research seeks to take a deeper look at what a successful campaign looks like, the strategies used, and how they crafted a message to reach their target audience while having a message that resonates with them.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Rebrand to Build Connection

Many companies find themselves rebranding when a significant element of the brand is about to change. Rebranding is not always a change in logo or name of the company, rather small occurrences such as a modification in the communication of the message. Rebranding tends to be risky if not executed properly. However, it can be essential to rebrand as time progresses and the market changes. According to Lischer, “There is one immutable truth about modern day business: Every company has to rebrand itself at some point.”

There are a few main reasons a company might rebrand itself. One reason is that the company might be trying to position itself differently in the market. The most common reason for a rebrand is if two companies join in a merger. Another common reason is if the company’s products or concept is out of date with the current times. Companies also take proactive rebranding, which is when “a company sees a reason to rebrand to seize an opportunity or thwart potential threats in the future” (Gunelius). A rebranding might be necessary if the company wants to target a new audience. As the desire to target millennials is on the rise, many companies needed to rebrand themselves to relate to this audience. To communicate the message of the rebrand, many companies used social media as the medium to get across to their millennial audience.

2.2 Establish a Target Audience

Defining a target audience is one of the first steps in the rebranding process, it helps to make sure an accurate message is communicated to the right audience using the ideal mediums. According to American Marketing Association, “Target audiences are distinct groups or segments of customers, and clearly defining your business' target audiences will help you promote the aspects of your business that are most relevant to each group.”

There are a few questions companies ask themselves to help define their target audience. Questions include: “Who are the most profitable clients,” “Which customers make up the majority of the business,” and “What do all of these customers have in common.” The marketing strategy will always reflect the objective to draw in these customers with the same commonalities. An example of this would be a local restaurant realizing their peak is during lunch hours when many business professionals dine in. If they defined their target audience as on-the-go business people, they may have a message of offering quick service and delicious food. They might communicate this message through social media channels, Google ads, coupons, etc. Demographics and psychographics are additional levels of specifying a company’s target audience. Age, sex, income, and occupation are demographic factors, while psychographic factors group people who share the same interest.

Once a company establishes a target audience, it is important to find out what the target market is interested in, what their activities consist of, and find out more information about the group as a whole. That way, a clear, precise target is established, which will help in creating tailored marketing objectives.

Defining a target market is essential. The more clearly you define your target audiences, the better you can reach them and encourage them to support your business. As you track the

effectiveness of programs targeting different audiences, be sure to periodically refresh and refocus your research on your target markets (American Marketing Association).

Many companies had to figure out how to communicate their message to millennials, which began the rise of social media campaigns.

2.3 The Rise of the Social Platform

Most marketers (90%) say social media marketing has increased their business exposure (Dephillips). Not having an active social media presence for business accounts is highly frowned upon today. While social media used to be the source for short-term campaigns only, brands are using social media for long term campaigns as well. Social media has become an essential part of the brand building process because consumers are connected now more than ever, through the social channels and smartphones. Social media campaigns are most effective when the brand's social media account is humanized. An example of this would be engaging with users through comments, trying to be a part of relevant news, and playing to context.

Consumers also like to see authentic engagement; they do not want to feel as if they are an ad viewer or a customer. Connecting with consumers, getting involved in the community, and answering questions, are ways brands build a connection with their audiences and ultimately take their brands to the next level. Companies are also able to “build connections with industry leaders and influencers, providing great stories for reporters, top notch products for promoters and interesting topics for experts to share with their followers” (Dephillips).

No matter what segment of consumers a brand intends to target, a significant sum is active on social channels. A recent Pew Research Center study found that “68% of American adults are Facebook users. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, 78% use Instagram and 45% are on

Twitter. Even among Americans 65 and older, 37% are social media users” (DePhillips). One of the best parts about social media is that it is free to engage, post content, and have a relevant social page. It may cost to boost posts or have an ad on social media, but brands are able to specifically target appropriate and segmented audiences.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

There are a few recent examples of how organizations have capitalized on social media for effective and excellent campaigns. The campaigns will show us how defining a target audience and having a creative message will capture consumers. Social media can help a brand earn media coverage, build brand loyalty, and be the perfect addition to the overall PR strategy. The methodology for this project includes the review of three case studies that did not have a very high marketing budget but used social media to take their campaign up another notch.

3.1 Goodwill Reaches New Audience

Goodwill, a non-profit organization, wanted to raise awareness of its brand targeting a younger demographic. However, they knew they had to rebrand themselves in order to keep the younger audience engaged. They decided to have a mobile campaign with objectives to encourage donations and make people aware of their organization. The brand's message was that sales retained from in-store donations help fund the local community through workforce-related programs. They used a specific target audience: charitable moms ages 35+ and female millennials ages 18-34. They understood the key to building awareness was to engage consumers with the brand, so they constructed a media game through their app. Users tapped on clothing items that fell from the ceiling. Goodwill facts and trivia questions appeared throughout the game once the game was over Goodwill encouraged users to donate or download the Goodwill Locator app to find the nearest store.

The campaign exceeded the company's expectations and goals. Engagement with the ad was two to three times the industry average and store-visits increased by 24.3%. This campaign showed the power of using a mobile-only campaign to drive awareness and increase business flow. Kim Zimmer, CMO and Senior VP, Global Development at Goodwill said, "The memorable mobile campaign reached our target audience and exceeded our expectations by providing a new way to inspire donations and remind people of the power their donations have in local communities."

3.2 The Romanian National Institute Defines a Target Audience

The Romanian National Institute needed to increase the number of young people donating blood. Surgeries had to be canceled and patients would be in a critical state because of the lack of donated blood. Romania's medical center was facing a crisis. They had to react quickly while being extremely resourceful in their funds with a low marketing budget. The objective of the campaign was to extend the number of blood donations, so blood would be available through the duration of the summer. According to the article, "Untold Festival & National Institute For Blood Donations: Pay With Blood," "The National Institute for Blood already conducted public awareness campaigns but these had very little direct impact on behavior..." They knew they had to do something different and target a new audience.

Romania was filled with a younger population that was the least likely to donate blood. This audience was not aware of the importance of donating blood and had little connection with the health system. One thing they did know was that music festivals in Romania were rapidly increasing with this target audience. It was a social symbol and a chance for all young people to post on social media and use the concerts to build social status. Cannes Lions Agency decided they could get the blood donations they needed and give their target consumers

something they wanted. Their creative idea was for their audience to donate blood and earn free tickets to the music festival, and it was genius. A new festival, Untold, was coming to town in Cluj-Napoca, the heart of Transylvania- the land of Dracula. The agency decided to capitalize on the Dracula theme for the creative approach to the campaign. They knew this would be the perfect cause-marketing partnership event to promote their cause.

The brand's approach to launching the campaign was to create creative messages that could be used to target the audience on social media. They wanted to "make it cool" to be a donor. A wristband would represent the donor's entry to the concert and represent the blood donation cause after the concert was over. Visuals on Facebook were used with messages that read "We Need Your Blood" and "Don't Suck, Donate" and "We Have A Bloody Problem." This was Dracula's invitation to the blood drive event. Two weeks before the festival they launched the campaign using a GIF countdown on the Untold Facebook page. They also used a mobile blood bank and outdoor banners to get their message across to their audience.

This campaign was the most successful in the recruitment of blood donations ever in Romania. They surpassed their original goal to triple blood donations. They were able to secure 2,000 blood donations in two weeks making this the most successful campaign ever for the National Blood Institute. This campaign gained extensive media coverage, #LeftSwipDat reached worldwide trending status twice on social media. Throughout the country, awareness was raised about the problem of low blood donors in Romania.

3.3 Social Media's Drive to Action

Another social media focused campaign was Truth Initiative. This organization launched a campaign using the "Left Swipe Dat" concept. This campaign was focused on youth smoking prevention in the United States. The goal of the launch was to try to deal with the

problem of tobacco use in teens. Truth Initiative has a successful track record of being one of the nation's most successful youth prevention campaigns. According to the article "Truth Initiative: Left Swipe Dat," "Their ads helped decrease the teen cigarette smoking rate from 23% in 2000, when Truth began, to 8% as of December 2014." With the extensive ad campaigns to reduce tobacco death, it still remains the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. The company wanted to take action to prevent early deaths among teens.

Today's generation has access to a great deal of information that is available every day, all day. Truth ad campaign uses important facts about the tobacco industry, selling an idea rather than a product. Since this generation of teens goes online and communicates frequently using social media, their attention will be drawn to this launch.

Truth launched a campaign using smokers and non-smokers. The goal would be to influence smokers by highlighting the dangers of smoking and how it can affect their health long term. Popular internet stars were used to discuss smoking and how it reflects an individual's personal appearance. The target audience was 12 to 24-year-olds. This campaign used public relations tactics to target and secure at least 20 earned media placements that were youth focused outlets. Videos and photos were shared across social media.

The case study highlighted how, "They helped us connect with youth authentically through the combination of media interviews, ads and a music video that capitalized on the term "left swipe." The YouTube video gained more than 1.9 million visits and over 48 million views online. Truth met and exceeded their goal for earned media.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

All three campaigns connected to their target audiences using low-budget methods and relied on social media tactics to make their campaigns viral. With the rise of social media, it is accessible for companies to excel in campaigns using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, if the campaign is executed properly. Start-up companies and entrepreneurs are at an advantage because of the accessibility to reach a mass audience through social media. The social media landscape is continuing to evolve every day.

Personal branding is extremely relevant today. People brand themselves utilizing social media, correlating with the popular term of brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors work “behind the scenes” for a company. They are often not paid monetarily by companies, but they receive free items in exchange for promotion on social media, blogs, etc. The brand ambassadors represent the brand in a positive light and help increase brand or product awareness. Brand ambassadors provide continuous customer feedback. Celebrity ambassadors on social media are becoming increasingly common. According to “Impact of Brand Ambassador on Consumer Shopping Behavior on Online Portals,” famous celebrities are instantly recognizable and easily attract consumer interest. They can attract the attention of the consumers in a way that no other type of advertising can.”

While the social media landscape continues to evolve, there is no argument it has greatly affected the media landscape today, and how companies share their identity and voice with the

public. Building a relationship between the consumer and the brand has been one of the most innovative aspects of social media and the campaigns.

Defining a target audience, having a strong message, and a creative strategy, will draw the audience in and connect them with the product or message. Furthermore, this leads to an increase in the product or company sales. It is essential to take risks, do something no one has done, and build social media campaigns to attract the attention of others. The Goodwill, National Blood Institute, and Truth Initiative campaigns all used these strategies to have outstanding campaigns and results.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Macey will graduate in May 2019 with a degree in public relations and advertising. During her two years at UTA, Macey was active at the university. She was a member of the UTA Dance Team, Vice President of PRSSA, and a member of the Honors College. After graduation, Macey plans to work at a public relations agency as an account executive. One day, she hopes to move to New York, Los Angeles, or Atlanta and work with fashion and food clients at a public relations agency.