

DIGITAL PR

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Abstract

Social media has affected not only individual lives but also many aspect of social life. As social network tools increase, the social media usage by public relations practitioner has been inevitable. Web 2.0 which is used for the aim to defined the transition period in which web contents are produced by internet user and shared with others, instead of just following web contents accessed through certain sources, has offered the important facilities for defining, understanding, discussing and solving of problems for public relations experts. This new role of social media providing conversation by another one of customer is, in a sense, the expansion of conventionally mouth to mouth communication.

Besides the communication with target people, the publishing of media announcements optimized for web search engines by SEO, the constitution of individual/institutions data, the publishing of media announcements through social media web pages, the sharing of information about an instution or a company, the providing of conversation about a mark, the rendering to be able to follow the innovations of a mark, the reaching to big mass in a short time by e-mail, the intervening in crisis, the promoting of communications of word of mouth and word of mouse (!), the measuring of positive and negative responses to the mark communication, and the most of on-line communication implementations are covered by digital PR. Digital medium providing speed and the new approaching methods for conventional public relation activities is deal with a big hardship for controlling the their communication between customers related with organization. The biggest risk to digital medium enabling simultaneously and quickly the communication, which seems impossible, among customers and between customers and organization, is the hardship for controlling their communication among customers. Although this feature provides big advantages, however, it is together with risk for creating and quickly expanding a crisis. Normally, Public Relations practitioners is not to be able to control the their

communication between customers. But they could use some methods to affect and form these arguments according to the mission and aim of organization.

In this study; it is reviewed the specific studies related with how the customers communication which is not to be able to follow in digital medium is directed and which methods could be used by Public Relations professionals.

As integrated marketing communication strategy is blending general communication strategies with digital communication strategies, it is also make possible to prosecution a campaign which has a lot of aspects. Social media is the one of channels which is quickly integrated into public relations activities and supporting campaigns, even accessing to a lot of people by a small budget.

Public relations activities, which is the one of conventional promotion components in new communication paradigm, have used many internet tools such as digital medium, social mark and share network, search engine, blog, forum, news web pages, like which in the one of components in Integrated marketing communication strategy. It has decreased the mediatorship role, which is played by conventional media, between firms and target people through the uptrending of social media for the public relations communication.

Social media is seemed as a powerful tool for administering social help programs, establishing a relationship for companies, and initiating organizations. Social media is a perfect way for managing the membership relations of a group or an organization

Key words: Social Media, Public Relations, Web 2.0

JEL Classification: M31 Business Administration and Business Economics; Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

'New Media Environments' starting with internet occasionally experience challenges when functioning as a controller of the information flow to other target groups in a social system as it is the case in classic media. Internet often defies the concept of 'control'; thus, "media relations" in the traditional sense working on behalf of PR encounter troubles in the midst of this change. Although some academicians and practitioners have debated a lot on the issue of public relations

and media, what PR will look like without its function of media relations is a reality to be investigated in front of us. (Grunig; J.,2005:52),

In the transition to the structure that plays a significant role in economic, cultural and societal changes, PR, which serves as the source of solution to problems arising from the needs of the society, thanks to its technologies like social media and blogs, micro blogs, social networks, wikis, and forums which are all now rooted in daily life, mediates the modification of this process through sharing of content and information. The social media medium, which ascribes a new meaning to PR activities by means of sharing ideas, videos, descriptions, references, news, documents, information, and presentations, is also describing new roles. Approaches regarding what the content of these applications should be, considering the role of public relations in informing, motivating, and developing good intentions, is gaining new aspects with the addition of new roles to the already existing ones.

In this study is discussing that communication between individuals and control them in the social media

2. DIGITAL PR CONCEPT

Digital PR; is the utilization of internet tools such as social media, social bookmarking & networking, search engines, blog, forum, and news sites for the purpose of public relations. With the assumption that it serves as a bridge ensuring strong and effective communication between the target group and the organization, PR mediates the more efficient establishment of strategic communication to provide understanding, support, trust, and help within both the target group and the organization by means of creativity, efficiency, sharing, mutualism, viral distribution and imagination. During the times when social media and digital media tools did not exist, conventional PR studies used face-to-face communication and traditional media channels for the accomplishment of these tasks. In today's social media environment, opportunities do exist to use both approaches at the same time and synchronization of cross-media environments is possible. This multi-communication environment requires more creativity, speed and care in the use of traditional PR methods. While offering possibilities like reaching wider masses, fast and extensive feedback, and personal interaction, social media environment also has the power to create a crisis environment which will develop with the same speed. Target individuals have the opportunity to constitute the same personal communication that they have set up with institutions

among themselves as well. In other words, PR control on target masses can decrease.

The new media environment, virtually a global communication tool in which sharing of common content takes place, has become the leading trend for PR. Effective use of current technologies that cannot be ignored by organizations desiring to survive and influence people occupies an indispensable place in *overlapping goals of individuals and organizations* which is the aim of PR studies.

PR changed the social communication way with its new role brought about by the changes in social media and communication technology. Upon realizing PR's new rule is to develop direct relations with the target audience, experts now aim to deliver personal messages to their special recipients through digital media.

The efforts of the enterprise to unite with the public and have a good reputation in the society will significantly help to increase the sales, which, as a result, will increase the profits. The efforts of the businesses to solve their community's common problems constitutes an important leg of the PR activities pursued by the business and in order to accomplish these missions, just as it is the case in conventional PR studies, creative and entrepreneurial ideas are needed. One of the major aims of PR is to let citizens acquire new values and to encourage them to adopt sustainable life styles.

In addition to speeding up shopping, increasing sales, and expanding brand recognition, when social media begins to be considered from other perspectives like creating social benefit, fostering sustainable consumption habits, symmetric and fair distribution of information, and equality of opportunity, public relations studies will attain an effective dimension. Today, big organizations like UNDP (United Nations Development Program) are not using social media as a reason, but rather, as a tool for fundamental changes, examples are on the rise. (<http://yedinoktasifir.blogspot.com/2012/01/davos-social-media-corner-dan-notlar.html>)

Views that recommend or require institutions to include the groups they affected or were affected by while they were achieving their goal in their responsibility field together with their customers and investors are getting widespread. In this regard, the responsibility of companies for the economic, social, and environmental consequences of their actions while reaching their financial

objectives is at issue. Thus, in the company management, a new and complete perspective dealing with the interaction of all parties as a whole comes to the fore. YOUNG, S. and THYIL, V., 2008:95)

It seems more likely to enable this while Digital PR studies are being carried out. Because, in a sense, institutions have the opportunity to spread their social responsibility further to wider masses. As a matter of fact, social media environment enables this. As regards social media, which expresses a new understanding with respect to public relations discipline, it has become inevitable for them to employ information technology specialists besides media managers who direct and supervise information flow. Because, after taking part in social media environment, a constant (7/24) follow up is required. These interactional communication environments which are referred to as social media have an essential place among reputation management tools of institutions and organizations. Institutions as well individuals can manage their own image and reputation through these mediums.

3. NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Media has a profound power to influence people's information, convictions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Not only individuals but also community groups, organizations, societal institutions, in short, all the society and culture are within the grasp of media's influential power.

Owing to the fact that social media concept has come to the fore, conventional media features have undergone drastic changes. Media tools like newspapers, magazines, television, cinema, and cd's etc. have all become rapidly updated, dynamic and even interactive mass media communication mediums that can be reached online. Accordingly, though media's influential power still continue to exist, alternative elements and interactive interactions allow the individuals to be able to make their own choices in this field to some extent.

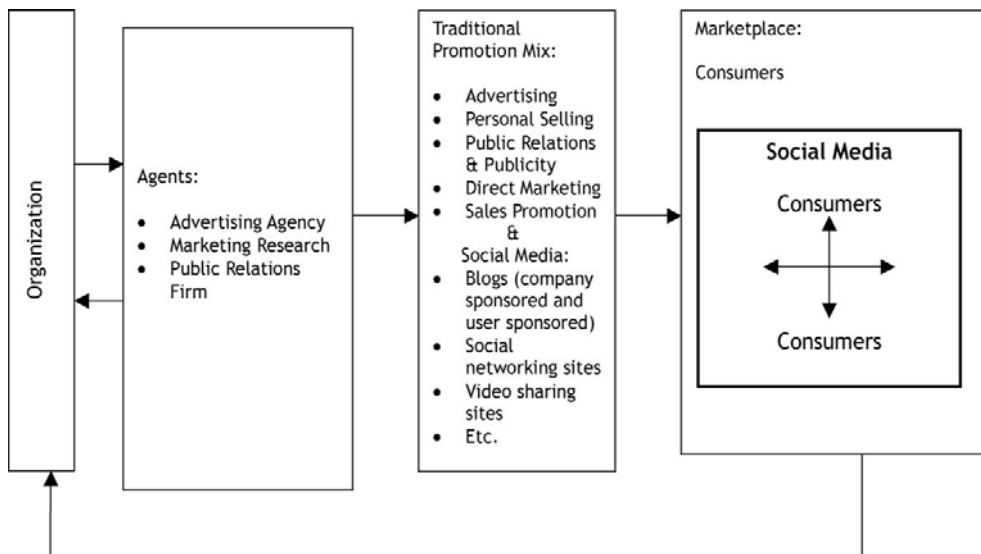
This new social media medium is participant-driven and dialog-based to a great extent (web 2.0, social marketing), includes cross-media approach applications, goes beyond information transfer and problem-oriented issues, is focused on solution and action, triggers change in attitudes and behaviors, instead of spreading blaming negative scenarios in the audience emphasizes personal advantages for media users (entertaining elements for instance), has a new perspective, and is concentrated on a new life style.

(http://www.rec.org.tr/dyn_files/20/4867-media-susbansibilty-book.pdf
09.04.2013)

4. THE PLACE AND FUNCTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE NEW COMMUNICATIONS PARADIGM

In communication between organizations and consumers, the dividing lines amongst marketing, advertising and public relations are sometimes blurred. The confusion and overlap is more marked with the advent of the Web 2.0 and the proliferation of online campaigns, and associated initiatives.

Figure 1. The new communications paradigm



Source (W. Glynn Mangold, David J. Faulds, 2009:358)

In PR studies, the most important information that provided the primary step was the views of the target audience. Obtaining these views used to be one of the hardest stages but owing to the construction of Web 2.0 today, mediums that will provide instant feedback have taken shape by themselves within social media's natural structure. Web 2.0, which is used to describe the transition from the process during which internet users just followed the content accessed from certain sources to the process in which users created their own content and shared this content with others, presents important opportunities for PR experts to identify, understand and discuss the problems. Contacting target audiences,

realizing their intentions and thoughts make up a resource for the strategic attitude and planned actions. By the same token, negative opinions of your target audience have the potential to backspace your reputation with the same speed as they spread.

5. CONCLUSION

Social media usage shows that media has two publicity roles which are related to each other. First, social media provides companies the opportunity to talk to customers. Second, it enables one customer to talk to another. Also, it enables the customers to talk to the firm as well. The first role coincides with the traditional unified marketing communication tools. Firms blog social media, using it to talk to their own customers through platforms like *facebook* and *myspace* groups. The second role of social media concerning publicity is unique. According to Gillins's emphasis in his book *The New Influencers*, (Gillin, P.,2007:4) customers can use this to communicate with someone else. Traditional marketing science considered it a disaster for an unsatisfied customer to tell this to ten other persons. Nevertheless, new generation social media has the mediums to share information overnight with ten million people regardless of gender.

This secondary role of social media which enables customers to talk to one another is in a way the extension of traditional word-of-mouth communication. Though firms cannot control messages between customers directly, they have the capability to influence customers' communication with one another. Control within the social media medium, even more than it was in the past, is now in the hands of the customers. This change shows that information control indicator is affected by the reactions of the customers. That is why marketing managers seek for ways to merge with social media when determining their unified marketing strategies. As a matter of fact, traditional communication paradigm continues its unified marketing communication applications which rely on typical promotion mix in social media which is a potential tool.

In PR studies, with the rise of social media as the primary tool for communication, the mediator role between companies and target audiences that traditional media has played diminished. Social media is viewed as a powerful tool for starting organizations, setting up relations for companies and managing social help programs; moreover, it is an excellent means of dealing with group or organization membership relations. If you have just started communication with a new group or if you are looking for a cost-effective tool to manage your

connections, social media medium will prove to be a flawless choice to mail an activity calendar or to provide extra benefits for your members. In this respect, forming groups within the scope of public relations studies and being effective on goals by carrying the characteristics of group dynamics to virtual medium can be achieved by means of social media. Thanks to social media, you have the opportunity to extend your group and to integrate it to the world's widest and largest social networks. Within a short period, you can become an active player to support your problem, create a web site and actualize a marketing site. If a brand is at issue, you have to have a social media page inevitably. Because your rivals have already established themselves in the virtual market environment to take advantage of the opportunities of this world and began to make us of this fastest way of reaching their own groups in order to communicate with them.

Managers cannot control the communication between customers who can reach each other with little effort. However they can make use of some methods to manipulate and shape these discussions so that the organization's mission and goals are served. (W. Glynn Mangold, David J. Faulds, 2009:358)

4.1. Provide Network Platforms Customers like to contact people who have similar interests and wishes. Organizations can take advantage of these wishes to create a community that thinks like them. These communities could become centers where values and interests are shared. Actually, while serving the sole need for communication as far as some are concerned, not only can these mediums respond to specific desires but also they provide opportunities for you to deliver your own messages. For example, Unilever's beauty products brand started "Real Beauty Campaign" to increase the number of women and girls who wish to respect themselves. This campaign also served the purpose of gathering people with the same ideas by helping to establish the grounds for real beauty standards. As it is the case in traditional word-of-mouth communication many people will choose to talk about this experience of theirs in social media.

4.2. Use Social Media Tools and Blogs to Tout Customers. When you provide feedback, customers tend to feel more connected with the product and the company. For example, companies provide feedback to their customers through blogs that contain various issues. Feedback, criticism, praise and help offers appear in forms. This feedback helps to determine the perception of the society and to encourage open and honest communication. Among the customers choosing these blogs depending on the sector, it is established that there are other blog users, journalists, consumers and even competitors..

4.3. Use Both Traditional and Internet-Based Promotional Tools to Gather Customers Together. With social media usage, traditional PR studies have not disappeared; on the contrary, they have evolved to require more creativity, fast thinking, and reflex speed. Agencies can use both word-of-mouth communication and social media to communicate with the customers to whom they were connected through service or consideration. Prior to or following traditionally planned organizations or events, snowball effect can be spread to masses through social media medium. Competitions, concerts, exhibitions, television programs and similar organizations can gather customers. New events could be formed through social media concerning these organizations. It is possible to see cross-media application examples about this point. In Turkey, winners of TV shows like *Survivor* and *Would You Dance With Me* are chosen by the votes of the viewers.

4.4. Support the Reasons Why Customers Choose That Product. Design the Products in Accordance with the Emphasis in the Talks and Demands in the Customer Mind. In order to get views about product design, social media medium is quite favorable. With regard to Egronomy, experiences of those who have used the product contribute to research and development while consideration of customer opinion strengthens the bond with your target audience.

4.5. Provide Information. When customers have more relevant information, they might talk more about the organization and the product. Many firms relay important and practical information that their customers might use in their lives about the sector of their products in the social media. It is inevitable for people with the same problems to use this knowledge.

4.6. Avoid Feelings, Be Relentless. Though entailing ethical disputes arise, one of the mass reaction measurement ways is to test the customers' reaction to occasional intentional misinformation. Customers tend to talk more about things they find relentless. For instance, Burger King played a joke on its customers by announcing that it discontinued the production of Whopper. Reactions were videotaped and important scenes from these videos were then used in the advertisement campaign. Access to these reaction videos were granted through a link in the company's web site.

4.7. Provide Privileges People like to feel special. Experts point out the need to listen to, and to be aware of, the desires, interests, and needs of consumers. This is essential to be able to produce marketing and communication programs that

enable consumers to play a much more active role. By identifying such characteristics of customers it is possible to make them feel more special and to provide their active participation in communication.

3.8. Support Important Events for Customers This action, probably the most important leg of societal social responsibility, will actually help to achieve the primary goal of PR studies. Those companies that exhibit concern and support for the public and environment in their community will strengthen their institutional reputation.

3.9. Use the Power of Tales Distinguishing institutions and organizations from their rivals and providing quick recall becomes easier by sharing short but real stories about the institution. These tales help you to be retained in the mind more.

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