“Trends in Branding and developing PR : An overview in reference to Digitalisation of Advertising Industry”

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Abstract
The paper tries to serve as an overview to help chart the course of social media research in public relations and generate conversations about its future path. Research about social media has grown tremendously over the past couple years. What used to be a trickle of research has turned into a fire hose that reflects the changing landscape of public relations. Broadly speaking, the most important areas of social media research in public relations include theories (transparency, authenticity, influence, engagement, and dialogue), ethics, measurement, standards, and benchmarking. This article discusses the various tenets of social media, and looks at where we have been and where we are today.

Keywords: public relations, brand, corporate, digital
Introduction
Public relations are increasingly about communicating credibly with key audiences who affect business results, such as media analysts, policymakers and policy influencers, customers and shareholders. It is an important element in supporting the power and value of an organization's brands to all stakeholders. All the elements of corporate brand, from tone and personality, functional and emotional benefits, core message and end goal, to its reputation – if fully leveraged with internal and external audiences – can help raise performance and credibility. Enhancing the awareness understanding and commitment to a brand through public relations is usually an essential part of any overall strategy aimed at sustaining and raising standards of performance and credibility.

Importance of Public Relations
No area in the history of public relations has grown and spread as fast as social media. With that growth has come a proliferation of social media research that has had an impact on the profession. Some of the most important areas of social media research in public relations include theories (transparency, authenticity, influence, engagement, and dialogue), ethics, measurement, standards, and benchmarking. This article reviews research in those areas, and explores where we were, where we are now, and the impact of social media research on public relations. While this paper is not exhaustive, it does serve as an overview to help chart the course of social media research in public relations and generate conversations about its future path. Research about social media has grown tremendously over the past couple years. What used to be a trickle of research has turned into a fire hose that reflects the changing landscape of public relations. Broadly speaking, the most important areas of social media research in public relations include theories (transparency, authenticity, influence, engagement, and dialogue), ethics, measurement, standards, and benchmarking. This article discusses the various tenets of social media, and looks at where we have been and where we are today. Evolution of Social Media Research has found that most online adults use social networking sites, with Facebook as the most popular, followed by LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram. Thanks to the popularity of multiple platforms across a wide range of audiences, social media has become one of the most popular topics in public relations research as organizations are increasingly integrating it into their strategy in an effort to engage with a variety of stakeholders.

Trends
With the Internet population continuing to grow at exponential rates (Internet World Stats, 2012), organizations are using various online communication platforms to reach stakeholders, achieve communication objectives, and build relationships (Argenti, 2006; Pollach, 2005; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). These tools enable an organization to hear directly from its stakeholders and engage in conversations with them (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). By providing stakeholders
with detailed information about what it represents, an organization can encourage openness and transparency (Ki & Hon, 2009; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009) and cultivate relationships (Men & Tsai, 2011; Waters et al., 2009).

In response to the increasingly fragmented marketplace and media environment, organizations today tend to adopt and coordinate multiple communication and contact points to achieve optimal coverage (Grove, Carlson, & Dorsch, 2007). But previous studies examining organizations’ use of online media to build relationships have explored organizations’ use of a single, specific online medium (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Park & Reber, 2008; Waters et al., 2009). The following study takes an integrated approach by examining how top global organizations use different types of online media — brand Web sites, Facebook, and Twitter — to generate dialogues and cultivate relationships with stakeholders.

**Brand Experience**

According to Josko Brakus, published in the AMA Journal, brand experience is, “Brand experience is conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognition, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.”

The above might be too bookish for some. In simpler terms, brand experience is a group of different things that a label delivers to its customers. These can be tangible or intangible such as reputation, value, goodwill, etc. There are numerous activities, both in the digital and the real world, which can be put together and termed as brand experience.

Some of these activities are corporate events, advertising, employee-customer relationships, a business website or an app. In short, almost everything associated with a business contributes to building up this experience. A meaningful and substantial experience generally results in either a high or low customer brand affinity. Advertising, no matter what kind, is about creating awareness around a brand’s promise. Brand experience, on the other hand, is proof of that promise. A perfect marketing strategy is able to accomplish that link between products and services and the customer. It is done through useful interactions. These interactions can result in an important emotional connection between the company and its users. Having said that, a negative brand experience can spoil it all.

**Relevance of Digital Marketing**

A couple of years ago, there was a study highlighting the most effective channels for marketing. According to the study, email, social media, online ads, retargeting and mobile were the top channels. A social media strategy is an important part of online marketing. Through a sharp and an effective social media strategy, a
business can target specific interests or demographics to grow awareness. Targeting thought leaders through social media is also a great idea. Similarly, displaying ads can help you discover people who are looking for what you have to offer but just haven’t found it yet. Through retargeting, you can approach people who have already been to your site and require some kind of a follow-up.

**What Is PR?**

PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) defines public relations as, “A strategic communications process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their public.”

Now, considering the digital divide, there are two types of PR existing today – traditional PR and digital PR. The main idea behind the two remains the same. They’re working toward building better relationships between the public and organizations. However, the process, tactics and the channels to address the audience differs.

**What’s the Role of Digital Marketing?**

Through link building and SEO, an organization can connect to its audience far more effectively. Similarly, a virtual landscape gives you an opportunity to reach out to key players – bloggers, influencers and thought leaders. Moreover, these key players can usually captivate a bigger, more relevant audience than you’d have expected.

A good digital relationship results in a more loyal following. This means more shares and increased visibility. The best thing about digital marketing tactics is the fact that they provide quicker results. Good social platforms typically have results in a matter of days, if not hours. Despite all this, traditional PR approaches like trade shows and event planning come with their own unique sets of benefits. People can interact directly with products and talk personally with creators or sellers. It’s a hands-on experience instead of a virtual one.

Digital PR is immediate, measurable and increases visibility. It may be more specific as compared to the traditional approach. After all, you need the ability to address and target the right audience, and therefore, online channels can help you achieve exactly that.

The Internet is transforming the business environment, creating new challenges and opportunities. This chapter provides an overview of the Internet and its defining characteristics, highlighting the key developments that have contributed to its explosive growth and its impact on the business environment.

In its current form, internet is primarily a source of communication, information and entertainment, but increasingly, it also acts as a vehicle for commercial transactions. Since the explosion of the web as a business medium, one of its
primary uses has been for marketing. Soon, the web could become a critical distribution channel for the majority of successful enterprises. One among them is marketing and spreading brand communication through Social networking sites (Thompson, 2002).

The Internet provides the opportunity for companies to reach a wider audience and create compelling value propositions that was not possible before (example Amazon.com's range of 4.5 million book titles), while providing new tools for promotion, interaction and relationship building. It is empowering customers with more options and more information to to make informed decisions. The Internet also represents a fundamental shift in how buyers and sellers interact, as they face each other through an electronic connection, and its inter-activity provides the opportunity for brands to establish a dialogue with customers in a one-to-one setting. As such, the Internet is changing fundamentals about customers, relationships, service and brands, and is triggering the need for new brand-building strategies and tools (Cleland, 2000).

Data from 2011 indicate that the world has currently over 2.4 billion Internet users. Visible increase in the number of users was detected in 2011, when the number of Internet users increased by 37 percent in the previous year (2010).

Internet brings new usability. Therefore, companies must also constantly be updated to follow the trend and make better exploit opportunities posed by the Internet, mobility and new technologies. Internet has become a visual and audio multimedia attraction of communication in the business world and in everyday life (Figure 1).
The distinctive characteristics of Internet can be summarised in three key points (Cleland, 2000):

1. **It Dramatically Reduces Information Costs** - the cost of searching for information and the cost of the information itself is significantly reduced (and in many cases is free).

2. **It Allows for Two-way Communication and Interactivity** - this radically alters the process of interaction between communicating parties, allowing both parties to identify each other and build one-to-one relationships - not previously available with mass medium forms of communication.

3. **It Overcomes the Barriers of Time and Space** - The Internet is a global network and can be reached from everywhere, regardless of where the computer or Internet access device is physically located. It can also be accessed at any time - 24 h a day, 7 days a week. These qualities eliminate the barriers of time and space that exist in the physical world.

These characteristics combine to create a very powerful medium. By allowing for direct, ubiquitous links to anyone, anywhere, the Internet lets individuals and companies build interactive relationships with customers and suppliers, and deliver new products and services at low cost. These defining characteristics have fuelled its explosive growth.

**Building successful brand on the Internet**

Internet is changing the brand environment or “brands cape”. This chapter explores new strategies and tools for building brands on the Internet, including the interactive approach to attracting customers and building loyalty.

Building a strong brand is a complex task. The brand building process starts with the development of a strong value proposition. Once this has been established, the next step is to get customers to try the brand. If the offering is developed properly, it should provide a satisfactory experience and lead to a willingness to buy again. To entice trial and repeat purchase requires triggering mechanisms, which are created through advertising, promotion, selling, public relations, and direct marketing. The company needs to communicate the values of the brand and then reinforce brand associations to start the wheel of usage and experience, and keep it turning.
Traditionally, in addition to providing added value, brands were a substitute for information - a way for customers to simplify the time-consuming process of search and comparison before deciding what to buy. However, the Internet makes search and comparison much easier. This threatens to undermine the value of brands. On the other hand, the logic of the Internet cuts another way. Transactions on the Internet require provide detailed personal information - names, addresses, credit card numbers, etc. Generally, people have concerns about sharing personal information. In addition, the intangible nature of the Internet, and the fact that customers are buying goods that, in most cases, they have never handled or seen (except on-screen) has placed greater importance on trust and security. People only tend to transact with sites they know and trust - sites that provide a wealth of information and make comparison shopping easy, where the user feels a part of, and sites that understand the user's needs and preferences. This highlights the surfacing of information and relationships as key sources of added value in the Internet economy. Customers derive added value through the provision of information on the products or services they buy, as well as on topics of interest related to the brand and product characteristics. Traditionally, brands have been developed in an environment whereby a company creates a brand, and projects it onto a third party intermediary (the media). In response, many unnamed customers develop a "relationship" with the brand. The Internet, on the other hand, offers interactivity, whereby the company can establish a dialogue and interact with individual customers on a one-to-one basis. In doing so, a company can listen, learn, understand and relate to customers, rather than simply speaking at customers. This creates the opportunity for companies to build stronger relationships than previously attainable. However, this also poses a challenge as these relationships may take on a life and character of their own (Cleland, 2000).

Social media

Over the last decade, social networks have changed communications, shifting the way we consume, produce and interact with information, based on explosive migration to the web. Social media websites like Facebook (FB), Twitter etc. have created huge impetus on the communication platform with the end customers of different products and services that was lacking in the traditional medium. Social networking sites are used as marketing tool by marketers in creating brand relation-ship. Huge growth of customer base enables marketers to explore social media networking sites as new medium of promoting products and services and resulting in reduction in clutter of traditional medium advertising of reaching the mass customers and not realizing the actual ROI. Social networking sites are more collaborative and interactive compared to traditional media followed by marketers. Social media advertising is a paid form of brand, service or business promotion and requires a proper and planned communicative message and budget.

Some benefits of social network advertising include (Jothi et al., 2011):
1. Popularizing your brand, idea or service to the target group.
2. Informing target audience about your brand or service present in the market.
3. Encouraging healthy competition in the market.
4. Providing social benefits for the brand.
5. Making the audience to interact and keep them intact with the brand.

Advertising on internet provides a major contribution to brand competition in the market. Advertising here not only provides information about a product or service but also promotes innovation. Besides, it also facilitates customers' satisfaction. Big and small companies, individuals of all walks of life, major and minor events, concepts, etc., nowadays lay their base on social network advertising to get recognized in the market (Zarrella, 2010). Facebook, Twitter etc. have become a personal product and corporate branding hub in the world. Every brand that exists on social networking sites has the same core features and benefits, such as the ability to create a page, share resources, add multimedia and much more (Eric, 2008). The effective brand communication strategies are analysed to find the impact among the users.

Conclusion

With the advent of Internet technology and social media revolution it is a must for the Slovenian company to take hold of social networking websites for sales generation as well as brand promotion to achieve global competitiveness. Social networking sites users of Facebook and Twitter have become a personal product and corporate branding hub in Slovenia nowadays in digital era. Every brand that exists on social networking sites has the same core features and benefits, such as the ability to create a page, share resources, add multimedia and much more. Social networking sites are filled with potential users who are mainly young adults. They spend more time in these networking sites due to heavy commercial contents, entertainment and social gathering. So, product or service communicators are needed through their ads in these areas with more and more interactive and fascinating factors so that their brand identity is developed among the right choice of focused audience. Advertisers and brands use social networking sites as the major resource for their promotion and developing brand identity among the focused market.

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