Social media for public relations: Lessons from four effective cases

Ilhem Allagui [a,*], Harris Breslow [b]

[a] Northwestern University in Qatar, P.O. Box 34102, Doha, Qatar
[b] Department of Mass Communication, American University of Sharjah, PO Box 26666, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

A B S T R A C T

This paper employs the collective case studies approach in an examination of four award-winning public relations campaigns conducted across a variety of social media platforms in order to determine the best practices of, and near term trends, in the effective use of social media for public relations. In their examination of these campaigns the authors discern the following trends in best practices: social media campaigns employ digital storytelling techniques that are both immersive and emotive, and that promote various forms of content sharing; these stories involve members of the target audience in at least one form of open-ended offline engagement that involves sharing behaviors; the content is optimized for mobile displays and controls; and, finally, the content is timely. The authors conclude that, although marketers think of social media in terms of brand awareness and reputation management, the effective use of social media in Public Relations campaigns can generate conversion, facilitate brand positioning, and maintain continued brand sustenance. The authors conclude that the effective use of social media is disrupting the PR campaign cycle: the role of campaign events to generate publicity in service to a PR campaign may, in the future, be displaced by social media campaign tactics which belong to an entirely different ecosystem where the act of sharing social media content generates publicity in lieu of a campaign event.

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1. Introduction

Public relations scholars and practitioners alike agree that social media are changing the PR industry and increasingly playing an important role in the business planning process. Marketers and professionals find that social media have transformed businesses priorities; Brown, Sikes and Willmott (2013) report that 56% of executives say digital engagement with customers is at least a top-ten company priority. Marketers typically think that social media goals are predominantly related to brand awareness. In fact, 87% of marketers believe that the goal of social media is to increase brand awareness; while 62% find that social media increase web traffic; 61% report that social media improve a brand's or client's reputation, 45% use social media in order to generate leads, while 40% use social media in order to increase sales and, lastly, 38% of marketers find that social media improve customer service. From another perspective, journalists have also spoken in favor of being reached via social media; one in four journalists report that they prefer that PR professionals contact them through social media (Institute for PR, 2013).

* Corresponding author.
  E-mail addresses: ilhem.allagui@northwestern.edu (I. Allagui), hbreslow@aus.edu (H. Breslow).

There is reason to believe that social media are becoming the preferred channel of engagement, both with the target audience and service providers. This paper investigates the practices that have enabled better interaction and engagement among companies and their target audiences. As Valentini (2014) suggests, empirical evidence of the use of social media for public relations remains anecdotal and depends on the specific case studied as well as current practices. This paper attempts to address this by providing evidence of good PR practices using social media: through our examination of prize-winning social media awarded campaigns in international and regional PR festivals and competitions, we argue that the integration of social media in the strategic communication mix adds to the effectiveness of a campaign and is, quite often, highly impactful. Furthermore, and to address Valentini's critique, we conclude with a series of prescriptions for future success in social media campaigns.

2. Literature review

It is increasingly evident that new and social media have reshaped the practice of public relations. DiStaso and McCorkindale (2012, p. 76), for example, suggest that, "The importance of social media to the field of public relations cannot be underscored, and is essential for the operations of many organizations". Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012, p. 11) argue that, "social media must be at the heart of public relations activities because social media can enhance organization-relationships by increasing and improving community relations." Moreover, Valentini (2014), Wright and Hinson (2012) and Shin, Carithers, Lee, Graham, and Hendricks (2013), have found that there is a pervasive discourse in the public relations literature that the use of social media in PR has positive consequences. For instance, the extended use of social media may lead to higher levels of engagement and positive behavioral impact (Paek, Hove, Jung, & Cole, 2013). Smith (2013) argues that social media enables the development of the relationship between marketing and public relations by enabling a greater capacity of interaction and relationship cultivation.

Perhaps, more importantly, the literature also suggests that social media and public relations exist in a natural symbiosis with respect to what we will discuss, below, as engagement. Here we refer to the strongly held belief that both social media and PR exist to foster relationships with, and to promote interaction between, members of a target audience and the firm, and among members of the target audience. For example, Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012, p. 6) write that, "definitions of social media focus upon the behaviors and interactions that are established among individuals, that is, for what individuals use social media. . . social media do not exist without users." Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012, p. 8) claim that, "Participation and collaboration should be the mantra of online public relations in social media environments." Moreover, Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012, p. 8) go on to describe participation and collaboration in terms of engagement: "Social media and social network sites should be conceptualized as online social environments that enable people to engage in relationships of a different nature for example, professional, personal, and spiritual ones." The engagement of users has become an essential component in social media campaigns that strategic communication specialists need to pay attention to (Paek et al., 2013; Bronner & Neijens, 2006). This is not to say that social media do not have their doubters: Barlett and Barlett (2012, pp. 13–14) have argued that "Whereas social media have built legitimacy alongside traditional media, the ways they impact publics are less clear."

One aspect of communications campaigns rarely examined in relationship to public relations is creativity. Green (2010, p. 6) defines creativity as a, "process that results in novelty, which is accepted as useful, tenable or satisfying by a significant group of others at some point in time." Green goes on to write that,

> By 'significant group' of others' he [Morris] means those who have influence or power to determine what is recognized as of value in a group. In a public relations context, 'significant others' could be defined as fellow practitioners, or users and consumers of our product or service, such as journalists and clients (p. 6).

While the use of technology is widespread in public relations, it should not be seen as either a substitute for either the creative execution of strategy or the production of content. Indeed, Green (2010, p. 141) warns that "Creative thinking in using social media should be focused on its content rather than its technology." While we agree with Green's assertion that the focus of any use of social media in a PR campaign should be on content, we would also note that, increasingly, the development of PR strategies and the creative design, development and deployment of PR content must take into account the communications technologies through which this content is delivered. We discuss this point further, below.

3. Research question

Following Hardy and Waters's (2012) discussion of the Silver Anvil awards, which analyzes the communication campaign as a process, we examine the objectives and innovative solutions to PR problems and/or goals in social media. Like Hardy and Waters, this paper analyzes award-winning campaigns while paying special attention to the following questions:

(a) What objectives do the awarded campaigns focus on?
(b) What strategies are employed in the campaigns?
(c) Are there any trends that can be identified from the campaigns that we analyze?

In so doing this paper identifies patterns to best practices in social media that have helped selected public relations and social media campaigns both succeed and become highly popular. In times of innovation, and bearing in mind that definitions of social media and tips on their usage still come in a kaleidoscope of forms and tones, it is important to stop and examine successful practices in order to investigate and explore what works and why. Blakeman (2014, p. 128) recommends that, "To be successful, a social media promotional campaign must take the following into consideration: Listen, focus, be patient, share, trendsetters, discuss, respond, be available." Barker, Barker, Bormann, and Neher (2013) find that successful social media strategies typically meet one (or more) of the PARC principles for success: participatory (interact with the target audience), authentic (conversing without forced attitudes or a false, or overtly commercial, demeanor), resourceful (provide audience with helpful information and, with respect to the use of social media, a variety of unique and entertaining and informative channels and methods of engagement), and credible.

Equally as important to this paper is a discussion of metrics that measure the success of a social media campaign. Kim and Johnson (2012, p. 51) assert that old metrics such as ROI, the number of likes generated across one or more social networks, and Advertising Equivalent Value are no longer relevant. Rather, concepts such as engagement, tone, authority, attention, interaction, relationship, and participation should be measured (Fisher, 2009; Solis and Breakenridge, 2009 in Kim and Johnson, 2012, p. 49).

Furthermore, we refer to Smudde and Courtright's (2012) text that suggests theories for discussing excellence in PR campaigns such as narrative theories, rhetorical analysis, or strategic analysis in order to make sense of the case studies that we have selected.

4. Methodological approach

This paper examines campaigns that have received awards in either PR or strategic communications festivals and competitions. The analyses of these award-winning campaigns are subsequently used to inform our discussion concerning successful professional practices, norms and processes derived from these excellent and innovative campaigns.

4.1. Awards: a brief overview of the awards industry

Like the Oscars in cinema or the Grammys in music, festivals and awards in the marketing communications industry are opportunities for exposure to peers' works and reflections on, and the evaluation of, their success. These competitions are usually based on an entries and submissions concept: individuals, agencies and firms from the industry choose to enter the competition and submit their work in one or a number of different categories. The cost of submission varies with the number of categories selected; the more categories entered, the higher the cost. Although the cost may be high, communication professionals find value in these competitions and perceive them as opportunities to enhance the agency's credibility and to drive even more business. The process of peer evaluation legitimizes and endorses the excellence and creativity of the work of one's peers. The competition spirit provides a push forward to the members of the industry insofar as practitioners learn from each other, and from industry-acknowledged best practices. Moreover, the awards themselves create a snapshot of the industry at a certain point in time and enable one to track the evolution in both practices and trends. We note, however, that this process is not exhaustive; some excellent work is left out of the festival and competition process as a result of individuals' or agencies' decisions not to submit their work due to the high cost, among other reasons. Another critique of this process is the fact that industry-juried festivals and awards exclude the audience's voice. However, the increasing use of social media in public relations implies that audience interaction is, and will increasingly become, embedded in PR tactics through the inclusion and presence of measurements of engagement as valid PR metrics. Because of this it is not only the level of engagement through the use of social media tools that can be tracked; brand sentiment and brand affinity, as well as the efficaciousness of more "traditional" PR tactics can also be evaluated and analyzed.

Competitions are most often run by professional institutions, such as the Institute for Public Relations, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, or the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Silver Anvil Awards for excellent public relations practices. Cannes Lions is another private business enterprise that celebrates creativity in advertising, public relations, integrated marketing campaigns, sales promotion campaigns, media, the Internet and digital campaigns, among many others. Panels of judges from the industry sort out the entries and rank them to select the nominees, then vote again to select the winners in various categories.

The peer evaluation process is only one of several ways to celebrate and recognize success. Measuring effectiveness has been a concern of the industry from its beginnings, and is an old debate; both scholars and practitioners agree that effectiveness is achieved when organizational objectives are met (Hon, 1998). Thus the main measure of success, the industry argues, is whether the campaign has solved the client's problem, achieved the program objectives, and returned a proven ROI, although ROI is still loosely used by practitioners to generally indicate the results of an activity (Watson, 2011). This is a challenge in and of itself, since public relations typically encompasses several objectives and there is no unique evaluation formula ready made to the industry (Hon, 1998).

The evaluation of effectiveness has become even more complicated with the proliferation of new and social media. The industry spoke on measurement and evaluation in this new era by publishing the Barcelona Declaration of measurement principles at the European Measurement Summit in June 2010, which "demonstrates that PR measurement and evaluation

is big service business and a long way from the local and regional cuttings agencies of 50–100 years ago" (Watson, 2012). In their search for examples of 'excellent' practices in public relations, Smudde and Courtright (2012, p. 888) found that

> The best we can do is lean on expertise of public relations professionals and look at exemplars of writing practices. This approach has been normative over the years. However, it remains for the public relations educator to teach and, subsequently, well-trained practitioners to employ principles drawn from public relations, rhetorical theory, and other communication fields to supply the reasons behind the tactics (i.e., *strategies*).

This paper uses the collective case studies approach "where the instrumental case study is extended to cover several cases, to learn more about the phenomenon, population or general condition" (Stake, 1994, in Punch, 2014, p. 121). For this paper we chose to employ a series of selection criteria for the case studies that we discuss, below. Our first priority was to derive a sample of winning case studies. Each of the cases that we discuss and analyze had to have won at least one award in both PR and social media simultaneously. In truth this has left us with a rather small sample size. This is also due to the fact that the industry has evolved to the point that some competitions and festivals include several sub-categories and sub–sub categories, under the general category PR. These include engagement, interaction, content generation, etc. Because of this, the opportunity to compete in a specific sub-category or sub–sub category often resulted in a narrowing of the scope of award categories that various campaign entrants compete for.

5. Case studies

Our discussion of each of the ensuing case studies will occur in the following fashion: we will begin with a short discussion of the case. Following our discussion of the basic facts at hand we will discuss the social media metrics that we believe to be both applicable to the specific case, and that we believe provide demonstrable evidence of high levels of target audience engagement as a result of the inclusion of social media as part of the campaign's media mix. This does not mean that we will not also provide more "traditional" metrics—for example media impressions—in our analyses. On the contrary, it is our belief that these measures be seen as evidence of the effectiveness of social media for driving target audiences across all media resources that may be used in a campaign.

Our discussion of the social media used for each campaign will be based on an analysis of the following categories. These categories are derived from the inescapable facts that mobile drives social, social drives mobile, and both are driven by youth. It should come as no surprise that the era of the desktop, particularly with respect to social media usage and engagement, has long passed. Mobile communications devices—smartphones and tablets—are increasingly the preeminent means through which social media platforms are accessed and their content shared.

(a) To what extent do the social media involved in the campaign make use of digital story telling and is this story resourceful—does it exist across more than one social media platform? Is the story telling immersive? Digital story telling is an important facet of an effective social media campaign because it is through the story that members of the target audience not only become aware of and interested in the campaign, but become engaged with the campaign. The greater that the target audience is immersed in the story, the greater that their engagement with social media will be, which in turn will drive other metrics.

(b) To what degree does the campaign's social media drive offline engagement? Offline engagement is often overlooked when planning a social media campaign but, to our minds, it is crucial. Offline engagement not only continues one's engagement with the campaign when one is away from social media, offline engagement can also generate huge viral effects when correctly executed.

(c) To what extent does either the online or offline engagement involve or enable the sharing of content, and thus, ultimately, the brand's message, over social media? This is a relatively difficult question to answer. It is relatively easy to measure online content sharing across one ore more social media platforms, but the sharing of offline engagement can be tricky.

(d) How has the campaign designed its content for mobile screens? Is the content designed for display in one of the typical screen ratios found on most mobile device screens? Is the content designed to display effectively on the high contrast/high color saturation of contemporary mobile devices? Can the content be easily shared among mobile devices? Given our assertions, above, it is as crucial to social media to design content for mobile screens as it is to a correctly sized and appropriately designed font when designing a book to be printed on a given paper size.

Case 1. The scarecrow.

Chipotle, an American restaurant chain, known for its healthy food, freshness and non genetically modified ingredients wanted to solidify its image and reinforce its competitive advantage of not using processed foods among its ingredients. Hence, in 2013, Chipotle launched a campaign vulgarizing the negative consequences of using processed food for both animals and public health, while positioning itself as offering an alternative, a different option based on growing and using natural, organic ingredients. Its Los Angeles based agency, Moonbot studios, chose the iconic image of a scarecrow to symbolize food protection and to deliver the message of naturally, unprocessed ingredients and food to its target audience of millenials, or generation Y, who are very tech-savvy. The campaign strategy used an emotional connection with the target audience through sounds and images. A short film, games and a mobile game app, all featuring the scarecrow, were created. The movie tells a story that demonstrates the negative consequences of the bad industrial practices of Chipotle's competitors, including

an increase in pollution, soil erosion and other environmental problems that stem from the use of either industrially grown or genetically modified foods, and the health problems that stem from eating these foods. The second half of the movie, literally a sunrise segment, demonstrates the positive consequences that arise from the option of adopting fresh ingredients and the happy and healthy planet and people that follow the adoption of fresh food. The mobile game incites players to help the scarecrow correct the wrongs done to the planet and the food supply, and that ensue from using industrially processed and genetically modified foods. Players are rewarded with coupons that they can use when they bring a friend with them to a local Chipotle restaurant. The animated movie and app are extremely well executed; there is great animation and artwork supported by compelling music that adds to the high aesthetics of the experience, which in turn facilitates the connection, at least emotionally, with the target audience. Social media platforms were used to maintain and further drive the emotionally driven conversation between the audience and the brand.

The campaign's metrics have been huge. The social sentiment score during the first month of the campaign, was 92.7. The campaign recorded 614 million PR impressions, and generated 18.4 million conversations across 17 social platforms in its first month, alone. The movie generated more than 12 million YouTube views, while 650,000 people downloaded the game and 13,000 song purchases were made on iTunes. Moreover, for the first time, Chipotle was ahead of Taco Bell at the top of the Social Brand Index. The huge metrics were driven by the following key attributes:

A very strong story: Although the scarecrow's story is simple, it is well executed, highly emotive and resonates strongly with the psychographic characteristics of millenials. The story has a foreboding beginning (the poor scarecrow all alone in a mean, industrial environment), a very positive outcome (the scarecrow's ultimate success), a positive moral (a healthy lifestyle leads to success and happiness), and marries millenials' beliefs and consumer behavior with this outcome and moral—Chipotle's customers prioritize personal health, a healthy planet and a sustainable future. Moreover, this story and its message are deployed across Chipotle's social media in an extremely consistent and resourceful manner: From Facebook to Twitter, to Tumblr, Instagram, an official blog and a YouTube channel, Chipotle is extremely consistent in its brand message; to cultivate happiness, success, and a sustainable future, one must first cultivate a healthy life, based on healthy, and healthily produced, food. The content across social media is exceptionally consistent: Every post consists of a positive message about living a healthy life, eating healthy food, and enjoying time spent among family, friends and community. The posts on one social media platform contain links to content on others, thus driving further engagement across all platforms as well as offline. Twitter and Instagram are both used to publicize current marketing communications initiatives, depict recent Chipotle-branded events and to drive further social media and offline engagement by publicizing upcoming local events while driving additional views of Chipotle's Facebook page, which contains further details of these events, and is later used as an archive of event pictures, accounts and reviews of these events—all of which are produced by the members of the audience.

Open-ended offline interaction: It is our belief that effective social media campaigns must drive target audiences towards some form of offline engagement, thus optimizing the chances that a campaign goes viral across a broad spectrum of the target audience, and eventually gaining publicity across a broad spectrum of the population. The Chipotle campaign accomplished this in a rather ingenious fashion by creating a mobile gaming app that was a companion piece to the Scarecrow movie. A link enabling one to download the game was embedded at the end of the Scarecrow movie. Posts across Chipotle's various social media platforms drove members of the audience to scarecrowgame.com, which directed one to download the game via Apple's app store. Once downloaded the game can be played entirely within one's mobile device (iPad or iPhone) without incurring additional bandwidth costs, which is something to be considered amongst the younger members of generation Y. When shared over Apple's Game Center, which has more than 150 million accounts, one's results can be used to challenge friends, to check one's position on a global leaderboard, and to display one's achievements. More importantly, however, playing the game lead to offline engagement and word-of-mouth (thus optimizing the chances that the campaign would go viral) in two ways. First, playing the game while in the presence of one's peers ensured that members of the target audience generated word-of-mouth merely through their presence among other members of the target audience. Second, players were rewarded for accomplishing goals within the game by receiving two-for-one coupons downloaded directly to a player's iPhone or iPad, and that could be shared with a friend at a local Chipotle franchise when the coupon is scanned, much like the QR code on a mobile boarding pass is scanned at an airport gate. This immediate gratification not only ensured that one would continue to play the game in order to receive more rewards (thus creating a self-sustaining beneficial cycle), it also optimized the possibility that the campaign would go viral by promoting further word-of-mouth when one shared the coupon with a friend. Of even greater importance is the fact that the game facilitates the conversion of the game-player's friend into a customer. We note that the game is also an open-ended experience. Updates via the app store ensure that new challenges and rewards can be pushed to existing players and used to draw in new players, thus mitigating the game's shelf life.

Content optimized for mobile displays and controls: We believe that this will become a crucial aspect of the social media content experience as social media increasingly become an almost exclusively mobile experience; namely, the design of content specifically for mobile devices. Regardless of the mobile device or platform that one uses, mobile devices share two attributes that must be taken into account when designing content for social media. The first attribute is known technically as responsive web design (RWD). RWD employs vector graphics and CSS3 standards to present content that tailors itself to the screen it is displayed on, and which is discovered via a device query at the time that the content is requested by the device. Similarly, native apps and content can be responsively designed for the three major screen aspect ratios: 16:9, 4:3

and 3:2. We note that in the future, as screens move towards high definition displays, the 16:9 standard will be the most common aspect ratio found on the screens of future mobile devices.

The second attribute with respect to mobile screens and controls that we consider to be of crucial importance to the success of social media content concerns the color gamut favored by mobile device manufacturers. Content should be designed for the full sRGB gamut and a contrast ratio of, minimally, 1300:1. This combination yields colors that are high in saturation, have extended tonal ranges, and that are also very high in contrast. The content designed for social media consumption should thus favor very bold colors in high contrast designs in order to optimize the target audience's viewing experience.

Finally, we note that, wherever possible, content should take advantage of the gesture-based control functions available to mobile device users. Swiping and tapping gestures no longer bring delight to the user, nor are they immersive experiences. In the case of the Scarecrow game, which is available only on iOS (Apple) mobile devices, the designers took advantage of the motion sensors, gyroscope and accelerometer built into both the iPad and iPhone. These sensors enable players to control game play by tilting the device to the left or right, pitching it forwards and backwards, and rotating it along both the horizontal and vertical axes. In addition to enabling a broader range of more intuitive controls to the game, these controls work to immerse the game player within the gaming experience.

Case 2. Dumb ways to die.

The Melbourne Metro system chose to entertain its target audience while raising awareness about metro safety. Instead of taking a traditional approach of a moral told or lesson learned conveyed via a somber PSA, the Melbourne Metro System's agency, McCann Australia, chose an unconventional message, Dumb Ways to Die (DWTD) for its PSA. To accomplish this, McCann Australia created a three-minute song and video in which the song was performed by cute animated characters. This approach was taken because the agency had identified

> that early adopters would be key to success, so we amplified shareability by creating .gifs from the video animation and shared them via Tumblr. The creatives believe this was the main reason DWTD made Reddit's front page over the launch weekend. After writing the first comment on the YouTube video, which provided the links to buy the song on iTunes or listen/download via Soundcloud, McCann Melbourne resisted the usual temptation to talk about the campaign in the media, on its social media channels, or through its press relations. The agency did not engage in online commentary in any way and have continued to be entirely non-interventional. This freedom has allowed people to create multiple translations that have facilitated growth throughout Asia, Europe and South America. (interpublic.com)

In addition to the song and video a smartphone game was created (there is now a sequel game), which was also very popular. A Tumblr page was created, which was used as the primary social media platform. A karaoke version of the song was produced and played in metro stations, and metro riders were encouraged to sing along with one another. Posters of the characters were used to reinforce the message: out of Home posters asked the target audience to take pictures with the characters and to post these to Instagram, which in turn helped to generate viral effects. A book was published and distributed to schools. Toys were produced and shared by children and teenagers, who reacted to the song in a variety of, playful ways. The audience was further engaged when asked to create and upload their own versions of the song.

Of course, enjoying such an experience is a function of both highly robust and high speed Internet connectivity. Both the US and Australia have high levels of Internet access. According to internetworldstats, and as of January 2015, the national Internet penetration rate for Australia is 89% vs. 87% for the US. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2015) reports that 83% of all households access the Internet at home and 77% of all households have access to the Internet via a broadband connection. Australians who access the Internet enjoy relatively fast Internet connectivity; more than half of Australian households (53%) accessing the Internet enjoy a download speed between 8 and 24 Mbps. Overall, American users enjoy higher speeds of Internet connectivity than their Australian counterparts—11.5 vs. 6.9 Mbps. As of December 2014, 57% of the Australian population had an active account with a social media network; the most popular social network site (SNS) is Facebook with 40% of the population having a Facebook account. Moreover, both Australia and the US have very high levels of mobile broadband penetration. Australia figures among those countries with the highest levels of mobile broadband penetration in the world with a penetration rate of 114% vs. 87% for the USA (OECD report, 2014).

High levels of mobile broadband penetration and fast mobile broadband connectivity speeds are very important to the success of any public relations campaign that employs social media in order to generate online and offline engagement as SNSs and social media in general become increasingly accessed solely via mobile connections. Facebook in January 2015 reported that more than 80% of its monthly active users were accessing the site from a mobile device (investor.fb.com). We expect these trends to continue unabated for both the near and medium term future as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reports that, "... mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants worldwide almost quadrupled since 2010..." and by the end of 2015 are expected to reach 47% worldwide. Moreover, the ITU also reports that mobile subscriptions are rapidly growing in all regions of the world (itu.int). Additionally Cisco's Visual Networking Index predicts that smartphone data traffic will increase by a factor of ten between 2015 and 2019 (Cisco.com).

The metrics generated in response to Dumb Ways to Die have been nothing short of staggering. The video is the most shared PSA in history, and the campaign is ranked as the third-most viral campaign, ever. Within 24 h of its release DWTD had reached the top 10 of Australia's iTunes charts, and within 48 h was ranked number six in the singer/songwriter category on the global iTunes chart, eventually charting in the top 10 singles on iTunes in 28 countries. The game app ranked number

one among free apps in Apple's iOS App Store in 18 countries, including The United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Germany. Additionally, the game app was ranked in the top 100 apps in the App Store in 101 countries. In the United States the song charted ahead of Rihanna's album, which was released on the same day. The Tumblr page went viral very rapidly, generating 4 million shares. With more than 60 million views, the success of the YouTube video channel has been massive. In addition to its chart success, DWTD was featured on all of Australia's national television networks and was played by radio stations as part of their regular music rotation.

"Dumb Ways To Die" is the most awarded campaign in the 60-year history of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity and has earned dozens awards at several other festivals. Most importantly, there was a 21% reduction in the amount of accidents, in the year on year measurements for the six weeks following the release of the campaign. The metrics generated in response to this campaign were a result of the following characteristics:

A simple, yet very effective story: The story told in DWTD is very simple; "acting silly on a metro platform will get you killed, here's how it happens." More importantly, the story is executed in a very charming and visually stimulating fashion; simple, cute cartoon characters, placed against vividly colorful backgrounds, engage in playful but deadly behavior that sees them killed in a number of amusingly gruesome (due to the nature of the characters) ways. The reliance of the campaign on an almost purely visual-based story and message plays very well to the target audience, which in this case is comprised of young people who fall into Generation Z, and whose social media content preferences tend to visual memes, such as icons, images and symbols (socialmarketing.org; generationz.com) and who prefer to "co-create... and to help make up the activity as they participate" (generationleaders.com), and to share this. The content across all media is exceptionally consistent, consisting almost solely of images, along with excerpts from the video and the theme song placed in a variety of online and offline environments. The tagline, "Dumb Ways to Die," along with excerpted lyrics from the song, is often the only visible text found on social media shares, out of home displays, and the video. This reliance on the use of image-based memes across all social media and other communication platforms and channels, ensures the highest level of attention and engagement on the part of members of the Generation Z target audience.

The offline interaction is very consistent and particularly effective. Members of Generation Z are technology-driven digital natives who are visually oriented co-creators and who prefer to participate in activities that they live stream or otherwise share. Their social media preferences, and the content that they share, tend heavily towards the visual. DWTD addresses these characteristics in a variety of ways: the out of home advertisements display characters from the videos and the games and encouraged members of the target audience to take selfies with the characters and to upload, hashtag and share these via Instagram and other social media. Other out of home displays depict characters from the videos engaged in activities that result in their death. A number of the metro system's platforms played the campaign's theme song, and out-of-home content encouraged people to sing along, karaoke style, to encourage others to sing along, to take selfies and videos of this and to share these via Instagram and other social media. The game applications (there are now two games) are almost devoid of text and are driven almost entirely via icons and symbols. Players take the Melbourne Metro to one of a number of stations where they engage in skill-testing tasks designed to save the lives of characters from the video. These tasks increase in speed as one successfully completes each task, scoring points. Each task that is not successfully completed results in a player's death, and each player has three deaths before the game ends. At the end of the game one is invited to tweet one's death, which is the score attained at the time of the final death.

The sharing of campaign content plays a very prominent role in the DWTD campaign. The storybooks were read together, and the content and its lessons shared, among teachers and young children, in school. The karaoke experience was, quite obviously, something that is most enjoyed when shared with others. The manufacture of various forms of collectibles—such as dolls, t-shirts, pillows, etc.—have created a secondary market on outlets such as eBay, and more importantly are traded and shared among children. Moreover, one can share one's scores on each of the DWTD games via both Twitter and Apple's Game Center, which also functions as a form of content sharing.

All of the content produced for DWTD is designed for consumption and engagement using mobile devices. The characters are very simple, and vividly colored, exhibit high color contrast, and are drawn very large in comparison to the sizes and aspect ratios of contemporary smartphone screens. The backgrounds for the video and the games and the objects that the characters in the video and games interact with are equally large, and simply depicted and vivid in color and contrast. The song is very easy to remember and to sing along with, and its sound frame leads us to believe that this song was optimized for listening via ear buds and headphones. The game makes use of the entire scope of the iPhone's motion controls, as players tilt, pitch and rotate the phone to move characters, as well as tapping, swiping and dragging other visual elements to complete tasks. The immersive aspect of the game consists of the continual increase in the speed of the tasks. The more successful one is, the more one must concentrate in order to engage with the game at the increasing speeds required of the player.

Case 3. No rights, no women.

The purpose of this 2012 campaign, created by Leo Burnett Lebanon, was to address gender inequality and to empower Lebanese women. The campaign's insight is that women are only half citizens; only men are fully citizens, having all the rights and privileges pertaining to citizenship. Thus, if women became men they would have the full citizenship rights and privileges that are the purview of men. The campaign called upon women to wear mustaches, a popular local symbol of masculinity. A social media campaign asking women to add moustaches to their Facebook profile pictures and suggesting they change their gender status to "male" has begun. The texts of discriminatory laws were simplified and circulated over

social media—in particular Facebook and Twitter—for sharing by women. This was supported by an online petition. Bloggers, influencers and students were approached to help build hype and to create social media content. Stories about women having been in a situation were they were granted no rights were circulated with the effect of humanizing the problem. This was followed by a call to action, namely to sign the petition.

Social media, including Twitter and Facebook, were used to publicize a second call to action, a peaceful protest timed to take place on International Women's Day. Women were asked to dress up like men and march along a pre-arranged route to Parliament, where they would stage a sit-in. In the Lebanese context the offline component of the campaign was as important as the online because the offline event helped to maximize the campaign's reach and impact, and for two reasons. First, Internet connectivity in Lebanon, contrary to that found in the US or Australia, had reached less than half of the population in 2012. Internetworldstats estimates that by December 2011 33% of the Lebanese population had access to the Internet (Internetworldstats, 2011) . Second, women are almost equally active online as men. The Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government reports that Lebanese women are the highest users of social networks in the Arab region; as of 2013, 45% of Facebook users in Lebanon are females. Moreover, Lebanese women have a history of fighting for their rights. In 2009 a women's empowerment campaign, entitled 'khede kasra' advocated gender equality and has been very successful in promoting the implementation of gender equality policies. This campaign No rights, no women builds upon the success of khede kasra but uses extensively social media, now that social networking sites had proliferated, which was not the case at the time of the 2009 campaign.

Both national and regional broadcast media covered the march to the parliament event, which garnered millions of media impressions as a result. The quantitative metrics included USD1.2 million in free media coverage. Most importantly, however, the campaign was politically influential as the Honor Crimes laws were abolished and laws and legal doctrines concerning domestic violence reviewed. The campaign won awards at the Cannes International Festival, Epica, Dubai Lynx and Mena Cristal, among others.

Like Chipotle's Scarecrow Campaign and DWTD, No Rights, No Women places digital story telling at the heart of its campaign. Indeed, this entire campaign revolves around digital storytelling, although in this case the digital story is told through the stories that have been written and posted by members of the target audience. This had the effect of combining digital story telling with audience engagement and thus had the effect of creating an initial buy-in on the part of members of the target audience, who, in effect were the campaign's content creators. This initial form of engagement was reinforced in several ways: as discussed, above, women were encouraged to change their Facebook profile picture to one that showed them wearing a moustache and to share this picture across their social networks, thus beginning to generate a viral effect. Excerpts of discriminatory laws were published on and shared across social media. The online petition reinforced the relationship between the campaign and members of the target audience.

Of course, the most dramatic aspect of the campaign, which gained the most publicity, was the march on the Parliament. Again, as with the Scarecrow and DWTD, the campaign's strongest and most viral effects are generated by offline interaction. It is our belief that, without the march on Parliament, this campaign would have been neither as effective nor as dramatically publicized as it was because of the march on Parliament. In this respect the march on Parliament served to put names and profiles to real bodies, and thus to make the social media campaign real for the Lebanese public in a very dramatic fashion.

Case 4 Oreo.   You can still dunk in the dark.

You can still dunk in the dark is an image that Oreo tweeted during the blackout that occurred during the 2013 Super Bowl. The tweet was part of a campaign designed to celebrate and publicize Oreo's one-hundredth birthday. The 360i team, Oreo's digital agency, designed and produced daily social media content based on top stories of the day, every day, for 100 days: over 100 days, Oreo produced 100 "twists"—images featuring Oreos in images that were designed for sharing over social media and that were timely parodies of various landmark dates, such as Bastille Day, Elvis Week and the first flight around the world. The strategy was inspired by the main research insight: millenials are the most passionate about Oreo. The campaign was designed to be image intensive and to generate a daily conversation with the target audience based on the timeliness of its twists and the sharing of these twists across the various social media platforms favored by millenials.

You can still dunk in the dark was designed, produced, approved and tweeted by 360i within minutes of the blackout's occurrence.

> "From a single tweet, the brand saw huge impact. The "Dunk in the Dark" image was shared on Twitter and Facebook more than 20,000 times and garnered 525 million earned media impressions—which is five times the number of people who tuned in to watch the game. Wired magazine declared Oreo the winner of the Super Bowl, and Adweek ranked the tweet as one of the top five 'ads' of the night" (360i, 2013).

The tactic piled up dozens awards, including Cannes Lions Awards, CLIO Awards, Interactive Advertising Bureau's MIXX Award, an Effie and many others.

We will be the first to admit that, at first glance, this spontaneously generated campaign content is somewhat unique when compared to the other campaigns that we have discussed. This was not a pre-planned content, nor was the campaign a pre-planned campaign. However, there are still aspects of this campaign that are similar to the others that we have discussed, and that figure in this tweet's massive success. We note, for instance, that although this tweet is not part of an overall digital storytelling strategy, it took advantage of a timely and strategic intervention in order to insert itself into the story of the evening. In a very real sense, as the drama of the Super Bowl played itself out for more than 100 million fans,

the blackout and the tweet's intervention became very real parts of the story that was told both live and after the event's conclusion. The graphic that was tweeted corresponded to the 16:9 screen aspect ratio found on smartphones, and was high in contrast. The tweet was thus designed to have maximal visual impact, and to be easily shared thereby taking advantage of the symbiotic relationship that Twitter has with smartphone users. Moreover, the fact that the tweet was graphic-intensive addressed the audience in two key ways: Older millenials tend to use text-based social media, such as Twitter, while younger millenials—particularly those on the cusp with Generation Z—tend to create content that is image-heavy and to share this content across social media that are image-based, such as Instagram and SnapChat. This tweet addressed both tendencies in that it was a purely visual tweet that could be shared across both text-based and image-based social media networks.

6. Discussion and concluding remarks

Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012, p. 11) state that, "Social media, more so than new or digital media, must be at the heart of public relations activities because social media can enhance organization-public relationships by increasing and improving community relations." The campaigns that we have analysed demonstrate that communicating with (rather than marketing to) a target audience in the context of community building and community relationships is what sets these campaigns apart and engaged their audiences. Their individual audiences appreciated the communication and community building and, in fact, participated in these activities through their engagement.

As we have discussed, above, marketers typically think of social media in relationship to brand awareness and reputation management. While these clearly are important goals and do indeed inform social media campaigns, the campaigns that we analyze emphasize conversion, brand positioning, and continued brand sustenance as the central goals at hand.

6.1. Successful social media campaigns: a shift in the PR campaign cycle

Although the analysis of Hardy and Waters (2012, p. 898) highlighted the fact that, "Special events are the most commonly used public relations tactic, followed by news releases and media kits" in the corpus of the 420 award winning campaigns they examined, it is interesting to note that none of the awarded cases we have examined make use of the above tactics. The number of cases that we have examined in this paper is admittedly limited in sample size and may not be representative of all social media usage in all public relations campaigns in all contexts. This is due to the limited number of social media campaigns that have won awards in both public relations and social media categories. Because of this methodological limitation, our study should be considered as an exploration of best practices, innovative engagement strategies and new trends in content production and target audience engagement found used in successful public relations campaigns that are conducted primarily through the use of social and other digital media. We call for continuing this research by studying a larger sample of case studies of campaigns that have won awards in other festivals or proved any measure of popularity in different contexts. However, it is our opinion that these cases reflect emergent trends found in contemporary PR practices. One important trend is the shift in the nature of the PR campaign cycle. Events and press releases are no longer the only or main solutions to provide the clients with. The increasing interactivity of and relationship building with the target audience across social media are becoming the winning formula to gain attention and response among members of today's audiences. We note that, in the case of all four of the campaigns we have analyzed, the huge number of media impressions, a measure of audience awareness and engagement that is proper to print and broadcast media and that precedes the existence of social media platforms, was driven by the media's coverage of the huge number of shares, retweets and online conversations generated by these tweets. In other words, and to be explicit, exogenous special events and media kits were unnecessary in each of these campaigns. In a well designed social media campaign the reaction online, across social media platforms, will take the place of the special event with respect to driving media impressions.

The social media campaign cycle—the production and dissemination across social media of entertaining and informative content that leads to online conversations and engagement, which in turn leads to offline engagement, further online conversations and potentially massive media coverage—can be very disruptive of the "traditional" PR campaign cycle. We are not claiming that special events, new releases and media kits no longer have a place in PR, for they do and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. What we are claiming is that the campaigns that we have analyzed indicate that, alongside these heretofore-common PR tactics are social media tactics that represent and belong to an entirely different media ecosystem and PR campaign cycle.

At the core of all of the campaigns that we have discussed are digital story telling and entertainment. All of these campaigns begin with a story that is used as the basis for the development and production of entertaining content—in the case of No Rights No Women, this content is compelling and certainly more politically charged as well as entertaining—that generates sharing among the members of a target audience's social networks. This sharing is fundamental to the audience's conversation with the brand, where the brand exists as a part of the media ecosystem, a part of the community and the topic of the conversation. Moreover, offline engagement enhances and extends an audience's conversation with a brand. Giving members of the audience something to do when they are not online accelerates the viral effect because it promotes further sharing, which in turn generates further social media conversations. In the campaigns that we have examined offline engagement has been generated through game playing, story telling, and engagement rewards, all of which lead to further acts of offline sharing, continued online engagement and thus continued social media conversations with the brand.

6.2. shift in the notion of resourcefulness

As we previously stated, above, Barker et al. (2013) found that successful social media strategies typically meet one (or more) of the PARC principles for success: participatory (interact with community), authentic (engaging in conversations without forced attitudes or a false demeanor), resourceful (provide audience with helpful information), and credible. All four of the campaigns that we have discussed were participatory insofar as they engaged the audience in a variety of ways and promoted further online and offline engagement with the audience. The Scarecrow, DWTD and No Rights No Women were all very authentic. Indeed, we would argue that Oreo's 100 tweets in 100 days was also authentic insofar as it did not try to sell anything, but rather focused on producing a humorous campaign whose content could be easily shared across various social media networks.

Most importantly, we also want to argue that each of these campaigns was resourceful. Here, however, we want to point to a new definition of resourcefulness that specifically addresses social media. A social media campaign's resourcefulness is not simply determined by whether or not the campaign has provided the target audience with useful information. In the era of social media resourcefulness must also, we believe, refer to the number of social media platforms that this information is both published on and shared across. In this respect, the more resourceful a campaign is, the more likely it will be to engage its audience and build a conversation. Thus our emphasis upon mobile devices and content that has been designed for these devices: social media are becoming an increasingly mobile phenomenon and content that does not address this fact, regardless of the number of platforms it is published on, will not be shared, and will not engage members of the target audience. This is particularly true for target audiences consisting of millenials and members of Generation Z, but with the near-saturation levels of smartphone penetration in the West and much of the rest of the industrialized world, this is becoming increasingly true of all demographic groups.

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