

SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Communication becomes one of the most important concepts of the today's world. Now, the successes and failures are made related with the communication and non-communication. It is an undeniable fact that effective communication has the biggest effect in the big presidential elections and public revolutions sweeping over the governments.

The social media has a big role in the concept of communication becoming an issue which gradually gets importance, is analyzed and discussed. The social media which becomes the apple of the communication with the new communication technologies makes possible the usage of the internet environment not only for getting information but also for communicating. Due to the social media environments, every user having internet access has gained privileges such as making activities such as forming, changing, interpreting and evaluating contents in a way which is independent of time and place or even being member to the communities that s/he cannot be informed if internet is not accessible. The phenomenon of socialization which is one of the most important humanitarian characteristics has gained new dimensions due to the social media and has ensured that the internet has become essential for us with the innovations that it has brought to the concepts of time place.

Even though the social media is a fairly new concept, it has taken hold of the whole world and has entered to all houses like a virus and amazes people with the power it takes from the people. The incremental growth of the social media like a snow slide has ensured that this environment has attracted attention of all organizations. The firms which cannot get the productivity that they want from the communication activities due to the fact that the target groups have got enough with the advertisements consider the social media as a new rescuer. Also, the firms which cannot find the opportunity to get famous with the high cost communication activities consider their remedy in the social media environments.

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The definition and bounding of the social media which becomes the easiest and effective way of reaching to the target groups whose structures have changed with the continuously changing trends and movements are also extremely difficult. The social media in which almost every day new applications have been developed and new environments have been formed and new concepts have been revealed has a vital importance for firms in terms of using the traditional communication activities in a complementary and supportive way. While the initiatives which give new points of view to the firm by executing the communication activities with support from social media continuously rise, the initiatives which get their own way by isolating themselves from the new communication technologies and social media environments are unfortunately condemned to disappear.

The public relations which are one of the most important pillars of the mentioned communication activities manage the strategic communication of an institution as well as its reputation, image and brands. Due to the fact that it is a direct management function, the public relations have big importance for all institutions. Due to the fact that it becomes one of the most important tools of this management process, the social media becomes one of the issues that also the public relations deal most. Today, the public relations realize most of its application through the social media channel due to the easiness that it brings and effective communication activities it promises.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Definition and Characteristics of Social Media

One of the biggest changes that the media has is that it becomes socialized and stopping to be a formation which the humans passively watch and becoming a world which is formed and managed by humans in person. In order to better understand this world, it is required to analyze the definitions of social media.

The first part of the social media, that is to say social, mentions the need and instinct of the person to communicate with the other people. Since the first human, we communicate with each in one way or another. Being included in a group in which there are people who think like us, nearby whom we feel like we are at our homes and with whom we can share our thoughts, feelings and experiences easily is a humanitarian need. Media is your methods of communicating with these people. This communication can be established with drum, bell, writing, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, e-mail, website, photograph, audio file, video, mobile phone and short message. Media is all of the technologies we use to ensure this communication (Safko, 2010).

That the internet becomes a gradually growing world makes the definition of the concept of the social media gradually harder. The social media is directly related with the content that is formed by the user. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the contents in the artificial world should have three characteristics to be considered as user sources: First of all, the mentioned content should be published on a website or social network which is open to public,

that is to say which can be accessed by everybody. Secondly, the content is required to appear as a result of a creative effort. Thirdly, it should be formed in nonprofessional applications (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). That is to say, sharing information via e-mails or online messaging or sharing a previously published article via the social networks are not included in the user sourced content.

Functional Characteristics of the Social Media

Seven functional phrases which the social media affects and changes can be listed as follows: Identity, dialog, sharing, availability, relations, reputation and groups. Each functional phrase is used for understanding one aspect of the social media experience. We can detail these as follows;

Identity: The social media has caused the changing of the concept of identity. According to TDK, the identity is 'all indications, attributions and characteristics which show what kind of person a human is as a social entity.' In the social media, the identity deals with how correctly the users tell themselves in any social media environments. This also means sharing or not sharing of the information such as name, age, gender, profession and place by the users; how and to what extent they share this information is also extremely important.

Dialog: Dialog means that the social media users communicate with the other users. The primary objective of the social media is to bring people having common characteristics together and by this way to create a community which is composed of people having the similar fields of interest and requests (Topper, 2009). That is to say, the priority of the social media is to make the communication between its users possible. This communication has many objectives: The people can be members to social media sites to find the real love, increase their self-confidence and making comments of the innovative thoughts and important issues (Kietzmann and et al, 2011). If this dialogue happens in social media sites which have millions of members, it is an inevitable reality that the environment formed becomes very important for the marketing. Every organization recognizing the importance of the social media will try to do its best to be a part of this dialogue and control the dialogue for its benefit.

Sharing: The biggest difference between the old communication channels and social media is related with the sharing. Our activity in the social atmosphere formed with the digitalization of our relations and communities to which we belong can mainly be called as "sharing". People makes sharing through the social media channels with their current friends to make many more friends and to belong to many more groups. Due to the social media, the information becomes a thing shared rather than a consumed or acquired thing (Zandt, 2010).

Availability: Availability is an issue related to the accessibility of the social media users. In the real world or artificial environment, it deals with knowing where the other users are and whether they are accessible or not. In the artificial world, it is done with the status updates such as "the one declaring availability" or "requesting confidentiality". If it is considered that the number of people who are existing in the

social media gradually increase, this serves as a bridge for combining the artificial world with the real world (Kietzmann et al, 2011). That is to say, activities oriented for the social media are also related to the transfer of the activities in the real world to the artificial world rather than existence of the people in the artificial world.

Relations: Relations are the element which makes the social media social. The most important characteristic of the social media that distinguishes it from the traditional media is that it allows people to establish bilateral relation with the other people. The social media approaches to all users in the same way: a trustable friend or a stranger who is not known at all, all or none. The relations are the most important pillar of this range (Gilbert and Karahalios, 2009). That is to say, it is very important that you "know" someone even if remotely, this situation will put that person in the category of trustable friend and it is very difficult for a person you do not know at all to enter this category.

Reputation: Reputation can have many meanings in social media platforms, however it is generally closely related with the concept of trust. Why the social media cares the issue of reputation that much can be explained as follows: We form a profile in a site, make friends, become members to the applications, participate to the groups and activities and we realize all of these to define our identity. In due course, we become more active and make contributions to the formation of content and make comments and attend to the voting; in turn this brings certain level of reputation to us. This reputation can be turned into trust: How trustable the social media users are is decided by looking at the information in their profile and their friends and contents they have formed. As all of these happen in due course, it can be said that the social media is a long term relation (Papworth, 2011). That is to say, the reputation which is the third step of the social media journey starting with the profile and aimed to be ended with trust is one of the most important pillars of the ranking as profile-identity-reputation-trust.

Groups: Groups represent large and small communities that the social media members form. The growth of social network means bigger friend group, more followers and connections. The groups are divided into as the one that everybody can view and confidential. The confidential groups are the private communities which can be entered with invitations. For example, there are groups which can be entered without the approval of the administrators in Facebook (Kietzmann et al, 2009). It is true that the social media is inclined to the grouping. The grouping of the users is important in terms of reaching to more people in a more correct way.

SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Transition from the Traditional Public Relations to the Public Relations in the Social Media

The duty we have called public relations is efforts shown by a real or legal persons, that is to say, a human, association, private or public institution to establish relations with the groups with which it does business reciprocally and to develop its relations with them, if any. Whether being done by the person (real or legal) or by others working for it, this business requires the usage of various techniques and following of various ways and undertaking of various mathematical efforts (Asna, 2006). These techniques change in direct proportional to the changes encountered in the social media.

Through the continuously developing communication technologies and especially the artificial environments, the individuals have provided the advantage of reaching not only to the things happening in their surroundings, but also to the events in the whole world at the "time they have selected" and via the "source that they have selected". In this context, the individuals have gained the opportunity to obtain the information they want at the moment they want and the regional, political, economical and social limits of the information have disappeared (Özgen, 2010). This situation has also affected the public relations in all communication activities. The public relations experts have started activities for reaching to their target groups in these new environments that the communication technologies indicate.

All changes affecting the social life enter into the field of interest of the ones doing the business of public relations. For this reason, nobody can be indifferent to the internet environment. We can have the chance of following the developments, being in them and making use of them in the rate in which they are presented to us and we can reflect them to our daily life. Today, an important part of world public relations industry has expertise in the field of communication technologies. They select their customers from this field and adapt their service forms to this expertise field (Kadıbeşegil, 2004). This adaptation changes the determined objectives and results, the public relations which are required to be an activity which is continuously renewed has started to feel the requirement of being renewed more frequently and dense as a result of the starting of rapid change and development of the communication technologies.

The contemporary public relations applications show the bidirectional symmetrical communication model as the ideal model. The social media environments are communication environments in which the organizations can have one to one interaction with the individuals in their target groups and where the bidirectional communication flow is possible and which are open to the sharing and participation. The social media environments are the newest communication channels in which they can extend their corporate communication messages in the content of the public relations tactics and in which they can support the application fields such as crisis management, activity management, public opinion establishment and cooperation with the shareholders. That the social media channels are measurable and traceable and it gives opportunity for rapid information sharing and publication is an important

communication channel characteristic sought in the communication of the organization with its target groups in the public relations (Onat, 2009).

Applications of Public Relations in the Social Media

Due to social media, the dynamics of creating action and reaction have shifted from the news and journalists to the audiences watching, reading and listening this news. The blogs, social networks, online forums and other social media tools have completely changed the dynamics of creating action and reaction. The information which is accessed as ready in today's world is shared and distributed among friends. This situation can be considered as a threat and an opportunity. While the communication experts tell their stories, they have the chance to access more efficient targets from the most important media channels without any obstacles in between them. Also, the ideal customer choosing to give information to his/her friends in the social media channel can be easily reached (Solis and Breakendige, 2009).

In the internet applications for public relations, the organizations are required to develop their internal communication strategies by using the internet techniques. We are required to be ready for facing with the internet users who spread to a wide range of attributions. There is no need for us to give the pre-estimates of how this group established their preferences. Because, due to the different channels of internet, all of them have many decision making processes. For this reason, the design of websites becomes important in terms of public relations for the companies (Sarı, 2011).

The corporate web pages give big opportunities to the institutions and present fast and effective communication. The web pages provide many advantages such as addressing to a specific part of the institution's target group, presenting different contents according to the different expectation and needs of the consumer, getting instant reactions, reporting attractive issues, making communication continuous and establishing a database (Bilbil, 2008).

A method that will make the communication of public relation expert both within the organization and with the institutions in his/her surroundings easier is teleconference (video conference and audio conference) systems. The system which appeared in 1960's but which could not become widespread due to the fact that its cost is too high and due to the failure of the potential users showed a big development in 1990's due to the increasing of the services, signal transmission rate and display quality of the digital network lines. By this way, the teleconference systems decrease travel costs and make time and energy savings and have become an indispensable element of the organizational communication (Becerikli, 2011).

From Web 2.0 environments, the corporate blogs are communication channels which are appropriate to the objectives and fundamental principles of the public relations. With the development of internet, the web phenomenon becoming an indispensable communication tool and the number of writers and readers of the blogs which increase every passing day in Turkey, like in the whole world in this alteration period, the blog writers creating their own reader groups and becoming gatekeepers,

the blogs have started to make their importance be felt in the communication world (Alikılıç and Onat, 2007).

Microblogging also has become an indispensable media selection of the applications of public relations. Today, especially the companies use Twitter efficiently and try to create difference in this environment which is changing and developing steadily. Twitter can be used by the public relations experts to create awareness and make corporate reputation studies and for notifying and getting feedback.

'wiki's which are one of the favorite tools of the social media can also be efficiently used by the public relations. "wiki"s which have structures that make possible the combination of information of more than one user in an issue in a single hypertext environment has characteristics of flexibility, quickness and providing cooperation. Also, some "wiki"s can also work in compliance with the institution's electronic document and document management systems. The corpo-rate usages are used in the project management, evaluations of the intraorganization documentation, evaluation of the institution documents by the external users and ensuring of the remote information entry (Çakmak, 2009).

Taking place in the social bookmarking sites has entered among the new objectives of the public relations experts. It is required to establish specific strategies for the social bookmarking sites. What is never forgotten is that when social media is at issue, the most important concept is communication, sharing and cooperation, not promotion. Marking and interpreting of the sites in which people are interested and reaching to the people who are interested in the similar issues become possible with the help of the social bookmarking. The public relations employees can benefit from the social bookmarking sites and can access to many persons (Hay, 2009). The target group to be reached in this way is selected in a more correct way and the communication to be established with this target group will also be more healthier. The social bookmarking sites also provide information regarding the institutions. The comments related to an institution or the numbers of people who have marked that institution give information to the public relations employees regarding the perception of the institution by the people. The activities that will be realized based on this information will be more effective.

The media sharing sites such as YouTube provide viral communication to the public relations employees. Fifty five of the ninety four campaigns winning in 2008 Effie Awards used YouTube in an effective way (Young, 2010).

Podcasting which is another one of the social media application can also be used in the applications for public relations. For example, the press bulletins can also be spread as podcasting as well as being printed. Similarly, the news related to the institution can also be spread as podcasting, because the files having images or audios are much sought after rather than the written files in the social media environment. Podcasting helps public relations in the issues of crating brand awareness and ensuring corporate communication. It makes the accession to the social shareholders easier and ensures to realize all of these with a very small budget (Sarı, 2011).

The networks which have appeared in the internet regardless of time and place have become communication channels in which the methods of forming public opinion, obtaining trust, approval, consent and respect of public relations are applied efficiently, effectively and in a measurable way (Onat, 2009). While the social networks become wider, they take more places in the applications in the public relations. Today, a public relations campaign cannot be considered as being separated from the social media and especially Facebook. What the companies deciding to take place in the social media do first is to open up a page belonging to the company in the Facebook and to communicate with the social shareholders over this page.

'LinkedIn' which is one of the most important social networks in which the professional become members and make information exchange related to the fields of expertise is also similarly used by the public relations experts. One of the most important advantages that LinkedIn provides is that it serves as a sharing site among the public relations experts. LinkedIn whose forum and discussion pages are extremely active also makes possible reaching to the newest information in the field of public relations by this way. Also, it makes accession to the target groups easier. The public relations experts who want to communicate only with the professionals in certain issues realize this very easily due to LinkedIn. Due to the fact that it is a social network bringing professionals together, LinkedIn is important for companies wanting to create brand awareness, because very effective communication can be realized.

The artificial worlds also have succeeded to attract attentions of the public relations experts as another social media tool which has been sought after. The firms wanting brand awareness and loyalty make operations in the artificial worlds and realize applications in public relations oriented for the members of these worlds. The companies and big brands which have determined their target groups well and known that these target groups spend time in the artificial worlds demand these public relations applications. The public relations activities in the artificial worlds can be opening a stand, organizing parties, giving items such as t-shirt, bag on which there is brand as presents to the profiles.

Examples to the Applications of Public Relations in the Social Media

Burger King: Burger King which is one of the America's famous fast food restaurant chains succeeded to attach attention and to be talked about not only in Facebook, but also in all media channels with the applications called 'Sacrifice' that it developed in Facebook. Again in 2009, that is to say, in a period in which the Facebook applications were extremely favorite, Burger King promised to its users to present a hamburger as a present in case they sacrificed their 10 Facebook friends.

The users were asked "Which one do you like more? Your friends or Whopper?" and the entertaining applications were developed for them to delete their friends. In the first week of the application which drew extreme attention, 230.000+ friends were

sacrificed. Also, the campaign had wide media coverage and was talked about everywhere including the big newspapers.

Facebook made a statement for the campaign which attracts intense attention and mentioned that this application was contradictory to the Facebook's nature of supporting friendship. Due to the Facebook's statement underlining that the social networks are based on making new friends, not sacrificing friends, Burger King gave up its 'Sacrifice' application. After the campaign ending with the announcement of "Even though it is very entertaining, we give up Facebook Sacrifice application", the users wanting to restart the campaign sent lots of petitions to Burger King, but they could get results.

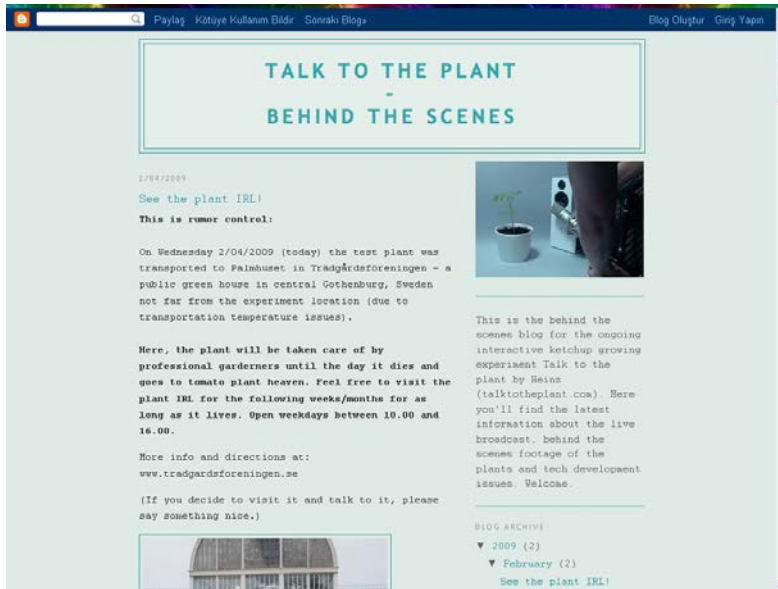
Burger King Sacrifice application which is one of the first viral campaigns realized, is a big success as it supports Burger King's aggressive communication strategy and it is entertaining, different and remarkable.



Heinz: Heinz which resonated with the project of Talk to the Plant achieved to enter among the unforgettable applications of the social media with this success. In this application which looked like an experiment, it was tried to observe whether the tomatoes grew healthier with the care of people. Meanwhile, it was tried to prove that nobody could grow tomatoes with care as much as Heinz. During the project which lasted totally eight weeks, the notes that the user wrote on one of two tomato seedlings grown in a sterile environment were read through a computer; by this way, it was observed how talking with the plants affected the developments. While the tomato seedling to which 18.774 messages sent were read grew 153 cm, the other seedling grew 146 cm.

It is difficult to say 7 cm is a big difference or proves something, however it is certain that it supports slogan of "No one grows ketchup like Heinz" which forms the bases of Heinz's communication strategy. This interactive experience is a good

example for how a social media application can be realized without allocating additional budget. The application which attracted attention in a short while was supported with the blog in which there were entertaining sections and placed Heinz among the heroes of social media.



Zappos: The firm which was established in 1999 started its journey by selling shoes in the internet and today it has added many categories such as clothes, glasses and accessories. The colorfulness of Facebook page of Zappos.com is one of the most successful applications in the social media. The application of “Fan of the Week” on Facebook page became a classic in very short while. The application of Zappos which kept the photograph selected among the photographs that its fans shared on Facebook wall for one week on its Facebook page attracted too much attention. The social media experts of Zappos which established dialogues one to one with all customers thanking for a fast service or making comments in any issues have directly loyal fans rather than customers due to its sincerity on the Facebook pages.



Cree: Cree, which is an illumination company, has aimed to reach to the target groups by creating an entertaining story. The institution which chooses to create its own social media environment instead of using the direct social media environments gains more fans every passing day with the “illumination revolution” it has started. The company which takes illumination revolution seriously as much as publishing a manifest in this issue has successfully highlighted the entertaining side of the social media. The institution calling its visitors to disclose bad light usage selects monthly winners with this movement and rewards them with the correct illumination. By this way, both the brand loyalty is created and it manages both its positioning and corporate reputation. This social media experience which is executed in the internet site is also supported with the famous social media tools.

Cree which shares the photographs uploaded to the internet site by the users with the title of “Help Scream” tells by this way that it is a company which takes its business serious and which is very entertaining and most importantly it can draw attention. The Cree’s applications are of the most beautiful examples that entertaining and productive social media applications can be realized even in an issue which seems to be boring such as illumination.



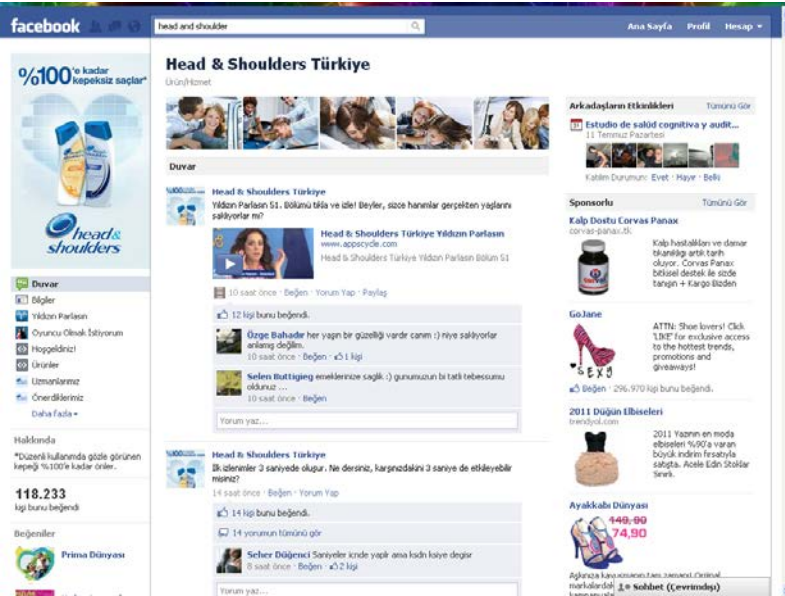
Ford: Ford which is a famous car brand is a name which becomes prominent with its social media applications. In addition to its effective usage of the social media environments, it also attracts attention with the applications that it realizes in www.fordstory.com. The institution which gives direct link to this internet site from www.ford.com calls its users as “Read. Help it to be written. Share.” in the site in which Ford tells its story. The visitors can easily share the articles they read in this site via the social media environments and can make comments on them. In the comment section, “Your voice is missing in this discussion” is told to the visitors and it is underlined that comments of everybody reading the article are very important.

In the mentioned site, the articles related to very different issues regarding the Ford’s history, design process or production are published. With the help of this site, Ford gives chances of speaking and making comments to its customers and includes them to an active communication process. Ford correctly using the advantage such that the contents it has presented attract attention of the men achieves to create Ford fan men from the car fan men.



Head and Shoulders: Head and Shoulders aiming to transform the Facebook dependence which gradually increases every passing day to an opportunity succeeds to draw attention by combining it with another dependence which takes hold of Turkish community together with the whole world and succeeds to find place in the media while increasing its fans in a short while.

The serial called 'Yıldızın Parlasmın' (Let your star shine) which started to be published on Head and Shoulders Turkey page as of the date of 16 May 2011 is a story composed of 180 episodes. It can also be observed in the comments that the serial which managed to create fanatics in a short while was extremely liked by the users. The unconcerned and rude comments arising from the unlimited freedom in the social media in the trailer or first episode of the serial left their places to the positive comments related to the serial when the new episodes appeared. Also that the heroes of the serial are two famous names such as Doğa Rutkay and Yosi Mizrahi has ensured for the serial to have wide coverage in the traditional media channels such as television and radio; and this has returned to the institution as a positive communication activity which million dollars of advertisement cannot realize. The firm succeeding to introduce itself, attract attention and create habits has also succeeded to attract the target group to itself.

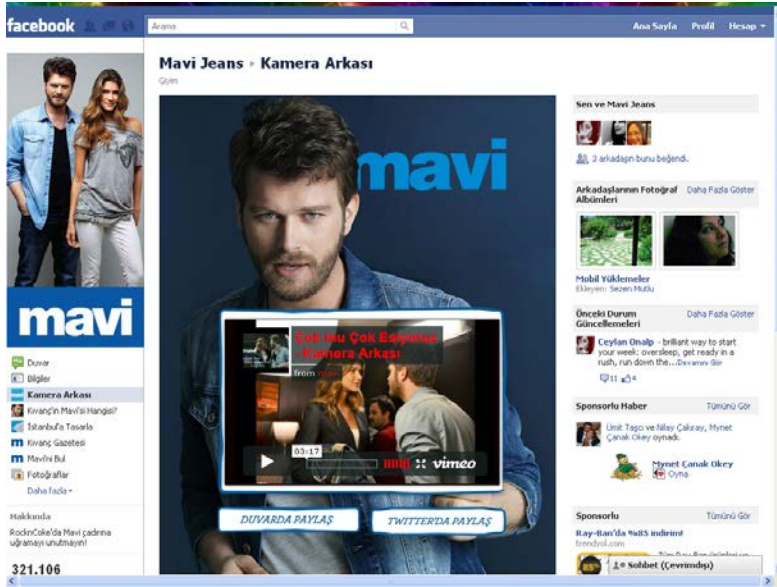


In the forthcoming episodes of the serial, the opportunity to take roles is given to the fans. By this way, the opportunity to be a part of this experience is given to the Head and Shoulders users. While doing this, not directly using the shampoo which is the product it presents is a positive movement; trying to create brand loyalty in this way can be considered as a correct application to attract attentions of social media users who are bored of aggressively behaving brands to become eminent in the data smoke and to cause positive consumer behaviors.

TTNet: TTNet is one of the Turkish firms which effectively use social media. The main attention attracting applications of the institution which executes successful application on its Facebook page with the aims such as dialogue establishment, management of corporate communication and notifying and getting feedback is what it does on Twitter. It is understood from its name that the institution which calls its Twitter pages as TTNetDestek (TTNetSupport) is ready to listen the users having complaints and invites them to any social media channel not to Twitter. That the institution which helps its users which have problems or want to ask questions or get information related to the internet or other TTNet services in case they send their mobile telephone and ADSL numbers uses its Twitter page at much actively positively affects the corporate communication and reputation of TTNet.



Mavi Jeans: Mavi Jeans which is one of the important clothing brands of Turkey actively executes its social media activities in Facebook and Twitter. That it has English and German Facebook pages in addition to Turkish due to being an institution which is active in the international area is important in terms of ensuring integrity in the corporate communication. Mavi Jeans which effectively uses the actor Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ with whom it makes cooperation in the recent periods on its Turkish page attracts attention with the news and questionnaires related to Tatlıtuğ. Mavi Jeans which presents the photographs it possesses due to the catalogue shoots with remarkable contents has succeeded to make more than 300.000 fans by this way. Mavi Jeans which also publishes the behind the scene images of the advertisements with Tatlıtuğ aims to increase the number of its fans by this way.

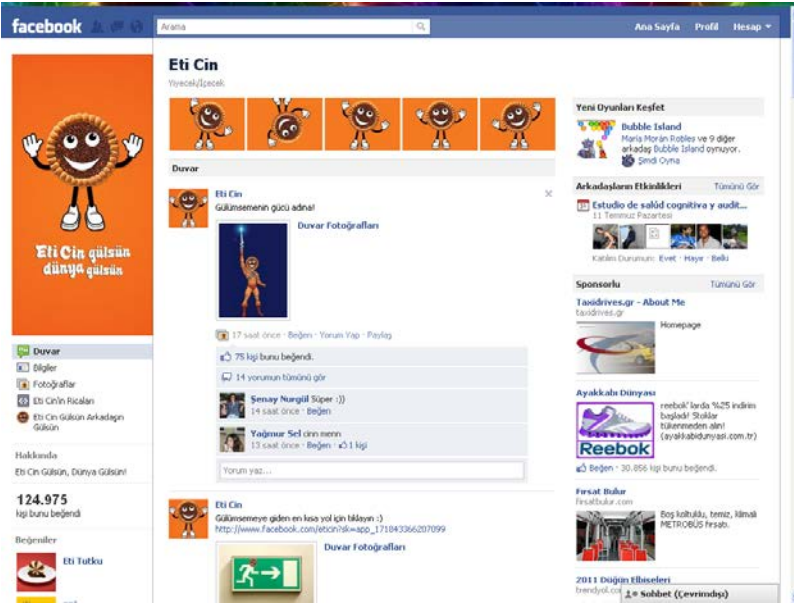


Nike Football Türkiye: Nike Football’s Turkey team has observed how actively the social media is used in Turkey and has invited the social media users dealing with football to its Facebook page by calling them “Çizginin Bu Tarafına Geç!” (“Pass to this side of the Line!”) and succeeded to make more than 800.000 fans in a short while. On Nike’s Facebook page, the social sharing related to the football is followed and comments on football players, teams and matches can be made and information about Nike which is the favorite brand of football lover youth can be obtained. That Nike does not become very prominent in the content presented, that is to say, the priority is given to football not Nike while communicating with the social media users is a positive movement in terms of social media communication. Being innovative and dynamic has a characteristic which complements the institution’s communication strategy in terms of compliance with the Nike’s image and values. On its page which attracts attention with the size of its fan number Nike can also announce the activities it organizes for the football lover youth, that is to say, it can use the social environments as a strategic tool.



Eti Cin: It can be more helpful that the firms having many products such as Eti develop different social media applications for each brand instead of integrated communication activities covering all brands. For example, that while Eti has 60.000 fans on its page Eti Cin has more than 120.000 fans on its page shows that Eti Cin becomes a classic which is independent of the firm and therefore its taking place in the social media alone can positively affect the image of Eti indirectly. The thing which attracts attention first on the Eti Cin's Facebook fan page is the section of "Eti Cin'in Ricaları" ("Requests of Eti Cin") where it asks the social media user to behave little more attentively. Eti Cin which tries to make its lovers laugh in its communication activities lasting for years wants its Facebook page to also make its visitors laugh. For this reason, it has chosen to solve the problem in a cool way such as with requests instead of sharp activities such as complaining the applications or deleting the comments which will make the social media environment which brings unlimited freedom worthless.

The properly sharing of the images which are formed with the montage of the smiley face of Eti Cin which is known by everybody to the frames which are known by everybody is one of the most correct applications to be realized when the communication strategy of Eti Cin is considered. The originality in this application also ensures that the number of loyal followers of the page and Eti Cin gradually increase. Eti Cin focusing its communication activities on making people laugh with its slogan of "Eti Cin GÜLSÜN, DÜNYA GÜLSÜN" ("Eti Cin Laughs, World Laughs") for long years succeeds also to make the social media users who get bored from everything rapidly laugh. When it is considered from this point of view, the Eti Cin's social media activities successfully support its brand positioning.



CONCLUSION

The social media which appears with the new communication technologies renews itself every moment and also includes its users to this continuity. That the social media is a brand new world that pulls all users to its inside has made this environment an indispensable channel not only for individuals, but also for institutions.

That the social media allows bidirectional communication, that is to say, it is interactive also transforms this environment into a unique experience for both individuals and institutions. The individuals can make friends with the help of many different social media elements and form contents and change the content formed by others or can comment on them. The institutions can directly communicate with their target groups and social shareholders with any marketing activities such as advertisement; with the help of the social media which is a much more sincere environment, getting feedback will also be easy. Furthermore, as the feedback obtained in this way is correct, it is possible that it will bring very positive results.

The social media in which all of the integrated marketing and strategic communication activities are made related also closely concerns the public relations as a function managing all communications of an institution with its target groups. It is not possible to think of the science of public relations which closely follows the technological developments and especially the new communication technologies as separate from the social media. In case the public relations covering the communication with the target groups are used effectively, it is closely related with the social media tools making all public relations applications easier.

Within the framework of the public relations applications, the social media is very important in terms of its contributions to the corporate communication, reputation and

image. Also, it makes the communication flow between the social shareholders and institutions significantly easier. It also positively affects the communication with the employees and easily fills the possible communication gaps between the lower and upper levels. The information flow whose control is almost impossible during the crisis period can easily be managed with the social media, because it is possible to update the information given and gather them at the same point with the help of social media environments. Gathering the information flow at one point will hinder the formation of gaps due to the questions and not answering them in due time.

When the social media applications which will be considered as successful in terms of the public relations are examined, it can be observed that the concept of “creativity” lies on the basis of these applications. Other than the extraordinary situations such as crisis, the public relations applications in the social media should be based on difference, that is to say, therefore creativity. The biggest minus of the social media that has numberless of pluses is unfortunately the data smoke it forms, the only way of get through this smoke by drawing attention of the target groups is to develop remarkable applications. When the social media applications analyzed are generally evaluated, it is observed that the social media promises an important future for the public relations, however this type of successful future passes through planned and creative development. The planned and creative development is related with the public relations experts.

The public relations experts can obtain important findings related to both target group and institution by closely following the social media and can realize the whole communication management related to the institution with the communication strategy that will develop related to these findings. However, in this process, the public relation employees have big roles, because closely following the social media is important in terms of witnessing to the information flow and seeing the trends in future. However, not losing creativity and not making repetitions by continuously producing innovations have vital importance in communication in social media. Observing not only the institution, but also the target group while developing communication strategy and applications and evaluating the obtained data correctly and considering the feedbacks received in the communication process are the issues which make the correct execution of the public relations applications possible.

The communication activities in the social media cannot be separately considered as advertisement, promotion or public relations. Every pillar of integrated marketing is important and complementary at the same degree. The most important reason that the public relations become that much prominent when the social media is at issue is that the social media user profile is very different from the users of traditional communication tools. The social media user gets enough with the direct advertisement and promotion activities, for this reason, making communication activities with emphasis on the public relations will be useful for the institution. That is to say, the communication applications should address all areas of the strategic communication, not to a single field; however, it should primarily consider the communication with the target groups.

The social media can make the works of public relations experts difficult as well as making the public relations applications easier. The public relations employees should evaluate the social media as one of the most important channels of future, at the same time; they should use it in an integrated way with the traditional communication environments. The biggest support to be given to the public relations experts whose works get more complex is training. The public relations experts should get training of “social media expertise”; and they should be trained on controlling and managing the information flow in the social media. With the help of the public relations supported strategic communication applications to be developed by this way, the social media which is already entertaining will become a much more entertaining environment.

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