

Chapter 13

Utilizing the Dimensions of Religion to Analyze Social Media Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the current chapter is to analyze one of the most recent and successful social media campaigns namely #NotInMyName from the viewpoint of the seven dimensions of religion utilized by Van Esch and others as the main pillar of social marketing and media campaigns. Further #NotInMyName Public Relations (PR) campaign is scrutinized for PR strategies and message strategies utilized in formulating the campaign messages. To achieve that end, a qualitative analysis was implemented on three levels relating to each video and vine of the study sample: first locating the Dimensions of Religion (DOR taxonomy(ies) used in this video or vine, then emanating on the PR campaign strategies implemented in the video or vine and finally searching for the message strategies utilized in the video or vine. The major conclusion of this study was that although campaigns launched via social media lack the scientific known steps utilized to plan and launch media campaigns traditionally, those campaigns derive from the social media platform exacerbating an unprecedented power to stir political and social movements especially, regarding controversial and stagnant matters. Posts, comments and shares on different social media platforms go viral, stir discussions, and trigger public opinion both virtually and in reality. Dimensions of Religion taxonomies proved reliability as a viable platform stemming from another discipline to plan messages and to analyze campaigns based on the different aspects the model would provide. Ranging from simple aspects to more complicated aspects, Dimensions of Religion model must be subjected to further research to determine its feasibility to be applied to different campaigning structures and objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Citing the seminal work of Locker (1993, 1994), Ha and Riffle (2015) asserted that interdisciplinary approach can help researchers reframe knowledge using other fields' models and terminology, thus reshaping knowledge into something more than in its original state. Research is interdisciplinary if it draws on

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theories from more than one discipline or field and employs complementary methods and fundamental knowledge from diverse fields and disciplines (Ha & Riffle, 2015, p. 570).

While an interdisciplinary approach seems desirable because it allows researchers to connect with larger conversations that span fields and disciplines and raise new questions for research, some interdisciplinary topics seem challenging for a variety of reasons mentioned in Ha and Riffle (2015). Nonetheless, the main challenge behind the current research is fear of misapplying concepts and methods from other fields especially whilst tackling a very sensitive topic.

Media campaigns have always been studied in light of their planning, theories, components, appeals or effects, which are mostly communication aspects. However, interdisciplinary research has been spotted in planning and executing campaigns beforehand from multiple disciplines. For instance, Keller and Otien (2007) analyzed an interdisciplinary campaign employing marketing, communication and education disciplines. Drury (2011) employed increasing interdisciplinary research on chronic pain conditions and the education of both health care professionals and the public in a women health campaign. Lister et al. (2015) combined communication with public health strategies in a campaign to engage communities. Kristen et al. (2016) utilized a phased, mixed-methods and interdisciplinary approach, which blends transportation research and marketing in a safety campaign. Those examples being mentioned, it seems obvious that assessing a campaign in light of such a delicate construct employing religious studies as a secular discipline is mostly unprecedented.

The current interdisciplinary paper resides to merge between the areas of campaigning strategies and messaging particularly via social media and the tabooed area of religious taxonomies from a secular viewpoint in order to construct a solid analytical base that can be further utilized in campaign planning and production of such controversial issues.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The objective of the current research is to analyze one of the most recent and successful social media campaigns namely #NotInMyName from the viewpoint of the seven dimensions of religion utilized by Van Esch and others (2013, 2016) as the main pillar of social marketing and media campaigns. Further #NotInMyName Public Relations (PR) campaign is scrutinized for PR strategies and message strategies utilized in formulating the campaign messages.

The main reason behind subjecting #NotInMyName campaign material to further analysis is due to its apparent success in gaining worldwide attention of at least 85000 people and 14000 tweets in less than a week from its launch early September 2014; converting it from a local community campaign to being honorably mentioned by former President Barak Obama - when addressing the UN general assembly - and former UK PM David Cameron as well (Hausam, 2014; living safe together Australian report).

The current research poses three major research questions as follows:

1. Which dimensions of religion (DORs) are utilized by #NotInMyName campaign?
2. What are the PR strategies depicted in the campaign videos and vines?
3. What are the message strategies utilized in the campaign videos and vines?

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