Branding and Environmental Analysis of Digital Marketing Strategies Against COVID-19 in Singapore

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Abstract

Since the first local community transmission was reported in Singapore, Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Education (MOE) used digital platforms to perform public education campaigns to prevent the virus from spreading further. For the quick distribution of explicit messages concerning social distancing and general hygiene, digital marketing strategies, which include blogs, cartoon, radio broadcast, television programs, Short-video platforms, tracking system, etc., have been applied. Such communications are considered as consistent and encompasses full engagement of the whole community via such digital communication process. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate such branding and environmental analysis of the digital governance during the pandemic time in Singapore. Community engagement, and digital models that are used for the benchmarking has been introduced according to the COVID-19 timeline. Further discussion of the new digital marketing strategies and environment has been provided. The engine optimization methodology and opportunities that are proposed in the end of the paper may also contribute to a higher user engagement.

Keywords

Digital Marketing Branding; Digital Marketing Environment; Digital Communication; Public Health; Short Video Platform.

1. Singapore Government's Blog for Quick Communication

The first case of the new coronavirus was confirmed in Singapore in late January 2020. Unlike the Australians who rushed to supermarkets and snapped up toilet paper, Singaporeans snapped up instant noodles (Tey et al., 2020). Having experienced the outbreak of SARS 17 years ago, Singapore was well aware of the potential devastation that a new virus may cause.

As the number of cases began to rise, brought on by infected visitors returning from overseas, the Singapore government's defences against the new coronavirus were put to the test. Within only one week after the breakout, the Singapore government tightened the rules, closed

cinemas and bars (Lee et al., 2020). Although restaurants still remained open, the number of customers must be reduced to five within a table. Changi Airport, the busy regional hub, also prohibited any travellers from transiting. In addition, short-term visitors are no longer allowed in Singapore. Moreover, Singapore Airlines also stopped flying most of its flights. Clearly, the Singaporean government won some victories in some aspects, but it ~~did~~ have not yet won the war of the new virus (Jacinta et al., 2020). Singapore still had to keep adapting to the situation and keep on fighting. Early on in the crisis, the Singapore government set up an inter-departmental digital working group with representatives from health, finance and many other departments. The working group issued daily updates to the public and communicated a consistent message. A WhatsApp digital system translated government messages quickly into Singapore's four official languages: Chinese, English, Malay and Tamil. The Government also made a cartoon series featuring Professor Fisher as the main character, presenting various practical and sensible advice, e.g., Wash your hands well and soap is important; You don't need to wear a mask unless you are sick; Keep a safe social distance. The main message that these cartoon series wanted to deliver was that "The disease can be controlled. If you don't control it, you can see what happens". WHO also used the same cartoons and translated them into other languages, indicating their effectiveness (Ho etal., 2020).

2. Creativity of Singapore's Blog COVID-19 Campaign for Public Health

Since local community transmission was reported, the Singapore Ministry of Health (MOH) with other health partners opted for public education campaigns to prevent the virus from spreading further. The ministry distributed explicit messages concerning social distancing and general hygiene (Jacinta et al., 2020). The government was also involved holistically, and the health officials were on the fore front to communicate on the measures on live television and radio broadcast. The communication was consistent and engaged the community. The messages requested those who felt sick to stay at home, those who had contact with any COVID-19 patient to go for testing, if anyone could not stay home, wearing a mask was a must, and everyone was to avoid crowds. The public education campaigns focused on voluntary compliance with community hygiene and social distancing measures.

Digital marketing strategies were used to create COVID-19 awareness. There were frequent press briefings on COVID-19 developments. The ministries and the Prime Minister oversaw communications regarding COVID-19. Also, the communications prepared the public on what to expect in coming weeks and months. The government set up a central source of information through WhatsApp from which notifications on COVID-19 updates were sent directly from the Ministry of Health (Saw et al., 2021). It helped to reduce misinformation and fake news. The government also 1aunched a contact-tracing application on 20 March, called (Trace Together). The application allowed contact tracers to identify other users who had been in contact with covid19 patients (Das & Zhang, 2020).

3. Efficient Tracking and Control via Digital Industrialisation

Except for the Ministry of Health (MOH), Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) also distributed explicit messages concerning social distancing and general hygiene and issued a circular to students studying abroad via digital strategies, telling them to come back to Singapore and not to stay abroad via MOE public information blogging platform. Singapore has many students studying in Europe (especially the United Kingdom) and the United States, and the deteriorating situation in Europe and the United States as forced them to return to Singapore. For these students, MOE also used email to deliver vital information for their safe return. Upon landing, they face a 14-day Stay Home Notice (Starting from the day of landing). During these 14 days, those who opted for home confinement were not even allowed to step

outside their homes, and some could not even leave their rooms (Lee et al., 2020). For the safety of their families, some people choose to stay in isolation in a hotel and are sent straight to their hotel as soon as they get off the plane. The use of digital marketing strategies to outreach millions of residences within a short period of time and information technology (e.g., wristband of tracking and control to accurately prevent and control the spread of epidemics have tested Singapore's digital management capabilities).

Digital industrialisation means promoting the optimisation and upgrading of digital-related industries and accelerating breakthroughs in key core technologies. This is also a prerequisite for the development of the digital economy, which mainly involves industries such as electronic information manufacturing, software and information services, information, and communications, as well as emerging technologies such as cloud computing, Internet of Things, block chain, artificial intelligence and 5G. The digitisation of industry is to digitally transform the whole element of the upstream and downstream of the industrial chain with the support of a new generation of digital technology, and to promote traditional industries to achieve high-end, and intelligent. In the end, it means empowering the real economy with digital technology through deep integration (Deiss, et al., 2020). The digitisation of industries has given rise to many new industries, and new models worldwide, such as the new industry of manufacturing integration represented by intelligent network-connected vehicles, intelligent drones and intelligent robots, and the new industry of service industry integration represented by mobile payment, sharing economy and platform economy (Saw, 2021).

4. Community Engagement Rate of Digital Platforms

As a data-driven organization that uses business intelligence tools and techniques to monitor and investigate various aspects of a company – sales, marketing, operations, etc., the engagement rate is important to measure the level of interaction by followers from content created by a user. As in indicated in Fig. 1, it is calculated as total engagement divided by total followers, multiplied by 100. User engagement measures whether users find value in a product or service (Haenlein et al., 2020). Engagement can be measured by various activities or combinations of activities, such as downloads, clicks, shares, etc. Highly engaged users are usually more profitable, provided that their activity is associated with a valuable outcome such as a purchase, registration, subscription or click (Wong et al., 2020).
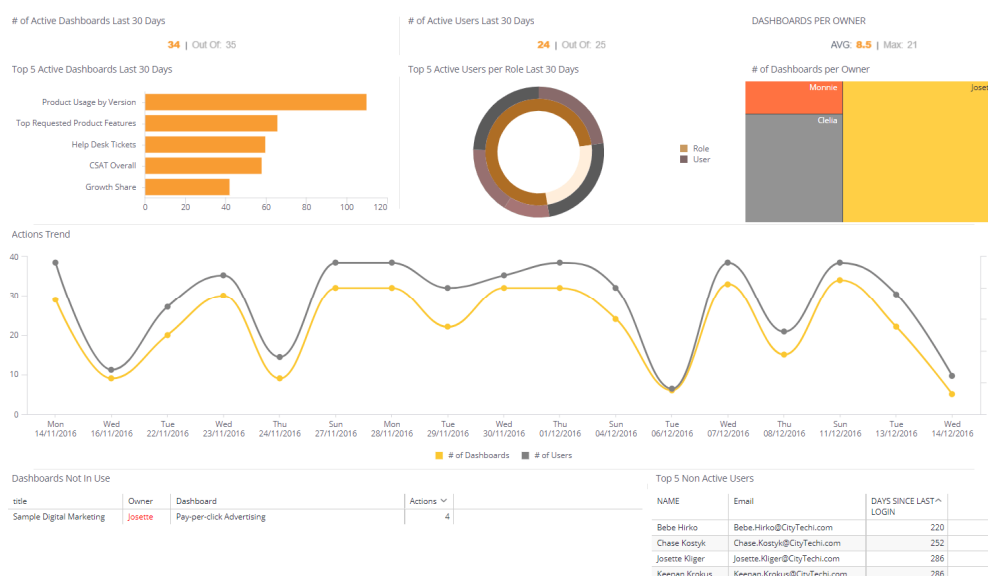

Fig 1. The dashboard examples for user engagement rate

The above-mentioned digital governance also requires a "precision approach". In the face of diverse realities, huge amounts of information processing and massive staff movements, one cannot expect a "one-click operation" or a "one-size-fits-all" approach based on a simple standard. The Singapore government will continue to solve the problem of the "last mile" of the epidemic in the cloud, and further open the blockade of people and logistics in the prevention and control of the epidemic and the resumption of production and work, so that the people can enjoy the dividends of technology applications from the big data that is running up (Deiss et al., 2020). Every step is critical and every link is important in winning the battle against the epidemic and achieving the established economic and social development goals.

Besides, from the perspective of digital marketing, user and community engagement are highly correlated with overall profitability. User attention is a finite resource, and if users choose to spend their time on a specific digital marketplace platform, they have found value in it. This allows businesses to make money from their products or services through advertising, subscriptions or sales. Highly engaged users are more likely to buy, return and share products or services with friends. Product and marketing teams that measure user engagement can use product analytics to understand the factors that contribute to higher engagement. By increasing engagement, teams can improve the profitability of their products (Zhang et al., 2020). No two definition of user engagement are the same. While hard metrics such as daily active users, cost per acquisition and return on investment (ROI) are fairly straightforward, engagement always depends on a company's business model.

5. How Digital Marketing Models can be Applied to Campaigns Against COVID-19
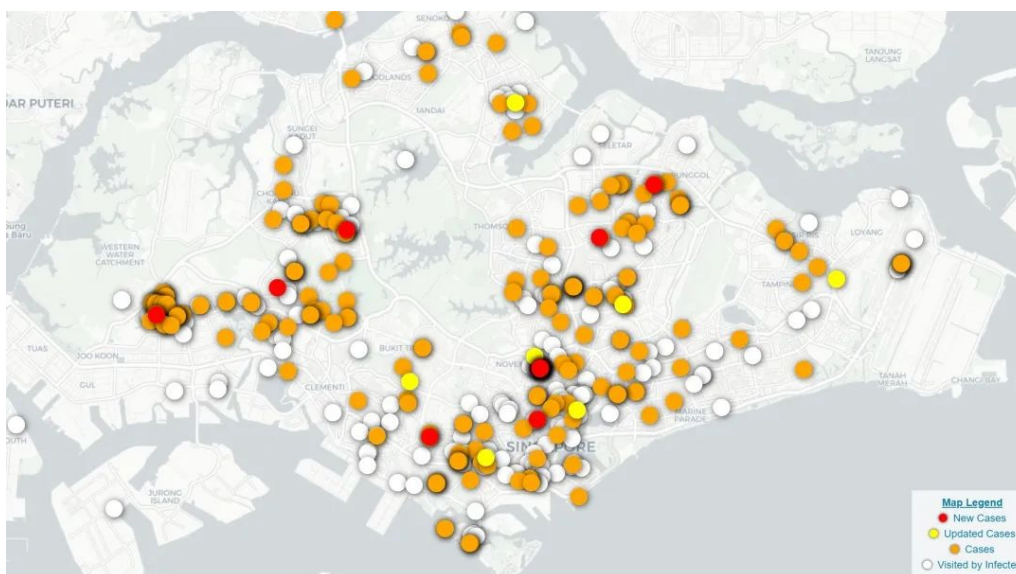
Fig 2. Legend of the five-colour epidemic map/model

Since the outbreak of the new corona pneumonia epidemic, statistical analysis of epidemic information, health monitoring, and judgment of the epidemic situation via big data analysis have already become the important sectors for the overall control of the virus. Digital marketing model, a five-colour epidemic maps (Fig. 2) generated by travellers scanning safety entry codes, has been designed to provide a clear picture of the regional epidemic situation. The technology has helped build a solid epidemic prevention and control network, providing strong support for scientific prevention and control, resumption of work and production, as well as livelihood protection (Dragon et al., 2018). And within this period, the rapid development of the digital economy has inspired more offline economic entities to vigorously enhance their online, digital

and intelligent service capabilities, accelerating digital transformation and profoundly changing the stock economy (Gaitniece et al., 2018). The digital transformation of the traditional economy is reflected in various aspects such as production, management, marketing and services, and mainly presents four outstanding features. The digital transformation of traditional financial institutions has significantly accelerated, with an eruption of demand for online customer acquisition, digital marketing, intelligent risk control, intelligent customer service and other online and intelligent services.

6. New Digital Marketing Environment

6.1. Explosive Growth of Short-video Platform

A blogger can use tools like Google AdWords Keyword Tool to find keywords that are related to the blogpost's topic. It also allows a blogger to spy on competitors and see the phrases and words that they are using to target customers and bring traffic to their blogs. Moreover, when creating posts, blogger can optimise images by including keywords in descriptions and captions, and referencing other people and influencers using links. Rather than so many wordings illustrated in the blog as discussed in previous sections, in recent years, the popularity of the mobile web has seen the rise of short-form video (Subramanian, 2021), which has created several top platforms: TikTok, Watermelon, Volcano, etc., all of which have gradually made their way to the attention of overseas marketers. Within the pandemic period, the popularity and importance of videos continue to grow due to the widespread lockdown (Huang, 2020). Such a short video platform is able to keep up to date with the latest developments and statistics is vital to developing a strong digital video marketing strategy. How can small companies use these short video platforms, which will have a huge user base in the future, to help their products go overseas and how can they use the short video trend to transform their B2B digital presence.

6.2. Industrial Success --Digital Marketing via TikTok within COVID Period

The new epidemic boosts the booming of "home" economy, with short videos, live streaming represented by TikTok and other online pan-entertainment industries. Counter and offline marketing activities have been forced to suspend, while live streaming and other online marketing methods has been becoming the new trend (Evie, 2020). In the context of the digital economy, short-form video platforms are becoming "the new infrastructure in the digital marketing space" during the pandemic period. It is essential for business owners to allocate more budget on short-form video platforms.

If brands want to do well in digital marketing using TikTok, they must find their own brand of marketing methods, instead of blindly imitating or rigidly applying it. (Hearn, 2020). More conventional TikTok marketing methods include breaking news, hashtags challenges, interactive stickers, etc. A more advanced TikTok marketing method is to personalise the operation and enhance the stickiness of fans. However, it is essential to pay attention to the creativity of the video ads and improve the quality of the videos. After all, in the era of content carnival, only quality content can survive (Ostrovsky et al., 2020).

6.3. Branding Strategies using TikTok

(1) Creating Breaking News & Events: TikTok is extremely interactive for its users, making it ideal for the dissemination and promotion of marketing campaigns, and the secret of success is to make TikTok marketing content a hotspot and generate widespread attention (Weimann et al., 2020).

(2) Establishing a Brand Persona & Culture: The purpose of establishing a brand persona is to attract users, gather fans and increase fan stickiness with a personified brand. To create a VIP account with the ability to attract fans through TikTok digital marketing, you need to design an

exclusive persona for the account and form brand persona characteristics (Ethan et al., 2020). First, through understanding the needs of customers, set the account positioning, account persona and content mainline; then, through high-quality, persona-compliant video content to gather customers and improve fan stickiness; finally, after a long period of branding exposure, establish its own traffic pool, and complete the conversion.

(3) Celebrity Effect: One of the most direct ways for brands to gain attention and spread the word is to work with celebrities on TikTok (Haenlein et al., 2020). Brands will produce video content for celebrity spokesperson who matches the habits of TikTok users, and such activities will also encourage users to interact with him.

(4) Hashtag Challenge: hashtag challenge is a challenge launched by the brand, and TikTok officially pushes the challenge activities to users intelligently, so that users can participate in the challenge according to the uniform requirements or actions of the video, forming a situation of universal co-creation, including brand challenge, super challenge and regional challenge (Su et al., 2020). Hashtag challenges can have any theme and can be combined with the latest hotspots, making them flexible and conducive to inspiring users' creativity and making it easier for brands to spread the word with hotspot content. In addition, the hashtag challenge has a low entry point, so users can jump directly to the event interface by clicking on the topic button in the recommended videos, or they can enter the event page through the hot content in "Discover".

6.4. Engine Optimisations for Short-video Platform

The essence of digital marketing is precision, and technology is the biggest driving force. The four models of digital marketing: (i) Digital Brand Building (Digital Branders) common in consumer goods companies or other marketing teams, focused on building and renewing their brand equity, deepening the interactive relationship with consumers (Kavoura et al., 2020). They shift marketing spend from traditional linear advertising to immersive digital multimedia experiences that create new ways of connecting with consumers. They reimagine new ways of interacting with consumers, trying to attract new customers to their brands and increase customer loyalty through multiple experiences. (ii) Customer Experience Designers (CEDs) use customer data and insights to create great customer experiences. Companies in this category (including financial services, airlines, hotels, retailers, etc.) often build their business models around customer service (Liu et al., 2020). Through innovative ways of interacting with customers and generating customer admiration at multiple touchpoints, these companies want to maintain a continuous dialogue with customers and cultivate a loyal customer base. (iii) Demand Generators (often seen in retailers) strive to drive online traffic and strive to increase sales conversion rates across channels, thereby maximising marketing efficiency and increasing the share of wallet. This is a key element of a digital marketing strategy. All elements of a digital marketing strategy (website design, SEO, mobile apps, social interaction, etc.) are used to drive sales and customer loyalty. While content is also needed to drive engagement, its core purpose is to drive traffic and efficiency rather than create a deep, emotional brand experience. (iv) Product Innovators use digital marketing to identify, develop and implement digital products and services. These companies engage with customers on digital platforms to quickly gather information and develop insights that shape their innovation process. The marketing team adds value to the company by cultivating new sources of revenue growth.

Acknowledgments

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