Megamarketing an Event using Integrated Marketing communications

Prakash Vel
University of Wollongong, pvel@uow.edu.au

Ricky Sharma
The Media House, Dubai

Publication Details
MEGAMARKETING AN EVENT USING INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS-The Success story of TMH

Abstract

Purpose – The choice of a well planned integrated marketing communication strategy (IMC) becomes crucial for the successful launch of an event. This paper is a Case study based description of how a Brand Management consultancy house, TMC, used IMC to launch a World music festival event in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in 2009, registering a visitorship of five-times their target, 89% satisfaction and a staggering 99% of the visitors planning to visit the festival also in 2010.

Design/methodology/approach – A Literature review on Event Marketing, Megamarketing and Integrated Marketing Communications are brought out to illustrate the challenges involved in launching communication campaigns in marketing of events. A primary research was conducted by way of in-depth interviews with TMH and the case developed based on the furnished information.

Findings – Event marketing requires the support of a well-crafted IMC plan to realise the objectives set for the event. This paper has brought out the role of public relations, direct marketing, social media networking, advertising and media planning in the IMC campaign launched by a Brand Management consultancy house and how it successfully achieved the event objectives.

Practical implications – Traditional communication media may not be sufficient to succeed in the current media clutter and an over communicated market place. In this context, Social networking media are emerging as a new media type and an important addition to the current media. Understanding your target audience and preparing customised media mix involving traditional and modern media may have a synergistic effect on end results.

Originality/value – The paper provides the marketers an IMC perspective to analyse traditional and emerging media types and integrate them with a communications plan to optimise the end results. The paper, in particular, brings out the need for total customisation of media mix for different market conditions.

Key Words: Events, Megamarketing, Integrated Marketing communications.

Paper type: Case Study
1. Introduction
Marketing of Products, Services and Events has started posing much challenges to marketers because of a saturated market condition, overwhelming availability of substitutes and the diminishing opportunities for differentiation. Event marketing, in particular has more challenges to be faced. The challenges are more in terms of creating awareness for a particular event, when a series of events take place in a city at the same time, creating a brand identity for an event, having companies to sponsor events, when each of them has a wide collection of similar events they can sponsor and finally to attract the targeted audience for the event. Hence Event marketers have to find ways of differentiating their marketing mix compared with other event marketers. When marketers attempt to differentiate their marketing mix, the role and support of the promotions mix is quintessential. Integrating your promotions mix is vital for differentiating the positioning of your event compared with others. Accordingly, it is important to understand how Integrated Marketing communications mix can be used to market events of strategic importance.

2. Event Marketing
Event Marketing is defined as, “The promotion and marketing of a specific event such as a conference, seminar, Exhibition, Trade fair artistic performances, company anniversaries and similar such events” (Kotler, 2009). Event marketing is a tool for experiential marketing that focuses on consumer experiences, and treats emotionally and rationally driven consumption as a holistic experience. Experiences often involve "sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values that replace functional values" (Schmitt, 1999). Events create a social setting for attendees and help raise attendees' involvement level; therefore, attendees are apt to be more receptive to marketing messages and images associated with the event than they are to those presented via other methods (Pope and Voges, 2000), (Meenachan and Shipley, 1999). Event marketing offers an additional advantage, in that it actively engages the consumer with the brand and its personality (Sneath, Finney, and Close, 2005).

3. Megamarketing
Megamarketing is the strategic coordination of economic, psychological, political and public relations skills to gain the cooperation of a number of parties in order to enter
or operate in a given market., Kotler (2009). Megamarketing is usually used for the launch of Products and services in different markets. As a renewed direction of thinking, Event marketing requires the adoption of megamarketing, particularly when the event is of a strategic importance and has to survive among the media clutter and other competing events in a chosen destination in the world. In this regard, megamarketing is employed in promoting events, in terms of mustering support from different stakeholders including Event sponsors, the multinational community of Event visitors, Government, International bodies like those related to Sports, Music, Arts and others, event planning & Support staff, Logistics service providers, Media owners and the Press media. The need for Megamarketing is directly related to the strategic importance of a particular event for the organisers and other manifold benefits it may bring to them.

4. Media mix
The communications mix tools have undergone rapid changes and no longer can the traditional grouping of promotional tools be assumed to be the most effective forms of communication. The arrival and the state of growth of digital media in the global market pose newer opportunities and challenges to marketers. To simplify the media currently in use in marketing, they can be categorised as Broadcast (TV and Radio), Outdoor, Print, Digital, In-Store and others like cinemas, exhibitions, product placement. One of the popular digital media, which was not expected to revolutionise communication is now doing it in a scale not expected in the earlier century and that is the social marketing media. Social marketing media are almost taking the marketers to the extreme of either deciding them to use or perish.

Social Media networking and how it is used in communication campaigns of products, services and events is an important trend to be analysed by marketers. Social Media networking platforms like Facebook, MySpace, Linked in, Twitter have been revolutionising transmission and dissemination of information at a rapid pace, although in typical social networking contexts. However, marketers have put the platforms to an effective use by having them as springboards to introduce new products, encouraging viral marketing, obtaining market feedback and other allied marketing objectives. Users have flocked into Twitter, the third most popular social
network, after Facebook and MySpace, making it a popular destination and almost a pop-culture icon for pioneering a whole new form of communication. Bloggers broadcast 140 character messages known as Tweets that others follow. Twitter now has 22.3 million users in March 2010 and the company is valued at $1 billion (Gulf News 2010).

5. Concept and importance of IMC
Integrated marketing communications (IMC) has become a popular approach with both clients and communication agencies. IMC concerns the use of three main elements; tools, media and messages. Duncan (2002) referred to this new, largely media oriented approach as Orchestration, Whole egg and seamless communication. More recently, various definitions and valuable insights have been provided on IMC. A more functional and a company specific definition of IMC are as a strategic approach to the planned management of an organisation’s communications (Gronroos 2004), (Kitchen et al 2004) and (Baines et al., 2008). IMC requires that organisations coordinate their various strategies, resources and messages in order that it engages coherently and meaningfully with target audiences. The main purpose is to develop relationships with audiences that are of mutual value (Fill 2002). Embedded within this definition are links with both business-level and marketing strategies and confirmation of the importance regarding the coherent use of resources and messages (Duncan and Moriarty 1998) and Ballantyne (2004). Hence, for IMC to deliver its desired output, it should in the first place be a strategic combination of the relevant communication mix tools including Advertising, Personal Selling, Sales promotion, Direct Marketing and Public relations, carefully selected message and the choice of right media mix. Success of IMC campaigns apart from correct decisions made in tools, media and message also depend to a great extent on proper and well-thought out planning, implementing and controlling of the whole campaign.

Based on the literature reviewed above on the nature of event marketing, importance of deciding the right media mix and the benefits and the challenges associated with choosing an integrated marketing communications mix, a live case study on how a Brand Consultancy firm, vested with the responsibility of launching a World Music Festival at Abu Dhabi, UAE, successfully did it with a carefully planned integrated
Marketing communications campaign. The campaign had duly considered the time and money constraints involved in the whole campaign on the one hand and the strategic communication objectives to be achieved in the campaign on the other. The case study attempts to systematically analyse the various stages of implementation of the campaign, strategies used to address the challenges and finally records the results achieved out of launching the campaign.

6. The Case of TMH initiating an Integrated Marketing Communications campaign for the launch of WOMAD 2009

6.1 Research Methodology
The information furnished below on the integrated marketing communications campaign done by TMH for the launch of WOMAD Music festival at Abu Dhabi, was obtained by Indepth-interviews conducted with Mr. Ricky Sharma, Chief Executive officer and Mr.Surej Madhavan, Brand Strategist, TMH, Dubai in December 2009. The interview was subjected to a content analysis and a case developed on that basis.

6.2 Award of WOMAD contract to ADACH
In January 2009, months of negotiation had come to a successful conclusion with an agreement between ADACH (The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture & Heritage) and WOMAD (World of Music, Arts & Dance) to stage the first ever WOMAD event in the Middle East in April 2009; WOMAD Abu Dhabi and the contract for launching the festival was awarded to TMH (The Media House), Dubai. From small beginnings as a one-off music festival in the UK, WOMAD grew into an annual event embedded in the cultural calendars of many countries such as Spain, Italy, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. WOMAD Abu Dhabi was planned take place over three days on April 23, 24 & 25 on the Abu Dhabi Corniche with a one-off concert, held at the newly renovated Al Jahili Fort in Al Ain on 24 April. 20 artists were scheduled to perform over the three days and the festival attendance was free of charge to the public. Hence, the challenges posed to TMH were rather high.

6.3 TMH Background
TMH began operations in 1997 and had grown to become a leading Branding agency with offices in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and London. Ricky Sharma, the Chief Operating
Officer had a team of over 30 people including a PR specialist, an Account Manager, a Media Manager, a creative specialist and a production and artwork team serving Clients in the Hotel, Real Estate, Retail, Leisure and Exhibition industries in the UAE. The company built ‘Brand Architecture’ for new brands and rejuvenated existing brands.

6.4 A well deserved Civilian gift from the Abu Dhabi Government

The Abu Dhabi government wanted to position this festival as a gift to the people of Abu Dhabi and the UAE. For this reason it was decided at a very early stage that this festival and any subsequent WOMAD festivals in Abu Dhabi would be free to attend. For ADACH, this festival was less about being a strictly commercial venture (they gained revenue streams from sponsorship, concessions and on-site advertising) and more about bringing the 200+ different nationalities closer together through such an annual event. Although the event was free to enter, TMH still began their task with pretty much zero awareness. In many ways, a free event was harder to promote than a paid event, as people could perceive its value as being quite low. What they had, however, was a very high quality product to promote, so they had to push the quality of the event as well as the excitement surrounding it and ADACH’s desire that it was to be seen as a celebration for all in the UAE.

6.5 Key Challenges in hosting WOMAD 2009

The main challenge for TMH in launching WOMAD 2009 event was to bring the people of Abu Dhabi and the UAE together. Many events had been hosted in Abu Dhabi and Dubai that only targeted a single section of the diverse population. Either the events were aimed at expatriate Westerns, expatriate Asians, expatriate Arabs or UAE Nationals; never all of them together. As far as music concerts in the UAE were concerned, they mainly featured Western artists and therefore primarily targeted the young adult Western expatriate community (i.e. under 30). If this festival were to be deemed a success, we would need the people attending to reflect the diversity of the UAE population. WOMAD Abu Dhabi should therefore be viewed as a family-friendly festival for all, with a healthy mix of expatriate Arabs, expatriate Asians, UAE Nationals and expatriate Westerners. It was also important to instil a sense of pride amongst all UAE residents, regardless of nationality, that Abu Dhabi had been
chosen to host this event. They also had to strike the right balance in promoting WOMAD Abu Dhabi and, at the same time, promoting Abu Dhabi as a tourist destination and cultural hub. Their rationale was that in staging a successful event, not only would the festival-goers benefit, but also the city of Abu Dhabi would reap long-term benefits, helping putting it on the cultural map. TMH therefore had to ensure they connected Abu Dhabi with WOMAD in their communications effort. In fact, these two had to be inextricably linked.

After conducting a straw poll of 100 people in Abu Dhabi and 100 people in Dubai, TMH discovered that less than 5% of those questioned had heard of WOMAD. This would further intensify their communications challenge, since it was also critical to educate their target audience about WOMAD and its previous successes. We also had an issue from a creative standpoint, in that each WOMAD festival had its own unique brand identity, each one reflective of the location in which it was being held. This helped giving the festival its own personality and helped the potential audience identify with the festival. For WOMAD Abu Dhabi it was important to create an identity that reflected the culture and tradition of Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi had the opportunity to play host to a global audience and position itself as a cultural capital. So, TMH needed to inform, excite and engage, and bring cultures together, but they also had the task of ensuring people in the GCC, the Middle East and indeed beyond understood what was happening in Abu Dhabi. This was a cultural experiment for the city of Abu Dhabi and, if successful, would help elevate the position of both the Emirate and the UAE as a whole.

6.6 Objectives for WOMAD 2009 Campaign

Their key objective was to ensure there was a healthy cultural mix of festival-goers of all ages. The targets were to achieve a mix of at least 5% UAE Nationals, at least 20% expatriate Arabs, at least 20% expatriate Asians and at least 20% expatriate Westerners for the festival to be deemed reflective of the UAE population. They also had to ensure that at least one third of all attendees were over the age of 30. These targets were important, as they had to ensure they catered for the entire population make-up of Abu Dhabi. Although bringing the diverse cultures of Abu Dhabi and the UAE together was critical, they also had to ensure a high overall attendance figure. Their target was to achieve a figure of 5,000 people per night on the Corniche in Abu
Dhabi and 1,000 people at the one-off event at Al Jahili Fort in Al Ain, i.e. a total attendance figure of 16,000 over the three days. These figures were derived mainly from the performance of WOMAD Singapore, which achieved 16,000 visitors over three days in 2007. Given that the Singapore population (4.8m) and the UAE population (4.6m) are approximately the same (and equally diverse), and both were free to enter, this was seen as a fair target. Another benchmark was the two most recent concerts that took place in Abu Dhabi, both held in the grounds of the nearby Emirates Palace in March 2009. The Andrea Bocelli concert achieved 11,000 attendees and the Cold play concert achieved 16,000, although both these concerts were ticketed events and catered mainly for the expatriate Western population.

They understood that an important aspect of success was to achieve a positive shift in people’s perception towards Abu Dhabi. The festival was meant to bring people from all walks of life living in the country and travelling from abroad together to have a fabulous time in Abu Dhabi. This was important for positioning Abu Dhabi as a global cultural destination. Thus, the post festival reactions of people were crucial in measuring the mileage Abu Dhabi as a city received from its tie up with WOMAD. TMH was also asked to achieve substantial pre and post event PR coverage of the event, with at least one national newspaper headline in the UAE and coverage in the UK, the home of the WOMAD festival. They were given a general target of achieving AED 1 million in PR coverage. This could increase brand awareness of Abu Dhabi as a tourist destination and the link with WOMAD in the international press would help in achieving Abu Dhabi’s aim of being seen as a cultural ambassador to the world. The announcement of WOMAD Abu Dhabi 2010 was another critical success factor, i.e. the festival being established as an annual calendar event. TMH was also be judged on whether people enjoyed the festival and whether they intended to attend the following year and recommend the festival to family, friends and colleagues. They were aware of the fact that in order to successfully communicate to their target audience they had to apportion their limited budgets through various marketing channels to ensure maximum optimisation of their marketing spend. The other crucial factor for the success of their campaign was to integrate their marketing efforts to work together as a unified force and attain a high level of consistency throughout their communications.
6.7 Pre-Campaign Research

In an effort to understand the essential underpinning, emotions and expectations of different stakeholders of a music festival in the UAE, TMH intended to initiate a pre-campaign research. This included in-depth interviews with the WOMAD management team on how they were able to launch and replicate the success of the festival across various cultural and geographic boundaries. Their response was a very simple fact that culture and music played a very significant role in strengthening the bond between people, irrespective of their roots or nationalities. This thought was further reinforced by the fact that the inspiration and theme of music and culture throughout the world were largely based on similar topics of love, religion, traditions and relationships. That insight led to the creation of TMH’s single-minded thought, “a festival uniting cultures through music.” They then went on to research the WOMAD festivals held in other countries and discovered that the festivals held in Spain and Singapore were very similar to the Abu Dhabi edition. The Singapore Tourist Board and the National Arts Council sponsored the Singapore edition of WOMAD festival and it was free to attend the event. They learnt that Singaporean authorities considered WOMAD an important biannual festival, as it was an opportunity for the people of diverse cultures living in the city to come together. WOMAD Singapore also added to the list of tourist attractions and helped in putting Singapore on the global cultural map. They knew that since Singapore was geographically and demographically similar to Abu Dhabi, they could achieve the same level of success the Singapore festival enjoyed.

However, an important aspect for them was to ensure that their communication strategy and messages were delivered effectively and provoked the target audience to attend the event. It was critical for them to understand the pulse of the local community, which represented an incredibly diverse mix of over 200 nationalities. They therefore held informal focus groups amongst UAE Nationals, expatriate Arabs and expatriate Asians, which form the majority of the population. Expatriate Westerners were excluded since they believed that there was a higher level of awareness among them about WOMAD and the strength of the artistic line up would attract their attendance. The insights they gleaned from the focus groups aided them in correctly positioning the festival to ensure that all target audiences were engaged.
They learnt that for the expatriates, it was important that the festival should be family friendly. The attendance of the expatriate Arabs, Asians and UAE Nationals would depend a great deal on the festival being attractive and considered as a learning experience for their children. UAE Nationals were very proud of their traditions and heritage and they were very keen on seeing local Emirati artists performing. This would surely add purpose to their visit. Arabs and Asians also expressed a need to see high profile artists from their part of the world so that they could feel connected to the festival and also be entertained with music from other parts of the world. Another important finding was that the expatriate Arabs and UAE Nationals preferred communications that were in both Arabic and English. They often felt excluded from events that were only promoted in English. Even though they could read English, they felt more engaged if the communications were in their mother tongue. The conclusion of their research was that WOMAD Abu Dhabi had to represent the meeting point of *Music, Culture* and *People*. They wanted to demonstrate the similarities that exist in these three entities the world over, and especially to the people of Abu Dhabi. We also wanted to promote the tradition of storytelling that exists in this part of the world.

### 6.8 Setting the Brand identity for WOMAD 2009

In developing the unique brand identity for WOMAD Abu Dhabi, TMH’s creative route interpreted the strategic direction of “a festival uniting cultures through music” as a ‘cultural kaleidoscope’, celebrating the vibrancy and energy of music, culture and people coming together in one place at the same time. They took the traditional WOMAD lion (which was a mandatory in the identity) and gave it an Arabic look and feel to reflect the location of this particular edition of WOMAD. This for them represented a ‘melting pot’ and was the perfect visual representation for what they were trying to achieve with WOMAD Abu Dhabi. As they only had three months to get their message across, they designed an innovative approach to communications, leveraging the power of a truly integrated campaign. They believed that as they were promoting a music festival, whilst ‘static media’ had an important role to play in terms of delivering frequency and coverage, they needed to bring the festival to life in the eyes (and ears) of their multicultural consumer.

They adopted what they called the ‘cake’ approach to their communications strategy: the base of the cake, which delivered the ‘brilliant basics’, i.e. their coverage and
frequency; the cream of the cake, which assisted them in disrupting the media status quo with innovative media placements; and finally the cherry that sat on top of the cake, which helped them achieve the ‘wow factor’, with several outstanding pieces of media activity including some regional media firsts. That approach was then split into three key timing phases, designed to build to a crescendo by the first day of the festival. It was very important to phase their messages as they had a lot to achieve in three months.

Firstly, they needed to build awareness for what WOMAD was. As it was a new concept in the Middle East, they had an education job to perform right from the start. That first phase began in mid February and ended in mid March. Their second phase (mid March to mid April) was all about piquing people’s interest in the festival whilst still continuing the education task that had started in February. Here they gave people a flavour of the festival, by exposing them to the artists, their traditions and cultures, and above all their music. Finally, in the week before the event, they had to go about securing attendance. Unlike a ticketed festival, where ongoing sales figures were known and communications efforts can be adjusted accordingly, they had no idea how many people would attend (although they did arrive at an estimation – see below with reference to Facebook extrapolations). They therefore needed to ensure that in the week before the event, they made as much noise as was possible in the market to spur people into action. In the final phase their messages and media selection were based on converting their audience from the awareness and interest stage to the action stage, in order to confirm their attendance at WOMAD Abu Dhabi. Total Media Expenditures Include value of donated media and non-traditional paid media and was in the range of $ 2-5 Million.

What was critical to the campaign’s success was that the three timing phases dovetailed into each other and that the three levels of media intensity (the base, the cream and the cherry) worked seamlessly together. They were also convinced that in addition to media, their PR efforts and use of social media were not only important but critical communication tools. In fact for them, that was our holy trinity, and without the integrated and effective use of all three, our campaign would not deliver the desired results. As a rule, they treated media, PR and social networking with the same degree of importance.
6.8.1 The Base

The backbone of their base was made up of the delivery of their website (www.womadabudhabi.ae), online banners on key websites (both regional and global) and press activity in both daily newspapers as well as glossy periodicals. Those three were a constant pattern across the three phases of their campaign. The website featured an email address and phone number, to which all queries related to the festival were directed and dealt with. It was important for them to be able to establish this two-way dialogue with people wanting to find out more about the festival, be it about the artists, transportation, parking, facilities, etc. The website was, of course, dual language (i.e. presented in both Arabic and English). Radio was an essential tool for them as it was a perfect means to showcase the musical talent on display. They started with 60-second radio adverts in the awareness phase, and then dropped to a higher frequency 30-second trailer for the interest phase before finally reverting to 60-second spots in the action phase. The 60-second adverts allowed them to bring the music to life on air. Radio time was purchased on both Arabic and English language stations. Outdoor media placements were used at the end of the interest phase and during the action phase of the campaign. They sent out two electronic direct mailers during the campaign to the people listed on the ADACH database as well as to contacts from purchased lists. The first direct mail was sent during the awareness phase and the second one was sent in the interest phase of our campaign. They also purchased lists to conduct a door drop in Abu Dhabi and certain areas of Dubai, and had an SMS campaign that ran during the interest phase.

To avoid confusion between Al Ain and the Corniche festivals, they decided to position the Al Ain event as a gift to the residents of Al Ain from the government, and to conduct intensive door drop and outdoor activity. As there was a large population from the Indian subcontinent in Al Ain, we ensured that a group from this part of the world (Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali-[an indian dance] performed at Al Jahili Fort and that PR activity in Hindi (a language used in India) and Urdu (a language used in Pakistan) was conducted to promote their act.
They conducted internal awareness sessions with ADACH staff in February to ensure they understood what the festival was and how they could promote it. They also held their first press conference on 3 March, where they announced the dates, the venue and some of the artists. They decided to drip feed the names of artists to the press in three bursts in order to sustain interest in the festival, and sent out the second set of names at the end of March. For our final release of names, however, they did something special, ‘The Cherry’ section.

### 6.8.2 The Cream

In order to differentiate their activity and cut through the clutter in the market, they used a layer of cream on top of their communications base. That included a 60-second radio spots (as described above) as well as enhanced online advertising in the form of ‘eye blasters’, which disrupted the web users flow of surfing in a non-intrusive way. They supported the use of outdoor ‘mupi’ sites with digital outdoor screens, which were aimed at bringing the festival to life at key traffic intersections in Abu Dhabi (e.g. at Marina Mall and outside M&S in the downtown district). They set up marketing partnerships with Starbucks, Borders and Virgin Megastores in Abu Dhabi and Dubai where they distributed flyers and concert programmes in exchange for free promotional space at the event itself. They also used the in-store screens at Virgin Megastores to play their digital screen content on a loop the week before the festival, at all UAE outlets.

During the last week of February, they set up their Twitter account and Facebook group. They believed that they were one of the first music festivals to communicate with fans using Twitter. They uploaded images on both sites and started many two-way conversations with the potential festival audience, encouraging them to talk with each other. This worked very well, with fans even setting up two independent WOMAD event and discussion groups; one for the Corniche and the other for Al Jahili Fort. It was thrilling to see them talking about the artists and even arranging
transport to the venues! What was interesting to note was the fact that members of all these groups were from diverse backgrounds and were all communicating with one another. They started talking to the administrators of these pages and acted as a resource and guide if they required any additional information or assistance. Other than that, they were very hands-off and watched these groups grow organically. To support their own Facebook effort, they also bought geo-targeted banner adverts on the site, directing people to either womadabudhabi.ae or to their Facebook group. Their PR effort was aimed at giving journalists in the region something they rarely received: direct access to the artists for interviews. The WOMAD UK team worked very hard at securing exclusives for them with as many artists as possible, ensuring they all had something special to write about. This meant they were able to obtain many prominent free media positions, which would bring critical added value to their communications strategy.

6.8.3 The Cherry
They believed their media strategy was on the right track and was working effectively in an integrated manner, but they felt the need to ‘wow’ the general public to find out more about WOMAD Abu Dhabi and to attend the festival. They wanted to create a buzz and talkability of what was happening in the city. Our ‘cherry’ activity was designed to push people over the edge by injecting life into their media campaign. For example, they used the Blip FM functionality on Twitter to create a jukebox of the performing artists’ songs and invited followers to upload their favourite world music songs. At the beginning of April they launched a media first for the UAE by mounting a CD onto a bellyband for TimeOut Abu Dhabi. Here they featured tracks by selected performing artists. This was tied in to heavy PR content on the festival including site maps, artist information and interviews as well as performance times. The week before the festival took place, they inserted a full concert programme into the main English language and Arabic language daily newspapers, which acted as readers’ personal invitation to the festival itself, aiming to spur them into action. As far as our PR effort was concerned, they believed they achieved another first by ‘Tweeting’ the news that rock legend Robert Plant was to play at WOMAD Abu Dhabi. They announced the news on Twitter first and directed journalists to follow us. Only then did they lift the embargo on the press release and sent it out via the usual channels.
They had held off conducting any TV or radio interviews with artists until the action phase so that in the final week before the event, local media stations would be screening heavyweight coverage in the build-up to the event. They then conducted what they dubbed a live press conference the day before the festival itself, that included a performance by the Zimbabwean group Siyaya and a private performance by Rai superstar, Khaled, that were both telecast on Abu Dhabi TV. During the action phase, they launched in-mall activity, where artists from several groups performed in malls in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain to give shoppers a flavour of what was to come. They also launched Arabic only cinema adverts to encourage UAE Nationals and expatriate Arabs to attend. They targeted both Arabic and Bollywood films for that activity, as they knew that is where they would catch the attention of the vast majority of Arabs. They also revealed the famous WOMAD flags the whole length of the Corniche to let people know WOMAD Abu Dhabi was about to descend on the city and create real talkability.

Two final pieces of activity that took place during the action phase were aimed at rapidly securing attendance. Courtesy of the WOMAD Foundation, children’s music, arts and crafts workshops were held in schools across Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, and children were encouraged to be part of the first performance on stage on the Corniche as well as the children’s procession on the final day. They targeted children of all nationalities for this activity, ensuring that both English language and Arabic language schools were selected. That therefore meant their families would attend the festival in order to see the children perform. Even if the children weren’t part of the performance, they would be enthused to attend and bring their parents along. The final piece of the communications jigsaw was the distribution of VIP invitations to a select list of PR contacts. By seeding invites with VIPs, opinion formers and key influencers of many nationalities in Abu Dhabi, they hoped to generate anticipation and excitement. As a thank you to those VIPs who attended, they sent them a DVD of the festival highlights, as well as a commemorative booklet.

### 6.9 Linking the messaging through the phases

Whilst raising the intensity, interactivity and engagement of their campaign through their cake communication strategy, they also ensured that each timing phase of the
campaign achieved its specific objective. In their awareness phase, their key role was to educate, so every piece of communication carried the mandatory messages of explaining what WOMAD Abu Dhabi actually was, the dates, and of course, the venue. Moving into the interest phase, they still carried those awareness messages, but then moved on to talk more about the artists and showcasing their music. In the action phase, their messages were aimed at steering people into action, so they used all channels to personally invite people and encourage them to bring their children, family, friends and colleagues.

6. 10 Leveraging the multiplier effect

They wanted to make sure that several layers of their cake communications were working at the same time, building to a crescendo during the action phase. That is why for the awareness phase, they mainly concentrated on the base, with a small proportion of spend on the cream. For the interest phases, they wanted to increase the intensity of both the base and the cream, with several pieces of cherry activity all working at the same time to bring the campaign to life. By the time they reached the action phase, all three layers were working hard to push them towards their goals, ensuring that potential festival-goers were receiving a three-dimensional and interactive view of the event. The various Consumer Communication touch points integral to the Campaign is presented below (figure1).

Figure 1
### 6.11 Post Campaign results

Over the three nights of the festival, they conducted exit interviews. They interviewed over 350 attendees, which they believed constituted a robust sample of all festival-goers. They discovered that 7% of attendees were UAE National (target 5%), 24% were expatriate Westerners (target 20%), 23% were expatriate Asians (target 20%) and 46% were expatriate Arabs (target 20%). We therefore felt that as long as they reached our target attendance figures, they had succeeded in their wish to bring the people of the UAE together through the vehicle of this festival. Furthermore, their exit interviews revealed that almost half (44% of attendees) were over the age of 30, the target having been 33%. When asked if they had enjoyed the festival, a staggering 89% fell into the top two approval boxes, rating it either “very good” or “excellent” (in fact, over half of those polled believed the festival to have been “excellent”).

As to whether they would attend again if the festival were to be held in 2010, and whether they would recommend to a friend or relative, both these questions received universal support, with 99% of respondents answering “yes” to both questions. The research also discovered that over two-thirds of people found out about the event through traditional media channels. However, 27% of people had heard about the event through word of mouth, a very powerful medium and proof positive that their PR and social media strategies had worked hard.

TMH was targeted with bringing 16,000 festival-goers to WOMAD Abu Dhabi over three days (5,000 per night on the Corniche and 1,000 to Al Jahili Fort). On Thursday 23 April, 2009, 25,052 people came to the Corniche. On Friday 24 April, 27,399 were counted on the Corniche and a massive 4,372 at Al Jahili Fort, Al Ain. On the final night, they achieved attendance figures of 25,000. In total, they brought almost 82,000 festival-goers to WOMAD Abu Dhabi, five-times their original target. As this was not a ticketed event, they thought they may struggle to prove overall attendance figures. However, due to the size of the event, the organisers (Flash Entertainment) were required to monitor attendance for health and safety reasons. The Event Safety Shop (Tess) were able to provide accurate overall attendance figures as they monitored the entry and exit of every festival-goer by using clickers (counting devices). They combined the Friday figures for both the Corniche and Al Ain, but were able to provide TMH with a split. They also received a great deal of anecdotal evidence that
the festival was enjoyed through the emails of approval they received via the website. By April 22, 2009, womadabudhabi.ae had received 38,000 total visits, 28,000 unique visits and a total of 184,000 page views.

By the time the festival started, their Facebook group had 1,042 members (now 1,166) and their Twitter page had 349 followers (now 397). As this was a free concert, they had no way of knowing how many people would attend all events. That was important information for them as it would help with volunteer staffing levels, security, first aiders, free water distribution, car parking, shuttle buses, etc. They used the data from the Facebook event groups started by world music fans to help them gain approximate numbers. They had an average of 931 people who told us they would be attending the Corniche event each night and 159 people who said they would be attending the Al Ain event. Using a UAE facebook penetration figure of 5%, they extrapolated that to gain approximate attendance figures, giving them a figure of 18,620 for each night on the Corniche and 3,180 for the Al Ain concert. Now these figures were approximate, but they actually gave us a fair indication of attendance.

The estimated value of regional PR was AED 1.5 million. They worked on estimating a PR media value with their partners Pan Arab Research Centre (PARC), but those figures were not independently verified. They did, however, achieve a total of seven front-page news stories (3 x The National, 1 x Khaleej Times, 1 x TimeOut Abu Dhabi, 1 x Abu Dhabi Week, 1 x Campaign) and two front-page news supplements (1 x The National, 1 x Khaleej Times). In the UK, this was an important PR target, we achieved coverage on BBC Radio 3 & 4, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph, Observer Music Monthly and The Word, achieving an estimated £200,000 (AED 1.18 million) in media coverage. The PR coverage was very positive, with one journalist from The National stating, “Something special happened in Abu Dhabi this weekend” and many of them commenting on how people from all nationalities and all professionals came together under the banner of music to enjoy that gift from the Abu Dhabi government. As previously highlighted, they cannot stress enough how critical the formation of a PR and a social media strategy were in achieving their objectives. TMH forged a marketing partnership with ADMC (Abu Dhabi Media Company), who gave us access to the UAE daily newspapers The National and Al Ittihad as well as ADTV (Abu Dhabi TV) and Emarat FM in exchange for sponsorship at the event. In
addition to PR coverage, they also gave them discounted press and online advertising rates which amounted to approximately AED 750,000.

6.12 Conclusion
Although TMH learned a great deal from the similar WOMAD events in Las Palmas, Cáceres and Singapore, and despite having an already globally established product to promote, they needed to successfully adapt it for the market conditions and for its first foray into the Middle East, a region that was unfamiliar with the concept of music festivals of that type. Furthermore, rather than making the event an ‘easy sell’, the fact that the festival was free could be viewed as a potential disadvantage, due to the fact that people may not have appreciated the true value of the product on offer. They needed to secure excellent attendance at WOMAD Abu Dhabi as they needed to build a cultural legacy for Abu Dhabi and to demonstrate that multiculturalism was alive and well in the Middle East and this was undoubtedly achieved by the successful communication campaign rolled out by TMH. If they had just relied upon ‘traditional’ media (including online channels), they would not have created sufficient buzz and talkability round the festival. Indeed, it was only by the integration of traditional media, social media and PR and hence an integrated marketing communication campaign that they turned a good festival into a great one. Their holy trinity had worked extremely well.
References


---------------------------------