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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Audit Course report on

"Social Media & Analytics"

This is to certify that **Ms. Pratiksha Sanjay Unde** has successfully completed the Audit Course work entitle" **Social Media & Analytics**" under my supervision, in the partial fulfilment of Bachelor in Engineering (Computer) of Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.

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ABSTRACT

Beyond influencing the ways we communicate and we do business, social media is currently challenging traditional higher education in many respects: from the way in which courses are delivered and students interact with each other and with their lecturers to the content that the courses cover. In particular, the emergence of the social media specialist working in marketing-communications, creative industries or journalism, and their use of ever-changing content management and analytics tools require adaptation of courses to the constant changes in industry. Starting from two case studies of teaching social media auditing and analytics as part of courses taught in Belgium and Bahrain, this chapter aims topresent a model exercise for marketing and public relations classrooms covering these topics. The discussion of the challenges of teaching social media audit and analytics emphasizes the need of more and constant collaboration between academia and industry as well as the need to ensure that students have a high level of media literacy before they embark on such a career route.

INTRODUCTION

It is an exciting time for communicators, academics and students. With social media uses going beyond the traditional business and educational fields and with its adoption rates increasing exponentially every year, educators have numerous opportunities to explore how social media change not only how practitioners, companiesand publics communicate but also how they teach the discipline.

With calls for public relations professionals for instance to be social media ready (Falls, 2009) and indications that some might be still struggling with the impact of new media (Alfonso and de Valbuena Miguel, 2006; James, 2007), educators may need to review course curricula in light of new media developments and industry responses.After all, revisiting content would only be in line with academia's pledge to prepare students for their professional life and integrate practice in the classroom (Ehling, 1992).

While educators agree that active learning is the best method through which students can put theory into practice, Coombs and Rybacki (1999) suggest that public relations educators are rather slow to utilize new technology in the classroom. This lack of integration of new and social media in the teaching process – from the method of delivery to content – is also perceived by students (Hemmi, Bayne and Land, 2009) who include new technologies and electronic communication in their list with items which they associate with their weakest feeling of preparation. The same list includes, among others, understanding technology, setting performance criteria and design andlayout.

Drawing on reflective practice and several case studies of implementing social media audit exercises as part of undergraduate courses, this chapter aims to fill the new media skills gap perceived by students as lacking in their preparation and deemed necessary by practitioners. In doing so, the chapter presents several models for social media audit exercises and how they have been used in different educational contexts. Although the primary focusof the exercise is on B2C the principles can easily apply to a B2B context. While the chapter examines the importance of evaluating current media activities from a strategic perspective, discusses the link between strategy, goals and objectives and how they reflect into a company's social media communication, its aim is to present a model exercise in its evolution and discuss its potential use in the classroom rather than evaluate its impact on teaching, learning and practice, the author considering it is to soon to see any effects on either areas.

DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA, AUDITS AND ANALYTICS

Social media is one of the newest concepts associated with new and emerging technologies and one of the fastest growing areas within the new media landscape. In her review of the impact of new media on public relations, Melanie James (2007) emphasizes that definitions related to new media remain fluid and continue to evolve, their key features including portability of data and mobility in communications. Like new media definitions, social media definitions are fluid as well. Heidi Cohen's (2011) collection of 30 definitions of social media offered by a group of social media, marketing and PR professionals and Econsultancy's (2009), a community for digital marketers, equally impressive list of 34 definitions are both good examples. While some definitions focus on platforms, formats, tools and specificities of the digital content production process, others provide reflections aboutsocial media as channels for communication and interaction between organizations and target audiences.

However different, most of the definitions recognize that communication through social media is in real-time and users generate the content that can be posted, transported, linked or aggregated from a platform to another. Among

the platforms mentioned most often are Facebook, the social networking site with more than 640 million registered users, Twitter, the micro-blogging platform with more than 200 million registered users (Uehara Henrikson, 2011) and YouTube, the multi-media sharing site owned by Google where more than 48 hours of video are uploaded every minute (Bal, 2011).

Other characteristics of social media include a requirement for transparency, a potential for engagement and dialogue - either one-to-one, one-to-many or many-to-many -, a customer-centered approach and when used for marketing and communication purposes a need for strategy and coordination. The strategy however requires constant evaluation and analysis both of an organization's goals and objectives and but also of their implementation. Whether called a situational plan, research into past and current activities, background or audit, the evaluation and analysis of goals and objectives plays an important part within the communication/marketing plan as it helps map out the current strategy and compare it with what has been accomplished or how effectively ithas been (WWF, n.d.). A social media audit therefore plays the same function. It assesses an organization's use ofsocial media and compares it with an established set of goals and objectives.

As Gattiker (2011a) puts it a social media audit is "a formalized view of an organization's social media activities" that is undertaken in order to express an "opinion on the organization under annual assessment based on work done on a test basis". The audit should also be used to help benchmark a company's social media efforts and thus help them establish tactics to improve and metrics to assess future performance. Depending on the platform used and the goals and objectives to be evaluated, various tools can be used to measure, collect, analyze and report data. They are also referred to as analytics.

COMMUNICATION AND NEW MEDIA EDUCATION

There are currently many groups that explore how new technologies and social media are or can be integrated in the educational process. For instance, the Social Media Global Education Connection Project (SMGECP) provides "leadership, guidance, facilitation and resources to students, educators, and administrators in educational organizations who will promote and enable competent usage of social media by the world's citizens, workforces, educational institutions, and societies" (Eberhart, 2011). Edudemic, a group run by graduate students and teachers, seek to find "the best way to improve education using social media" (Edudemic.com) while the digital media and learning initiative of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation explores how digital tools enable "new forms of knowledge production, social networking, communication, and play" (Digitallearning.macfound.org).
The New Media Literacies
Project of the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism of the University of
Southern California investigates the participatory practices in which youth engage while HASTAC (haystack)[i] network brings together individuals and institutions "inspired by the possibilities that new technologies offer us for shaping how we learn, teach, communicate, create, and organize our local and global communities" (Hastac.org; Davidson, Goldberg and Jones, 2010).

These initiatives, it could be argued, are mostly concerned with new media literacies and collaborative learning rather than communication or public relations however their findings apply across disciplines. With their focus onauthorship and content generation using a variety of digital media and tools for self-expression, advocacy, and research, and their questions about identity, ownership and legal and ethical concerns related to online activities, these initiatives help create new conceptual frameworks for studying "audiences and authors, messages and meanings, representations and realities that can deepen students' reflexivity, critical thinking and communicationskills" (Hobbs &

Jensen, 2009, p. 9). For communication and public relations courses these discussions are extremely important as an understanding of the boundaries and functions of social media can ensure effective and efficient communication.

Besides, there is little literature dedicated to teaching public relations and communication with new media and especially new media audits and analytics.

The Public Relations Review started a discussion about pedagogical experiments of those who "dare to keep up with the pace of change" in Spring 2001. It was perhaps in reaction to writing like those of van Leuven (1999) or Coombs and Rybacki (1999). While van Leuven suggested that the core competencies that undergraduate students are required to master at the end of their degree course are changing, an increasing demand and emphasis being put on ethics, public relations management, public relations campaigns and visual and interactive communications, Coombs and Rybacki (1999) highlighted how slow PR education is in adopting technology. Although the Public Relations Review has since dedicated three special editions to PR pedagogy, in 2001, 2002 and more recently in 2011, only very few articles focus on technology in the classroom or innovative teaching that addresses new media challenges to the practice and profession of public relations.

Badaracco (2002), for instance, presents the case of teaching a Media, Religion and Cultural Identity course using technology to construct a learning community and to "turn the laboratory into a studio, where both teacher and student learned through performance" (p.149). The classroom was equipped with "two televisions with voice-activated cameras made possible team-teaching across three time zones" (p. 149). Video-teleconferencing systems, synchronous chat and threaded discourse using a common course site were other technologies used to enable students to talk both with each other and with US experts and faculty members about "all genres of media, including advertising, film, sitcoms, music, newscasts, newspapers" (p. 150). While innovative in delivery mode, Badaracco's article does not focus on integration of and impact of technology on public relations practice.

Boynton and Imfeld (2002 cited in Barry, 2005) explore how textbooks for undergraduate, introductory public relations courses address Internet technologies. Although the study looks at skills commonly used in textbooks and identify challenges facing the PR profession it does not however offer any innovative exercises for the classroom but only a warning that texts are outdated.

Barry (2005) investigates the new teaching methods that could be used in public relations education. His case study based on data gathered from the Ain Shams University School of Women in Egypt suggests that students look for more practical course work rather than theoretical knowledge, workshops and internships programs at media corporations being presented as more suitable methods for teaching public relations. Gaining computer skills and a good command of English language are competencies deemed necessary for a successful PR career.

Answering Barry's identified need, Swanson (2011) focuses on student-run public relations firms in USA undergraduate programs that are linked with capstone courses as a means to provide students with supervised work experience in public relations, "enhance student learning, maximize faculty support, build community relationships, and contribute to the overall health and vitality of the academic curriculum" (p.505).
While student-run PR firms are certainly not the cure for every curricular problem, they require a different way of teaching and it can be assumed that through the work with real clients student inherently exposed to the challenges of technology. However, setting up student-run agencies can be a rather lengthy and complicated process and requires a general university courses set-up that allows for the professional practice to be evaluated in a manner that fits academic criteria and requirements.

Finally, Kent et al. (2011) present a case study of teaching web analytics as a tool for better strategic communication, examining the usefulness of analytical software for public relations and communication students and professionals. Their study uses analytic data from four organizations, "the websites include a professor's website, the

Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) (an independent social cause organization), the city of Prague OK (a municipal, governmental website), and PR Romania (a professional information site)" (p. 538) and show how to it should be interpreted mentioning among others measurements like new vs. returning visitors, bounce rates, adwords, landing pages, key words, or visitor loyalty. The authors suggest several activities that enable students to actively use and interpret data such as students interpreting the same set of organizational data while in class, or interpreting data on their own and writing up a strategic communication analysis for a fictive supervisor. "Such an assignment might involve explanations of what is happening and why, a short and long term organizational analysis, and tangible strategies and tactics that might be employed to improve the effectiveness of the website" (p. 541). While inspiringand up to date, Kent et al.'s suggestions remain generic leaving room for further exploration by those interested in integrating new and social media data in their classes.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDITS – IN PRACTICE AND IN THE CLASSROOM

Although the academic literature might only marginally be focusing on social media audits and metrics, there are numerous resources and examples of practice on the web. Margaret McGann (2010), principal at 2M Communications Ink, dedicates a blog post to the communications audit, the reasons for completing one and offers twelve tips to conduct one. They include evaluation of recent communication and marketing materials, analysis and evaluation of media coverage and social media presence, one-on-one interviews with senior management, board members and key partners, focus groups with internal and external stakeholders and surveys for all stakeholders. She also recommends incorporating ongoing measurement tools into the communication plans.

Gattiker (2011b) from Commetrics.com emphasizes that social media audits need to be linked with the organization's strategy. In this respect, he recommends establishing an organization's level of maturity as reflected by their effective achievement of their strategic objectives. In his view, there are 5 phases that an organization using social media can find itself into:

- The novice or the discovery stage when only a few people participate with the purpose of "identifying consumer tech gadgets that could impact the business", The early adopter stage which is affiliated with the exploration and experimentation of tools, services and platforms undertaken by a small number of peoplewith the aim of exploring ways to measure goal attainment,
- The evangelist stage associated with the practice, trial and connection phase when managers are open to change and new technologies and actionable metrics are developed in order to benchmark the organization,
- The adopter or the acceptance and focus on engagement stage when
"successful pilot projects or evangelization leads to increasing use across the enterprise" and metrics are used and applied to assess key drivers and finally, The optimizer or cooperation and facilitation stage when "processes are improved and company seeks to expand adoption of its ecosystem in order to better serve stakeholders".

Like Gattiker, Kristi Bolsinger (2010) also suggests that social media audits have to reflect the needs of the organization undertaking them. Her example presents a list of elements included in the social media audits she performed. They include profile evaluation, branding, blog, content, tracking, promotions and tools as well asoffline presence, conversation coverage and social touch-points.

Boame's (2010) model touches on similar elements like Bolsinger (2010) but makes the aim of the audit more obvious. Formulated as a series of questions, Boame looks at social media audits from a branding, integration, content, measurement, and overall campaign perspective. For instance, the branding social media audit focuses on

the completeness of social media profiles, exclusive ownership, custom landing pages and overall consistency with the branding identity. The content audit explores the messages and feedback the company receives. The integration audit on the other hand analyzes how well connected and consistent are the organization's presences on various social media while the measurement audit concentrates on identifying platforms that provide the most leads or traffic.

Instead of a list of questions, Deidre Breakenridge (2011) proposes using a matrix to evaluate a company's social media based on the brand guidelines, engagement, strategy/purpose, frequency of posts, content shared and measurement where measurement indicates both what is being assesses as well as the tools, if any, used to collect and analyze the data.

Finally, the model proposed by Renegade (2010) starts from the organization's goals and then notes the presence of the organization on a variety of channels including the company website, microsites, blogs, social networks, microblogs, video, feedback, search or mobile in comparison with four major competitors. The model also includes a detailed evaluation list for Facebook, Twitter, search and blogs and comments preceded by a series of questions related to:

- Planning and competitive issues - the organization's social media goals, strengths and weaknesses of the current presence, the strategic role of each social media element in the context of the overall goals,
- Infrastructure and organizational issues – impact measurements, tools, senior management engagement on social media, social media within the overall strategy,
- Cultural issues – social media policy, participation of staff and senior management in social media, access to social media.

Six examples, six different methods of assessing social media.

The variety of examples provided by professionals suggest that there is no agreed template for a social media audit and it emphasizes the fact that effective social media audits reflect the needs and goals of the organizations undertaking them. However, the lack of a single model also shows that social media audits still represent an exploratory practice for practitioners making them quite a challenging project if integrated as an exercise in communication classes.

Such approaches, although few, exist several educators and universities around the world including social media audits and analytics within their courses and as part of their assessment. The Social Media and Business Course offered by the Beedie School of Business of Simon Fraser University in Canada[ii] includes a social media audit exercise and so do Michigan State University [iii] and Southern University in the USA [iv] in the courses they offer. Other examples include Corrine Weisgerber's[v] Social Media PR class whose social media audit represents 15% of the final grade, Barbara Nixon's social monitoring report [vi] developed for Southeastern University and Dr Regina K Water's Strategic Social Media for NonProfits and Business offered at Drury University which includes a social media campaign proposal. All these examples come mostly from the USA indicating that their practice is better documented but also that there is plenty of potential for adopting or developing similar exercises and tasks for other university courses in Europe and beyond.

Barbara Nixon and Corrine Weisegerber's exercises share commonalities in the sense that they propose a monitoring exercise which is aimed to observe an organization's communication as dynamic process as opposed to the social media audits proposed by practitioners that are more static due to their aim to capture the usage of social media by an organization at given time. However, both exercises go beyond the capturing of data requesting students to write a report in which they present the data obtained and explain what it means. They both concentrate on the main social media platforms: Facebook and Twitter but also include multimedia sharing platform Flickr, social networking site MySpace, message boards and analytic functions and alerts from Google.

Developed independent from the other social media audit exercises presented above, my exercises had the benefit of being offered not only to home students, but also to exchange students. Moreover, the exercise was presented in a variety of forms to students from the USA to Europe and the Middle East providing plenty of opportunities of reflection on the ubiquity of social media in the world as well as its different cultural and practical applications.

The sections to follow will present my experience with teaching social media audits and analytics, describe the exercises I developed to teach these concepts over the years and present the lessons learned from delivering them

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDITS AND ANALYTICS IN THE CLASSROOM

Belgium 2008 – the precursor

In summer 2008 I was invited to develop and teach a course about new media and using new media at Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid-West-Vlaanderen (KAHTO) in Kortrijk, Belgium. The course was to be offered to Erasmus exchange students from all over Europe studying in the Business and Languages School at KATHO. The group's academic background was heterogeneous ranging from communication to logistics and accounting. This influenced the decision to design learning outcomes focused on creating new media skills, expanding the students' new media literacies and exposing to the newest developments in digital technologies and their impact on creative industries including journalism and public relations that enabled students to explore communication and new media related areas without having to have an in-depth knowledge of either subject.

Designed as an intensive course with only 15 hours of contact all covered throughout one week of teaching, the New Media course introduced students to concepts and definitions such as convergence and web 2.0 and provided them with examples and case studies. The course also required students to contribute to a blog, join Twitter and create a profile on LinkedIn, giving them an opportunity to explore through practice these three different new media environments. As part of the assessment students were asked to produce a team report assessing and reflecting on how international companies use new media, and websites and blogs in particular for their communication. Students were asked to find an international advertising company, public relations group, European institution or NGO and check their international and national sites looking for elements reflecting web
2.0 and convergence. They were also asked to compare and contrast the results while also looking at the company's mission, vision and objectives and discuss their findings. The focus of the students' reflections was thus on image consistency and cultural and technological differences between web presences of the same institution targeting two different audiences: an international one and a local one.

Lessons learned

The exercise aimed to show students how complex online communications can be and how the target audience and their culture influence how a company presents itself through various websites. Considerations of whether links with cultural communication theories should be made were taken into account, however it was decided to keep the exercise at experimental and observation level as it reflected practice better. While theories provide a formula for real-life phenomena, it is challenging to include them in exercises that aim to replicate practice especially when presented in a condensed form such as the KATHO course was. This would require time for explanation and reflection so that an understanding of the theory is achieved before implementation in an exercise. With a class as diverse as the one at KATHO and a timeframe so short, when much of the attention was already dedicated to demystifying new media, integrating theory within the exercise could have confused the students. This does not mean that there is not any merit in integrating theory. On the contrary, for academic courses with an emphasis beyond applications of technology and potential uses for communication, theory can be the conceptual lens needed to analyse practice. This would ensure that the learning outcomes would expand from experience of tools and platforms to critical analysis and design of solutions that integrate theory in practice.

As the exercise aimed to reflect practice and integrate current online communication it was noted that future exercises should include social media analysis components as the number of websites showcasing social mediaconnections was increasing.

Belgium 2009

A year later I rewrote the exercise to incorporate social media sites. Unlike the previous year when the students had to produce a report, the exercise was incorporated into a practice day when, during the 3 hours allocated to the classroom, the students had to gather their data and write up their report. Minimal instructions were given to the students combining a usability test with a social media audit image/presence audit making therefore possible the implementation of problem-based learning into the classroom and replicating the short deadlines and tight deliverables of marketing and communication agency pitches.

In this case students were randomly given the name of an organization. Their task was to:

- Find the organization's website using search engines,
- Check the organization's online presence,
- Identify what their mission and vision is and who their target audience might be,
- Identify whether they have any social media accounts and whether they visibly link to them from their website,
- Assess the audience and objectives of using social media as well as whether they are complimentary to or different from those of the website and
- Suggest improvements, if needed, both for the websites and the social media accounts.

In producing their arguments students had been introduced to and encouraged to use a series of analytics tools such as *Google Insights for Search* which enables comparison of search volume patterns across specific region, categories and timeframes, *Twitgraph* which provided a twitter network visualization for an account together with statistics reflecting the number of tweets, mentions, replies, links posted, twitter rank, conversation quotient and more or *TweetStats* that provided usage statistics for an account reflecting the timeframes and activity volume. At the end of the 3 hours students were asked to upload their report on one of the class blogs – Kathonewmedia.wordpress.com or Kathonewmedia.posterous.com where they can still be accessed today.

Lessons learned

Introducing social media as well as free social media analytics tools provided students with a dynamic image of online communications. It challenged them to think both about the objectives of the companies they were auditing as well as about the relevance and reliability of the tools they were using. This enhanced their learning experience providing an opportunity for critical thinking, analysis as well as widening their understanding of how new media operates, expanding their new media literacies and improving their social media skills. It could be argued that the exercise wanted too much in too little time and this might be a very valid observation. The intention however was to create the situation of a company pitch with a tight deadline scenario when quickness of response, creativity and strength of argument can win the client. The ability to choose from a variety of data available as well as the ability to discern which tools serve the task at hand better, are essential when facing such scenarios. However, to increase the efficiency of the time used to produce the media audit, it was decided that future lectures will provide more detail and opportunities to discuss about and analyse the existing social media tools and how they can help measure how goals and objectives are reached.

Belgium 2010 – the improved version

After 2 years of teaching and constantly improving the course and after having its contact hours double as a result of student demand and interest, the social media audit became part of a dedicated public relations practice day. In the first year of teaching the course, there were only three content-driven lectures – New media, definitions and landscape; New Media challenges for Journalism and New Media challenges for advertisers, marketers and public relations practitioners – the other two meetings being dedicated to guest lectures, class discussion and presentations. In the new format the number of lectures was maintained but each lecture day was followed by a fullday of practice – journalist for a day; communicator for a day; job seeker for a day -. The lecture on new media and public relations was therefore adapted to include information about the strategic planning of communication using new and social media emphasizing on a cyclic process that goes from listening or monitoring, to engagement, creation or content generation, buzz or dialogue and moves onto networking. The process also showcased a range of free tools that organizations could use to detect trends, monitor a brand, assess user sentiment, measure influence or evaluate volume of mentions. These include *RSS, Google Insights for Search, Twitter Search, Trendistic* – displays frequency of mentions on Twitter of searched keyword and enables its comparison with up to four other terms - , *Backtype* – blog and web search - , *Twitscoop* – Twitter trends and search - and social bookmarking sites. Emphasis was also put on explaining the complexity of the social media landscape and on identifying the functions and roles that different social media platforms – such as networking, professional networking, multimedia sharing and more – could play within an organizations' communication strategy.

Students were assigned a company. Their task this time combined search, usability, and message strategy. The aim of the audit was to assess the visibility of social media efforts and coherence and consistency with the company's brand and communication objectives. It required students to have an overall look at the assigned company's social media efforts but also evaluate each platform individually. While they were recommended to use a series of tools which were considered to provide the most indepth data and whose algorithms of data retrieval could be identified, students were free to use any other tools as long as they justified their choice.

Search

The exercise asked students to google their company and note whether they find it straightaway and in which position within the Google results the link to the company is. Was the link to the website, a social media account?Who owned the website or the social media account?

Website

On the website, students were asked to identify the three main messages that the company aimed to transmit and assess their clarity. To identify the most frequently used words within the website, students were asked to create a word cloud using *Wordle.net*. This allowed them to compare whether the messages they identified found their keywords within the automated visualization. They were also asked to see if they could identify any links to social media accounts like Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, MySpace.

Twitter

If students identified a Twitter account related with the company they were assessing, they were asked to check the number of followers for the account as well as the number of people the account followed. They were also asked to look at the company's bio and whether it was featured in any lists. Next, they were required to look at the messages, mentions and ReTweets (RTs) of the account as a way of identifying whether there is an algorithm, structure or strategy in the way the account was used. To verify their observations, students were encouraged to use *Twitter Analyzer* to verify the same information but also find out more about where the followers are located orhow often they would engage with the account. *Klout* was used to assess the account's influence score and its location within the Klout matrix. To better see how users are connected to one another and perhaps uncover the source of some of the accounts' mentions students were directed to FlowingData[vii], a web application which upon

input of a Twitter account automatically generated its network visualization. Finally, in a similar way to websiteand as a way to identify the words most frequently used and therefore identify the key messages transmitted through Twitter by the company, students were recommended to create another word cloud using wordle.net.

Facebook

If a Facebook group or Facebook page were found students were recommended to collect the following data: number of fans of the page or members in the group, number of likes, the description associated with the page which works as an equivalent of the Twitter bio and sometimes reflects the mission and vision of the company andthe assumed objectives they aim to reach using the network, the frequency and type of links shared and the whether the page or group presented a conversational aspect or was a more like another channels through which the company would push information.

Blog

Since access to Google Analytics for a blog cannot be done without having access to the blog dashboard, students were asked to assess the structure, searchability, shareability and content of the blog as in easiness to use and browse, clarity of information, links with other social media presences and the official website, existence of a search option and the type and frequency with which information was shared on the blog.

Sentiment

Since students have looked at mentions and conversations and their nature, the sentiment analysis provided by *SocialMention*[viii] was recommended as an opportunity to verify, yet again, their findings. The website searches are reported both at web level as well as separately on blogs, microblogs, video and more. The results include mentions with links to the original posts, a percent calculation of strength meaning the likelihood that the brand/keyword is being a topic of discussion online, sentiment meaning the ratio of mentions that are positive compared to the negative, passion meaning the likelihood that people will write again about the brand/keyword and reach meaning the number of unique references to the brand/keyword compared to the total mentions. Other metrics provided by *SocialMention* include top keywords, top sources and top users writing about the keyword.

As an alternative for those whose audit focused mostly on Twitter, *Twittratr*[ix] provides a less in depth but equally helpful sentiment analysis bases on an input search.

The exercise thus organized provided students with several opportunities to verify their results and with an equal number of opportunities to question the accuracy, relevance and reliability of the tools they used in relation to the audit that they had to complete. Their recording and analysis of the website mission and vision, twitter bio, Facebook page/group description enabled them to identify the communication objectives associated with each presence as well as the target audience addressed. This also enabled them to verify the consistency of the messages. The use of Twitter analytics tools enables them to verify the data that they collected manually.
Similarly, the use of *SocialMention* allowed them to cross check the statistics provided by the other tools.

Lessons learned

With the information gathered, the students had to make recommendations. Their report, as in previous semesters, was to be uploaded on either one of the class blogs. The time students were allocated to conduct their research, gather the data and write up their report was three hours however they were given a chance to revisit it and amend it until the next day's class. While many of the students reported that they found the exercise interesting and useful they still indicated that the time awarded was too little for them to produce an in-depth report their lack of knowledge of the tools suggested or of the specificities of the social media landscape contributing to their delay. Providing them with a more prescriptive exercise helped direct and focus their work however their feedback suggests that they were only marginally aware of the depth of the social media field and its influences on daily communications. This highlights once more the need for new and social media literacies to be incorporated into theclassroom both within specialized subjects linked to the students' degree but also within interdisciplinary projects.

This also suggests that practice and experimentation in the classroom provides students with a space for safe exploration where they receive guidance, support and explanations.

As with previous exercises, the aim was to introduce students to concepts and tools unique to online communication while providing them a controlled yet realistic environment to test them. Although focused mainlyon how companies used the internet and social media to communicate about themselves and their services or withtheir clients, the exercises aimed to create awareness, increase digital media literacy and create digital media skillsat the same time with presenting an experimental modal of analysis of online communication practices. The tools and platforms chosen reflected online trends and practices and therefore incorporated both popular platforms as well as emerging ones. Judging from the end of the course feedback received this mix of direct and indirect learning outcomes as well as the guided experimentation were among the points that the students appreciated mostindicating that there is some merit in aiming for learning outcomes that go beyond the classroom and beyond assessment.

Bahrain 2011

The years I taught at KATHO in Belgium provided me with an invaluable testing ground for the social media audit exercise. One of the challenges I faced was due to the study background diversity of the class making it difficult at times to provide them with examples and exercises relevant to their degrees. One of the other challenges faced was that using free analytics tools meant that some were not available several months later. This was the case with many of the Twitter analytics tools after the change of the way Twitter makes data available to third party applications, were not operational anymore. Some of the functions of *Flowing Data* for instance could be performed by the *5K Twitter Browser* by Neuro Productions[x] and the sentiment analysis available via *Twittratr*'s could be replaced with the one from *Crowdeye*[xi]. Others like *The Archivist* by Mix Online[xii] that also enables Twitter data archival covers some of the functions that Twitter Analyzer offered.

The chance to revisit the social media audit exercise came when I joined the team developing the Applied Communication course at the Business School of Bahrain Polytechnic in Bahrain. Among the learning outcomes were the application of audiencefocused strategies to written and oral communication and the analysis of the impact of information technology applications on communication. The social media audit exercise helped meet both learning outcomes by challenging students to identify the audiences targeted by local business via their new and social media presences as well as make them critically assess the impact of technology on communication. Despite the political unrest in Bahrain (Naughtie, 2011), the temporary closing of the university, the reopening only to teach a shortened semester and the management's decision to block access to social media sites on campus,it was decided to still give students the exercise. This required accessing the social media platforms from outside the campus and saving as screenshots the pages that the students were supposed to click through. This eliminated the interactivity of the exercise as well as any possibility of using any analytics tools. The exercise therefore was refocused on how local companies communicate with their target audience through social media sites.

The worksheet given to students is included below in its entirety.Social

Media audit worksheet

OBSERVE:

Website:
1. Find the Batelco[xiii] website
   a. Write down the procedure you used to find it (search engine, referral or URL)
2. Analyze menu
   a. Based on what you see what are the audiences the website is targeting? Justify why.
   b. Based on what you see, what are the communication aims of the website?
   c. Based on what you see, what do you think Batelco would want its website visitors to do on the website and after visiting the website?
3. Find the mission and/or vision of the company?
   a. What are the key messages (Who, says what, to whom?... what is the desired effect?)

   b. How do they compare with the general communication aims you have identified at point 2?
4. Find links to social media sites.
   a. Note position within the homepage (consider visibility, clarity and ease to identify)
   b. Note how many links there are.
   c. Discuss – relevance and importance of links (how do they link with the website's communication aims?)

Social media

1. Click on each of the social media links you see on Batelco's home page.
   a. Where do they take you? Are the links working?
   b. Categorize the social media platforms based on the type of content/information they share (e.g: networking, sharing...)
2. Once you are on each social media page check:
   a. Information about the account/account holder (who owns/manages the account? Bio/about user section – e.g. check the info page on Facebook or the about me section on YouTube)

   b. Facebook
      i. How many people like the page?
      ii. Can you identify any links to other websites/social media sites?
      iii. Identify the type of content and interactions that Batelco has through Facebook? (check the Facebook postings and the number of comments and/or likes they received; check the photos, videos and links shared and the reactions – comments/likes – they received)
      iv. What is the communication goal of Batelco's Facebook page?
      v. What are the key messages of Batelco's Facebook page? vi. Who is Batelco's Facebook target audience?

   c. YouTube

      i. Check profile data: channel views, total upload views, subscribers, total videos uploaded, comments.
         1. Is this an old channel?
         2. Is this a channel with a lot of views? (check ratio – channel views/subscribers)
         3. Evaluate the interaction between the channel's viewers and Batelco.

ii. Can you identify any link to other websites/social media sites? iii. What is the communication goal of Batelco's YouTube channel? iv. What are the key messages of Batelco's YouTube channel?

v. Who is Batelco's Facebook target audience?

d. Twitter

i. Check profile data (tweets, followers, followed, lists)

1. What is the ratio of followers/followed?

ii. Who is Batelco following? iii. Who is following Batelco?

iv. What is Batelco tweeting about? (check tweets, mentions and RTs)

1. Evaluate the interaction between Batelco and its Twitter followers.

v. Can you identify any link to other websites/social media sites?

vi. What is the communication goal of Batelco's presence and activity on Twitter?

vii. Who is Batelco's Twitter target audience?

SOME MORE QUESTIONS

1. Is Batelco linking all its media (and social media) sites to one another?
2. Are the social media presences consistently representing the Batelco brand image?
3. How do the communication goals of Batelco's social media presences compare to one another and to Batelco's website?
4. How to the key messages of Batelco's social media presences compare to one another?
5. Are the social media presences covering at least one of Balteco's website key messages.

Based on all the information you have gathered, you can now create your report presenting:

- Batelco's communication goals for their website and social media presences
- Batelco's key messages as presented through their official website and social media
- Your discussion about the impact of internet and social media on Batelco's communication strategy (compare audience targeted, communication goals and key messages)
- Your discussion about the impact of Internet and social media on Batelco's communication consistency (compare audience targeted, communication goals and key messages).

Lessons learned

Although highly prescriptive, this exercise emphasized the need to define metrics and analytics to be used for social media. This can be done in an exploratory way allowing the students to identify them through their own searches and inquiries or pointing them out to them.

Bournemouth 2012 – preparing a specialized social media audit

The experience of the past years has been extremely valuable. Started as an exercise of assessing the impact of digital technologies on how companies communicate with their target audience, the social media audit has become over the years a specialized exercise that addresses several of the current pedagogy challenges all at once: it is problem-based, reflects practice, incorporates emerging technologies and tools and proposes an experimental

approach to both new media and communication. In previous years, one of the suggested shortcomings of the exercise was the little time provided to complete it. Therefore, this year the social media audit was part of the final assessment of Digital Communication Strategies course offered to more than two hundred 2nd year marketing, advertising and public relations students at Bournemouth University. To make their task easier and their social media audit exercise more valuable the students benefitted from an entire semester of lectures and seminars discussing social media strategy, audits, return of investment, metrics and tools. Similarly, the students were required to find a client of their own either located in the Dorset area or located closer to their hometowns.

Unlike previous social media audit exercises the one implemented at Bournemouth University had for the first time a practice perspective – either marketing, public relations, advertising or branding. This was believed to support students to identify the business objectives of their client and link them or translate them more easily to social media related objectives. This decision was inspired by a variation of the exercise proposed to students at KATHOin May 2011 when students were provided with two exercise models for a social media audit: one from a public relations perspective and one from a branding and branding equity one (Adi, 2011). While the public relations exercise follows the same pattern as the one presented above with few changes when it comes to tools recommended, the branding exercise starts with a brand touchpoint (website, Facebook page or Twitter account) using it as a gateway for the brand's image assessment. The Twitter brand audit exercise is replicated below:

1. Check out Twitter account (observe account bio, the followers, follows, list ratio and the structure of the messages – tweets, RTs, mentions)
2. Go to Twitter Network by Neuro Productions and analyze the account's network (is it well connected with other accounts or not, is it's network interconnected…)
3. Go to TwitterGrader [xiv] to assess the account's influence score (alternative TwitAlyzer or Twinfluence)
4. Go to Twitter Sentiment [xv] and Social Mention and compare the positive/negative mentions ratio of the brand/account. Analyze (qualitatively) the messages about the brand and identify associations with the brand. Are the tools correctly assessing positive/negative sentiment. Add depth to the analysis separating tweets based on their references to price, performance or quality of brand/product.

Also, unlike in previous years when it was either the tools or the data available that shaped the way the way theexercise was formulated, the exercise at Bournemouth University focuses on strategic outputs and business communication. In this respect, the structure of the report and the process of the social media audit that is emphasized rather than the tools to be used and steps to be followed.

The following structure is therefore recommended:
- Introduction & Executive Summary
- Internal Review o Business goals, objectives and target audience
    - o The company's goals, objectives and target audience for social media o Tactic (e.g: platforms and tools used)
    - o Content (e.g.: messages, frequency, types; this could also include information about integration, sentiment, engagement)
    - o Metrics (e.g: mentions, followers, subcribers, likes…)

Optional: External Review/Competitor Analysis (helps benchmark your client)
Optional: Perception map

Insights and recommendations including metrics and analytics that could be used to assess the client's progress should they wish to implement your recommendations o E.g. objective increase engagement – tactics: launch a weekly questions – measure: increase in number of mentions, increase in number of RTs – tools: Crowdbooster or TwentyFeet.

In its current format, the exercise incorporates information from Bolsinger (2011), Beakenridge (2011), Shepherd (2010) and Renegade (2010) reflecting in part the structure and audit elements they propose to be incorporated in a

social media audit. Compared to the version of the exercise developed for Bahrain, this exercise is more complex. Unlike the version for Bahrain where every step was explained, this exercise leaves room for a multi-faceted approach and invites more depth of the analysis. For instance, if public relations students were to take this exercise they would first have to explore and find out what social media presences the company they audit has as well as find out what the company's potential goals and objectives might be. When it comes to goals, they can be either: reputation management ones such as improve image of the company, relationship management such as improve communication with a specific group of the target audience or task management goals such as increase interaction or engagement on one of the platforms they are present on. Having identified the goals, the students should then try to assess what objectives are associated with them. This can be done through a combination of observation and interviews with the client. Once the objectives are identified and what outcomes - whether knowledge such as increase awareness, predisposition such as increase feedback or behavior such as increase number of fans that post content on the account Facebook page - are desired, the students not only will know what to concentrate on but also what metrics and analytics to choose.

For instance, should the goal be reputation management and the objective associated with an increase in the ratioof positive to negative references across social media, hence an opinion change outcome then the students wouldbe looking at the number of mentions and RTs on Twitter, the number of likes and comments on Facebook, the number of comments on their blog or the number of shares of content they produce on social bookmarking sites that the company currently has. To assess whether the mentions are positive or negative, they could use tools like *SocialMention, UberVu, TwitterSentiment* or by collecting all the mentions and then assessing them for the tone and references they include. Complex algorithms for data collection and sentiment analysis are also provided by Prabowol and Thelwall (2009) and Godbole, Srinivasaiah, and Skiena (2007).

Alternatively, should the goal be reputation management and the objective associated with it is to foster dialogue the outcome envisaged would be an informational one. The measurements required for assessing such an objective should consider not only mentions, likes and shares but also engagement and reach. Lovett and Owyang (2011) suggest a formula for audience engagement that sums up the comments, shares and trackbacks and divides their sum to the total views. They also suggest a formula for conversation reach which consists in the division of the total number of people participating to the total audience exposure. However, while the formulas are simple and straightforward, deciding what one understands by total views or even by total audience exposure remains to be defined by each organization.

Taking another example, this time looking at a task management goal, with a raising awareness about a new range of services an organization provides associated goal, the audit should focus on the current awareness of the company's services. A series of metrics such as number of subscribers to the blog, number of followers, number of fans of the page could indicate awareness but the numbers would only capture the people who associate with the company and its services and not necessarily those who are aware of it. Awareness thus will be assessed also through the number of social bookmarks, number of shares of a link, number of RTs or even through the number of unique visitors to a blog.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social media audits are "key for identifying priorities, benchmarking previous efforts, and planning for future efforts" (Owyang, 2009). Currently used to obtain insight or drive strategic decision, social media audits are being offered more often by communication agencies as part of their digital media services. This chapter provided a history of development of a social media audit exercise and presented it in its international context and application.It is difficult to currently state what is the real impact of such exercises on teaching, learning, industry and practiceas the exercises has not been implemented long enough in the same place as to enable data collection at student and client levels. However, the limited feedback received either in Belgium or in Bahrain indicate that the exercise is challenging and rewarding at the same time as it provides an opportunity to the students to engage with social media in a professional way, relevant to their field of study and future field of work. The paragraphs to follow willdiscuss the potential implications of implementing social media audit exercises into the classroom.

Introducing a social media audit exercise in communication related courses provides educators with an opportunity to reflect practice but gives students a change to be part of and experiment current trends within their own field of specialization.

To prepare students for the dynamic and ever-changing world of digital and social media the exercises have to be experimental. They also have to be connected, realistic and up to date. The educators therefore need to become explorers and connectors with technology and with practitioners but also supporters of their colleagues' and their exploratory journeys. Teaching a social media audit like teaching new media and with new media is not about the tools or the process or the outcome: it is about all of them together, at once.

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