Facebooking Airspace: A Study on the Effectiveness of Cebu Pacific Facebook Page in Maintaining the Positive Image

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Abstract—The emergence of social media is undeniable. With the amount of people going online for faster communication, certain things go viral on the internet in just a short span of time. These things may either make or break a reputation of person or an organization. Cebu Pacific Air, Philippine's leading airline, encountered a lot of incidents resulting to cancellation and delayed of flights. The aim of the study is to determine how Facebook helps in maintaining the public image of Cebu Pacific amidst the negative comments of unsatisfied customers regarding delayed and cancelled flights. Descriptive-Quantitative method was utilized using KAP questionnaire. Four factors emerged: content, communication behavior, crisis response and consistency that could help Cebu Pacific improve their image in the Social Media world. The paper reveals that the content of Cebu Pacific's Facebook page helps the most in maintaining a positive image for the airlines.

Index Terms—Social media, facebook, airlines, public image, reputation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Air travelers know the frustration of waiting endlessly for their plane to arrive or depart. Delayed flights are inevitable instance that maybe caused by a couple of factors i.e., technical problems, bad weather and air traffic. Although passengers anticipate delays, no one counts on such eventuality to happen to him. On June 2, 2013, a carrier of Cebu Pacific Air had an emergency landing at the Davao International Airport claiming pilot error, and with this single incident, many flights were delayed as a consequence. Using the power of the social media, countless complaints have been voiced out by unsatisfied customers stating their experiences with the airline (Hua [1], 2013). Two weeks after the incident, Cebu Pacific flight 5J448 from Iloilo skidded at the runway as it landed at NAIA during heavy rain, even though no one was harmed, it damaged five head lights of the runway. (Santos [2], 2013) In the month of August, there were also cancellation of flights because of the Typhoon Maring.

These unfortunate incidents proved detrimental to Cebu Pacific Air and its positive image as the low flight leader. As a result, no less than Lance Y. Gokongwei, Cebu Air Inc., president claimed, the airline will miss their target of 15 million passengers for 2013. (Amojelar [3], 2013) Cebu Pacific, the Philippine's number 1 and one of the fastest growing airlines in Asia, is known for having the lowest flight fares with its "low fare everyday promo", but even with a strong foothold as a budget airline, it could not escape the trouble caused by delayed flights or even cancellations. The unforeseen flight delays will eventually bring financial loss and damage to its reputation.

Thus, this paper puts forward the significance of determining whether Cebu Pacific's Facebook Fan Page helps in maintaining the image of Cebu Pacific Air Company. The connection of social media, specifically, Facebook and the maintained positive reputation of Cebu Pacific lead the proponents to further investigate the effectiveness of Facebook in maintaining the image of the said airline despite the cancellations and delays of flights.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Cebu Pacific Facebook Fan Page has a total "like" population of approximately one-million-seventy thousand. The researchers profiled the respondents by securing their email addresses, gender, and age. It utilized the descriptive quantitative research method, using probability sampling. The survey form, divided into three parts, used the knowledge, attitude, and practice as a formula. With a population of 120 respondents, the respondents are registered frequent flyers of Cebu Pacific Air, who have experienced delayed and cancelled flights and have liked the official Facebook Fan Page of Cebu Pacific. Data gathering ran for three weeks, from August 14 to August 30. The clients' perception towards the airlines in relation to Cebu Pacific's official Facebook Fan page was categorized, with the most common variables falling under three factors: Content, Communication Behavior, and Crisis Response. The data collected from the frequent fliers were encoded using computer software IBM© SPSS© Statistics Version 20 in order to compute for the mean, median, and standard deviation of the data.

III. RESULTS

A. Delayed Flights

In the context of Air Transport Industry, different kinds of crises can arise. Crisis is a non-routine event that risk undesired visibility that in turn threatens significant reputational damage (Doorley and Garcia [4], 2010). According to {Serusi [5], 2012} there are three common characteristics in which crisis in the air transport industry are mutually evident. "[3] There is no prior notice or

warning signs, [6] the need to inform large numbers of people in a very short time and [7] a large number of (increasingly digital) angry/distressed people." (Serusi [5], 2012).

Whatever crisis it maybe, whether it is caused by environment or some other factors like air traffic, operation requirements and maintenance, a crisis is still a crisis and it is the reputation that is at stake when crisis enters into the picture. It has been said that "reputations are widely recognized as valuable, intangible asset." (Coombs [8], 2007; Carneli and Tishler [9], 2005)

Data gathered from Cebu Pacific frequent fliers reveal that delayed flights have an effect to the image of the airline. However, Christian Domingo, digital marketing manager of Cebu Pacific Air, counters this claims since delays are foremost caused by outside forces (air traffic, bad weather, and technical problems) that Cebu Pacific has no complete control over. Although Domingo admitted Cebu Pacific considers the June 2, 2013 as a major crisis which may greatly affect their operations.

Contradicting results reveal that while the frequent fliers' perception towards Cebu Pacific's Official Facebook Fan Page has a "negative" perception towards airlines, the respondents still agreed that they will still fly Cebu Pacific even after experiencing delayed flights. The results of this study have been divided into three important factors that greatly contribute to the positive image of Cebu Pacific Fan Page to their clients: Content, Communication Behavior, and Crisis Response.

B. Content

The content of Cebu Pacific's Official Facebook Fan Page was regarded as a contributor to the positive image of the airline because the fan page carries everything including photos and videos, applications tabs and other features which encourage engagement.

TABLE I: Contents Divert the Attention for the Unanswered Queries about Delayed and Cancelled Flights

	Frequency	Percentage
Low Flight Fares	64	21
Promos	55	18
Updates	41	13
Information	34	11
Queries	25	08
Content gives a positive impact on Cebu Pacific's Reputation		
Yes	98	82
No	22	18
Contents that helps maintain the reputation Of Cebu Pacific Air		
Low Flight Fares	88	19
Promos	67	15
Information	64	14
Updates	56	12
Contest, Prizes, Winners	35	08
Colors and Posters maintain Positive vibe		
Yes	110	92
No	10	08
Characteristic of Cebu Pacific FB Fan Page		
Interesting	76	32
Significant	56	24
Timely	33	14
Relevant	46	20
Truthful	17	07
Other	06	03

The content of Cebu Pacific's Facebook Fan page is one of the things that helps the company maintain its reputation. This is because the clients find these contents interesting and significant. The colors and the posters give them positive vibes as well and that also reflect on the image of Cebu Pacific. This supports Parkinson, 2007 "Graphics quickly affect the emotions especially in decision making", thus diverting their attention from the unanswered queries to these interesting contents. Among these contents that divert their attention from the negative ones to the positive ones are the Low Flight Fares and other promos of the airlines that are being promoted on the Facebook fan page.

C. Communication Behavior

Communication behavior was added as one of the important factors on Cebu Pacific's Facebook page. This covers the Cebu Pacific's performance when it comes to responding to their clients' queries and concerns like how fast they reply and how helpful their replies are to their current plight.

The frequent fliers claimed to have a hard time communicating with Cebu Pacific. This is due to the late and unclear responses. The top two communication problems encountered by the frequent fliers are (1) Late replies and (2) Ignored Questions. People expect feedback to be faster on the internet. Consumers get annoyed when companies have a slow response time on the social media. It annoys them if they don't get a fast response from a company or brand they have contacted via social media channel. (Havas Worldwide [10], 2013). On the contrary, Cebu Pacific responded that slow responses is due to the fact that the company does not have enough outsourced employees to handle and take action to the online queries of their clients all at the same time. Furthermore, these unanswered queries, would require them to ask the frequent fliers to disclose some personal information on a public site and that cannot be since their clients' privacy is one of their top priorities.

On one hand, the good communication behavior aspects that Cebu Pacific has attained are (1) transparency (2) honesty (3) helpful and (4) good communication relationship. In contrast, the aspects that Cebu Pacific has to improve on are (1) efficiency, (2) dissemination of information, (3) updates (4) quick responses, (5) clarity and (6) timeliness. In addition, electronic replies have also been observed as a factor that does not solve the queries of the clients because it leaves no clarity in their response.

Since Cebu Pacific was not able to fulfill their duty to respond to their clients' concerns and queries on their Facebook fan page in just a short span of time, they were not able to build an efficient rapport between them and their frequent fliers since 54% of them verified that they have hard time communicating with Cebu Pacific Air and among their reasons are late replies and ignoring questions. Therefore, it can be said that if Cebu Pacific has successfully fulfilled their part in replying to customers as quickly as possible, there would be an efficient rapport built connecting them and their clients. Thus, this affirms that quick and concrete responses to queries on Facebook help in building an efficient rapport between Cebu Pacific Air and their clients.

D. Crisis Response

The rapport between the airline and the clients is essential in times of crisis. Customer positive experience is still a plus for the clients in times of crisis. Cebu Pacific delivers (1) updates and (2) sufficient information during and after the crisis thus making the page reliable for clients. This is the age of real-time marketing. It's all about responding and

reacting to events as quickly as possible. (Bodenlos [6], 2013, Weismann, 2013) Although Cebu Pacific's responses don't come as quickly as they should, the clients still deem it positive in favor of the airline as long as their posts have been responded to, thus, giving back their trust to Cebu Pacific even after a bad experience.

Apologizing to the public is also a plus factor for the airline because apologies are becoming a corner stone of customer satisfaction, trust, loyalty and retention. Customers just seek for an explanation, assurance, apology or even a chance to vent. (Stamato [11], 2008) However, even with the sincerest apologies from the airlines, the clients are still not satisfied with the way Cebu Pacific responds to them due to the slow response time.

TABLE II: Cebu Pacific's Crisis Response

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Cebu Pacific is efficient especially during crisis and after the crisis	2.6694	.74597	Agree
After the crisis, Cebu Pacific gives sufficient information	2.5702	.78344	Agree
Respondents are satisfied With the way Cebu Pacific Responds to their clients	2.5967	.79035	Agree
Even after a bad experience, Cebu Pacific gains back clients' trust after they respond to concerns on Facebook	2.5620	.79470	Agree
The way Cebu Pacific responds to my queries during crisis has a positive impact to their image	2.7851	.81860	Agree
Cebu Pacific's Facebook page is reliable in times of crisis	2.5868	.78177	Agree
Cebu Pacific updates their clients in time of crisis.	2.6777	.77690	Agree
Cebu Pacific apologizes to their clients after the crisis.	2.7107	.77929	Agree

E. Framing in Organizations Theory

Framing in Organizations theory is used to support this study where in the communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs an issue or controversy. (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson [12], 1997) In the case of Cebu Pacific, they have been framing these issues by [3] trying to define delayed flights as something that is beyond their control [6] referring to the unanswered queries on their Facebook Fan page as something that they do in order to protect their clients' privacy and [7] diverting their clients' attention through the Low Flight Fares which have been constantly advertised on their page as observed by the researchers. Despite all the complaints regarding delayed and cancellation of flights, they are still the number one airline when it comes to low flight fare promos.

F. Consistency

The content and crisis response of the Cebu Pacific Facebook page are the factors that help in maintaining the reputation during delayed and cancelled flights. On the other hand, Communication Behavior must be improved. However, the researchers would like to argue that it just does not stop with those three factors. They should achieve another C factor which is Consistency. Being consistent means achieving a level of performance that does not vary

over time. The customers' satisfaction is in line with consistency of the brand. (Gunelius [13], 2013). Therefore, it can be said that if Cebu Pacific has managed to reach that level of great performance on social media, they should maintain it. The researchers cogitate that if these four factors are achieved and maintained, then Cebu Pacific can increase their number of likes and further sustain their overall positive image and client support.

Thus, the researchers are proposing a simulacrum that connects all the major factors considered in this study: See Fig. 1.
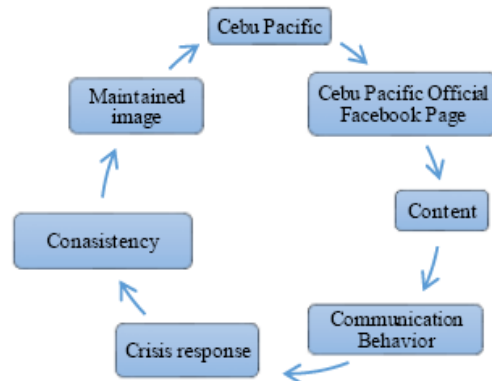

Fig. 1. In this study.

IV. Conclusion

The contents of Cebu Pacific's Facebook Fan page undoubtedly contribute in maintaining the positive reputation of the airlines. With the low flight fares and promos being constantly promoted on their page, it cannot be denied that the people's attention, particularly those who have had experienced delayed and cancelled flights with Cebu Pacific, are diverted towards something that gives them a good perception of the airlines. Even though Facebook does not have a direct impact on their sales coming from the low flight fares, the constant promotion of these promos remind the clients on Facebook of something that Cebu Pacific never fails to deliver, which is the lowest flight fares in the country.

Second, the problem for Cebu Pacific when it comes to handling their page is their communication behavior. The clients have been able to pinpoint the airline's slow response time on queries concerning delayed and cancelled flights, as well as the lack of direct and concrete responses on other queries. However, frequent fliers still find the page reliable most especially in times of crisis. Even with the slow response time, the frequent fliers deem it positive in favor of Cebu Pacific once their questions or concerns have been responded to.

With this, it can be said that Facebook has been an effective tool to use for Cebu Pacific in terms of maintaining a positive perception from their clients even with all the negative posts regarding delayed and cancelled flights. The fact that even with the late replies, the clients still perceive these replies as positive means where through Facebook, these clients feel a personal and direct relationship with the company. According to Jao [14] (2013), individually responding to tweets and wall posts to let each one of the customers or prospects know that the company cares make them feel important. Conversely, since social media replies are public, when others see that

the company responds to individual posts on social media, they'll be more engaged and be more likely to establish a relationship with your brand. And this establishment of relationship between the clients and Cebu Pacific is something that is considered positive for the company, thus maintaining a positive reputation.

With this, it can be said that Facebook has paved a way for Cebu Pacific to have favorable dealings with their frequent fliers. Cebu Pacific has also afforded their clients opportunities to become more engaged with the airlines, resulting to a good communication relationship that positively affects the reputation of Cebu Pacific.

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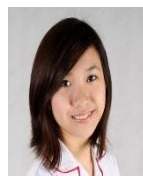
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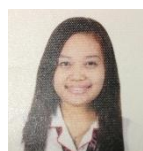
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