Although philanthropic organisations are supported by thousands of people, the trustworthiness and authenticity of their figure heads can make or break them, affecting the health system as a whole.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the value of health philanthropy in Australia and the use of social media to instill trustworthiness and authenticity in the public persona of a philanthropic organisation's figure head. This paper takes the position that once trustworthiness and authenticity has been established, it needs to be maintained by building brand identity and forming enduring, meaningful relationships with donor communities. Taking the McGrath Foundation as a case study, this paper will demonstrate how they achieve maintenance of their figure head's pre-existing public profile: with their use of social network sites and participatory sporting events they continue to unite on-and-offline communities raising money for breast cancer research, services and preventative programs, benefiting the health system as a whole.

Keywords: breast cancer, communities, identity, philanthropy, social networks

"My theme for philanthropy is the same approach I took for technology: to find a need and fill it" ~ An Wang

Introduction

Breast cancer does not discriminate; affecting women and, although not as common, men, of varying ages and walks of life, world-wide. Breast cancer reeks devastation. It impacts on the person, their families, their friends and their local community. The magnitude of this disease is captured in the following statistics taken from the Australian government breast cancer (2019) website:

> *In 2019, it is estimated that 19,535 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed in Australia (164 males and 19,371 females)…the risk of an individual being diagnosed with breast cancer by their 85th birthday will be 1 in 7 [equaling]1 in 675 males and 1 in 7 females* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare as cited in Cancer Australia, 2019).

The immense costs involved, both directly (treatment) and indirectly (research and preventative programs) for this disease, and other diseases, cannot be addressed effectively by relying solely on funding from the Australian government and individuals. According to the HIHA (2018) report "governments fund two-thirds (67%, or $115 billion) of all health spending, and non-government sources fund the rest (33%, or $56 billion) with individuals contributing more than half (17%, or $29 billion) of the non-government funding. Together, hospitals (39%) and primary health care (35%) account for three-quarters of all health spending [whilst only 3% is spent on research]". In the Australian health system, most of the primary care falls to health care personnel: an approach that stakeholders have cautioned is not sustainable (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, as cited in Taylor et al., 2013, p. 1104). Consequently, philanthropic organisations have stepped in to bridge the gap, providing vital funds for the necessary services, research and preventative programs. One of the most recognized philanthropic organisations in Australia is the McGrath Foundation, established in 2005 by Australian cricketer Glen McGrath and his wife, Jane, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997. With the McGraths as its figure head, the organization formed a union between pre-existing sporting communities and those affected by breast cancer, exemplifying Taylor et al. (2013) shared belief that "a healthy population is a collective good … maintaining the health of the whole community" (p. 110). The McGrath Foundation aimed to fund the placement of breast cancer specific nurses in regional and rural areas of Australia, provide preventative programs and raise awareness of breast cancer (McGrath Foundation, www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au). Since its launch, the McGrath Foundation continues to use popular social network sites (SNS) to promote their cause and raise money through on-and-offline community events. As a direct result of these donations, and as an indicator of where "adversity can bring members of other communities together and strengthen bonds" (Rhinegold, 1992, as cited in Kendall, 2001, p. 315) the Foundation has placed 143 breast cancer specific nurses in rural and regional communities and helped 83,000 families (McGrath Foundation, www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au). In addition, these figures signify the value of social media for health philanthropy in Australia and the importance of trustworthiness and authenticity in the public persona of its figure head. Therefore, this paper examines the role of the public and social media identity of figure heads in philanthropic branding and argues that although philanthropic organisations are supported by thousands of people, the trustworthiness and authenticity of their figure heads can make or break them, affecting the health system as a whole.

"The value of identity of course is that it so often comes with Purpose" ~ Richard E. Grant

The identity and authenticity of the figure heads of philanthropic organisations are vital for the success of health philanthropy—after all, an organisation is just a legal entity, whereas it is the people within that organisation that are responsible for its actions. Traditionally, philanthropic organisations do not have a product to sell, rather they depend on people's goodwill, a situation which increases the demand for "positive perceptions of the organisation" (Dyer et al., 2002; Sargeant, 2001, as cited in Holtzhausen, 2013, p. 2). In order to survive, philanthropic organisations need to "raise awareness, secure donations and solicit volunteer support … [and] build long-term, meaningful relationships with potential and existing donors" (Woolf et al., 2013, p. 95) whilst addressing the "real [health] needs and problems within the communities they serve" (Wiggill et al., 2009, as cited in Holtzhausen, 2013, p. 1). In response to building community-based relationships and where competition for donations has increased, some philanthropic organisations have looked to charitable sporting events. This approach has more than one outcome as it generates a "mutual exchange of valued benefits between the individuals and the cause" (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003 as cited in Woolf et al., 2013, p. 95). Instead of simply asking for a donation it allows for the public to become either spectators or participants; provides a socialising opportunity; and "they might also serve as meaningful 'brandfests', which could lead to the development of stronger (and new) attachments to the charity" (McAlexander et al., 2002, as cited in Woolf et al., 2013, p. 96). The McGrath Foundation is one example of philanthropic organisations who have adopted this practice. As the Foundation's figure head, Glen McGrath's identity and achievements as an Australian fast bowler were renown world-wide—even amongst non-cricket lovers. Therefore, when his wife, Jane, was diagnosed with breast cancer—instead of shying away from the public eye—they saw a way of using Glen's existing public profile and cricket-based community to promote their purpose: raise breast cancer awareness and the necessary funds to place breast cancer specific nurses in rural and regional areas throughout Australia. Albert Borgmann (1992) wrote, "community gathers around reality" (as cited in Barney, 2004, p. 49) and although using the game of baseball as his analogy, it is just as applicable to Glen McGrath and cricket. The Domain Sydney Pink Test has become the iconic centrepiece of the partnership between Cricket Australia and the McGrath Foundation;

with the previous traditional Day 3 being changed from “Ladies Day” to “Jane McGrath Day” in honour of her battle with cancer and as a co-founder of the McGrath Foundation. A day that is shared by on-and-offline communities; either in the physical—with the turning up of nearly every spectator decked out in pink, from the banal to the bizarre; or virtually—by means of the McGrath’s website or SNS promoting the event or posting photos and comments from the day; which in turn creates discussions and interactions with participants that might not otherwise be aware of the Foundation or its cause.

“We are what we share” ~ Charles Leadbeater

Social network sites are an essential medium for contemporary philanthropy to achieve maximum growth; create brand identity; trust; and increase the reach of donor communities. Although professional fundraisers believe “media exposure of charitable causes facilitates giving and volunteering” (Yörük, 2012, p. 813), many philanthropic organisations do not have the financial resources to “invest in a variety of advertising or public relations measures” (Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2008, p. 1). And whilst some critics, for example Hubert Dreyfus (2004), argue that “the Internet is a space bereft of values and offers only meaningless communication”—others [such as the McGrath Foundation] see it in more positive terms (as cited in Delanty, 2018, p. 206). The Internet provides organisations access to free software—where emails, web sites, blogs and social network sites have replaced the need for letters, posters and expensive television or radio advertising; and have overcome the barriers of geographical boundaries. Research studies have shown the motivations for philanthropic organisations’ use of social media are: general promotion; to create dialogue and a sense of community; to reach a greater audience; faster-paced communication and to change their image (Carim & Warwick, 2013, p. 522). Image, reputation and trademarks are components of an organisation’s brand identity (Van Riel, 1995 as cited in Holtzhausen, 2013, p. 2) where identity is “manifested by an organisation’s values, beliefs, behaviour, communication and symbols unique to them” (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Cornelissen and Elving, 2003, as cited in Holtzhausen, 2013, p. 2). Symbolism is an important starting point for developing a brand, as a reflection of an organisations’ values plus a visual recognisable identity—distinguishing one organisation from another (Holtzhausen, 2013, p. 2). For

example, the colour pink—already popularised in 1992 by *Self Magazine* and Estee Lauder in the form of pink ribbons as a symbol of breast cancer awareness month (squarecowmovers, 2014)— has become the identifying symbol of the McGrath Foundation. This has led to a plethora of pink-orientated fund-raising events hosted by individuals, schools, clubs and communities—and even unwitting participants, such as pigeons, as part of the Narromine shires' annual "Pink Pigeons Festival Events". Pink fund-raising events which are immediately associated with the McGrath Foundation. A foundation that through promotion and sharing on social networks sites, has become almost a house-hold name and has brought on-and-offline communities together for the common good.

"The Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow"

~ Bill Gates

Interestingly, identity and authenticity of figure heads are not only essential to the success of philanthropic organisations but are also essential elements of what Feenberg and Bakardjieva (2004) list within the five sociological and philosophical attributes of community: identification with symbols and ritual practices; acceptance of common rules; mutual aid; mutual respect; [and] authentic communication (p. 5, as cited in Kendall, 2011, p. 310). These attributes are expressed differently depending on the social network site, facilitating the formation and maintenance of the many diverse communities and community interactions. With this in mind, philanthropic organisations tend to strategically spread their online presence across other SNS, and link them, thus creating a "situation in which multiple media systems co-exist and where media content flows fluidly across them" (Jenkins, 2006, as cited in Papacharissi, 2010, p. 305). For instance, websites tend to be more of a read-only, their primary function to visually tell an organisation's story. An opportunity to outline an organisation's origins, history and traditions; to establish their purpose and intent; and where they rely on donations—the publishing of financial reports (as practiced by the McGrath Foundation) all of which creates sincerity; transparency and authenticity (Holtzhausen, 2013, p. 3). By adding the function of click-to-donate it allows "an ease and efficiency of Internet giving which could lead to 'everyperson' or ubiquitous, philanthropy" (Reis & Clohesy, 2001, p. 116). Additionally, websites provide the scope to display corporate partnerships, which in the case of philanthropic organisations, reinforces the notion of their being seen as trustworthy and authentic by others. Fuchs (2010) believes by linking to the most popular

SNS, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, it facilitates contact between an organisation and the public in a "more casual, less sanitised way which as a result, the organisation is accepted with much less cynicism" (p. 766). SNS provide a means of connecting and creating dialogue with different demographic communities, replacing the traditional word-of-mouth with the electronic (e-WOM) that, in an age where people tend to rely more upon other users' opinions, increases the credibility of an organisation (Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012; Park et al., 2007, as cited in Dijkmans et al., 2014). The facility to "like" or "retweet" allows the user to be part of the sharing of "content, tastes, emotions, goods, contacts, relevance and reputation" (Fuchs, 2010, p. 765). This is a double edged sword, in that it although it increases the network of the organisation—as the subject of the original post—there is an unfortunate consequence of user-generated content, where at times, when the public look at "leading philanthropists—people selected by media outlets for their unusually kind, generous acts—their thoughts become increasingly cynical" (Crichter & Dunning, 2011, p. 1208). These philanthropists' actions, ones intended as selfless acts, can be twisted and later interpreted as selfish acts designed to promote oneself (Crichter & Dunning, 2011, p. 1212). Cynicism has often been associated with online identity where there is the opportunity to create multiple identities "free from body unifying anchors" (Donath, 1996, para 2). Or in other words, "One can have, some claim, as many electronic personas as one has time and energy to create" (Donath, 1996, para. 2) where users can create a "face" for each interaction and develop "faces" for a variety of situational contexts (Goffman, 1959, as cited in Papacharissi, 2010, p. 307). However, in the case of figure heads that have a pre-existing offline identity, such as Glen McGrath, their identity, authenticity and purpose have already been established—but need to be maintained. One such way is by employing what Hampton (2016) describes as "persistent and pervasive contact" (p. 103). Where "persistent" refers to "articulate an association and maintain contact and "pervasive" refers to "awareness of the ambient nature of digital communication" (p. 103). By undertaking such contact, figure heads can maintain their trustworthiness and authenticity and protect the image of the philanthropic organisation, of which they are the "face" of.

"Together we can make a difference" ~ motto of the McGrath Foundation

The role of philanthropic organisations in the Australian health system is one of extreme importance, taking up the shortfall in government and individual contributions, raising funds

for health care services, research and preventative programs. The McGrath Foundation, born out of adversity, is only one such Australian philanthropic organisation. The McGrath's selfless philanthropic acts; the expressing of their purpose; the transparency of their foundation and the sharing of Jane McGrath's battle with cancer spread across various SNS, has garnered the support of communities of all demographics. However, if philanthropic organisations want to continue to make a difference, they need to be acutely aware that although there is value in SNS for disseminating information, raising funds, promoting their cause and building trustworthiness and authenticity of their figure heads, there is also occasion for cynicism and provision for a user to construct or manipulate content, and unless the integrity of their figure heads is maintained, reputations that were made—can rapidly be destroyed, affecting the health system as a whole.