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Promoting Hawaiian Culture in Hong Kong: How to Use Facebook Effectively?

Background

Spreading happiness by living the aloha spirit is the mission of the Hong Kong International Hula Association (HKIHA). A registered society founded in 2007, HKIHA is devoted to promoting a relaxing atmosphere and a healthy lifestyle in Hong Kong, where people have been suffering from unhealthy working pressures.

As revealed by the World Happiness Report 2013 published by United Nations' Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the happiness of Hong Kong people dropped from 2005–2007 to 2012–2014¹. HKIHA has organized various activities to promote a happy atmosphere in Hong Kong. By holding hula dancing classes, arranging culture exchange activities, and implementing Project Aloha, HKIHA always tries to make Hong Kong a happier place.

According to the founder, Mr. Ian Chu², the goals of HKIHA are to spread the aloha spirit, which is the attitude of accepting one's freedom to change and love unconditionally, and to introduce more people to hula dancing.

Beliefs and Opportunities

The smile never left Mr. Chu's face, making people wonder if the aloha spirit was powerful enough to make people perpetually happy. Mr. Chu described hula dance as a very cheerful and enjoyable dance. Not only the dancers but also the audience can enjoy it. According to Mr. Chu, hula dance is interesting and meaningful, a way for Hawaiians to admire the beauty of Mother Nature. It offers relaxation and harmony to those involved. "It is more than a dance," Mr. Chu said. "It's a cultural art."

In fact, hula dance has an actual impact on the body and mind. It is a very good exercise for people because it involves a lot of full body movements.

¹ http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/WorldHappinessReport2013_online.pdf

² We would like to thank Mr. Ian Chu, founder of Hong Kong International Hula Association, for his time spent providing valuable information in the interview and the Facebook page data.



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Such bodily exercise releases endorphin, which is a type of neurotransmitter that can reduce stress and feelings of anxiety and depression and improve sleeping quality. Mr. Chu thinks that learners become happier after spending only a little time in a lesson.

In addition to the hula dancing classes, HKIHA allows its dance students to freely organize activities and lets the university students set up booths for their mini-social enterprises in the room where the lessons take place. HKIHA believes in supporting growth for young people.

One of HKIHA's crucial objectives is to promote cultural appreciation. Held in November 2014 by HKIHA at the University of Hong Kong, the First International Aloha Festival promoted internationalization and cultural integration. HKIHA invited students to dress up in the folk garments of their native countries. Students had so much fun in the workshop and activities related to the Hawaiian culture. In addition, students were encouraged to present and share some special elements of their own culture, such as food, dance, or clothing.

Project Aloha

HKIHA has employed different means to promote Hawaiian culture in addition to the abovementioned activities. Joining the Hong Kong Social Enterprise Challenge (HKSEC) is one. The challenge is meant for social enterprises that want to solve real-world issues with innovative, practical, and social entrepreneurial solutions. HKSEC reminded the participants of the importance of being creative in this challenge.

HKIHA participated in the challenge with its Project Aloha (PA), including its core members from the university student body. With their knowledge of Hawaiian culture that they learned via HKIHA, project members have provided innovative ideas to promote the culture. For example, they recruited housewives and trained them to make Hula skirts, which can be sold and exported to Japan. The housewives can earn a stable income while also having enough time to take care of their home.

However, great ideas without promotion are like diamonds in the rough. A Facebook page was set up for PA. Project members post photos, videos, and status updates about the activities they hold. Members promoting PA and



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HKIHA in the Internet world is a very good strategy, as it can bring the organizations' image in front of a massive audience using little effort.

Utilization of Social Media, Communication Tools, and Their Refinements

A few social media and communication tools that have been used to advertise HKIHA and PA, namely Whatsapp, websites, YouTube, and Facebook. He added that each tool has its own strengths and weaknesses. He is partial to Facebook because of its customization and user-friendly interface, and it offers a comprehensive statistical report.

Whatsapp is not a prominent tool used by HKIHA. However, group chats in Whatsapp are created for the members who are not regular social media users. Most of these people are middle-aged and up. Using Whatsapp to provide an open platform for them is a very good way to maintain their engagement and involvement within the organization.

Official websites were set up for HKIHA and PA. However, In mid-2015, HKIHA's website was affected by a virus. Access was spotty. HKIHA suspected that the Internet service provider had an infected server. Changing to a provider with a better secured server is recommended. In contrast, the PA website was well set up. A blue color scheme with a Hawaiian beach background picture and relaxing music synthesise an overall appealing experience for website visitors. It includes a background of the project, a catalogue of the products, the events held, and so on. Information can be easily found thanks to a user-friendly interface, which makes surfing the website pleasant.

Hula dancing is the core activity for HKIHA and a crucial element for PA as well. Dancing videos are usually recorded and uploaded on YouTube. Sometimes recordings of events and activities are also uploaded. Written words allow direct information to be communicated to the readers, but watching dancing videos and hearing people clapping and cheering can offer a completely different emotional experience to the audience, especially for an organization like HKIHA, which wants to convey positivity and happiness to Hong Kong people. To a certain extent, posting videos on YouTube is a great way to achieve such an aim.



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Effectiveness of Facebook Usage for HKIHA and PA

Both HKIHA and PA have their own Facebook page to document their activities. They share their activities in the form of status updates, links, photos, and videos. The attention paid to various elements differs between the two pages. For an organization that wants to use Facebook to advertise effectively, it needs to find what elements are more effective. In this section an analysis was performed in an attempt to help HKIHA and PA identify what should be done with the page.

The goal for creating and managing a Facebook page is to attract more followers and have them engage with the page when opportunities are provided. The first issue is what to do to attract more people. Sharing posts is the best way to do that with a Facebook page. Commercial pages mainly share four types of posts: status updates, links, photos, and videos. A status update usually includes a few sentences or a paragraph. For individual users, a status update is usually about an emotion or something that they want to share with their friends on Facebook, whereas commercial users share informative content such as the details of an activity or a product. Posts of links direct Facebook users to websites outside Facebook, such as an official website of an organization or a catalogue of products. Photos are usually pictures of events or products, sometimes with simple captions. Videos usually document events or advertisements. For HKIHA and PA, most of the posted videos are of dances.

Descriptive statistics for the Facebook pages of both HKIHA and PA are presented in Table 1. Because HKIHA's page was created long before PA's page, HKIHA's page had more posts overall than that of PA. Both pages have a greater number of posts of videos and photos than of posts of statuses and links. HKIHA had 5.04 posts per month whereas PA had 8.33 posts per month. Number of clicks on the posts and number of likes, comments, and shares by types of posts are also presented in the table.

Using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), statistical differences were found across and within the pages in certain aspects. When analysis was done with two pages combined, a significant difference was found in post clicks between types of posts, $F(3,323) = 7.737, p < 0.001$. Posts of photos attracted viewers to click more than did posts of links ($p < 0.05$) and statuses ($p < 0.001$). A significant difference was found in number



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of likes, comments, and shares between types of posts, $F(3,323) = 14.867$, $p < 0.001$. Viewers tended to like, comment on, or share the posts with photos more than they did the posts of status updates ($p < 0.001$) or links ($p < .05$). In addition, video posts had a significantly higher number of likes, comments, and shares ($p < 0.05$) than the other types of posts.

Table 1. Average number of clicks, likes, comments, and shares for four types of Facebook posts on the pages of HKIHA (between Sept. 3, 2011, and Nov. 4, 2015) and PA (between Feb. 28, 2015, and Nov. 4, 2015)

Type	Page	<i>N</i>	Number of Clicks, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Number of Likes, comments & shares, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Link	HKIHA & PA	72	8.90 (12.81)	3.04 (4.23)
	HKIHA	62	10.16 (13.38)	3.42 (4.42)
	PA	10	1.10 (1.10)	0.70 (1.25)
Photo	HKIHA & PA	159	55.80 (129.28)	6.35 (9.34)
	HKIHA	102	61.21 (152.59)	7.51 (10.0)
	PA	57	46.12 (70.79)	4.28 (7.68)
Status Update	HKIHA & PA	87	4.89 (5.73)	0.40 (1.28)
	HKIHA	80	4.95 (5.93)	0.26 (0.95)
	PA	7	4.14 (2.80)	2.00 (2.89)
Video	HKIHA & PA	9	42.78 (67.66)	7.56 (8.88)
	HKIHA	8	47.88 (70.46)	8.38 (9.12)
	PA	1	2.0 (N/A)	1.0 (N/A)

Note: *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

For the Facebook page of HKIHA, a significant difference was found in post clicks between type of posts, $F(3,248) = 6.078$, $p = 0.001$. Posts of photos attracted viewers to click more than did posts of links ($p < 0.01$) and statuses ($p = 0.001$). A significant difference in number of likes, comments, and shares existed between type of posts, $F(3,248) = 17.552$, $p < 0.001$. Viewers tended to like, comment on, or share the posts with photos more than they did the posts of status updates ($p < 0.01$) or links ($p < 0.001$). In addition, video posts had a significantly higher number of likes, comments, and shares ($p < 0.05$) than the posts. Posts of links tended to have more likes or shares than did the posts of status updates ($p < .05$). In addition, posts of videos had significantly more likes or shares than had status updates ($p = 0.01$).

For the PA page, a significant overall difference existed in post clicks between types of post, $F(2,71) = 3.178$, $p < 0.05$, but no individual significant



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differences were found between the types. Posts of photos received the highest number of clicks. No significant differences in number of likes or shares were found between types of post.

Discussion and Further Development

The results of the analysis highlight the importance of sharing photos when using social media as a tool for commercial means. A wordy status update bores viewers. It is too time consuming for viewers to click on the link and read what is on the other website or to watch a video. Fast-paced interaction is what people online are looking for and they often want to gather information and respond as quickly as possible. Thus, wordy statuses, external links to a lot of content, and long videos are not useful to social media users or an organization. Photos can quickly communicate an idea or fact; the audience does not need to spend time reading words or watching a video.

However, the value of textual and video contents should not be underestimated. Textual updates can be transformed into the caption of a photo, as long as the photo is related to the textual update. Another option is to simplify the content of a status update and put it directly on a photo. The font size can be adjusted as needed to attract people's attention. The content of the videos in HKIHA is usually a performance of Hula dance. Videos can be edited to shorten the length and present only the best and core part of the dance. In addition, HKIHA may also post a variety of videos, such as a simple hula dance tutorial or Hawaiian scenery, to better convey HKIHA's values and share Hawaiian culture.

The differences in the number of interactions between the pages of HKIHA and PA could be due to the number and variety of posts. HKIHA has more (and more varied) posts in the given time than has PA because HKIHA has a longer history than PA. The page for PA serves its purpose by focusing only on the project, whereas HKIHA has a broader view and more activities to share. This indicates that the effectiveness of Facebook posts varies depending on the subject of a Facebook page. For example, for an organization that sells clothes, surely their photo of clothes will likely have more clicks, likes, and comments than would the occasional status update of a coffee shop providing information about discounts. But fewer clicks, likes, and comments does not mean that the discount status updates are not as effective as the clothes photos. Visitors to the coffee shop's page probably



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enjoy reading and being simple. A simple status with just enough information would be better for them than a fancy photo. Therefore, the purpose of the page, the nature of the business, and the background of the viewers/customers can make a difference when interpreting the page's effectiveness. The analysis done in this report is only for HKIHA and PA and it cannot be generalized to other pages with different purposes. Yet this analysis indeed indicates that photo posts are more beneficial for HKIHA than for PA.

The status updates, photos, and videos can be categorized, and further analysis can indicate which photos are most effective for HKIHA. A comparison between full-length, unedited and shortened, edited videos can also be made to determine whether edited videos will earn more clicks and likes.