

A million reasons to believe in Thailand

BANGKOK, THAILAND: The soft drinks market is fiercely competitive in Thailand. Coke was a stagnant number two at 24%, well behind Pepsi, which was at 40%. In addition, a newcomer "Big Cola" has managed to grab 10% in just 5 years, growing faster than Coke. Coke was not even on top of mind amongst core target drinkers and consumer relevancy was on the wane.



To add insult to injury, Coke sales were heavily affected at the end of 2011 from some of the worst floods in Thailand's history, isolating two thirds of the population and submerging buildings and factories under water. Bangkok was paralysed and Coke ran out of stock as manufacturing was brought to a halt. 70 million Thais were plunged into crisis.

Right after the crisis, Coke's biggest selling opportunity is to provide refreshment during the hot, dry summers in Thailand. The global communication platform of Coke is "Happiness" which is localised as "Summer Fun" during peak sales season. However, given that the country is just recovering from one of the worst floods in recent history, "Summer Fun" was terribly inappropriate. We had to find a new way to connect Coke with its consumers to revitalise its brand image and sales.

Strategy

Thailand is known, for good reason, as the "Land of Smiles" but these floods in Thailand just added to the many crises the country has had to endure in recent years and pushed the nation to the edge. Thais became overly cautious about the future. For the national psyche, the floods really were a watershed.

Although only two-thirds of Thais were directly affected by the floods, everyone was emotionally affected such that Thailand's Gross Domestic Happiness plunged almost 10% to its lowest point yet after the floods in January 2012.

For more than 65 years, Coke has been the ambassador of "Happiness" in Thailand so we wanted to bring Smiles back to the Land and give Thai people a boost to their confidence, taking the lead in moving the country forward again.

As the crisis unfolded, millions of people were relying heavily on TV and the internet to get minute-by-minute updates both from official news outlets and social media. News spread far and wide across the country, increasing the ratings by 16% for news programs on TV.

Digital media became the real time crisis centre. We noticed that during the first day when the floods hit, the number of twitter messages soared to 3.3 million tweets, the highest tweets ever in a day for Thailand.

Media was oversaturated by news of the disaster, adding to gloomy mood of the country. Thus, to reverse the tide of bad news, we needed to inject as many positive stories & messages to uplift the country's mood. Coke initiated the "Million Reasons to Believe in Thailand" campaign, aimed at recharging the people's confidence in these difficult times. We encouraged all Thais to become our happiness ambassadors by sharing encouraging messages and good news to their fellow citizens directly affected by this disaster.

Execution

Initiative set up the first and largest 4D interactive illumination display, integrating light, sound, animation and effects on one of the tallest buildings in the heart of Bangkok to serve as a beacon of hope that could be seen across the entire city. Consumers were invited to send their stories how they overcame their personal tragedy and send encouraging messages that appeared on the building in real time.

National pride picked up. Everyone felt a sense of belonging as they shared their stories and messages on social network sites, becoming an online phenomenon. A total of 137 million engagements transpired over the Coke Facebook page, which became the central storage of happiness stories.



The trend to replace bad news with stories of hope attracted mass attention that was further reinforced into a partnership with evening news programs on the two biggest TV stations, top national cable TV and radio channels by making daily good news into a permanent feature on their news programs.

At the end of the campaign period, the Hall of Happiness was built, an exhibit in the Digital Gateway Mall whose roof was wrapped to resemble the iconic Coke bottle, essentially creating the biggest Coke bottle on the planet. The exhibit featured every message shared by every Thai on the Facebook page and previously flashed on the giant display to show the world that Thailand has never been stronger and ready to move forward via a giant Coke bottle filled with "millions of happiness stories."

Results

- More than 1 million Thais shared their happiness through the campaign
- 137 million engagements with the campaign through Coke and social network sites
- Awareness of the "Million Reasons to Believe in Thailand" reached 92% of Thais
- Even as Thailand GDP stands at a minus 4.2%, Coke sales hit an all-time high of 29 million unit cases sold for the month of March 2012
- Coke market share increased from 24% to 30% through this social relevance campaign, narrowing the gap against Pepsi whose market share dropped from 40% to 32%

At the end, there are so many reasons to believe that Thailand is a country of opportunity, creativity and prosperity. There are no prizes to be won for participating in this campaign just simply the well-wishing messages coming from the heart of every Thai.

As the happiness ambassador, Coke's utmost achievement is to proudly say it made "Thailand, The Land of Smile" once again. (Thailand's Gross Domestic Happiness went up from 66% to 75% at the end of the campaign - ABAC POLL)

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