

Word-of-Mouth Marketing is the polyphonic drone, the dark matter, the seamless awareness created by a business action for a personal recommendation from its consumers. “Word-of -Mouth” is a term that symbolizes oral traditions, how communication is perceived and transmitted, how lineage and prestige are passed down, how influence and emotion are gestured. If “Word-of-Mouth” is a sheer act of sharing; “Word-of-Mouth Marketing” is a strategy that simply organizes the functional, social and emotional aspects of WOM. This strategy creates an environment where consumers engages oneself as an advocate and builds personal relationship with the brand.

It is clear that the history or evolution of WOMM evolves within the social currents and trends of communication of mankind, however, one of the earliest formalization and analysis of “Word-of-Mouth Marketing” in the 20th century was by the psychologist Ernest Dichter in 1966. His article “How Word-of-Mouth Advertising Works” is a research based journal article on motivational analysis on WOMM. From his research, WOMM are split into two larger spectrums, first, the psychology behind WOMM and then the applications. Although his research does not involve where word-of-mouth happens, however, key aspects of his research still rings truth to our current mass media

trend.

Effective advertising as he puts it is the “desire to re-create the situation where the shoemaker, the tailor, or the grocer gave information and friendly advice based on personal knowledge of the consumer.... Such intimate relationships create a feeling trust and security and reduced the confusions of cold “commercialism.”” (Dichter, 1966) This special bond or mentality describing between consumer and brand is much like the marketing effort that we see in our daily lives, in everything we do, online and offline. Such “desire for an intimate relationship” has become that constant drone, in our heads reminding both consumer and brand how they are shaping their symbiotic environment.

But before such “drone” is crafted and orchestrated into a seamless stream of thought.

Word-of-Mouth Marketing is fundamentally about making business with passionate conversations. With every conversation there is a point to make or information to share, or simply an emotional gesture. It is when advocacy appears, when the conversation is inspiring, and empowers people to share their love for an idea, cause, products, and brands. So much so that they themselves becomes the living messengers for the idea,

cause, products and brand. (Phillips, Crodell, Church, & Moore, 2013) Advocates are passionate about their ideals and inspirations, they are often motivated by the social, and emotional, and functional aspect of their cause. In the case of WOMM, both consumer and brands are advocates for their products but from opposite ends of the spectrum but meeting half way in the middle, where the talk or the burst of viral chain reaction happens.

Since a conversation is a two way stream and ideally in a friendly and intimate environment; WOMM strategies are based on three motivations for maximum effectiveness in both parties involved. First, the functional aspect of any product or brand gives target audience a chance to discover and develop product knowledge for better understanding the “world around them.” (Phillips, Crodell, Church, & Moore, 2013)

Vices Versa, the functional aspect also gives the products or brands an opportunity shape their environment for better fit and delivery of their cause, based on the needs and demand from their target audience. This is also an opportunity for brands to develop their back story, because as we talk about our products or brands, involuntarily we are gaining their attention, showing off our connoisseurship, spreading the gospel, asserting

superiority, and seeking confirmation of our own judgment. (Dichter, 1966)

From the listener's point of view, the functional reality is closely linked with a social one.

Strategically, WOMM triggers the intention to impress others, to exert self-uniqueness, and elevate social status among peer groups. How well standing and vivid of an identity a product has draws clarity to the social interpretation of its users and producers will signify and enhance social signaling, expertise, passion of one's self and reinforces one's uniqueness. The social environment is also an influential one, who are the ones talking and delivering the content and who are the ones listening can impact the outcomes of WOMM greatly. In measuring the value and validity of a recommendation, the listener often concerned in two key conditions: 1) that the person who recommends has interests in his or her well being, and 2) that the speaker's experience with and knowledge are convincing.

But let us not forget the magic potion that binds a successful WOMM together, the passion. Without passion to support one's advocacy, there is no point in doing what we do.

These "expressive movements" of human nature are what drives a successful WOMM

together and marks a truthful and convincing persuasion. A person's inner experience are often the most powerful when expressed by the conveyance of emotions perceived by others; revealing the "truth" of a product and its effect not only through the choices of words, but also through tone inflection, body language, and gestures. (Dichter, 1966)

In our most recent cultural event of the year 2014, the Super Bowl; Renée Fleming, opera superstar, was brought on stage to sing the national anthem at the game. The hype and buzz created by her presence in a sporting event became a cultural phenomenal instantly.

It is as if such combinations of sports and arts have never been done before in our mass media trained mentality. An ingenious act of wonder really facades the ingenious and repetitive act of WOMM. Here, we have Renée Fleming, as Mcluhan calls it "the medium" delivering "the message" of the Super Bowl to us, "the listener." (Mcluhan, *The Medium is the Message*, 1965) Fleming being an internationally acclaimed opera singer has a powerful long standing within her own profession. Her artistry represents excellence, superiority and status all of which are qualities and characteristics the Super Bowl WOMM team wants its target audience to associate with the game.

Renée as the medium fortifies Super Bowl's influence in American sporting culture, and by recognizing her stature and appointing her the task singing the national anthem is a symbolic display of supremacy. This is a pattern that the Super Bowl does year after year, appointing an influential figure to deliver the national anthem, a gesture that they repeat themselves for the culture they have nurtured and tradition they have created. This is a "new environment, of integrated tasks, integrated knowledge, and that demands pattern recognition. The kind of contrast between those two situations creates an absurdity that has launched the theater of the absurd." (McLuhan, *The invisible Environment: The Future of an Erosion*, 1967) Although, Renée as the medium is not of the absurdity, but the environment she was being presented at was nonetheless theatrical and entertaining for the affect of the game and stir of human emotions.

Renée as the medium also brings about new topics in conversation about the Super Bowl, these "new knowledge" of the Super Bowl are like the gentle and yet refreshing ripples in our constant "polyphonic drone" mass media. As we know that media in the 20th century has become more ambivalent and seemingly buzzing quietly in the background, channeling endless streams of voices, images, sounds and words, however, it is evident

that we as the orchestrators of our own personal and temporal use of media and technology, we are able to construct polyphonic dissonances for our own chronaesthetic management. (Nansen, Arnold, Gibbs, & Davis, 2009)

What we need to know about the game is all there in the background, accessible at all times. We are our own time lords, we choose when to switch on and when to switch off, essentially, the WOMM of Super Bowl understands that their target audiences are individually unique in their own ways, they have the power to choose when, what and where they converse on topics that matters to them. And as their leader of a common shared interest in American football, to share something out of the ordinary and in the non-traditional sense of football culture, Renée Fleming's "art form" also known as "opera" is sure to spark a viral reaction and sends out a message of infinite authenticity in the taste of American football. Thus the timely announcing of Fleming's performance and how we choose to receive this "new knowledge" becomes that polyphonic dissonance we decide for ourselves.

Placing Fleming as the center piece for the opening gesture of the game is a clever

strategy as this gesture also opens up portals to un-delved or under developed territories of the Super Bowl, namely, the arts communities. Even though, Fleming is not an official spokesperson for the Super Bowl this year, staging at the Super Bowl has definitely increased and broadened Fleming's professional career on a different level of national scale. In turn, Fleming has become the new "speaker" for the Super Bowl in her own communities as a strategic placement of the WOMM. As Fleming may bring in her own fan base to talk and praise of the American football culture, she in return also tapped into a large group of people who are passionate about what they love and approve of what they recognizes with.

Many of Fleming's recent appearance in major arts interviews for her upcoming premier of the opera *Rusalka* at The Met are often paired with her national anthem performance at the Super Bowl. In those interviews, Fleming displays an array of positive feedback of her experience at the Bowl, and shows honor and excitement for the event. Fleming is an advocate for her own art form, but after the Super Bowl she is recognized by the millions of football fans as an advocate for American football. In the schema of Super Bowl WOMM, not only Renée Fleming is the medium that carries the message, a recommender

but a customer that Super Bowl has well earned her trust from.

This choreographed statement between Fleming and the Super Bowl is yet another spin on WOMM. The art of rhetoric is nothing new, but the passion and human expressivity will always be that driving force behind what get to be talked about. Word-of-Mouth Marketing is like the dark matter that we sense but cannot grasp; it emotes human nature and frequently is the most effective persuasion technique for building beneficiary partnerships.

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