

## Crisis Management: Snack Food Contamination

The global snack food industry is worth almost \$4bn a year. The most popular brands are enjoyed around the world, across geographic, cultural and religious borders. Some boundaries, however, must never be crossed: consumers must trust that the global brands they enjoy, honour and respect any religious food taboos. Violations of religious law can provoke local, regional or worldwide anger, escalating to protests, boycotts, or worse. In the event of an accidental breach, response must be swift, appropriate, and sensitive to both local and world-wide concerns.

In 2014, routine testing of a chocolate product by the Malaysian Health Ministry, indicated the presence of pork DNA in a product labelled as being halal. When the tests were made public, The manufacturer immediately withdrew the affected products from sale. However outrage, which had already spilled out into social media in both the local language and English, continued to grow. The manufacturer was concerned that the story could soon swell to becoming a regional, then global issue.

The possibility of a world-wide backlash by affronted Muslims loomed large.

The pressing questions: How to act? What to say, who to say it to, where and in what way, to dampen the self-feeding flames of anger?

Given the fast-moving situation, the complex networks of stakeholders—consumers, religious leaders, politicians—and their geographical and cultural diversity, the chocolatier could not abide the long lead-times and cost of traditional research and third-party consultancy. Instead, they turned to our Triage product, to achieve fast, cost-effective insight in both English and Bahasa Malaysian languages.

The goals of the exercise?

- to understand the effect of the crisis response already in place,
- to quantify the significance of the issue and its likely future growth or decline,
- to identify and rank the key actors in the narrative with who to engage, and
- to maximise outcomes over the following 48 hours.

Triage quickly identified that the highest engagement narrative related not to the actual events on the ground, but to the perceived relations between the chocolatier's over-arching brand and halal/Islam themselves: a much larger and more complex narrative. These larger narratives were *transformational in nature*—fast-evolving stories, which tap into timeless, high-engagement themes.

### Transformational

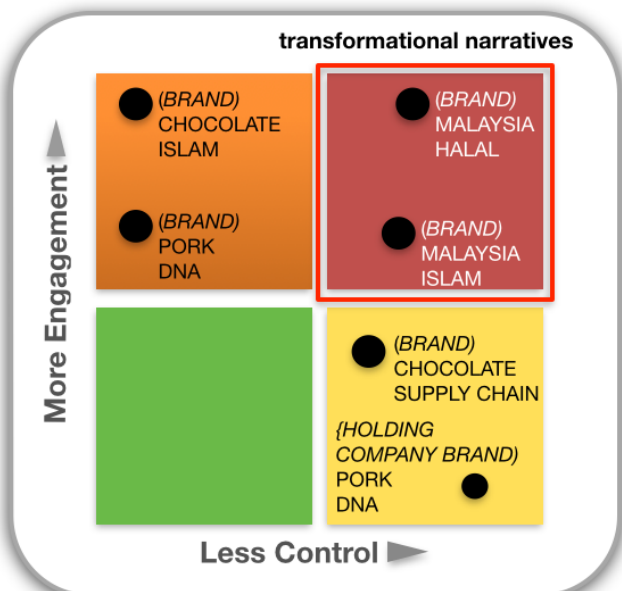
A very small number of narratives, campaigns or, indeed, brands. **Characterised by intense, engaged individual experience with strong timeless themes.**

Fast-changing, yet potentially resulting in lasting transformation of the world.

A volatile environment for **the positioning of brands or themes for communications.** Strong opportunity if there is positive alignment, or great threat if it is an opposed issue.

**Communications power** comes from detailed understanding of, and alignment with, both the timeless drivers and the in-the-moment significant experiences of those connected to the narrative.

2%



Having first identified the key media and voices which shape and drive engagement, Triage highlighted that, for all the sound and fury on social media, none of it generated high engagement outside its own echo-chamber. From experience, it would likely die down unless inflamed by ill-chosen actions or words on the part of the brand. Triage rapidly identified that the significant local-language media considered the narrative to be simply the story of a 'halal alert' for the affected products. In fact, much of the local-language engagement was simple fact-seeking, rather than anger or protest.

The data clearly demonstrated that the 'big picture' spectre of regional/global protest was being created and amplified by the regional and global *English*-language media.

Triage also highlighted that the brand retained significant positive equity.

Positive Drivers		Negative Drivers	
SINGAPORE	0.75	MALAYSIA	0.71
HONGKONG	0.50	PENANG	0.5
BUTCHER	0.095	MAJORITY MUSLIM COUNTRY	0.31
TWITTER	1	FOOD INDUSTRY	0.29
REVIEW WEBSITE	0.81	GOVERNMENT	0.24
DNA	0.63	KUALA LUMPUR	0.21
HEALTH MINISTER	0.33	FOOD	0.21
(BRAND)	0.4		0.21
KUALA LUMPUR	0.23		
CHOCOLATE MAKER	0.23		
SUPPLY CHAIN	0.10		

Even in crisis, the brand retains positive equity.

So: not all was lost. If the brand held its nerve, pro-actively exploited social media to deliver *useful* information to those seeking such, and avoided head-on conflict with the angry but ineffectual online mob, there was the opportunity to strengthen its position whilst minimising risk.

As for the regional concerns, it was clear that although there was awareness of the situation in neighbouring markets, engagement was at a low level.

Proactive building of relationships with key voices in those markets, and continued openness and transparency, would hedge against possible spread of misinformation, anger and fear.

Triage's data offered clear guidance and reassurance on the route by which to navigate a communication crisis situation, in a multi-cultural, multi-language region, and a complex stakeholder environment.

As expected, the online furore died down, and consumers responded positively to clear, open updates from the brand. Regional response was muted.

A sweet solution to a sticky problem, thanks to Significance Triage.

# Significance Triage

## About the Product

Significance Triage provides actionable diagnostics that assists you to prioritise issues, identify key media, and consolidate messages rapidly and effortlessly, so you can focus on what matters, when it matters most: in a crisis.

# Significance Systems

## About Us

Shape the Narratives  
That Shape Your World

Knowing **what to say, how to say it, where to say it** and **to whom**, empowers you to *focus your time and effort, to deliver better outcomes for your business.*

Our products rapidly analyse a **communications issue, sector, category** or **market need**, to quickly, accurately and securely identify the narratives on which to focus. They cost-effectively identify **what's likely to happen** to each particular narrative, and highlight the levers of **communications power**: the key media, the key people, the key messages.

We don't need any of your data to do this.

We work across the whole web, in any major language.

This sounds like social listening? It isn't. All our clients continue to use social listening to improve their customer care experience. Our products deliver strategic insight.

## Contact Us

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