

Reputation management of companies during crises - a case study of the Saudi Electricity Company

Ennas alkedm, Petya Eckler

PhD student , PR and crisis management at Strathclyde university, UK- Glasgow

Abstract

Social media has transformed into a potent force occasioning social change in Saudi society. Out of about 25 million active users on social media in KSA. Currently, one of the biggest crises that has affected the Saudi society is raising electric prices for the first time in the company's history. Saudi Electricity company is the biggest producer of electricity in the Middle East and North Africa. The crisis started after more than 9 million of customers received bills in June 2018, which were much higher than previously experienced. This study will ask how did the Saudi Electricity Company work to manage its reputation during the crisis with rising electricity prices?

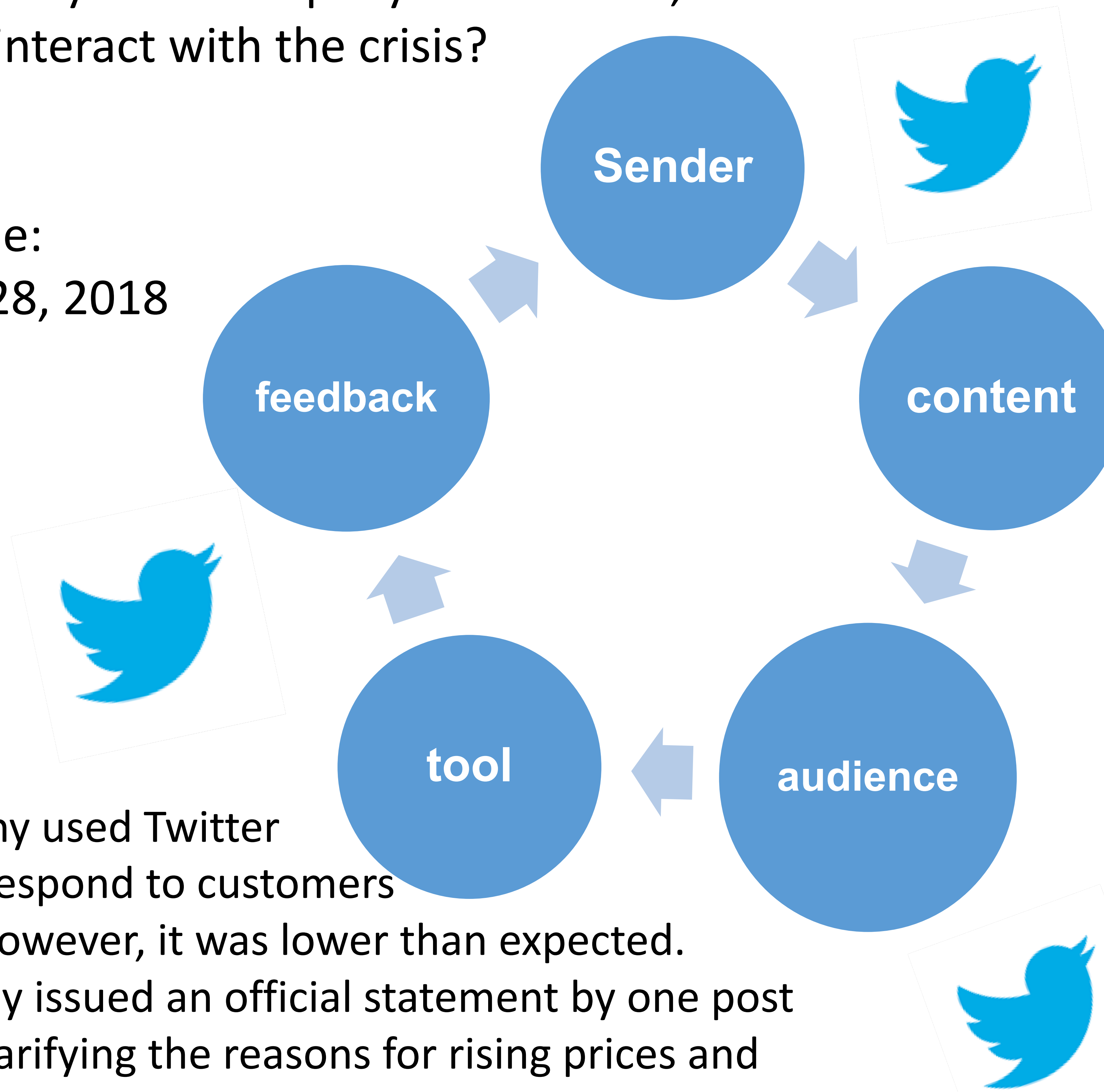


method

RQ1: how did the Saudi Electricity Company work to manage its reputation during the crisis with rising electricity prices?

- content analysis of Company's statement, and how did customers interact with the crisis? via twitter.

- Timeframe:
June 15 – 28, 2018



Results

- _The company used Twitter platform to respond to customers objections, however, it was lower than expected.
- _the company issued an official statement by one post via Twitter clarifying the reasons for rising prices and welcoming any objections or feedback through its call centre.
- _The company established the Tayseer program to spread out the bills for all customers.
- _Company post has 1,739 replies, 302 retweets, 188 likes.
- _ #Saudi_Electricity_company reached trend over 228,000 tweets during the first hours of crisis.

Strengths& Weaknesses

- This study shows the benefit of using Twitter as a tool of social media communication during a crisis, due to saving time and low cost, & opening two-ways communication between a company and its customers quickly.
- The time factor is important to manage a crisis and the company's response was 2 weeks after the crisis began – late procedure.
- The company used limited communication with customers (using the same one post on all platforms during the full crisis)
- PR practitioners' responses showed lack of advance preparation for such events

Conclusion

The Saudi Electricity company monitored media complains by users and responded to them as a way of keeping its reputation intact. In recent times, many people have complained about raising energy bills and the company is struggling to wade off bad reputation among customers (Fuchs, 2017).