

Kony2012: What do 70+ Million Views Mean

Notes: SXSW Panel, March 14, #sxkony - goo.gl/aNo6W

Panelists

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Intro (Christie George, moderator)

- Looking at incredible success (100 million views: <http://corp.visiblemeasures.com/news-and-events/blog/bid/79626/Update-Kony-Social-Video-Campaign-Tops-100-Million-Views>), understanding data, engaging with critiques
- Organized on the basis of a session that emerged from Friday informal session; SXSW offered additional slot to discuss.
- Invitation to IC; they are busy, and unfortunately weren't able to attend. Encourage people to use hashtag #AskICAnything to ask questions to them.
- Showing Kony 2012 Trailer

Sam Gregory (WITNESS, www.witness.org)

- Background on LRA and Uganda/DRC/Southern Sudan/CAR
- Note that tomorrow there will be first ever judgement from ICC in case of Thomas Lubanga: http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5i1mDUNgGM6e3b3zP3gXXV_aFSF5A?docId=621884f2dfbc44a083429c1e63cb2819

Gilad Lotan (SocialFlow)

From SocialFlow highlighting - at the peak of the conversation there were 25000 references to Uganda on Twitter every 10 minutes. Social media campaign started seven days ago. Illustration of the comparison of StopKony, Kony 2012, and then a comparison to the spammy sxsw hashtag (which to people at SXSW looks like its dominating their feeds).

Trending topics: Birmingham AL was one of the first places to trend and Joseph Kony trended in many cities. Have not yet looked at how spread between cities, haven't had time to do the research.

Two important things to note about how it spread:

- Viral mechanism that led users on the website to spam celebrities - grid of celebrities including culture makers. One click gives already composed tweet to send. Also politicians. Make it feel like all people are already associated with group and that its about reminding people. So a stream of tweets - most similar. Shows slide - most similar, using @mentions. It did work for some of them. E.g. Oprah Winfrey, who had previously supported IC. Ryan Seacrest. Using viral mechanism to get all celebrities to talk at same time about the cause. Ellen DeGeneres got 36000 pings that day. Justin Bieber 36,000, Lady Gaga 28,000.
- So what does it mean to use these viral mechanisms to reach celebrities? And what are consequences of this in terms of what gets attention?
- Gilad shows graphics illustrating that IC has worked for years to build support groups. So

data shows the initial 5000 users who used hashtags. You see dense clusters emerge around Invisible, and other hashtags.

- Clusters including Oklahoma City as some of the first users to post too the hashtag. Birmingham AL has one of the largest initial clusters. Assume have strong support base there., and oriented towards that day.
- Dive into center of graph. See how early someone got involved. Red shows who got involved first: Invisible Children obviously starting point; Kristen Bell another early adopter. Note that many of the profiles suggest a trend towards religious conservatives.

Teddy Ruge

- Concerns that situation in Uganda was simplified to make it engageable for Birmingham AI
- Longstanding single story in continent about what its about.
- Easy for western audiences to understand this simple story as they accept the messenger, someone one they could relate to.
- One of the problems of oversimplifying the message is that it misses about about talking about issues important to Uganda now. It talks about messages that should have been important to the world 20 or 15 years ago
- Has unintended consequences - c.f. Uganda trying to build tourism. 2011 - Uganda related as one of the top destinations for tourism with this framing. Already have difficult time telling story about why come to Uganda, now have to overcome talking about Kony again.
- We need to be at the center of our own rescue, vs saviour complex
- One of the questions is what victims of Kony are doing now to get back into society. Women who watched their families being hacked to death and their huts burned down. The numbers are far greater than those killed. There are 100s of thousands of people walking around with these images in their head.
- We have such a hard time being given the microphone to talk about our issues that sometimes we have to follow on the coat-tails of western projects like this one and say that we also have a voice in this matter. A group called Hope North did a very similar video to IC and spread a similar message but the concentration on the agency was very different, what actually needed to be done: Hope North: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFRPYyOH9Tc>
- Need focus on what are the victims doing now, versus focus on the dead.
- Here's another perspective on these victims' need from WITNESS' work with women's groups in northern Uganda: <http://blog.witness.org/2011/10/ugandan-women-use-video-to-advocate-for-psychosocial-and-livelihood-support/>

- Unintended consequences of having people relive this experience.
- Also want to talk about the positives - having the Kony discussion has enabled Ugandans to get the mic to talk about their issues; have to follow on the coattails of western projects to be able to exert own voice in this matter.

Cheryl Contee (Fission Strategy)

Sees a video that follows the hero's journey. Caution vs make a 30 minute video on the first try. See new book by Jonah Sachs - [Winning the Story Wars](#). They did the 'Meatrix' and 'Grocery Store Wars' based on Star Wars. It's about tapping into ancient myths that don't tell us something new but make us feel we've remembered something we'd forgotten. Connect us

to values - overcoming, love, family. Uses emotion to connect. about the heart not the head. appeals to our shared humanity. Involves great music, art, applies universal themes connecting us to each other.

And the dialogue it engenders, the way that Teddy and others have taken apart this simplified story, shows the power of people to push back. How many of us now know a lot more about this part of Africa than a few days ago? That's very powerful. Those working on foundations and non-profits are close to the topic but a teenager in church in Birmingham just wants to know what's the problem and how can I help. If the story you're telling doesn't move you, how will it move anyone else? Whatever happens to IC, what's been important is the dialogue about the solutions and the status of Uganda right now.

This does open up an opportunity for response. Appreciate IC Children's response to engage in dialogue.

What's also been successful in their strategy: when we've had clients and strong successes, what works is putting the power in their hands. A single message is never going to work. Your supporters have to feel like they are your ambassadors. IC has a digital kit with a beautiful graphical image, a poster you can print out, a digital zine with nice photos, clear language, the names of the street teams they have in various US cities with their own hashtag. They use language that appeals to younger people.

Less controversial analogue to this:

Jose Antonio Vargas - illegal immigrant who is also a journalist. There is a very simple campaign with a video of him talking. We made that video knowing that if it didn't move us it wouldn't move anyone. We wanted people to see it and think, if I were Jose, how would I feel and react to being in this situation.

<http://www.mediaite.com/online/the-washington-post-turned-down-jose-vargas-illegal-immigrant-story/>

Sam Gregory, WITNESS:

There are a couple of questions. It's really important that the US have a human-rights movement. Important not to dis-empower people who have participated in Kony 2012 - we need to valorize interest in human rights, but work out how to take it further. For instance, why are we not engaged on Guantanamo. Why is it not a cause celebrate.

How to move this forward? My own experience at Witness: critical to engage with your audience (and to understand video as part of a broader strategy). IC did a masterful job of this. But it jumped the shark: became something much bigger, and a lightning rod for criticisms. A couple of these are worth framing:

- how do we think about oversimplification of the problem and oversimplification of the

messaging

- how do we balance that with the effectiveness of reaching the audience

Ethan Zuckerman's blog: "“If we need simple narratives so people can amplify and spread them, are we forced to engage only with the simplest of problems? Or to propose only the simplest of solutions?”

Global voices generated one of the first Ugandan responses from Rose Bell, A Uganda blogger <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/03/08/uganda-can-a-viral-video-really-stopkony/>

My suggestion on how to move beyond this: Lessons learned.

Two elements to try to hybridise: how we think about local voice. If we engage on international issues, how to ensure we hear a diversity of local voices. That could be in the slipstream of another video. Eg, a different voice from a different community org in Uganda every week. Global Voices has done a great job of surfacing these. WITNESS works with community groups in Uganda, DRC and CAR creating video. A way to bring a diverse dialogue to people.

The other model is from the Arab Spring. How do Facebook pages like “We are all Khaled Said” translate into our organising. Maybe it's a nodal story. It grew virally but gave lots of people the opportunity to share stories related to it, to lead to a range of movements that culminated in January 25th.

Cheryl Contee: to push back on the simplification issue: there's a risk that you lose the possibility of a simple message. If you see your message as a trailer to the movie of the problem, an introduction, keeping it simple, and trusting that if people are interested they will want to know more. Treat your audience like they're smart enough to figure it out themselves. That is what happened with Kony: a simple message, but IC weren't adequately prepared to allow people to go deeper, so when people started to research it for themselves they started to question the way it had been done.

Teddy Ruge: However, message was specifically meant for this young audience, to move them. At that age you're more idealistic than you are intelligent. You're moved by emotion and also by peer pressure - you want to be part of something, a movement, an engagement. That's the danger. I don't buy that these people are moved to want to know more. It's the *secondary* audience that goes in to find out more and ask what is wrong. The people who were the original target are going to be watching cat videos in two weeks. The conversation will now move to the intellectuals to discuss the issue. I look at *us* as the audience, and how do we deal with those unintended consequences. Having reached 100m people you have left a message about what Africa is and missed out on the opportunity to educate people about the other side of the continent.

Q&A:

Q. Cheryl, there's a difference between respect and simplification. My 14-year-old was so moved by the film. But I have friends in conflict resolution, T&C work about real solutions. But my son was won over by a simple message that was disrespectful to both him and people in Africa. Truly misinforming American youth. Colonial message - "we can save Africa" - campaign helping western youth identify with the white family, instead of focusing on Jacob's story.

A. Cheryl: I'm not defending the content of the video but the structure. The way it can be adapted to inform or misinform. DefineAmerica.com has a similar video but giving a different message. When something moves someone, a teenager, that relating to the family is important. Could it have been done differently - sure. But ultimately we are one human family. People here responded to what was happening in Egypt because we shared those values of freedom, participation, free speech. The African-American civil rights mvts would not have happened without Jewish Americans. Dismantling of apartheid wouldn't have happened without African-Americans. {Q. They weren't misinformed though.} Right, but this is a point about the strategy, not the content. How can you use that approach to inform.

Q. But what is the solution to now having 100m misinformed people?

A. Teddy: tweet that Hope North video. In all these uprisings, you have to look at who was the agent in moving these things. In Egypt, Syria, Northern Africa, it was local people; in the Civil Rights mvt it was African Americans, who got support from Jewish people but they were drivers. Look at what happens when local agency is in the lead.

Sam Gregory: Hybridisation: getting those voices into the slipstream. There is also a role for working with IC. There are general questions about how it's framed but 100m people have started to talk about this and that's valuable. We have to think about how to get 100m people to talk about Syria where there is already a relentless flood of footage. And how to get the discussion going on human rights here in the US. As to IC, it's up to other human rights activists to engage with them and discuss how to move things forward in Uganda.

Gilad Lotan: they've done an amazing thing to capture the attention of all these people. I hope we'll now see more attention to the actual problems on the ground.

Cheryl Contee: it's happening already. We encourage organisations we work with to think about a story arc: start with getting people's attention, wanting to know more; then educate them to educate others. Other people who are doing amazing work - their voices will be lifted up and we will hear from them over time.

Christie - lets see how we move this from 'yes, but' to 'yes, but, and...'

IC Responses to critiques

Webpage: <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/critiques.html>

CNN Interview:: <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/politics/2012/03/12/intv-lemon-kony.cnn>

Jason Russell thank-you video: 'Wow. Thank You' <http://vimeo.com/38145370>

Ben Keeseey video: 'Thank You, Kony 2012 Supporters' <http://vimeo.com/38344284>

LRA Crisis Tracker: LRAcrisistracker.com

And hashtag for questions to IC - #AskICAnything

Other stories from room

Al Jazeera - The Stream -- <http://stream.aljazeera.com/story/kony2012-and-its-critics-0022087>

Pinterest board on these examples cited in discussion: <http://pinterest.com/burness/sxkony/>

Tweeted suggestion of film emphasizing continued threat there from LRA: <http://peacemedia.usip.org/resource/let-us-be-free-discover-journey-dtj>