

9 SCARY SOCIAL MEDIA FAILS THAT WILL HAUNT BRANDS FOREVER

Halloween is fast approaching and that means donning your most ghoulish costume, watching lots of horror films in the dark and stocking up on copious amounts of sweets for trick or treaters.

It's also a great time of the year to look back on some of the scariest social media and marketing fails in recent times. From the terrifying use of social hashtags to horrifying advert taglines, let's take a trip down memory lane and ensure that we do not make the same mistakes with our own social and marketing efforts.

1 – Tesco with an unfortunate tweet during the horse meat scandal



When you're in the middle of a company crisis because you've been selling horse meat and describing it as beef, it's probably not the best time to let your Twitter followers know that you're "hitting the hay". Proof-check tweets with team members to avoid such issues!

2 – If you're going to reply to customers, try to be conscientious!



Many of the big brands use social media as a customer service tool. If you make the decision to do this, you need to be aware that every response you give can and will be scrutinised. Transport For London learnt this when they told a customer (who had complained about train delays) to “leave early and you will not be late next time”. How rude!

3 – Epicurious and Urban Outfitters showing how and when NOT to tweet



The Boston bombing was a horrific event that shook the world over. Naturally millions of people took to Twitter to offer their condolences, updates, support and sympathy. The rule here is just because something is 'trending' on Twitter does not mean that you should try to find a way to promote your brand through it. Epicurious now know that. The sad thing is that they were not the only ones guilty of this twitter abomination.

4 – Blackberry promote phone advert on Twitter, but do so using an iPhone



BlackBerry ✓
@BlackBerry

Keep up with the conversation on [@twitter](#)
[instagram.com/p/xzh-3HGrKm/](#)
[pic.twitter.com/a5gWaO19CB](#)



2:08pm · 13 Jan 2015 · Twitter for iPhone

38 RETWEETS 38 FAVORITES



The Verge ✓
@verge

[Follow](#)

BlackBerry is tweeting from an iPhone [theverge.com/e/7303724](#)

8:02 PM - 13 Jan 2015

1,504 842

Facepalm for the social media manager. If you're promoting BlackBerry phones, try not to make it visible that you're doing it through an iPhone! Whoops!

5 – Heinz QR competition promotion sends people to an x-rated adult website



The intention was good. Scan the QR code on a bottle of ketchup and enter a competition. However, the ketchup bottle would of course outlive the campaign and Heinz did not re-register the competition domain. The domain was bought by an x-rated adult site and if you now scan the QR code, you may regret doing so! Heinz apologised for their error. Remember to monitor domains!

6 – Research trending hashtags before jumping on board!



DiGiorno Pizza 
@DiGiornoPizza

#WhyIStayed You had pizza.

9/8/14, 11:11 PM



Keosha Varela @K_J_Writes 1h

So many courageous ppl sharing their stories re: **#whyistayed** and **#whyileft**. Domestic violence is often a hidden issue, bring it to light!



Adrienne Airhart @craydrienne 1h

I couldn't face the fact that I was a textbook statistic: if (step)daddy hurts you, so will hubby. **#whyistayed**



Scott Paul
@scottfpaul

 **Follow**

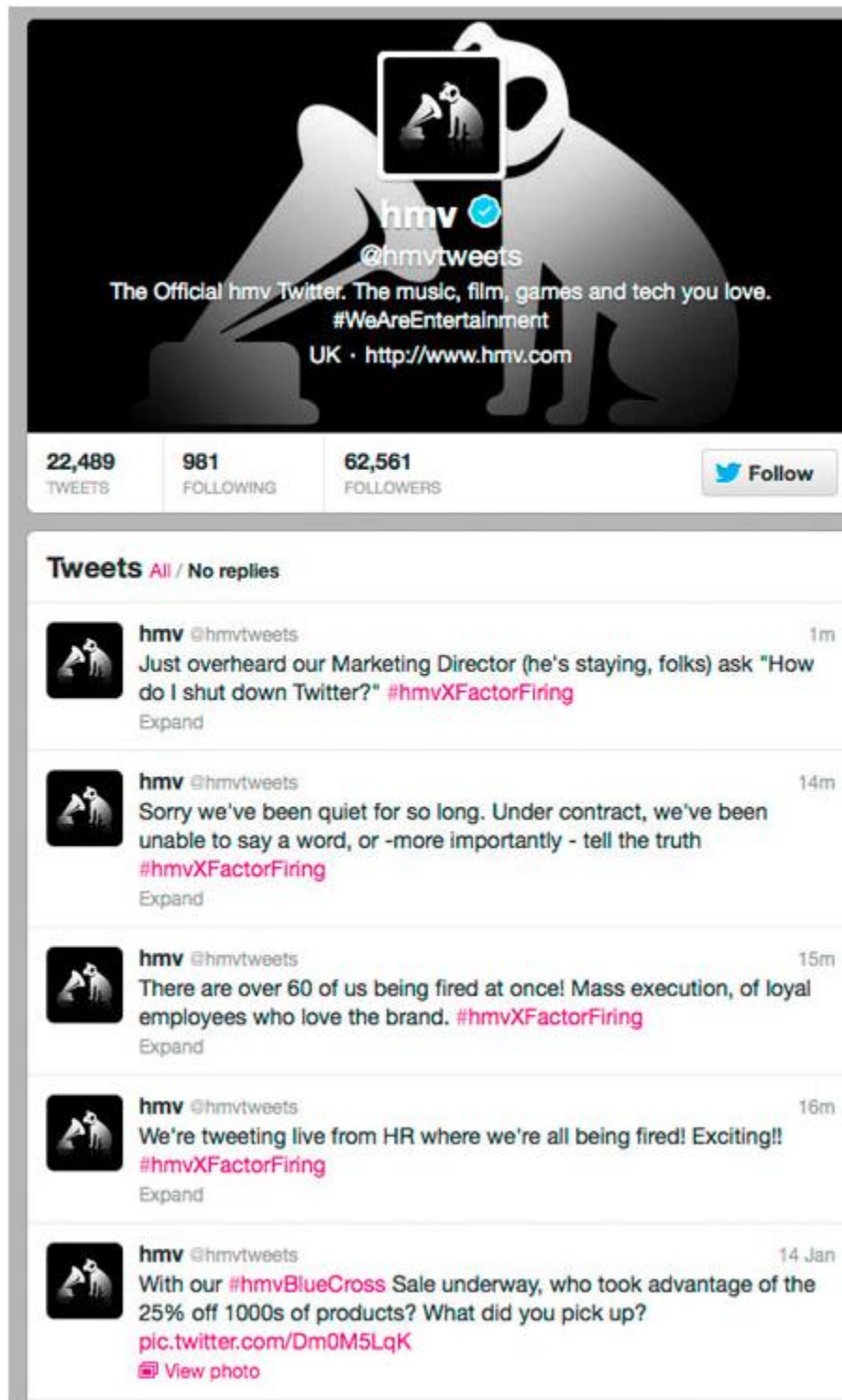
Example of a brand using a trending topic without understanding the context **#Advertising** **#SocialMedia** **#WhyIStayed**

4:23 AM - 9 Sep 2014

  535  237

DiGiorno pizza learnt that trending topics shouldn't simply be an outlet for promoting your brand. Always research what the topic of conversation is, which in this instance was domestic violence. **#WhyIStayed** was designed for courageous people to tell their story and offer support for others who suffer from domestic violence. DiGiorno Pizza simply used it as a promotion tool, and it backfired.

7 – HMV staff go rogue with the Twitter profile



When a lot of staff members lost their jobs at HMV in 2013, they were understandably

upset and disgruntled. However, what they didn't count on was their social media manager live tweeting the entire situation. 7 tweets were posted before HMV regained control. A stricter policy on social media management can help to ensure posts are reviewed before being sent.

8 - BIC tells women to 'think like a man' on #HappyWomensDay



BIC's excuse for this poorly executed advert was that the quote was taken from a businesswoman blog. However, people were offended for numerous, quite obvious reasons.

9 – When a McDonalds hashtag turned into a bashtag



This is a very famous example of when social media goes wrong, but one that should not be forgotten! McDonalds encouraged social media users to share their memorable stories of times they ate Happy Meals. However, the internet decided to turn it into a bashtag and share their horrifying McDonalds stories, such as:

– Ate a McFish and vomited 1 hour later....The last time I got McDonalds was seriously 18 years ago in college..... #McDstories (via Twitter)

Before starting a social media hashtag, think of all of the possible outcomes and whether your audience will truly embrace it.

Looking for social media marketing advice? Spindogs is a unique team of 27 highly trained creative and technical individuals. Day in day out, digital is our business. If you'd like our advice on how to use social media to benefit your brand in the right way, we'd be happy to talk.