





**Media downsizing** is pushing brands to fight harder to get positive media attendance at events.

The print publishing space is seeing the impact from declining advertising revenue and sales. Publishers are downsizing as their readership continues to shrink and move to other formats.

The landscape is streamlining, and a leaner headcount limits the media's capacity to mobilise manpower for media events. This means that brands are having to fight harder to get positive media attendance. We are seeing this happening even among interesting consumer brands with pull factor.

"It used to be that a smartphone product launch could attract 100 pax easy, but not anymore," says Angel Ng, PR Manager at ROOTS PR. It is becoming more challenging to get a full brand experience in front of the media.

The most effective brands will continuously seek to create a symbiotic relationship with the media. Win-win is the new norm.

## Malaysian print media that downsized in 2018

Utusan Malaysia downsized to a thinner, more compact tabloid size. Star decreased pages

Star Media Group shut down printing ops in Penang as part of an ongoing cost rationalisation exercise.

Malay Mail ceased print on December 1, 2018 and has gone fully digital since.

# Public Relations

## Media Landscape Changes

### Opportunity

While traditional revenue streams are downsizing, media publishers are strengthening their competitiveness by investing in digital operations instead, with several key joint partnerships and acquisitions established over the last one year.

This is an opportunity for brands to use a more diverse media mix in campaign strategies by exploring newer and less conventional online publishers, such as Millenials of KL which maintains a good balance of sponsored and unsponsored content. This would mean adapting PR content for digital audiences, especially videos.

Brands need to acknowledge that media events may no longer be the best way to reach their audience. They need to have a very good reason to organize a media event.

Some questions worth asking:

*If you need to launch a product, what other ways can you reach the media? Media drops for product reviews are common, but how can you bring the full brand experience to them instead of making them go to you?*

PR as a marketing discipline must not exist in a vacuum. We will have to adopt an activation mindset and invade new public spaces with novel concepts, and bring those concepts to the media's attention, which will allow PR the breathing room to evolve along with the narrowing media landscape.



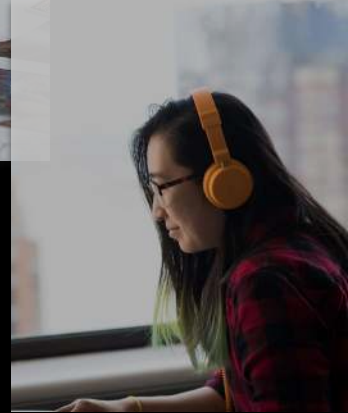
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### The media is looking for **more story**, less brand names

While the media is looking for more variety in angles, brands still insist on speaking from a brand POV. Press releases are stubbornly product-driven and delivered in traditional format.

This doesn't sit well with an environment that is rapidly digitalising. Key messaging needs to be strong enough to compete against the plethora of content online, and brand angles are just not first choice for the way people consume content on the internet.

There is a discrepancy between what brands are doing and what publishers want. The media wants special angles and reader-relevant content. Content from a brand's business perspective is less as newsworthy.



# Public Relations

## Industry Observations

### Opportunity

Think more story, less brand names. This may be counter-intuitive - brand names appearing in published content is, after all, a core measure of ROI for PR practitioners.

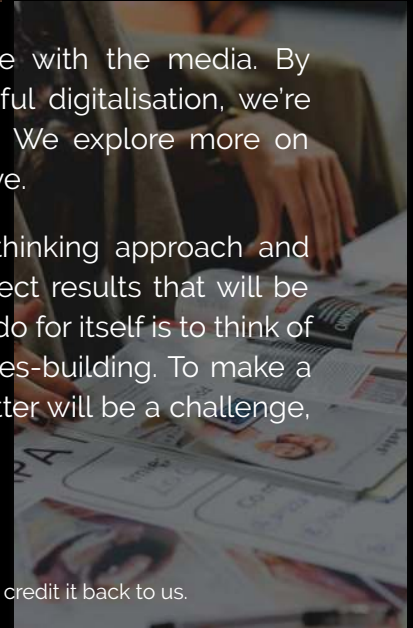
But a shift in content paradigm and content delivery will bring numerous creative opportunities to create content that both media and audiences love, without losing out on brand memorability. We're talking about taking a content-first approach to PR.

Brands that pump up on special angles and deliver their messages in unconventional ways, such as a product sheet in a video or an infographic, will have an edge over brands that are stuck in the present.



We need to evolve our content to keep pace with the media. By providing the media what it needs for successful digitalisation, we're creating room to co-exist in the digital sphere. We explore more on digital content in the section on Content & Creative.

Evolving your content requires a longer-term thinking approach and marketing plans will likely have to adjust to reflect results that will be less immediate. The greatest favour a brand can do for itself is to think of its mandate as relationship-building, not just sales-building. To make a business case for how the former leads to the latter will be a challenge, but will help PR adapt to the state of the media.



# Public Relations

## Industry Observations

### **Sustained engagements** enjoy better results than **campaign-based engagements**.

Brands that take a piecemeal approach to their PR strategy don't see as much impact as those that consistently work together with a dedicated agency for an extended period of time.

Brands that have in-house PR teams with their own roadmap fall into the trap of poor alignment with their external agencies. Failing to enlighten their agency on their entire vision, the partnership cannot contribute to the overall long-term strategy.



Sometimes brands fail to keep the different agencies they work with fully informed about each other, choosing to deal with each separately. This limits the potential for impact and relegates each agency to operational and divisional work rather than integrated strategy.



# Public Relations

## Industry Observations

### Opportunity

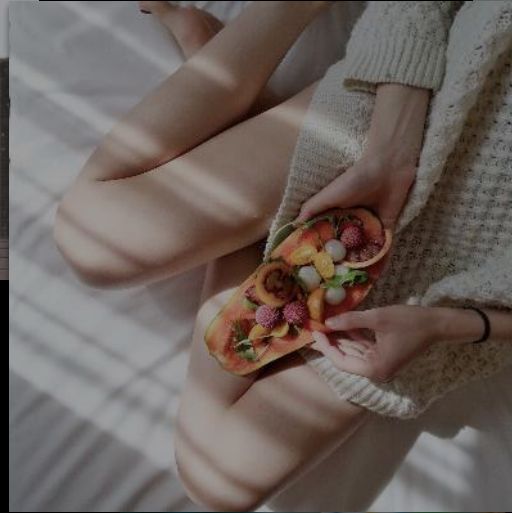
Work with longevity in mind. Brands and agencies that work on a longer term basis are better at identifying issues together and keeping the roadmap in check.

When working on short engagements, involve PR (and for that matter, any specialisation) right from the first phase of planning.

Some brands go ahead to plan an event without consulting PR in the process, leaving the PR team to work with weak media angles at the very end.

# Public Relations

## Industry Observations



## Influencer Marketing

Jumping on the bandwagon for no good reason

Micro-influencers are overriding KOLs in preference, but brands don't often know how influencers should fit into their overall brand plan. There is no intent that informs strategy, so brands that approach influencer marketing like a commodity are more likely to see insignificant gains stemming from their shortsightedness.





# Public Relations

## Industry Observations

**Allow time for followers to commit to your brand story, a story driven by strong characters whom they can love and remember.**

We've seen greater success when influencers are used on a longer term basis as brand spokespersons rather than in one-off engagements. The idea is to build a community with strong loyalty, led by recognisable influencer(s) who embody the brand's lifestyle.

Long-term partnerships allow the influencer to build deeper ties with the business and create stronger secondary association.

adidas Runners KL works with the same influencers regularly to lead their growing community of runners. It has worked tremendously for creating a tightly bonded community of runners who identify with adidas and who become brand ambassadors.

Don't kill off your protagonist too soon. Allow time for followers to commit to your brand story, a story driven by strong characters whom they can love and remember.



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