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## Content Analysis

### **The Brand**

The organization I chose for this assignment is RVD Communications, a specialty public relations and marketing firm located in New York City. RVD, named after its founder Rachel Van Dolsen, was founded in 2012 in Williamsburg, Brooklyn as a progressive PR agency and was one of the pioneers of influencer involvement in the food and beverage strategic communications scene. The agency is one of the top specialty firms in NYC and continues to serve some of the most recognizable brands in the area. Some of their clients include Black Seed Bagels, Otto's Tacos, Van Leeuwen Ice Cream, Toby's Estate Coffee, Bocce USQ, Tonchin, Little Tong Noodle Shop, SakaMai, Bar Moga, Dame, Unbound, COTR, Inc, Buffy and many more. While the agency technically falls under the boutique category when it comes to organizational structures, as I mentioned earlier, the group found a niche way to reach their target audience in an emerging digital age - social media influencers.

It's no secret that food reaches an audience wide and far, but when it comes to social media it can be hard to break through and become a sensation. I speak not only from experience as my Instagram has transformed into a food-stagram over the years, but as an avid consumer of this type of media. As we discussed in class toward the beginning of the semester, each social media platform is home to a vast array of digital communities, and for the food community, it's Instagram. Practically when the social media platform launched, the hashtag "foodporn" began to sweep the nation. From simple posts to well-designed masterpieces, the hashtag quickly became a trend. Many social media gurus presumed the trend would be short-lived and a fad as a new generation of digital natives took to their phones and joined the Instagram community. However, as of 5:03 pm on February 10, 2019, #foodporn now has 187,293,180 posts, with that number growing by the minute. All of this to say, to categorize the food community on Instagram as huge would be an understatement. This is where RVD comes into play. New York City is the epicenter of the American food culture, and I would go as far as to say the modern day global focal point of a compilation of cuisines from every corner of the earth. Thus making it the perfect location to make a mark on the national, and perhaps global food community.

### **The Platforms**

While RVD was founded almost seven years ago, the agency still remains on the small side of things when it comes to full-service agencies. However, for a boutique firm, a staff of 20-30 isn't out of the normal range. Additionally, since the agency specializes in the food and beverage industries it once again makes sense to utilize Instagram the most. However, when it comes to RVD, Instagram is one of the only social media platforms it consistently uses. While the typical strategic communications organization, from my experience and research, typically only uses 2-3 platforms, I think expanding the firm's digital reach would be a step in the right direction, but I will continue to discuss this opportunity, and opportunities like it throughout the essay.

The two main platforms that RVD is present on include Instagram and Facebook. While I have had conversations about the agency and their social media presence with various employees

of the firm including Rachel herself, I never technically received any sort of official goals or objectives that the organization has for the two platforms. However, after completing the previous assignment for this class, the social media audit, and being a regular consumer of their media, I have listed below some of the objectives that I think the team at RVD would agree with.

#### Instagram:

- To promote the company's brand while spreading awareness of their clients.
- To promote a consistent branding message that aligns with the younger generation and a target audience that includes consumers familiar with food and beverage companies in the NYC area.
- To curate content that appeals to the larger food community on the platform while still sending a clear brand message of the agency.
- To curate content that is consistent with current food trends on a national level.
- To present content that aligns with food and beverage trends both in the New York City area and forecasts trends that will potentially diffuse into the larger food community on a national level.

#### Facebook:

- To provide an all-in-one place to promote the firms and its current clients in addition to providing a direct two-way communication channel for the consumer and potential clients.
- To curate professional media content that promotes the brand and reflects on both the strategic communications and food and beverage industries.

#### **Instagram Content:**

Instagram is by far the primary platform used by the agency. To be one hundred percent technical, the organization links four platforms in total to their brand - Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. However, I've chosen to only analyze the first two platforms since the Twitter account that is linked isn't an official business account, instead, it is the founder's personal account, and the LinkedIn page has no content posted other than a brief description about the company. Which leaves us with Instagram and Facebook. In this section, I will be taking a deeper dive into the types of content posted on the organization's Instagram account. To dive into this, I wanted to begin by listing the basic categories of content as seen below, and then further discuss each one.

- Content that appeals to the larger food community.
  - Content that specifically appeals to the agency's clients.
  - Content that is either trending within the food community or matches the aesthetic/branding of the account.
- Text that is both inspirational and motivational that matches the branding of the account.
- Content that promotes the brand itself or educates its audience about the agency.

As you can see above, there's basically three different types of content that are present on this platform, with the strongest presence of the first point, followed by the next, and then the occasional presence of the last. If you were to look at the account with no previous knowledge of what the organization was, it could easily be categorized as a food-stagram type account since

about 70% of the content that is presented is centered around food. This is where I think RVD really stands out from the rest of its competitors.

While I was researching competitor's social media accounts during the information gathering stage for the social media audit, I noticed a consistent trend among nearly every one of the top ten specialty strategic communication agencies in the New York City area. While each of the firms specializes in serving the food and beverage industry, if a consumer was to look at the competitor's social media accounts, it wouldn't automatically be clear that the food community was their target audience. There was a lot of professional looking posts promoting the agency and the occasional inspirational quote, but the overall messaging did not make it clear that their target audience was the vast food community on Instagram. And perhaps that was the pattern simply because the food community isn't their primary target audience. However, RVD's ability to directly tap into the trends, forecast up and coming fads, and actually have a voice in the community sets the organization far apart from its competitors.

However, the aesthetic of the organization is drastically different on Instagram than it is on Facebook. While this could be negative for the agency, I think the ability to understand the different communities on each platform demonstrates their experience in social media marketing and gains the trust and respect of potential clients. An easy critique of the organization's Instagram presence would be that there isn't enough content that promotes the brand and educates its audience, however, with a strategic communications firm like RVD that's been specializing in social media for 7 years, there's a simple rebuttal - Facebook.

### **Facebook Content:**

While Facebook isn't the primary platform used by the organization, it still serves a great purpose in presenting a more professional side of the agency and raising brand awareness. Similar to the previous section, I want to first dive into the basic types of content and then discuss them in further detail.

- External media that directly promotes their clients.
- External media that focuses on both the strategic communications and food and beverage industries.
- Interact with the non-client related audience by posting content such as event recaps and the latest happenings in NYC.

As you can see, there are about three different basic categories that the platform's content falls under. The top two are the most frequent, with the last point being a rarity. About 90% of the content presented is external media, or articles, that either directly or indirectly promotes the clients or raises brand awareness of the firm via pieces that highlight the food and beverage industry. While I think that Facebook is the best platform for posting and sharing external media as demonstrated by RVD, I think the account is underperforming in several other content features that Facebook offers. In fact, in my social media audit, the organization received a "D" for its Facebook presence. As I mentioned, Facebook is terrific for external media, but I think the absence of features such as events, video, pictures, reviews, and more direct audience interaction leaves much to be desired with this account.

I don't wish to give off the impression that the organization's presence on Facebook is a complete failure, in fact, compared to its competitors in the area, RVD outperforms in likes, following, shares, and overall engagement. However, for an agency that is one of the first to

utilize and recognize the unique roles and influence of social media in the food and beverage strategic communications field, I think the organization has room for improvement when it comes to the full utilization of the varying content types that Facebook offers.

### **Content Strategy:**

Since the organization has such a unique and niche audience in an already small field, the platform's content strategy doesn't necessarily fall into one of the larger, more typical strategies we have discussed in class. However, there is most definitely a pattern/strategy that is present in both accounts. To start off, I'd like to first take a look at the organization's Instagram account.

As I mentioned, the content pattern that the account seems to follow doesn't necessarily match any particular content strategy, however, if there is one that it most reflects it would be the "Rule of Thirds" strategy. About a third of the content is the promotion of the organization's clients, about a third is content that focuses on engagement with the food community on Instagram, and about a third is content that focuses on engagement with its audience, but in a way that is more universal, appealing to the larger community of Instagram users via inspirational and motivational posts.

I think one of the best ways to illustrate how well the account fares against its competitors in the area. Through my research for the social media audit, I looked at the top 10 specialty strategic communications firms in the NYC area. While RVD's top competitor, Bullfrog + Braum, has over 22,000 followers on Instagram, compared to 6,300, RVD has a combined engagement rate that's 20% higher. Averaging 6 comments and 188 likes out of a sample of the accounts 15 most recent posts, RVD's strategy seems to not only be working, but drastically outperforming its competitors who have an audience 350% greater than RVD.

When it comes to Facebook, the story is a little different. The content strategy doesn't quite reflect any of the structures we've previously discussed but does still follow a sort of pattern of its own. As I mentioned earlier, the organization's Facebook account consists primarily of external media and links to outside articles. While the articles comprise about 90% of the content, the subject of the pieces is split into industry-wide information and media that promotes the firm's clients. So if the account was to fit a content strategy structure it would be 50% promote brand/company ad 50% promote the company's clients.

Overall, the strategy is neither a success nor a failure when it comes to results. Compared to its competitors, RVD's account is #3 out of the top 5 specialty firms in the categories of likes and followers, but #2 when it comes to engagement and shares. Similar to the critiques for the strategy for the Instagram account, I think the overall lack of utilization by the specialized communications scene makes way for a perfect opportunity for RVD to stand out amongst the crowd.

### **Final Thoughts:**

I think RVD is doing a terrific job of illustrating the company's brand and aesthetic while presenting both a personal and professional side of the firm across its two platforms. While I have been giving feedback and criticism throughout the essay, I think the major point that I would make is for RVD to take the opportunity of underutilization of social media platforms by its competitors to stand out and reach a larger audience. All in all, the organization is heading in the right direction and continues to distribute content that reaches its target audience while striving to over achieve its goals and lay a path for a brighter future for the agency.