



**Isentia PH Case Study**  
**PANDEMIC EFFECT:**  
**How Netizens Intervened the**  
**Media to Counteract its**  
**Standards of Feminine Beauty**

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# Scope

This study covers all discussions relating to **Belo Medical Group's advertisement** called Pandemic Effect.

In terms of social media channels, this report covers data from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Data from **August 9-16, 2021** was harvested via Isentia's social media listening dashboard Workbench, while Pulsar and Google Trends were also utilized as tools to support the data.

This study aims to identify the talking points unveiled following the controversial advertisement of Belo Medical Group, and pinpoint how Isentia can help relevant industries leverage on these conversations.



## The Social Buzz

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There has been a total buzz of **6,784 on *Belo OR Pandemic Effect*** and their permutations from August 9-16, 2021. About 51% or 3,467 of the buzz was from Facebook, 48% or 3,233 buzz from Twitter, and 1% or 84 of the social buzz was on YouTube.



# Behind the Scenes of the Beauty Industry

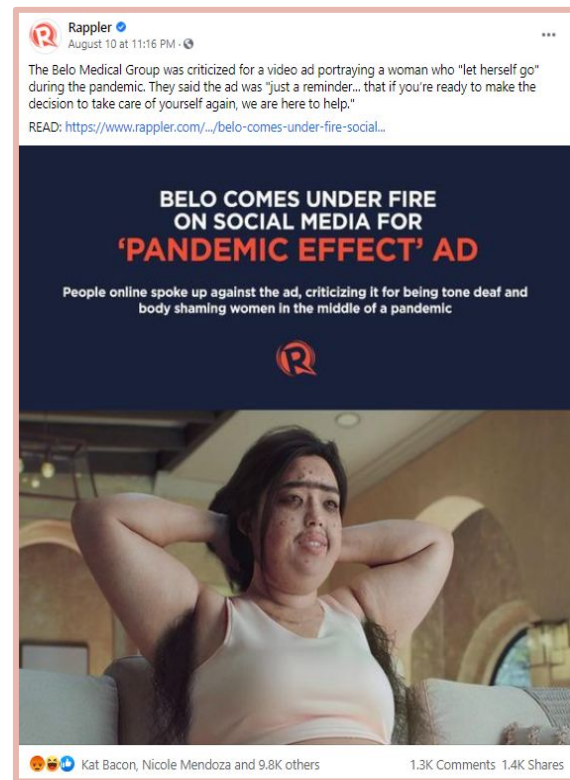
While the Philippines accounts for a minute fraction of one of the most alarming challenges this world has faced, everyone is trying their best to do their part and stay afloat in the situation.

**Belo Medical Group** released an advertisement on August 11 with a woman watching the news on the couch getting stressed out. It was a relatable one for many. Although the said commercial, **Pandemic Effect**, has since been taken down after attracting flak online.

People online criticized the ad for being tone-deaf and insensitive in the midst of a pandemic, and hashtags **#PandemicEffect** and **#BoycottBelo** trended.



Chart is from Isentia's Workbench with keyword "Belo"



# Body Shaming is Out. Body Positivity is In.

If it's that relatable then why did the netizens react negatively towards the advertisement?

It just suddenly went astray as the scene goes into timelapse and the woman's face starts to grow pimples, hair, and gain weight.

As the short film by **GIGIL Advertising Group** nears the end, it flashed a call-to-action, saying: **"Tough times call for beautiful measures."** This prompted responses from Pinays encouraging each other to be comfortable in their own skin despite all the negativity and challenges brought by the pandemic.



claire! @SWEETNRTAPES · Aug 11

belo rly disguised "let's force all filipino women into a standard" as "focusing the care onto ourselves." and srsly?? calling it the **#PandemicEffect** too?? times are already stressful enough as it is and y'all just wanna profit off of our insecurities?? we deserve better...



Jepoy @JQueps · Aug 11

Belo hitting on our pains was a tactical mrktg ad to cut thru the noise of social media. But to use pains in the middle of the pandemic was a different story.

**#PandemicEffect** ad was a personal attack. I had the worst acne breakout of life in 2020. Excerpts on my journal entry:

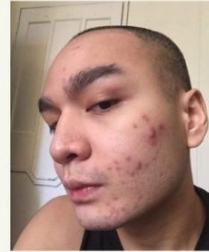


Photo taken between August – September 2020, and was still under treatment with my dermatologist.

I was starting to get depressed. I had a pus-filled face, and

I was furious with my face. At one point while taking a bath, I scrubbed my face with Kojic soap. Yes, I did not lather my face with soap, I scrubbed it using a facial scrub with an acid soap on my face. When I rinsed, my face screamed. It burned, bled, and throbbed. I cried, finally letting out all the wrath from within. I knew I had to stop this madness. I was right when I said that I did everything —it was just that I *overdid* it.

It took me months to heal, and to accept myself. It was the greatest battle of my life, because it was with myself. At one point in my journal, I was cursing myself, the next time I was comforting myself. I was schizophrenic. But I was grateful for the support of my family and Ron. My mom and dad told me that everything heals, no matter how deep the scars may be. My mom who had a severe acne in her teenage years told me, "Oh, tignan mo ko, gumaling naman." She was right. She was a living proof that everything heals. It was the mantra that instilled in



aly @1DiagonAly · Aug 11

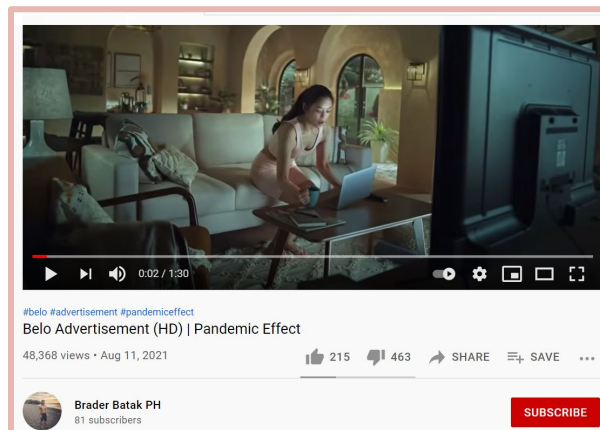
**#PandemicEffect** My mental health is another story, but skin-wise I have never been better: I no longer wear makeup everyday, get 2/3 of my meals at a foodcourt, or touch my face w my dirty hands. Lol. So on top of being utterly tasteless, sorry Belo, I actually like how I look.

# No Shocking Pictures, Only Shocking Reality

While it is easier to point out the negative retort to this campaign, this study found out that some netizens did not find the ad offensive and insensitive. This group believed that Belo and GIGIL, somehow, managed to show the reality of life. They also noted that it helped raise awareness on certain issues concerning one's health.

As seen from the response towards this ad, the reaction from the digital public would be varied. However, there would always be a golden nugget amid the muddle that can be leveraged to advance one's communication objectives.

This is why brands need to pay attention and wade through their social buzz where valuable insights can be mined.



Aldrene G. 1 week ago

The good side of this ads is maging aware padin tayo sa health issue natin lalo na nasa bahay lang tayo ... maging healthy living ... yan ang reality tlga ng karamihan may tumataba ang iba napapabayaang ang sarili kasi asa bahay lang ... pero the bad side is ang OA lng ng itsura nung girl.... pwede naman haluan nila pano mka iwas sa pandemic na hindi obviously na ganda lng ang panlaban sa pandemic or ganda lang ang dapat isa sa i focus at this moment ... anyways godbless po sa lahat ng nag ccomment dito ... doble ingat sa kalusugan .... ♥♥♥

Show less

41 REPLY



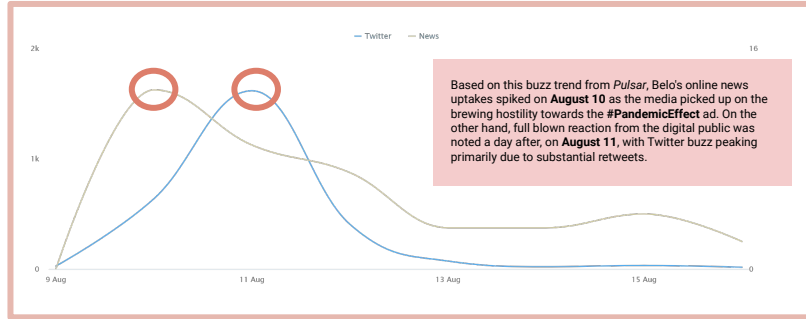
Carlo Cruz

Good or bad, this is a publicity for Belo Medical Group. I'm not here to argue but to give my two cents' worth. Please take it with a grain of salt. I can see this as a comedic approach to marketing their services. We don't need to be overly sensitive about things. Intended to be light and taken as it is. In a country of naturally copper-skinned citizenry, people are quick to take offense in this ad but failed to do so when plagued with white-skin-is-more-beautiful kind of messaging from whitening product ads. Just like any ad material, it's not for everybody. It is for a specific target market. It's subject to interpretation. Admit it or not, these are the physical effects of the pandemic to some. It can be a reminder that even in the midst of this stressful global pandemic, we can still look good to feel good. Let's be civil and be kind. Spread love not hate. If all you see is negative, it isn't their problem. It's yours. ♥♥♥

Like · Reply · 1w · Edited

324

Chart is from Pulsar with keyword “Belo”



**Bobby James Dagatan** 1 week ago

Kala siguro nila papatok kagaya nung ads ng RC etc. A bit insensitive nga naman yung ad which only give more insecurities sa iba base sa standard nila at Pandemic pa na dapat unahin hindi lang ang panlabas na anyo. Pag marami bang balahibo sa binti di na nag te take care ng katawan? Pag may tagiyawat ba di na maganda? They can still think of ads na mas may sense.

36 REPLY

**Sef @sefloseo** · Aug 11

the rc cola ad by gigil was great because it was just plain stupid. i love me a stupid humor.

but the new **belo** ad — it wasn't stupid. it was ignorant. it felt like a male gaze who supports d\*terte, jacks off with left hand while slut-shaming women on the internet with his right

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## Shockvertising: More buck than bang?

Following the success of RC Cola's thought-provoking ad, Belo tried to bank on this **creative yet controversial** way of getting attention. Not surprisingly, the ad triggered a strong reaction from the digital public, but Belo suffered an intense backfire.

While this campaign surely increased brand awareness, there is this underlying question on whether this negative publicity helped its sales.

**Having a lot of engagement on social media might seem like a success.**

**However, a high volume of mentions is only a positive sign when it's accompanied by positive sentiment.** Given this, understanding your

audience's sentiment is important. How they feel about your brand provides you with the context necessary to evaluate your marketing and communications strategy.



# ~~APOLOGY:~~ The Promise and Pitfalls

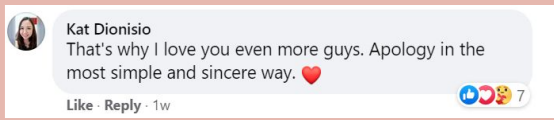
*Corporate apologies, when done correctly, can help a brand recover from a PR disaster and turn negative perceptions around. When done badly, they can exacerbate the problem.*

# K.I.S.S. Your Sorry

Companies hit by a crisis of misconduct typically issue a public apology to minimize reputational damage, negative word-of-mouth, and declining sales. **Brands should be quick to apologize, whether it is for a social media gaffe or a much larger issue. However, the manner in how they do it is equally crucial.**

Following the backlash, GIGIL released a short and simple apology, owning up to its mistake. Interestingly, this worked for GIGIL as netizens noted they see true remorse and a genuine willingness to improve moving forward.

It is important to note that releasing a public apology is not enough. **Brands should go beyond their effort and understand how their message is perceived by the digital public. Apology efficacy varies according to audience, brand, and message factors, hence exploring how consumers process a corporate apology on social media is vital in crisis communication.**

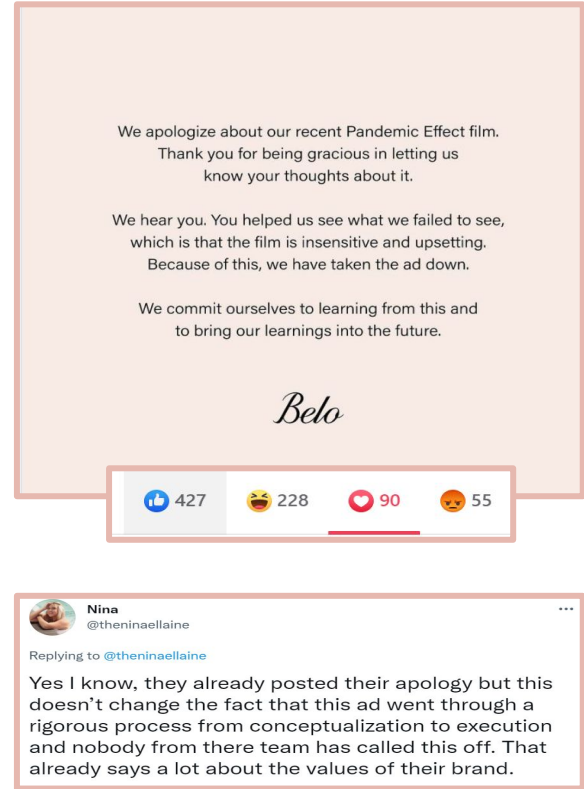


# When “Sorry” isn’t enough

Like GIGIL, Belo also released a statement owning up to its mistake in releasing the ad. However, it did not work for Belo. Prior to this, Dr. Vicki Belo, assured the digital public about the stand of the campaign, saying “it is not you, it is the pandemic effect.” Netizens did not buy this and described the ad as “distasteful,” and “insensitive.”

It must be noted that even before this incident, Belo has already earned a reputation for “banking on people’s insecurities.” This image can be a factor why the brand’s public apology was frowned upon by the digital public.

This tells us that **any company's brand image is pivotal. People have higher expectations of brands than ever before.** When customers purchase a product or avail a service, they are also investing on your brand's values. **Given this, measuring consumer response to your brand feeds into wider metrics used to determine the success of your business. In a nutshell, it aids in future planning.**



## Saab Magalona's statement

When I was approached by Belo to post about the Pandemic Effect last week, I had NOT seen the ad that they released yesterday. They simply invited me to post a reminder to love ourselves especially during these hard times.

So that's what I posted: a reminder to keep doing the little things that make us happy amidst all the uncertainty. I used the hashtag thinking I was helping promote self-care and, understandably, people got upset after the ad aired!

It was 100% insensitive and tactless.

I wouldn't promote or support a campaign that highlights and shames (unintentional or not) those of us badly affected by mental and emotional exhaustion given that we are all just trying to stay alive.

Their team has reached out to apologize and acknowledge their poor choice of execution and while I appreciate it, I'm not the one that needs the apology.

As the Belo Beauty team has publicly committed to learn from this, I'd also like to call for them to actively promote diversity and inclusivity as beauty comes in all shapes, shades, and sizes.



**gabbi** We all get anxious from time to time because of the uncertainties this pandemic is bringing us. All of us have different struggles, worries, and problems.

But please, do not ever forget to BREATHE. Take it one step at a time. There is nothing wrong with a little self love and a pat on the back. You are doing well, love. You will be okay.

@belobeauty thanks for continuously reminding us to love ourselves even more everyday 🌟 #PandemicEffect

2w



**francinesdiaz** This pandemic taught me how important life is - how the world can change in a snap, and most importantly, how important it is to love. Here's a kind reminder of how important it is to love others and to love yourself too. ❤️ Glad there's @belobeauty to always take care of me - making me look good and feel good everyday! #PandemicEffect

2w

# Clueless and Out of Touch

**Influencer marketing has become an important strategy in the digital space in promoting campaigns and products.** Prior to releasing its ad,

Belo utilized this approach to boost its initiative.

*Saab Magalona-Bacarro, Francine Diaz, and Gabbi Garcia* were among the celebrities tapped by the beauty conglomerate for its social media campaign. However, when the criticisms erupted against the Belo ad, Magalona-Bacarro also experienced unfavorable feedback from her end.

Amid the fiasco, Magalona-Bacarro stood her ground, called spade a spade, and stated that she participated in the campaign because she believed it would uplift others in these tough times. Moreover, she called on Belo to "actively support diversity and inclusivity."

Belo has apologized to the singer and YouTuber for their poor choice of execution on their **#PandemicEffect** campaign, which has since been withdrawn.

# Empowerment, not inadequacy

Majority of the marketing we see is based on inadequacy, which are messages intended to cause fear or insecurity about what a person lacks. On GIGIL's point of view in creating the ad, they casted Belo's services as the hero, something people can purchase that fills a hole.

In the midst of a crisis, **netizens yearn for narratives that underscore how they can flourish and find personal satisfaction.** Campaigns that go viral showcase not only the brand's grandeur, but also the value of its audience.



# In Listening there is Learning

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Social media insights, through listening, help brands unearth the interests and intentions of their audience, their concerns, and motivations. **While it was easy to spot the negative discussions surrounding Belo's controversial ad, looking deeper into the conversations of the digital public unearth relevant insights from consumers' perspectives.**

Apart from identifying trends, **social listening enables companies to listen to unique industry-relevant conversations and see if new, unknown topics are coming up that can be leveraged to advance a brand's communication strategy.**

# Look Beyond the Numbers

While getting traction improves brand awareness, companies should start asking - **“is my social media presence leading to conversion?”** It is important to note that a high volume does not necessarily mean winning over new customers.

**Belo’s ad may have the digital public talking, but it is creating negative publicity, which in turn, may adversely affect the brand’s reputation.**



# What Isentia Can Do To Help?

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Social media should consistently be measured as it is a potential source of rabid discussions that could lead to brewing crisis. **Push for digital content that is bite-sized yet empowering for its target audience to engage them in discussions and call-to-action reviews.**

Brands should be wary of how their services can make their consumers feel, and this can be assessed by taking a consistent approach across every interaction they have with the brand through social media platforms. With this, **Isentia may help brands refine their social strategies and understand which trends they can leverage on.**

**Positive or adverse sentiments are influential since they can strengthen or detract a brand's reputation.** Brands may tap Isentia to mine data, and extract the sentiments that underpin social media conversations, in order to fully comprehend why netizens talk about a specific topic.



# What our Insights leaders in the PH say

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## **Tina Laceda**

Insights Analyst, Philippines



"The advertisement of The Belo Medical Group #PandemicEffect campaign just proved that social media users have a big impact in how a brand or entity should effectively communicate with its consumers. It is vital to track the sentiment of conversations, allowing the brand to take action before a bad experience goes viral."

## **Gladys Ruiz**

Insights Analyst, Philippines



"Marketing for any brand today has become all about staying relevant and updated. Keeping abreast of the latest trends in the digital sphere is important as it will help in designing purpose-driven campaigns that resonate with the target audience. To add, this will help brands stay ahead of the curve and capitalize on emerging trend even before they go mainstream."

# What our Insights leaders in the PH say

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**Rowelyn Bigayan**  
Insights Analyst, Philippines





“Showcasing your brand out in the market is just one way of offering your services and selling your products. With so many brands offering similar products and services, it boils down to how it could benefit clients and potential customers. Aside from promotional techniques, brands should also understand the shifts in behaviors and preferences amongst their audience, especially in the social media platform, and utilize these to stay ahead of the competition.”



Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us  
for more information on this whitepaper.

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