



## Handwashing campaign bags top prize for Essence at Malaysia PR Awards

by **Kathleen Tan**  
FD@bizedge.com

A SIMPLE yet effective strategy to promote soap won Essence Communications the campaign of the year award at the Fourth Malaysia Public Relations Awards on Nov 3.

"They took a simple product — soap and handwash — and put it into the centre of a serious issue such as the H1N1 through a simple strategy: wash your hands," said Sharifah Rozita, founder of homegrown PR agency SR Associates and one of the judges at the awards.

Fellow judge Andreas Vogiatzakis, managing director of Omnicom Media Group Malaysia, credited Essence Communications for a "truly integrated effort — well-designed, well-thought of and with clear results".

Essence Communications' "Delta Strike" campaign for Unilever's Lifebuoy soap also clinched the best consumer launch campaign of the year award. Stretched over an eight-month period, the campaign aimed at positioning Lifebuoy as the gold standard in germ protection with greater efficacy than competitors and increasing market share.

The RM500,000 "Delta Strike" campaign which comprised events, on-the-ground activities, public campaigns and celebrity endorsement, generated RM2.3 million in PR value during a six-month period and increased Lifebuoy's market share from 5.1% in December last year to 9.7% in May 2010. Lifebuoy also reached its sales target of one million soap bars in less than two months, ahead of its initial three-month target.

Essence Communications group managing director Felix Heinemann credited client Unilever for "fast and uncomplicated decision-making processes", as well as "constructive arguments that challenged both agency and client to maximise the quality of the campaign".

This year, only three awards were



Essence Communications' Eliza Abdul Rahim (centre, with headscarf), Sanjay Jacob (back row, centre) and Chin Chern-Yen, product manager for Lifebuoy Malaysia (seventh from left), posing with other nominees and judges at the awards night.

given out at the Malaysia PR Awards. Out of the 30 entries received, 19 were short-listed as finalists. In 2009, there were 26 entries and 14 awards, while in 2008 there were 16 entries and 12 awards.

Besides Essence Communications, Text 100's "Spread the Smile" campaign won corporate social responsibility campaign of the year while Weber Shandwick Malaysia's work for Youth Asia, "YOUTH '10 Malaysia's Largest Youth Festival", won promotional activity of the year.

Weber Shandwick Malaysia general manager Rozani Jainudeen said her young team, who were very excited about the festival themselves, were instrumental in the success of

Youth '10. Using a mix of traditional and digital media to promote Youth '10, the three-day festival attracted nearly 89,000 youths, corporate partners, 10 youth communities, 230 schools, 40 colleges and four government ministries.

"We were heartened by the enormity of the project and [how the agency] managed it well to make it a relevant issue for youths," said Sharifah in an email interview yesterday.

With the objective of educating Malaysians on the misperceptions of cleft lip and palate, Text 100's "Spread the Smile" campaign encouraged the public to join the "Spread the Smile" movement via its website and official

facebook page to raise funds for the Cleft Lip and Palate Association of Malaysia (CLAPAM).

Interviews with CLAPAM, medical professionals, caregivers, cleft individuals and ING Insurance Bhd were featured in print and broadcast media.

According to Text 100 Malaysia senior account director Min Chow, the seven-week campaign garnered 41,800 Facebook page members, drew seven first-time corporate sponsors to contribute to the cause, increased approximately 30% of first-time patient and volunteer calls to CLAPAM, and increased CLAPAM membership renewals by 10%.

"The campaign was unique in the

employment of the right channels to reach and engage Malaysians en masse while ensuring the tonality portrayed the condition with sensitivity, given the pre-existing social stigma," said Chow.

Julia Ahmad, president of the Public Relations Consultants' Association (PRCA) of Malaysia, surmised that the smaller number of awards given out this year could be because of the more stringent criteria of the judges this year.

However, Ku Kok Peng who was on the judging panel this year said the smaller number of entries did not necessarily mean a drop in quality. "A lot of fantastic work out there in PR do not necessarily result in an award-winning campaign. For example, a crisis that is handled well will see little publicity but a poorly handled crisis will be very prominent," said Ku in a phone interview yesterday.

"What is important is that good PR initiatives clearly understand the issues, opportunities and prescribe the strategies that work to reach the desirable outcomes," said Ku, who is the associate director of communications for the Economic Transformation Plan (ETP) at the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Pemandu).

Vogiatzakis said the digital aspect of entries could be improved. "One of the key trends is managing and harnessing the digital platforms. I do not think all Malaysian PR agencies are leveraging digital to the fullest and this is where special effort needs to be placed, as our society expands rapidly in this sphere," he said.

Sharifah said many entries were still using fairly traditional approaches — event-based and publicity-type media relations. "Strategies could have been more sophisticated, such as measures to really engage stakeholders in stakeholder-type forums. The write-ups for the submissions could all have been better written as well," she said.