Free cultural differences and event management report sample

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Introduction

Music has no boundaries and is listened by all sections of society, globally. Whether it is in English, German, French, Hindi, Mandarin, Arabic, Urdu, or any other language, music is enjoyed by one and all for its sheer power of attraction. It is not necessary that all audiences like the same kind of music, and it is also not true that all artists are liked by all. Tastes differ, and preferences are many. While some would pledge their hardcore support for the songs sung by Madonna, or a Lady Gaga, they need not necessarily have to agree that they are the prettiest or most well-behaved stage performers. Sitting in the comfy of one's sitting room at home and enjoying a song of one of these two artists for example, in a country like Saudi Arabia or The United States, may not cause any uproar, but if they were to perform on stage in either of these two countries, the repercussions are conspicuously different and serious. There is a difference between listening to a song sung is a

foreign language and seeing it live on stage. A number of international artists engage in different styles during their stage performance, and this may not suit all audiences across the globe. The clash of cultural differences can have a serious impact on how and where these artists perform.

As a cultural advisor of an event management, the responsibility to prepare an advisory report for Lady Gaga's team warning them of two culturally diverse countries that the tour might want to avoid or they may have to alter the content in the show has fallen on me. It would be hard for her management to understand or assess the difficulties of operating a show in certain countries without understanding their cultural or political background, and the possible consequences on both the artiste and the audience if they do not take my advice could be very serious. An event management organization has to consider the implications of stopping a programme in the middle of their tour and this is an area where huge amount of money can be lost in contractual obligations. In recent times a number of such programmes had to be curtailed because of political and cultural pressures, and one such event that was almost shifted from the nominated country to a third country because of political and cultural differences was a Miss Universe pageant. There are a number of issues that have to be considered if a live show of the magnitude of Lady Gaga's has to be abruptly stopped or terminated because of political or cultural pressure from within that country. The logistical difficulties in shifting equipment and personnel have to be considered; the contractual obligations made to broadcasters, the money generated from advertisements and tickets; and most importantly, the safety of the performers and the audience.

Considering these issues, it is best for such live performers to understand and plan their world trip according to the advice of the cultural advisor(s).

The Muslim World

There is a world of difference in how women in Muslim societies and communities are treated from that of their counterparts in western societies. Muslim women face gender-based inequalities, and are victims of the so-called ' patriarchal gender system' that was predominantly conspicuous during the great Roman Empire. The remnants of this " pre-capitalist system," as Offenhauer (2005, pp. 1) declares, persisted in a stretch of land covering both Muslim and non-Muslims from Asia to North Africa. The system is characterised by male domination, early marriage, and restricted codes of female behaviour. Veiling and sex-segregation, especially for Muslims, form part of the gender system (Offenhauer, 2005, pp. 2-6)

Patriarchal issues rose during the Roman Empire and it continues even today. There is an ever-growing dismay among feminists that ' multiculturalism' is the root to inequality and suppression of women. ' Multiculturalism,' they say, " locks them up within the confines of their traditional, often patriarchal communities and hands them over to the power of the men within that community." While Okin questioned the feminist credentials of multiculturalism, Ayaan Hirsi Ali (Cited in Prins, 2008), a Muslim, defended the thesis that " Islam is inherently misogynous and curbed all expressions of autonomous female sexuality" (Prins, 2008, pp. 243-250). Okin's bold stance against patriarchal traditions in favour of women's emancipation won her friends and foes. For Ali, liberal feminism can

be achieved only through the adoption of secular liberal values and following
the Western liberal views on gender relationships and sexuality. However,
her critics firmly believe that many Muslim women have " successfully
managed to reconcile their faith in Islam with the struggle for
emancipation?"

In the 1960s, feminists fought their ideological battle over female sexuality
when issues then surrounded the topic of pornography and prostitution.
While radical feminists denounced pornography and prostitution as forms of
sexual slavery to me, liberals argued that feminists should conceive them as
legitimate forms of work, on the condition that women engaged in them
voluntarily. Thus, the question arose as to " what extent are women indeed
better off with a liberal view of gender relationships and sexual autonomy?"
Should public policies be guided by the unconditional respect for the
autonomy of (adult) citizens, or was it better to adopt a more cautious or
even paternalistic approach? This led to the much publicized issue on the
position of Muslim women in society and the moral status of prostitution
(Prins, 2008, pp. 243-270).

Almost everywhere in the Muslim world, continues Offenhauer (2005, pp. 30-
32), there is a strict restriction on what women should do and how they
should dress. In these countries, religion-based law is pertinent, and forms a
core component of the legal system. However, in countries such as Iran, Iraq,
Libya, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Algeria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Nigeria,
and other Islamic states, there are attempts made to revise in parts, the
legal system in personal and family laws that were formed from the Qur'an
and Islam's other sacred texts. Thus, while attempts are being made to

challenge certain religious doctrines based on notions of patriarchal rationale of women's subordination, and the present unfriendly women-centric laws of the land, there is restriction on what women can wear in public in the majority of these countries (Offenhauer, 2005, pp. 33-35).

The portrayal of women and their bodies in public cannot be seen as being universally acceptable. While women can go around in dresses that expose a major part of their torso in many western countries, the same cannot be said in a number of other countries. Cultural difference exists among countries and while one country may accept women in shorts and T-shirts, there are some countries where women are prohibited to walk around in public with their faces uncovered. Saudi Arabia is one such country to even forbid women to drive cars in public. Every country has its own cultural heritage and practices, and so, it would be illogical for internationally renowned singing and dancing artists to take spectacular live performances on a world tour in 2015 to a country without knowing their cultural beliefs and practices. This is especially critical for those international artists who sexualise dance routines and wear revealing outfits that they are well-known to wear during their performances.

In order to understand a country's cultural heritage and practices, one can seek to understand this by examining the social identity theory and the self-categorization theory. According to White, Argo and Sengupta (2012, pp. 704-719), a person's identity comprises two levels; his or her personal identity, and their social identity that relates them to the groups to which they belongs or is affiliated to.

The History of the Muslim World

In order to understand culture, one can go back in time to gauge what instigated or propelled the growth of religious beliefs and practices, and its equally powerful role in politics. Politics and Religion have played a major role in history, and it continues to do so even today. This trend can be seen way back in time when Charlemagne, a barbarian played a decisive role in propagating religion through force. From the time of the barbarians and later the emergence of Muslims in Europe, religion played an important role in politics and vice-versa. " In one particular episode of the 9-series documentary on the Dark Ages, one barbarian who was ruthless in making people follow his popular religious belief was Charlemagne. Charlemagne's relationship with the Catholic Church goes beyond the role of a messiah. He enforced Christianity and sought to make people understand the need for them to become true believers of the Christian faith (You Tube, 2013). The idea of introducing religious practices and beliefs is because a lot of countries that do practice Islam view their culture and identity differently from those countries that practice Christianity.

In reality, " the revival of Islam was not an offshoot of the Iranian revolution but the assertion of it that spread and extended from the north of Africa to Southeast Asia" asserts, Esposito (2004). There are many reasons for this, and they differed from one country to another, but they were all united by a common catalyst and concern. " Secular nationalism (whether it's in the form of liberal nationalism, Arab nationalism, or socialism), has not provided a sense of national identity or produced strong and prosperous societies," says Esposito (2004). Because the majority of Muslim states are non-elected,

authoritarian, and dependent on security forces for internal stability, they have not been able to establish their political legitimacy.

Islamic Law

According to Islam, " Munkar (transgression) is not limited to khamr; liquor, gambling and zina; unlawful sex, but it also involves the degrading and defiling the honour and dignity of the people and citizens. In addition to this, cheating in the elections, refusing to give testimony, neglecting to vote, letting government be in the hands of those who are not deserving and undesired, stealing and squandering the nation's wealth and property, monopolizing the needs of the people for personal gains or cronies' interests, detaining people without crime or just cause without judgment from a fair court, torturing human beings in prison and the detention camps, giving, accepting and mediating in bribes, cowering up to, praising evil rulers, allowing the enemies of Allah and the enemies of the Muslim community to be leaders and shunning the believers; the mu'min," says al-Siyasah (1999). " Should a Muslim remain a mute spectator to any or all of these, it means that neither he nor she deserve to live from the mafhum of al-ayat and al-hadith." A true Muslim is required by law, or by his/her Iman (faith) " to sympathize and help the ummah; the community, from tyranny and oppression. By retreating and abstaining oneself, he/she will only invite divine retribution and burn in hell (mafhum ayat)," ended al-Siyasah (1999). Some may argue that there is the indiscriminate use of the term ' Islamic fundamentalism' and its identification with governments and movements have contributed to the sense of a monolithic menace," says Esposito

(2004). This is not the truth, but " in actuality political Islam is far more diverse." Take countries like " Saudi Arabia, Libya, Pakistan, and Iran" for example, says Esposito, they have been labelled as being fundamentalist states, but this tells nothing about their nature: " Saudi Arabia is a conservative monarchy, and Libya is a populist socialist state headed by a military dictator. While Pakistan embodied a conservative Islamic view, Libya sought a radical and revisionist view, while clerics run Iran" ended Esposito (2004).

Male members of the kin group have extensive control over key decisions affecting " their" women's lives. Women are required to obtain permission of father, husband, or other male guardian to marry, seek employment, start a business, or travel. Although the highly formal Islamic marriage contract may or may not require the consent of the wife (depending on the Sunni school relied upon), marriage is largely an agreement between two families rather than two individuals with equal rights and obligations. Marriage gives the husband the right of access to his wife's body, and marital rape is not recognized. Only men have the right to divorce unilaterally and without cause. There is no provision for alimony. Polygamy on the part of a man is allowed. Shia law permits the contracting of temporary marriages for specified periods of time. Women are not granted guardianship of minor children in the case of the father's death. Children acquire citizenship and religious status through their fathers, not their mothers (Moghadam, 2004, pp. 1-32).

Cultural Issues: An Analysis

In 2012, Lady Gaga had to cancel a live concert in the Indonesian capital Jakarta because of security concerns after a group of protestors representing various religious groups caused an uproar in that country. This leg of her performance was part of her world tour which also included Singapore, New Zealand, and Australia. She had earlier performed in Seoul, South Korea, where she had to deal with protests and angry Christian groups who called her show, an adults-only concert. Lady Gag kicked off her Born This Way Ball tour with a concert in Seoul that had a restricted fan audience permitted to attend the show. Fans under the age of 18 were forbidden to attend. Taking a dig at her show, authorities took a gig at her and called her show an adults-only event. All this came about because a small group of Christians staged a rally outside Seoul's Olympic Stadium; where a strong crowd of over forty-five thousand witnessed the singer perform hits like Poker Face and Judas. The protesting activists claimed that Lady Gaga was ' obscene' and could presence there could ' influence' the minds of the young Korean population. A group calling itself the Civilians Network, said that her performance was " too homosexual and pornographic" for the young minds to be exposed to. Many of her fans wore dresses that symbolized the singer's flamboyant costumes, and when the audience saw her introduce certain new designs, among them a leotard fashioned from four guitars and a giant piano keyboard headpiece, the group knew that her dress sense would soon get the better of the youth of the country (BBC News, 2012).

In Indonesia, when she ran into difficulties, she claimed that she was ' devastated' at the decision of the organisers. The organisers had to take this

step to prevent an outrage in the country over Lady Gaga's performance. The Indonesian police refused to issue a permit to her and her troupe after Islamic groups objected to her show. They believed that her show was too vulgar for the Indonesian audience to accept. The Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) threatened to try and stop Lady Gaga from getting off her plane (BBC News, 2012). More than fifty thousand tickets had been sold for the event, and the promoters offered to refund the people who bought tickets for the show. There were a lot of discussions held between the organisers and the police before the police relented to the extent of allowing her into the country provided she toned down her performance on stage. However, for Lady Gaga, who has been on the Born This Way Ball concept tour for some time, her management decided to pull out of the show. Lady Gaga had tweeted that there was " Nothing holy about hatred," and after considering the situation carefully, decided that there was no way the show could go on because of the threat to her life and the lives of her troupe. Confirming this, Minola Sebayang, the lawyer for promoters Big Daddy, told reporters that Lady Gaga's management called off the concert because of the threats. The show had to be called off not only because of the threat perceptions, but also because the conditions imposed by the police would hurt Lady Gaga's ratings. Big Daddy President Michael Rusli said that the possibility of the show to continue on track was very much in balance, with the government too showing it support for the show. But, after reviewing all the planning and the events that have been happening in the media, and what is happening in Indonesia itself, it would be too risky to continue with the show. The Islamist FPI, which had threatened to unleash violence if the concert went ahead,

called Lady Gaga a ' devil's messenger' who wore only a ' bra and panties.' The group's head termed the cancellation of the show as " good news" for Indonesia's Muslims. Indonesia's conservative Religious Affairs Minister, Suryadharma Ali, who also welcomed the cancellation, said that he strongly believed that the cancellation of the show would benefit the country immensely. There were protests in the Philippines too, with Christian groups accusing her of being blasphemous (BBC News, 2012).

Analysis

Considering the issues that stage performers run into during their concerts abroad, it is important for managers to understand the implication and seriousness of issues that can derail a concert. It is with great difficulty that organizers conduct an event programme of the magnitude of inviting foreign celebrities to perform in their country. While Lady Gaga may be well-known globally, it is also evident that they are also aware of how these performers perform on stage. With the advent of satellite television broadcasts, it is easy for people sitting in the remotest corners of the globe to watch performers performing on stage. Their attitude, behaviour, dressing, and language for example, are clearly visible, and when such acts that are contrary to their beliefs or practices are played in front of their home audiences, there are sure to be protests and demonstrations.

In the case of Lady Gaga, it is obvious that her performances expose a lot of her body, and this does not go well with religious groups from certain countries. Saudi Arabia has a very strong Islamic law that warns women to walk around in the public or drive cars on their own. It is against the law for

women to show their face in public or touch a stranger other than their family members. In such a situation, if Lady Gaga is to perform, she would be imprisoned at the least. Exposing a part of the body is forbidden in Saudi Arabia, and if Lady Gaga performed the way she does elsewhere, the threat to her life and those of her troupe is extremely dangerous.

When a contract is signed, the contract is signed by the sponsor and the sponsored party. The sponsor looks at all possible marketing opportunities to generate revenue. The possible markets could be corporate houses that seek brand recognition, institutions, and individuals. The sponsor pledges a certain amount to the sponsored party for their performance, and if the sponsor is able to generate enough money to cover the event and take home a sizable amount from the show, the vent can be concluded to be successful. In the case of Lady Gaga's show in South Korea, forty-five thousands tickets were sold, in addition to the large number of sponsorships from corporate houses. The show would have raked in a sizable profit for the organizers, but the problem they had was with the protests from certain groups that demanded the show be stopped. In Indonesia, the protests were so vociferous that the police had to cancel the visa for the group to perform there. The cancellation would have hurt the promoters badly as they had to return the money to the audience, and would have had to pay the sponsored group for their trip to Indonesia. Damages would also have been claimed by Lady Gaga's management for the cancellation of the contract.

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