Facebook love story ends badly

Netizens lash out at what turns out to be an insurance campaign

BY AMANDA TAN & YUEN SIN

LOVE has turned into hate. Those who pledged support for a “couple” documenting obstacles to their relationship on Facebook now feel betrayed after it was revealed yesterday that it was part of an insurance campaign.

Yesterday, in a four-minute video on their webpage, “Mark” was seen going to pick up “Audrey”. Towards the end of the clip, a screeching sound came on and his pals rushed out of their car, but it was not shown what had happened to Mark. The video then flashed this message: “Unexpected Things Happen in Life. Be insured to have your loved ones assured.” After that, a disclaimer came on to confirm that the saga of Mark, 23, and Audrey, 47, was a campaign, “which hopes to bring across the social message that nothing in life is certain”.

The “couple” also uploaded a YouTube video and set up a website counting down to yesterday morning, when they planned to pledge their love for each other. But their aversion to media interviews had led some to speculate the story could be fake.

Yesterday, netizens lashed out at the campaign on the couple’s Facebook page, calling the stunt an “epic fail” and the “worst marketing”, among other things.

Media experts had mixed views about the publicity stunt.

Singapore Management University social media expert Michael Netzley said: “Here is an intentional campaign that involved a corporation, involving clients, reputation and brands.

“When you communicate this way, you put all of those on the line. More thought should have been given to that.” Outraged netizens such as real estate agent Justin Lee, 25, called the stunt distasteful: “They evoked the sympathy of the public and asked for help. Then, they turned the tables on us. If I find out I have policies from the insurance company...I will switch to another.” Training executive Bernard Ng, 25, said: “Instead of promoting trust and positive mindsets, they are causing negativity and suspicion.”

At press time, no one had claimed ownership of the Mark and Audrey stunt.