



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION
BAC 2101: PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION
END OF SEMESTER EXAM

Date: 27th October 2021

Time: 13:00 – 15:00

Instructions

- i) Answer question one and any other two questions in the answer booklet provided.
- ii) Be sure to write your arguments accurately using grammatically correct language.
- iii) Poor expression of thought and language will be penalised.

QUESTION ONE (30 MARKS)

Effective political communication strategies

Thinking Heads-8 January 2020

Politics and communication cannot be separated in a democracy. Politicians and political parties must convince voters of their ideas and proposals and try to organize, from them, sufficient majorities to achieve power. The purpose of any political communication is, therefore, to transmit content to specific recipients. These can be decision makers and multipliers (media), or the voters directly.

But in a world where the news no longer represents change, but rather how fast it is, we must ask ourselves what political communication strategies remain effective, what the current trends are or, for example, how you can attract attention and convince new audiences. We have summarized the answers to these questions in these 5 strategies:

The first step in practising a successful communication strategy in the political sphere requires writing a definition of the narrative for the project we are asking people to trust in. What attracts voters are not individual political measures, but a global vision of the

country that brings the 3 Cs into line: Consistency, Credibility, and Coherence. These three elements represent in themselves the fundamental base that should inspire the remaining tactics. Voters are interested in knowing that the party they choose to vote for represents very specific interests. They use different media to obtain information, and consult election programs, websites, and social media. But how do we find the right words to craft messages that reach them?

Listening to the audience we're targeting is one of the main ways to know not only what to convey but also how. In this way, the conclusions should serve to create effective messages that, for example, turn a "necessary reform" into what others describe as "social dismantling" or that speak in different tones to young voters, who are usually more receptive to change, and to older, much more loyal voters.

Leaders should focus on the fundamental messages underlying their policies and communicate them understandably. In this case, "brevity is the soul of wit". The past has taught us that unexpected events can change the entire dynamic of an election campaign or a term. Think of it as a pilot who not only knows the coordinates of the target before a flight, but must also take into account possible influences along the way, such as crosswinds, turbulence, traffic along the route, and the performance and capabilities of his plane. In political communication, these changing aspects include, for example, bad news, changes in stakeholder expectations and perceptions, sudden rumours, but also the influence of other actors who draw attention to their messages. In short, everything distracts from the normal course of events.

Good communication strategies react quickly and swiftly to create appropriate, unforced, messages at decisive times. Although it's still happening, especially when power has already been attained, society increasingly penalizes those leaders who remain silent or don't accept questions from journalists. The emergence of social media and digital channels as a whole has led to new forms of communication, even in politics. The current selection of media is huge and creates confusion when setting criteria.

Be careful: it's not about reproducing the same thing on each of them, but about providing suitable content on the channels where your target audience is located. Moreover, certain formats work better in some cases than in others. For example, short videos are great for Facebook, not for other platforms, and remember that social media is two-way. It's not just about saying or transmitting messages, it's also about dialogue and listening.

Politicians are, by definition, representatives of the people. That's why it's important to remain close to the citizens and find out about their concerns directly. Voters demand candidates they personally know and who are convincing. And even word-of-mouth propaganda has not lost its relevance in the digital age. Whether it's online, at events, or

during personal meetings, showing authenticity and empathy represents an opportunity to build a strong brand around a leader.

Elections provide the tools to successfully address an effective political communication strategy. However, we must not forget that the success of a political project depends on many other factors, such as competition, previous preparation, personality, etc. There is no doubt that when these intangible factors contribute to the strategy itself, it will have largely managed to influence the course of events.

Use the text above to guide your answers to the following questions:

1. How is McGuire's input output model of communication exemplified in this narrative? Discuss any 4 inputs and the resultant outputs (8 marks)

2. Michael is an *unknown* young man in your estate who is an aspiring politician and actually wants to vie in the next general election. He will be running against Mary, a seasoned politician. Michael has asked for your help because you understand how communication works.
 - a. Clearly articulate and justify what goal you would like to achieve for him. (4 marks)

 - b. Develop a detailed 6 point, realistic persuasive political communication strategy for him. (18 marks)

Question 2 (15 marks)

Aristotle's rhetorical triangle is a three-point fool proof system on how to effectively persuade. You have been invited to interview for the position of communications intern at a local media station. How can Aristotle's ideas guide how you present yourself during the interview? Explain each appeal and give equal consideration to them with the use of examples to justify your thinking.

Question Three (15 MARKS)

- i) Write brief introductory notes on propaganda, and in addition to defining what it is, explain how it works and how it can be identified. **(5 marks)**

- ii) You would like to advise an audience on resisting persuasion attempts. Using the inoculation theory as a background to prepare your presentation, justify two ways you will teach your audience to resist persuasion. Use your introduction to briefly explain inoculation theory and create a context for the audience. **(10 marks)**

Question Four (15 MARKS)

Mary, your friend who studies Engineering in your university, doesn't quite understand why you would spend time studying persuasive communication. Borrowing any four principles from Cialdini's book, *The Psychology of Persuasion*, structure a four-point presentation for her to see the value of understanding and applying persuasion for any professional- even in Engineering. Offer a suitable introduction to help her contextualise your explanation.