



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION (BAC)
END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION
BAC 2203: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS

Date: 24th March 2022

Time: 15:30 – 17:30

Instructions

1. This examination consists of **FOUR** questions.
2. Answer **Question ONE (COMPULSORY)** and any other **TWO** questions.

Question 1 (30 marks)

Read the article below and answer the questions that follow.

Telltale signs of deceitful public relations campaign

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 28 2018
DAILY

DR. SCOTT

BUSINESS

Public relations stands as one of the most ubiquitous fields present in corporate Kenya but often one of the most misunderstood. Public relations stands as one of the most ubiquitous fields present in corporate Kenya but often one of the most misunderstood.

In crisis, a public relations director or firm remains the first phone call for a troubled CEO, an errant board member, or a marketing director with a new product launch.

However, internal public relations professionals also get stuck with many “other duties as assigned” workload from executives who misunderstand the sector. Public relations essentially thrives as organised persuasive communication.

Public relations professionals create dialogue, shape public opinion, mitigate against disinformation, disseminate thoughtful campaigns, and inform internal and external stakeholders. In honour of the Public Relations Society of Kenya’s annual summit earlier this month, let us investigate a recent research trend in social science.

Vian Bakir, Eric Herring, David Miller, and Piers Robinson new just-released research examines the positives and negatives of organised persuasive communication.

Most public relations research focuses on the positive side of the industry. But organised persuasive communications also holds substantial negative power if done coercively.

As an example, when looking at vibrant democracies but with current leaders holding leaning preferences towards authoritarianism, like in the United States, Turkey, or Israel, many observers highlight non-consensual organised persuasive communication that subsides as neither informed nor free and exists as propaganda.

A positive consensual aspect of public relations includes dialogical consensual communications whereby stakeholders can actively question and receive feedback from a leader. Also, strategic one-way consensual persuasion represents positive public relations.

But negative public relations involve four areas: deception where stakeholders are misinformed, incentivisation and coercion where adherence is not free and fair, and combinations of deception and coercion whereby adherence is not free and fair and also misinformed. US President Donald Trump utilises the negative form of organised persuasive communication with, according to the Washington Post, more than 5,000 false or misleadingly deceptive statements since he took office. An example at the corporate level includes one of the vegetable oil firms here in Kenya.

The brand allegedly involves deception through public campaigns touting the product as healthy all the while ignoring the linkages with vegetable oil and certain types of cancer and uses incentivisation through prizes and discounts to lure customers based on false claims.

Additionally, numerous real estate firms in the country make false claims. This week a newer real estate agency paid for advertising on Twitter enticing customers to buy "Nairobi plots" but the plots are past Kitengela towards Isinya.

Other famous firms touting plots in up and coming areas advertise eighth of an acre plots. But if a consumer measures between the beacons, one finds out that many plots for sale only comprise 39 feet by 80 feet instead of the typical 50 by 100 feet to total the 5,000 square feet required in an eighth of an acre plot.

These firms usually incentivise and coerce by creating a false sense of urgency requiring purchasers to put a deposit down before being shown the plots or exhibiting quick time schedules whereby the prices will increase exponentially thus thwarting dialogue and disallowing the consumer to formulate educated well researched opinions before buying.

As we continue to develop our strong public relations sector in Kenya, let us also be wary of telltale warning signs of negative organised persuasive communication and alert industry associations or regulators or incorrect and damaging practices.

1. "Public Relations essentially thrives as organised persuasive communication." Enrich this introductory statement on what Public Relations (PR) really is and include one value PR adds to an organisation. **(5 marks)**
2. There are many misconceptions of Public Relations (PR). Isolate any three (3) alluded to in this article and offer suggestions to correct them. **(6 marks)**
3. Consider any element of PR discussed by Dr Scott and discuss a pure PR theory you would use to either justify or explain PR, to a businessperson who doesn't quite understand the value of PR. **(6 marks)**
4. With the help of specific examples, show the relationship between communication and PR? **(4 marks)**
5. "Public relations professionals create dialogue, shape public opinion, ..." In three (3) distinct arguments and with an example from varied contexts for each argument, judge how PR practitioners shape public opinion today. **(9 marks)**

Question 2 (15 marks)

1. Pick one PR theory and discuss its gist. **(5 marks)**
2. Create a scenario and clearly demonstrate at least three PR angles, and how this theory applies. **(10 marks)**

Question 3 (15 marks)

1. Who are stakeholders? **(3 marks)**
2. Create a simple context and use a theory or model of your choice to segment the stakeholders. **(8 marks)**
3. Justify how you will engage at least three of the stakeholders **(4 marks)**

Question 4 (15 marks)

A company would like to employ a PR assistant. What five skills should they look out for? Link your response to the profession.