Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

BAC 2104: TRENDS IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION

Date: 10ᵗʰ November 2021   **Time: 10:30 – 12:30**

Instructions
1.   This examination consists of **FIVE** 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
Where we have come from and where we are now
   a. Where we came from

To understand the disruptive nature of digital, it is useful to look back over the changes to the media landscape and the public relations and marketing industries over the past two decades.
'Traditional PR'
It's an oversimplification to present public relations as media relations, yet that is how the discipline was most commonly understood in the twentieth century. This is what people mean when they refer to 'traditional PR'.
Back then, public relations worked alongside – or sometimes as an alternative to – mass media advertising. The advertiser paid for their message to appear in the media (through billboards, print advertisements and broadcast time), and the public relations practitioner sought to develop relationships with journalists and craft news stories likely to appeal to reporters and editors. The aim was for these stories to appear in the channels and publications for 'free'.
This has come to be known as 'earned media'. Advertising budgets were typically many times larger than public relations budgets, yet advertising is easier to ignore ('they would say that, wouldn't they?') whereas 'free' mentions in the media came with an implicit editorial endorsement (it must be important because they think it's worth reporting).
This end-of-century narrative was clearly articulated in a 2002 book with a self-explanatory title: *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*. Authors Al Ries and Laura Ries were not predicting the imminent demise of advertising, but rather they argued that advertising brands that no one has heard of is a waste of money compared to first building brand recognition through public relations (which they understood as media publicity).

This public-relations-first approach had long been adopted by fast-growing technology companies. Bill Gates, cofounder of Microsoft, may never have said 'if I was down to my last dollar, I'd spend it on PR' (don't believe everything you read online), but the saying has the ring of truth. Microsoft was more than anything else a public relations success story, and Google and others have since followed this pattern. First, the brand was built by media relations and word of mouth, then once established, advertising was used in a supporting role. The mass media was key in the last century. There were fewer television channels and radio stations, and newspapers had much larger circulations than they do today. There were thousands of specialist trade and consumer titles covering a multitude of hobbies and professional interest areas. There was no way for individuals to publish their own content and no mechanism for mass public dialogue. The media was largely a one-way broadcast form of communication.

b. Where we are now: Digital disruption

Mobile phones and the worldwide web began their early adoption phase in the 1990s. Google became the dominant search engine before the end of the century. But it was not until the first decade of the current century that the digital and social media landscape began to take shape.

The talk is now of convergence. Practitioners – particularly those on the agency side – will often use the terms marketing and PR interchangeably, and while this can lead to short-term confusion (is a PR graduate equipped to apply for a digital marketing role, or a marketing graduate a PR role?), it does have the advantage of encouraging us to see the bigger picture. We are now being forced to think about the purpose of our activities: why does it matter to gain positive media coverage? How does this contribute to the success of the client or organisation? Does the website help or hinder the customer journey? Is effort cultivating conversations on social media rewarded by improved loyalty or reduced customer service costs? How can we quantify the results of these efforts? The two pillars of this converged world of PR and digital marketing are: 1. A broader understanding of the media - and influencer - landscape, often presented as the **PESO model** 2. A recognition that much more can be measured, monitored, counted and analysed. So practitioners who were once solely strong with words, now need to become comfortable with data.

Questions

i.   Describe four differences between 'where we are' and 'where we have come from' in relation to disruption of traditional media and the current situation. (12 marks)

ii.   With examples in each case, describe the concept of PESO model.   (12 marks)

iii.   Reflect on the presentations on 'Digital Hacks' done in class throughout the semester. Discuss a digital tool or skill you learnt from your classmates other than the one you presented on. Provide details on how the tool is used and its importance to a communication practitioner.   (6 marks)

Question 2   (15 marks)

Assume you are consultant in the field of digital communication. A start-up firm has invited you for an interview to assess your suitability for the role of drafting a digital communication strategy. Demonstrate the five elements you would plan as a consultant.

Question 3 **(15 marks)**

With a suitable example in each case, describe the difference between each of the following concepts as used in digital communication.

i. Share of voice and bounce rate
ii. Virtual and augmented reality
iii. Twars and memes:

Question 4 **(15 marks)**

Research has demonstrated that security and privacy in use of ICT, especially in the internet, are the most important thematic areas of concern which include freedom of expression, privacy of communication, and secure online spaces where vulnerable people and institutions feel unsafe.

With reference to real examples of individuals or organizations that have suffered any of the emerging threats, discuss FIVE threats you are likely to face from the internet.

Question 5 **(15 marks)**

Apps were created to make our lives easier and more organized. In many ways they do. Apps help to make work more efficient, and this is especially true for public relations, where there's a constant juggling of clients, clips and collaboration.

a) Outline FIVE Apps that have specifically been developed for use in public relations activities (these should not include social media). (5 marks)

b) In each case, examine the use of the App and how it is used by public relations practitioners. (10 marks)