

**FINAL
ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT**

(COVER PAGE)

Session : APRIL 2022

Programme : Diploma In Mass Communication (DMCN/DMC)

Course : COM2131: Digital Media Communication

Date of Examination :

Time Start : August 6, 2022 (Saturday) @ 8:00am

Time End : August 7, 2022 (Sunday) @ 8:00am

Duration : 24 Hours

Special Instructions :

Answer ALL questions

Material permitted : NIL

Materials provided : NIL

Examiner(s) : Mohd Norhazli Mohamed Azlanudin and Annimalar

Chief Moderator : Mr Wilfred Tan Kwang Shean

This paper consists of 7 printed pages, including the cover page

DIPLOMA IN MASS COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME (DMCN)
DIPLOMA IN DIGITAL MEDIA PROGRAMME (DDM)
COM2131: DIGITAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION
FINAL ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT: APRIL 2022 SESSION

This Alternate Assessment contains **2 (TWO)** parts :

Part A : Article Review (40 marks)

Part B : Case Scenario (60 marks).

Instruction for Part A: Produce an article review based on the digital-media-communication related article given. You need to analyse the article content, compare the findings with other related scholars' articles and summarize the article. The words should be range is from 1000 words to 1100 words only. The article review assignment contains 40 marks. Download the article from the Final Assessment folder. The minimum numbers of references in Harvard Style are 5.

Article Title: **The 5Ws and 1H of Digital Journalism**

Article Author: **Silvio Waisbord**

Article Year Publish: **2019**

Publisher: **Routledge Taylor and Francis Group**

Instruction Part B

Answer **ALL** questions.

Each question consists of 20 marks.

1) Case Scenario 1: **Most Americans Think They Can Spot Fake News. They Can't, Study Finds**

As many as three in four Americans overestimate their ability to spot false headlines -- and the worse they are at it, the more likely they are to share fake news, researchers reported Monday. The study of surveys involving 8,200 people, which published in in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, also showed Republicans are more likely to fall for fake news than Democrats are. The team, led by Ben Lyons, a professor of communications at the University of Utah, showed study volunteers headlines presented in the format of how news articles would look if they appeared in a Facebook feed. They were also asked to rate their ability to determine whether stories were true.

"We show that overconfident individuals are more likely to visit untrustworthy websites in behavioral data; to fail to successfully distinguish between true and false claims about current events in survey questions; and to report greater willingness to like or share false content on social media, especially when it is politically congenial," the team wrote.

"In all, these results paint a worrying picture: The individuals who are least equipped to identify false news content are also the least aware of their own limitations and, therefore, more susceptible to believing it and spreading it further," they added.

"Finally, Republicans are more overconfident than Democrats, which is not surprising given the lower levels of media trust they report."

About 90% of the participants told researchers they believed they were above average in their ability to sniff out fake stories.

"Though Americans believe confusion caused by false news is extensive, relatively few indicate having seen or shared it," Lyons said in a statement.

"If people incorrectly see themselves as highly skilled at identifying false news, they may unwittingly be more likely to consume, believe and share it, especially if it conforms to their worldview."

Prior, R. (2021). Most Americans think they can spot fake news. They can't, study finds. Retrieved May 2022, from <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/31/health/fake-news-study/index.html>

Question 1

Based on the case scenario above, discuss any **EIGHT (8)** possible methods that can combat fake news to spread to the public.

2) Case Scenario 2: Europe's Growing Trail Of Lawsuits Threaten To Stifle Journalism

Lithuania is just one more example of the increasing use of privacy laws to obstruct transparency. In Lithuanian, the term "hot feet," or karštos pėdos, originates from an era in which detectives used to track people down by following their footprints, tracing hot trails to obtain any information a person of interest may hold. Repurposed for the digital age, Karštos Pėdos is now the name of a publicly accessible database housing information regarding potential conflicts of interest, supporting journalists and civil society in Lithuania to connect the dots between public funds, influential politicians and business leaders. Since its launch, however, it has also drawn the attention and ire of the country's State Data Protection Inspectorate (SDPI) — a supervisory authority safeguarding "the human right to personal data protection."

Yet this ongoing clash is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the many attempts across Europe to restrict transparency and threaten journalists, activists, academics and campaigners into silence using Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation lawsuits (SLAPPs). And the shiniest new tool in this legal sandbox is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Even though Karštos Pėdos only visualizes publicly accessible information, the SDPI has alleged that it has been violating the GDPR. And though the law itself states that countries must provide exemptions for “journalistic purposes,” this runs into the slippery question of what constitutes journalism. Co-funded by the European Commission and implemented by Media4Change and the Investigative Journalism Center Siena, the platform itself does not produce or commission journalistic reporting, but it does present data that can form the basis for it, making an undeniable impact on the media environment. Yet the SDPI told me, “the activity of the journalist or other people sharing personal data publicly does not necessarily mean that it falls under the journalistic exemption.”

Fortunately, the country’s Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics — responsible for the “processing of personal data by the media for the purpose of providing information to the public” — disagrees, and confirmed over the summer that Karštos Pėdos is considered a journalistic activity in the context of GDPR. Yet still, the situation has continued to escalate: The platform now awaits the results of a hearing on a hefty fine to be announced later this month, and the situation has unearthed an underlying lack of trust in the whole process. Neringa Jurčiukonytė, the CEO of Media4Change, puts this fear more bluntly: “GDPR is used as a cover for hiding or even removing information, and such actions restrict not only the rights of journalists but also the right of the general public to know about the activities of state institutions, politicians and civil servants.”

And if her statement seems extreme, Lithuania need not look much farther for cautionary tales: In 2019 in Bulgaria, a reform was proposed to the country’s Personal Data Protection Act, seeking to establish a checklist that media outlets must satisfy to secure journalistic exemption. Thankfully, being evaluated on criteria that included responding to “the impact that the disclosure of the personal data or the publishing of the data would have on the data subject’s privacy and reputation,” as well as the potential fine of €20 million, eventually set off alarms and was found unconstitutional. Though they don’t define a specific legal power, SLAPPs can be read as an exercise in outcome-oriented thinking, with a goal to stifle critical reporting or public participation irrespective of the tool used. And for years, defamation was the most common driver for SLAPPs, but it no longer holds sole dominion. The publisher of the Croatian online media outlet Index.hr and its journalists, for example, have been targeted with 65 legal actions, three of which relate to GDPR, anti-discrimination and copyright claims. Similar legal action in Hungary also forced Forbes from newsstands in 2020, after it included one of the owners of Hungarian energy drink company Hell Energy in its list of the 50 richest Hungarians. According to the International Press Institute, “Hell Energy’s suit does not challenge the truthfulness of the information,” but in this case, GDPR and a weakened and captured judiciary was sufficient. For far too long Maltese journalists and transparency campaigners have also wrestled with a media landscape forever distorted by SLAPP actions. Assassinated investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was sued for the first time in 1994, and 67 defamation lawsuits were filed against her during her professional life.

While Caruana Galizia was never personally threatened with a GDPR lawsuit, the foundation that bears her name now has been. In 2020, the foundation received two letters from a law firm representing two businessmen mentioned in articles published on Caruana Galizia’s personal

blog. They demanded the deindexing, removal and modification of the articles published in 2015, as they contained “outdated and distorted” information. The request was reiterated in 2021, this time alleging defamation.

Sometimes, simply mentioning a name can even be enough. Like in December 2020, when MaltaToday received a legal letter on behalf of Farnoush Farsiar, demanding the removal of an article from the outlet’s website. The reason? That the publication of her name amounted to the unlawful processing of her personal data. In a jurisdiction so malleable to financial influence, bringing GDPR action against MaltaToday must have appeared an obvious next step, though its likelihood of success was perhaps limited. However, speaking to Caruana Galizia’s sister Corinne Vella, it becomes clear that while GDPR threats may be relatively new, the playbook is certainly not. Threats do not need to make it to court to disrupt reporting and public participation. And even if they do, the process begins a long time before that. Just like the defamation threats that plagued Maltese journalists, they drain resources and confidence, encourage the need for legal representation and intimidate those speaking out, making them question the risk of publication.

And Vella raises an important point: Like defamation, GDPR is a balance of rights issue, and like any such balance, the outcome is always imperfect. In the digital age, the right to privacy and attempts by which we can take control of our data are vitally important. But this cannot come at the expense of transparency, accountability or media freedom. Paired with the challenges highlighted by the ongoing tug-of-war between the SDPI and Karštos Pėdos, all these examples underscore a complexity that must be faced head on by both national governments and the European Commission — sooner rather than later. If we do nothing, the trail may run cold.

Williams, N. (2022, February 14). Europe’s growing trail of lawsuits threaten to stifle journalism. Retrieved from Politico: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europes-growing-trail-of-lawsuits-threaten-to-stifle-journalism/>

Question 2

Based on the case scenario above, explain **EIGHT (8)** repercussions of data privacy violation to the readers made by international online journalism websites with similar examples of happening in Malaysia.

3) Case Scenario 3: **Why Is Trust In Media Plummeting? Just Look At What's Happening At CNN**

Media outlets are supposed to report the news not become it. On Wednesday CNN found itself coming afoul of that rule when Jeff Zucker abruptly resigned from his position as network president amid lurid circumstances. In a memo sent to colleagues, Zucker explained he was stepping down after failing to disclose a “consensual relationship” with a close colleague. While Zucker didn’t name the colleague directly, Allison Gollust, CNN’s executive vice-president and chief marketing officer, has confirmed her involvement in a memo to employees.

Hang on a minute. Is a powerful man really resigning from a big job because he had a consensual relationship with a colleague? That’s not the usual way of things; many men have been accused of far worse transgressions and still managed to cling to power. Well here’s some context: Gollust happens to be the former communications director for disgraced former New York governor Andrew Cuomo. And Zucker’s relationship with Gollust came up during an internal investigation into former anchor Chris Cuomo, who was fired from CNN in December after using his job to help his brother, Andrew, combat sexual harassment allegations (leading some commentators to dub CNN the “Cuomo Nepotism Network”).

Zucker stood by Chris Cuomo for months when his conflict-of-interest scandal first hit but eventually fired him a few days after the anchor was accused of sexual misconduct by a junior colleague at another network. Like his brother, it seems Chris holds a grudge. Two sources told Politico that it was Cuomo’s legal team, which is still negotiating his exit from the network, who flagged the relationship between Zucker and Gollust. A reporter from media startup Puck News has also claimed that CNN received a letter from Cuomo’s lawyers asking for all communications between Zucker, Gollust and Cuomo to be preserved. While Zucker may not be having a very good week, Donald Trump (whose views on CNN are common knowledge) is having a ball. “Jeff Zucker, a world-class sleazebag who has headed ratings and real-news-challenged CNN for far too long, has been terminated for numerous reasons, but predominantly because CNN has lost its way with viewers,” Trump wrote in a statement.

I hate to say it, but Trump has a point. You don’t have to be a cynic to reckon that CNN’s dismal ratings may factor into Zucker’s sudden departure: CNN had record ratings during the Trump years but has seen viewership plummet recently. The Cuomo scandal certainly hasn’t helped the network’s credibility: during the early days of the pandemic Chris Cuomo repeatedly interviewed his brother on air and it was largely treated like hilarious banter instead of a clear conflict of interest. And that’s hardly been the only embarrassment the network has suffered: last year Jeffrey Toobin, CNN’s chief legal analyst exposed himself on a Zoom call with colleagues. While the New Yorker fired Toobin from his staff writer position, CNN gave him a little tap on the wrist and put him back on the air.

There are lots of brilliant, hard-working, journalists at CNN. However, Zucker has a storied history in reality TV (he green-lit *The Apprentice* during his time at NBC) and, under his stewardship, CNN has treated politics like entertainment. There have been several instances where the most basic journalistic principles have gone out of the window because “good TV” was more important. In 2016, for example, CNN hired Corey Lewandowski to be a political commentator shortly after he’d been fired as Trump’s campaign manager. They hired Lewandowski to talk about politics when the man was still collecting severance pay from Trump and had signed a contract prohibiting him from disparaging Trump. And it gets worse: in 2019, after being accused of sexual assault and boasting that he has “no obligation to be honest with the media”, CNN invited him back on air.

Trust in media has declined dramatically and the media can’t just blame that on people like Trump shouting “fake news”. There is a revolving door between high-profile jobs in cable news and big jobs in government: the idea that journalists and politicians are part of an overlapping “elite” with aligned interests isn’t entirely misplaced. Take Zucker’s public “feud” with Trump, for example. Rather than being sworn enemies, the two have always had a symbiotic relationship. Back in 2016 Michael Cohen, Trump’s former fixer, secretly recorded conversations between the two in which Zucker can be heard lavishing praise on Trump, who he refers to as “the boss”. “I have all these proposals for [Trump],” Zucker says at one point in the tapes. “Like, I want to do a weekly show with him and all this stuff.”

Now that Zucker and Trump are both out of jobs, perhaps they’ll finally put that weekly show together. In the meantime the fallout at CNN should be a wakeup call for everyone in media. Trust is hard to win and very easy to lose.

Mahdawi, A. (2022, February 3). Opinion CNN. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/03/why-is-trust-in-media-plummeting-just-look-at-whats-happening-at-cnn>

Question 3

Based on the case scenario above, discuss any **FIVE (5)** reasons why some people do not fully trust the news media nowadays with **FIVE (5)** possible solutions solutions respectively.

~THE END~

COM2131 (Final)/ April 2022