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INSTRUCTION GUIDELINE

ASIAN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

ASSIGNMENT 3

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A. ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY:

In this section, we will revisit the assignment's expectations and the steps necessary to complete the assignment effectively.

1. Assessed criteria:

    - Explain communication and media theories and their application in the Asian context

    - Analyze the key political, social, cultural and technological factors that have influenced the development of Asian media and communication

    - Identify and discuss the opportunities and challenges relating to Asian media and communication

    - Students will be assessed on their skills in formulating an argument, researching, analyzing, expressing and developing ideas to address the argument.

    - Students will also be assessed on their ability to apply relevant concepts and theories from the course to analyze the chosen prompt AND to select and use appropriate peer reviewed sources

2. Assignment details:

    - *Requirement:* write an independently researched essay (white paper) about ONE of the following topics:

        - Media and communication industries as complicit

        - Media and communication as a social institution

        - Media and communication for propaganda

        - Media and communication for social change

        - Media and communication practices and pressing social problems

- *Format:* a 1,750-word white paper
- *Objectives:*
  - Word count of 1,750 (excluding references and appendices)
  - A minimum of 8 academic sources to be cited (sources in your annotated bibliography can be used and/or changed as you see fit). You should also use other high-quality sources, such as government documents, NGO papers, statistics and data, or news articles
  - You can only use ONE theory or concept as a lens when discussing your argument throughout the essay.
- *Assignment structure (suggested in course content):*
  - Title
  - Introduction
  - Context or background information
  - Conceptual framework
  - Data or cases or case study
  - Analysis or discussion
  - Recommendations
  - Conclusion

B. KEY TERM DEFINITION:

In this segment, we will take another look at the terminology associated with assignment that is discussed within the context of the course.

Term	Definition
White paper	A report that informs readers concisely about an issue. It is meant to help readers understand an issue, provide ways to solve a problem, or make a suggestion.

Structure & agency	- Structure: societal arrangements (such as government, politics as well as norms, values) which influence or limit our choices and opportunities - Agency: the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices This theory enhances the belief that human behavioral patterns are influenced by structure and agency.
Technological determinism	A reductionist theory that aims to provide a causative link between technology and a society's nature. It tries to explain as to whom or what could have a controlling power in human affairs. The theory questions the degree to which human thought or action is influenced by technological factors.
Social shaping of technology	Decisions regarding the promotion of specific technological innovations are influenced by social factors. In other words, this theory rationalizes that humans shape the development of technology.
Political economy of new media	The theory delves into the ways in which economic policies, structures, and outcomes are shaped by and shape political institutions, processes, and ideologies. In relation to media, this approach argues that there needs an understanding of the regulations affecting information and communication technologies (ICTs) and/or the digital media-driven communication environment.
Public sphere	The idea of the public sphere involves a conceptual space where people gather to participate in reasoned discussions, deliberation, and debates on topics of shared importance. It

	provides a new perspective of looking at the world of public discourse and societal communication.
Participatory culture	This theory concerns the environments that allow people to actively participate in the creation and sharing of content and products, becoming producers rather than just consumers. The rapidly developing communication technology is accelerating this culture as more and more individuals become creators and distributors on online platforms.

C. FOOD FOR HUNGRY THOUGHTS

Courtois C and Timmermans E (2018) 'Cracking the Tinder Code: An Experience Sampling Approach to the Dynamics and Impact of Platform Governing Algorithms', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(1):1-16.

Nurhayati-Wolff H (2022) *Leading mobile dating apps in Vietnam as of September 2020*, Statista website, accessed 25 December 2023.
www.statista.com/statistics/1188428/vietnam-leading-mobile-dating-apps/

Ranzini G, Lutz C and Hjorth L (2017) 'Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives', *Mobile media & communication*, 5(1):80-101, doi:10.1177/2050157916664559.

Rochadiat AMP, Tong ST and Corriero EF (2020) 'Intimacy in the app age: Romantic relationships and mobile technology', in Ling R, Fortunati L, Goggin G, Lim SS and Li Y (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Communication and Society*, Oxford University Press.

'The Growing Moral Panic Over Prostitution And Sex Trafficking'

Seol, 'International Sex Trafficking in Women in Korea: Its Causes, Consequences and Countermeasures'

Becker, 'Crime and punishment: an economic approach, Palgrave MacMillan, UK, London'

Kallis RB (2020) 'Understanding the motivations for using Tinder', *Qualitative research reports in communication*, 21(1):66-73, doi:10.1080/17459435.2020.1744697.

Kleck and Barnes, 'Do More Police Lead to More Crime Deterrence?'

Soothill and Walby, 'Sex crime in the news'

Jain, Sahoo and Kaubiyal, 'Online social networks security and privacy: comprehensive review and analysis'

Pevac, 'Tertiary Victimization of Sexual Violence Victims Online: How the Internet Needs to Become a Safer Space for Women'

Nguyen, 'Sex Trafficking and the Attribution of Blame: A Comparison between Vietnamese and American Perception of Sex-trafficked Individuals'

D. DETAILED OUTLINE:

In this step, we will discuss in detail each component and its requirements within the assignment.

When choosing a topic to conduct research on, it is worth mentioning that you must be able to identify a particular case study alongside that before commencing the white paper. In other words, you should not start researching a subject without having a clear case study of that subject in mind. More details about this in the "Case study analysis" section.

Considering the 5 categories of media and communication the assignment has proposed, in general the "media and communication for social change" and "media and communication practices and pressing social problems" topics should be taken up because they are comparatively easier to gather data, easier to explore various areas of life and easier to rationalize your views on. Keep in mind that these topics can intertwine and exchange ideas, thus you are also required to form connections to further enrich your argument. For this instruction guideline, the latter topic has been chosen as a point of focus, with the specific case study being that of Tinder's practices in matching algorithms and their effects on real life relationships.

1. <u>INTRODUCTION:</u>

The purpose of this section is two-fold: to introduce the topic of the white paper and to announce your positional perspective on it. Depending on the angle you adopt regarding the topic and the white paper's approach to the topic, you'll need to look at the following aspects: the difference in angle and perspective between you and other sources on the same topic, the knowledge gap/opportunity your paper seeks to elaborate on, and the goal of your topic - from settling a debate or intending to provide greater insights into the problem. This structure below should provide support in terms of composing this segment:

- *Introduce what the existing studies or researchers have found about the topic:*
  Start with general and broad concepts, then with each following sentence narrow the scope of your white paper to the specific aspect you've chosen to research on.

<u>Example:</u> Online communities have, since their establishment, enabled seamless and seemingly "real" connection between people => Nowadays, there is a market of applications for every single type of interaction: Snapchat, Messenger, Zalo for messaging, Instagram for photo publishing, TikTok for video consumption and creation, Hinge, Tinder for dating. => In the dating scene, Tinder proves to be a heavyweight app compared to others (Rochadiat et al. 2020) => To formulate relationships based on users'

preferences and personal info, unique algorithms are constructed by Tinder (Courtois and Timmermans 2018).

Another idea for you: Cybersex crime in South Korea

The 2021 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights a disturbing trend: traffickers are increasingly turning to virtual platforms to sell photos and videos of sexual abuse and exploitation. This method allows them to profit globally without incurring extra costs

- *Introduce your critiques to the above or show the gap in the knowledge about the topic. Support them with academic, reliable sources.*

Example: Tinder has enjoyed relative success in the Vietnamese market, amassing millions of users ever since its entrance. However, the social impacts and their implications on the romantic relationships alongside expectations of one's significant others have yet to be studied in relation to this country. Furthermore, the balance of research has been generally one-sided when it comes to Tinder, as most articles attend to the motives and reasons behind a person's use of the app (Ranzini et al. 2017; Kallis 2020) thus the knowledge gap regarding its effects on the socio-cultural environment still exists. Consequently, governments and the public are left in the dark about the possible adverse influence Tinder's matching algorithms will have on its users.

Another idea for you:

Various studies have proposed different methods for tackling cybersex trafficking. Weitzer (2005) suggested legal reforms, particularly legalizing prostitution, as a strategy. Seol (2004) focused on increasing public awareness about trafficking dangers through media, public campaigns, and educational programs.

→ These strategies have proven to be either insufficient or unpredictable. For instance, Becker (1968) argued that tougher sentencing and harsher punishments might not

effectively reduce crime rates. Similarly, Kleck and Barnes (2014) noted that simply increasing police presence may not be an effective deterrent.

→ However, Efforts to address the problem of cybersex trafficking have largely overlooked a critical perspective: focusing on the victims and their experiences.

- *Introduce the main concept/theory you'll use:*
  You can follow the structure laid out below: "In response to this debate, this white paper aims to provide knowledge/reconcile/etc. about (insert your topic)." Afterward, bring forward your data/case study.

Example: In response to this situation, this white paper seeks to provide new knowledge and findings regarding the discourse around dating apps, Tinder in particular, their algorithms as a media practice, and effects on intimate relationships. Informed by the concept of technological determinism, this white paper uses X as a case study to present real life implications.

- *Introduce the position of your paper/research question/thesis statement:*
  Don't mistake the topic of discussion with your thesis statement, the latter should be brought forward now, providing a glimpse into what your stance on this problem is (do you support Tinder's algorithms, are those algorithms helpful for the user, etc.).

Example: Conclusively, this essay asserts that despite the technological edges algorithms deployed by Tinder are assumed to possess, their purpose aligns closer with the company's financial targets and user attraction in comparison to the interest of the common user.

Another idea for you: This paper presents the argument that cybersex trafficking is a significant manifestation of power abuse in the realm of social media.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

You're expected to deliver brief information about the country in which the topic is occurring along with the topic itself in greater detail. Depending on your topic, you may want to explore from 2 to 3 different aspects of background information. For each aspect, you need to supply credible sources, preferably statistics and tables to demonstrate your research rather than just purely citations.

<u>Example:</u> For the above topic, you may explore these aspects:

- The Vietnamese media and communication settings, systems, and methods => Explaining how the country operates and regulates media and communication
- The Vietnamese ideas regarding love, dating and online dating (go from general to specific)
- Tinder: its profile, revenue, influence in the Vietnamese market
- The multifaceted nature of software algorithms and how it alters romantic relationships in the case of dating apps, especially Tinder

The supportive concepts "algorithms" and "relationships" should be explained not on their own but in relation to Tinder and/or one another. For instance, the third bullet point is a combination of background research in romantic relationships in Vietnam. Or the final bullet point concerns the direct link between dating, loving and in the many ways that online formulas can intercept (affect positively/negatively) between those experiences. The deeper the connection between concepts you can establish, the sounder your argument will later turn out to be. The intention of this section is to convince readers why the country and the case the paper uses are worthy of study.

TIPS: Again, try to provide numbers, figures, statistics to prove your point. If they aren't applicable to your matter of discussion, try credible sources as always. To illustrate, here is how Tinder squares up to other dating apps in Vietnam as of 2020:
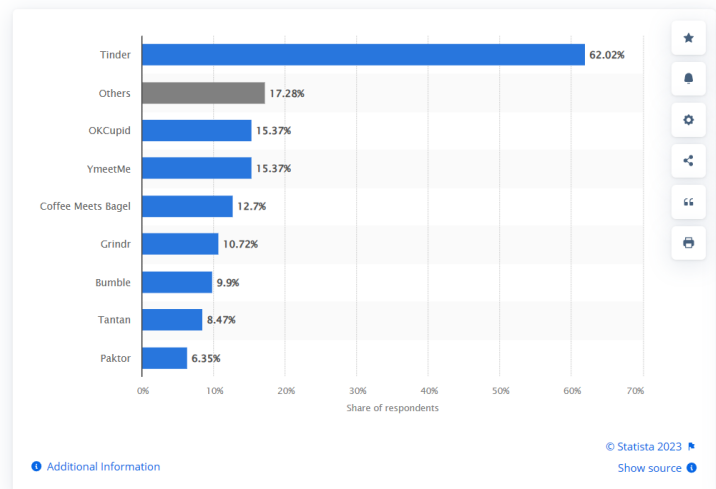
Figure 1: Leading mobile dating apps in Vietnam as of September 2020

Source: Nurhayati-Wolff 2022

You can compose your following sentences elaborating on this as follows: "Tinder's performances in the virtual dating world has rendered its name a household in the Vietnamese market, leading the race miles ahead of competitors at 62.02% when comparing the percentage of users". Afterwards, go deeper into the subject with explanation on the implications of this statistic on society, economy and dating business.

Another idea for you:
- The definition of cybersex trafficking (Add scholarly source here)
- The truth of the issue:
    - The widespread cultural production and diffusion in South Korea → significant increase in both the exposure to and consumption of online sex trafficking content
    - Sexual crimes have often been a taboo subject, leading to their significant under-reporting in media representations. In some cases, these acts are not even acknowledged as crimes (Soothill and Walby 1991)

- ○ In 2019, The Mekong Club reported that Asian countries, particularly South Korea known for its significant cybersex trafficking dens, consistently recorded high rates of sex crimes during that period. The year 2018 saw a surge in the spy-cam (molka) issue, which was followed by the Seungri Burning Sun scandal in 2019.
  - ○ The Covid-19 has led to even higher rate of data mining for illegitimate purposes (Jain et al. 2021)
- ● The effects on stakeholders:
  - ○ The Korean sex chat rooms → the blatant violation of the rights of women and children in the country.
  - ○ The wave of sex crimes → women, even teenage girls, suffer from severe physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Pevac 2020:53; Nguyen 2018).

3. <u>CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</u>:

Since you can only opt for 1 theoretical concept for this assignment, you have plenty of words to explore it in-depth. You should devote at least 2 paragraphs in this section to fully exploit its ideas. The following structure can be of help:

- ● *1st paragraph:*
  - - Definition and meaning of the theory. For instance: public sphere refers to the '...' (insert source).
  - - Purpose or implication of the theory (what it seeks to understand). To illustrate: first popularized by scholar X, the participatory culture theory has become synonymous with societal progress and is only looking to accelerate due to the advancements of technology. This implies that…
  - - Components of the theoretical framework. If a theory includes pivotal components that require descriptions, then you should elaborate briefly in a phrase or an entire sentence on one characteristic. To illustrate, structure & agency framework consists of 2 components, thus you have to explain both

of them separately. If one does not possess multiple sub-factors to it, you can ignore this step and instead inspect its implications further.

- *2nd paragraph:* Establish a connection between the theory and your topic. Some of the following questions may help you kickstart this segment:
    - Link back to the general topic:

      Example: The core idea of the political economy of media directly concerns Tinder as a substantial driver of the dating application market.
    - Link back to the specific aspect of the topic:

      Example: On a more specific note, it allows for deeper reading into the success of algorithm mechanics that skyrockets Tinder's revenue streams, shaping the very foundations of the romantic experience of contemporary society.
    - Link to your case study:

      Example: On this front, a case study regarding X will be studied for a real life instance of this practice. From there, as both the benefits and drawbacks of this mathematical approach to an aspect where logic often "fails", the veil obscuring the public's perspective on it will be cleared.

4. <u>PRESENTING YOUR CASE STUDY/DATA:</u>

Before selecting your subject to write about in this paper, conduct preliminary research (secondary research) regarding your case study. The case or data set can be from your observation of a specific media platform (LinkedIn, YouTube, Reddit, CNN, BBC, radio, etc.), a policy related to it, and more. You should not solely rely on case studies that have been established by others, but also on cases that have a lot of potential aspects to discover as well. Moreover, the more specific your case study is, the deeper the connection you can make to prove your argument. Nevertheless, a case study analysis should never contradict or create new points to discover - it should serve as a real life example of the topic you've chosen, examined through the lenses of theoretical concepts to deliver comprehensive evidence regarding what you're proposing.

Besides, the objective remains that you provide examples or evidence from real life which can help you prove your thesis statement. Bear in mind, the goal of this phase is to supply readers with a convincing case and demonstrate your ability of presenting relevant evidence.

To illustrate, you might find that even though Tinder has a lot of case studies, readings and insights to its algorithm's effectiveness, after performing secondary research, you come to the conclusion that there isn't a representational example in real life. Therefore, you divert your topic's attention to something that has: the authenticity of Instagram influencers' personalities. For this topic, you're seeking if there's a difference between a KOL's real life characteristics and their online ones. You identify that artist X is a prime example of there being a large disparity between those notions - that could be a potential case study. The more specific, the better.

First, you need to lay out the premise of your case study. In a neutral, unbiased tone, supply the reader with facts and figures about what has happened or is happening or happened, the ways in which it is occurring (how) and the reasons behind the phenomenon (why). An easy way to approach composing this part is to devote one paragraph to answering each one of those questions.

Example:

- **1st paragraph:** Even though charity work can vary in its methods, sizes and its destination community or individual, it is often a crucial responsibility that both companies and affluent people are expected to perform. As Vietnam is a country often impacted by natural catastrophes, namely the floods and tornadoes in the central region, these donations have become increasingly important for the communities living in such areas. Therefore, when renowned actor and comedian Hoai Linh declared he was going to donate 14 billion VND to those affected by natural disasters in that region, everyone was delighted. However,... This presents

an ambiguously sharp point of difference to his bubbly, kind-hearted public image on Instagram.

- **2nd paragraph:** The Vietnamese media wasted no time catching up with his controversial inaction… Hoai Linh also explained how the process was going to be carried out…

- **3rd paragraph:** So the big question is why has this been allowed to occur? The reasons behind that are… This is further incentivized by the…

5. <u>CASE STUDY/DATA ANALYSIS:</u>

This section's aim revolves around showcasing your critical thinking and analysis skills while connecting with course concepts and the topic at hand. The structure of this section will vary according to your topic and chosen theoretical framework, but a rough direction can be observed below:

- *1st segment:* Elaborate on how the theory is manifesting itself in the case of the case study (in this case the structure & agency theory is applied)

  Example: For Hoai Linh's 14 billion VND donation to the central region communities, one can observe the interesting influence of both societal structure and personal agency. Undoubtedly, when it comes to donations, a public figure performing such an action is subjected to public scrutiny and often receives showers of praises for their "kind-heartedness" and "care" for the unlucky. This is a double benefit that projects a win-win situation for both the benefactor and the donor, and in the case of Hoai Linh, his intended agency most likely includes appraisal for his public image…

- *2nd segment:* From here you can explore different options based on your concept and case study. Maybe providing another supporting idea will strengthen your argument, or examining a counter-argument if you deem it introduces more depth to your topic.

- *3rd segment:* discuss the implications, meanings and deductions you gain knowledge of after analyzing the case. What does this mean for Tinder/for

Vietnamese dating traditional/for the users/for the media and communication landscape/for government policies?

Another idea for you:

- 1st paragraph:

   <u>Example:</u> Online data privacy invasion → Motive of traffickers behind such an organized sex crime.

   In the digital realm, where social statuses and identities can be fabricated, traffickers have the opportunity to construct their own environments for recruiting and manipulating victims.

   Under the concept of Surveillance Capitalism, as described by Zuboff in 2015, the victimization process begins with deceptive techniques aimed at bypassing individual awareness, ultimately leading to the erosion of personal autonomy. Surveillance capitalists possess numerous opportunities to uncover secrets, increasingly utilizing these to restrict people's choices regarding what aspects of their lives can remain private. → Unable to do anything or escape from the issue

   2nd paragraph: Provide a detailed example that could further elaborate the application of the theory in real life

   <u>Example:</u>

   Utilizing platforms like Twitter and Instagram, Baksa targeted women and children in need of jobs or money, enticing them to share personal information. This included sensitive photos, videos, or even home addresses, which were then collected on Telegram. With the sensitive materials in his possession, he wielded them as leverage over the victims, labeling them as his slaves. He used the threat of disseminating their private data or inflicting physical harm to compel obedience whenever they resisted his demands.

Exploiting the fact that victims often don't realize they are being trafficked until it's too late, his modus operandi involves transforming a seemingly benefit-based relationship into one of asymmetrical power. This is achieved through just an online conversation, compelling the victims to comply

6. <u>RECOMMENDATIONS:</u>

The recommendations section should be compiled by 2 elements: suggestions for ways to fix/maintain/develop the phenomenon AND direction for future studies. Each one should have its own paragraph.

● *Recommendations for ways to handle the issue:*

For this section, it is commendable to come up with a solution for certain entities that can alter the phenomenon. Ideally 2 organizations or individuals (government, industry, upper management, etc.) can be identified and then recommended about a course of action. The 1-1 structure (one organization/individual - one recommendation) is advisable.

Example: Amidst of this controversial debate, more emphasis is placed on governmental bodies to resolve this issue and also clear up any misconception in the future. As the structure-agenda balance is currently uneven as a person's agenda has not received warning or questioning from authorities, it is advisable that the former be reinforced in the form of policies, rules and regulations pertaining to the practice of donation. Imperative is the intervention of local government in the donation process to guarantee it undergoes proper procedures and the assets arrive with benefactors without fail.

● *Queries for future studies:*

Moving onto future implications, you should touch on the aspects that you feel are not adequately represented in readings or case studies. Perhaps you've recognized that insufficient research has been carried out regarding Instagram's verification protocol for making sure the person's identity is accurate, thus you should set it as a direction that analysis in the future can delve deeper into. At least 1 direction should be suggested.

Example: On the other hand, this white paper presents several shortcomings, one of them due to the lack of… Future studies can be carried out into this aspect to allow more avenues to be explored, in turn more comprehensive understanding can be achieved when it comes to Instagram's influence on a societal scale.

7. CONCLUSION:

Summarize your main points throughout the white paper: the topic, specific aspect, theory, case study, implications and recommendations.

Example: In summary, this white paper highlights a contemporary problem pertaining to the phenomenon of contrasting characteristics between a person's virtual and real life selves, with the use of X as a theoretical scope. The case of Hoai Linh's obscure donation efforts acted as a prime example of this disparity, allowing for experimental recommendations to be assigned for government and Instagram management itself.