



MAKING THE PR IMPACT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Great leaders use communication for
making an impact

W7 WORLDWIDE

Level 6, Office 145 | Al-Faisaliyah Business Building |

P.O. Box 2064, 23442 | Jeddah KSA

T: +966 12 661 4579 | **W:** www.w7worldwide.com

Follow us on LinkedIn | Twitter

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The world today is undergoing a sea of change. The whole gamut of our behavior and business; education and careers; progress and developments; and even the nature of crimes and conflicts have been shaken to the roots. The process was set in motion during the 1990s when the internet began gaining ground globally. The pandemic years during 21-2020 only speeded up the process that took us all to a digital realm creating a tectonic shift in all sectors, affecting life globally — personal or public, individual conversation or business dealings, and media or public relations.

We in the business of public relations felt the need to make a review of the development considering its impact, mainly on the PR sector, and outline or revisit PR strategies based on those new changes. In terms of reference, we focused on the state of the sector, its relations with market forces, its challenges and contributions to the Vision Plan of 2030.

While the digital storm continues to carve a new arc of life, affecting nearly all areas of public interest, the PR industry is probably one of the few areas that are least affected by the transformation. Rather, what we find is that it came as a big boon to PR. Yet, it was not without new challenges that spurred PR professionals to adjust their positioning as well as devise new strategies to remain in the saddle.

INTRODUCTION



The wide use of the internet during the closing decade of the last century gradually brought forth the digital revolution making it possible to share a wealth of information with people all over the world through a variety of internet channels including online media titles, social media websites, influencers, bloggers, and podcasts.

The pandemic speeded up the process. According to a **McKinsey report**, consumers embraced five years' worth of digital adoption just 8 weeks into the pandemic. This quick transformation forced countries as well as brands to rethink and reevaluate their marketing and PR strategies.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of the leading countries to understand the immensity of the sector. It soon created a Digital Media Committee to activate the digital media in the Kingdom to contribute to developing the business sector, create partnerships, and benefit from the media experts.

As things were changing, some sectors that were used to the traditional way of working, had to take the brunt. Several media shops — the backbone of a PR agency — began shuttering. And, therefore, PR agencies doubled down to adapt to the nuances of the new era and went beyond writing press releases or creating a media presence for a brand.



FACTS



**\$5.3
BILLION**

Saudi Arabia's digital content market is expected to grow between **SR16bn and SR20bn (5.3\$bn)** by 2030



**SR1.2
BILLION**

The investment rate in video content in Saudi Arabia is expected to reach **SR1.2bn.**



**\$175
MILLION**

Video generated **175\$ million** in revenue locally, with video streaming **127\$ million**, and the expected market size is **262\$ million in 2025.**



**169
BILLION**

Minutes of video content is believed to have been created every month in 2020 as video traffic grew eightfold in the Middle East and Africa. Videos **make up 79 percent** of global Internet traffic.



MAKING AN IMPACT

The pandemic has taken a heavy toll on some areas like the traditional media which is fast going out of fashion in the face of the rising use of the internet and the increasing use of online platforms for news and general information. This has thrown new challenges before the PR industry and also created confusion as to how to leverage the industry to make an impact.

PR agencies are fast embracing effective and smart strategies to cater to a wide range of audiences who are not accessible through traditional ways, mainly print such as newspapers and magazines, and traditional broadcasting channels like TV and radio. The PR industry took use of it targeting specific consumers in new-earned areas such as online media sites and social media sites, gradually shifting to digital PR. It realizes that digital thing is here to stay for quite some time, maybe decades.

The PR sector will surely have to be serious over the next few months, charting new paths and devising newer strategies. With new technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning (ML) and internet-of-things (IoT) making their way into the industry thick and fast, everything — from staff training to hiring the right talent — will have an impact on its digital transformation journey.

The best thing is that it sets out to replace traditional PR in a cost-effective way. It ensures a greater result-oriented investment (ROI) than traditional PR as all digital PR tactics can be measured, tracked, and optimized, promising better results. Unlike traditional PR the turnaround time of delivery of a campaign has been reduced from months to hours, which helps the brand to fast the process of PR. Not just the delivery time has shortened but even the brands can access PR services at affordable rates. Due to the emergence of digital PR and its bespoke features, startups and small businesses can use the best of PR and emerge in their respective domains.

Digitization has helped brands grow and even media publication has leveraged this. To capitalize on this evolution, news and media companies are harnessing the power of their digital platforms to generate insights into readers' behavior in ways that were never before possible. Companies are improving reader engagement and online revenue performance by applying these insights with increasing sophistication.



CHALLENGES

We find some of the biggest difficulties facing the PR and communications industry today.

Coordination.

01

Scheduling and coordinating with clients or coworkers is critical in any job, even more so for PR professionals. With strict deadlines, client meetings, and a 7/24 news cycle, PR professionals have a full plate.

02

Audiences.

Consumers are more technology savvy and doing more research. This means that audiences are harder to impress, especially in highly competitive markets. So, to make a long-lasting impact, as a PR professional, you need to do your homework. And to do that, you need to dive deeper into your audience's psyche to better understand their needs and preferences. This is one of the biggest challenges that people who work in the industry are facing.

Measuring impact.

03

Despite having plenty of online data and media intelligence, measurable results are hard to spot on. It's difficult to provide clients with an exact ROI (return on investment). Circulation and audience reach are not precise indicators since they don't always guarantee success. With all the tools and metrics available, it's still not enough to get definite numbers or figures that define impact.

04

Grabbing attention

A serious challenge to public relations is to remain visible to journalists, who are flooded with hundreds of pitches on a daily basis. It's difficult for a story to stand out in a sea of emails. Thus, what ultimately matters is how, and to what extent, one can develop one's relations with journalists and editors to get their attention. Even if it's a bit difficult, it's not impossible.



STRATEGIES

Technology is changing – and improving – so it's important to train and retrain the staff every now and then. With a skilled and knowledgeable workforce enabled by technology, a PR agency is bound to attract more consumers and greater media attention, besides outsmarting competitors.

A digital PR strategy encompasses the most important tactics that have the potential to drive defined business goals. In order to achieve the desired results, public relations professionals need to have the following bases for digital PR:



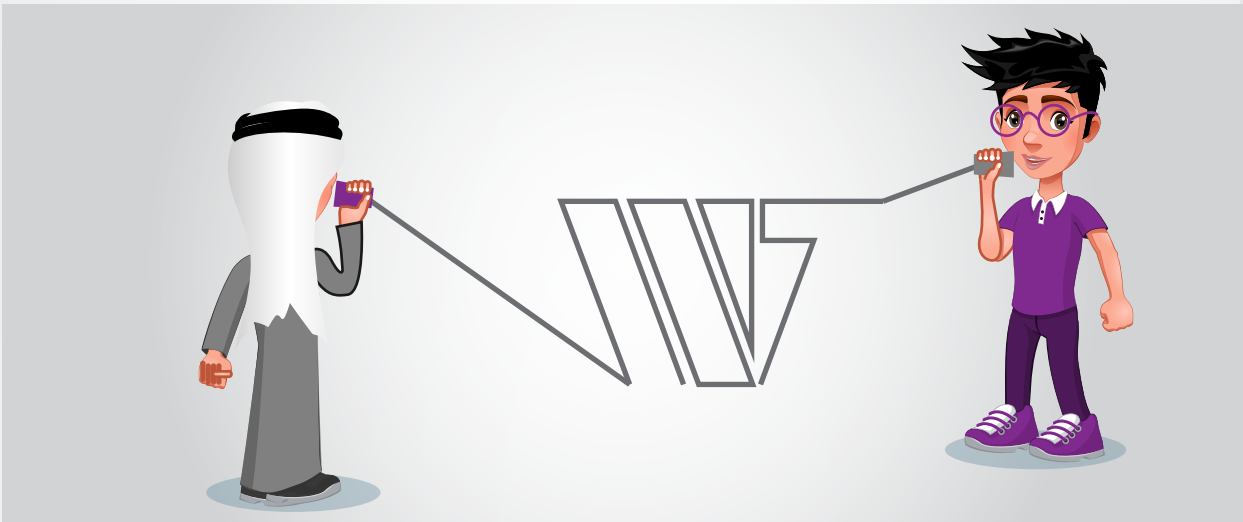


CONCLUSION



Digital wave that has made a dent in the media impact has affected little the image, relevance, and the need for a PR agency. Yet, the rapid evolution of technology with a tinge of uncertainties drives the industry to go for smart strategies. While research, effective communication, and creative content telling the story differently still hold the key, PR practitioners need to keep their workforce agile with a digital culture in place.

ABOUT W7 WORLDWIDE



W7 WORLDWIDE is an independent GCC marketing communications consultancy based in Saudi Arabia. Our understanding of the local market converged with our global reach and knowledge enables us to bridge our clients with their audiences effectively. We are aligned by the objective of filling the gap in communication that exists in the local market. Therefore, our specialty lies in building bridges that sustain relationships and create brand reputation and value through innovative approaches. Our array of services is, but not limited to:

- Reputation Management
- Stakeholder Mapping
- Crisis Management
- Media Relations
- Public Relations
- Social Media
- Marketing and Brand solutions

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For more information:

Our Official Website: <http://www.w7worldwide.com/>

 +966 12 661 4579

 +966 56 720 1039

 info@w7worldwide.com

 www.w7worldwide.com

 @w7worldwide