



Register Number:

Date:

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE
I SEMESTER BCA/BVC END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION Oct 2019
MEDIA, CULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY (MCT) – GE 114

Time: 2 ½ hours

Max marks: 70

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. This booklet contains 7 pages and 2 sections.
2. Answer the questions according to the sections assigned to you.
3. Please indicate your section clearly on the front page of your answer booklet.
4. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits.
5. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination

MCT A: WRITING A PERSONAL HISTORY OF TECHNOLOGY

I. Read this article from *Esquire*:

Self-discovery can be found in a lot of places: religion, meditation, a solo trek through the Andes. Luckily, it can also be found on the internet.

1 | What Your Politics Really Are

politicalcompass.org

“A man who is not a liberal at 16 has no heart. A man who is not a conservative at 60 has no head.”

So said Benjamin Disraeli / Winston Churchill / your grumpy Granddad (no one can quite decide who). The point is, for most people, political convictions are something that change over time.

By testing how much you agree with various statements – some relatively straight forward (‘Possessing marijuana for personal use should not be a criminal offence’), some a little more challenging (‘People with serious inheritable disabilities should not be allowed to reproduce’) – the Political Compass plots where you on a scale of Stalin to Gandhi. Check back every few years to see if your own inevitable lurch to the right is on course.

2 | What Personality Type Are You

16personalities.com

The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator is probably the most famous – and strongly contested – personality test in the world. It uses four indexes – Introverted or Extroverted (I/E), Intuitive or Sensing (N/S), Thinking or Feeling (T/F), and Perceiving or Judging (P/J) – to fit you into one of sixteen possible personalities. This well-designed version of the test is the best online. People using Myers and Briggs' theory to describe their personality will talk about personality type in terms of four-letter codes, like ESTJ or INFP. Each of the four letters signifies a key aspect of an individual's personality.

Myers and Briggs' theory of personality types tells us that seemingly random variations in people's behavior are actually quite predictable, as they are due to basic differences in the ways individuals approach key functions of thought, behavior, and interaction. Myers and Briggs described individual differences in terms of four personality *dichotomies*. Each dichotomy consists of two distinct and opposing styles, for instance Extraversion versus Introversion.

Esquire is a 'Protagonist', apparently. Could be worse.

3 | How Smart You Are

iqtest.com

Esquire spent a migraine-inducing couple of hours trying out the plethora of free online tests that claim to tell you your IQ, and weren't terribly convinced. Then we grudgingly handed over \$4.99 (£3.33) to try the official test used by the International High IQ Society – who sound about as much fun as the Real Ale Society, but hey – and realised this was the real deal. You have 30 minutes to answer 40 questions, which involves identifying the correct missing pattern in a sequence. At the end you not only get your score but a series of helpful charts explaining where you come on the line between 'mentally deficient' and 'gifted'. And no, we're not sharing.

4 | How Emotionally Intelligent You Are

greatergood.berkeley.edu

Can you tell a grimace from a grin? Reading facial expressions is, according to this test, an accurate measure of whether you're emotionally in tune with others or utterly oblivious to anyone's feelings but your own. Surprisingly difficult. Or maybe that's just us.

5 | What You Should Do With Your Life

sokanu.com

Like IQ tests, there is no shortage of online quizzes designed to tell you what career you'd be best suited to. Sokanu is one of the best, using a sophisticated algorithm and encompassing a broad range of possible outcomes. Looks nice, too. Most of the features require signing up and paying, but you can get some suggestions based on your work-based preferences for free. See ours above, and note neither 'journalist' nor 'online quiz researcher' gets a look in.

I A. Answer the questions that follow in about 120- 150 words each: [2x10=20]

1. Have you ever taken a standardised test? (Most entrance exams with multiple choice questions are standardised tests). Would you trust standardised tests to measure how smart you are?
2. What did you understand about The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator based on what you read?

I B. Is self-discovery possible on the internet? Use the cartoon as a cue and respond in 200 words, based on your personal experience. [1X15=15]



The bubbles in the cartoon read: I want to know the meaning of life; Have you ever tried googling it?

II Read this *HuffPost* article about how the internet is changing the idea of ownership:

The idea of ownership is rapidly changing. As society continues to advance, technology has spearheaded the transformation of the way we work, live, and play. With co-working spaces popping up all over the world, and companies like AirBnB and Lyft, we are moving towards a socio-economic system built upon sharing our time, talents, and resources.

Through tech platforms, companies like AirBnB are fostering change with way we live and travel. AirBnB is a website that allows users to rent out their homes. The lender gets extra cash from their apartment or home and the renter has the luxury of having an authentic experience in a new place, often cheaper than the hotel alternatives. As a by-product of AirBnB, local economies see a boost. The outer boroughs of NYC received a \$105M in additional funds from AirBnB guest spending.

People worldwide are posting their homes online to help pay their rent or mortgage, reduce their debt, plan for a trip, or support a freelance or entrepreneurial career. However, financial motives are not always a driving force of a sharing economy lifestyle. Companies like Couchsurfer, a competitor to AirBnB, is a website hosting a community of travellers that allow other travelers to crash on their couches when exploring new cities.

The sharing economy is permeating the transportation and travel industry not only in destination, but also the means to get there. Through technology, we now have platforms like Lyft that allows users to share their cars. The stay-at-home-mom can now use her station wagon to carpool customers. The idea of a shared platform is beneficial for all. Not only does it bring the supply to the demand, but also it provides a source of passive income for users, and meets demand. Uber is another technology-driven company that is closing the gap between supply and demand. Through creating this combo of taxi and private car services, they make more money, have a wider reach, and have the opportunity to create more jobs. Consumers have the benefit of having a car when they want it, with very little effort and waiting. No more waiting in the rain for a taxi!

In a 2010 TED Talk, sharing economy champion and author Rachel Botsman argued that the tech-enabled sharing economy could “mimic the ties that used to happen face to face but, on a scale, and

in a way that has never been possible before.” Botsman quoted a *New York Times* piece in saying, “Sharing is to ownership what the iPod is to the eight track, what solar power is to the coal mine.” In 2013, Thomas Friedman proclaimed that Airbnb’s true innovation wasn’t its platform or its distributed business model: “It’s ‘trust.’” At a 2014 conference, Uber investor Shervin Pishevar said sharing was going to bring us back to a mythical bygone era of low-impact, communal village living.

II A Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in 120 words each [2x10=20]

1. How comfortable are you sharing or renting technology (for example, renting a bike or staying at an AirBnB)? Do you think ownership of technology gives you more privacy of use? Respond based on personal experience.
2. What do you think is the difference between hiring and renting? Have you ever read the terms and conditions for hiring any technology? Talk about this experience.
3. Do you agree that “tech-enabled sharing economy could mimic the ties that used to happen face to face”? Using the example of any technology, explain how you think it affected relationships among people.

II B Read this note about The Tragedy of the Commons before you answer the question.

The phrase Tragedy of the Commons, first described by biologist Garrett Hardin in 1968, describes how shared environmental resources are overused and eventually depleted. He compared shared resources to a common grazing pasture; in this scenario, everyone with rights to the pasture grazes as many animals as possible, acting in self-interest for the greatest short-term personal gain. Eventually, they use up all the grass in the pasture; the shared resource is depleted and no longer useful. Public roads are an excellent example of common property shared by many people. Each of these people has his or her own interest in mind — typically, how to get to work as quickly and easily as possible. But when everyone decides that public roads are the best way to meet traveling needs, the roads jam up and slow down overall traffic movement, filling the air with pollutants from idling cars.

Do you think online sharing economies will end up the same way as real-life sharing economies? In what ways does behaviour like this (The Tragedy of the Commons) manifest online? Respond in 200 words. [1X15=15]

MCT B-ONLINE LIVES ON WEB 2.0

I. Read this article by Sandip Roy, from *ThePrint.in* February 2019.

Quitting the school WhatsApp group is the liberation Indians need

I quit the group on Jan 30. As did a few others. I didn’t leave because someone who went to school with me was sick enough to post a message celebrating Gandhi’s assassination. I left the WhatsApp group because too many of us stayed quiet or tried to lighten the mood by posting a Pappu joke or a picture of a scantily clad woman. I left the group because a friend I respected told the ones complaining to “chill” so that there could be some “peace in the group”. Just ignore, they said. I couldn’t. We took great pride in the values our school had supposedly instilled in us. On the other hand, I should have known that a good Indian education mostly teaches us the value of

keeping our heads down and our mouths firmly shut. Good schools don't teach us to rock boats, even WhatsApp boats.

The school WhatsApp group is a most curious beast. I joined it with some trepidation, feeling as if I was being sucked into a time machine back to a world I had long left behind. I was no longer the boy the rest of them remembered and I wasn't sure what I had in common with the men they had become. I worried we would wallow in memories of what we did in Class 4A. I feared being irritated by cheery 'Good Morning' messages with nodding flowers. All of that was there.

A school WhatsApp group can feel like a Neverland for middle-aged Peter Pans still trapped in about the same hormonal frustration as they were at age 15. But it was still rather nice to encounter people we had not seen or heard of since school, to catch up with their lives in far corners of the world. It was fun to encounter classmates we'd never hung out much with in school and discover that they were genuinely nice helpful people. It was convenient to organise meet-ups when someone came to town from America or Australia. We pulled each other's legs. We argued politics. We tried to help teachers who had fallen on hard times. We bugged the doctors in the group for medical help. We helped each other out. School loyalty can run strong.

But a school WhatsApp group is very different from other groups that are bound together by a common interest. We are bound together by a common history, a history that certainly defined us, but still a very old history. We called ourselves Friends Forever, but unlike most friends, we had little in common other than a school tie.

Every WhatsApp group comes with usual suspects. There is the Relentless Forwarder who spends all day forwarding things – jokes, news articles, conspiracy theories, fake news. The Relentless Forwarder forwards, and having forwarded moves on. Then there is the Lurker. The Lurker rarely posts but reads everything and occasionally pops up to say "Happy Birthday". The Silent One has the group on mute and only checks it when stuck in traffic in an Uber. The Cheerleader is usually the most affable member. That's the gung-ho person who keeps trying to rally the troops and organise a get-together. There's always a Stirrer whose goal it is to needle someone and stir up controversy just because things are getting boring. Of course, there's the Group Bore who posts long pedantic messages, which no one has time to read. The Head Hunter goes to extraordinary lengths to track down long-lost schoolmates and add them to the group even as the rest of the group wonders who's that guy. And then there is the Arsonist. The Arsonist's job is to lob fireballs into the group, usually in the form of such way-out paranoid conspiracy theories, you wonder whether you really all went to the same school together.

In school, the Arsonist would be relegated to the fringe. But in a WhatsApp group there was no fringe. I post, therefore I am. And the more you post, the more real you are. It can be invigorating to get outside your echo chamber, to hear the opinions of people whose views are unlike yours. There can be real impassioned free-for-all debate. But there can also be out-and-out bigotry because in the encrypted playground of a school WhatsApp group we feel we can all let our hair down and expose our truest colours.

That's when you realise those lynching videos, the fake BBC polls, the spurious Mark Tully quotes about the Saheb, they are just not being spread to the gullible, semi-educated in provincial towns. They are being consumed and forwarded with gusto by people just like you. And when confronted with a fact-check they shrug and say, 'So what if BBC didn't conduct that poll, the Congress is still corrupt, isn't it?' It might well be, but that's not the point. You realise we went to the same school, but we certainly all went to different WhatsApp universities. It's as if we had scattered all over the

world and then suddenly the WhatsApp group had found us and sucked us all back into a classroom except, we no longer fit behind our desks.

My friends said quitting isn't the answer. One should stay and stand one's ground. The silent majority surely don't agree with messages that celebrate the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, even those who have their own issues with the old man. However, that's the problem, whether in a school WhatsApp group or the country. The silent majority stays silent.

This morning when I woke up to an uncharacteristically quiet WhatsApp icon I felt a strange sense of liberation. I don't have to be friends forever with anyone just because we wore the same uniform once. We'd always have that history and it would always be precious. But it didn't need to be artificially grafted in the hothouse of a WhatsApp group.

I A. Are you on WhatsApp? Give reasons to explain your WhatsApp presence. If you are not on WhatsApp, explain if you think you're missing out by not being on it. Respond in at least 120 words. [1X10=10]

I B. Answer the questions that follow in about 200 words each: [2x15=30]

1. "I post, therefore I am. And the more you post, the more real you are"; "whether in a school WhatsApp group or the country, the silent majority stays silent". Do you agree with the correspondence between real and online lives that this statement attempts to create? You may also draw from personal experience to substantiate your response.
2. Suppose you're the admin of a WhatsApp group. Formulate a set of guidelines for the members, to maintain a sense of decorum on the group. How would you find a balance between protecting members' right to expression and ensuring there is no misleading material being posted?

II. Read this article from the San Francisco Chronicle:

How YouTube became an Internet of Contradictions Feb 2019

*If you want to understand **YouTube**, start with Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself."*

"Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)"

YouTube is large. (300 hours of video uploaded every minute.) YouTube contains multitudes. (Nearly 5 billion videos watched a day.)

Google's video service is the subject of a fraught argument about the power of algorithms, blamed for steering thousands, perhaps millions of its viewers chasing conspiracy theories down rabbit holes. With its "related video" algorithms recommending fiction after fiction, YouTube sends its viewers spinning into a post-fact whirligig.

All of this has happened before. All of this will happen again.

YouTube has had this problem for years. It just happens that at the early part of this decade, it was limited to a small, insider-y group of hardcore users — videobloggers, or vloggers, who posted with incessant frequency to devoted audiences.

The primary subject of their conspiracy theory was the YouTube algorithm itself, an unwritten set of rules they constantly tried to break, or at least master.

Sophisticated hackers figured out how to inflate YouTube view counts using holes in Google’s mobile software — it was called “botting.” Bidders sold views on the black market to vloggers hungry for fame and the ad revenue that was beginning to gush through. When YouTube cracked down on view sales and moved to ban accounts with inflated views, the hackers persisted — only now they tried to get rival vloggers bounced off the service by sending illicit bot views their way.

At one point, there were so many bots that YouTube engineers feared that they would drown out the human audience, and make it impossible to train their artificial intelligence on legitimate behaviour. They called it “the Singularity” — the moment when bots completely took over.

YouTube headquarters figured out the mobile bot problem. But they didn’t figure out how to stem the very human desire to game the system, and the willingness of viewers to be gamed.

So now we have the Islamic State using YouTube as a recruiting tool. Sexual predators relying on “related videos” to steer victims their way. Flat Earthers seeing their numbers rise along with their video views. Conservatives and liberals growing increasingly polarized.

The monster YouTube created, or at least awakened, showed up at the company’s campus last year, when video creator Nasim Aghdam opened fire, wounding three employees and killing herself. She expressed anger at YouTube’s algorithms on a website listing her grievances.

It seems perplexing that a site so long owned by Google, the company whose mission is to “organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful,” has become so disorganized. Google figured out how to solve the problems of web spam, pages and sites created merely to game the system. Why couldn’t it do the same for video? Didn’t anyone at YouTube, well, watch it?

“We recently announced that we’ve started reducing recommendations of borderline content or videos that could misinform users in harmful ways,” a YouTube spokeswoman recently told the New York Times. “This is a gradual change and will get more and more accurate over time.”

II A Answer the following questions in about 120- 150 words: [3x10=30]

1. How would you explain the idea of a ‘bot’ to someone who is unfamiliar with it? The context needn’t be restricted to YouTube.
2. How often do you take suggestions from YouTube’s ‘related videos’ and ‘recommended videos’? Do you find the recommendations useful?
3. Based on your reading of the passage, what do you understand about how artificial intelligence is trained to fetch better search results?
