

Ist Edition

TechKomms Report

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KOMMUNE
Brand Communications



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5 Tenets of Future of Technology Communications

1

The primary strategic goal of Public Relations (PR) in the ICT domain is to help in creating a universal image of a company with its products & solutions. At the same time, it must integrate the company with the local markets.

2

The new technologies are transformative in nature and demand a behavioural change in consumers, organisations, economies and nations. PR must effect change in the behaviour of the stakeholders including government, partners and consumers.

3

Companies that will be successful in the future in the ICT domain, are the ones that shall be able to canvas the big picture, as well as articulate, without any ambiguities, the transformational powers of the set of emerging technologies.

4

ICT solutions of the future shall have B2B2C go to market. This needs a strong last mile consumer connect. This is being enabled through micro-influencers rather than having celebrity brand ambassadors.

5

There is a need to re-invent PR to create more immersive PR engagement using new forms and types of content and platforms. Explaining technology without jargon is required for impactful outreach programmes.

Global Technology Communications



Trending Technologies

Globally, the challenge in the technology domain is keeping stakeholders excited and engaged with emerging technologies, while balancing it with the present technologies and solutions which are driving revenue. A lot is being talked about AI, 5G, Immersive technology, but business is still primarily driven by existing technology solutions.



Use case driven outreach

Communication and messaging are led by use cases. No longer are companies talking about technical functionality of their products and solutions. Rather, they are articulating precisely how a particular use case / application can be addressed by them. This is because the building blocks of emerging technologies are the same.



Consumerisation

Technology is taking a predominantly B2B2C orientation. All major technology players are attempting to connect to end users and 'consumerise' their outreach. This is also helping them to position themselves as youth centric organisations, which assists in attracting the finest talent within millennials and Gen Z.

Indian Technology Communications



Redefining Social

Technology companies are redefining the objectives of Social Networking. The focus is more on driving engaging conversations. At the same time, in some segments, like Smartphones, there is a brand representative, a CXO, who drives direct conversation with existing and prospective.



Thought Leadership

Companies within the ICT domain are focusing on driving thought-leadership through specific outreach programmes. This is giving them an early mover advantage in the emerging Technology domain, which their businesses can capitalise on at an opportune time.



Non-Textual Content

Companies in India are heavily skewing their communications through video-based content. Other than web-episodes, 1-2 minutes videos are gaining momentum. There is also an early uptake of podcasts which has started following the global trend.

2Q 2019 Update

ALIGNING TO REALIGN

Globally, as well as in India during 2Q2019 (April-June), the main challenge with the ICT companies was to clear any ambiguity about their alignments. The brands were primarily positioning themselves as global, yet neutral in outlook.

After the recent skirmishes in a few global markets, the threat perception of discontinuation of global trade and collaboration reached an all-time high, with a few major brands taking a definite stand against a few foreign brands at the instructions of their respective governments. This had serious repercussions across world markets and fears of losing customers, partners and suppliers rose with the potential to disrupt the entire value chain.

The situation was handled with utmost care and caution by the PR partners of several companies in the ICT domain, which were apprehensive about various serious implications of such escalations getting worse. This also led to a slowdown in the pace of development of emerging technologies like 5G and Industry 4.0.

While PR partners have controlled the situation and managed to portray a neutral global view of such brands, efforts in 2H (second half) of the year would be to again start steering the conversations towards the themes that were positioning them as thought leaders in the domain. However, this will continue with a neutral stance.

1Q 2019 Update

EXCITING THROUGH USE CASES

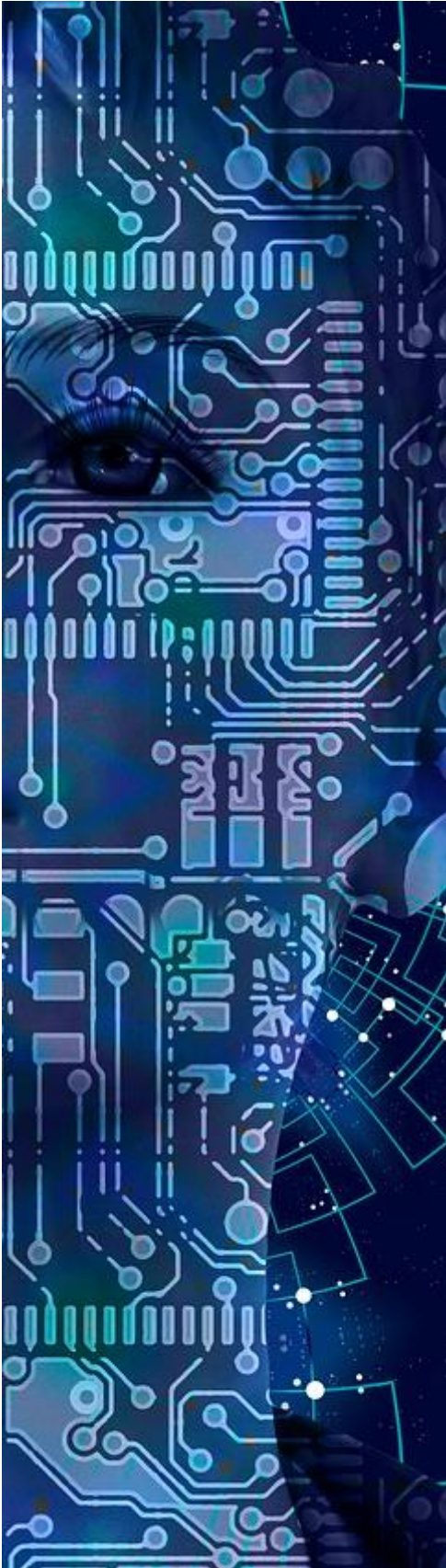
Be it any buzzing technology 5G, AI, Block Chain, Machine Learning, Robotics, Digital Transformation and many more - leading technology companies had already announced and exhibited their solutions for the next wave of technology interventions.

However, in countries like India the regulatory and policy discussion is still taking place. To some extent this had delayed the adoption of such emerging technologies. Consequentially, PR is challenged with how to keep brands visible and with communicating while the transition takes its own pace.

The set of emerging technologies are fundamentally disruptive. They cannot be explained as a normal PR pitch process. This poses new challenges to the companies who must acquire story-telling skills and be as creative as possible. The role of PR is widening fast and overlapping greatly with the marketing function, especially brand marketing activities.

The technologies which are transforming lives have a multidimensional impact. This requires a wider integration through PR. The normal vendor-customer relationship is no longer working. There is a wider collaborative ecosystem of partners that must be weaved together through PR.

The role of PR is becoming extremely important in communicating the use-case application of a technology which is fundamentally an amalgamation of several technologies. This is causing disruption in PR.



EXPERIENTIAL PR



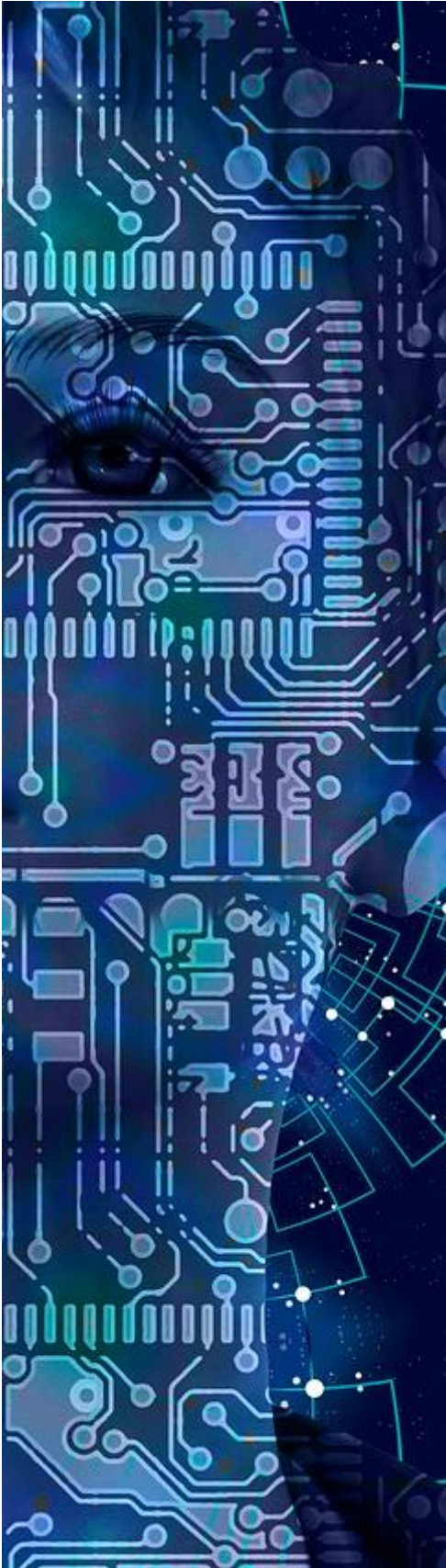
In several product categories, like consumer technology, media is being engaged to experience a technology product or solution. This is assisting them to understand how each feature and functionality (which may be enabled using Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, etc.) is actually beneficial or offering a superior experience. It also empowers them to interpret it in lucid language to the audiences that they are serving.



Digital media is playing a critical role in making experiential PR effective. There are several micro to medium-scale influencers having their own channels on various popular platforms, through which they propagate such products and solutions.



However, the challenge that is increasingly difficult to manage is the removal of subjectivity in their comparative analysis. Such comparisons of products and services are done majorly on the subjective and unquantifiable parameters which are confusing end-users and not assisting them in making any definite decisions.



REDEFINING SOCIAL



The technology sector was one of the early adopters of Social Media. As an early adopter of Social Media, the technology sector used the medium to enhance digital presence. This was followed by engagement with various stakeholders, primarily consumers.



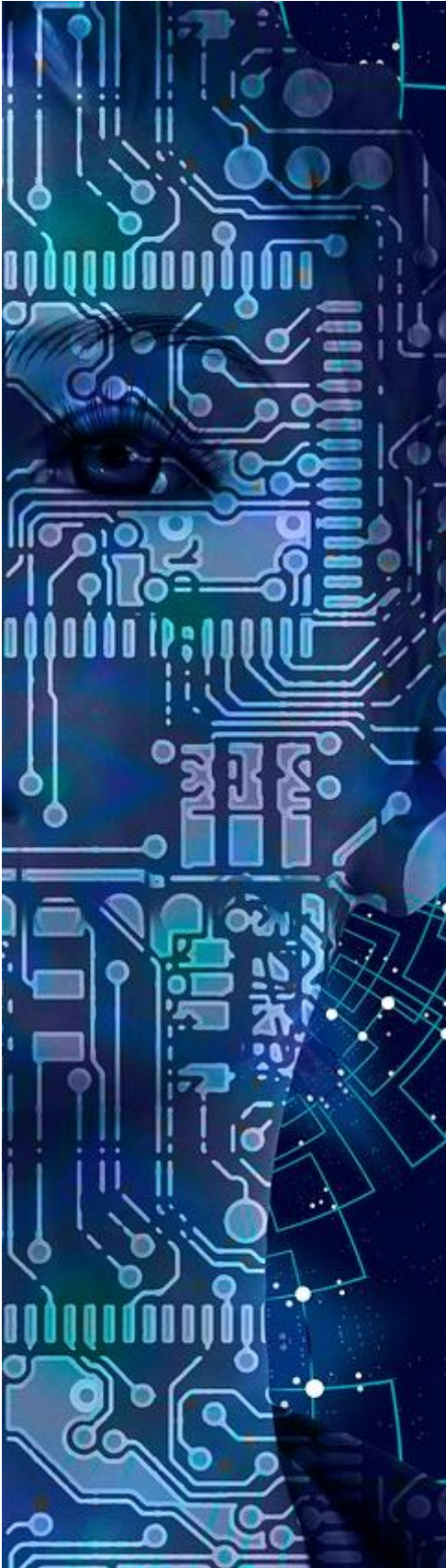
The significance of Social Media across businesses has lowered due to certain ill practices by a few, like paying for comments and engagement and buying followers.



There is a need being felt across the board, to repurpose Social Media. It has grown beyond the medium of communicating with the immediate as well as extended eco-systems. Registering complaints has become easier and more effective for customers. As a lot of customer care is undergoing transformation where chatbots are being used to interact with customers; customers are finding Social Media quick and simple to reach out to a human to express a concern.



Globally, there is a thought being nurtured to think of Social Media beyond a channel of communication. It is being viewed as a medium of user generated 'case studies' where happy and delighted customers educate audiences about a brand and promote it.



ROPO TO ROPA



Research-Online-Purchase-Offline was a phenomenon identified a few years back. It brought forward the significance of being adequately present online, even if the product or service is not sold through any such medium.



In the enterprise domain, the online resources were abundantly and adequately available to learn about the products, services and their benefits by way of product sheets, case studies and white papers. On the other hand, in consumer technology, with the scarce availability of third party, often incorrect information sources were heavily relied upon.



The trend in both enterprise and consumer tech domains is rapidly moving from ROPO to ROPA (Research-Online-Purchase-Anywhere). This is making it important for all technology companies to have accurate content available at two levels. It should be made available for basic as well as advanced potential users who could access them to research before making a buying decision.



Companies in the technology domain are enabling such content in text, graphics and video formats directly or through partners for enterprise as well as individual consumers.



CONSUMER CONNECT

A predominant number of emerging technologies are going to be consumed in a B2B2C fashion. For instance, most of the IoT and connected technologies will be used by individuals through an aggregator or a service provider. Some of the rudimentary examples are connected energy meters and connected healthcare systems.

Currently, such technology companies engage with another business entity and disconnect onwards. However, this scenario is undergoing transformation. Globally, several traditionally B2B companies have started communication programmes for end users so that they understand the benefits of such transformative technologies. Else the adoption and acceptance are going to be very low.

This means a product or solution is going to have two levels of communications - one for the enterprise consumer and another for the end-user. The PR partners now need to increase their capabilities in end-user communication and connect, which goes beyond the fundamental PR interventions of media releases and briefings.



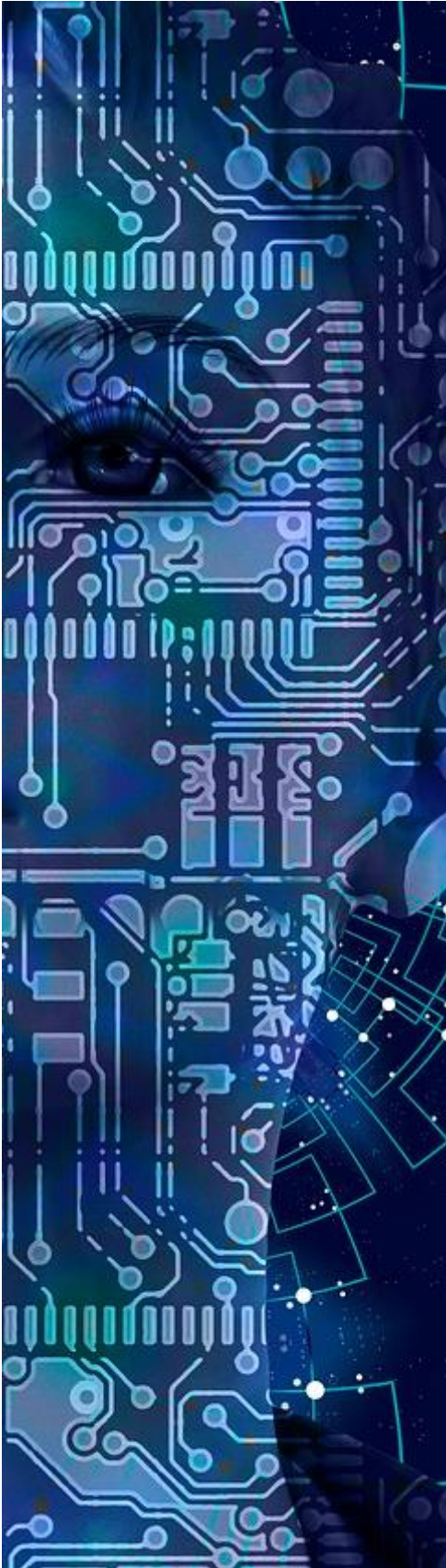
MICRO-INFLUENCERS

Celebrity endorsements are diminishing in the ICT domain. Several marketing leads of some of the major ICT brands feel celebrity endorsements do not help much in this class of product or service. However, in pure consumer technology products there is still a bit of relevance and brands are engaging with celebrities.

Brands are finding it very effective to engage with micro-influencers who may have a very limited, but relevant and engaging, influence over a group that resonates with the brand image or products. These micro-influencers could have a larger influence on a single or a limited number of digital platforms like Instagram. They would also be aligned to a genre, for instance, lifestyle, healthcare, education or others.

These micro-influencers are not only endorsing a product or a brand, but also painstakingly interpreting a technology to their audiences which adds a lot of value for the brand engaging them.

Another value addition these micro-influencers bring is that they use a multi-medium strategy which could include several formats, in multiple languages, helping increase the efficacy of communications.



DATA DRIVEN PR

Analytics is not only being used for making business decisions with respect to forecasting sales.. Several technology companies are using a lot of internal data to create interesting market-neutral views to share insights about various products, geographies and people.

The data is anonymised and generalised so that no important brand-specific information is exposed to competition.

This kind of PR is helping brands create substantiated narratives which are insightful and support explaining behavioural changes that the technology is reasoning with.

Data driven communications results in indexes, benchmarks, dashboards, reports and creation of other such instruments, which is very powerful in engaging with the stakeholders.

Many such indexes have become industry barometers. Even competition is using them to project industry level trends and insights positioning the brand as a thought leader and visionary in the space.



KEYWORDS PR

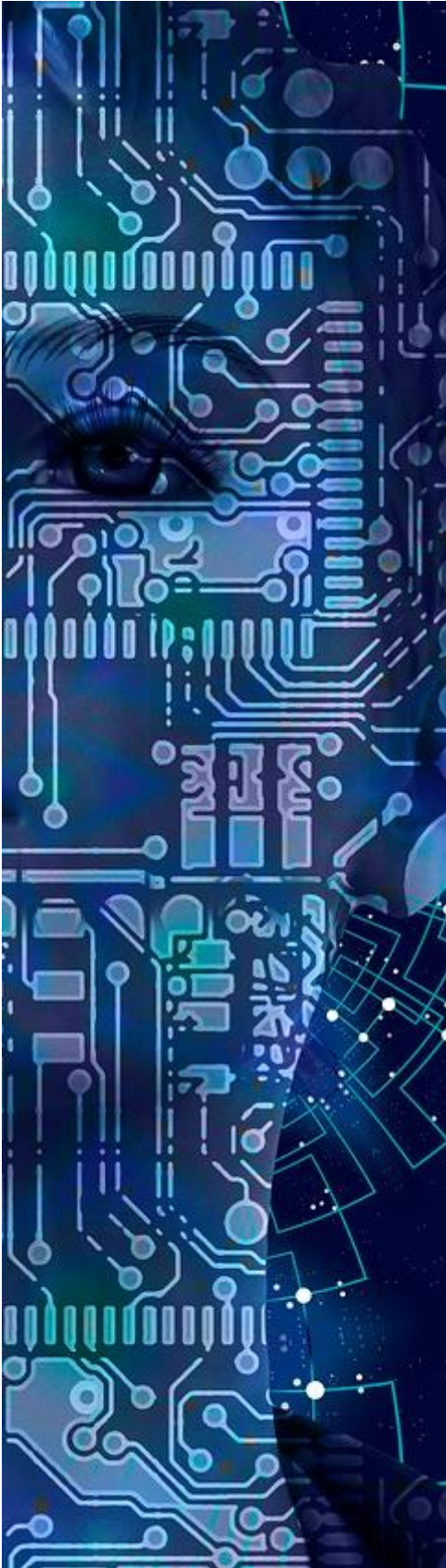
Since the inception of digital mediums, brands have become conscious of keywords and with the advent of social networking, hashtags have taken precedence.

Over the past 3-5 years, trending technologies are being discovered that become the industry keywords. Every brand then tries to leverage these to position itself as a stakeholder in such technologies.

For example, few years back cloud and mobility were trending, after which SMAK (Social, Mobility, Analytics, Cloud) was the flavour. Similarly, every season there are list of keywords around which the whole communication is built by a brand.

Over the past year or so, Digital Transformation, Industry 4.0, AI, ML, IoT, 5G, Block Chain, Immersive technology and a few more similar technologies are being used as the keywords trending in the industry. Every brand in the ICT domain is referring to these in all communication that positions them as players moving with the latest tide.

It is a good strategy to associate with trending keywords if the brand has some element of it present in their solutions.



PR AS BRANDING



In the traditional view so far, PR was viewed as a function of communications with a limited role in marketing. PR was a function to manage media relations, whereas marketing was more related to advertising and sponsorships.



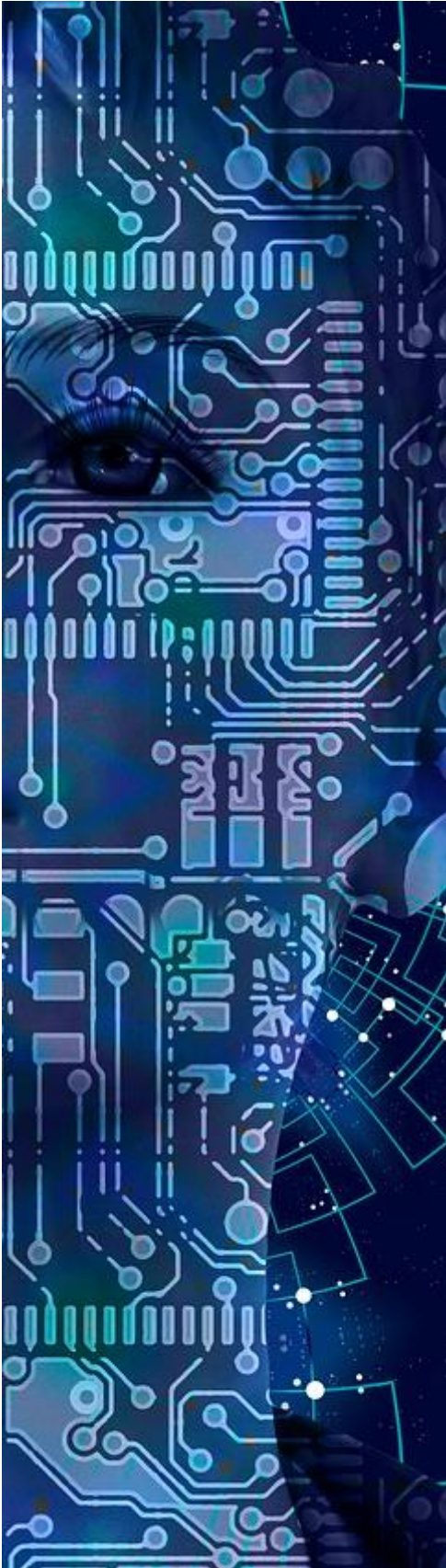
In ICT and a few more sectors, this is changing rapidly. PR is now used as a brand building intervention, where, how a brand would be positioned among stakeholders as well as the competition is all driven by PR.



PR is now used to manage several stakeholders including government, customers, partners, competition, suppliers, influencers and other major segments, apart from media.



Another important role PR is being involved with is helping a brand connect with students. They are considered as future customers who also act strong influencers within homes when deciding about technology procurement.



GUERRILLA PR



Guerrilla marketing is about adding an element of surprise to all marketing endeavours. To remove the monotony and obviousness in the marketing programmes, brands started Guerrilla marketing to surprise audiences.



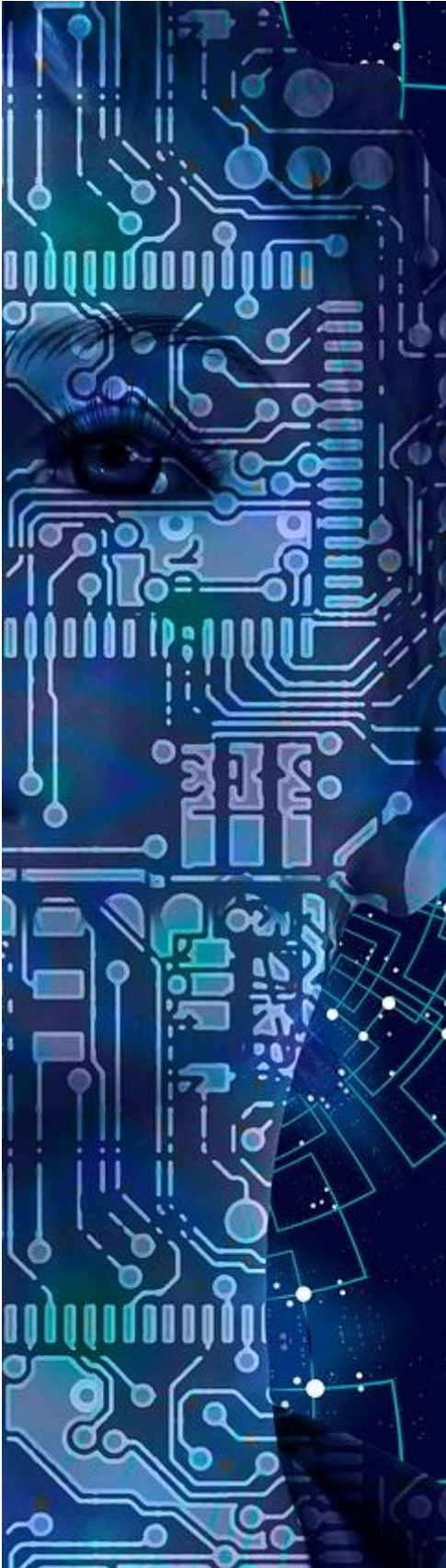
Technology is a meta resource and has its application everywhere. This provides many reasons for a technology company to be present and associated with several platforms and mediums. Some of the early traces of what could be termed as 'Guerrilla PR' can be seen in the technology domain, where brands are surprising consumers by getting associated with platforms and forums, where they could not be usually be recalled.



Some brands blend 'social PR' to increase the impact of such surprise appearances. It also helps in positioning a brand as a responsible corporate citizen.



Brands are also getting associated with national government-led programmes to reinforce this emerging trend of 'guerrilla PR'.



MULTIDOMAIN PR



The very nature of the emerging technologies platter is making technology percolate through several other sectors. In fact, any transformation that a sector is talking about is based on a technology disruption.



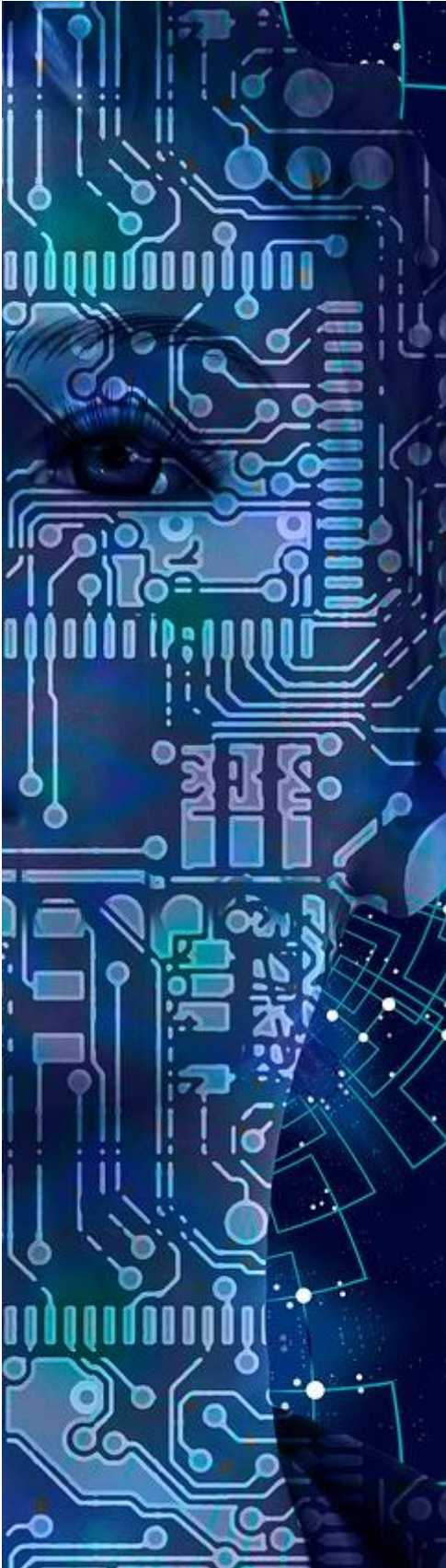
This is pushing brands to widen their horizon of outreach and PR. For instance, a company which would be supplying processors to a PC or Mobile OEM, is not engaging with the healthcare and automobile sector. The reasons are very explicit as the future use cases lie in these domains.



This is demanding that PR partners should acquire multi-disciplinary expertise and domain networking to help their brand clients get connected with the seemingly disassociated sectors.



Many companies have already established connects and started creating thought-leadership about specific domains by showcasing how technology can transform a particular sector.



IMMERSIVE COMMUNICATION



Youth are driving technology across the globe. Either in the form of actual decision makers or as a strong influencer, youth have become the central figure in the technology era.



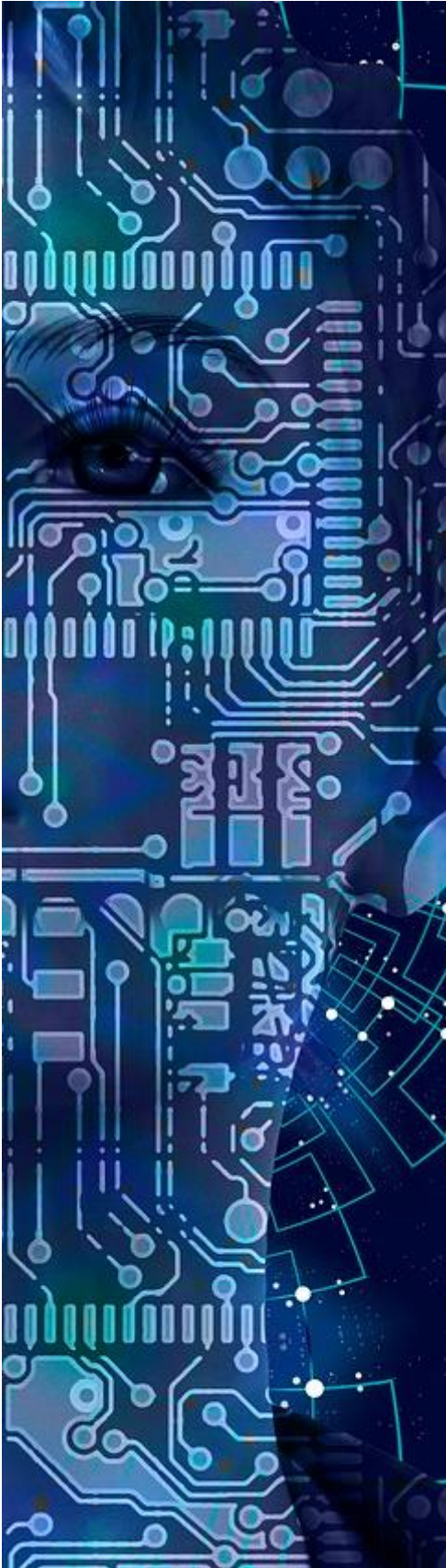
At the same time, technology has exposed youth to a different experience about consuming information and content. Youth are looking for rich, precise and insightful content to be impressed.



This is opening challenges as well as new opportunity areas for the PR industry to engage audiences using immersive content.



PR is seeing a phenomenal change in its outlook and is acquiring a lot of digital and video-based capabilities. Soon, some of the forward-looking PR partners will have their own immersive studios where clients could have AR/VR-based content to engage with potential audiences. This content could assist in providing a better understanding to customers about client products and services.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Storify brands through PR. It is more than a medium to just engage media.
- ▶ Leverage from trending technologies relevant to the products or services. However, develop thought leadership in the most appropriate and resonating emerging technology.
- ▶ Run communication themes over Social Media with specific objectives and expectations. Social Media should not be viewed as a vestigial communication channel; rather should be integrated with the mainstream PR mediums.
- ▶ Start investing in video with other immersive and engaging communication mediums.
- ▶ Instead of communicating technology-functional comparisons, focus on how the product or service offers ease in use and adds to the overall experiential journey of a user with the brand.
- ▶ Widen and broaden the communication pitch and start engaging with application domains. Leverage internal and external data to create industry benchmarks and barometers.
- ▶ Make the communication as energetic and youthful as possible. That's what the brand needs to connect with.
- ▶ There is not much difference between the messaging of technology companies in India another geographies. The only difference is what stage the company is of a customer life cycle.

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report, its contents, IP, insights and analysis, is owned by Kommune Brand Communications Private Limited. The objective of the report is to bring out insights about Public Relations and communications in technology domain and highlight how brands are changing their outreach philosophy and approach to effectively engage with the stakeholders.

The present report, 1st edition, captures analysis based on the PR and communication trends in technology - IT and Telecom domain - across the globe. Specific events were analysed and interpreted that were witnessed in the 1H (Jan-June) of year 2019.

This report is brought in collaboration with techARC as research and insights partner.



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