

Johann



En hier is ons M -
klaar, gebind - en nogal
in mooi baba.

Woorde werk hier nie vir
my nie. Die dankbaarheid
is te groot vir woorde.

Dis egter in soorreg om jou
te sien.

En:

Dankie!

Benjie Pit

**The role perceptions of public relations practitioners
in South Africa**

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Opdrag

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Some comments on style

In this thesis the UK spelling of English was used, except where direct quotes were taken from American textbooks when the American spelling was used.

“Public relations”, although a term denoting the plural, is used throughout the text as reference to a specific discipline (the study of public relations). For this reason, the term is used with the singular verb. This convention is, *inter alia*, also used by authors such as Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron (2000), Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000), and Skinner, Von Essen and Mersham (2001).

The text favours the use of the **listing comma** to avoid any possible ambiguities. Although the argument could be made that Americans favour this usage, it is also not uncommon in the UK, and is – there - referred to as the “Oxford comma” (Trask, 2001: 74).

Technical presentation

Guidelines presented in the Cape Technikon Faculty of Management’s publication entitled “Guidelines for advanced studies” were used in the technical presentation of this thesis. In some instances, further clarification was obtained from Mouton (2001).

Where percentages form part of the written text, the words “per cent” are written out – where they form part of figures, the “%” symbol is used.

Bibliography

Mouton (2001: 125) differentiates between a bibliography (“a complete list of all sources consulted”) and a list of references, which he describes as a list that “includes only those sources that you explicitly refer to (and quote) in your text”. The list of references provided at the end of this thesis is exactly that – a list of references and **not** a bibliography.

Declaration by student

I hereby confirm that all the work reflected in this thesis is my own, and that none of what is written here has been submitted to any other institute of learning for the purposes of obtaining a qualification. No part of this thesis (in abstract or in full) has been submitted anywhere else for any form of publication whatsoever.

BP Venter

Cape Town

January 2004

ABSTRACT

The role of public relations as a management function is currently under discussion among public relations practitioners in South Africa. PRISA – the Institute for Public Relations and Communication Management (Southern Africa) has also immersed itself in this discussion and is actively involved in a number of activities aiming at repositioning public relations as a strategic management function. This discussion is the latest development in a discourse on the role of public relations spanning a number of decades, and is a logical outcome of an evolution of the understanding of the contribution that public relations makes to the success of organisations.

The discussion, however, has several dimensions – the role of public relations in regard to marketing; the contribution that public relations makes to integrated marketing communication; and the role of public relations as a management function on the top level of the organisation. Clarity about, and an understanding of, the role of public relations in the organisation is therefore crucial to the practical implementation of “new” thinking on public relations.

Literature – especially in the sphere of public relations – seeks to give theoretical manifestation to a relatively young discipline seeking to carve its own niche in the organisational sphere of operation. While a number of authors agree on the valuable contribution that public relations can make to the organisation’s strategic success, some measure of confusion seems to exist regarding the precise relationship between public relations and other functional departments within the organisation, most notably marketing and marketing communication. The question of course is whether this confusion is mirrored in the ranks of public relations practitioners who daily have to deal with the execution of their task.

This thesis examines a number of these issues and provides a theoretical framework for an understanding of the role of public relations, after which the understanding of public relations practitioners of this role is investigated. It does so by examining the existing literature (especially widely-used public relations textbooks) in order to establish a theoretical basis that guides the understanding of the theoretical role of public relations in regard to the three functions that most

closely influence public relations (or is closely influenced by public relations), namely:

- Marketing.
- Marketing communication.
- Management.

The literature review is then used as the basis for a questionnaire, which measures the opinions of South African public relations practitioners (members of PRISA) on a number of identified issues. The findings of this survey are reported and contextualised against the three functions identified above.

It is significant to note that the perceptions that South African public relations practitioners have of the role of public relations are not necessarily consonant with the views expressed in literature. This situation proves fertile ground for actions that need to be taken to properly contextualise the role of public relations.

The findings of this research project could therefore be useful to PRISA, guiding that organisation in its endeavours to position the discipline (and the profession) as a serious management function. The findings could also be useful to existing practitioners, guiding them in shaping continuous development programmes designed to enhance their professionalism. Future students in the discipline may, in addition, find guidance for future research on a number of topics in this field.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

“Advertising is dead. Long live PR”, write Al and Laura Ries (2002: XII) in *The fall of advertising and the rise of PR*. The publication of this volume sparked a debate in (especially) public relations circles, and was used by some to justify the value of public relations to the organisation. For instance, on a website entitled Biz-community, the debate is typified by articles like those of Sally Falkow (2003, July 6) who reviews the book, and concludes her article by saying that “[w]hen you position yourself as a brand building expert, you will be more likely to convince your CEO that PR can deliver the goods”.

The publication of the book by the Rieses, and the subsequent discussion of its contents in a number of articles, again brings to the fore a debate that has smouldered in public relations circles for a number of years: public relations should not be a function that is subservient to marketing or other disciplines such as advertising – it can and should make a strategically vital contribution to the success of organisations.

The King II Report on Corporate Governance is also used by public relations practitioners to justify a new look at the role of public relations in the organisation. In the words of Jensen (2003: 6), the requirements of the report for relations with stakeholders “ensure a strategic public relations seat right next to the CEO of any boardroom table”.

Public relations practitioners embrace the so-called triple bottom line, and agree that corporate citizenship means that the organisation should concern itself with balancing the interests of the organisation, the individual, and society (Motau, 2002: 7). This triple bottom line, according to public relations practitioners, underlines the importance of good relationships between the organisations and key publics.

The professional body representing public relations as a profession, PRISA, is also involved in endeavours to reposition the profession. Known previously as the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA), its new name and strapline is PRISA – the Institute for Public Relations and Communication Management (Moscardi, 2003: 4). During 2003, PRISA moved from the Marketing Chamber to the Business Chamber of the Services SETA (Sectoral Education and Training Authority), while it took the initiative to play a leading role in forming a single professional body. This body will be known as the Council for Public Relations & Communication Management. According to Moscardi (2003: 4) the legal structure for this body is being developed, and it will be “responsible for professional ethics, advocacy/reputation, legislative issues and certification”.

The rationale behind the move from the Marketing Chamber to the Business Chamber of the Services SETA was explained in an e-mail sent to its members by PRISA on 10 December 2002, and reads as follows:

“The public relations and communication activities which fall within the marketing sphere are small (i.e. promotions, marketing communication etc) and PRISA members have made it clear that they are not ‘part of marketing’ but rather contribute to the business management function ... members indicated that they would be delighted to have the public relations and communication management function positioned within business, rather than marketing as it ‘was good for their own positioning of the function within their organisations” (Richardson, 2002).

Management function. Not part of marketing. More effective than advertising.
Small part of the marketing sphere.

These phrases point to the core of a debate that has been going on for a number of years in the public relations fraternity – locally and abroad. For many years public relations practitioners have been struggling to define their role in the organisation and, more importantly, to convince management of the strategic contribution that public relations can make to organisational success. A curious characteristic of this debate is that it seems to be one-sided, that is, marketing professionals and advertising professionals do not participate in this debate. To them public relations is a part of the marketing communication mix, *quod erat demonstrandum*.

Public relations practitioners, on the other hand, are still hotly debating their relationship with marketing. In an article in PRISA's official journal, *Communika*, Vivian Fritelli (2002: 8) refers to this debate: "rather than establishing a difference between marketing and public relations, we should be emphasising the synergy of the two disciplines". This remark clearly indicates that the debate has not yet been settled in the minds of public relations practitioners.

Apart from the fact that the debate is ongoing in nature, and is attracting considerable discussion in the ranks of public relations practitioners, it is also important to note that this debate has been going on for a number of decades.

1.1 Not a new debate

As far back as 1977, public relations practitioners sought to clarify the contribution of public relations to the organisation: "In fact, public relations is nothing but a branch of management which had to be developed, under the pressure of growth, together with other present-day specialised branches of management such as sales promotion, marketing survey, organisation and methods, personnel relations and financial control" (Malan & L'Estrange, 1977: 3).

This sentiment is shared, in the same year, by Krause (1977: 17) who observes that the placement of public relations in the organisational structure is "often a thorny question".

The uneasy relationship between public relations and marketing is also not new: "Certain professions, such as advertising and sales promotion, are so closely related to public relations that confusion exists in the minds of the uninitiated. This confusion is compounded by the fact that in South Africa ... public relations are often expected to carry an additional responsibility, usually that of sales promotion or advertising manager" (Malan & L'Estrange, 1977: 19). Again, Krause (1977) concurs with this view.

Jumping forward by about two decades, these themes are echoed by current authors. Public relations as a management function is advocated by Skinner, Von Essen and Mersham (2001: 6), as well as Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000: 6), and Cronjé, Du Toit and Motlatla (1994: 394).

That the relationship between public relations and marketing (among others) is uneasy, is confirmed by Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 6): “Many people confuse public relations with another management function – marketing”. This sentiment also finds manifestation in other texts, such as Skinner *et al.* (2001: 43), who indicate the differences between public relations and marketing.

From the viewpoint of marketers, there is less of a problem with the relationship. Public relations is a sub-field of marketing and is an important marketing tool, and that – to them - is that. For instance, Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 515) state:

“Another mass-promotion tool is public relations – building good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumors, stories, and events”.

One reason why this is probably the case, is the fact that marketers use the marketing mix as a guideline when compiling marketing plans. The marketing mix, the “set of controllable tactical marketing tools – product, price, place, and promotion – that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 56) firmly positions public relations as one of the promotional tools at a marketer’s disposal. In fact, most marketers regard public relations as one of the tools of marketing communication.

The view of public relations as a marketing communication tool is not new, and is propagated by a number of authors on the subject. Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff and Terblanché (2000: 309), Koekemoer (1998: 9), and Duncan (2002: 9) all classify public relations under the marketing communication mix (or integrated marketing communication mix).

But how do marketers see the role of public relations in the integrated marketing communication mix?

Standard marketing textbooks, notably Kotler and Armstrong (2004), as well as Perreault and McCarthy (2002), view public relations as a function that obtains favourable publicity for a product/service. In the words of Perreault and McCarthy (2002: 393) the function of public relations is “publicity”, while this function (publicity) is described as “any *unpaid* form of nonpersonal presentation of ideas, goods, or services ... [public relations practitioners] try to attract attention to the firm and its offerings *without having to pay media costs*” (italics in original text).

In addition to marketers, advertising specialists also take a narrow view of public relations. Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (2003: 81) state that public relations “seeks to enhance the company’s image, and includes publicity ... news conferences, company-sponsored events, open houses, plant tours, and donations”. Russell and Lane (2002: 27) take care to present the definition of the Public Relations Society of America, but add that “some marketing executives view public relations as useful to set the stage for advertising, especially for new product introductions”.

Again, the “other discipline” seems to want to relegate public relations to a subservient role.

1.2 The current state of affairs

It becomes apparent, reading the textbooks and articles referred to in the previous section, that there is at present a situation in which public relations practitioners (but not marketers) are trying to carve a niche for themselves in the corporate world – a role that is broader than “mere” marketing, and sufficiently strategic in nature to warrant representation at the very top of the corporate ladder.

In addition, public relations practitioners are also seemingly locked in a battle to position the discipline as being one that is more valuable than advertising.

At this stage three themes present themselves:

- Public relations practitioners see public relations as more than a marketing function.
- Public relations is part of marketing communication, but spans a greater width in corporate importance than just a marketing communication function.
- Public relations is a management function.

For many years public relations practitioners (and, of course, academics) have grappled with these three themes which have led, in many cases, to academic wrangling and even a jockeying for position in organisations. That these themes are still discussed speaks volumes for the importance and intensity of this debate to public relations practitioners.

Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron (2000: 29) succinctly describe the uneasy relationship between public relations and other related functions as follows:

"In many organizations, marketing is the dominant voice. Public relations has historically been relegated to a market-support function, concentrating on techniques instead of strategy ... [p]roblems also arise when advertising agencies attempt to do integrated programs. In many cases, 90 percent of the budget is spent on advertising and 10 percent or less on public relations ... [public relations professionals are thus wary of integrated communications, and] see it as a veiled attempt by marketing or advertising to reduce public relations to a product-publicity function".

The discussion/debate about the role of public relations is important because, if a discipline were to make a strategically significant contribution to the success of organisations, its practitioners should understand – clearly – what the contribution is that their discipline makes. This should then enable them to articulate – to other functions in the organisation – what their function's contribution is to the organisation's overall strategic success. However, they can only do this if **they themselves** understand their contribution.

Significantly, Steyn and Puth (2000, 11) point out that there is little or no mutual understanding between management on the one hand, and practitioners on the other about the role that communication should play in the organisation. This lack of agreement could in part be attributed to a lack of understanding of the role that communication (including public relations) plays in the organisation's strategic success.

That is the background against which this research is undertaken. The next section of this chapter will examine the research questions that have been identified.

1.3 Research questions

The debate on the relationship between public relations and marketing, and endeavours by organisations such as PRISA to reposition the discipline as a strategically significant management partner, does not seem as if it will be resolved in the near future. While discussion forums, articles, books, and serious research on this debate are ongoing, it is becoming apparent that there is a **fundamental disagreement** on the contribution of public relations to the success of organisations. This disagreement needs to be investigated.

At its heart the disagreement on this contribution may be verbalised as follows:

- Is there a direct relationship between public relations and marketing?
- What is the nature of this relationship?
- Is there a link between public relations and marketing communication?
- What is the nature of this link?
- Should public relations be seen as a strategic management function?
- What is the nature of this function?

And, perhaps most importantly, **do South African public relations practitioners understand the relationship between public relations and these functions?**

That (primarily) public relations practitioners are debating these questions, and **not** marketers or advertising practitioners, possibly speaks volumes of the extent to which public relations practitioners seek to understand their own strategic contributions to organisational success.

The literature seems to point the reader to the insight that public relations practitioners are themselves uncertain of their strategic role and function in the organisation. They seem to grasp at straws that will help them (and their function) to survive. They seem to try to broaden their sphere of influence in the organisation by making other functions subservient to public relations.

Here is an example of the feeling with which some public relations practitioners discuss the uneasy relationship between public relations and other disciplines:

“South African advertising agencies began to take PR seriously, about four years ago, when the bigger agencies established their own PR divisions, or bought majority shares in existing PR agencies. The result was disappointing for both, since the advertising agencies tried to dominate and dictate, trying to turn the PR arm into an advertising agency. The PR teams were still largely old-school and had not quite shifted into the next gear of Power PR. Also, both the advertising and PR teams were territorial and competitive, often sabotaging each other’s efforts” (Aronson, 2003).

In short: it would seem as if public relations practitioners are uncertain and unclear about the strategic contribution that they could make to organisational success.

This thesis will concern itself primarily with the questions outlined above, and will seek to establish whether public relations practitioners are, indeed, not certain about their strategic contribution to organisational success.

Up to this point the background to the thesis, as well as some questions raised by a quick overview of existing textbooks and articles in relevant print and electronic sources, was discussed. The next logical step will be to find a pattern (or patterns) in the state of the discussion, which will serve as a guide for the literature review and subsequent research.

2. PRELIMINARY READING

After identifying the broad themes that will be addressed in this thesis the reading should, of necessity, be centred on materials that discuss these themes in one way or the other. It is for this reason that the decision was taken to source and study books and other materials that refer to, or discuss, the themes outlined in the first section of this chapter.

The discussion of the preliminary reading that follows below is therefore thematically structured:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations as management function.

Preliminary reading matter focused on current textbooks in the disciplines of public relations, management, marketing communication, and marketing. For the purpose of preliminary reading, widely-used and prescribed textbooks (especially in South Africa) were selected, for the reason that they are already established source materials in the three disciplines. In Chapter 2 (see p. 27) more in-depth reading of material other than seminal texts will also be done in order to detail any issues that may arise out of the literature review.

The first theme that needs to be addressed is that of the relationship between public relations and marketing.

2.1 Public relations and marketing

Reference to the fact that “many people confuse public relations with marketing” is found in a surprisingly large number of textbooks. Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 6), Lubbe and Puth (1994: 10) and Newsom, Scott and Turk (1989: 5) all agree that public relations may be confused with other activities, including marketing, while Skinner *et al.* (2001: 43), and Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000) contrast the functions of public relations and marketing.

This seems to indicate that people – including public relations practitioners – have difficulty in grasping the relationship between public relations and marketing. This may in part be due to an inability on the part of public relations practitioners to understand the marketing process.

In order to substantiate this statement, it is necessary firstly to outline the marketing process. Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 53) describe the marketing process as the “process of (1) analyzing marketing opportunities, (2) selecting target markets, (3) developing the marketing mix, and (4) managing the marketing effort”.

This process takes place while firmly grounded in the organisation’s corporate and business strategies (see **FIGURE 5.1** on page 94). The main objective of the marketing process is of course to generate the **exchange of value** between the organisation and its customer.

The third step in this process, developing the marketing mix, is where public relations plays a role as a marketing communication tool: the marketer’s only interest in communicating with the customer (or any other public, for that matter) is to create a customer for the organisation.

To public relations practitioners (at least, according to leading textbooks), marketing is a “coordinated programme of research, product design, packaging, pricing, promotion, and distribution ... to attract and satisfy customers ... in order to achieve an organization’s economic objectives” (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 43). The description offered by Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 7) is very similar to that of Skinner *et al.*: “[m]arketing is the management function that identifies human needs and wants, offers products and services to satisfy those demands, and causes transactions that deliver products and services in exchange for something of value to the provider”.

While these descriptions are not necessarily incorrect, they seem to ignore the **strategic nature** and importance of marketing: without the exchange that helps to achieve the organisation’s economic objectives, the organisation will not be sustainable.

Marketers, on the other hand, do not seem to suffer from the same confusion.

In addition to texts already quoted in the first sections of this chapter, a number of other marketing textbooks also clearly refer to the function of public relations as a **support function** to marketing.

Public relations is seen as communication that is not paid for, and “should be seen as a potentially highly effective marketing tool” (Doyle, 2002: 273), while Cant, Strydom and Jooste (2002: 213) relegate the role of public relations to that of publicity.

Lamb *et al.* (2000: 309) believe that public relations:

“is the marketing function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies areas within the firm that the public may be interested in, and executes a programme of action to earn understanding and acceptance ... Marketers use public relations and publicity not only to maintain a positive image but also to educate the public about the firm’s goals and objectives, introduce new products, and help support the sales effort”.

Ries and Ries (2002: XVII) add coals to the fire by stating that “[t]he emphasis in most corporations is on advertising, with public relations considered a secondary discipline, if considered at all.” Furthermore, “for many corporate managers, it’s true that marketing is synonymous with advertising – not PR”. Could it also be that public relations practitioners (unwittingly) contributed to the formation of this view because they themselves are not always certain about the nature of their contribution to the organisation’s success?

It seems as if marketing practitioners have decided that public relations is a marketing tool, and should be used primarily to obtain free (product) publicity. If seen as more than publicity, all of its activities should nonetheless be geared at product/service sales.

The views quoted above encapsulate a dilemma facing many public relations practitioners today: **public relations is not marketing, and marketing is not public relations.**

To marketing practitioners, public relations is seen as “mere” publicity, while public relations practitioners define their role in organisations by stating, *inter alia*, that public relations is “not marketing”.

What, then is the true situation? Is there a relationship between public relations and marketing? If so, what is the nature of this relationship? Are the two disciplines equal, or is one subservient to the other? And if the relationship can be clarified, are public relations practitioners clear in their minds about this relationship?

The answer to the first question seems to be straightforward: both public relations practitioners and marketing practitioners agree that there is a link between the two functions. The answers to the other questions, however, warrant more attention, and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5 of this thesis (see p. 91 onwards), while the question on the clarity in the minds of public relations practitioners forms the focal point of the empirical research.

At this stage it seems clear that to marketers, public relations should function as a marketing communication tool – one of the promotional elements used as part of the marketing mix which, in turn, is designed to attract customers and satisfy their needs for products or services. Public relations practitioners, on the other hand, see their role as **more** than that of a “mere tool” (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 44).

It is, however, accepted (also by public relations practitioners) that the discipline has a contribution to make in regard to marketing communication. This theme will come under examination in the next section.

2.2 Public relations and marketing communication

One of the four Ps of the marketing mix, promotion, is regarded by most academics as being a “mix in its own right” (Rensburg & Cant, 2003: 5). A number of marketing textbooks regard the promotional mix as the “specific blend of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing tools that the company uses to pursue its advertising and marketing objectives” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 467).

The five “traditional” elements in the promotion mix are also found in Perreault and McCarthy (2002), as well as in Boyd, Walker, Mullins and Larréché (2002) and in Du Plessis, Jooste and Strydom (2001), to name but a few standard textbooks.

Citing evolution in marketing, the organisation’s communication mix has recently been expanded to a minimum of 12 elements, identified by Rensburg and Cant (2003) as being:

- Advertising.
- Point-of-purchase.
- Interactive marketing.
- Sales promotion.
- Exhibitions/trade fairs.
- Personal communication.
- Sponsorship.
- Direct marketing.
- Mass communication.
- Public relations.
- Personal selling.
- Image/theme communication.

This communication mix is “therefore a wider mix of elements than the promotion mix” (Rensburg & Cant, 2003: 5 - 6).

The distinction made here is important, indicating that communication is not solely the responsibility of the marketing department but of the **organisation as a whole**. However, “[a]lthough many specialists may be involved in planning for and implementing specific promotion methods, determining the blend of promotion methods is a strategy decision – and is the responsibility of the marketing manager” (Perreault & McCarthy, 2002: 396).

There are, of course, a number of different communication functions to be found in the organisation. Steyn and Puth (2001: 5 – 6) identify five different forms of communication, and also relate the different forms of communication to confusion. This issue is examined in more detail later in Chapter 6 of this thesis (p. 118 onwards).

When the promotional methods are effectively blended, integrated marketing communication is said to take place.

Recent decades saw the rise of a new line of thinking in marketing communication circles: the birth and growth of the notion of integrated marketing communication. Where the communication functions of marketing (traditionally seen as personal selling, advertising, sales promotion, and public relations) in the past were treated by organisations as separate functions, and handled by experts in those areas, the trend is now to regard these functions as an integrated whole.

This phenomenon – integrated marketing communication – is exhaustively defined by Koekemoer (1998: 3) as:

“[A] concept of marketing communication planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, sponsorship – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communications impact.”

This definition, on the face of it, firmly places public relations in the sphere where it can influence marketing, alongside a number of other marketing communication tools such as advertising and selling. This situation itself leads to vigorous debate among public relations practitioners, as is evident in an article published on the Internet by Anthea Abraham (2003), who complains that “my own colleagues within the industry are negating the points scored in the PR versus Advertising debate over the past approximately 50 years”. The debate has seemingly widened from public relations versus marketing, to public relations versus advertising!

Public relations practitioners are adamant about inclusion in the marketing communication mix: public relations can make a contribution to the marketing communication effort, but is more than “mere” marketing communication. This is how strongly Cutlip *et al.* (2001: 76) feel about integrated marketing communication: “Cooperation does not mean co-optation however. Calls for combining public relations and marketing under the umbrella of ‘integrated marketing communication’ (IMC) typically originate from those working in the marketing function”.

Wilcox *et al.* (2002: 19) are less damning in their discussion on IMC, but add that “[t]urf battles no doubt will continue, but the concept of integrating, or coordinating, communications is here to stay”, while Skinner *et al.* (2001: 50) seem to welcome the advent of IMC: “The practice of integrated marketing communication is emerging as one of the most valuable tools companies can use to gain competitive advantage”.

Chataway and Baird (2003: 8) refer to integration as the “holy grail of communication”, and mention that “communicating in silos” is a mindset to be eradicated. They argue for a person/department to take the lead in integration and, by implication, advocate for public relations practitioners to take the lead in this regard.

The principle of **integration** in integrated marketing communication therefore seems to form common ground between public relations and marketing practitioners. However, the **way** in which public relations fits into the integrated marketing communication mix is the cause for concern (among public relations practitioners).

One attempt at addressing this interrelationship is reflected by Duncan (2002: 543), who proposes a way of looking at the role of public relations in IMC: “Marketers often talk, erroneously, about using ‘public relations’ to help promote a brand. What they are really talking about is using **marketing public relations (MPR)**, which is just one function of public relations and is defined as *the use of non-paid media to deliver positive brand information designed to positively influence customers and prospects*” (boldface and italics in original text).

The debate does not end here. Not only do public relations texts advocate a vision of public relations as being more than marketing, and bigger than marketing communication, but they also very firmly advocate the viewpoint that public relations is a management function. Building on the theme that public relations has more to offer the organisation than being a mere tool of marketing managers or marketing communication departments, the textbooks are adamant in their views that public relations is a management function - belonging at boardroom tables alongside other

management functions such as marketing, finance, human resources, operations management, and so on.

2.3 Public relations and management

Public relations practitioners are lobbying for public relations to be recognised as a management function, while others (notably Steyn & Puth, 2000) emphasise the strategic contribution of public relations to organisational success. The arguments put forward by Steyn and Puth (2000) in fact strongly suggest that public relations practitioners do not understand the **strategic contribution** of public relations, and that they focus only on the **technical** aspects of this discipline.

A number of academic authors (as well as practitioners) are adamant that public relations should be recognised (by practitioner and manager) as a management function. Both Skinner *et al.* (2001: 6) and Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 25) strongly advocate the case for public relations to be seen as a management function. They are supported in this argument by other texts, such as Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 6).

The PRISA Education and Training Centre (PE & TC), in a workbook prescribed to all first year students in their three-year Diploma in public relations, also strongly argues for the discipline to be a management function:

“Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organisation that may influence the organisation and plans and execute [sic] programmes to create and maintain public understanding. It is the only function, apart from general management, which interacts with all the publics of the organisation, both internally and externally” (PE & TC, 2002: 3).

This, then, deals with the current public relations texts.

Do authors in the discipline of management studies agree?

“[P]ublic relations is a fully fledged functional management area and ... the public relations manager is on an equal footing with top managers, such as in marketing, purchasing and human resources departments” (Cronjé *et al.*, 2000: 252).

They are supported in this view by Smit and Cronjé (2002: 15 – 16).

It is of interest to note that management texts aimed at smaller businesses (especially entrepreneurs) seem to relegate the function of public relations to that of publicity, as is the case with Longenecker, Moore and Petty (2000: 338).

At this stage, public relations and management textbooks seem to agree that public relations should be seen as a management function that should be represented at the very top levels of organisations.

The next question that should be addressed is of the **nature** of that involvement. In other words, if it were agreed that public relations is a management function **how** will it function in the organisation?

Preliminary reading on this particular question yields some interesting answers.

A brief review of the public relations texts on this matter reveals some measure of confusion. The public relations practitioner is supposed to operate on the highest levels and be involved in strategic planning, while developing communication plans that support the organisation's business mission, its policy, and its goals (Skinner *et al.*, 2000: 6). This rather vague and broad-sided view needs further clarification, not found in the above textbook.

Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 5) cite the Public Relations Society of America's *Official statement of public relations* as a guide to the management function of public relations. This guide refers to analysis, counselling, research, planning, objective setting and the body of knowledge required to practice public relations in organisations, and is also cited by Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 6) as well as De La Rey (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994: 19).

The reader is, however, still left with a feeling of “woolliness” after searching for a clear, structured explanation that explains how public relations manifests itself as a management function. It is only when a discipline can clearly indicate its strategic contribution to organisational success that it can indicate what its contribution will be to the organisation. Very few – if any – public relations textbooks address the strategic contribution of public relations: the contribution that it makes to the organisation’s strategic success that cannot be replicated by other functions within the organisation. In short, what is the value that this function (public relations) adds to the organisation’s success?

While public relations texts are not forthcoming with a clear picture, management texts are also of no great assistance in answering this question.

Cronjé *et al.* (2000: 252) present readers with an organisational structure of a “typical” public relations department, which has six functional areas: research, publications, visitors’ programmes, house magazines, media liaison, and special publications. This analysis, like those of Cutlip *et al.* (2000) and Skinner *et al.* (2001), seems to focus on the **functions** of a public relations department, rather than on the strategic contribution that public relations can make to business success.

All of the texts cited above seem to describe the management function of public relations by means of describing the various functions of public relations. The statement by PRSA (discussed on the preceding page) goes as far as to identify knowledge required by public relations practitioners. However, again the reader is left with a feeling of bemusement at the lack of direction: what is the strategic contribution that public relations can make to the success of an organisation? The answer remains elusive.

Many textbooks – excluding, of course, marketing textbooks – seem to agree that public relations should be a management function. This statement is not under debate. What is under debate, however, is whether public relations practitioners have a clear grasp of their strategic contribution to management. The literature review discussed in Chapter 2 (see p. 27 onwards) and empirical study discussed in Chapter 3 (p. 50 onwards) will seek to address this issue and others.

The strategic contribution that public relations can make to the organisation is not an easy subject to discuss. As a number of authors have noted, it is difficult to pinpoint the role and function of public relations owing to the fact that it is a multi-faceted discipline in its own right. What is clear at this stage, however, is that public relations is undoubtedly a discipline that does not stand alone – it is of necessity in contact with other disciplines which, therefore, warrants a systems approach in examining the debate.

3. A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

It is said that a butterfly beating its wings in Hong Kong may ultimately cause a hurricane in New York. This expression encapsulates the core of the systems theory.

Smit and Cronjé (2002: 48) describe the systems theory by saying that “[t]he systems approach to management views an organisation as a group of interrelated parts with a single purpose. The action of one part influences the other parts and managers therefore cannot deal separately with individual parts”.

Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 229) attempt to explain the systems theory by describing what is meant by a system: “A system is a set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states”.

One of the current impacts of understanding the systems theory is the concept of **synergy**. According to Smit and Cronjé (2002: 64), synergy “is another concept of the systems theory that can be applied to management. It means that the whole is

greater than the sum of its parts, or that the individual subsystems are simultaneously applied in such a way that the result of their simultaneous application is greater than the sum of their individual efforts”.

In short the systems perspective helps managers to view organisations as unified organisms that chase specific goals, and that plan, organise, lead, and control their resources in such a way that they have maximum output (goal achievement) with the minimum of input (resources).

One of the resources used in an organisation is naturally that of its public relations team. How this team views itself as an integral part of that organisation, and how it sees itself as a sub-system in synergy with other functionalities within the organisation, therefore, seems to add to/subtract from its ability to succeed.

The point is this: neither public relations nor marketing should see itself as superior to or inferior from the other. The systems perspective should focus both disciplines on the achievement of **strategic goals** of the organisation.

However, this is an approach that can only work if both functions understand their relevant contributions to the organisation.

PRISA defines public relations as:

“the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders” (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 4).

This definition implies a systems approach to public relations by indicating that public relations plays a role in maintaining harmony between the organisation internally, and its publics externally.

Through communication, the relationship between (at least) three systems is managed.

“Working on behalf of their organisations and in the public interest, public relations professionals are *agents* and *managers of change*, both inside and outside their organisations. They plan and facilitate organisational and social adjustment and adaptation using primarily communication” (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002: 245).

This implies that public relations functions best in an open system, where sub-groups and environments interact with one another in a constantly changing macro-environment.

Why advocate the systems perspective in this thesis?

If it were understood that the modern organisation is almost always an open system, and that the internal environment of an organisation consists of many sub-systems that have to operate in a way to achieve synergy, it becomes clear that the study of public relations should not be restricted to the study of this discipline (public relations) alone, but that other disciplines also need to be taken into consideration. These include (but are not limited to) marketing, marketing communication, and management.

It is, however, not sufficient to limit studies to the subjects listed above – an integrational approach should be advocated: public relations (if an open system) interacts with these disciplines, influences them and is, in turn, influenced by them.

This approach is validated in part by Newsom *et al.* (2000) who state that marketing activities sometimes have a direct impact on public relations, and in almost all cases have implications for the organisation’s public relations.

Ries and Ries (2002: 265) also support the open systems approach by comparing the role of advertising to the role of public relations: “After being built by PR techniques, a brand needs advertising to maintain its position”. They go further by indicating that the “true role and function” of public relations in the marketing process is one of building a brand.

From the brief discussion above, it becomes apparent that public relations is an open system that interacts with the management of the organisation, the marketing function, advertising, and other functions. In the process of this interaction it has an influence on, and is influenced by any number of management functions.

The preliminary reading discussed in Section 2 of this chapter (see p. 9) clearly indicates that at least three disciplines are intimately involved in a discussion of this topic: public relations, marketing, and management.

While some people seem to believe that academic research should focus on one discipline and one discipline alone, the systems perspective advocates the view that a study of one discipline **cannot be complete** without (at least) reference to its impacts on other related disciplines (and their impacts on it).

This thesis, building on the fundamental approach that **public relations** (like any organisation) **is an open system**, should therefore include reference to the disciplines of marketing, marketing communication, and management in order to be complete.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

In order to establish whether or not public relations practitioners are confused/are not confused about their contribution to business success, the following null hypothesis is identified:

- H₀ Public relations practitioners in South Africa clearly understand the nature of their strategic contribution to business success.

Underlying this hypothesis are three research questions that also need to be addressed:

- What is the role that public relations should play in its interaction with marketing?
- What is the role that public relations should play in its interaction with marketing communication?
- What is the strategic role that public relations should play in the management of an organisation?

The null hypothesis is tested by looking for evidence that will allow the researcher to accept/reject the null hypothesis (Neuman, 1997: 112). The hypothesis is typically used together with an alternative hypothesis, which in this case will read:

Public relations practitioners in South Africa do not understand the nature of their contribution to business success.

The danger in using a null hypothesis is that, if the null hypothesis is rejected by evidence, the alternative remains a possibility and is not necessarily proven. This is not necessarily a bad thing – after all, in the words of economist Thorstein Veblen, “[t]he outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before” (in Cohen, 2000: 453).

The hypothesis can only be proved/disproved if it were possible to measure the opinions of public relations practitioners against an existing body of knowledge, or theories in regard to the topic at hand.

This necessitates a review (literature study) of the current theory on the relationship between:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations and management.

Once the theory has been described (and, perhaps, consolidated) it will be possible to set up a measuring instrument (in this case, a survey questionnaire) to establish the views that South African public relations practitioners have of the themes identified in this chapter.

It is for this reason that the research will be both **exploratory** and **descriptive** in nature. These are, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 79), the “most common and useful” research purposes.

The **exploratory** research will bring about a better understanding of the state of the debate on:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations and management.

As such, it will help to uncover the contribution that public relations can make to the organisation on a strategic level. This will then aid the researcher in compiling a questionnaire that will describe the views that South African public relations practitioners currently have on the three themes above.

This approach will necessitate a review of literature pertinent to the three themes, and will be supplemented by empirical research in the form of a survey questionnaire that will establish the opinions of South African public relations practitioners on these three themes.

Descriptive research requires careful and deliberate observation. By means of surveys, the issues identified during the exploratory phase may be given statistical weight, and thereby help to give quantitative weight to the questions under research.

Therefore, the research design will require two distinct phases:

- Literature study.
- Surveys (quantitative research).

The research design (see p. 52) and methodology (see p. 55) will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter introduces the background to the research and provides a brief review of preliminary reading to the topics identified. It then explains why an interdisciplinary (systems) approach will be followed, and introduces the research questions and hypotheses to be addressed in the thesis. The research design and methodology are briefly discussed.

Mouton (2001: 114) presents the following basic logic of the research process: research problem, design, evidence, and conclusions. This logic informs the basic structure of a thesis in the following manner:

- Chapter 1: Background, research problem, hypothesis, methodology.
- Chapter 2: Literature review.
- Chapter 3: Discussion of research design and methodology.
- Chapter 4: Presentation of findings and discussion of data.
- Chapter 5: *Main conclusions and recommendations.*

It needs to be noted that Mouton makes allowances for more chapters following Chapters 4 and 5, but the logic remains the same.

This thesis will be based on that logic and will, therefore, be structured in the following manner:

Chapter 1 (this chapter) presents a brief introduction to the issue under research, a brief literature overview, the hypothesis and research questions, and introduces the methodology proposed for the research.

Chapter 2 will examine in great detail the literature reviewed, and will provide a synthesis of the findings of the extensive literature review, classified according to the themes identified in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 will expand on the research design and methodology, and will explain the questionnaire that is used.

Chapter 4 will present the results of the survey, and will provide an overview of the main results of the survey.

Chapter 5 will focus on the relationship between public relations and marketing in some detail, and will discuss specific results from the survey on this topic.

Chapter 6 examines the role of public relations in the marketing communication mix, and also analyses survey data pertaining to this subject.

Chapter 7 discusses the management role of public relations, and also provides a perspective on the strategic contribution of public relations to organisational success.

Chapter 8 will present the major findings and conclusions of the research, and will propose certain recommendations for further research, as well as discuss policy implementations of the findings of the thesis.

The next step on the road to discovery and enlightenment is the literature review: What is the current state of debate on the research question at hand?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

Public relations, the “management, through communication, of the perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders” (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 4) finds itself at a crossroads in South Africa.

On the one hand, it is - through the initiatives of PRISA – endeavouring to position itself once and for all as a management discipline in order to “contribute to the business management function” (Richardson, 2002). On the other hand, public relations seems to be in a battle to “defend” itself against disciplines such as marketing and advertising.

A website, focusing on South African advertising and marketing issues, known as Biz-community, has a section devoted to public relations. In this section, a number of contributors across the country electronically publish their views on the latest developments in the public relations industry. Access to the website is available free of charge, and electronic newsletters are posted to anyone who asks to receive them. The public relations page of the website is available at the following URL (Universal Resource Locator): <http://www.biz-community.com/196/18.html>. Although not posing as a serious academic resource, the website nonetheless serves to highlight issues at the forefront of public relations activities in South Africa.

A brief review of articles on this website reveal the following phrases:

“[P]ublic relations can be applied to every part of the marketing mix” (Schorah, 2002).

“[T]raditional PR needs to move beyond the boundaries of distributing press releases and securing media interviews” (Marsland, 2003).

“The perennial battle between advertising and public relations tends to keep both sides in a state of muted – or overt – hostility” (Yossava, 2003).

“South African advertising agencies began to take PR seriously, about four years ago, when the bigger agencies established their own PR divisions” (Aronson, 2003).

The quotations above are a small sample of the large number of articles published on websites like this, and indicate that there is a need for public relations to be seen (especially by its practitioners) as a management function that is **strategic** in nature; that it has a relationship with marketing, but not necessarily **only** marketing; and that it is a part of the organisation’s total communication mix – commonly referred to as the marketing communication mix – but also that it is more than an element in the marketing communication mix. It is therefore necessary to investigate the current state of affairs on all three disciplines (that is, public relations, management, and marketing), as well as a specific investigation into the situation currently in South Africa.

As was indicated in Chapter 1 (see p. 21), the focus of this thesis necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. For the purposes of the literature review, a number of parameters were set:

- The literature must be recent. This thesis does not concern itself with *historical development of theories, but rather investigates the current state of affairs*. However, it may prove that older studies are seminal to the topic, and may be included for discussion to provide historical perspective where needed.
- The literature must cover the disciplines of public relations, management, marketing, and marketing communication.
- The literature should, as far as is possible, include a South African component, for this thesis investigates the South African situation.

The key to successful literature research, according to Neuman (1997: 96), is “to be careful, systematic, and organized”. The parameters outlined in the previous paragraph assist in achieving this goal.

In keeping with the thematic classification discussed in Chapter 1 (see p. 9), this chapter will be broken into three main sections, each dealing with the relevant theme. In each of these sections, the attention will focus on current literature from the relevant disciplines, definitions will be examined, after which the view of public relations texts on the pertinent subject will come under scrutiny.

In order to find existing literature on these topics searches will be conducted in scholarly journals, scholarly books, dissertations, and presented papers.

It is believed that the literature review will assist in identifying possible gaps in empirical knowledge, and will therefore help to further refine the questions already identified in Chapter 1 (see p. 23).

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

“I place PR in the context of marketing ... Business is marketing and marketing is business. Without the creation of demand (through marketing/PR), there is no business” (Gibbons in Marsland, 2003).

This rather broad statement may reflect the way in which public relations people confuse marketing with other business functions, including public relations.

Public relations is not marketing (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 43; Newsom *et al.*, 1989: 9; Wilcox *et al.*, 2000: 15; Cutlip *et al.*, 2000: 6). These authors also take pains to point to differences between public relations and other functions such as advertising, publicity, and so on.

If it were agreed that public relations is not marketing, advertising, publicity and so on, the question that does arise (again) is that public relations must be something, and it must be something that adds value to the organisation (helps the organisation to achieve its goals).

Instances where authors of texts indicate that there is a difference between public relations and marketing have been quoted in the preceding pages, and it is therefore not necessary to repeat them here. What is needed, however, is a definition of marketing.

3.1 Marketing defined

A brief look at a number of marketing texts reveals that marketing is a process that harnesses all the activities in a business in such a way that individuals' needs are identified, and then satisfied through the creation of products/services aimed at those needs. This satisfaction is obtained by the individual through an exchange of value with the organisation (Boyd *et al.*, 2002: 6; Kotler & Armstrong, 2001: 5; Perreault & McCarthy, 2002: 4 - 5).

At its most basic level marketing is seen as "managing profitable customer relationships" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 5).

The marketing process is a simple one: identify consumer needs, manufacture a product or deliver a service consonant with those needs, and rake in the money.

Of course marketing is not as simple as that, and involves a great number of activities and a large amount of planning in order to succeed.

Of more importance is the role that marketing plays in society and in the organisation. Marketing is seen as an engine for economic growth (Perreault & McCarthy, 2002: 18), a philosophy for business (Doyle, 2002: 59); contributes directly to the organisation's objectives of survival, profits, and growth (Lamb *et al.*, 2000: 22); and provides value to consumers (Cant *et al.*, 2002: 32).

Marketing is in fact highly important to the organisation. In the words of Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 5), "[s]ound marketing is critical to the success of every organization – large or small, for-profit or not-for-profit, domestic or global".

Do public relations texts agree with this view of marketing?

Skinner *et al.* (2001: 43) see marketing as a “coordinated programme of research, product design, packaging, pricing, promotion, and distribution ... to attract and satisfy customers ... on a long-term basis to achieve an organization’s economic objectives”. This sentiment is echoed (almost verbatim) in Cutlip *et al.* (2002: 7), as well as Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 16).

These definitions point not to the understanding of marketing as a business philosophy, but rather to the “mechanical” aspects of marketing – the functions or tasks carried out by people who work in a marketing department, rather than employees who are committed to organisational success through a common vision – shared even by colleagues in the public relations department.

The question that could already be asked at this stage of the research is this: If prescribed textbooks themselves do not succeed in clearly communicating the role of marketing in the organisation, how will it be possible for public relations practitioners to understand the role of marketing – and thereby the interaction between their discipline and that of marketing?

The evolution of the marketing concept from production through selling to the societal marketing concept underlies the current marketing philosophy. Meeting the needs of customers, and doing so better than the competition (competitive advantage) seems to be the current focus in marketing philosophy. Doyle and Kotler agree that putting the customer at the centre of all of the functions of business will lead to success in achieving organisational goals and objectives. This view leads inevitably to the understanding that organisations are linked to consumers as well as suppliers. In fact, organisations take “advantage of new opportunities for connecting with their customers, their marketing partners, and the world around them” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 32).

Connectedness and value.

These two words point to the two challenges facing organisations today: how to build and maintain strategic networks, and how to create and maintain superior

customer value. The organisation that can do these two things will have a better chance of survival and growth than those who do not.

These two themes link marketing to public relations. And it is this link that seems to lead to a “turf war” (Wilcox *et al.*, 2000: 19) between marketers and public relations practitioners.

For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of marketing by Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 5) will be used:

“Marketing [is] a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others”.

The concept of exchange of value is of particular interest – the individual consumer satisfies his/her needs by obtaining the value that will satisfy that need. This value is delivered by a product or a service that is offered by the organisation, which, in turn, obtains the value that it requires from the consumer (normally this value is money, although a vote, or support for an idea could also serve as value).

3.2 Marketing in the public relations practitioner’s view

Public relations techniques, while not marketing, can fulfil a certain support role to the marketing function. Several authors agree that marketing can and should be supported by public relations activities such as endorsements, stretching the promotional budget, building the organisation’s credibility, demonstrating social responsibility, and so on (Cutlip *et al.*, Skinner *et al.*, Wilcox *et al.*).

The relationship is further clarified by Skinner *et al.* (2001: 45) who suggest that the public relations practitioner should, when engaged in corporate activities, report to the top management, whilst, when involved in “purely” marketing, he/she should work in a cross-functional team with the marketing department (among others).

Both viewpoints, that of supporting marketing and of differentiating between lines of reporting, seem to narrow the focus on the role of public relations, not only with regard to marketing, but also with regard to its function in the organisation as a whole.

Public relations, according to PRISA, is a management function that interacts with all of the organisation's publics, who judge the effectiveness of management in achieving its goal, which is to "meet market demands for services in an economically viable way" (PRISA Education & Training Centre, 2003: 3).

For this discussion that this description does not include reference to products is neither here nor there. What is interesting is to note that management effectiveness (at least, according to the PRISA Education and Training Centre) is judged by publics, and that the overriding goal of management is to meet market demands.

The themes of connectedness and value now start crystallising: Organisations survive, grow, and prosper when they succeed in creating and delivering value to various publics. The prosperity of an organisation is partly dependent on marketing, and partly on public perception. This rather neat world view helps to adjust the focus of the public relations practitioner: when creating value, the organisation is busy marketing, and public relations supports that function. When interacting with publics, however, the public relations function reigns supreme, and all is well.

Or is it?

It seems increasingly as if public relations practitioners are wanting to take a more active role in the marketing function. Some of them, such as Wilcox *et al.* (2000), base their advocacy of increased public relations involvement in marketing on an article written by Philip Kotler in 1986, entitled "Megamarketing". Among other things, Kotler suggested adding two more "P's" to the marketing mix: power and public relations (Kotler, 1986: 117). To Kotler, the role of public relations is that of communicating to groups of people typically not part of the organisation's target markets.

To marketers, the contribution of public relations is a simple one: help to create a platform on which new products/services may be launched, and create a climate within which the sales of existing products/services are sold to the identified target markets.

Public relations practitioners concede that there are functions that public relations can engage in to support the marketing function, but also campaign for a situation where public relations is seen as **more than marketing**.

Fritelli (2002: 8) goes as far as lobbying public relations practitioners to stop searching for differences between marketing and public relations, and to find the synergy between the two disciplines, stating that public relations is finding itself in a position where it is fighting for survival. Public relations is seen only as a cost centre, "wheeled out if there needs to be any dialogue with the press, or disaster".

Lubbe (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994: 10-11) also refers to confusion between public relations and marketing, citing the fact that one uses the tools of the other (and vice versa) as a root cause of this confusion. The major difference between the two functions lies in the fact that marketing concentrates on the "*quid pro quo* relationships with customers, public relations deals with all publics vital to an organisation's mission".

Seitel (1998: 5) maintains that marketing focuses on selling the product, while public relations sells the organisation as a whole. In this view, Seitel is supported by most authors on the subject, such as Cutlip *et al.* (2000), Skinner *et al.* (2001), and Beard (2002).

However, the authors cited above also agree that public relations does provide some form of support function to marketing. In the words of Beard (2002: 13), the public relations manager is also responsible for "carrying out those marketing support functions which are also used in public relations, such as media relationships and sponsorship".

The literature at present therefore indicates the following:

- There is **confusion** between public relations and marketing, mainly because the two disciplines use similar tools.
- This confusion leads to organisations **not** giving **sufficient stature** to the function of public relations.
- Public relations practitioners try to define their contribution to the organisation by stating that it is not marketing, which is **not** helping to provide a **clear focus** on what it is that public relations does for an organisation.
- There is certainly **synergy** between the two functions.

These conclusions from the present literature points the way forward. If indeed there is confusion between the two functions in the literature, it is also conceivable that public relations practitioners themselves may be confused about the role of their discipline in regard to marketing.

3. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 468 - 469) the rise of target marketing away from mass marketing, coupled with a proliferation of technology, has given impetus to a need for more integrated communication with target markets. The concept of integrated marketing communication is a result of the realisation by marketing managers that their target customers are exposed to a variety of messages from a variety of different sources. Somewhere, the content and delivery of messages from the organisation to its various target markets needs to be integrated and coordinated.

Duncan (2002: 15) mentions that marketing communication refers to all of the communication functions that are used in the marketing of a product, and that its purpose is to add value to a product for customers and company. He continues by defining the marketing communication mix as being "for the selection of MC functions used at a given time as part of a marketing programme" (Duncan, 2002: 16).

Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 19) argue that marketing is the dominant voice in many organisations, while the “concept of integrating, or coordinating, communications is here to stay”.

What is this phenomenon?

The integration of communication is described by Clow and Baack (2004: 8) as:

“the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools, avenues, and sources within a company into a seamless program that maximizes the impact on consumers and other end users at a minimal cost”.

Other texts, such as Du Plessis, Bothma, Jordaan and Van Heerden (2003) and Duncan (2002) echo this definition, while all texts agree that the practice of integrated marketing communication is dependent on the guidance provided by the marketing department.

The texts are also unanimous in stating that the strategic integration of communication functions as opposed to autonomous operation of various functions makes business sense.

Duncan (2002: 31) warns against what he calls the “two-edged sword of expertise”, meaning that as agencies or departments (such as public relations departments and public relations consultancies) grow their particular expertise, they increasingly develop their **own strategies** for brand-building without necessarily bringing other marketing communication functions into consideration. Is it possible that this departmentalisation, with its concomitant “turf wars” is currently the core of the debate “public relations versus the others”? Could it be that an unwillingness to accept integration helps to bring about confusion?

This certainly seems the case when reading major public relations texts. Cutlip *et al.* (2000), Wilcox *et al.* (2000), Newsom *et al.* (2000), and Skinner *et al.* (2001) all start their discussions on public relations by stating that it is **not** marketing; that it is **not** advertising; that it is **not** selling. This seems to be an almost feverish attempt at departmentalisation, protesting against the trend of integration.

On the one hand, therefore, marketers and marketing communication specialists are calling for **increased integration**, while public relations professionals seem to be calling for **increased separation of duties**.

This latter view could be construed as short-sighted. In the words of Clow and Baack (2004: 29), "effective marketing communication begins with the establishment of a clearly defined corporate image", certainly one of the major functions of public relations.

From this brief discussion, it is clear that public relations has a definite role to play in integrated marketing communication, and could indeed make a strategically significant contribution to the organisation's success by building and maintaining a positive corporate image.

For the purposes of this thesis, integrated marketing communication will be defined as follows:

"A concept of marketing communications planning that recognises that added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact" (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2003: 10).

One area in which this definition is particularly useful, is that of the strategic contribution that public relations (among others) can make to the organisation's success.

4. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Although the need for the recognition of public relations as management function has already been identified in Chapter 1 (see p. 16 onwards), it is important to not only investigate whether public relations is a management function, but to investigate the need for it to be seen as such.

Management textbooks agree that the role of managers in the organisation is that of giving direction to the organisation, motivating people through leadership, and allocating resources required to accomplish organisational goals.

One of these resources, of course, is that of public relations, which should help the organisation to achieve its goals. As such, the discussion around the relationship between public relations and management is important. The endeavours initiated by PRISA in 2003 (and which were discussed in Chapter 1 on page 2) are proof of the fact that public relations practitioners in South Africa want their discipline to be seen as a management function.

In its vision and mission statement, PRISA states:

“PRISA’s vision is:

The recognition of public relations professionals as role-players of significance in Southern Africa and beyond.

PRISA’s mission is:

- Fostering the dynamic and relevant professionalism of public relations practice in Southern Africa;
- Establishing public relations as a strategic management function;
- Maintaining professional ethics and standards amongst members of the Institute;
- Providing dynamic, value-added services to members of the Institute” (PRISA Education & Training Centre, 2002: 7).

For the scope of this thesis, the phrases “role-players of significance” and “strategic management function” are particularly interesting. Here is a professional body that states in its vision and mission statements that it is committed to positioning public relations as a significant role-player, while at the same time driving to position public relations as a strategic management function.

Do texts in public relations and management agree that public relations should be a management function? If so, what is the role of public relations in the management of the organisation? Does it make a contribution to the organisation? What is the nature of that contribution?

In order to answer some of these questions, it is necessary to start at the beginning: a definition of management.

4.1 Management defined

Textbooks in the field of management agree that the term “management” may refer to any of the following activities: attaining organisational goals; planning, organising, leading and controlling the organisation’s resources; increasing efficiency (minimising input, and maximising output); and a set of activities (Daft & Marcic, 2003: 7; Cronjé *et al.*, 2000: 23; Hellriegel *et al.*, 1999: 8; Griffin, 1993: 5 – 6). These authors also point to the current understanding that management should also be viewed as a process, rather than as a static set of activities.

The definitions provided by these authors all agree that management should be seen as four primary activities that are performed in the process: planning, organising, leading, and controlling of the resources of an organisation in such a manner that the inputs are kept to a minimum, while output is enhanced. This is done in order to achieve organisational goals. These functional definitions of management serve the purpose of explaining the particular management activities (planning, organising, leading, controlling) and their relationship to each other, while contextualising their contribution to the attainment of organisational goals. What is lacking from these definitions is an element referring to the interaction between the organisation and its various environments.

Considering the focus of this thesis, two issues present themselves at this stage:

- According to the PRISA definition, public relations is a management function (referring to planning, organising, leading, controlling); and
- The management of relationships between the organisation and internal and external stakeholders.

So far the definitions examined help to clarify the first issue. The second issue cited above highlights the fact that no organisation truly operates in a vacuum, and in most cases deals with internal and external variables, of which stakeholders form part.

Holtzhausen (2002: 32) highlights the contributions made by Grunig in positioning public relations as a management function, and says that “the management focus has generated numerous perspectives on the strategic management of public relations with *strategic* as the key word”.

According to David (2003: 5), strategic management is:

“the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organisation to achieve its objectives. As this definition implies, strategic management focuses on integrating management, marketing, finance/accounting, production/operations, research and development, and computer information systems to achieve organisational success”.

Notably absent from this definition by a world-famous management strategist is a reference to public relations. This is, in part, attributed to the focus by public relations practitioners on the *functional* aspects of management, rather than the *strategic* aspect of management (Holtzhausen, 2002: 32). Ironically, the sharper focus on the strategic aspect of public relations has, paradoxically, brought it onto the brink of a crisis in the discipline (Holtzhausen, 2002: 32).

This seeming paradox bears further investigation into the nature of management and strategic management, and the relationship between it and public relations.

Smit and Cronjé (2002: 9) state that the task of management is:

“to combine, allocate, coordinate and deploy resources or inputs in such a way that the organisation’s goals are achieved as productively as possible”.

This definition seems to suggest a certain rational approach in management: managers look at objective facts, and make objective decisions that have rational outcomes.

This statement is supported by Van Ruler and De Lange (2003: 146), who state that there is a “shift from regarding such functions [communication functions] as requiring artistic or creative talents to perceiving them as needing to be fulfilled by specialists on a management level”.

In a report on his seminal *Excellence* study, James Grunig (Grunig & Grunig, 2000: 307) also promotes the rational approach by outlining a mechanism to identify strategic constituencies for an organisation. But, argues Holtzhausen (2002: 36), “public relations is much more than the technical role of an organisational player. It is a major societal force and should be studied as such.” While this thesis does not aim to pursue the postmodernist agenda that is advocated by Holtzhausen, it is aiming to come to grips with the organisational role of public relations, and indications are that this role should be more than that of functional player.

The discussion so far has indicated that management has a functional perspective, as well as a strategic perspective. It is also clear that public relations is finding itself in a position where it is seen (among others, by practitioners themselves) as a functional management component.

Like strategic management, public relations has been described as an “art and a science” (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 6). Looking at most of the definitions quoted so far, the “science” part of the description (regarding management) seems to refer to the mechanism of management: the steps followed in managing organisations, rather than the “art” of managing the functions in an organisation in such a way that organisational goals are met – creatively and innovatively.

As long ago as 1992, management guru Peter Drucker (1992: 5) outlined the new challenges facing management: "There is a new configuration to economic life today which confounds all the old analytical categories". Henderson (in David, 2003: 7) states that:

"[t]he accelerating rate of change today is producing a business world in which customary managerial habits in organisations are increasingly inadequate. Experience alone was an adequate guide when changes could be made in small increments. But intuitive and experience-based management philosophies are quite inadequate when decisions are strategic and have major, irreversible consequences".

David uses this quotation to underline his argument that good management today, under conditions of high risk, requires a mixture of process and creativity. Moss and Green (2001: 123) argue that management, if seen by itself, is a simple process, but can become complicated owing to the fact that managing involves interaction with large numbers of people: "the complexity lies in the web of relationships that managers in organisations have to cope with, not in the basic process that managerial work entails".

Management, therefore, should be seen on the one hand as a process (planning, organising, leading, controlling), while at the same time it involves relationship-building and relationship management in such a way that the organisation can achieve its goals in an increasingly unstable environment.

4.2 The link between management and public relations

"[N]o organisation can develop or even exist without communication" (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003: 145). Authors such as Porter (1980 and 1996), Kotler and Armstrong (2004), and Daft and Marcic (1998) all underline the importance of communication in the smooth and successful management of organisations. It is, however, interesting to note that the terminology seems to favour "communication", rather than "public relations".

The definitions discussed in the previous section all refer to the fact that management has a task: meeting organisational goals. It has four fundamental functions: planning, organising, leading, and controlling. And it meets organisational goals by planning, organising, leading, and controlling a number of functions such as general management, marketing, finance, human resources, production/operations, and public relations (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 11–16).

Skinner *et al.* (2001: 6-7) are unclear about the way in which the public relations function can contribute to management, other than saying that the public relations practitioner should have a senior management position. They do, however, point out that public relations helps the organisation to achieve its goals by maintaining a beneficial relationship between the organisation and its internal and external publics.

Public relations acts as a “bridge to change” (Newsom *et al.*, 1989: 22) and is a means of measuring and influencing attitudes to help the organisation to create changes. Because it looks at the whole, rather than a specific (functional) focus, public relations with its wide and diverse experience will help groups to adapt to each other.

These two textbooks, therefore, argue for a cross-functional approach to public relations and management: the public relations function creates harmony between the organisation and its stakeholders, thereby enabling it to reach its goals and objectives more easily; and it does so by interacting with all the functional areas of management.

Other texts agree with this approach: Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 4 – 6) endeavour to outline the management role of public relations by referring to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) statement of public relations which, *inter alia*, stresses the viewpoint that public relations creates harmony between private and public policies. They also outline the knowledge fields in which public relations practitioners should be proficient in order to create this harmony. Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 20) put it succinctly:

“the world needs not more information but sensitive communicators who can explain the goals and methods of individuals, organisations, and governments to others in a socially responsible manner. Equally, these experts ... must provide their employers with knowledge of what others are thinking, to guide them in setting their policies wisely for the common good”.

Steyn and Puth (2000: 5) state that corporate communication (public relations), when defined as a management function, is more than just the application of communication techniques, and managing them. They see corporate communication as a form of managed communication that improves the organisation's ability to achieve its goals and objectives effectively through the creation and maintenance of stakeholder relationships.

These authorities all seem to agree that public relations is an important management function that creates harmony between the organisation and its stakeholder groups, and put forward reasons why this harmony is important. All available sources argue – cogently – that public relations is, and should be seen as, a vital management tool. By the same token, a brief investigation into management texts bears this insight out. However, the texts share a commonality in that they share a seeming inability to quantify the value that public relations adds as a management function. Where does public relations fit in? Is it a strategic tool? Is it a tactical tool? Is it both? If so, how does it fulfil its management function?

4.3 The role of public relations as management function

Motau (2003: 11) argues that public relations be seen on the strategic and tactical level of an organisation. He reminds readers that CEOs need reminders from time to time that public relations can and should add value to the organisation on the strategic level, and is not merely to be used in case of crisis, and calls for public relations professionals to take the lead in positioning public relations accordingly.

4.3.1 Tactical function

The execution of public relations on the tactical level has brought with it its own challenges, fuelling the feuds (especially) between public relations and marketing,

and public relations and advertising. In fact, a fairly current debate in public relations circles is reaction on the recently published book by Al and Laura Ries entitled *The fall of advertising and the rise of PR*. In this book the premise that advertising is relegated to becoming an art form, while public relations is the true builder of brands is discussed (Ries & Ries, 2002). Understandably, this delights public relations professionals. For instance, Falkow (2003) advocates the primacy of public relations as the only function that can build brands over the long term.

Marketing and advertising professionals, again understandably, are less enamoured of Ries and Ries. For instance, argues Neff (2002: 14), “[e]ven brands that use PR as their primary marketing vehicle can find it’s a mixed blessing, since the message isn’t always quite the one they wanted to send”. In taking a rather cynical view of the arguments proposed by the Rieses, Neff is joined by Drake (2003: 23) and Berman (2002: 42).

This debate and others like it demonstrate that there is still a measure of uncertainty (at least in the minds of public relations professionals) about the role of public relations as a tactical management tool, particularly in regard to marketing and advertising. The tactical roles will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

What needs solid clarification is the nature of public relations as a strategic management function. As was indicated at the start of this subsection, public relations can be seen on the tactical as well as the strategic level in an organisation. So far, the chapter has also investigated the nature of management, and proposes the concept of management being tactical and strategic in nature. The question that now presents itself is: What is the strategic function of public relations?

4.3.2 Strategic function

David (2003: 5) uses the following analogy to explain the notion of strategic management:

“Once there were two company presidents who competed in the same industry. These two presidents decided to go on a camping trip to discuss a possible merger. They hiked deep into the woods. Suddenly, they came upon a grizzly bear that rose up on its hind legs and snarled. Instantly, the first president took off his knapsack and got out a pair of jogging shoes. The second president said, ‘Hey, you can’t outrun that bear.’ The first president responded, ‘Maybe I can’t outrun that bear, but surely I can outrun you!’ This story captures the notion of strategic management, which is to achieve and maintain competitive advantage”.

The strategic management of an organisation is described by Pearce and Robinson (2003: 3) as the “set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company’s objectives”. They identify nine tasks critical to the success of strategic management. These include a mission statement, environmental analysis, setting objectives, development of short-term strategies, implementation of the strategies, and evaluation of the success of the strategic process.

In brief, top management (comprising functional directors) write the company’s strategy, which then serves as the basis for the functional strategies, such as the marketing, financial, production/operations, and public relations strategies. These functional strategies are written as implementation plans for the business strategy.

The process of strategic management can be broken up into the following stages (David, 2003: 14):

- Develop vision and mission.
- Perform external and internal audits.
- Establish long-term objectives.
- Generate, evaluate, and select strategies.
- Implement strategies.
- Measure and evaluate performance.

While these steps will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (see pp. 144 - 146), suffice it to say that there are two “levels” of strategies that command our attention; namely **corporate** strategy and **functional** strategy.

The corporate strategy concerns itself with opportunities for growth, profits and sustainability, while the functional strategies are confined to functional departments, and their interpretation of how their functions can contribute to the attainment of corporate goals and objectives.

If one takes a look at the current level of planning that takes place in public relations in South Africa, the following picture emerges (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 106):

“The traditional public relations programme consists of seven important elements:

- defining the situation (situation analysis);
- setting the objectives;
- determining the target audience;
- developing the message;
- activities – strategy and action plans (with timing and responsibilities);
- budget;
- review and evaluation”.

This programme reflects the “traditional” approach in public relations, viewing the function as a conglomerate of tactical activities. Although the approach in this programme is strategic in the sense that it employs tactics to achieve set objectives, the programme itself is not contextualised in regard to the organisational strategy. It is, at best, a functional strategy.

The fact that a programme should be put into the context of the organisation's strategy is addressed by Steyn and Puth (2000: 53), who argue that the corporate communication strategy (public relations strategy) should reflect the corporate strategy. In understanding how the public relations strategy should do that, it will be necessary to investigate the nature of corporate strategy. This will be done in detail in Chapter 7 (see p. 144 onwards).

Suffice it to say that most literature agrees that public relations needs to be more strategic in nature (Lages & Simkin, 2003; Dolphin & Fan, 2000; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003; Grunig & Grunig, 2000).

The “how” of the strategic involvement of public relations will be addressed in Chapter 7 (p. 137 onwards), but at this stage several questions present themselves:

- How does public relations contribute to the corporate strategy formulation?
- How does the public relations programme fit into the corporate strategy?
- Are public relations professionals in South Africa aware of their strategic contribution in organisations?
- Should public relations practitioners be educated in management?

Public relations authors all seem to agree that whatever public relations is, and whatever its contribution to the organisation, it is **manifestly not marketing**. This thesis will examine the relationship between public relations and marketing; public relations and marketing communication; and public relations and management in more detail.

5. CONCLUSION

The confusion that exists between public relations and other (similar) functions in the organisation, including marketing and advertising, has led to a situation where public relations practitioners and their colleagues have become involved in an academic wrangling and jockeying for position within the organisation, with little or no positive results for the organisation. Adding to this confusion is the fact that public relations has only recently found for itself a voice as an important strategic component in the corporate strategy. Planning public relations (corporate communication) from the very source (corporate strategy) is still a novel concept to many South African public relations practitioners, as is witnessed by the still raging debate on the “supremacy” of marketing, advertising, and public relations. It is ironic that a strategic focus on the contribution of public relations could easily help to clarify the relationship between public relations and all other functional departments. This theme needs to be investigated from a closer perspective.

Suffice it to say at this stage that the weight of current literature agrees that:

- Public relations is linked to marketing and should, from time to time, support marketing as a communication tool.
- Public relations is a vital, and inseparable, part of the integrated marketing communication mix.
- Public relations is a management function.
- Public relations is a strategic function.

The questions that need to be addressed through empirical research (since none seems to exist) are the following:

- How do South African public relations practitioners view the link between public relations and marketing?
- How do they view the link between public relations and integrated marketing communication?
- How do they view the relationship between public relations and management?
- Are they aware of the strategic nature of public relations?

The next chapter will address the research methodology that will be used to further examine existing literature and empirical evidence to be collected.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was identified briefly in Chapter 1 as being exploratory and descriptive in nature (see p. 24). The exploratory research requires a literature review (which was dealt with in Chapter 2) as well as a survey.

It is essential that any research is “placed in the context of the general body of scientific knowledge” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 565) in order to reflect on extant knowledge, identify general themes, point to gaps, bring the reader up to date, and so on.

An exhaustive study was done of **latest** available literature in textbooks, as well as recent articles in industry-related publications, on the themes identified in Chapter 1:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations and management.

In addition to the literature review, it is also necessary to collect empirical data to accept/reject the stated hypothesis.

Derived from the Greek term “*empireia*”, which means “experience”, the term “empirical” refers to study methods that are used to “investigate the world of observations and experiences” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 641). Quantitative analysis, for its part, is defined as “[t]he numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 646).

The hypothesis under discussion in this thesis is that public relations practitioners in South Africa understand the nature of their strategic contribution to organisational

success. In order to fully investigate the veracity of this hypothesis it will be necessary to observe (empirically) their opinions, and to give statistical weight to the situation by quantitative analysis. In other words, to test the hypothesis, it is essential that the world of the South African public relations practitioner be investigated in an empirical, quantitative manner.

One way of doing empirical quantitative research is by means of the survey questionnaire. Mouton (2001: 152) describes the survey as “[a] stud[y] that [is] usually quantitative in nature and which aim[s] to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population”.

Based on the literature study, a questionnaire will be drawn up to ask questions to South African public relations practitioners that pertain to the role of public relations in relation to marketing, marketing communication, and management.

The research outlined in the design above will be conducted using the methods described below.

Textbooks, journals, publications, and Internet articles were selected for the literature study based on the thematic classification discussed in Chapter 1 (see p. 9), namely:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations and management.

Publications that address these topics only were selected for review. Given the fact that the debate has been going on for many decades, the primary focus fell on recent publications, especially since recency also establishes currency. It seems self-defeating to search for articles from the 1960's, except where these will help to provide historical perspective.

Based on the results from the literature survey discussed in 1.1 above a questionnaire will be drawn up and sent to members of PRISA who by virtue of their membership to this professional organisation are regarded to be actively involved in public relations activities, and are of sufficient experience and qualification to understand the issues at hand. In order to ensure that qualifications and experience are sufficient, a stratified sample is used to select those members of PRISA that have attained a certain minimum level of registration at this organisation.

After finalising the questionnaire, the sample will be drawn from the membership roll of PRISA.

This chapter will explain these methods, and the reasons they will be used, in more detail.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

“A research design is a plan or structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process in order to solve the research problem. Research methodology refers to the methods, techniques, and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or research plan” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 104).

The research design, according to Mouton (2001: 55), will indicate what kind of research will be done, as well as what kind of research will best answer the question that is being researched.

Mouton (2001: 56) then points out that a research design has the following three characteristics:

- The focus is on the end product – the kind of research and kind of result at which the research aims.
- The research question is the point of departure.
- An awareness of the importance of the kind of evidence required to address the research problem.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of design types, namely empirical studies and non-empirical studies. Non-empirical studies deal with meta-analytic questions, theoretical questions, and philosophical questions. Empirical studies, in turn, are divided into the use of primary or existing data analyses, and the analysis of existing data is divided in turn into text data and numeric data. Following the guidelines laid out by Mouton it seems as if the research design that can be used for this thesis should be a combination of empirical and non-empirical studies.

In order to sufficiently address the research questions and hypothesis described in Chapter 1 of this thesis (see p. 22 onwards), it is suggested that a combination of empirical and non-empirical research be used.

One of the methods used in non-empirical studies is the literature review, described by Mouton (2001: 179 – 180) as “studies that provide an overview of scholarship in a certain discipline through an analysis of trends and debates”. This kind of method is descriptive in nature, and seems particularly suited to be used in the chapters that address the relationship between public relations and management; public relations and marketing; and public relations and marketing communication. Although Chapter 2 already presents a literature review, the review in that chapter addresses the research question from the points of view of the discipline: public relations. It will be necessary to address each of the themes (management, marketing, marketing communication) by investigating the trends and debates in those disciplines by means of a literature review in each discipline.

The literature review discussed in Chapter 2 has, however, brought to the fore a number of questions that can (and should) be addressed through primary research. For this purpose, empirical research in the form of a survey is suggested.

Mouton (2001: 152) defines the survey as a study “that [is] usually quantitative in nature and which aim[s] to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population”. Two kinds of research questions best addressed by the survey are exploratory and descriptive research. This method will be very useful to help establish how South African public relations practitioners view the contribution of public relations to business success.

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 80) point out that exploratory research may be conducted by three methods – literature review, survey, and analysis of examples. For the purposes of this thesis, the first two of these methods have been selected. The exploratory research will bring about a better understanding of the state of the debate between public relations and marketing; public relations and marketing communication; and public relations and management, and will help to uncover the contribution that public relations can make to the organisation.

This approach will necessitate a review of literature pertinent to the three themes, as well as a survey of public relations practitioners.

Therefore, the research design will require two phases

- Literature study.
- Surveys (quantitative research).

2.1 Literature study

An exhaustive study was done of the latest available literature in books, as well as recent articles in industry-related publications. The review on this literature was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. However, the structure of the thesis (refer to chapter outline presented in Chapter 1 on pp. 25 - 26) necessitates further investigation into available literature where specific issues such as strategic planning and mission formulation are examined in forthcoming chapters. Where necessary, references to the literature pertinent to that specific issue will be integrated into the chapter itself.

2.2 Empirical quantitative research

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 23 – 264) discuss the strengths and weaknesses particular to survey research, and point specifically to the sampling strength, flexibility, and measurement strengths of the survey as a research method. Weaknesses of surveys are that they may, through standardisation, represent the least common denominator, have difficulty in dealing with contexts of social life, and

are subject to artificiality. The authors also make a point of the weakness that surveys have in terms of validity, while being strong on reliability.

The authors conclude their discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of survey research by stressing that an awareness of the weaknesses can partly help to solve them, but recommend that “you are on the safest ground when you can employ several research methods in studying a given topic” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 264). In this thesis, the survey is supported by the literature study.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research outlined in the design above will be conducted using the methods described below.

3.1 Literature study

For the literature study conducted in Chapter 2, a (primarily) thematic approach was followed. Textbooks, journals, publications, and Internet articles for the study were selected on the basis of the thematic classification that was identified in Chapter 1, and the following themes were used:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations and management.

The thematic classification has been used (see Chapter 1, p. 9) as a structure for the rest of this thesis, and, as has been indicated, further literature reviews may be used in chapters that follow. In each instance, the theme at hand will determine the search that will be initiated, again from textbooks, relevant journals, and Internet articles that have bearing on the theme under discussion in any particular chapter. Again, recency will determine inclusion in the particular review.

3.2 Empirical research

Based on the results from the literature review done in Chapter 2, a questionnaire will be drawn up, and sent to members of PRISA, who are actively involved in public relations activities.

The questionnaire will be designed to establish:

- Whether public relations practitioners are clear about the role that public relations fulfils in an organisation's strategic success.
- Whether public relations practitioners feel that their function contributes to organisational success, and what could be done to enhance this contribution.
- Whether professionalism of public relations practitioners is called into disrepute owing to the "misunderstanding" of the contribution that public relations can make.
- What "business skills" are required from public relations practitioners in order for them to be regarded as part of the organisation's performance measurement?

Once the questionnaire is finalised, the sample for the empirical study will be drawn from the database of PRISA's membership roll. After the quantitative research results have been analysed and interpreted, a need may exist for illumination and clarification of some issues. To achieve this illumination, it is envisaged that senior representatives from all three fields (public relations, marketing, and management) be interviewed by the researcher. These representatives will be selected with the participation of PRISA, the Marketing Federation of South Africa (MFSA) and the South African Chamber of Business (SACOB).

4. SAMPLING

The sampling element required for this thesis is South African public relations practitioners. PRISA, established in 1957, has in excess of 5 000 members who are involved in the profession of public relations in one way or another. Academic qualifications and experience is the basis on which PRISA manages a registration

level of members, ranking from Affiliate (lowest level) to Accredited in Public Relations (highest level) (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 22).

In order to qualify for the registration level of Public Relations Practitioner (PRP) and higher, members need at least three years of full-time public relations experience and a tertiary qualification (not necessarily in public relations). Considering the nature of this thesis, respondents who have a number of years experience in the field of public relations would be in a better position to comment on certain of the issues than, say, a student member. For this reason, it was decided to implement a random stratified sample by type of membership.

The training manager at the PRISA Education and Training Centre, Helena van Wyk, was approached to supply a complete list of members from PRP level and higher. A list, containing the e-mail addresses of 540 members with this profile, was supplied on 9 December 2003 (Van Wyk, 2003).

A random stratified sample is normally more representative of the population than simple random sampling, and is of particular use when a stratum of interest is a small percentage of a population (Neuman, 1997: 212) as is the case with this thesis.

5. SURVEY

In Section 2 of this chapter, it was mentioned that a survey needs to be carried out to obtain empirical evidence of the situation in South Africa. This survey should obtain answers to some of the questions identified in Chapter 1 (see p.7), as well as to some of these below:

- Are South African public relations practitioners also confused about the link between public relations and marketing?
- How do South African public relations practitioners view the link between public relations and marketing?
- How do South African public relations practitioners view the strategic management role of public relations?

- Are South African public relations practitioners aware of the strategic role that public relations plays in an organisation?

The population that will be used, will be the membership roll of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa. Since it is (at present) the only existing professional body in South Africa that represents the profession of public relations, and since all of its members are involved in public relations (whether on a corporate, agency, or academic basis), it is felt that their opinions would be representative of the discipline in South Africa.

6. QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire should be designed to obtain information on the profile of PRISA-members, that is, to establish what percentage of public relations officers are involved on the corporate, what percentage on the agency, and what percentage on the academic side. This will be important, since it is feasible that practitioners from these various fields may have differing views on the practice of public relations in South Africa.

It will also be important to establish the percentages of practitioners who are involved in charity work, services, public relations, and marketing organisations, for the same reason as quoted in the above paragraph.

A further matter of interest will be to differentiate between the various levels of public relations practitioners on the PRISA classification system. Skinner *et al.* (2001: 22 – 23) explain that the PRISA registration system uses two principles to allocate points up to a maximum of 100. These principles are academic qualifications and experience.

The registration levels of the PRISA system are the following:

- Affiliate.
- Associate.
- Public Relations Practitioner (PRP).
- Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP).
- Accredited in Public Relations (APR).
- Fellow of PRISA (FPRISA).

Individuals applying for registration at PRISA are allocated points, ranging from a minimum requirement of two points for an affiliate membership, to a minimum of 70 points for APR status. The designation FPRISA is honorary, and is bestowed upon individuals based on PRISA's discretion. However, this designation is normally only bestowed when an individual has given a large number of years service to the industry. The designation PRP is given to individuals with a minimum of three years experience in full-time public relations, and is regarded by PRISA as the first of the senior levels of accreditation.

Based on the fact that affiliate and associate members are new to the field of public relations, and normally fill assistant or junior practitioner positions, it was decided to eliminate them from the universe of the research.

The questionnaire was sent out to the following profile: All members of PRISA who are PRP or higher level. This population totalled 540 individuals on 9 December 2003, when the questionnaires were sent out. More information on the universe and the mechanics surrounding the distribution of the questionnaire will be discussed in Chapter 4 (see p. 63 onwards).

An example of the questionnaire that was used is appended to this thesis as **APPENDIX A** (p. 173).

7. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

On 9 December 2003 a total of 540 questionnaires were mass e-mailed to all members of the study population. Since the PRISA database was used a covering letter, under the PRISA logo, was sent to urge members to respond to the questionnaire. It was also believed that the PRISA-connection may favourably influence members to respond. This covering letter is attached to the thesis as **APPENDIX B** (p. 178).

As is explained in the introduction to **APPENDIX A** (p. 173) the questionnaire was created in MS-Excel format, which allows for ease of use in answering the questionnaire electronically, rather than printing it out, and having to mail it back to the researcher via surface mail or fax. Apart from the time-saving aspect (on the part of the collector of data), the relative ease of use for the respondents is also apparent.

Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire electronically, and to return the completed questionnaire to an e-mail address specifically created for this purpose: prstudy@mweb.co.za. E-mail as a data collection method has other benefits: it ensures that the questionnaire reaches the correct addressee, and it provides a reliable record to the researcher of which e-mails did not reach their destination (via the "message failed" facility). It is a matter of record that thirty-six e-mails were returned to sender. In all, e-mails allow for good control on the distribution of questionnaires.

The response was surprisingly swift – after the first three days, nearly a hundred completed surveys were received. Owing to the fact that most people tend to take annual leave in South Africa commencing 16 December (Day of Reconciliation), the cut-off date for receiving and processing completed questionnaires was set at 15 December. By this date, 112 completed questionnaires were received.

The completed questionnaires were printed out in hard copy in preparation for them to be captured in electronic format. A document containing the topline results is

appended to this thesis as **APPENDIX C** (p. 179). These results will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (see p. 63 onwards).

The data contained in questionnaires have been field edited, as well as computer edited, in order to ensure accuracy of data. Given the sample of 112, and the study population of 540, the margin of error is calculated at approximately 8,25 per cent, with a confidence level of 95 per cent.

Dillon & Madden (1994, 141 - 145) estimate that the typical response rate for any mail survey is between 10 per cent and 20 per cent. Given the fact that the sample is small and geographically dispersed, and that the people in the sample share a high interest in the topic surveyed, the e-mail survey is ideal. The response rate of this survey (112 out of 540) is calculated at 20,7 per cent, which is at the top limit of mail survey responses.

Zikmund (1997, 228 - 238) indicates that mail survey questionnaires should be of "moderate" length. Containing 30 questions, and taking on average five minutes to complete, this survey can be described as "moderate". This also contributes to the high response rate.

Validity is described as the degree to which a test measures that which it is supposed to measure. For this specific thesis, construct validity required the researcher to read about the topic, and then to compile a measurement construct. This was done in the form of the literature study, and by drawing up a questionnaire (measurement construct).

In order to minimise non-response, all respondents were requested by PRISA to complete the questionnaire.

The sampling frame that was used is the e-mail list of PRISA.

All results were compiled using a statistical package, and cross-tabs were executed by type of member (see pp. 59 and 63).

8. CONCLUSION

The research design and methodology that was used in this thesis was based on currently acceptable social research methods, as specifically identified by the research texts mentioned in this chapter.

To the empiricist, theory is something that belongs to a “world of thought that also contains illusions, dreams, imagination, speculation, and misconceptions” (Neuman, 1997: 45), and should therefore be tested against hard reality. This view therefore compels the researcher to develop instruments of measurement that enables him/her to develop a clear, “untainted” view of reality; one that is devoid of the illusions of the world of thought.

To the relativist, on the other hand, “we can never fully escape the powerful influence of our thoughts” (Neuman, 1997: 45).

This thesis seems to fall somewhere between the two extremes discussed above. While it recognises the importance of an empirical approach that enables the researcher to measure the study-object, it also recognises that the world of the social sciences is one in which theories guide and inform the conduct of its inhabitants. Therefore, the research design was done to include elements from both worlds – theory and fact.

Based on information collected, a deductive approach was followed in that the “abstract, logical relationships among concepts” (Neuman, 1997: 46) was examined, before finding concrete empirical evidence.

Chapter 2 served the purpose of introducing the logical relationships among the concepts relevant to this thesis, while the next chapter, Chapter 4, will start to discuss the empirical evidence collected by the survey.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the rationale for the research methods used, and also discussed the questionnaire. Although the methodology was discussed at some length it is necessary, before presenting the overall research results, to refer to some of the main characteristics of the research methodology.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3 (pp. 56 – 57), the sample consisted of people with the following profile:

- Respondents have to be members of PRISA.
- As members of PRISA, they have to have a certain minimum experience in public relations.
- This experience (and knowledge) is best reflected in the PRISA accreditation system.

1.1 Study population and methodology

As such, the study population used for this study consists of PRISA members who are accredited on the PRP, CPRP, APR, and FPRISA levels, details of which were discussed in the preceding chapter.

With the generous help of Helena van Wyk, Training Manager at the PRISA Education and Training Centre, an e-mail database was made available for this thesis (e-mail to author dated 8 December 2003). This database contains the e-mail addresses of all members of the study population, and totalled (on 8 December 2003) 540 members from all over South Africa. No other delimitations such as age, income, organisation size, etc. were introduced for the purpose of the research.

The e-mail, containing a letter (**APPENDIX B**, p. 178) and the questionnaire (**APPENDIX A**, p. 173), was sent in bulk format to the entire database on 9 December 2003. By 15 December 2003, chosen as the cut-off date for the survey, 112 individuals replied. This means that the reply rate on the survey is at 20,7 per cent, sufficiently large to allow for meaningful analysis.

1.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the survey

An e-mail survey may be classified as a mail survey and, as such, is one of the cheapest ways of conducting research. According to Neuman (1997: 251) mail questionnaires “offer anonymity and avoid interviewer bias”. He continues by stating that mail surveys are very effective, and may provide high response rates, depending on the target population’s education level and interest in the topic.

Disadvantages include low response rates, and limits to the kinds of questions that can be used. For instance, no open-ended questions were included in this survey. Other disadvantages include the fact that the researcher cannot control the conditions under which respondents complete the questionnaire, nor can he/she observe reactions to questions, or the context within which the questionnaire is completed.

1.3 Use of values in graphs

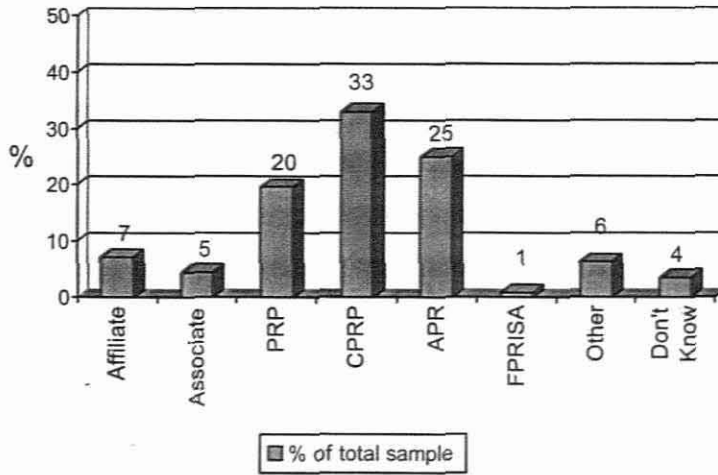
All values shown in the graphs are expressed as percentages and, for the sake of ease of reading, decimal values have been rounded up (whenever the decimal point equals or exceeds 0,5 per cent), or rounded down (whenever the decimal point equals or is less than 0,49 per cent).

Original values have, however, been retained in the results presented in the appendices at the end of this thesis.

2. THE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The first part of the questionnaire, specifically questions one to eleven, is designed to obtain certain demographic information on the respondents, and will be discussed in this section. Please note that the full set of results is available as **APPENDIX C** (p. 179) of this thesis.

Firstly, the registration levels of respondents needed to be confirmed:



GRAPH 4.1: Registration levels of respondents as a percentage of the total sample.

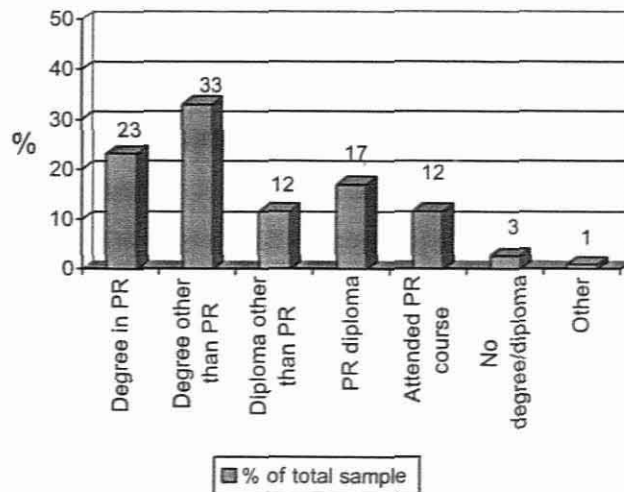
The majority of respondents (79%) are accredited with PRISA on the Public Relations Practitioner (PRP) level and higher denoting, in the PRISA system, a senior level of accreditation that reflects experience in public relations, and some form of tertiary education completed.

It comes as little surprise that the large majority of respondents (83,9%) are in daily contact with public relations activities, while 8 per cent indicated that they are involved in public relations activities at least once a week. Given the nature of the study population (membership to PRISA), this result makes sense. A further 8,1 per cent indicated that they are involved in public relations only occasionally – 5,4 per cent on a monthly basis and 2,7 per cent only “sometimes”.

Again, given the nature of the study population, it is not surprising that the majority (86,6%) have in excess of five years experience, while 8,9 per cent have between two to five years experience. More than half of all respondents indicated that they have between ten and twenty years experience, while a further two in ten have in excess of twenty years experience. If experience in this discipline were the **only** measure of qualification to discuss the strategic nature of public relations, the study population is certainly appropriate.

When asked to indicate their involvement in different activities in organisations, five out of ten respondents indicated that they are involved in corporate public relations, while 25,9 per cent work for public relations consultancies. Again, not surprising given the nature of the population under study.

How well qualified are PRISA members, and what did they study? This question reveals some interesting facts:



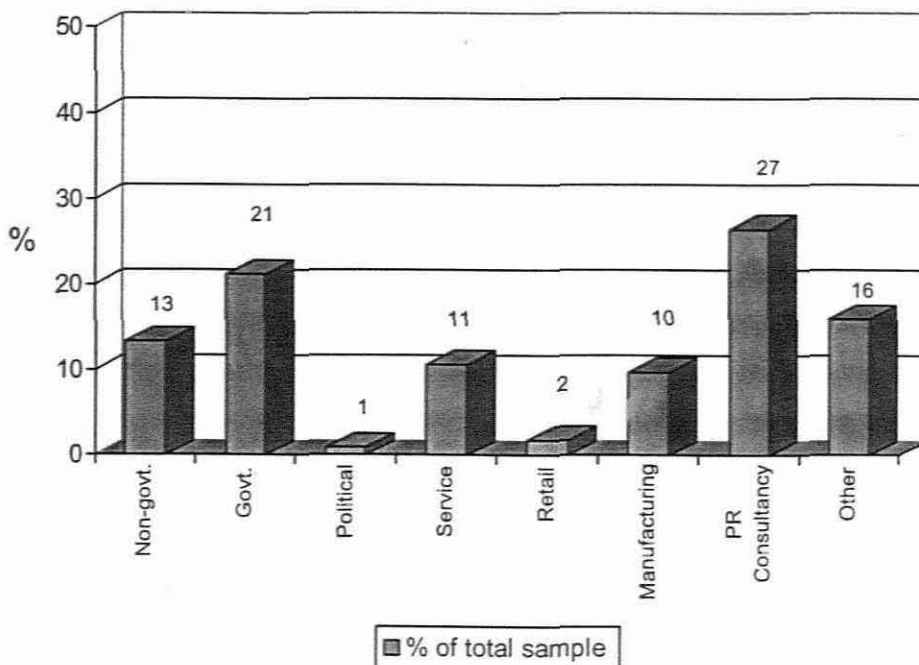
GRAPH 4.2: Qualifications of respondents as a percentage of the total sample.

Is it a reflection of the state of the debate in public relations that nearly half of the respondents (47,3%) have either no degree/diploma (2,7%), or a qualification in a field other than public relations (44,6 %)? This situation could pose interesting

questions when examining the opinions of members for the simple reason that the qualification in public relations should help to contribute to an understanding of the role and nature of public relations. In other words, people who did not study in the field of public relations may be influenced by their particular disciplines to the detriment of the body of knowledge in public relations.

Of course, the counter-argument may well be that these members (who did not study public relations) may bring new insights into the world of public relations, and may be untainted by a confused theory base. If it were true that the body of knowledge in existence for public relations is itself confused about the nature and role of public relations, it may well be that students in public relations are taught, from an early age, that public relations has a hazy role in the organisation. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the literature review clearly indicates that (for example) marketing texts exhibit none of the existential *angst* found in public relations texts. This insight bears further investigation later in the thesis.

The industries represented in the questionnaire results are the following:

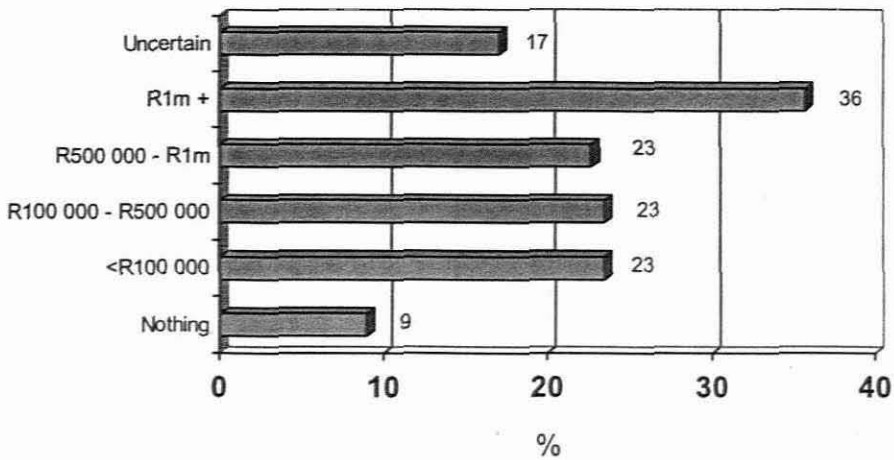


GRAPH 4.3: Industries in which respondents work.

Given the nature of PRISA (a professional body), it is perhaps no surprise that a quarter of its members are themselves public relations consultants. The second biggest constituency in the PRISA membership is (surprisingly?) governmental organisations (21,2%), while very few members (1,8%) are in retail and manufacturing activities (9,7%).

The majority of respondents (59,8%) indicate that their organisations employ more than 100 people each.

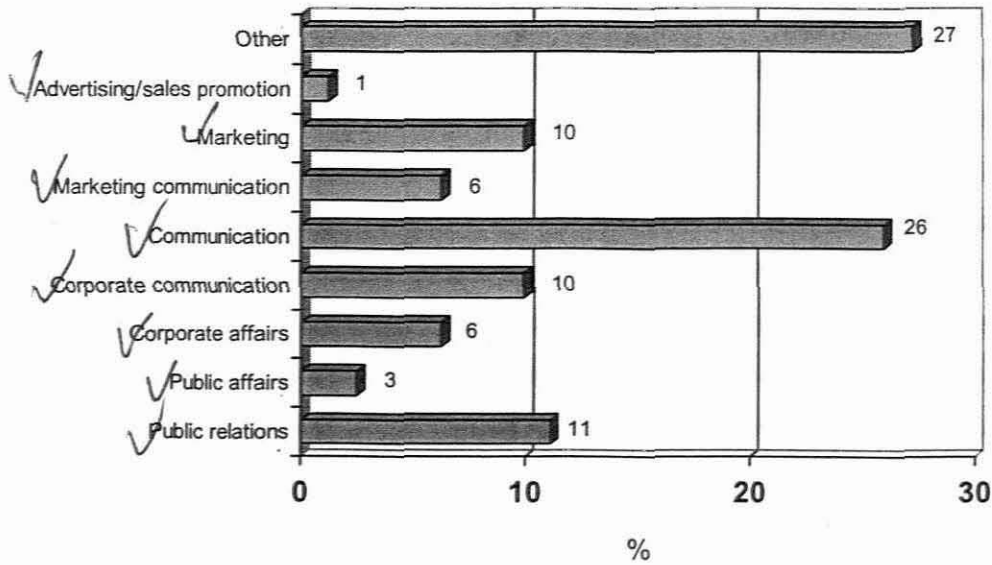
Organisations are also not shy to spend money on public relations budgets:



GRAPH 4.4: Expenditure on public relations programmes.

The relatively high levels of expenditure on public relations programmes (64,3 per cent spend in excess of R500 000 per year) bears out the indication that respondents work for fairly large organisations.

A significantly interesting picture is painted when nomenclature comes under scrutiny. Respondents who were **not working for consultancies** were asked to indicate what their respective departments are called:



GRAPH 4.5: Department names.

Steyn and Puth (2000: 5 – 6) touch upon the debate discussed in this thesis by specifically referring to the confusion that often exists between related terms such as corporate communication, business communication, organisational communication, management communication, and communication management. They conclude their discussion by saying that “recent trends indicate a clear shift in preference in using the term corporate communication rather than the traditional public relations”. A main reason for this is “negative associations with the way in which the function was practised in the past”.

The confusion referred to by Steyn and Puth is borne out by the reality reflected in the research results: public relations practitioners, who indicated that they are (mostly) involved in public relations activities on a daily basis, work in departments with different names. Is it any wonder that there is a possible confusion over the

nature and role of public relations? This observation begs closer scrutiny, and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

One of the research questions addressed by this thesis is that of strategic involvement of public relations in the process of managing the organisation. Since there are two kinds of practitioners involved (corporate and consultancy), they were asked to state the level of involvement in strategic planning on the top level of the organisation.

A fairly large number of respondents (80,7%) who work in corporate public relations departments have indicated that their departments are, indeed, involved in strategic planning on the top level. A staggering 91,4 per cent of public relations consultancies have indicated that they are required to do strategic planning for clients. This is a significant piece of information, considering that strategic planning is normally the reserve of (in-house) top management levels.

In regard to training, 64,3 per cent of respondents believe that training will aid in helping public relations consultancies to do more strategic planning, while slightly more than half of all respondents (51,3%) indicated that public relations does not always/never earns the recognition it receives from top management. More than 90 per cent of respondents do, however, believe that greater professionalism on the part of public relations practitioners will result in greater recognition from top management.

This, then, deals with the first-level observations on the demographic profiles of the respondents. Two issues that will bear closer scrutiny have been identified. They are (in no particular order) the following:

- Are public relations practitioners **suitably qualified** to fulfil their functions?
- Is the **confusion with naming public relations departments** part of the general confusion surrounding the role and function of public relations in the organisation?

In order to address these issues to their full measure, other data will need to be examined first. The next chapter will return the focus to (among others) these particular two issues.

Having established a bird's eye view of the demographic details of PRISA-members, it is appropriate to establish what their views are on a number of issues.

These issues were identified in the preliminary reading and literature review stages of the thesis, and relate to, specifically:

- Public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing communication.
- Public relations and management.

The reason for including these issues in the thesis obviously relates directly to the hypothesis that public relations practitioners in South Africa are certain about their strategic contribution to organisational success.

3. RATING THE ISSUES

Respondents were given a number of statements, and requested to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with those statements on a Likert scale. This scale was developed by Rensis Likert "in an attempt to improve the levels of measurement in social research through the use of standardized response categories in survey questionnaires" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 644).

Although Likert rating is not in general use today, the format that he devised is still used in the development of simple indexes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 154).

A Likert scale is particularly useful in testing the **strength of feelings** that respondents have on a variety of issues, also helping the researcher to establish what the current issues are over which respondents have strong feelings. Strengths and limitations of the Likert scale are identified by Neuman (1997: 162), who mentions the ease and simplicity of the Likert scale as its strengths, while the

response set imposes a limitation on the results. However, by taking care in wording the statements, the careful researcher may minimise the impact of the response set.

A word on the debate whether a neutral category (in this case “neither agree nor disagree) should be included in the Likert scale: Neuman (1997: 242) recommends offering a non-attitude choice in order **not to force** those respondents who have no particular opinion on an issue to make a choice.

The statements used in this questionnaire were developed after the literature review was done, and are intended to establish the views of current South African public relations practitioners on a number of issues, including their views on the relationship between public relations and marketing; public relations and marketing communication; and public relations and management.

Before we take a look at specific issues that have been identified in this thesis, it is appropriate to reflect the results for all statements given to respondents.

In order to establish the strength of feeling that respondents have about the issues, the mean score per category was calculated. In each case, the sample (actual number of responses per category) is reflected in the table, since respondents were allowed to leave a category blank in cases where they felt that they had no particular opinion.

A table summarising the mean scores of responses to the statements is found on the following page:

TABLE 4.1: Rating the statements regarding public relations issues (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree)

Please note that the original list of statements (as contained in the questionnaire on p. 176) is differently ranked to the table below. It reflects the ratings in descending order from highest mean score to lowest mean score.

Category	Mean score	Sample
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	3.21	100
“Strategy” means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	3.19	99
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations.	3.05	107
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	2.88	106
Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	2.64	104
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	2.63	104
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	2.51	108
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	2.19	107
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	1.87	108
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	1.79	105
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	1.79	107
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	1.75	107
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation’s mission.	1.66	107
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	1.61	109
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	1.61	108
Public relations is a business discipline.	1.55	107
Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	1.36	105
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	1.36	107
Public relations should be a strategic function.	1.31	110

A first glance at the table immediately points to three issues:

- Respondents **do not** agree that public relations practitioners are to be viewed as technicians (Likert mean is 3.21).
- They also **do not** agree that “strategy” means that an organisation has a public relations programme (Likert mean is 3.19).
- In the third place, respondents **do not** agree that public relations practitioners are sufficiently trained (Likert mean is 3.05).

A number of statements met with strong approval from all respondents, and will also be discussed in some detail later in this thesis. For the purposes of the current discussion (identifying the issues) our attention is pointed to the three statements that met with strong disagreement among the respondents, and that were highlighted above. Each one will be discussed separately.

3.1 Public relations practitioners as technicians

The issue about which respondents felt quite strongly, is that of public relations practitioners being regarded as technicians. The full statement, “Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians”, met with the strongest disagreement rating of all – a mean score of 3.21 on the Likert scale.

In order to fully understand the extent of feeling on this particular issue, a more detailed examination of the mean score by sector is warranted. In **GRAPH 4.3** on page 67, the various types of organisations that are represented by respondents have been identified as the following (in rank order):

PR Consultancy	26,5 %
Government organisation	21,2 %
Non-government organisation	13,3 %
Service provider	10,6 %
Product manufacturer	9,7 %
Retailer	1,8 %
Political organisation	0,9 %

The category marked “other” yielded a response rate of 15,9 per cent, and would presumably include own business, education, and so on. The questionnaire did not allow for open response on this category, so it is not possible to accurately reflect what respondents mean under “other”.

For the purposes of further analysis, respondents from certain types of organisations have been grouped together according to a specific criterion based on the way in which the particular organisation relates to marketing.

The category “PR Consultancy” remains on its own as a category, while government, non-government, and political organisations have been grouped together. Service providers, product manufacturers, and retailers have been grouped together under the heading “private sector”, while the group “other” remains as is.

The rationale behind this grouping of respondents by types of organisation is very simply this - the importance of marketing as an organisational function in the organisation.

What does this mean? Government organisations, non-government organisations, and political parties typically would not have a marketing department, while manufacturers, retailers, and service providers will have such departments. Obviously, public relations consultancies stand alone in this regard – they interact with both private sector and government/non-government organisations.

The question that is asked here is this: do different kinds of organisations view the situation differently from one another, or not? The scores, per sector, are reflected in **TABLE 4.2** below:

TABLE 4.2: Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	3.21	2.97	2.95	3.29	3.88

It does, perhaps, make sense that the public relations consultants, as well as “other” (which includes education), would feel most strongly that public relations practitioners should **not** be considered as technicians alone. It is, after all, one of the recurring themes in the industry that public relations practitioners should be seen as more than “mere” technicians.

This issue is important. CEOs, according to Steyn and Puth (2000: 20 – 21), expect public relations practitioners to play three roles:

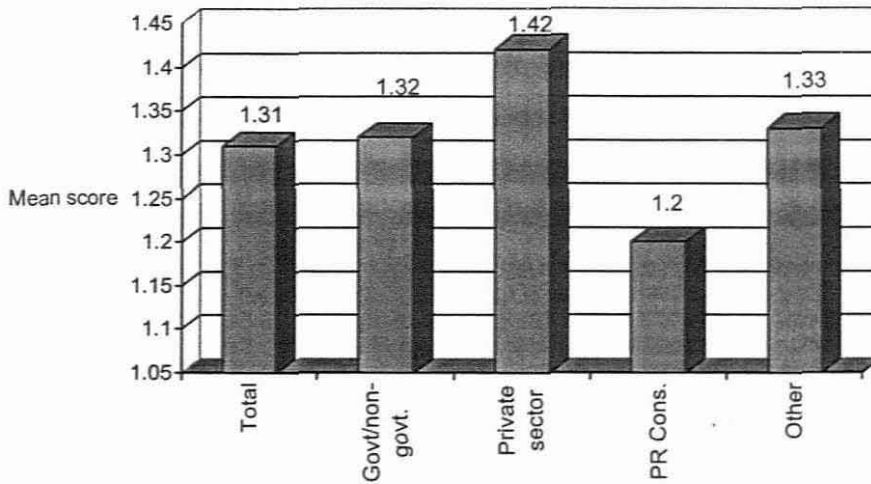
- Strategist.
- Manager.
- Technician.

The latter role, technician, is “played at the implementation or programme level” (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 21) and is a role that was traditionally played by public relations practitioners. As was indicated, this is not the only role that public relations practitioners should play anymore – they should also act as managers and strategists. This view is borne out by the research, as was already indicated in **TABLE 4.2** above.

The issue on the technician (and more) role of public relations introduces the question of the strategic contribution of public relations. In Chapter 2 (most

specifically p. 46 onwards), the fact that public relations should be a strategic, rather than mere tactical management function, is mentioned.

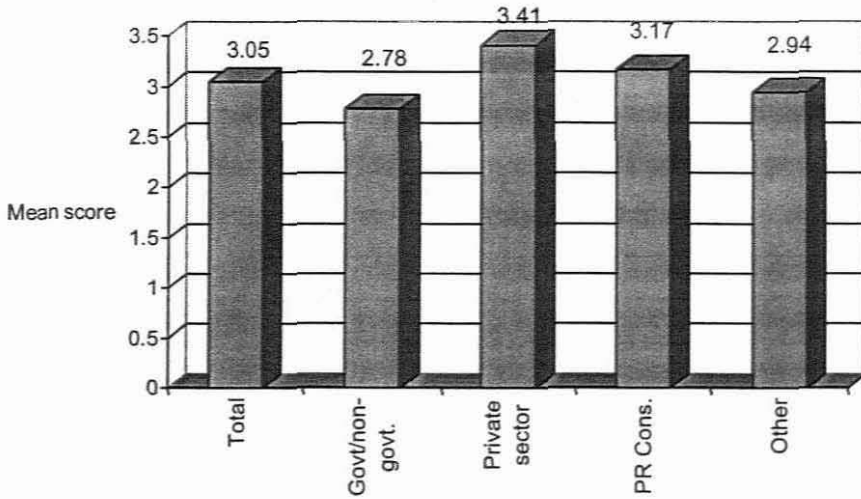
Respondents agree fully that public relations should be a strategic function. It is marginally interesting to note the relative levels of agreement with that statement among the different industries:



GRAPH 4.6: Public relations should be a strategic function.

It is clear that public relations consultancies have heard and accepted the gospel – their agreement with this statement is almost total. Significantly, respondents who work for the private sector companies agree least with this statement, pointing to the possibility that there is still work that needs to be done to explain the strategic contribution of public relations to the organisation's success. Again, the question is whether respondents would not agree most fully with this statement if they were completely sure about their role in organisational success.

It is significant to note that respondents feel that public relations practitioners need more training and education to be involved in strategic planning:



GRAPH 4.7: Practitioners are sufficiently trained and educated to be involved in strategic planning.

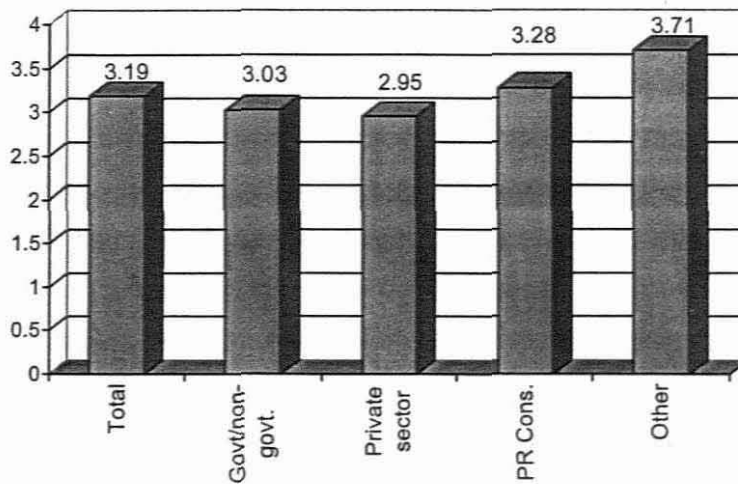
Respondents from the private sector, closely followed by public relations practitioners, **disagreed** with the statement that public relations practitioners have sufficient training and education to enable them to be involved in strategic planning. This clearly indicates a need for more education among public relations practitioners on this aspect of the discipline.

This sentiment is echoed by Steyn and Puth (2000: 11) who refer to research by Groenewald, who established that communication managers are aware of this particular shortcoming. This is proven again by this particular statement in the research.

Significantly, Steyn and Puth point out that there is very little evidence in academic literature in the field that helps to indicate exactly what this strategic role should be. This is a significant question, and relates directly to the hypothesis stated in Chapter 1 (see p. 22). The contribution of public relations to organisational success, and public relations practitioners' understanding of that role, is critical to this thesis. For this reason, it will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 (p. 144 onwards).

3.2 The public relations programme and strategy

The second most important issue identified by respondents, is the fact that a strategy is not a programme. The statement, “Strategy’ means that an organisation has a public relations programme”, elicited the following response:



GRAPH 4.8: “Strategy” means that an organisation has a public relations programme.

Why is it, one wonders, that the private sector tends to agree most with this statement, whilst public relations consultancies and “other” disagree with this so vehemently? Is it that the groups have a vague grasp of what strategy means?

The statement implies that, when an organisation has a public relations programme, it has a strategy. This surely cannot be true. Many organisations have programmes in place without necessarily having strategies behind those programmes. On the other hand, no strategy can be implemented without a programme to execute the strategy.

At this stage of the discussion, the attention is again directed to the subject of strategy.

This is how Rensburg and Cant (2002: v) see the relationship between strategy and programme: “[t]his is where strategic ... public relations programmes or campaigns are becoming driving forces in communication plans and strategies that deliver exceptional value to organisations”.

Strategy, arguably one of the more popular buzzwords of the Twentieth (and Twenty-first) Century, has come to mean different things to different people. It certainly seems as if no public relations practitioner worth his/her salt can survive without injecting this word into at least one paragraph per page of any kind of document. This is also true of other disciplines, such as advertising, selling, and, naturally, marketing: every function and every organisation, urges the literature, should plan and implement strategies.

A wealth of books and articles on the subjects of strategic planning and strategic management have been written, some bad, some good. It is not possible to visit a bookstore without finding metres of shelf space dedicated to this elusive concept. It is perhaps owing to the wealth of information, and different perspectives, that public relations practitioners may find themselves somewhat bemused when confronted by the term “strategy”.

The strategy of an organisation, and the link between public relations programmes and strategy is a subject that is worthy of significant attention, and for this reason will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 7 (p. 148 onwards).

3.3 Public relations and training

GRAPH 4.7 on page 78 has already indicated to what extent respondents in the survey agreed/disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners have sufficient training and education to be involved in strategic planning. The upshot was that most **disagreed** with the statement, indicating a need for strategic training and education.

The need for training and education is **further supported** by the following two statements:

TABLE 4.3: Views on training and education

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	1.36	1.42	1.35	1.36	1.28
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	1.61	1.64	1.58	1.63	1.56

Respondents, in the main, agree with these statements, indicating a real need for additional training of public relations practitioners, especially in the three fields mentioned:

- Management.
- Marketing.
- Advertising (marketing communication).

Could it be that the identified lack in training is partly to blame for the discussions surrounding the role of public relations in management, marketing, and marketing communication? And if this were the case, could the debate be settled merely by adjusting existing training modules?

Suffice it to say that there is a need for broader training and education of public relations practitioners in the three specifically identified fields of management, marketing, and marketing communication. This should be addressed one way or another.

While this thesis is not about to establish a causal link between lack of training and confusion (if such confusion exists), it is a very real fact that public relations practitioners require more training.

3.4 Public relations and marketing

According to respondents, public relations is not a marketing discipline. In reaction to the statement that “public relations is a marketing discipline”, respondents disagreed with a mean average of 2.88 – not a resounding disagreement, but a disagreement nonetheless. An interesting phenomenon appears when the specific reactions of the identified sectors come under scrutiny.

TABLE 4.4: Views on public relations and marketing

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	2.88	3.03	2.95	2.41	3.24

Government and non-government agencies (as well as “other”) feel very strongly that public relations is **not** a marketing discipline, while public relations consultancies feel that it **is** a marketing discipline. Could this be because government organisations do not, as a rule, practice marketing?

Since these organisations do not practice marketing (at least in the commercial sense of the word), it is conceivable that they would view public relations in its “purer” sense – that of a communication discipline.

Public relations consultancies, on the other hand, are normally in contact with all sorts of organisations (ranging from government through manufacturing) and will, therefore, have developed a sensibility for the need of implementing the marketing philosophy; thereby understanding that public relations is linked to marketing. But, be that as it may, even the public relations consultancies do not view public relations

only as a marketing discipline. The theory needs to provide guidance in partial answer to this question: is public relations a discipline of marketing, or is it a discipline in its own right? This question seems to lie at the heart of the “public relations versus marketing” debate. In order to address this question in more detail a brief review of the contribution of public relations to marketing will be in order, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (see p. 103).

The relationship between public relations and marketing has already proven to be a bone of contention in the world of public relations academics. That South African public relations practitioners also seem to have difficulty to clearly understand the link between the two disciplines may point in the direction of a possible rejection of the hypothesis of this thesis.

3.5 Public relations and marketing communication

It is not very easy to define exactly what is meant by “integrated marketing communication”, according to Rensburg and Cant (2003: 6), although three general principles in integrated marketing communication may be identified as being: “knowing the customer, building the brand and measuring effectiveness” (Rensburg & Cant, 2003: 20). Integrated marketing communication is a valuable tool in positioning the organisation, and in building relationships with its customers (current and potential).

Chataway and Baird (2003: 8) are adamant that integration of communication is a definite future trend for communication specialists in South Africa, and state that integrated [marketing] communication, at its very core, “leverages all communication in a co-ordinated and creative fashion to enable the achievement of clear business objectives”.

Integrated marketing communication is most certainly a strategic function of the organisation, whereby all of the communication tools at its disposal is used in such a way that the organisation achieves its (marketing) objectives. This view of the strategic nature of integrated marketing communication can be found in all major

texts on the subject, including Koekemoer (1998); Du Plessis *et al.* (2003); Duncan (2002); and Clow and Baack (2004).

The principle of marketing communication that is of particular interest is that of **synergy**, which is an issue that was identified in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The Systems Theory holds that the contributions of the parts of the whole are less than the whole itself. The thinking in integrated marketing communication supports this notion.

What do respondents have to say about the relationship between public relations and other marketing communication tools?

TABLE 4.5: Views on public relations and marketing communication

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	2.63	2.82	2.65	2.32	2.61
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	2.51	2.33	2.38	2.77	2.61
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	2.19	2.16	2.36	2.30	1.82
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	1.87	1.76	2.00	1.97	1.78
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	1.79	1.84	1.67	1.93	1.67

It is interesting (but not surprising) to note that public relations consultancies agree most with the statement that public relations should attract more money than advertising does in promoting a brand. The score of 2.32 for this category points the attention in the direction of the debate so succinctly discussed in Ries and Ries (2003), who advocate a situation where public relations should receive the lion's

share of the organisation's promotion budget. According to these authors, public relations is the latest brand-building tool – not advertising.

It is also interesting to note that governmental and non-governmental organisations agree least with this statement – possibly because they do not advertise in the marketing sense of the word, but rather in the public relations sense of the word. In other words, government and non-government organisations would use advertising as a public relations tool to build image, but would have little use for advertising to market a product/service. To them, therefore, advertising has but one use – to serve public relations.

Public relations consultants disagree most with the statement that all forms of marketing communications should be executed by public relations, pointing to a measure of sensitivity for the specialisation required by other marketing communication tools such as selling, advertising, and sales promotions. It is again significant to note that government/non-government organisations agree most with this statement – again, a question of whether these organisations practice “pure” marketing. This view (of government/non-government organisations) is repeated under the statement that **all communications** should be channelled through the public relations department, while the private sector disagrees most with this statement.

Is it reason for happiness to note that public relations practitioners agree that all communications should **not** be managed by public relations? Certainly, some forms of communication must be managed by the particular functional department. A human resources manager, for instance, will want to communicate a message to his/her department in memorandum form. The question is whether this memorandum should be generated by the public relations department? Of course not – however, the public relations department can (for example) present training on how to write a good memorandum.

It is significant to note that integrated marketing communication requires a **cross-functional** perspective. In the words of Lane and Russell (2001: 8), who write from an advertising perspective, integration of promotional functions will require future

professionals to “make decisions about the role that both advertising and other promotional tools will play in any particular campaign”, while these decisions will be based on an evaluation of “marketing goals and strategies, identification of prime prospects, product characteristics, and the budget available for all areas of the communication mix”.

The question is of course who will manage all of these processes. This requires a discussion of the organogram of the integrated marketing communication function, and will be discussed in Chapter 6 (see **FIGURE 6.1** on page 134).

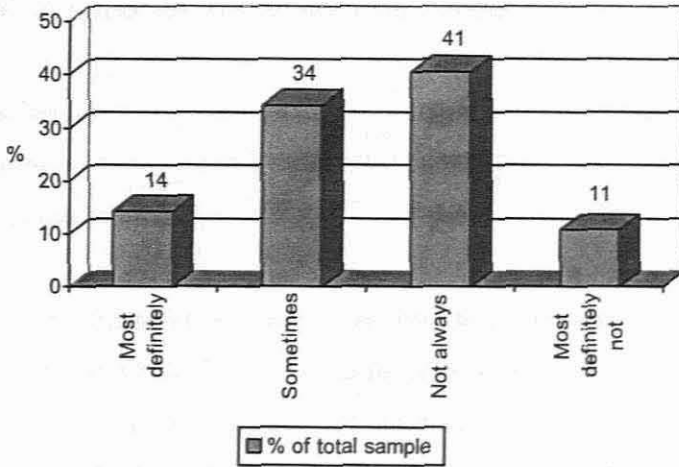
Is public relations solely responsible for internal communication? Most respondents seem to agree – at least partially – with this statement. This responsibility, it may be argued, will rest partly on the shoulders of the public relations function in an organisation and partly on the shoulders of other functional departments. Considering that the internal public is a key public to the organisation, and that internal marketing is essential in relationship building, the situation seems to warrant (at least) cooperation between marketing and public relations.

The relationship between these two disciplines will be discussed in full in the next chapter.

3.6 Does public relations get the recognition it deserves?

Top management recognition has long been a thorn in the side of public relations practitioners, who historically believed this to be one of the major hurdles to overcome in positioning public relations as a top management function.

It is interesting to note the following reaction from respondents on the statement that public relations earns the recognition it deserves from top management:



GRAPH 4.9: Recognition of public relations.

While a number of practitioners feel that this is indeed the case, it is significant to see that slightly more than half (51.2%) of respondents feel that public relations does not always (or never) gets the recognition it deserves. The devil's advocate may be forgiven for asking whether this same reply were to be given if asked of marketers.

Steyn and Puth (2000: 9 – 14) echo these sentiments, and identify a number of trends that have emerged with regard to the role played by public relations practitioners:

- Top management satisfaction.
- Differing viewpoints.
- Shortcomings of practitioners.
- Insufficient managerial training.
- A limited role.
- A lack of understanding by CEOs.
- A need for change.

These trends have been identified based on wide-ranging research, notably that done by Grunig, Groenewald, and Steyn and Puth themselves. This survey underscores two areas, namely shortcomings of practitioners (inclusive of training needs), as well as a lack of understanding by CEOs. Furthermore, Steyn and Puth point out that the corporate communications manager should play three roles:

- Strategist.
- Manager.
- Technician.

The role of the strategist is played at the top management level (sometimes inclusive of board level), while the manager role is played on the functional level and the technician role is played at the implementation level. This role is traditionally played by practitioners, although many respondents strongly disagree with his particular statement. So far, nothing really new has come to light. Public relations practitioners need more training, and are not really highly regarded by top management. Although this insight is not new, it is interesting that, in the three years since the publication of Steyn and Puth, very little has changed – except perhaps for the fact that respondents now are indicating that the practitioner should not be seen as a technician.

This thesis does not want to reinvent the wheel designed by Steyn and Puth; neither does it want to overstate the obvious. What it does want to achieve is to establish whether public relations practitioners do understand their role in the corporate world. In order to measure the level of understanding that public relations practitioners have of their role (specifically, the strategic contribution), it is necessary to investigate what that role could/should be. It is also important to be able to delineate that role – this will help not only to inform budding public relations practitioners, but also students in management disciplines.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis (see p. 2), reference was made to the endeavours of PRISA to position public relations in the business chamber of the Services SETA, in order to contribute to the larger business function (as opposed to “only” marketing). This step is significant in more ways than one. It indicates, firstly, that public

relations practitioners have discovered that their contribution to organisational success is greater than a marketing tool. Furthermore, it points to the support among PRISA-members for the fact that their function contributes to organisational success. It is against a background such as this that the debate on the strategic nature of public relations naturally presents itself. The simple question is: What is the nature of the contribution that public relations makes to the organisation?

In order to answer this question we need to revert to themes that were identified earlier on in this thesis, namely public relations and marketing; public relations and marketing communication; and public relations and management. That these themes are important is also underscored by the measure of uncertainty as reflected on the results of the Likert scale, and which was mentioned earlier on in this chapter. The fact that most respondents agreed with the statements regarding management and strategic management point to the need expressed in the public relations community for their discipline to be given necessary management status.

How does existing theory guide us? This question will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the overall research results were presented, including a demographic profile of the study population. The demographic discussion highlighted three issues, to wit:

Public relations practitioners in South Africa are not always qualified in public relations, but have qualifications in other fields.

Public relations departments have a variety of different names.

Different sectors, who deal differently regarding marketing, have differing viewpoints on the relationship between public relations and other management functions.

The focus then turned to the issues identified by the respondents, who indicated the following:

Public relations practitioners should not be regarded as technicians.

There is a measure of confusion regarding the meaning of strategy.

Public relations practitioners require more training and education in a number of fields.

The research results present some interesting findings:

- Different sectors have different viewpoints on some of the issues that are identified in the thesis.
- There is confusion regarding the naming of public relations departments.
- Public relations practitioners seem to have insufficient qualifications.
- The relationships between public relations and marketing; public relations and management; and public relations and marketing communication need clarification.

The next three chapters will deal with these findings in some more detail.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 of this thesis (see p. 9), where the relationship between public relations and marketing is briefly discussed, three questions pertaining to marketing were identified:

- Is there a relationship between public relations and marketing?
- What is the nature of this relationship?
- Is one discipline subservient to the other?

Another question was linked to these three: do public relations practitioners understand this relationship between public relations and marketing?

Furthermore the literature study, discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 27 onwards) indicated that present literature mentions the confusion between the two functions, and that this confusion may lead to confusion on strategic level. Simply put: if I don't know what I am doing, I cannot make a contribution on a strategic management level.

In Chapter 4 (p. 82 onwards), preliminary research results also point to the possibility that public relations practitioners are themselves confused about the relationship between public relations and marketing. This chapter will establish the extent to which public relations practitioners in South Africa understand the link and nature of the relationship between public relations and marketing. This needs to be done against the background of prevailing theory on this particular issue – in both public relations and marketing texts.

The contention of this thesis is that public relations serves as a support function to marketing – when it comes to the execution of a marketing plan and where the marketer needs to communicate with his/her most important public, the customer. In turn, marketing is a function that is directly linked to the organisational strategy, and a marketing plan is devised to help the organisation to achieve its objectives.

This marketing plan, based on the organisational strategy, will inform the particular public relations strategy that is devised to support the marketing strategy. This is not a question of one discipline “dominating” another; neither is it a question of one discipline having “more responsibility” than another – both equally contribute to organisational success on a strategic level.

2. MARKETING AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

The marketing function in an organisation is not only highly visible and necessary but is also, by its very nature, a major strategic weapon in the organisation’s arsenal. In the last number of years marketing authors have increasingly indicated the important strategic role played by the marketing function in organisations, whether manufacturing, retail, service, or even ideas.

Philip Kotler, widely regarded as a doyen of marketing, makes the point that an organisation does not necessarily have to sell a product or a service to practice marketing. In Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 9), he stresses the importance of the exchange as the “core concept of marketing”. He explains that the marketer offers something (marketing offer) to a customer who needs something. This marketing offer is intended to elicit a positive response from the customer, who then engages in a transaction with the marketer. Kotler (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 9) then says that “[t]he response may be more than simply buying or trading products and services”, and mentions churches and political parties as examples of “non-product” marketers.

It is crucially important that public relations practitioners understand this core characteristic of marketing: every organisation exists in order to exchange something (product, service, political clout, peace of mind, salvation) of value for

something else of equal perceived value (money, votes, support, tithe). These exchange relationships are vitally important for the organisation's long-term sustainability – exchanges bring life to the organisation.

Largely because it is the one function that literally “brings home the bacon”, marketing naturally attracts top management's attention. It is to be understood that marketing receives the prominence that it does within an organisation – it is the only function that is aimed exclusively at achieving the exchange of value between an organisation and its customer. Bearing in mind that, in profit-oriented organisations, this exchange of value is crucial to the sustainability of the organisation, which makes it clear why this function receives the attention that it does. This also should explain why other functional departments should understand that, while their roles are not subservient to marketing, they certainly have to make plans and take actions that **support** the marketing function. If other departments start arguments in favour of “reducing the dominance” of marketing (such as, for instance, in some public relations circles) they will potentially weaken the marketing effort of the organisation and, thereby, reduce its chances of long-term success and sustainability.

Owing to the nature of marketing's contribution to the organisation's success, there exists a vast body of knowledge linking marketing, strategic planning, and strategic management. This link could possibly serve as a guide to other functional areas (such as public relations) in the strategic planning processes.

In the words of Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 41), “[s]trategic planning sets the stage for the rest of the planning in the firm ... At the corporate level, the company starts the strategic planning process by defining its overall purpose and mission ... this mission then is turned into detailed supporting objectives that guide the whole company ... [t]hus, marketing planning occurs at the business-unit, product, and market levels, supporting company strategic planning with more detailed planning for specific marketing opportunities”.

At its simplest, strategic planning takes place on three levels: top, functional, and operational levels. In a diversified company, the levels of business strategies intersperses itself between top and functional levels. This is how Thompson and Strickland (2003: 52) illustrate the strategy-making pyramid in a diversified and single-business company:

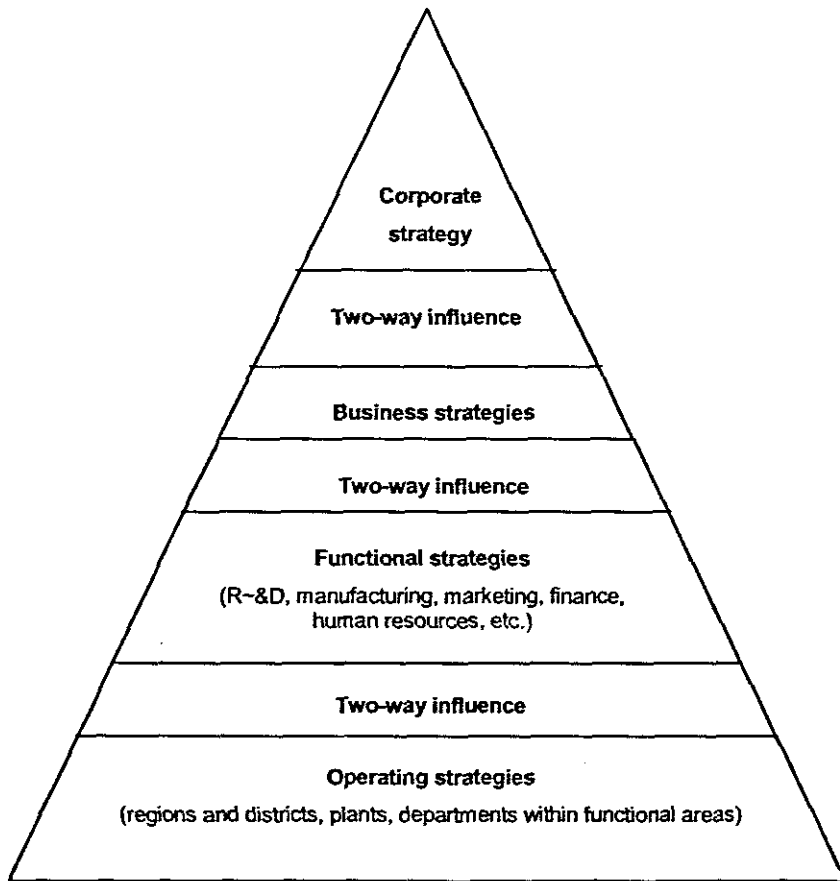


FIGURE 5.1: Strategy pyramid for a diversified company.

The various levels of strategy differ from each other in respect of the scope, amount of detail, and time-span. For instance, corporate strategy typically has a broad (companywide) focus spanning a long time-period. The business strategy will focus only on a specific business unit and have a shorter timeframe than a corporate strategy. Functional strategies focus only on the particular function (marketing, human resources, operations, public relations, and so on). Operating strategies are detailed and short-term (less than one year).

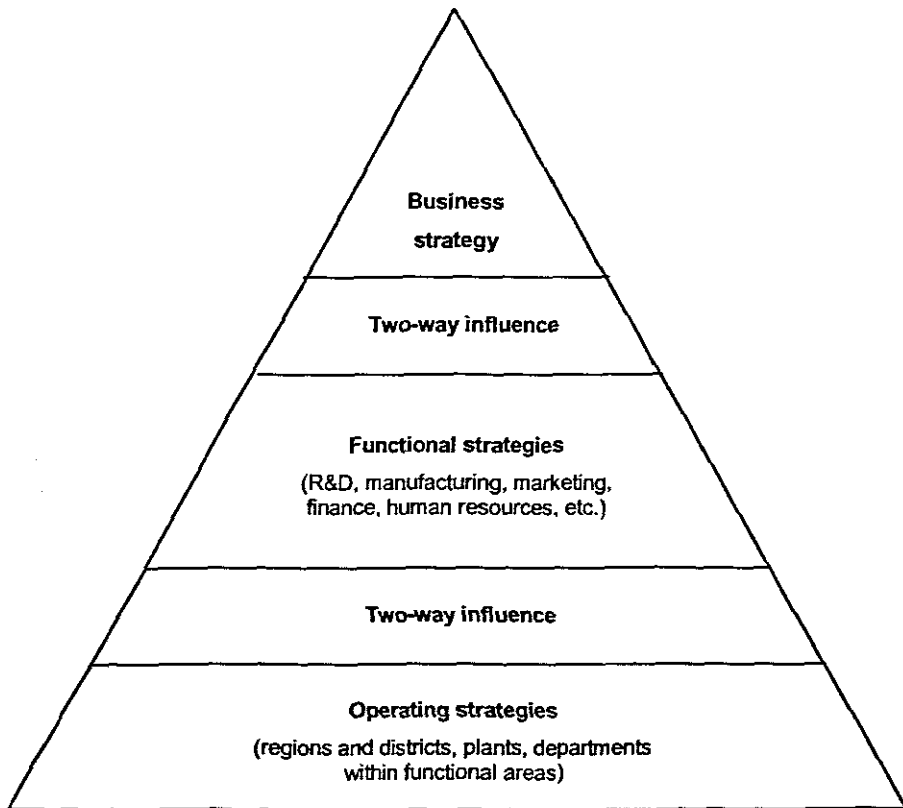


FIGURE 5.2: Strategy pyramid for a single-business company.

The major difference between a diversified (normally large) and a single-business (normally small) organisation is therefore that of the **complexity** of the strategic planning process – the diversified organisation has more levels than the single-business organisation has.

As can be seen from both illustrations, every functional department within an organisation makes a specific contribution to the organisation’s strategic successes. This contribution is solidly based on the organisation’s chosen strategy. This strategy, while typically developed at top management level, is informed by the various functional departments within the organisation, where each functional department, by way of its functional manager, makes one form of a contribution or another to the strategic planning process. It is in this area that the frustration on the part of public relations practitioners is most keenly felt – the function, according to them, does not get the recognition that it deserves on this level. It is then that they

take pains to study developments such as the King II Report on corporate governance in order to find ammunition that will propel public relations to the very top level of organisations.

The irony is that most CEOs would gladly welcome public relations to the strategic table – with the proviso that it (the function) can clearly explain the value that it will add to the organisation's strategic success. This can only be done if public relations practitioners are clear in their own minds on the strategic role that their function fulfils in the organisation.

Marketing, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 54 – 55), is a function that enables the organisation to identify those customers it can best serve. It does so through a process of segmenting the total market, selecting one or more target markets for the organisation to serve, and then to arrange for the product or service on offer to occupy a distinct place in the minds of customers – relative to that of competitors. One of the key factors in positioning is for the organisation to identify a competitive advantage upon which it will build the positioning. The authors caution that the company cannot only offer superior value, but must be able to deliver superior value to the customer.

Once the positioning is selected, the marketing department will blend the (famous) four Ps of marketing (product, price, place, promotion) in such a way that the desired position is delivered to the desired target market. This blend is typically known as the marketing strategy. This process is clearly outlined by Du Plessis *et al.* (2001: 331) who, like Kotler, mention that the marketing strategy is formulated after the marketing objectives (based on corporate objectives) are set by the functional department. They refer to the four Ps of marketing as the organisation's value mix, and say that strategy formulation "will take place via the integrated process of STP – segmentation, targeting and positioning – plus the value-mix". Importantly, they add that "the marketer must position the brand in such a way that it is perceived to satisfy the needs of target customers better than competitive offerings".

Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 58), as well as Rensburg and Cant (2003: 11), point out that the traditional four Ps in the marketing mix are better described, in the eyes of the customer, as the four Cs of marketing:

Four Ps	Four Cs
Product	Customer solution
Price	Customer cost
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication

Be that as it may, and important as the customer-focus is to the organisation, the “traditional” marketing mix is still in play in the form of a product, a price, a place, and promotion. The Four Cs merely help to focus on the consumer, not the organisation. However, this focus helps the organisation to determine its competitive advantage.

What, then, is the role that public relations can play in conjunction with marketing?

The argument could be made that public relations can be of assistance in the positioning of the product in the minds of the customers. The question that needs to be asked is whether this positioning is driven by marketing, or driven by public relations? Looking at the customer focus of marketing, and understanding that marketing seeks to effect an exchange of value with a customer, it seems straightforwardly simple: the marketing department, through its marketing strategy, will drive the process of positioning.

Coupled with positioning is the question of **competitive advantage**. Porter (1980 and 1996), Smit (1999), Steyn and Strickland (2003) and Kotler and Armstrong (2004), to name but a few, are all authors that mention the importance to an organisation of doing something so well that it cannot be copied by the competition – its competitive advantage. Interestingly, Porter himself (2002) in an article in *Harvard Business Review*, ponders the importance of corporate philanthropy (a public relations tool) to competitive advantage, while other authors such as Clow

and Baack (2004) also refer to the strategic importance of “image” to an organisation’s competitive advantage.

This, then, is a definite area of marketing (and marketing communication) where the expertise of the public relations practitioner may be brought to bear in helping the organisation to achieve strategic success in the marketplace. The question that does need to be addressed, however, is whether the image is important to effect marketing exchanges, or whether it is important just because public relations practitioners say so?

Rensburg and Cant (2002: 118) advocate taking an **integrated approach** to relationship building (including brand building and image building) between the organisation and its customers. With an integrated approach the two functions recognise that they have a common responsibility. What is this common responsibility? Again, Rensburg and Cant (2002: 118) provide a clue. They identify the following commonalities between the two functions:

- Publics and markets.
- Need for market segmentation.
- Acknowledge the importance of attitudes and perceptions.
- Acknowledge the management process of analysis, planning, implementation, and control.

According to Skinner *et al.* (2001: 43) marketing and public relations “have a lot in common” in the sense that they deal with relationships and “employ similar processes, techniques, and strategies”, while Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 8) maintain that public relations contributes to the marketing effort “by maintaining a hospitable social and political environment”. The authors take pains to explain that public relations and marketing are two separate, but complementary, functions and also point out that marketing (typically) is a line function, while public relations (typically) is a staff function. They do mention, however, that “in too many organizations ... neither senior management nor public relations and marketing practitioners clearly distinguish between the two organizational functions”.

It would seem to be important that a distinction between these two functions is made. The question that has puzzled many academics and practitioners, is that of how to make the distinction? One way to look at a possible distinction could lie in viewing the functions according to their **relevant strategic contributions** to the organisation's success. It is believed that an understanding of the nature of that contribution will help to focus the practitioner on the strategic focus of the particular function.

The literature examined for the purposes of this thesis is not very exact on the nature of public relations planning in response to strategic planning. There does not seem to be an equivalent to the marketing planning process (segmentation, targeting, positioning, value-mix) in public relations. The closest that public relations texts get to a similar situation, is the seven-step plan advocated by PRISA and explained by Skinner *et al.* (2001). The seven-step plan is also discussed on page 47 of this thesis.

Suffice it to say that marketing is a function that is firmly rooted in the organisation's strategy, and that it sees public relations as one of the four elements of the value-mix, which is implemented to give effect to the organisation's strategic objectives. There are similarities between public relations and marketing, although the two functions are separated by strategic goal. Marketing's goal is that of effecting the exchange, while public relations has as its goal to build and maintain good relations with all publics who may help/hinder the organisation in its endeavours to achieve its mission (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 43). This, on the face of it, looks rather simple. However, the discussion does not refer to the areas in which public relations may serve as a strategic support to marketing. Certainly the question may be asked whether public relations should not also have a goal of supporting marketing?

From reading the literature on the relationship, it does not seem far-fetched to describe the role of public relations, **where marketing is concerned**, as that of a tactical tool to marketing (without removing the fact that strategic planning is required) – public relations therefore serves as a staff function to marketing. Rather than engage in a turf war with marketing, would it not benefit public relations to accept that it plays a similar role to that of advertising?

Most authors on the subject of advertising agree that the advertising strategy (including the advertising campaign) is firmly rooted in the organisation's marketing strategy.

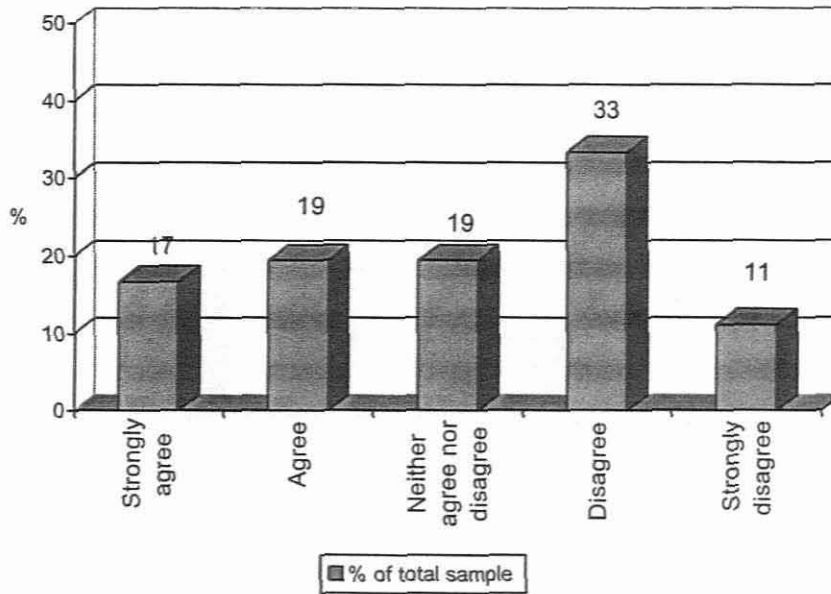
Can the same not hold true for public relations programmes? The contention of this thesis is certainly not to "rob" public relations of its overarching function of building and maintaining relationships with key strategic publics but it does contend that, **where marketing is concerned**, the public relations programme (strategy?) should be informed by the marketing strategy.

What do South African public relations practitioners have to say about the relationship between public relations and marketing?

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Chapter 4 discusses – broadly – the fact that respondents disagree with the statement that "public relations is a marketing discipline" (see p. 82). The disagreement rang up a mean average of 2.88 on the Likert scale, and requires more specific investigation.

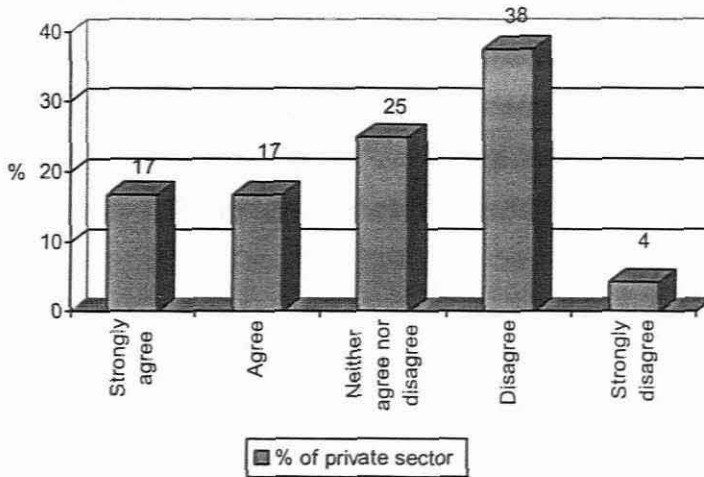
When broken down according to sector (see discussion on sectoral division on pages 74 – 75), and when outlined in specifics, the following picture emerges:



GRAPH 5.1: Public relations is a marketing discipline: government/non-government sector.

Of those respondents who work for government/non-government agencies almost half (44%) indicate disagreement or strong disagreement with this statement, while a further 19.4 per cent neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Could this point to uncertainty over the role of public relations regarding marketing? It certainly seems to be the case: either public relations is a marketing discipline, or it is not. However, 36 per cent of these respondents agree that it is, while 44 per cent do not agree that it is a marketing discipline.

The private sector feels thus about the issue:

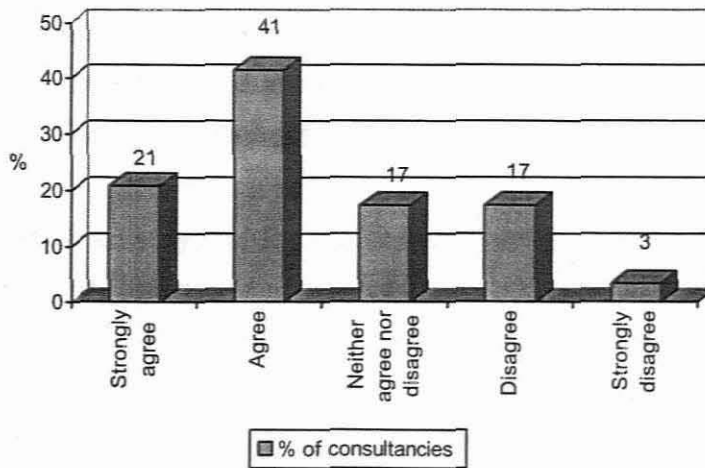


GRAPH 5.2 Public relations is a marketing discipline: private sector.

Just over 40 per cent of respondents in the private sector do not agree that public relations is a marketing discipline.

Again, as is the case with respondents in the government/non-government sectors, there is a fairly even split (34 per cent agree, while 42 per cent disagree). This certainly does not help to prove that public relations practitioners in South Africa are clear, in their minds, about the link between public relations and marketing.

How do public relations consultancies view the issue?



GRAPH 5.3: Public relations is a marketing discipline: public relations consultancies.

A rather staggering 62,2 per cent of all public relations consultancies in the research population either agree or strongly agree with the statement that public relations is a marketing discipline. They clearly have a different view to that of the private sector and government/non-government sectors who mostly feel that it is not a marketing discipline.

Does this anomaly indicate a misunderstanding on the part of any of these sectors about the role of public relations?

To answer that question, a brief look at existing theory will guide the discussion.

3.1 Theoretical relationship between public relations and marketing

Public relations is a discipline in its own right, with its own body of knowledge, and its own professional status. This view is shared by, *inter alia*, Cutlip *et al.* (2000), Skinner *et al.* (2001), Newsom *et al.* (2000), and Steyn and Puth (2000).

The authors cited in the previous paragraph also mention that public relations as a discipline is still growing and evolving, and is set to do so for some time to come.

Therefore, even if public relations is a discipline in its own right it is, as an evolving discipline, trying to come to grips with a number of recent developments, such as the growth of the global information age (Cutlip *et al.*, 2000: 135), the growing focus on integrated marketing communication and relationship building (Rensburg & Cant, 2003: 118), and strategic management (Steyn & Puth, 2000).

These authors specifically mention that the relationship between public relations and marketing is, at best, controversial. The fact that the respondents in this research also seem confused about the relationship between the two disciplines seems to bear this out. It is especially concerning that the respondents who classify themselves as public relations consultancies regard public relations as a marketing discipline.

What is true, however, is that there is a **definite link** between public relations and marketing. Although previous chapters refer to this link, the *nature* of the link has not yet been discussed.

Again, when looking at existing textbooks, the reader is struck by a seeming inability of authors on public relations to pinpoint the exact nature of the link between public relations and marketing. Skinner *et al.* (2001: 45) try to explain the link by stating that the public relations practitioner should be a part of the marketing team when involved in “purely marketing projects”, while he/she should report to top management when involved in “corporate work”. They identify the following “marketing spheres” (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 46 - 50) in which the public relations practitioner can function:

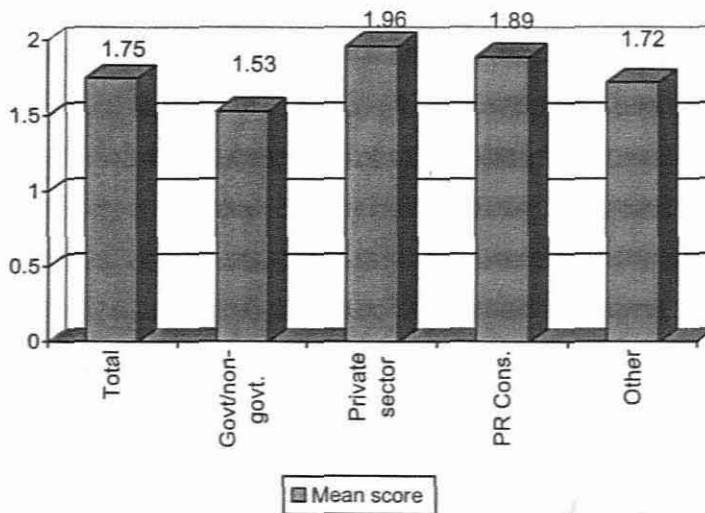
- Market attitude and product publicity.
- Marketing communication.
- Product launches.
- Sport sponsorship.
- Packaging, presentation, and product utility.
- Customer education.
- The non-advertised position.
- Relations between dealers and distributors.

- Consumer complaints.
- Employee attitude.
- Positioning.

This somewhat exhaustive list certainly makes the public relations function look like a very important, and undeniably vital, part of the organisation's marketing effort. The question remains, however, whether the public relations practitioner will lead marketing, or whether marketing will lead the public relations practitioner in the execution of these activities. Furthermore, the question is whether these functions form part of the public relations strategy, or the marketing strategy.

To help find an answer to this question, respondents were asked to react to the statement that "public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers".

The overall result on the Likert scale was:



GRAPH 5.4: Public relations supports marketing.

Interestingly, government/non-government respondents agree most with this statement, while the private sector and public relations consultancies agree least with the statement that public relations is an important support function to marketing,

but should not be managed by marketing. On the whole, however, the respondents are comfortable with this statement.

Specifically, the percentages, per sector, of those who strongly agree with this statement are as follows:

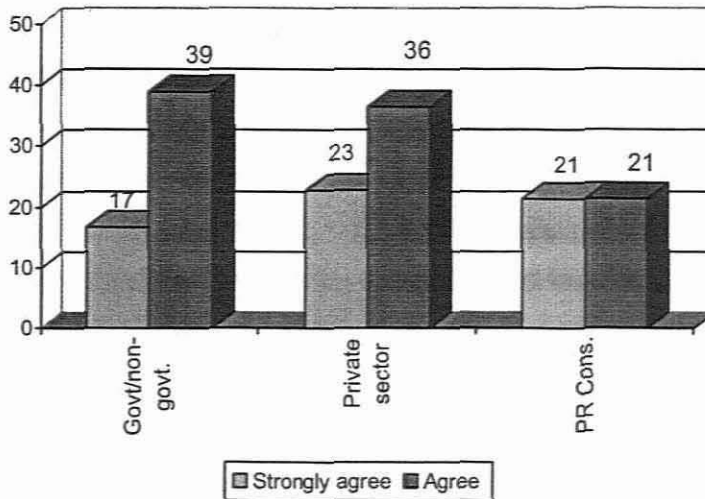
TABLE 5.1: Strongly agree that public relations is an important support function

CATEGORY	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy
Percentages of sectors that strongly agree that public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	57.9	39.1	32.1

Is it significant that government/non-government agencies agree most strongly with this statement, while public relations consultancies agree least? When examining the results to the statement that **public relations** should sometimes **manage marketing**, a fairly substantial 42.8 per cent of public relations consultancies indicated agreement or strong agreement! This indicates a (disturbing?) belief that public relations practitioners should sometimes take over the role of the marketing manager – among nearly half of public relations consultancies!

While respondents indicate that they are not comfortable with their function being managed by marketing, they do not seem to have much compunction in expressing a belief that public relations should manage marketing.

In reaction to that same statement (that public relations should sometimes manage marketing), the other sectors take the following viewpoints:



GRAPH 5.5: Public relations should sometimes manage marketing.

Is the fact that the private sector overwhelmingly agrees with this statement (59,1 per cent of respondents) due to a misunderstanding of the role of public relations in that sector? In other words, do private sector companies have a sufficiently clear understanding of the role of public relations in the organisation's marketing effort to answer this question satisfactorily, or is this a reflection of the state of confusion that still prevails in the minds of South African public relations practitioners?

To discuss this question sufficiently, the attention again needs to be pointed to the existing theory.

Up to this point, sufficient evidence has been presented to indicate a necessary link between public relations and marketing, and some evidence has been presented to indicate that public relations supports marketing. Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 8) are of the opinion that marketing is a line function, while public relations is a staff function. This statement needs some clarification, since it is central to an understanding of the nature of the relationship between public relations and marketing.

On page 98 of this thesis, Cutlip *et al.* are quoted as stating that public relations is a staff function, while marketing is a line function. In order to properly understand this comment, it is necessary to understand what is meant by “line” and “staff” function.

Smit and Cronjé (2002: 241) mention that line functions are activities that are “essential for realising the organisation’s objectives”, while staff functions are activities that influence line functions by “advice, recommendations, research and technical know-how”.

As staff function to marketing, therefore, public relations can act in a supporting activity while advising, recommending, and so on to the various other management functions in the organisation.

As line function, public relations can be responsible for building and maintaining accord with strategically significant publics that are not the focus of other functions. In other words, where it comes to customer communication, public relations should act in an advisory, specialist capacity. It should therefore not try to manage marketing - much as it should not be managed by marketing.

Up to this point, the views of authors on public relations have been discussed. How do authors on marketing view the relationship?

Brassington and Pettitt (1997: 781 – 785) view public relations as a strategic function that is not only “the ad hoc seizing of any free publicity opportunity that happens to come along”. They distinguish between **marketing public relations** and **corporate public relations**, and are of the opinion that public relations should be integrated with the organisation’s promotional efforts, and that it should also relate to organisational objectives (strategic role).

Marketing public relations is “used for long-term strategic image building, developing credibility and raising the organisation’s profile, to enhance other marketing activities. When used in this way, it becomes a planned element of the wider promotional mix” (Brassington & Pettitt, 1997: 784 – 785). The concept of “marketing public relations” is also found in Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 479), and is also

used to denote the role of public relations as a support to marketing activities. However, both textbooks agree that while public relations has in the past been referred to as “publicity”, it is a wider, more planned function than publicity.

That public relations is a necessary support to marketing is a view that is also shared by Kotler and Armstrong (2004), Lamb *et al.* (2000), Cant *et al.* (2002), and Perreault and McCarthy (2002).

If viewed in this way the role of public relations in marketing becomes quite clear, and removes the cause of so much confusion. The reality of accepting the view that public relations supports marketing, and therefore is managed by marketing for marketing strategy purposes, leads to an understanding that marketing is the dominant strategic partner in this particular form of relationship. This introduces the concept that the strategic contribution of public relations to business success, where it relates to marketing, is that of functional support: the public relations practitioner acts as technician.

The mention in an earlier paragraph of the concept of “marketing public relations” also introduces, in this discussion, the issue of the name of the discipline: public relations.

3.2 A rose is a rose is a rose

Chapter 4 of this thesis (see p. 69) introduces the discussion on the name of the discipline, mentioning that there is confusion between related terms such as corporate communication, organisational communication, etc. There is also a shift in preference, whereby organisations move away from the term “public relations” to the term “corporate communication”.

The research results regarding the names of departments also indicate a panoply of different terms for the departments in South African organisations that are involved in public relations activities. The “name issue” is resurrected in this chapter on marketing, since it is important to understand that the name of the discipline – public

relations – is also closely linked to how it is seen to interact with other functions in the organisation such as marketing.

Rensburg and Cant (2003), Skinner *et al.* (2001), and Newsom *et al.* (2000) all refer to “public relations” as “public relations” without discussing the possible negative connotations that may be associated with the term, although the potential confusion with other functions (such as marketing) is discussed to a greater or lesser extent in these textbooks.

Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 23 – 24), however, introduce the discussion about a possible confusion of terms, stating that the function of public relations is oftentimes labelled as “corporate relations, corporate communications ... public affairs, and public information”. Despite this confusion, the authors state that the “basic concept and function of public relations are similar from one organisation to the next” (Cutlip *et al.*, 2000: 23).

This discussion is expanded by Steyn and Puth (2003), who advocate a renaming of the function “public relations” to that of “corporate communication”. The main reason for this, according to these authors, is the negative connotations with which public relations came to be associated.

They continue by stating that the term “corporate communication” encompasses three areas (Steyn & Puth, 2003: 6):

- It may be applied to all kinds of organisations.
- It entails the management of communication to both internal and external publics.
- As a management function, it is more than just a collection of communication methods and techniques.

The authors do state that the renaming and consequent redefinition of the name of this discipline in itself does not necessarily compel change – the function should absolutely add value to the organisation on a strategic level. That this is not currently the case, is a result of “the legacy of the past that still seems to retard the

development of corporate communication as a truly strategic management function in the organisation” (Steyn & Puth, 2003: 7).

William Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet* (II.ii.43), poses the question: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet” (in Cohen, 2000: 352). By the same token, the question could be posed here: is it really necessary to debate the name of the discipline? If the discipline itself is in a state of confusion, and if it by itself does not understand its contribution, it could be called anything and be just as ineffectual (that is to say, if it were proven to be ineffectual).

It is the contention of this thesis that renaming the discipline is an exercise in semantics. One of the logical results of a name change would be that a number of years study, lobbying, discussing and so on would be just so much wasted effort, requiring practitioners to redefine, lobby afresh, and explain anew what it is that they do. *more might be gained by an effort* Should that effort not rather be aimed at ensuring that the term “public relations” is clearly defined and delineated, and that it is explained in language that marketers and other functional managers (including top management) would understand?

In other words, rather than play semantic games, authors on public relations should ensure that the term “public relations” is explained and properly contextualised. With the support of a professional body such as PRISA, and the backing of a unified body of theory, it could be a relatively easy task to carry the message convincingly to organisations. As it stands, the discussion around the “proper name” for public relations may detract the attention from the real issue at hand: do public relations practitioners understand the role that they play in organisations?

3.3 The role according to received wisdom

A point of departure in this thesis was discussed in Chapter 1, where it was stated that the thesis would use the PRISA definition of public relations (see p. 20). According to PRISA, public relations “is the management, through communication, of the perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external publics”.

Steyn and Puth (2003: 3 – 4) cite the definition of Grunig and Hunt as being “the most authoritative prevailing definition ... [which is] the ‘management of communication between an organisation and its publics’”. After examining some more definitions, Steyn and Puth (2003: 4) describe corporate communication (public relations) as “the identification and management of issues, stakeholders, and publics in order to assist the organisation in adapting to its environment: using communication as a solution to critical problems or to capitalise on opportunities that present themselves”.

Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 6) define public relations as the “management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends”, while Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 4) call the definition of Long and Hazelton the “best definition for today’s modern practice”. According to Long and Hazelton (in Wilcox *et al.*, 2000: 4), public relations is “a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals”.

This last definition, given the discussion so far, seems to encapsulate – to a great extent – the strategic nature of public relations.

The three roles that CEOs expect public relations practitioners to play are those of technician, manager, and strategist (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 20). These roles will enable public relations practitioners to contribute to organisational success.

As technician, the public relations practitioner is required to understand the various techniques and tools of public relations, and should be able to apply his/her knowledge in practical settings. The staff function of public relations also underscores the need for a well-qualified and experienced technician, who can lend much-needed technical support to a number of other functional departments.

As manager, the public relations practitioner is required to manage his/her function. That is, he/she is in charge of planning, organising, leading, and controlling the people and resources in the public relations department/consultancy in such a way that departmental objectives are met.

As strategist, the public relations practitioner should be able to think strategically (that is, keep the ultimate goals of the organisation in mind when making plans to adjust the organisation to its changing environment). Steyn and Puth bemoan the fact that public relations practitioners in South Africa have not yet started to think like strategists.

The issue of strategic planning and management will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis (p. 137 onwards), and is introduced here to enable a critical look at the various definitions quoted so far.

To return the attention to definitions. The function of a definition is to enable the researcher to form an understanding of the concept with which he/she is grappling, just as it helps to direct the understanding that practitioners have of their discipline.

The PRISA-definition was (and still is) one that seems to be quite comprehensive, although it seems to lack a **strategic focus**.

That is why the definition of Long and Hazelton certainly seems to provide a solid platform for understanding the role of public relations – it refers not only to the “mechanical” aspects of public relations, but also to its strategic role.

4. VIEWS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS ON MARKETING

The discussion in the previous section on the strategic versus tactical role of public relations regarding, among others, marketing, helps to guide the researcher to measure the opinions that South African public relations practitioners have on a number of issues. A clear understanding, for instance, of the link between public relations and marketing will help the individual public relations practitioner to understand his/her tactical and strategic contribution to organisational success.

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement with the statement that “public relations is a necessary part of marketing”.

This intends to establish whether respondents agree that there is, at least, a necessary link between public relations and marketing. The statement does not, at this stage, intend to investigate their views on the *nature* of that relationship.

TABLE 5.2: Public relations is a necessary part of marketing: Likert rating according to sector

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Mean score	1.61	1.78	1.38	1.60	1.56

No dissent among the ranks here – all respondents agree that public relations is a necessary part of marketing. In fact, a closer examination of percentages – per sector – who “strongly agree” or “agree” with this statement reveals a high level of agreement:

TABLE 5.3: Public relations is a necessary part of marketing: percentage per sector that strongly agrees and agrees

CATEGORY	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR consultancy
Strongly agree	45.9%	70.8%	53.3%
Agree	35.1%	25.0%	40.0%

More than nine out of every ten respondents from both the public relations consultancy sector and private sector agree or strongly agree that public relations is a necessary part of marketing. There is a lesser level of agreement among government/non-government agencies, though, with only eight out of every ten agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. This could be partly attributed to the fact that government and non-government agencies are less involved in marketing than the private sector would be.

At the start of the research project, it was also deemed necessary to establish whether South African public relations practitioners felt that they (or at least their peers) need more training and education in a number of areas. Given the fact that such a large percentage of respondents have indicated that they have no formal training in public relations (see p. 66), this question is extremely relevant. Also, given the hypothesis, it is interesting to see whether respondents not only understand their role, but believe that they are sufficiently trained to deal with the requirements of their jobs.

The picture at this stage is not too encouraging, since a number of respondents have already indicated training needs, which could also point to a lack of understanding that could be eradicated by education.

Should public relations practitioners receive training in marketing and advertising, since they will interact with these disciplines? This is what respondents replied:

TABLE 5.4: Training in marketing and advertising: Likert ratings per sector

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	1.61	1.64	1.58	1.63	1.56

There is no doubt that all respondents express a clear need for training in marketing and advertising to be a part of the training of public relations practitioners, in order to enable them to interact (sensibly) with these disciplines. In fact, an examination of percentages, per sector, who either agree or strongly agree with this statement shows the extent of this need:

TABLE 5.5: Training in marketing and advertising: percentage per sector that agrees or strongly agrees

CATEGORY	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy
Strongly agree	52.8%	41.7%	36.7%
Agree	38.9%	58.3%	63.3%

Close to 100 per cent of all respondents agree or strongly agree that training in marketing and advertising is a requirement.

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, the relationship between public relations and marketing seems to be misunderstood by public relations practitioners in South Africa. Specifically, the following issues are identified:

- There is a link between public relations and marketing.
- Public relations, however, is not a discipline of marketing – they think.
- Public relations is a support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketing.
- Public relations will not return the compliment, because it should sometimes manage marketing.
- Public relations practitioners should certainly be instructed in marketing and advertising.

This brings to a close the preliminary examination of the impressions that South African public relations practitioners have of the relationship between them and marketing. But what about marketing communication? What is the situation there?

CHAPTER 6

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION

1. INTRODUCTION

“In the consumer’s mind, advertising messages from different media and different promotional approaches all become part of a single message about the company. Conflicting messages from these different sources can result in confused company images and brand positions” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 468).

This statement in a leading marketing textbook succinctly makes the argument for an integrated approach to marketing communication. The move away from mass marketing to target marketing, coupled with the explosion in media options available to consumers, have had a direct effect on the way in which an organisation communicates with one of its most important stakeholder groups – the consumer. It is simply no longer feasible for an organisation to have the sales department running a sales promotion, while the advertising department runs a (conflicting) advertising campaign, while the public relations department is busy implementing yet another conflicting public relations campaign. Owing to the fact that the consumer will not ask where the message comes from, it is clear that an integrated approach in the planning of **message content** is essential to successful communication.

The realisation of the potentially damaging results to the organisation of a fragmented approach in marketing communication led to the emergence of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). IMC is defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 469) as “[t]he concept under which a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling message about the organization and its products”.

In order to facilitate the process of integrated marketing communications, a number of organisations have appointed marketing communication directors. This director (sometimes called a marcom manager) has the overall responsibility for the organisation’s communication efforts. This person will develop a “total marketing

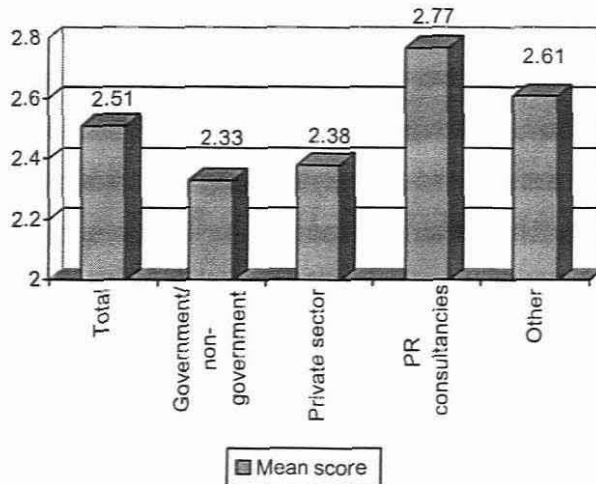
communication strategy aimed at showing how the company and its products can help customers solve their problems” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 470). One of the promotion tools that the marketing communication director will use, is that of public relations, which again introduces the debate that forms one of the cornerstones of this thesis: how does public relations contribute to organisational success in regard to its relationship with integrated marketing communication? That question is addressed in this chapter. But before the question itself, and theory relating to the question is discussed, it is perhaps necessary to investigate pertinent research results.

2. RESEARCH RESULTS

The weight of literature on the subject of marketing communication today agrees on an integrated approach to marketing communication, positing that the “new” term for this discipline should be IMC (that is, Integrated Marketing Communication). It seems, from the review on public relations texts and articles addressed in Chapter 2 of this thesis (see p. 27 onwards), that public relations texts and authorities agree on an integrational approach to marketing communication. But who should “drive” this effort? Marketing? Advertising? Public relations? Sales?

A closer investigation is warranted.

In response to the statement: “All forms of marketing communications should be executed by public relations practitioners”, the respondents answered as follows:



GRAPH 6.1: Public relations should execute all forms of marketing communication.

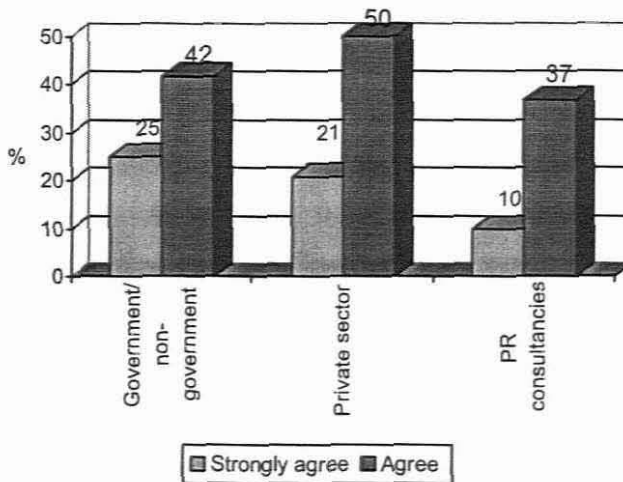
Public relations consultancies disagree least with the statement under discussion, indicating a grasp of the intricacies of marketing communication. It is again somewhat significant that the government/non-government sector seems to agree most with this statement, while the private sector (surprisingly?) also agrees with this statement more than what other respondents do.

It must be kept in mind that integrated marketing communication is a multi-faceted, multi-disciplined field that requires the contribution of a large number of specialists in their respective fields. For example, personal selling requires the talents of salespersons who have been trained in selling techniques; advertising requires the talents of creative artists (among others); sales promotion is a field with a very specific focus – short-term incentives to customers; and so on. It is therefore somewhat dangerous to want to execute all forms of marketing communication.

What is more worrying, is that respondents in all probability would have disagreed strongly with this statement had they had a solid understanding of what it is that marketing communication entails. It can be deduced from the respondents' reaction to this particular statement that they do not have a clear grasp of what it is that

marketing communication entails, with the result that they do not understand – clearly – the role of public relations in marketing communication.

It is even more interesting to examine the percentages of those sectors who agree or agree strongly with this statement:



GRAPH 6.2: Public relations should execute all forms of marketing communication: agree/strongly agree per sector.

Opposed to nearly 70 per cent of all government/non-government respondents, and just over 70 per cent of all private sector respondents, **less than half** of all public relations consultancies agree or strongly agree with the statement that public relations should execute all forms of marketing communication. This could indicate that public relations practitioners have a clearer grasp of the relationship between public relations and marketing communication than their counterparts in other sectors do. Given the fact that public relations practitioners, on average, have much more experience in public relations than their colleagues do, it is perhaps not too surprising to see more insight on this matter from them.

The operative term in this statement is the word “execute”. It is interesting that the public relations consultancies seem to have picked this up, and naturally chose to disagree with this statement – public relations as a discipline is (hopefully) not

interested in executing sales promotions, or selling, or direct marketing, or advertising campaigns (at least not for product advertising).

To the private sector and government/non-government there seems to be no difference: public relations is one of the marketing communication tools and is therefore capable of executing other forms of marketing communication. There is therefore no problem with this function to execute marketing communication.

It is possible that this insight highlights the measure to which the private sector and the government/non-government sector misunderstand the role of public relations in the marketing mix. While a public relations practitioner certainly should be capable of managing the organisation's total marketing communication effort, he/she is not necessarily required to execute all of them.

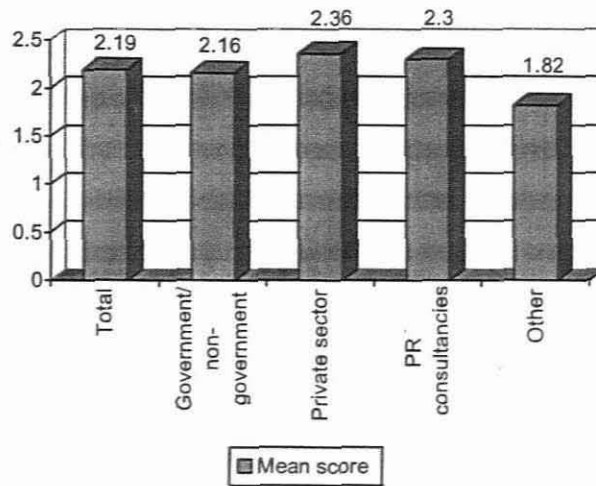
It is, however, still significant to witness a measurable state of confusion in the ranks. Public relations practitioners are (as prevailing theory indicates) a necessary part of the organisation's integrated marketing communication effort. They bring their specific expertise to bear in enabling the organisation to achieve its long-term goals by implementing a goal-oriented integrated marketing communication strategy. Public relations practitioners are however not required to extend their influence to other marketing communication functions requiring different skill sets. If respondents understood this aspect clearly, they would have resoundingly rejected the proposal that public relations should execute all forms of marketing communication. As it stands, some of them did – and some did not, pointing to confusion on the role of public relations in marketing communication.

Execution and management are of course two different concepts, and this question does not address the view whether public relations should manage marketing communication.

The attention now turns to the management of **communication**. As will be indicated in Section 6 of this chapter (p. 128 onwards), one of the important functions of public relations practitioners is that of communication. Given the fact that marketing communication is a communication function, it is perhaps not massively surprising that respondents, as communication experts, see themselves playing a deciding role even in marketing communication.

How do respondents view the relationship between public relations and other organisational communication functions?

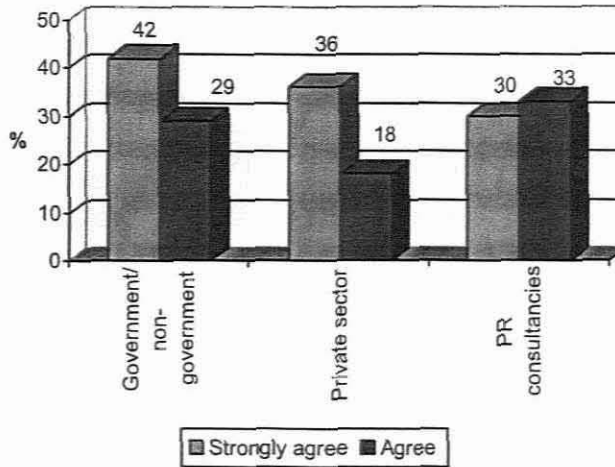
In response to the statement that public relations “is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes”, respondents answered as follows:



GRAPH 6.3: Public relations is the only function to manage communication: Likert ratings.

While the mean averages on the Likert scale seem to point to a measure of disagreement with this statement, the level of disagreement is not convincing.

A more detailed investigation into the specific sectors reveals an interesting insight:

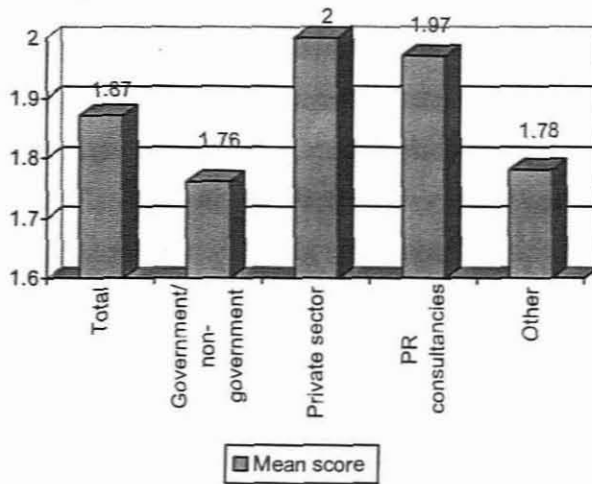


GRAPH 6.4: Public relations to manage communication: agree/strongly agree per sector.

In each instance, more than half the respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement. The public relations function, to respondents, is central to the organisation in the sense that it should manage the communication processes. This is an interesting viewpoint to exhibit. Do they really want to manage all the communication processes? Does this include inter-office memoranda? Or sales presentations? What about product advertisements? Do they want to manage the communication processes for advertising; for human resources; for operations; for finance? Will it be at all possible (from a logistic viewpoint) to manage all of the organisation's communication processes? Does the answer not rather lie (again) in an understanding of the **technician** role of public relations practitioners as an equal partner in the integrated marketing communication mix? This again brings to the fore the discussion on the staff function of public relations.

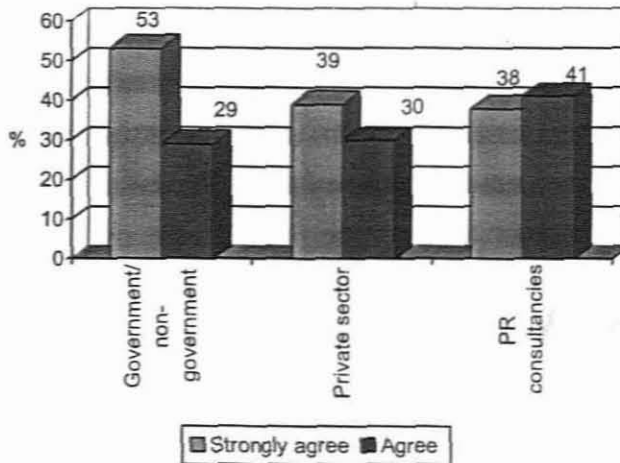
Another, closely related, statement reads as follows: "All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments".

This is how respondents feel about that statement:



GRAPH 6.5: All organisational communication to be channelled through public relations: Likert rating.

It seems as if the private sector practitioners do not agree with this statement with the same vigour as do government/non-government practitioners. A closer examination of the results is therefore warranted.



GRAPH 6.6: All organisational communication to be channelled through public relations: percentages that agree/strongly agree.

Eight out of every ten government/non-government respondents agree, nearly eight out of every ten public relations consultancies agree, and even seven out of every ten private sector respondents agree with this statement.

The statement refers specifically to all “organisational communication”, which does not include all forms of communication that take place in an organisation. According to Steyn and Puth (2000: 6), organisational communication regards the study of the organisation as a system, and the study of communication as “an end in itself”. Furthermore, the statement specifies that the communication be “channelled through” the public relations department. Respondents are, as far as existing theory is concerned, quite right in advocating a situation whereby public relations fulfils its purpose as a **staff function** to other functional departments in the organisation. However, to channel all forms of organisational communication through the public relations department may create a bureaucratic monster.

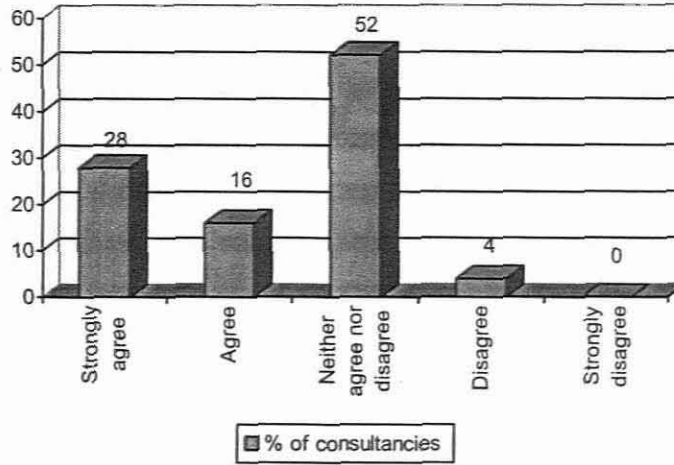
Returning to the opinions of South African public relations practitioners on the role of public relations in marketing communication, and remembering that a number of books and articles seem to refer to a “turf war” between these two disciplines (specifically advertising), it was deemed prudent to test the temperature of South African practitioners on the relationship between advertising and public relations.

The premise of Al and Laura Ries’s (2002) book, *The fall of advertising and the rise of PR*, is that public relations, rather than advertising, should become the engine that drives the branding of products/services, chiefly owing to the fact that advertising has become less effective than it was in the past.

Reference was already made to this book in Chapter 1 (see pp. 1 – 2), and it was indicated that a number of public relations practitioners are elated at the prospect of public relations “winning the war” against advertising.

How do South African public relations practitioners view the relationship between advertising and public relations?

In response to the statement: "Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted", respondents answered as follows:



GRAPH 6.7: More spend on public relations than on advertising: public relations consultancies.

Four out of every ten respondents believe that an investment in public relations is more prudent than an investment in advertising, while a staggering 52 per cent are unsure of their opinion on this matter. While only 4 per cent disagree with the statement, it is interesting to note that no one *strongly* disagrees. While the debate on the relationship between advertising and public relations has in all probability been fuelled by the book of Al and Laura Ries, respondents do not speak with one voice. Is the correct answer to this question not the following: the two functions should work together to achieve common goals, and it is therefore immaterial who gets most money?

It stands to reason that marketing communication is a communication function. While the major elements of the marketing communication mix all have specific focus areas (sales, advertising, promotions, direct marketing, public relations), they share a commonality in that they serve to communicate certain messages to the organisation's target market(s). While public relations texts refer to various target publics of an organisation, marketers (and by extension marketing communicators)

are chiefly interested in communicating to selected **target markets** – those groups of people most likely to purchase the product/service that is on offer.

3. COMMUNICATION

The PRISA definition of public relations underlines the fact that public relations is a communication function. That public relations is a communication function is not under dispute, especially given the fact that its accepted definition clearly refers to the “management, **through communication**, of perceptions and strategic relationships”. It is, however, not the only communication function in the organisation – business communication relates to writing of letters and memoranda; organisational communication to the study of the flow of communication in organisations; management communication on the processes of managers communicating to subordinates; while communication management is equated with public relations.

For example, Steyn and Puth (2000: 5 – 6) list five forms of communication:

- corporate communication
- business communication
- organisational communication
- management communication
- communication management

... and make the argument for the first term (corporate communication) to replace the term “public relations”.

Whether the term “public relations” should be changed into something else is, however, not part of the scope of this thesis. What is significant, however, is to note that here (different forms of communication) is potential for confusion.

This thesis examines the hypothesis that public relations practitioners in South Africa are clear about their strategic contribution to organisational success. The alternative hypothesis is that they are **not** clear about their role in organisational

success. When studying the organisation as a whole the fact that within it are found at least five different forms of communication may already be fertile grounds for confusion. Add to this the fact that the name of the **public relations function itself** is in dispute, the potential for confusion becomes clear, especially when it is realised that a number of existing public relations practitioners did not study the discipline at all (see **GRAPH 4.2** on p. 66), and may therefore have little or no theoretical knowledge of the differences between these forms of communication.

For example: business communication is one of the forms of communication that is encountered in the organisation. It refers specifically to written communication, presentation skills and interview and meeting procedures (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 6). Does a wish to control all forms of communication translate into a public relations department having to generate all forms of written communication, and to put together all presentations, and to conduct all interviews and meetings? Surely not.

The contact between a manager and his/her employees (management communication) is the focus of management communication. Again, the question may be posed: Does this mean that public relations will conduct all forms of management communication? Again, the answer should be emphatically “no”. However, the public relations practitioner is certainly somebody who **trains colleagues** in the finer points of communication (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 12).

This interaction with colleagues points to (again) the public relations practitioner as technician – a specialist in his/her field (of communication) who acts in a staff function capacity to enable other functions in the organisation to perform more effectively and efficiently.

4. FOUNDATION OF THE IMC STRATEGY

Clow and Baack (2004: 8) describe integrated marketing communication as:

“the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools, avenues, and sources within a company into a seamless program that maximises the impact on consumers and other end users at a minimal cost. This integration affects all of the

firm's business-to-business, marketing channel, customer-focused, and internally directed communications".

While a number of other definitions exist (some of which have been discussed earlier in this thesis), it is significant to note that these authors inject a specific focus into the definition. Not just stating that integrated marketing communication is a collection of communication tools, they specifically point to the fact that these tools are used with a **specific intent**, or focus: those publics that are directly affected by, or directly affect, the organisation's marketing effort.

Here is the crux of the matter: does a tool "belong" to any specific department or function in an organisation merely because it is a tool, or does it become a marketing, or advertising, or selling, or public relations tool when it is intended for a specific strategic purpose?

Put differently: Public relations from time to time uses advertising to achieve its purposes. This very same tool is used by marketers to sell products, while the human resources department may use it to recruit new employees. Is advertising then a function of any one of those departments, or should it be regarded as a tool that assists all three departments in achieving strategic objectives?

The integrated marketing communication plan has its roots firmly embedded in the organisation's marketing strategy (Clow & Baack, 2004; Duncan, 2002; Skinner *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, whatever the requirements are of the various tools of marketing communication, these will be informed by the marketing strategy.

The four "traditional" tools of marketing communication, advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, and public relations (discussed earlier -- see pp. 12 - 13), together with direct marketing, today form the backbone of any integrated marketing strategy. Together, and in a differing blend, these tools are used for their particular strengths – for example, when credibility is required, public relations is used; when interpersonal contact is required, personal selling is used, and so on.

In this situation, it seems again as if public relations finds itself in a technical, advisory capacity. The marketer wants the public relations practitioner to assist

him/her to achieve marketing objectives. The public relations function is therefore used **tactically** by the marketing department.

Among others, Duncan (2002) and Kotler and Armstrong (2004) explain that planning in an organisation takes place on (at least) three levels: corporate, functional, and operational. The corporate and functional levels are normally seen as **strategic** planning levels, while the operational level is seen as a **tactical level**.

This view will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter dealing with strategic management, but it is necessary at this stage to understand how these levels of planning impact on integrated marketing communication.

An organisation will, on the corporate level, typically set long-term company-wide objectives, broad in scope, and normally financial in nature. Based on these objectives, the various functional departments (marketing, finance, human resources, etc.) will develop functional plans, detailing various strategies that they will employ to achieve specific functional objectives. In the planning process, it is not uncommon for managers of these departments to meet in order to ensure cross-functional synergy between departments and to ensure that objectives are not counter-productive. Once the functional plans and strategies have been approved by top and middle management, the departments are in a position to develop detailed, short-term tactical plans that are designed to achieve departmental (and thereby corporate) objectives.

In examining a turf war, it should be borne in mind that the public relations function is part and parcel of the integrated marketing communication strategy. However, when it comes to taking individual, tactical public relations decisions, the public relations manager will rule the roost.

5. ORGANISATIONAL POSITION OF IMC

In organisational charts, traditionally, the four functions of marketing communication (advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and personal selling) resorted under the marketing department – except of course in organisations that have separate public relations departments.

The nature of integrated marketing communication, however, requires a different organisational design approach.

Russell and Lane (2002: 142 – 143) identify three ways in which integrated marketing communication could function in the organisation:

- Marketing communication manager (marcom manager).
- Brand management approach.
- Communication manager.

These three approaches need further explanation.

5.1 Marcom manager

In this approach, a single person or office is tasked with the responsibility for centralising all communication activities. The marcom manager is responsible for developing communication strategies and directing communication programmes. This approach is one of **centralisation**.

While centralisation tends to concentrate decision-making in the hands of an individual or at least individual departments, the trend in South Africa is that of decentralisation, where middle and lower management are left to take important decisions (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 243). The advantages of decentralisation include reduced workload for top management, quicker turnaround on decisions, flexibility, and more participation from employees. Decentralisation may, however, lead to anarchy if not managed well, requires more intensive management, and “sophisticated planning and reporting methods” (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 245).

5.2 Brand management approach

The organisation forms three groups, known variously as marketing services/communications, marketing operations, and sales. "Marketing operations is responsible for developing and delivering the product to the MSC [marketing services/communications], which works with sales to develop and implement all sales and marketing programs" (Russell & Lane, 2002: 142).

The brand management approach is an example of product (brand) departmentalisation in organisation design. According to Smit and Cronjé (2002: 220), the "marketing, financing and personnel needs involved ... [with one brand] will differ considerably from those of [other brands]". Organisations with large numbers of different brands may find that they benefit from implementing this particular organisation design.

Advantages are that decisions are made quickly, and it is easy to measure the performance of each brand. Disadvantages include tunnel vision on the part of managers and costs.

5.3 Communication manager

A communication manager, sometimes called a "czar" (Russell & Lane, 2002: 143), is made responsible for approving and coordinating all of the communications programmes for the organisation as a whole. While various brands (and other functional departments) will develop their own communication programmes, the communication manager has the responsibility for "coordinating, consolidating, and integrating the programs, messages, and media for the organization" (Russell & Lane, 2002: 143).

This latter structure is graphically represented in the following manner:

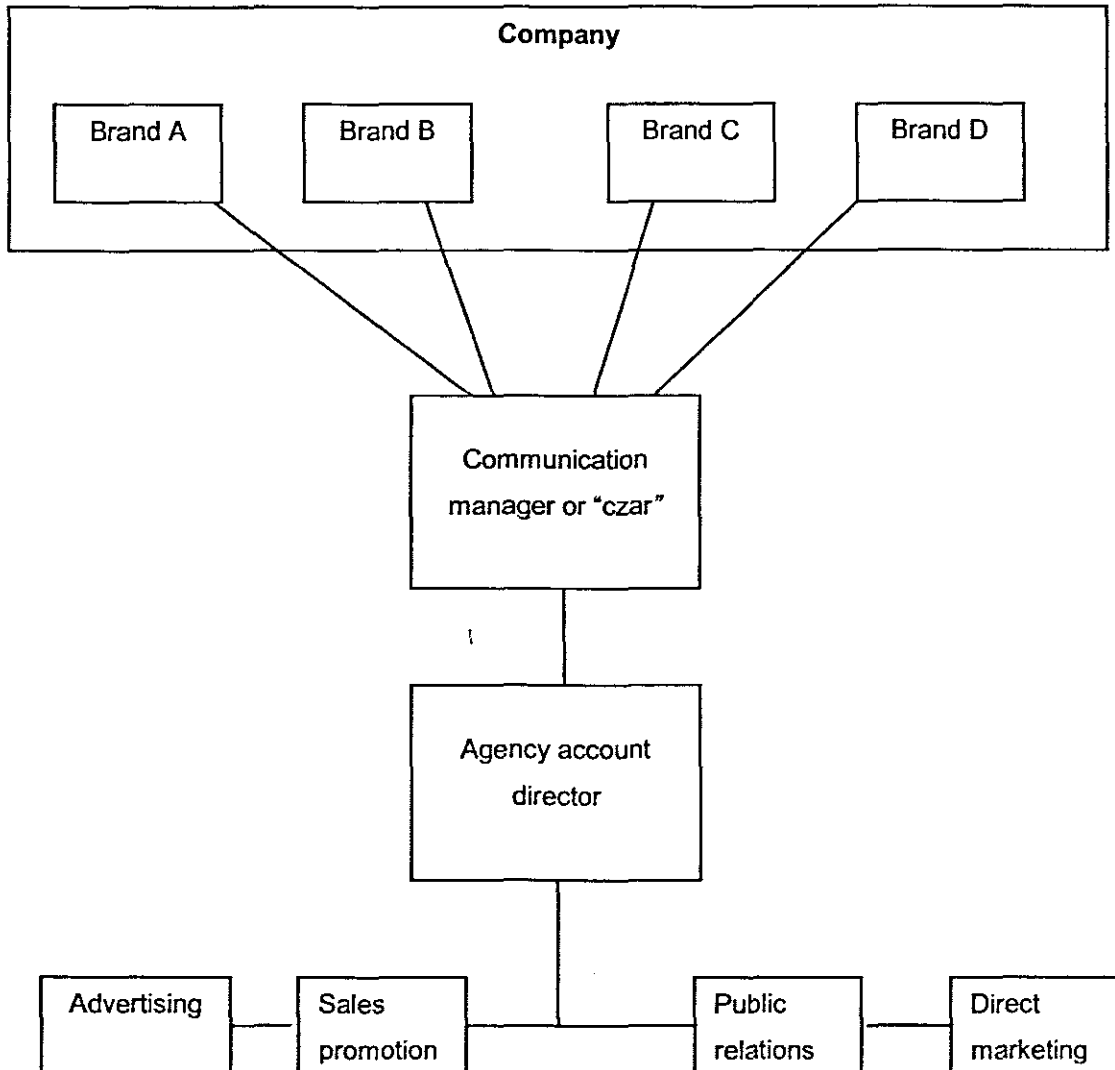


FIGURE 6.1: Communication manager structure

(Adapted from Russell & Lane, 2002: 143)

This form of organisational design is a mixture of the marcom manager and the brand management approaches in the sense that different brands are left to their own designs, while a centralised authority (the czar) is responsible for coordinating communication activities in such a way that the organisation as a whole benefits. The communication manager seems to combine the advantages of both the marcom and brand management approaches, while negating a number of disadvantages (such as costs, tunnel vision, and anarchy).

While this thesis does not intend to provide a final answer on the “best” organisation structure for accommodating communication functions in the organisation, it seems as if the latter structure – that of communication manager – could work well in a number of different kinds of organisations with more than one brand.

There is thus an argument to be made for centralising to an extent the communication functions in the organisation, but with a strong focus on the staff function of public relations. In other words, functional departments will be put in charge of their various communication strategies that are devised in partnership with the communication manager. This does not, however, mean that the public relations function automatically should be the function that controls all communication in the organisation. This person will be appointed (probably) based on his/her proven expertise and experience in all forms of communication – including public relations. That is why it will be important for public relations practitioners to not only achieve excellence in their own disciplines, but should also receive training in other disciplines in order to add real value to the organisation, should it decide to implement the communication manager design.

It also implies that public relations practitioners should drop their blinkers, and see the bigger picture of strategic communication.

6. CONCLUSION

In the section on public relations and marketing communication, the survey has highlighted the following issues for more detailed discussion:

- Who should execute marketing communication?
- Who should manage marketing communication?
- How should the various functions in marketing communication interact?
- Who should control the organisation’s communication processes?

While the last issue identified above also touches on communications outside the marketing function, it will be addressed in the context of marketing communication.

The current literature on the subject unanimously proposes that the organisation's communication functions should be integrated in the sense that each function be used for its particular strengths to enable the organisation to achieve its goals. Furthermore, the literature clearly indicates that the integrated marketing communication function should be organised in a way that enables one individual (or individual department) to coordinate all of the various communication strategies and functions.

The research results point to a measure of confusion among respondents – some want to execute all marketing communication activities, while others want to manage or at least control all of the organisation's communication functions. This is not realistic – specialists in various fields should be left to execute specialist functions, while the communication functions (advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and so on) are coordinated, and not necessarily controlled, by a single individual or department.

It is, however, quite feasible that an individual (the czar, for instance) be made responsible for this coordination function, which would require him/her to have a fairly solid knowledge of the various communication functions of an organisation. Here, the public relations practitioner can play a role, especially if he/she were trained in the wider fields of marketing and marketing communication. This is, however, a decision taken by an organisation to appoint an individual with proven skills and knowledge and is not necessarily the province of a particular organisational function such as public relations.

This, then, the current general opinion on public relations and marketing communication.

The next chapter of this thesis deals with the relationship between public relations and management.

CHAPTER 7

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The drive for recognition of public relations as a management function has been discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis. The thesis has also discussed in some detail the views of Steyn and Puth (2000) on the matter.

It is important for the purposes of this thesis, however, to understand exactly what the dimensions are of this facet of the debate. It is true that public relations as a profession in South Africa is striving, through its professional body, to position itself as a management function. Definitions of public relations that were discussed in earlier chapters also agree on the management aspect of public relations. That public relations should, in one way or another, be regarded as a management function therefore seems to be a foregone conclusion. The question that does need attention, is that of the **nature** of the management function that public relations should fulfil. In other words, in what way is public relations a management function of the organisation, and how does it contribute to organisational success?

The starting point seems to be to find a definition of the concept “management”. A South African-oriented textbook on management describes management as “the tasks or activities involved in managing an organization: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling” (Hellriegel *et al.*, 2001: 8).

Another South African text expands on this definition: “management can be defined as the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the resources of the organisation to achieve stated organisational goals as efficiently as possible” (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 11).

Management texts that were consulted all mention that management takes place on three levels, namely top management, middle management, and first-line management. On each of these levels, a mixture of technical, human

(interpersonal), and conceptual skills are required. However, first-line managers require a greater proportion of technical skills than human or conceptual skills, while top managers require a bigger proportion of conceptual and human skills in relation to technical skills. How does this tie in with the classification of the roles of public relations practitioners as technicians, managers, and strategists?

To assist the discussion, the figure below (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 19) will be used:

Top management	Middle management	Lower management	Non-managers (Workers)
Conceptual	Conceptual	Conceptual	Conceptual
		Interpersonal	Interpersonal
Interpersonal	Interpersonal	Technical	Technical
Technical	Technical		

FIGURE 7.1: Managerial skills needed at various managerial levels

Smit and Cronjé (2002: 19) define the various skills as follows:

“Conceptual skills refer to the mental ability to view the operation of the organisation and its parts holistically. Conceptual skills involve the manager’s thinking and planning abilities. They also include the manager’s ability to think strategically”.

It is interesting to note that the ability to think strategically is part and parcel of the conceptual skills required at top management level. This comment will be discussed a bit later in this chapter.

***Interpersonal skills** refer to the ability to work with people. It stands to reason that if managers spend about 60 per cent of their time working with people, a manager

should be able to communicate, understand people's behaviour and motivate groups as well as individuals.

Technical skills refer to the ability to use the knowledge or techniques of a specific discipline to attain objectives ... [a] manager at a lower level in particular requires a sound knowledge of the technical activities he or she must supervise. However, the time spent on technical activities decreases with progress up the managerial ladder" (Smit & Cronjé 2002: 19).

The difference between the various levels of management identified in **FIGURE 7.1** (p. 138) lies in the shift in focus – non-managers need a large percentage of technical skills, while top managers need a large percentage of conceptual skills.

Smit and Cronjé (2002: 21) point out that the management skills required are acquired by a combination of formal and continuous **education** on the one hand, and job **experience** and various assignments on the other. Where a person lacks management skills, he/she should be able to acquire them through continuous education and on-the-job experience.

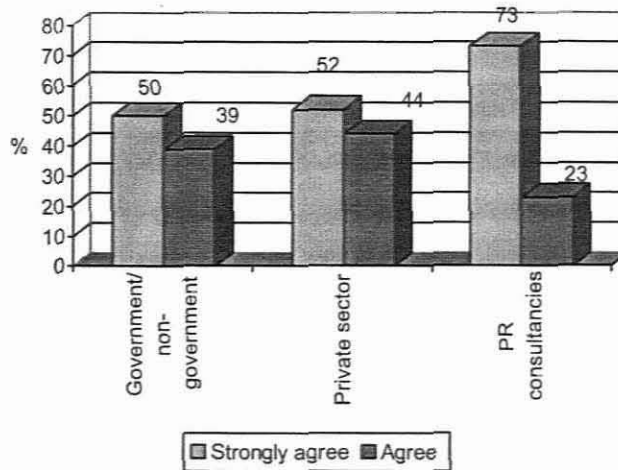
Their contention is echoed by Steyn and Puth (2000: 21) whose aim with their book is to "provide knowledge and skills in all of these areas". The areas to which they refer include management and strategy.

This, then, a brief overview of the nature of management. How do South African public relations practitioners view the situation?

2. RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with the statement that "public relations is a business discipline". Perhaps not surprisingly, a mean score of 1.55 on the Likert scale was registered, indicating a high level of agreement

When looking at the various individual sectors, the following picture emerges:

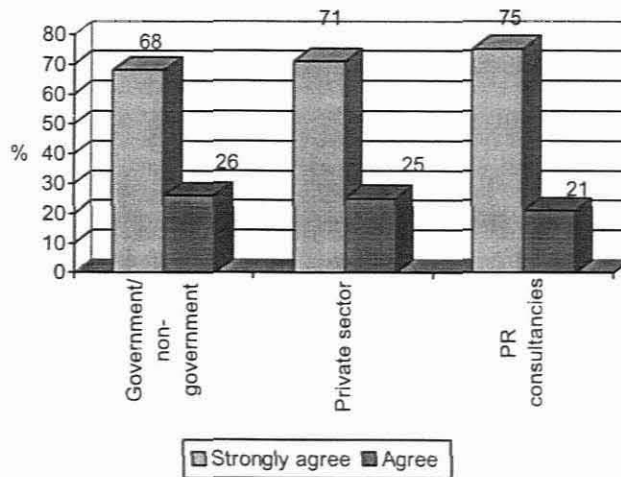


GRAPH 7.1: Public relations is a business discipline: Percentages that agree/strongly agree.

It should come as no surprise that public relations consultancies would feel most strongly about this statement – seven out of every ten respondents in that sector feel strongly about this statement.

As business discipline, it is important for public relations to take a broader view of its activities and organisational involvement than just its techniques and tools. Sadly, almost none of the existing textbooks on public relations such as Cutlip *et al.* (2000), Skinner *et al.* (2001), Newsom *et al.* (2000), and even Wilcox *et al.* (2000) spend time and effort on explaining the management (business) aspects of public relations. The question should also be asked whether universities, technikons, and colleges (including the PRISA Education and Training Centre) spend sufficient effort in educating learners about management and its various aspects – especially with reference to strategic planning and strategic management. This question does not fall under the scope of this thesis, and could form the basis for a research project on its own.

In support of the above statement, that public relations is a business discipline, respondents were also asked to indicate their support/lack of support for the following statement: “Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status”. Here is what respondents indicated:



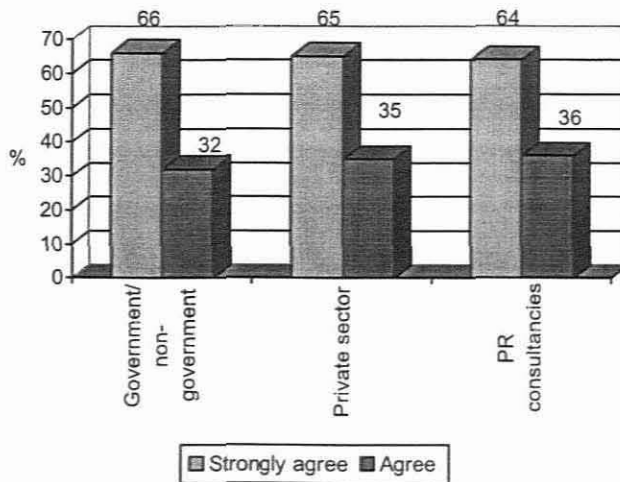
GRAPH 7.2: Public relations is a management function: percentages that agree/strongly agree.

Respondents indicated overwhelming support. Seven out of every ten respondents agree strongly that this is the case, while the remaining 30 per cent agree with this statement. With the exception of 2.6 per cent of government/non-government respondents (a negligible percentage), no single voice of dissent, crying from the wilderness, is trying to disagree with the sentiment that this discipline firmly belongs in the ranks of management as a management function. This thesis also certainly does not want to propose a logic for this not to be the case, rather, it aims to investigate the *nature* of that involvement in management. Is it “merely” a management function, or can it contribute even more than that to business success? This theme will present itself again later. But first, our attention is again drawn to the opinions of practitioners.

If it were the case that public relations is a management function (and the body of knowledge, as discussed in Chapter 2, supports this notion), the question that arises

is whether public relations practitioners require training in management to make them more effective.

This is what the respondents had to say:



GRAPH 7.3: Public relations practitioners should receive training in management.

This surely makes for one of the most striking graphs so far, in that it indicates a previously unseen show of solidarity: 99 per cent of respondents overall agree or strongly agree that practitioners **need training** in management to be made more effective. Again, it is the government/non-government sector that exhibits a lone voice of dissent – 2,6 per cent of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. Considering that this percentage represents one respondent, it is not at all significant.

A couple of deductions may be made from this picture. Firstly, the response implies that practitioners do not have any training or sufficient training in management. Secondly, the response implies that public relations practitioners are not sufficiently effective in management.

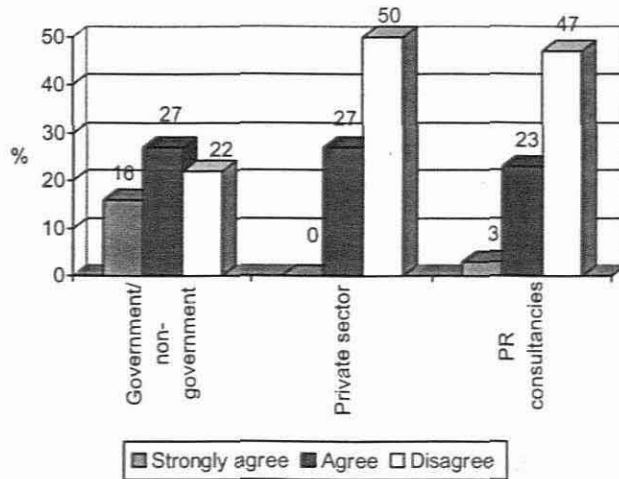
Does this reflect badly on the training that public relations practitioners receive? Or does this point to a lack of vision from management in not sending practitioners on management training courses? Or is it a combination of both? We will return to this discussion.

Management, especially in the modern era, implies at least an element of strategic planning, whether on functional or corporate level. We have seen that respondents are solidly in favour of public relations practitioners needing more training in management.

Is this also true for strategic planning?

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that “[p]ublic relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations”.

This was how they replied:



GRAPH 7.4: Public relations practitioners should receive training in strategy.

The response in this instance, while not quite mirroring the solidarity of the previous one, bears out the impression that public relations practitioners are insufficiently educated and trained to prepare them for management or strategic planning (an important element of strategic management). In fact nearly half of all consultancies, as well as half of all private sector respondents, indicated a lack of training and education to be involved in strategic planning. Could this partly be due to a situation where organisations do not view public relations as a function that can make a strategic contribution, and then do not send practitioners on relevant training courses or mentorship programmes?

When asked whether public relations gets the recognition it deserves from top management, 34 per cent of respondents replied “sometimes”, while half (51,3%) feel that it is “not always” or “never” the case. If the same question were to be asked about finance, or operations, or marketing, would the answer be similar? Or would respondents answer “most definitely”? This indicates that top management do not seem to be convinced that public relations is an integral and essential part of the organisational management on all three levels of management.

This brings the discussion around to the strategic function/contribution of public relations.

3. STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS

This section, in all probability, is the crux of the discussion so far. In Section 1 of this chapter, the discussion on conceptual skills makes particular reference to the manager’s ability to “think strategically”.

What is meant by “strategy”?

3.1 Strategy, strategic management, and strategic planning

Thompson and Strickland (2003: 3) describe strategy as the “game plan management is using to stake out a market position, conduct its operations, attract and please customers, compete successfully, and achieve organizational objectives ...

[a] strategy thus entails managerial choices among alternatives and signals organizational commitment to specific markets, competitive approaches, and ways of operating”.

Kotler and Armstrong (2004: 41) see a strategy as a “game plan that makes the most sense given [an organisation’s] specific situation, opportunities, objectives, and resources”.

To Steyn and Puth (2003: 29 - 30), a strategy is defined in a number of ways. However, the authors do point out that strategy:

- Is direction.
- Is movement.
- Is purpose.
- Is a pattern.
- Is proactive.
- Determines success.

An eloquent description of strategy is found in Doyle (2002: 18), who defines it as “a set of decisions taken by management on how the business will allocate its resources and achieve sustainable competitive advantage in its chosen markets. Strategy, therefore, sets the *direction* of the business ... and the *means* of getting there” (italics in original text).

A strategy is therefore a game plan that informs all members of an organisation where it is headed, and how it will get there. But it is not enough to have an understanding of the term “strategy”, because there are other activities that surround the strategy itself such as *strategic planning* and *strategic management*. There are also different strategies within an organisation – a hierarchy of strategies.

Strategic management is described by David (2003: 5) as “the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives”.

Thompson and Strickland (2003: 6) see strategic management as:

“the managerial process of forming a strategic vision, setting objectives, crafting a strategy, implementing and executing the strategy, and then over time initiating whatever corrective adjustments in the vision, objectives, strategy, and execution are deemed appropriate”.

In order to develop a successful strategy, and to manage it in such a way that the organisation attains its goals, it is necessary to do **strategic planning**. Although strategic planning is a concept that is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept of strategic management, it specifically refers to the first of three broad stages in strategic management, namely, **strategy formulation**. The other two stages are **strategy implementation**, and **strategy evaluation** (David, 2003: 5). Evaluation is linked to control, which means that the strategic planning process may be described as one of:

- Analysis (assisting in formulation).
- Planning (actual formulation).
- Implementation.
- Control (linked to evaluation).

The hierarchy of strategies is described by Doyle (2001: 18) as consisting of “interrelated strategies, each developed at a different level. Typically, there will be a corporate strategy for the whole company, individual strategies for each of the company’s business units and, finally, a strategy for each market or product”.

An organisation, therefore, finds itself guided by a strategy. The strategy is normally the result of strategic planning, which is the first of three stages in the strategic management process, while strategies are developed on several hierarchical levels in the organisation.

The hierarchical levels of strategic plans in the organisation are discussed on pp. 94 and 95 of this thesis (refer to **FIGURES 5.1** and **5.2** respectively).

In a small organisation, there are a minimum of three levels, namely organisation, functional, and operational levels. The plans on each of these levels differ from each other in terms of scope, duration, and level of detail.

3.2 Strategic and tactical planning compared

Much has already been said in this thesis about “tactics” and “strategy”. How do these two terms compare?

Tactical planning is described as the “process of making **detailed decisions** about what to do, who will do it, and how to do it, with a normal time horizon of one year or less” (Hellriegel *et al.*, 2001: 78). Tactical planning is normally executed at the middle and first-line levels of management. The tactical planning process will typically include things like the choice of specific goals and the way in which the organisation’s strategic plan may be implemented; making decisions on what courses of action should be embarked upon; and the development of budgets.

Strategic planning, on the other hand, is described as “the process of (1) analysing the organization’s external and internal environments, (2) developing a mission and a vision, (3) formulating overall goals, (4) identifying general strategies to be pursued, and (5) allocating resources to achieve the organization’s goals” (Hellriegel *et al.*, 2001: 77). Dealing with opportunities and threats, the strategic planning process normally has an **organisation-wide focus**.

It is the contention of this thesis that public relations practitioners in South Africa still find themselves in a position where they are concerned with tactical planning, as opposed to strategic planning. This contention is supported by Steyn and Puth (2000).

This is how Hellriegel et al. (2001: 79) describe the focus of strategic and tactical planning:

Dimension	Strategic planning	Tactical planning
Intended purpose	Ensure long-term effectiveness and growth	Means of implementing strategic plans
Nature of issues addressed	How to survive and compete	How to accomplish specific goals
Time horizon	Long term (usually two years or more)	Short term (usually one year or less)
How often done	Every one to three years	Every six months to one year
Condition under which decision-making occurs	Uncertainty and risk	Low to moderate risk
Where plans are primarily developed	Middle to top management	Employees, up to middle management
Level of detail	Low to moderate	High

FIGURE 7.2: Focus of strategic and tactical planning

Were public relations practitioners in South Africa to be asked to explain this grid to colleagues, the question begs: will they be able to?

3.3 Strategy and public relations

The venerable Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 373) make the compelling point that “[m]anagement expects the public relations unit to manage the organization’s reputation and good standing with the same strategic thinking that goes into managing other assets”, while Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore (1997: 132) refer to strategic plans as “long-range plans, usually made by higher levels of management. ... [p]ublic relations plans are ... strategic”.

Skinner *et al.* (2001), and Rensburg and Cant (2003) do not mention the relationship between strategy and public relations at all. It is also significant to note that Cutlip *et*

al. (2000) devote a total of 11 pages out of 588 on this topic. Lubbe and Puth (1994) devote some space to the topic of strategic planning, mentioning that public relations should play a strategic role in the organisation. They (Lubbe & Puth, 1994: 11) make the point that public relations also has a **tactical function**, a notion that is supported by Baskin *et al.* (1997: 132). Very little space, however, is devoted in the textbooks cited so far to the nature of strategy and public relations.

PRISA's recommended model for planning a public relations programme consists of the famous seven steps (Skinner *et al.*, 2001: 106):

- Situation analysis.
- Objective setting.
- Determining the target audience.
- Developing the message.
- Activities.
- Budget.
- Review and evaluation.

Compare this somewhat elaborate model with the rather simpler strategic planning model discussed in Section 3.1 of this chapter: formulation, implementation, and evaluation (control). In fact, most strategic planning processes (including that of public relations) should consist of four steps: analysis, planning, implementation, and control (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004: 59 – 62).

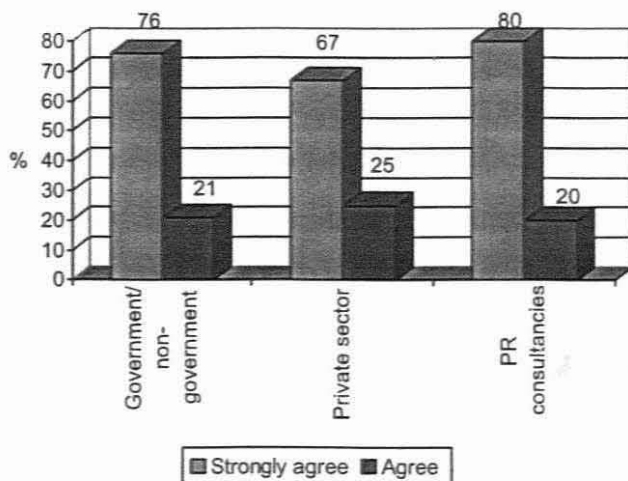
The argument could of course be made that the first step in the seven-step programme discussed above is exactly the same as the first step in the strategic planning process, namely analysis. It is the nature of that analysis that may cause concern: Skinner *et al.* (2001: 106 – 108) explain that this step is one of defining a problem, which includes an examination of existing perceptions among various publics of the organisation. The question could rightly be asked: is public relations then only concerned with problems? What about challenges, such as assisting the organisation in achieving its strategic intent?

This discussion does not intend to take the commonly-used PRISA planning model to pieces. What it does intend to do is to simplify the process, and to provide it with a **strategic focus** that it currently seems to lack. The strategic focus should be firmly ensconced in the organisation's strategy and should bring public relations planning into line with the planning activities of other functional departments in the organisation. It should also have the added benefit of enabling public relations practitioners to speak the language of business, rather than the abstruse language of public relations.

The dilemma is that very little information still exists on developing corporate communication strategies (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 21). That this is indeed so is clear from the discussion on "strategic content" of some of the most widely used textbooks in South Africa.

3.4 Strategic function

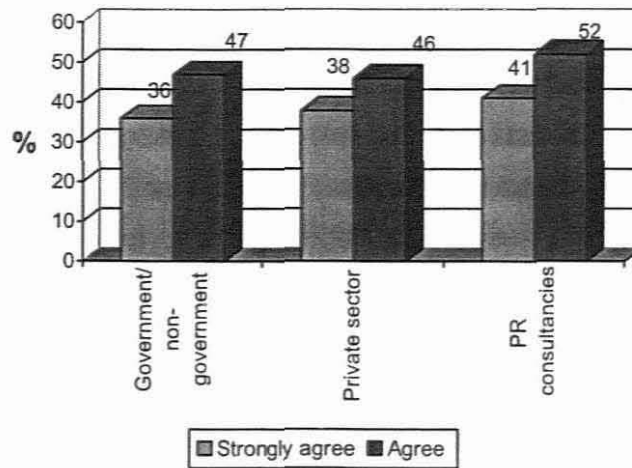
The importance of a strategic mind-set cannot be denied. That public relations should be a strategic function, is a sentiment that is resoundingly shared by all respondents:



GRAPH 7.5: Public relations is a strategic function: percentages that agree/strongly agree.

There is no doubt that all respondents feel very strongly that public relations is a strategic function. It is also not too much of a surprise to note the particularly strong support for this statement among public relations consultancies, given the frequency of articles on this subject in recent issues of *Communica*.

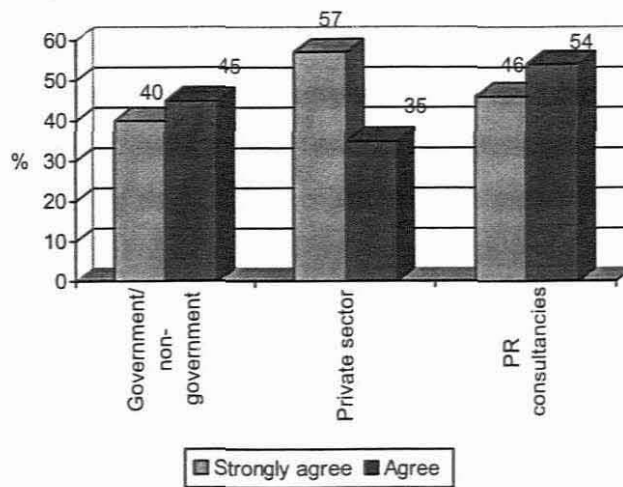
Should public relations managers then be elevated to board level?



GRAPH 7.6: Public relations should be on board level: percentages that agree/strongly agree.

While the feelings are less strong than for public relations as a strategic function, the vast majority of respondents do agree or strongly agree that public relations managers (practitioners) should be appointed to board level. This statement was specifically phrased to test reaction on what is the highest level of corporate governance – the board of directors. As board, the strategic role of directors is to ask “perceptive and incisive questions ... to test whether the case for the [strategic] proposals is compelling and to exercise vigilant oversight” (Thompson & Strickland, 2003: 27). Board members are normally appointed by the majority stockholder in an organisation, and the trend is to appoint board members who can “bring supplementary knowledge and broad experience to corporate management” (Longenecker *et al.*, 2000: 180).

Can, and in fact should, board members who are public relations specialists help to shape the organisation's mission?



GRAPH 7.7: Board members shape the organisation's mission: percentages that agree/strongly agree.

This, of course, depends on the measure to which the board is actively involved in the organisation's management. If the trend of more active involvement is set to continue, boards of directors will in all probability be involved in the organisation's mission statement and other, related, strategic decisions.

What is important, is to see that all respondents do seem to feel strongly that public relations is a function of sufficient strategic importance to the organisation to be involved at the very top level of corporate governance.

However, as the situation stands at present, this is still very much a pie-in-the sky scenario, since public relations practitioners are struggling to receive recognition as a strategically important function.

7. CONCLUSION

Public relations practitioners seem to be unsure of the relationship between public relations and management, and this confusion could cause a situation whereby public relations practitioners do not (in the eyes of CEOs) contribute strategically significant value to the organisation. In fact, the majority of respondents have indeed indicated that their contribution is not sufficiently valued.

All respondents do indicate a clear desire for their discipline to be more involved in strategic management on the top level of the organisation. This involvement will depend in part on the ability of public relations practitioners to actively participate in the strategic planning process. This, in turn, will depend on the grasp that public relations practitioners have of strategic planning and management. Public relations can indeed make a major strategic contribution to the organisation. CEOs recognise this potential contribution, but do not, in the eyes of South African public relations practitioners, give public relations its due credit.

This is attributed in part to the fact that public relations practitioners are as yet unable to think strategically, a situation addressed by the work of authors such as Steyn and Puth (2000). Some of the myths surrounding the words "strategic management" should also be removed, and practitioners should be shown how relatively simple the strategic process in an organisation is. A strategic planning process, and strategic management, is a process whereby the organisation constantly adapts itself to an ever-changing environment.

Respondents surveyed indicated most strongly that they need training in strategic management, indicating an as-yet unfulfilled need for formal training in this particular area of business management.

There are two aspects to management: "mechanical" management, which is the process of planning, organising, leading, and controlling the organisation's resources, and strategic management. This latter aspect of management seems to puzzle most respondents. This, then, is an area that will need attention from public relations and educational circles.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the role perception of public relations practitioners in South Africa. The research questions that gave rise to the research reflected in this thesis are the following:

- Is there a direct relationship between public relations and marketing?
- What is the nature of this relationship?
- Is there a link between public relations and marketing communication?
- What is the nature of this link?
- Should public relations be seen as a strategic management function?
- What is the nature of this function?

Underlying the research question is the issue whether public relations practitioners in South Africa truly understand their strategic contribution to organisational success. The null hypothesis that was posed in Chapter 1 of this thesis (see p. 22) read as follows:

Public relations practitioners in South Africa clearly understand the nature of their *strategic contribution to organisational success*.

A survey questionnaire, together with a literature study on this particular issue, was then used in order to accept/reject this hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis to the null hypothesis was that public relations practitioners in South Africa do not *understand the nature of their strategic contribution to organisational success*.

In order to accept/reject this hypothesis, the thesis had to pay attention to the areas in which public relations typically functions, as well as to the current state of the debate in public relations circles in South Africa. It is also not inconceivable that, if

public relations practitioners do not understand their role, it may be partially caused by gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

How does one measure whether the hypothesis is/is not acceptable?

Anything that is measured can only be measured against a standard, that is, measurement is relative to a benchmark, whether in practice or in theory. The same held true for this thesis – if it were to be proven that public relations practitioners in South Africa clearly understand the nature of their strategic contribution to organisational success, the benchmark first needed to be established.

What was this benchmark and how was it established?

The only thing that can guide the researcher in establishing theoretical benchmarks is of course the theory itself. In other words, what does accepted (and current) theory on public relations present as the strategic contribution of public relations to organisational success? It is for this reason that the literature study was structured *in the following manner: find current literature that addresses the role, function, and strategic contribution of public relations practitioners to organisational success.*

Preliminary reading indicated that there are three areas in which public relations is deemed to make one kind of a contribution or another to the organisation's success:

- Marketing.
- Marketing communication.
- Management.

In brief, therefore, the literature review focused on current literature relating to the contribution that public relations makes to the organisation in the three areas identified above. After the literature review was completed, a questionnaire was drawn up to measure opinions of South African public relations practitioners on the issues identified in the literature review.

In the preceding chapters, the thesis dealt with two questions regarding each of the themes, namely, *what does theory tell us about the contribution in this area, and what are the opinions of South African public relations practitioners on this area?*

This provided the researcher with a measuring instrument that enables him to accept/reject the hypothesis, and this will be discussed in the following sections.

2. OVERALL RESULT

Public relations does not always get the recognition it deserves from top management in South African organisations. This viewpoint is not new, and is surprising, given the fact that South African CEOs and top managers realise the importance and necessity of communication to the organisation (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 7). This somewhat surprising situation is attributed by Steyn and Puth (2000: 8) to an inability on the part of public relations practitioners to "think, behave and perform strategically in the organisation".

This statement provides the first clue to the researcher that the emperor is perhaps not fully clothed. Dissatisfaction with top management recognition as a result of an inability to make a strategic contribution to the organisation may indicate that South African public relations practitioners do not fully understand their contribution to organisational success.

Adding perhaps to the confusion experienced by public relations practitioners, may be the fact that so much uncertainty exists on the name of the discipline itself. The survey results indicate that practitioners, who are employed by organisations to be involved in public relations work, are employed by a number of differently named departments – communication, public affairs, etc. It is a singularly untenable position for public relations practitioners to occupy – marketers work for the marketing department; human resource officers work in the human resource department; financial officers work in the financial department, and so on, while public relations practitioners work in a confusing panoply of differently named departments. While the argument could be made that a name in itself does not

guarantee excellence (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 7), it certainly helps to identify the activities performed in such a department.

As John Steinbeck wryly observes:

“Okie use’ to mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you’re scum. Don’t mean nothing itself, it’s the way they say it” (in Cohen, 2000: 352).

It also does not help that nearly half of all public relations practitioners in the study population (47,3 per cent) do not have formal qualifications in the field of public relations. While doctors study medicine, and accountants B.Comm, public relations practitioners do not seem to require formal qualifications in public relations. This is a situation that should surely be addressed in one way or another. If someone studied a discipline other than public relations, it stands to reason that he/she may be incapable of understanding the nature of public relations as well as the strategic contribution that public relations may make to organisational success. For example, someone who studied journalism may understand and master the art of press release writing and media liaison, but may not understand marketing, marketing communication, and strategic management of public relations. This will obviously contribute to a situation where public relations practitioners are unclear about their role in management.

Again, the facts seem to point in the direction of public relations practitioners not understanding their strategic contribution to organisational success.

Respondents significantly disagree with the statement that public relations practitioners should not be considered to be technicians, while they also agree that public relations is a strategic function. So far, so good: in order to make a strategic contribution to the organisation, a practitioner should be considered as more than a technician, and should definitely see him/herself in the role of a strategic partner. But merely stating that this is the case does not necessarily make it so. In order to understand the strategic contribution that a function makes to organisational success, it needs to understand the **nature** of the contribution that the strategic partner can make.

For this reason, respondents were asked to react to a number of statements, and it is in this area that some interesting research results were discovered. In keeping with the structure used for the literature review, and the subsequent chapter headings, this chapter will be divided into thematic sections:

- Marketing.
- Marketing communication.
- Management.

3. MARKETING

Respondents indicated that public relations is a necessary part of marketing. This viewpoint is supported by the theory, which clearly points to a link between public relations and marketing, with public relations acting as a support function to marketing in order to achieve strategic marketing objectives.

Although public relations theory is loath to state the link in language as strong as that used in the previous paragraph, sufficient theoretical and academic evidence exists to suggest that public relations is indeed a necessary part of marketing. With respondents agreeing to this statement, a clue emerges that public relations practitioners in South Africa do understand public relations' contribution to the marketing function. It is however significant to note that a number of individuals are seemingly uncertain about the fact that the two disciplines are linked. An analysis of the data reflected in the Likert Scale (TABLE 15 on p. 182) of individual inconsistencies (see Inconsistency Matrix on p. 200) indicates that individuals themselves are uncertain about whether they believe that public relations and marketing are linked. A total of 89,9 per cent of all respondents agreed or strongly agree with the statement that "public relations is a necessary part of marketing". However, of these respondents, 30,6 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with another statement: "public relations is a marketing discipline". Therefore, there is a measure of confusion on this link even on individual level. Although the majority of respondents seem to agree that there is a link between public relations and marketing, a significant number of respondents are uncertain that there is a link.

The fragile clue pointing in the direction of respondents being mainly clear about the *public relations/marketing link is somewhat tarnished, however, when it emerges that there is dissent among the ranks regarding the nature of this link.* Respondents indicated uncertainty when reacting to the statement that “public relations should sometimes manage marketing”. The question is immediately this: if it were true that the two functions are separate disciplines in their own right (and prevailing theory strongly advocates for this to be the case), then one should not manage the other. Respondents were, however, not convinced that this is the case. For instance, 21 per cent of respondents who work at public relations consultancies strongly agreed with this statement, while a further 21 per cent agreed with it. More disconcertingly, 28 per cent had no opinion on this statement. This certainly points the researcher to the conclusion that respondents in this category are uncertain about the nature of their contribution to the organisation’s (marketing) success. The pattern is repeated in the other two sectors – more than half of respondents working in the private sector, and nearly half of all respondents working in the government/non-government sector agree or strongly agree that public relations should sometimes manage marketing. This flies in the face of accepted functional management theory.

The situation is compounded by a perceived need of respondents for practitioners to be **trained** in marketing and advertising.

Public relations is a function that does interact with marketing. When doing so it serves primarily as a marketing communication tool, assisting the marketing department in achieving its strategic objectives (by, *inter alia*, doing product launches, assisting in media relations, and so on). As such, it is informed by the marketing strategy, and guided by the marketing department. Just as advertising agencies (communication specialists in the area of advertising) receive briefs from the marketing department based on the marketing strategy, should public relations departments/consultancies be briefed. How they react to the brief, in other words, what special techniques are used, etc. is up to the specialist – the public relations practitioner. It would therefore seem as if the practitioner acts as a technician (and manager) when he/she interacts with marketing. But he/she manages the public relations function, and not the marketing function.

The fact that respondents do not clearly state this as being the case is yet another clue that points the researcher in the direction of concluding that, perhaps, South African public relations practitioners do not understand their strategic contribution to organisational success. Furthermore, respondents agree fairly strongly that public relations practitioners need training in marketing and advertising. While the thesis does not establish whether respondents believe it to be the case that practitioners are at present insufficiently educated in marketing and advertising, the fact that the need exists may well point to a perceived knowledge gap in this area.

Marketing is the organisational function that is primarily concerned with the organisation's economic survival. However, as marketers may observe when confronted with the King II Report's "triple bottom line", the notion of societal marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004) has for a number of years proposed a balance between the interests of the organisation, the individual, and society. This latest development in the marketing philosophy gave added impetus on the part of marketers to build relationships with customers. These relationships should be built in a manner that is responsible not only to the organisation's bottom line (profit), but should also be responsible to the individual and society in general: the triple bottom line. It becomes clear that public relations can play an invaluable role in this regard.

Marketing's primary constituency is the customer; while suppliers, competitors, employees, unions, distributors (channels) are also regarded as important links in the organisation's total value chain. As such, marketers have to ensure smooth communication links with these publics. A rocky relationship with any of these publics would jeopardise the organisation's marketing effort, and thereby the organisation's chances of long term sustainability. Is it, then, in the organisation's strategic interest to suffer a turf war between marketing and public relations on the "ownership" of certain publics? The obvious answer to that question is no, and again points to the nature of the relationship between marketing and public relations: the marketing department requires someone who, with specialist knowledge in certain communication techniques, can assist it in achieving marketing objectives. As such, the public relations practitioner plays the role of technician – or tactician – to the marketing strategy. In drawing up a public relations programme, and in managing that programme in conjunction with the marketing strategy, the public

relations practitioner acts out his/her role as manager. But, where it comes to **achieving marketing objectives**, the marketing manager will be firmly ensconced in the driver's seat – not the public relations manager.

In conclusion, it cannot be stated more simply: the relationship between public relations and marketing is cross-functional in nature, where the public relations practitioner acts as professional support function to the marketing function. This professional support comes to the marketing manager in the form of expertise in the field of communication.

This, then, answers the first two research questions stated on page 7 that relate to the link between public relations and marketing, as well as the nature of that relationship.

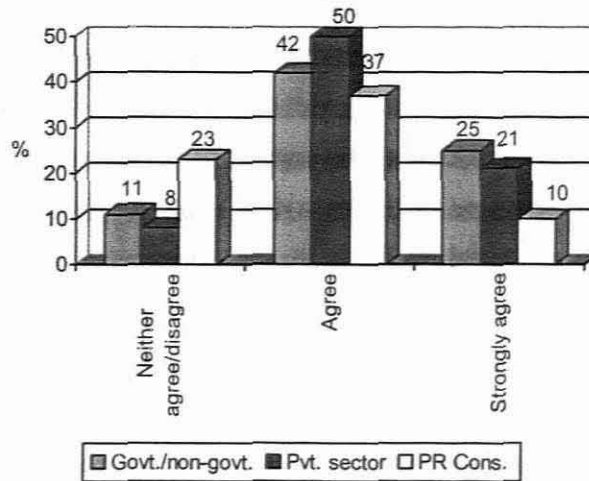
The results of the survey indicate that public relations practitioners in South Africa **do not** clearly understand the nature of this relationship.

The survey also clearly indicates a strong need among respondents for training of public relations practitioners in the field of marketing.

This, naturally, brings the discussion to the theme of marketing communication.

4. MARKETING COMMUNICATION

A public relations practitioner is (supposedly) trained in a variety of communication techniques, certainly excluding techniques such as sales promotion, advertising, and personal selling. Yet, respondents seem to believe that **all forms** of marketing communication should be **executed** by public relations practitioners:



GRAPH 8.1: All forms of marketing communication should be executed by practitioners: By sector, percentages that are uncertain, agree, and strongly agree.

This graph is surely one of the more disturbing graphs reflected in this thesis. A clear understanding of the nature of marketing communication, and the abilities of public relations practitioners, would presumably result in all respondents vehemently **disagreeing** with this statement. As things stand, the vast majority agree with the statement that all forms of marketing communication belong in the executorial control of public relations.

When searching for an indication that South African public relations practitioners clearly understand their strategic contribution to organisational success, this graph would be the wrong starting point. Another disturbing aspect of this result is that it seems to point to a mentality of control, in other words, it points to a desire to control all marketing communication – surely another turf war.

This need for control is echoed in replies to the statement that all organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments. Apart from the obvious bureaucratic nightmare that this may cause (does this mean that all internal memoranda, for instance, have to be vetted by public relations?), the fact that respondents seem to favour this state of affairs again points to a dream of

empire building. Delusions of grandeur in this regard are further awoken when respondents reply that public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage all communication processes.

The literature surveyed clearly indicates a strong link between public relations and marketing communication. The nature of the relationship is also indicated as a cross-functional relationship that should be strategic in nature, depending on the organisation's particular needs and situation. However, the survey results indicate that public relations practitioners are unclear in their minds about this relationship.

This therefore does **not** support the hypothesis that public relations practitioners are clear about their contribution regarding marketing communication, as well as communication functions in the organisation.

5. MANAGEMENT

This thesis set out to examine the premise that South African public relations practitioners understand their strategic contribution to the success of organisations. This topic was prompted, *inter alia*, by the large number of articles and studies appearing in recent years on the relationship between public relations and marketing, public relations and marketing communication (especially advertising), and public relations and strategic management. That this is an important topic is indeed witnessed by the fact that the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) is itself involved in lobbying for the discipline of public relations to be repositioned as a business – rather than marketing – discipline.

There is a **tactical and strategic contribution** that public relations can make to the organisation. On the tactical level, public relations practitioners make their contributions to marketing and marketing communication, while it certainly also can serve as a communication counsellor to the other management functions (such as human resources, finance, operations, and so on). In this instance, public relations is a staff function. Existing theory seems to support this view of the management nature of public relations.

As tactical staff function, the public relations practitioner is a manager of all of his/her public relations activities, planning, organising, leading, and controlling the activities needed to carry out his/her function.

It is, however, as strategic management function that public relations still needs to find its place in the organisation. There seems little doubt that it can (and should) make a strategic contribution to the organisation's long-term success. Enough literature supports this notion, although very little (apart from Steyn & Puth's invaluable contribution) has as yet been written about this subject in South Africa.

Public relations practitioners also seem unclear about the necessity for, and nature of, this contribution. The research results point to a woolliness among South African practitioners where it comes to the strategic contribution, and the vast majority of respondents have indicated that practitioners in South Africa need more education and training in strategic management principles, and that practitioners are as yet insufficiently educated in this subject matter.

It is interesting to note that individual respondents are also unclear about the nature of strategy. Of those individual respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "public relations should be a strategic function", 42,9 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "public relations practitioners should be considered technicians". This is correct – as strategists, public relations practitioners are more than technicians. However, 57,1 per cent of those who agree on the strategic nature of public relations are either uncertain about the technician label, or agree/strongly agree that practitioners are technicians. This points to a significant level of uncertainty in the minds of individual respondents.

The survey of existing literature clearly explains that public relations is indeed a management function, and that it can and should make a significant contribution to the organisation's strategic management.

The survey results do not, however, yield sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that South African public relations clearly understand the link between their discipline and that of management or strategic management.

6. SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Insufficient evidence was found to accept the hypothesis that public relations practitioners in South Africa clearly understand the strategic contribution of their discipline to organisational success.

Public relations practitioners in South Africa are in fact confused about their contribution to organisational success. This may be attributed to three phenomena:

- The state of confusion in the existing theory (body of knowledge).
- The fact that public relations practitioners have educational backgrounds that sometimes do not include formal training in public relations.
- The fact that most respondents feel that they require more education and training.

While the thesis did not examine the causal nature of the clarity/lack of clarity among public relations practitioners, it may be deduced that the state of confusion in existing theory is a contributing factor to confusion in the minds of practitioners. If the body of knowledge cannot provide clear direction, it will be very difficult for individual practitioners to form clarity in their minds. This is certainly an area that lends itself to future research.

Almost half of all current public relations practitioners in South Africa have formal education in disciplines other than public relations. The lack of formal training in the discipline will certainly contribute to uncertainty in the minds of practitioners regarding their contribution, and is in itself grounds for future research.

Respondents have indicated – resoundingly – that they require training in the fields of management, marketing, advertising and strategic planning. This clearly points to a situation where most practitioners – in their own opinions – require more training, again supporting the notion that they are not yet comfortable in related disciplines to clearly understand the nature of their contribution to the organisation's strategic success. The nature of training, and the level at which it should be presented to existing and budding practitioners could form an interesting foundation for research.

This thesis found that:

- Public relations is more than marketing, but is also a support function to marketing.
- Public relations is more than marketing communication, but is also one of the elements of marketing communication.
- Public relations is a strategic management function, but it also makes a contribution on tactical level.

Owing to this multi-dimensional contribution of the discipline to the organisation, it is easy to see why public relations is a somewhat confused function, and why public relations practitioners themselves are also confused.

What is needed, is a clear guideline to encapsulate theoretically, once and for all, the contribution that public relations makes to organisational success.

What can be done in the meantime, is to ensure that all public relations practitioners in South Africa receive training in:

- Marketing.
- Integrated marketing communication.
- Management.
- Strategic management.

Training and education will certainly help to eliminate the current state of confusion reigning in the minds of South African public relations practitioners, while it will at the same time direct the minds of professional bodies and academics in finding a new theory to clarify this difficult relationship.

Public relations can and should play a significant strategic role in the modern organisation. It should do so by being represented on all levels of the organisation's management structure and strategic planning structure. In order to do this, the prevailing confusion needs to be eliminated, enabling public relations practitioners to focus their efforts and direct their energies towards a constructive debate. A debate

that will result in this discipline (public relations) getting the acknowledgement it deserves. The research that is discussed in this thesis clearly indicates that:

- There is confusion about their role in the minds of public relations practitioners.
- There is a strategic role that public relations can play in the organisation.
- There is much work to be done to empower public relations as business discipline.

Public relations lives, but not at the expense of other functions. It is a discipline in its own right. It is a strategically significant management function in its own right. It cannot and should not position itself negatively, but should look towards a situation where it can affirm itself, certain of its position in the organisational sphere.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: The questionnaire

Appendix B: Covering letter

Appendix C: Topline results

Appendix D: Cross-tabulation

Appendix E: Likert scale ratings per sector

APPENDIX A: The questionnaire

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the questionnaire was sent out in e-mail format to respondents. In order to facilitate ease of reply, the questionnaire was drawn up in MS-Excel format. For the purposes of consistency in style and layout, the questionnaire below has been converted to MS-Word format. Since the questionnaire was distributed using the PRISA-database, the logo of PRISA appeared on the questionnaires that were distributed.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please read through the statements below, and answer each one by putting an "X" in the appropriate box
2. This questionnaire is done in Excel, which means that you can answer the questions electronically.
3. Please ensure that you only have ONE answer/box marked for each statement.
4. When you have finished answering the survey, please save it as "Answersurvey", and send it as an attachment to the following e-mail address:
prstudy@mweb.co.za



THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

1. What is your current registration level with PRISA?

Affiliate	
Associate	
Public Relations Practitioner (PRP)	
Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP)	
Accredited in Public Relations (APR)	
Fellow of PRISA (FPRISA)	
Other	

2. In you current job, are you involved in public relations activities?

Every day	
Once a week	
Monthly	
Sometimes	
Never	

3. How many years have you been directly involved in public relations activities?

Less than a year	
Up to 2 years	
2 to 5 years	
5 to 10 years	
10 to 20 years	
More than 20 years	
Have not been involved at all	

4. Are you:

Involved in corporate public relations	
Involved in a public relations consultancy	
Involved in a marketing department	
Not directly involved in public relations	
Other	

5. What is your qualification?

Degree in public relations	
Degree in a field other than public relations	
Diploma in a field other than public relations	
Public relations diploma	
No degree/diploma: attended public relations courses	
No degree/diploma	

6. Is your organisation:

A non-governmental organisation	
A government organisation	
A political organisation	
A charity	
A service provider such as a bank, insurance company	
A retailer	
A product manufacturer	
A public relations consultancy	
Other	

7. What is the size of your organisation in terms of full time employees?

1 (Sole Proprietor)	
2 – 5	
6 – 10	
11 – 20	
21 – 50	
51 – 99	
100 +	

8. How much, on average, does your organisation spend per year on its public relations programme?

Nothing	
Less than R100 000	
R100 000 – R500 000	
R500 000 – R 1 000 000	
More than R1 million	
Uncertain/don't know	

9. If you work for an organisation (that is, not a public relations consultancy), is your department called:

Public relations	
Public affairs	
Corporate affairs	
Corporate communication	
Communication	
Marketing communication	
Marketing	
Advertising and/or sales promotion	
Other	

10. If you work for an organisation, is your department involved in strategic planning on the top level?

Yes	
No	

11. If you work for a public relations consultancy, are you required to do strategic planning for your clients?

Yes	
No	

12. If your answer to the previous question is "no", do you believe that further training will alleviate the problem?

Most definitely	
Maybe	
Maybe not	
Most definitely not	

13. In your opinion, does public relations, as a discipline, get the recognition it deserves from top management?

Most definitely	
Sometimes	
Not always	
Most definitely not	

14. If your answer to the previous question is "no", do you believe that greater professionalism on the part of public relations practitioners will help to address the situation?

Most definitely	
Definitely	
Definitely not	
Most definitely not	

Below follows a number of statements. Indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with each statement by clicking in the appropriate box. If you have no opinion of the related aspect, please leave the answer blank.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. "Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Public relations is a business discipline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Public relations is a marketing discipline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 21. Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Public relations sometimes should manage marketing. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. Public relations should be a strategic function. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

THE END!

Thank you once again for your contribution. It is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B: Covering letter

The following covering letter accompanied the questionnaires. Owing to the fact that PRISA was instrumental in distributing the questionnaire, the letter went to members under the name of Helena van Wyk, Training Manager at PRISA. The letter was sent electronically, and is reproduced below:

Dear PRISA colleague,

One of our members is currently busy on a Master's study in public relations, and has compiled a questionnaire that needs to be answered by members of PRISA.

This study promises to be of significance for our profession, and I therefore urge you to participate in this study by answering the attached questionnaire.

To make things as easy as possible for you, the questionnaire is done in Excel-format, which means that you can answer it "on-screen", merely by entering an "X" in the relevant blocks on the questionnaire.

Answering the questionnaire should take no longer than 20 minutes of your time, and you will contribute to our body of knowledge.

When you have finished answering the questionnaire, save it as a temporary file under the name "Answersurvey", and e-mail it to prstudy@mweb.co.za as an attachment.

My e-mail address again:

prstudy@mweb.co.za

Thank you for your time!

Regards,

Helena van Wyk
Training Manager
PRISA Education & Training Centre

APPENDIX C: Topline results

The topline results, as discussed in Chapter 4, are reflected below for the sake of completeness.

TABLE 1: Current registration level with PRISA

Category	Sample	Percentage
Affiliate	8	7.1%
Associate	5	4.5%
Public Relations Practitioner (PRP)	22	19.6%
Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP)	37	33.0%
Accredited in Public Relations (APR)	28	25.0%
Fellow of PRISA	1	0.9%
Other	7	6.3%
Uncertain/don't know	4	3.6%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 2: Degree of involvement in Public Relations activities

Category	Sample	Percentage
Every day	94	83.9%
Once a week	9	8.0%
Monthly	6	5.4%
Sometimes	3	2.7%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 3: Number of years involved in Public Relations activities

Category	Sample	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1	0.9%
Up to 2 years	4	3.6%
2 to < 5 years	10	8.9%
5 to < 10 years	32	28.6%
10 to < 20 years	38	33.9%
20 years +	27	24.1%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 4: Public Relations involvement

Category	Sample	Percentage
Corporate public relations	58	51.8%
Public relations consultancy	29	25.9%
Marketing department	11	9.8%
Not directly involved in public relations	5	4.5%
Education (college/Technikon/ University)	1	0.9%
All other	8	7.1%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 5: Highest qualification

Category	Sample	Percentage
Degree in Public Relations	26	23.2%
Degree in field other than Public Relations	37	33.0%
Diploma in field other than Public Relations	13	11.6%
Diploma in Public Relations	19	17.0%
No degree/diploma: attended public relations courses	13	11.6%
No degree/diploma	3	2.7%
All other	1	0.9%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 6: Type of organisation

Category	Sample	Percentage
Non-governmental organisation	15	13.3%
Government organisation	24	21.2%
Political organisation	1	0.9%
Service provider e.g. bank & insurance company	12	10.6%
Retailer	2	1.8%
Product manufacturer	11	9.7%
Public Relations Consultancy	30	26.5%
Other	18	15.9%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 7: Size of organisation: Full time employees

Category	Sample	Percentage
One (sole proprietor)	8	7.1%
2 to 5 employees	10	8.9%
6 to 10 employees	6	5.4%
11 to 20 employees	10	8.9%
21 to 50 employees	6	5.4%
51 to 99 employees	5	4.5%
100 + employees	67	59.8%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 8: Average expenditure on Public Relations programme

Category	Sample	Percentage
Nothing	10	8.9%
Less than R100,000	15	13.4%
R100,000 to < R500,000	15	13.4%
R500,000 to < R1m	13	11.6%
R1m +	40	35.7%
Uncertain/don't know	19	17.0%
Base	112	100.0%

TABLE 9: Name of department (non-Public Relations consultancies only)

Category	Sample	Percentage
Public Relations	9	11.1%
Public Affairs	2	2.5%
Corporate Affairs	5	6.2%
Corporate Communication	8	9.9%
Communication	21	25.9%
Marketing Communication	5	6.2%
Marketing	8	9.9%
Advertising and/or sales promotions	1	1.2%
Other	22	27.2%
Base	81	100.0%

TABLE 10: Department is involved in the strategic planning on the top level (non Public Relations consultancies only)

Category	Sample	Percentage
Yes	71	80.7%
No	17	19.3%
Base	88	100.0%

TABLE 11: Required to do strategic planning for clients (Public Relations consultancies only)

Category	Sample	Percentage
Yes	32	91.4%
No	3	8.6%
Base	35	100.0%

TABLE 12: Training will aid to alleviate the problem of doing more strategic planning for clients

Category	Sample	Percentage
Most definitely	9	64.3%
Maybe	3	21.4%
Maybe not	1	7.1%
Most definitely not	1	7.1%
Base	14	100.0%

TABLE 13: Public Relations earns the recognition it deserves from Top Management

Category	Sample	Percentage
Most definitely	16	14.4%
Sometimes	38	34.2%
Not always	45	40.5%
Most definitely not	12	10.8%
Base	111	100.0%

TABLE 14: Greater professionalism on the part of public relations practitioners will result in greater recognition from Top Management

Category	Sample	Percentage
Most definitely	35	50.7%
Maybe	28	40.6%
Maybe not	2	2.9%
Most definitely not	4	5.8%
Base	69	100.0%

TABLE 15: Rating the statements regarding Public Relations issues [1 = strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree]

Category	Mean score	Sample
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	3.05	107
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	1.61	109
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	2.51	108
"Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	3.19	99
Public relations is a business discipline.	1.55	107
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	2.88	106
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	2.63	104
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	1.79	105
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission.	1.66	107
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	1.79	107
Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	1.36	105
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	2.19	107
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	1.75	107
Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	2.64	104
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	3.21	100
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	1.36	107
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	1.61	108
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	1.87	108
Public relations should be a strategic function.	1.31	110

APPENDIX D: Cross-tabulation of results

As was discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis (see pp. 74 – 74), the topline results in and of themselves were not complete enough to provide a full picture of the state of affairs regarding South African public relations. It was therefore necessary to divide respondents into three broad groups, namely: government/non-government; private sector; and public relations consultancies.

Below is a complete list of the cross-tabulation of all results:

TABLE 1: Current registration level with PRISA

CATEGORY	Type of organisation				
	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Affiliate	8 7.1%	4 10.3%	2 8.0%	1 3.3%	1 5.6%
Associate	5 4.5%	2 5.1%	0 0.0%	1 3.3%	2 11.1%
Public Relations Practitioner (PRP)	22 19.6%	8 20.5%	7 28.0%	4 13.3%	3 16.7%
Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP)	37 33.0%	11 28.2%	11 44.0%	9 30.0%	6 33.3%
Accredited in Public Relations (APR)	28 25.0%	7 17.9%	5 20.0%	12 40.0%	4 22.2%
Fellow of PRISA	1 0.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%
Other	7 6.3%	5 12.8%	0 0.0%	1 3.3%	1 5.6%
Uncertain/don't know	4 3.6%	2 5.1%	0 0.0%	2 6.7%	0 0.0%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 2: Degree of involvement in public relations activities

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Every day	94 83.9%	34 87.2%	18 72.0%	29 96.7%	13 72.2%
Once a week	9 8.0%	3 7.7%	3 12.0%	1 3.3%	2 11.1%
Monthly	6 5.4%	1 2.6%	3 12.0%	0 0.0%	2 11.1%
Sometimes	3 2.7%	1 2.6%	1 4.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 3: Number of years involvement in PR activities

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Less than 1 year	1 0.9%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Up to 2 years	4 3.6%	2 5.1%	2 8.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
2 to < 5 years	10 8.9%	5 12.8%	1 4.0%	2 6.7%	2 11.1%
5 to < 10 years	32 28.6%	15 38.5%	7 28.0%	5 16.7%	5 27.8%
10 to < 20 years	38 33.9%	13 33.3%	8 32.0%	10 33.3%	7 38.9%
20 years +	27 24.1%	3 7.7%	7 28.0%	13 43.3%	4 22.2%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 4: Involvement in public relations**Type of organisation**

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Corporate public relations	58 51.8%	31 79.5%	17 68.0%	1 3.3%	9 50.0%
Public relations consultancy	29 25.9%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	27 90.0%	1 5.6%
Marketing department	11 9.8%	4 10.3%	6 24.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%
Not directly involved in public relations	5 4.5%	1 2.6%	2 8.0%	1 3.3%	1 5.6%
Education (college/Technikon/ University)	1 0.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%
All other	8 7.1%	2 5.1%	0 0.0%	1 3.3%	5 27.8%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 5: Qualifications

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Degree in Public Relations	26 23.2%	14 35.9%	4 16.0%	6 20.0%	2 11.1%
Degree in field other than Public Relations	37 33.0%	5 12.8%	12 48.0%	14 46.7%	6 33.3%
Diploma in field other than Public Relations	13 11.6%	6 15.4%	3 12.0%	1 3.3%	3 16.7%
Diploma in Public Relations	19 17.0%	6 15.4%	4 16.0%	6 20.0%	3 16.7%
No degree/diploma: attended public relations courses	13 11.6%	7 17.9%	1 4.0%	1 3.3%	4 22.2%
No degree/diploma	3 2.7%	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	2 6.7%	0 0.0%
All other	1 0.9%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 6: Size of organisation**Type of organisation**

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
One (sole proprietor)	8 7.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8 26.7%	0 0.0%
2 to 5 employees	10 8.9%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	9 30.0%	0 0.0%
6 to 10 employees	6 5.4%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	4 13.3%	1 5.6%
11 to 20 employees	10 8.9%	3 7.7%	0 0.0%	4 13.3%	3 16.7%
21 to 50 employees	6 5.4%	4 10.3%	0 0.0%	1 3.3%	1 5.6%
51 to 99 employees	5 4.5%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	4 13.3%	0 0.0%
100 + employees	67 59.8%	29 74.4%	25 100.0 %	0 0.0%	13 72.2%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 7: Average expenditure on public relations programme**Type of organisation**

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Nothing	10 8.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10 33.3%	0 0.0%
Less than R100,000	15 13.4%	3 7.7%	0 0.0%	10 33.3%	2 11.1%
R100,000 to < R500,000	15 13.4%	9 23.1%	3 12.0%	0 0.0%	3 16.7%
R500,000 to < R1m	13 11.6%	7 17.9%	4 16.0%	0 0.0%	2 11.1%
R1m +	40 35.7%	15 38.5%	15 60.0%	2 6.7%	8 44.4%
Uncertain/don't know	19 17.0%	5 12.8%	3 12.0%	8 26.7%	3 16.7%
Base	112 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	30 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 8: Name of department (non-PR consultancies only)**Type of organisation**

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Public Relations	9 11.1%	3 7.9%	2 8.0%	0 0.0%	4 23.5%
Public Affairs	2 2.5%	2 5.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Corporate Affairs	5 6.2%	2 5.3%	1 4.0%	0 0.0%	2 11.8%
Corporate Communication	8 9.9%	4 10.5%	3 12.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.9%
Communication	21 25.9%	17 44.7%	4 16.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Marketing Communication	5 6.2%	3 7.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 11.8%
Marketing	8 9.9%	1 2.6%	4 16.0%	1 100.0 %	2 11.8%
Advertising and/or sales promotions	1 1.2%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Other	22 27.2%	5 13.2%	11 44.0%	0 0.0%	6 35.3%
Base	81 100.0 %	38 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	1 100.0 %	17 100.0 %

TABLE 9: Involvement in strategic planning on top level (non-consultancies only)**Type of organisation**

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non- govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Yes	71 80.7%	31 79.5%	21 84.0%	6 100.0 %	13 72.2%
No	17 19.3%	8 20.5%	4 16.0%	0 0.0%	5 27.8%
Base	88 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	6 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 10: Do strategic planning for clients (PR consultancies only)

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Yes	32 91.4%	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	28 96.6%	3 75.0%
No	3 8.6%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	1 3.4%	1 25.0%
Base	35 100.0%	1 100.0%	1 100.0%	29 100.0%	4 100.0%

TABLE 11: Training will help alleviate the problem of doing more strategic planning

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Most definitely	9 64.3%	3 50.0%	3 100.0%	2 66.7%	1 50.0%
Maybe	3 21.4%	2 33.3%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%
Maybe not	1 7.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 50.0%
Most definitely not	1 7.1%	1 16.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Base	14 100.0%	6 100.0%	3 100.0%	3 100.0%	2 100.0%

TABLE 12: Public relations earns the recognition it deserves from top management

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Most definitely	16 14.4%	5 12.8%	2 8.0%	4 13.8%	5 27.8%
Sometimes	38 34.2%	8 20.5%	8 32.0%	16 55.2%	6 33.3%
Not always	45 40.5%	23 59.0%	10 40.0%	7 24.1%	5 27.8%
Most definitely not	12 10.8%	3 7.7%	5 20.0%	2 6.9%	2 11.1%
Base	111 100.0 %	39 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	29 100.0 %	18 100.0 %

TABLE 13: Greater professionalism on the part of public relations practitioners will result in greater recognition from top management

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Most definitely	35 50.7%	18 62.1%	5 31.3%	9 52.9%	3 42.9%
Maybe	28 40.6%	8 27.6%	8 50.0%	8 47.1%	4 57.1%
Maybe not	2 2.9%	2 6.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Most definitely not	4 5.8%	1 3.4%	3 18.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Base	69 100.0 %	29 100.0 %	16 100.0 %	17 100.0 %	7 100.0 %

TABLE 14: Rating statements regarding public relations (1 = strongly agree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

Type of organisation

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Govt/non-govt	Private sector	PR Consultancy	Other
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	3.05 107	2.78 37	3.41 22	3.17 30	2.94 18
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	1.61 109	1.78 37	1.38 24	1.60 30	1.56 18
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	2.51 108	2.33 36	2.38 24	2.77 30	2.61 18
"Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	3.19 99	3.03 36	2.95 21	3.28 25	3.71 17
Public relations is a business discipline.	1.55 107	1.72 36	1.52 23	1.30 30	1.67 18
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	2.88 106	3.03 36	2.96 24	2.41 29	3.24 17
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	2.63 104	2.82 38	2.65 23	2.32 25	2.61 18
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	1.79 105	1.86 36	1.88 24	1.67 27	1.72 18
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission.	1.66 107	1.84 38	1.52 23	1.54 28	1.67 18
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	1.79 107	1.84 37	1.67 24	1.93 28	1.67 18
Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	1.36 105	1.42 38	1.33 24	1.29 28	1.40 15
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	2.19 107	2.16 38	2.36 22	2.30 30	1.82 17
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	1.75 107	1.53 38	1.96 23	1.89 28	1.72 18
Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	2.64 104	2.58 36	2.55 22	2.64 28	2.89 18
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	3.21 100	2.97 34	2.95 21	3.29 28	3.88 17
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	1.36 107	1.42 38	1.35 23	1.36 28	1.28 18

Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	1.61 108	1.64 36	1.58 24	1.63 30	1.56 18
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments,	1.87 108	1.76 38	2.00 23	1.97 29	1.78 18
Public relations should be a strategic function.	1.31 110	1.32 38	1.42 24	1.20 30	1.33 18
Mean	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.08	2.16

APPENDIX E: Likert ratings per specific sector

As was mentioned in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, the different sectors' specific reactions to the statements were found to be significant, and were therefore studied for relevance and significance. For the purposes of completeness, the specific reactions (per sector) are reflected below:

TABLE 15: RANKING THE STATEMENTS REGARDING PUBLIC RELATIONS. SPECIFIC RANKING PER SECTOR IDENTIFIED.

Government/non-government

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	37 100.0 %	6 16.2%	10 27.0%	10 27.0%	8 21.6%	3 8.1%
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	37 100.0 %	17 45.9%	13 35.1%	6 16.2%	0 0.0%	1 2.7%
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	36 100.0 %	9 25.0%	15 41.7%	4 11.1%	7 19.4%	1 2.8%
"Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	36 100.0 %	5 13.9%	7 19.4%	9 25.0%	12 33.3%	3 8.3%
Public relations is a business discipline.	36 100.0 %	18 50.0%	14 38.9%	2 5.6%	0 0.0%	2 5.6%
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	36 100.0 %	6 16.7%	7 19.4%	7 19.4%	12 33.3%	4 11.1%
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	38 100.0 %	6 15.8%	8 21.1%	16 42.1%	9 23.7%	1 2.6%
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	36 100.0 %	13 36.1%	17 47.2%	5 13.9%	0 0.0%	1 2.8%
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission.	38 100.0 %	15 39.5%	17 44.7%	4 10.5%	1 2.6%	1 2.6%
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	37 100.0 %	15 40.5%	18 48.6%	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	2 5.4%

Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	38 100.0 %	26 68.4%	10 26.3%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	1 2.6%
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	38 100.0 %	16 42.1%	11 28.9%	4 10.5%	3 7.9%	4 10.5%
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	38 100.0 %	22 57.9%	13 34.2%	2 5.3%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	36 100.0 %	6 16.7%	14 38.9%	7 19.4%	7 19.4%	2 5.6%
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	34 100.0 %	5 14.7%	6 17.6%	11 32.4%	4 11.8%	8 23.5%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	38 100.0 %	25 65.8%	12 31.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 2.6%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	36 100.0 %	19 52.8%	14 38.9%	1 2.8%	1 2.8%	1 2.8%
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	38 100.0 %	20 52.6%	11 28.9%	4 10.5%	2 5.3%	1 2.6%
Public relations should be a strategic function.	38 100.0 %	29 76.3%	8 21.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 2.6%

99

yes!

Private sector

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	22 100.0 %	0 0.0%	6 27.3%	3 13.6%	11 50.0%	2 9.1%
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	24 100.0 %	17 70.8%	6 25.0%	0 0.0%	1 4.2%	0 0.0%
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	24 100.0 %	5 20.8%	12 50.0%	2 8.3%	3 12.5%	2 8.3%
"Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	21 100.0 %	7 33.3%	2 9.5%	1 4.8%	7 33.3%	4 19.0%
Public relations is a business discipline.	23 100.0 %	12 52.2%	10 43.5%	1 4.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	24 100.0 %	4 16.7%	4 16.7%	6 25.0%	9 37.5%	1 4.2%
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	23 100.0 %	5 21.7%	6 26.1%	7 30.4%	2 8.7%	3 13.0%
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	24 100.0 %	9 37.5%	11 45.8%	3 12.5%	0 0.0%	1 4.2%
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission.	23 100.0 %	13 56.5%	8 34.8%	2 8.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	24 100.0 %	12 50.0%	9 37.5%	2 8.3%	1 4.2%	0 0.0%
Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	24 100.0 %	17 70.8%	6 25.0%	1 4.2%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	22 100.0 %	8 36.4%	4 18.2%	5 22.7%	4 18.2%	1 4.5%
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	23 100.0 %	9 39.1%	8 34.8%	5 21.7%	0 0.0%	1 4.3%
Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	22 100.0 %	5 22.7%	8 36.4%	3 13.6%	4 18.2%	2 9.1%
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	21 100.0 %	1 4.8%	8 38.1%	5 23.8%	5 23.8%	2 9.5%

yes!

Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	23 100.0 %	15 65.2%	8 34.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	24 100.0 %	10 41.7%	14 58.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	23 100.0 %	9 39.1%	7 30.4%	5 21.7%	2 8.7%	0 0.0%
Public relations should be a strategic function.	24 100.0 %	16 66.7%	6 25.0%	2 8.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%

PR Consultancies

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	30 100.0 %	1 3.3%	7 23.3%	8 26.7%	14 46.7%	0 0.0%
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	30 100.0 %	16 53.3%	12 40.0%	1 3.3%	0 0.0%	1 3.3%
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	30 100.0 %	3 10.0%	11 36.7%	7 23.3%	8 26.7%	1 3.3%
"Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	25 100.0 %	3 12.0%	5 20.0%	3 12.0%	10 40.0%	4 16.0%
Public relations is a business discipline.	30 100.0 %	22 73.3%	7 23.3%	1 3.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	29 100.0 %	6 20.7%	12 41.4%	5 17.2%	5 17.2%	1 3.4%
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	25 100.0 %	7 28.0%	14 56.0%	13 52.0%	1 4.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	27 100.0 %	11 40.7%	14 51.9%	2 7.4%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission.	28 100.0 %	13 46.4%	15 53.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	28 100.0 %	11 39.3%	10 35.7%	5 17.9%	2 7.1%	0 0.0%
Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	28 100.0 %	21 75.0%	6 21.4%	1 3.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	30 100.0 %	9 30.0%	10 33.3%	6 20.0%	3 10.0%	2 6.7%
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	28 100.0 %	9 32.1%	15 53.6%	3 10.7%	0 0.0%	1 3.6%
Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	28 100.0 %	6 21.4%	6 21.4%	8 28.6%	8 28.6%	0 0.0%

42.8

Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	28 100.0 %	3 10.7%	4 14.3%	7 25.0%	10 35.7%	4 14.3%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	28 100.0 %	18 64.3%	10 35.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	30 100.0 %	11 36.7%	19 63.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	29 100.0 %	11 37.9%	12 41.4%	3 10.3%	2 6.9%	1 3.4%
Public relations should be a strategic function.	30 100.0 %	24 80.0%	6 20.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%

YES!

100.0%

APPENDIX F: Likert ratings for all respondents

All respondents

CATEGORY	TOTAL	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are sufficiently educated and trained to be involved in the strategic planning of organisations	107 100.0 %	9 8.4 %	29 27.1%	24 22.4%	38 35.5%	7 6.5%
Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	109 100.0 %	59 54.1 %	39 35.8%	8 7.3%	1 0.9%	2 1.8%
All forms of marketing communication should be executed by public relations practitioners.	108 100.0 %	20 18.5 %	45 41.7%	15 13.9%	24 22.2%	4 3.7%
"Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	99 100.0 %	16 16.2 %	15 15.2%	18 18.2%	34 34.3%	16 16.2%
Public relations is a business discipline.	107 100.0 %	60 56.1 %	39 36.4%	6 5.6%	0 0.0%	2 1.9%
Public relations is a marketing discipline.	106 100.0 %	17 16.0 %	27 25.5%	23 21.7%	30 28.3%	9 8.5%
Organisations should spend more money on public relations than they do on advertising in ensuring that a brand gets promoted.	104 100.0 %	21 20.2 %	23 22.1%	39 37.5%	16 15.4%	5 4.8%
Public relations managers should be appointed to the boards of organisations.	105 100.0 %	41 39.0 %	49 46.7%	13 12.4%	0 0.0%	2 1.9%
As board members, public relations managers help to shape the organisation's mission.	107 100.0 %	50 46.7 %	46 43.0%	9 8.4%	1 0.9%	1 0.9%
Public relations should be the primary function for communicating to the internal public.	107 100.0 %	49 45.8 %	40 37.4%	11 10.3%	5 4.7%	2 1.9%
Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	105 100.0 %	73 69.5 %	28 26.7%	3 2.9%	0 0.0%	1 1.0%
Public relations is the only function in the organisation that should manage the communication processes.	107 100.0 %	41 38.3 %	30 28.0%	18 16.8%	11 10.3%	7 6.5%
Public relations is an important support function to marketing, but should not be managed by marketers.	107 100.0 %	49 45.8 %	41 38.3%	14 13.1%	1 0.9%	2 1.9%

Public relations sometimes should manage marketing.	104 100.0 %	19 18.3 %	31 29.8%	26 25.0%	24 23.1%	4 3.8%
Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	100 100.0 %	10 10.0 %	24 24.0%	20 20.0%	27 27.0%	19 19.0%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in management to make them more effective.	107 100.0 %	71 66.4 %	35 32.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 0.9%
Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	108 100.0 %	50 46.3 %	53 49.1%	3 2.8%	1 0.9%	1 0.9%
All organisational communication should be channelled through public relations departments.	108 100.0 %	49 45.4 %	35 32.4%	15 13.9%	7 6.5%	2 1.9%
Public relations should be a strategic function.	110 100.0 %	81 73.6 %	26 23.6%	2 1.8%	0 0.0%	1 0.9%

APPENDIX G: Inconsistency matrix

In order to test whether individual respondents are also confused, some statements seminal to this thesis were cross-tabulated per individual. This assists the researcher to establish whether any inconsistencies occur in individual response sets. An inconsistency higher than 20% is regarded as significant.

RESPONSE SET I

Statement rated 4 out of 5	Q20 (rated 1/2)	Q16 (rated 1/2)	Q31 (rated 1/2)
20. Public relations is a marketing discipline.	-	30	37
16. Public relations is a necessary part of marketing.	0	-	2
31. Public relations practitioners should be trained in marketing and advertising, since they will need to interact with these disciplines on a daily basis.	1	1	-

RESPONSE SET II

Statement	Q25(rate d 1/2)	Q19(rate d 1/2)	Q33(rate d 1/2)	Q29(rated 1/2)	Q18(rated 1/2)
25. Public relations is a management function, and should be elevated to that status.	-	1	0	1	1
19. Public relations is a business discipline.	2	-	2	0	0
33. Public relations should be a strategic function.	0	1	-	1	0
29. Public relations practitioners should be considered technicians.	40	39	46	-	9
18. "Strategy" means that an organisation has a public relations programme.	49	46	48	16	-