Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

An investigation of techniques and functions used by public relations practitioners at agencies in Durban, South Africa

by

Tsholofelo Dumakude

209149655

This is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Technology: Public Relations Management

in the

Faculty of informatics and design: Department of Public Relations

at the

 Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Supervisor: Professor Nirvana Bechan

November 2019

DECLARATION

I, **Tsholofelo Dumakude**, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

SIGNATURE: DATE: November 2019

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the techniques and functions used by public relations (PR) practitioners at agencies in Durban. Although PR techniques and functions are known, there is a lack of research on how they are being applied and how they assist current PR practitioners in conducting their activities. Using the constructivist approach and the reflective paradigm of PR as a conceptual theoretical framework, this research aims to provide a view of how the PR techniques and functions are being employed today as well as report back on current trends. Through interviews with various PR agencies in Durban, the findings revealed that practitioners are applying the techniques and functions correctly for the most part. However, the media landscape is changing and is affecting the role of the PR practitioner by demanding they play a larger role in creating journalistic content. In addition, the changes in the digital media space require PR practitioners to apply new tactics to keep up with the fast development, especially when it comes to working with influencers. Although the practitioners believe PR is perceived as a legitimate industry, it is still regarded as a marketing tool. A shift is required in this regard as this signifies that PR may not necessarily be seen as a standalone industry by corporate organisations. To improve the current state of PR, practitioners need to conduct adequate environmental scanning and research in order to gain access to the decision-making table and prove PRs value to senior management.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to sincerely thank:

My supervisor, Professor Nirvana Bechan, for all the support and guidance. Thank you for pulling me out of the rut when I nearly walked away from this journey.

Rearabetswe Makgalane, for the books that helped me draft crucial parts of this research. Without you, completing this study wouldn't have been possible.

My friend, Lerato Thakholi, for answering all my research related questions, even when you didn't have to. It's a privilege to call you my friend, Dr Thakholi.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my partner, Wandile Ndumiso Dumakude, my children, Azile Dumakude and Ahadi Dumakude and lastly, to my mother, Mosela 'Winnie' Makgalane.

Babe, you have been a part of my academic journey since our early days. I appreciate your support and the sacrifices you have made.

My children, Azile and Ahadi, let this be a testament that you can achieve anything you put your mind to. The world is your oyster.

Mama Winnie, thank you. I hope this makes you proud. I'm so lucky to have such an understanding mother. You are appreciated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

1.1. Introduction

The public relations (PR) industry is fast growing and ever-changing. Its evolution has been widely documented to have moved from a profession that seeks to distribute manufactured news (Skinner, von Essen, Mersham and Motau, 2010:20), to one which solely focused on generating positive publicity (one-way communication) for organisations (Skinner et al., 2010:20). The role of the PR profession today is one that requires practitioners to have a firm understanding and consideration of all stakeholders through practicing good governance and offering counsel (Rensburg, 2003:149). All of these key elements cannot be achieved without the use of fundamental techniques and functions that aim to ensure that PR reaches its main goal, which is; to manage perceptions and maintain good relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders (Skinner et al., 2010:4).

Scholars such as Skinner et al. (2010) present a broad view of the South African PR industry and inform us of what PR techniques and functions are. However, little is known about how these techniques and functions are applied by practitioners today. PR techniques and functions are one way to provide the industry with legitimacy by understanding how they have evolved. Rensburg (2003:148) states that the South African PR profession has not only relied on international influence but its establishment as a complete strategic management function in business and industry, has yet to be comprehensively documented and researched. It is therefore important to seek an understanding of PR techniques and functions in order to present a view of the current PR landscape in South Africa.

Through examining the techniques and functions developed by scholars and professionals over the years, this research investigates the extent to which the techniques and functions are applied by public relations practitioners at agencies based in Durban, South Africa. In an effort to present the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed through thematic analysis. These use of these qualitative methods necessary to answer the research questions which essentially aim to point to

trends that will provide an outlook of the current state of public relations, particularly using Durban as a case study.

Under the title "*An investigation of techniques and functions used by public relations practitioners at agencies in Durban,*" the PR techniques and functions which guide this research have been described in chapter 2, titled 'literature review'. Furthermore, the research design and methodology adopted for this study have been discussed in detail. Measures have been taken to protect the identity of the agencies and individuals who took part in the research as well as their clients. Agencies have been referred to as "Agency A, B or C" and in some sections, fictitious names were created to protect the identities of the PR agencies and their clients, as certain practices are confidential in nature.

1.2.   Clarification of basic terms and concepts

1.2.1.   Barcelona Principles

The International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), together with ICCO, Institute for PR (IPR), PRCA and The Global Alliance developed the Barcelona Principles, which are a framework for measuring communications performance (AMEC, 2015). It consists of seven principles which focus on; goal setting and measurement, measuring communication outcomes versus only measuring outputs, measuring the effect of organisational performance, measurement and evaluation require qualitative and quantitative methods, the advertising value equivalents (AVE) are not the value of communications, social media should be measured consistently, and lastly, measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid (AMEC, 2015).

1.2.2.   King IV Report

The King IV Report is developed by the Institute of Directors Southern Africa (IoDSA) and details codes for corporate governance (IoDSA, n.d).

1.2.3. Public Relations

The Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (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., 2010:4).

1.2.4. The Global Communications Report

The Global Communication Report is a definitive study of the global PR industry detailing trends shaping the future of PR (Holmes Report, 2018). It is produced by the Holmes Report, a trusted source for the global PR industry, in conjunction with the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism (Holmes Report, 2018).

1.2.5. World PR Report

The World PR Report is the definitive analysis of the world PR and communications industry (World PR Report, 2017). It is produced by Internal Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) and OnePoll. ICCO considers itself the global voice of PR with membership comprising of 66 countries, spanning networks in Europe, Africa, Asia, The Middle East, The Americas and Australasia, representing over 3000 PR firms (ICCO PR, n.d.). OnePoll is a PR, marketing and market research firm delivering insight and data analysis to strengthen communications across various sectors (World PR Report, 2017).

1.3. Statement of research problem

PR techniques and functions are an important part of the PR profession. They aid in providing legitimacy for the industry and ensure that other areas within an organisation are informed on how PR practitioners conduct their activities. According to the Global Communications Report (2018:10), 26% of PR agencies report to the chief executive officer (CEO) or president inside of their clients' organisations, 35% to the corporate communications department and 21% to marketing departments. Although this is positive, the percentage of agencies reporting to marketing is considerable, showing signs that the lines between PR and marketing are blurring significantly (PRmoment, 2017). One of the reasons for this is the lack of reporting on how PR techniques and functions

are being used today. Other communication disciplines such as marketing, can point to well publicised results, attached to tangible tactics, used to challenge perceptions. PR, on the other hand, presents quantitative reports that often fail to substantiate qualitative approaches used by PR practitioners (Ragan, 2017). In light of this, this research investigates techniques and functions used by PR practitioners at Durban based agencies. It discusses, in detail, what PR techniques and functions are, how they are meant to assist organisations and presents the findings by comparing how agencies are applying them today.

1.4. Background to the research problem

Many South African organisations outsource the PR function whereas other communication departments have a seat at the decision-making table. The Global Communications Report (2018:9) found that 50% of PR practitioners at agencies believe that senior management will push for PR to be merged with marketing within the next five years. This can be linked to organisations not understanding how PR can change perceptions and assist in building brands that are in touch with stakeholder's needs. Merging PR with marketing will make it increasingly challenging for PR practitioners to continue to deliver results linked to core PR principles, thus threatening the entire PR profession. Roodt 2011 examines the state of PR in South Africa and highlights that the it has been "suffocated by a crowding in of disciplines into the communication space," as well as, "peers robing PR of its credibility." The effectiveness of PR practitioners can be traced through tracking their application of PR techniques and functions. It is therefore important to continuously review how practitioners are applying PR techniques and functions which in essence provide the industry with legitimacy. The PR industry continues to fight for professional recognition and legitimacy amongst itself and other communication disciplines. If the industry is to secure professional recognition for generations to come, it needs to be able to prove how PR techniques and functions propel organisations to greater heights. Through investigating existing techniques and functions and the application thereof at PR agencies in Durban, as well as examining national and international trends, the researcher presents an outlook of the current state of the industry using Durban as a case study.

1.5. Research aim and objectives

The overarching aim of this research is to present findings on how PR practitioners at agencies are applying techniques and functions. This will be done in an effort to gather current trends in the PR industry. Although this research is being conducted in Durban, the findings thereof may be used as a hypothesis which applies to the South African PR industry. The specific research objectives (RO) to be met are:

RO1: To identify PR techniques used by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO2: To describe the application of PR techniques by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO3: To identify the PR functions carried out by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO4: To describe the application of PR functions by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO5: To compare the current use of PR techniques and functions to how they are meant to be used

RO6: To provide evidence of the current state of the PR industry through tracking the application of PR techniques and functions.

1.6. Research questions

In an attempt to present clear results this research will attempt to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Which PR techniques and functions are PR practitioners employing today?

RQ2: How are PR practitioners currently applying traditional techniques and functions?

RQ3: How has the application of PR techniques and functions evolved in comparison to how they were meant to be used?

RQ4: Which new techniques and functions have PR practitioners adopted?

RQ5: What are the current trends contributing to the state of the PR industry?

1.7. Significance of the research

Piehl 2017 (cited in World PR Report, 2017:16) states that there is an increasing demand for PR agencies to provide tangible business impact that resonates at the boardroom table. In a time when the industry's legitimacy is constantly questioned and continues to face threat from other disciplines, it needs to know where it is and what it has to offer organisations in order to shape where it's going. As such, PR practitioners need

to prove that they can drive organisational change by demonstrating how techniques and functions help achieve this.

At the rapid rate that the PR industry is evolving, there isn't enough evidence which informs how techniques and functions are being applied today. This research contributes to the existing body of work on what PR techniques and functions are and further presents evidence of their application. The results of this research paint a picture of South African PR practices and the trends which are currently shaping the industry.

Through the years, PRISM award winners have been dominated by agencies from Cape Town and Johannesburg. This provides industry with some insight into how agencies in these cities are conducting their PR activities, however it raises questions about Durban agency activities. As such, this research will shed some light on PR activities in Durban while offering a starting point for further academic research on the state of the PR industry in South Africa. This will be beneficial for practitioners to uncover areas of improvement as well as provide upcoming professionals, especially students, with an outlook of the current South African PR trends.

1.8. Brief chapter outline

Chapter one: Introduction and background to research
This chapter introduces this study and outlines the research objective and questions. It also details the problem it seeks to address, the background to the study as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter two: Literature review
The literature underpinning this study is detailed in this chapter. It provides a historical view of how PR techniques and functions have evolved over time. It also outlines the definitions of the techniques and functions, and details how practitioners are meant to apply them. Lastly, it provides information on current trends in the PR industry.

Chapter three: Conceptual theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual theoretical framework guiding this study. It discusses the constructivist ontology and the reflective paradigm of PR as suitable frameworks for this study.

Chapter four: Research design and methodology

The research design and methodology is discussed in this chapter. It highlights the choice of following a qualitative methodology based on the selected conceptual theoretical framework, namely, the constructivist ontology and the reflective paradigm of PR. It explains how participants were selected, how data was collected and analysed.

Chapter five: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study which were obtained through interviews with the selected participants. The findings are presented according to the headings; PR techniques, PR functions and current trends. Each heading has subheadings to further categories the findings. The subheadings are in line with the techniques, functions and current trends discussed in the literature review.

Chapter six: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter concludes the findings and offers recommendations for the use of PR techniques and functions. The researcher further draws conclusions on current trends based on the findings presented in chapter five.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"A competent review affirms that you are knowledgeable in interpreting what others have written. Also, using the existing literature on a topic is a means of developing an argument about the significance of your research and where it leads," Bryman and Bell (2018:92-93).

2.1. Introduction

Doorley and Garcia (2011:25) describe PR as, "The selling of ideas, policies, products and services through often uncontrolled media and two-way communication that compliments or replaces the controlled media and often one-way communication of advertising." It can be implemented through a PR programme which ensures a successful campaign through a set of objectives, messages for a specific target audience, activities and measurement tools (Skinner et al., 2010:106). The objectives stipulated in a PR programme are achieved through a set of techniques, which are essentially tools that ensure the establishment of harmonious and balanced relationships with an organisations target publics (Skinner et al., 2010:8). A PR programme forces practitioners to consider the "what" and the "how" of a particular campaign, in other words, the desired result as well as the way in which it is to be achieved (PRISA, 2018). The "what" can be derived as the techniques, while the "how" can be considered as the functions required to achieve the goals.

The sections that follow describe the techniques and functions related to the objectives of this research, giving a detailed explanation of what they are and how they relate to PR. Also, in order to compare trends which are uncovered in the research results, current national and international PR trends are also discussed. The techniques to be discussed are; media relations technique, corporate image, promotional activities, issues management, crisis communication and networking. The functions to be discussed are; research, writing, media relations function, advising and monitoring.

2.2. The evolution of PR techniques and functions

The earliest form of PR practice dates as far back as ancient Egypt when Pharaohs made use of hieroglyphics to impress and entertain the masses to win support (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Rensburg, 2003; Skinner et al., 2010). Greece followed with

word-of-mouth which they used to encourage a certain line of action (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Skinner et al., 2010). The Roman Empire took it further by creating free shows and parades to win support (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Skinner et al., 2010). We can compare this to a more modern technique referred to promotional activities which will be discussed later in this section. When Gutenberg invented the printing press, the written word became a medium of mass communication (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Skinner et al., 2010). These early forms of PR set the foundations for the modern PR used today.

Early use of PR techniques and functions point to press agentry as the main technique utilised by practitioners for over a century (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977:7). Press agentry is characterised by securing favourable publicity regardless of whether it is accurate or truthful (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:74). P.T. Barnum, a showman, is set to have started a trend of exploiting the news and buying advertising space to promote his shows (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977:7). He sought to only promote his shows in whichever way necessary — it was an aggressive and self-serving means of using the press agentry technique. However, press agentry was only one technique of PR and its use at the time, unfortunately, ended up giving PR the misconceived reputation it continues to fight against today (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Doorley and Garcia, 2011).

Barnum's use of PR techniques and functions was followed by Ivy Lee, dubbed the father of modern PR (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977:8). However, the current use of techniques and functions can be closely linked to the ideas created by Edward Bernays, one of the first PR pioneers. Although the concept of counsel (referred to as advising later in this section) in PR has existed for centuries before Bernays' time, he provided a clear need for it and full rationale for modern PR (Olasky, 1987:80). He gave practitioners purpose by offering them practical tools and formulated the idea that they were public servants who were there to provide counsel to business executives (Olasky, 1987:80). Bernays' methods were not without controversy. His form of publicity sought to control public opinion through mass influence (Olasky, 1987:90). This technique was highly criticised as a means to subtly run an authoritarian "democracy" and mass manipulation (Olasky, 1987:91).

Bernays suggested that a practitioners' job is also to "know his subjects better than they know themselves," which can be achieved through thorough research (Olasky, 1987:82). Without research, PR is not possible. It remains one of the most important functions of a PR practitioner. Robert Lund, who was president of the National Association of Manufacturers at the time, solidified the purpose of research in PR when he commissioned a nationwide public survey to discover the most effective means of reshaping popular sentiment (Olasky, 1987:97). This also showcased the importance of involving multiple stakeholders when conducting PR activities, thus making networking or relationship building an integral part of PR.

Over the years, PR had devised many ways to distribute news through plays but more means were discovered as the profession matured. Businesses started making use of booklets, magazines, newsletters, advertisements, radio messages and other activities to deliver company messages and other industry news to various stakeholders. These techniques continue to shape the industry and are currently being influenced by technology, the internet and the use of social media.

2.2.1. A South African perspective

The "official" start of the PR profession in South Africa can be traced back to 1937 when the then Prime Minister, General J.B.M. Hertzog created the Bureau of Information as a means to disseminate official information (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977:9). By 1947, it was referred to as the State Information Office (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977:10). In 1957, PRISA was founded and South Africa adopted a memorandum of PR which was luckily spared the press agentry phase (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977:11). During this time, PR practitioners had already adopted techniques and functions which were fully developed, however, the profession had not yet reached a state of acceptance (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Lubbe, 2000).

In 1992, PRISA together with Research Surveys, a market research group, conducted a survey on the South African PR industry. Respondents ranked employee relations, community relations, corporate PR, marketing PR and investor relations amongst the most important PR disciplines of the future (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:287). These results proved that the success of PR in South Africa would be reliant on engaging multiple stakeholders. Based on the results of PRISAs research, Rhodes and Baker

(2000:286) estimated that 45% of practitioners' activities were related to media relations, while 55% was spent on other techniques and functions. These figures were said to drop further, given the direction of the PR industry at the time as well as the changing communication landscape (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:286).

Rhodes and Baker (2000:292) listed five competencies which they considered to be a legitimate part of PR, namely; social marketing, issues management, cross-cultural communications, culture change management and social responsibility.

Kotler 1980 (cited in Rhodes and Baker, 2000:292) described social marketing as a management orientation directed towards preserving and enhancing the well-being of the consumer and society. Social marketing in PR is a strategy used in public participation and community relations as a means to bring about changes in beliefs, values and ultimately, changes in behaviour (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:292-293). Although this concept has been a part of PR for some time, it required people resources and project management skills which Rhodes and Baker (2000:293) said were not necessarily characteristics of the PR industry.

Issues management is a technique which requires PR practitioners to identify potential threats to the business while shaping public opinion and policy (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:293). The ability of a practitioner to see beyond the wall contributes to the legitimacy of the profession as a whole.

Given the diversity in South Africa, cross-cultural communications were under-researched from a business or management perspective even though they are an important part of communication (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:293). South African PR operated from a Western point of view and it is only more recently that practitioners understood the need to be able to communicate across various cultures.

Cultural change management is linked to cultural communications but is different. It is a management function which requires organisations to communicate cultural changes effectively with different stakeholders (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:294). It is the responsibility of an organisation to accommodate stakeholders during a time of change and

ensure that the change is understood, thus making it a process rather than a secret affair (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:294).

South African companies are expected to perform a level of social responsibility which needs to be communicated. However, it is controversial as it is driven by mixed motives of self-interest and a genuine desire to contribute to the greater community (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:294). Social responsibility communication is the practitioners' ability to adequately communicate and consult communities prior to making changes which affect that community (Rhodes and Baker, 2000:294-295).

The above-mentioned competencies or in the case of this research, techniques and functions, are still widely used today. Practitioners needed to be competent in these and other areas in order to adequately fulfil their roles. Rhodes and Baker (2000:292) considered these competencies an important part of PR as they provided practitioners with the necessary skill of assisting clients beyond traditional PR interventions. These and the techniques and functions described below continue to form an important part of practitioners' responsibilities.

2.3. Public relations techniques

PR techniques are the oil of the PR machine and provide practitioners with purpose. In a sense, they are the knowledge which practitioners need in order to fulfil their obligations.

2.3.1. Media relations as a technique

Media relations is one of the most important responsibilities of a PR practitioner (Skinner et al., 2010:8), and is both a technique and a function. According to Doorley and Garcia (2011:69), media relations consists of all the ways an organisation interacts with the news media.

Historically, the goal of engaging with the media was solely to secure publicity on behalf of clients but with the creation of new technology and more news outlets, practitioners needed to create and manage relationships with media (Hallahan, 2010:623). During the late 1900s, establishing and building mutually beneficial relationships with

media became a key focus for practitioners and scholars (Hallahan, 2010:635). Although the creation of new media has seemingly made it easier to engage with various stakeholders, "rich media" (characterised by providing feedback, multiple verbal and non-verbal cues, language variety and personal focus) is still considered highly superior despite the creation of the internet which relies mostly on impersonal cues (Hallahan, 2010:636). As such, members of the media still prefer face-to-face meetings (interviews), telephone, written and personalised communication as opposed to standard media releases and reports (Daft and Lengel, 1986; Daft Lengel and Trevino, 1987; Trevino, Lengel and Daft, 1987 cited in Hallahan, 2010:636).

Before the commercialisation of the World Wide Web during 1994, it was quite simple to engage the media and secure publicity on behalf of clients (Hallahan, 2010:623-624). The explosion of the internet opened up various ways of distributing news and put pressure on the media to produce engaging high-quality content for the public (Hallahan, 2010:624). This, in turn, put pressure on the practitioner to not only rely on "good content" for publicity but to actively build good relationships with key media so that their clients are top of mind and well represented. The media relations technique relies heavily on the ability to build long-term relationships with journalists who cover news on the organisation to ensure beneficial or at least fair reporting on behalf of an organisation (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:76).

Relationship building is a key area for PR practitioners as they not only need to have good relationships with the media but they also need to have good relationships with the managers and spokespeople of their organisations they represent. In the event that the organisation suffers a publicity blow, practitioners need to be able to justify their actions to the board while simultaneously managing the reporter involved (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:75). Doorley and Garcia (2011:76) state that, "The best media relations people are advocates in two directions: they need to clarify and focus the organisations' viewpoint for reporters. But they also need to help management better understand what a reporter is up to and whether it is in the company's interest to engage with the reporter."

Having a good relationship with media can be highly beneficial for the company as it allows practitioners to be aware of potential issues. If a certain reporter usually covers

news on a particular organisation, they also engage with other stakeholders related to the organisation (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:73). This engagement allows them to develop deeper insights which practitioners or management may not always have (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:73). A practitioner with good media relations practices will constantly engage certain reporters to uncover issues which have the potential to harm the organisation's reputation.

In a nutshell, successful media relations depend on both the PR practitioner and journalist working together to find a common goal to work towards (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:77). Doorley and Garcia (2011:77-78) say, "The goal is a timely, fair news report that accomplishes what the reporter wants — a story people are interested in — and that also accomplishes what the practitioner wants — a story that is fair, and favourable, or less negative than it would have been without their involvement."

2.3.2. Corporate image

Dowling 1986 (cited in Van Riel and Fombrum, 2007:40) states that the corporate image is the set of meanings by which an object is known by and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. It is the culmination of all experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge people have about a company (Overton-De Klerk, 2000, Skinner et al. 2010; Brønn, 2010). PR practitioners have a responsibility to uphold the image of the organisations they represent — a crucial technique in maintaining a good reputation of any organisation. The corporate image of an organisation is a combination of various communication efforts by different parts of the business such as marketing (Overton-De Klerk, 2000:192). It cannot be communicated in silos but at the crux, all the public relations activities directly impact the corporate image of an organisation (Overton-De Klerk, 2000:192). As such, corporate image is one of the top factors PR practitioners need to steer in a direction that is favourable to the organisation.

Organisations communicate the corporate image through (but not limited to) products and services, treatment of its staff, policies and its logo which can add to or detract from how they are perceived (Overton-De Klerk 2000, Skinner et al. 2010). A positive corporate image is not only attractive to graduates or skilled people, but it is also attractive to investors who can directly improve the financial structure of an organisation

(Overton-De Klerk, 2000:195). It can also ensure that the integrity of an organisation is upheld in the face of new competition or during a merger (Overton-De Klerk, 2000:192).

Absa Group, a financial services group, is an example of a company whose new logo and marketing campaign resulted in negative criticism from the media and a fall in the share price. Absa launched the new logo and marketing strategy as part of its separation from the international Barclays PLC groups to form a standalone bank (Absa, 2018). According to Business Live (2018), Absa's share price fell 4,6% two days after trading under its new name on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). Business Live (2018) sighted the groups rebranding as a cause for the sharp fall and also noted that the public's response on social media had been less than impressed. The University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) (UCT GSB, 2018) stated that Absa's brand change was bold and brave but the products and services had to match its new image. The bank will have to follow through and deliver its stated intentions through their branches, staff and products — all elements which give the brand meaning and affect their corporate image (UCT GSB, 2018).

Overton-De Klerk (2000:197-199) states that successful corporate image is characterised by coordinated communication activities. Companies can achieve this by enlisting someone in top management with the responsibility of ensuring that communication from various parts of the organisation (marketing, human resources or PR) reinforce each other and what the company stands for, thus projecting a unified and consistent image through all communication (Overton-De Klerk, 2000:199-200).

2.3.3. Promotional activities

Promotional activities have been a part of PR even before it was declared an official industry. They can be traced back to the times of the Roman Empire where some tyrants created free shows and parades in order to win support (Malan and L'Estrange, 1977; Skinner et al., 2010). Promotional activities are a set of events which aim to persuade others to accept ideas, concepts or things (Skinner et al., 2010:226). It requires a strategy with a, "Controlled, integrated programme of communication methods designed to present an organisation and its products and services to prospective cus-

tomers, to communicate need-satisfying attributes to facilitate sales, and thus to contribute to long-term profit performance" says Skinner et al. (2010:226). Promotional activities can also be referred to as events which are used to communicate specific information to specific audiences in order to contribute to a well-functioning organisation (Skinner et al., 2010:8).

They are achieved efficiently through a set of intermediate and ultimate objectives (Skinner et al., 2010:226). Intermediate objectives encourage consumers and traders to take specific action, benefitting the brand, which they otherwise would not have taken without the intervention of promotion (Skinner et al., 2010:227). Ultimate objectives aim to; increase consumers among specified consumer categories, increase usage of certain product or services and increase loyalty to a certain extent (Skinner et al., 2010:228). There are various types of promotional activities such as conferences, exhibitions and corporate advertising which all require a high level of specific skills (Skinner et al., 2010:8).

Skinner et al. (2010:8-10) state that promotional activities are often high profile, media sensitive and may require collaborating with other professionals in the marketing, advertising and design fields for optimal success. The role of the PR practitioner in promotional activities involves the creation of original ideas and overall coordination (Skinner et al., 2010:229). Practitioners may need to; advise on budgets for advertising, take part in in-store promotions, act as media liaison and arrange events which involve media personalities (Skinner et al., 2010:229). As such, PR practitioners taking part in promotional activities need to have exceptional organisational skills to adequately support other communication disciplines (Skinner et al., 2010:229).

2.3.4. Issues management

Before the 1970s and 1980s, organisations were mostly reacting to issues rather than proactively seeking potential risks, threats and challenges (Jaques, 2010:435). The term "issue management" was formally introduced in the, "Corporate Public Issues and Their Management" publication released in 1976 by Howard Chase, one of the founding members of the PRSA (Jaques, 2010:436). With the rise of activism and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) influence on public policy, Chase and his colleagues

promoted issues management as a business discipline designed to enable organisations to not only respond to but participate in public policy issues which may or may not affect the organisation (Jaques, 2010:436). Chase 1982 (cited in Jaques, 2010:436) originally described issues management as, "The capacity to understand, mobilise, coordinate and direct all strategic and policy planning functions, and all public affairs/public relations, toward achievement of one objective; meaningful participation in creation of public policy that affects personal and organisational destiny." There have been various adaptations of this definition as issues management has evolved from, a technique to allow the corporate sector to participate in public policy-making, to now being used by government and NGOs to promote, implement and facilitate public participation in policymaking (Jaques, 2010:436).

A 2007 survey revealed that CEOs expect communication professionals to "see around corners" and anticipate how different audiences will react to different events, messages and channels (The authentic enterprise cited in IPR, 2008). As such, the following definitions will be adopted for the purpose of this research. Jaques (2010:436) describes issues management as a process to identify and prioritise issues early, to mobilise resources across the organisation, and to develop and implement practical plans in order to achieve planned positive outcomes. While Doorley and Garcia (2011:301) describe it as a corporate process that helps organisations identify challenges in the business environment before they become crises. It then mobilises corporate resources to help protect the company from reputational and operational harm, and the financial condition that the issue may provoke (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:301).

Scholars (Sadie 2000; Meng 1992, cited in Jaques 2010) have ascribed a life cycle models or categories to issues management which they have described as going through phases of; emerging issues, current issues, societal issues or trends. Underpinning the multiple descriptions are two common threads; firstly, issues unattended generally deteriorate toward greater risk and secondly, the longer an issue survives and the later intervention occurs, the fewer choices remain open, the greater the cost, and the less the chances of achieving positive outcomes (Jaques, 2010:439). While these models emphasise the importance of early intervention as a means minimise impact on the organisation, they do not take into account that issues management is a process (Doorley and Garcia 2011; Jaques 2010). It requires several parts of the

business to proactively and consistently identify and devise strategies to deal with the issues (Doorley and Garcia 2011; Jaques 2010).

Issues management has a close relationship with crisis management and with similar development. The notable difference is that crises developed mostly in the fields of psychology, sociology, and disaster response (Booth 1993 cited in Jaques, 2010:440) and later developed into formal crisis management in the United States of America (USA) following poisoning deaths caused by tampered Tylenol in the1980s (White and Mazur 1994; Jaques 2010). Although the interrelated concepts follow similar processes, they require different management. PR practitioners have the responsibility to communicate with various stakeholders during a crisis. This form of communication is referred to as crisis communication and will be discussed in the section that follows.

2.3.5. Crisis communication

Issues can evolve and once they do, they can become a crisis which then requires crisis communication. Before delving into crisis communication, the following definitions of *crisis* are offered. Coombs 2007 (cited in Coombs 2010:477) describes a crisis as, "The perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectations of stockholders and can seriously impact an organisation's performance and generate negative outcomes." Doorley and Garcia (2011:328) state that a crisis is not a catastrophic event, but rather an event that can cause significant reputational, operational, or financial damage if left unhandled. Venter (2000:211) has a similar definition stating that a crisis is an unexpected occurrence, developing at a fast rate of destruction, that would rapidly destroy an organisation if left unmanaged. According to Fearn-Banks (2011:2), a crisis is "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting the organisation, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name." At the crux, these definitions essentially state that a crisis can bring an organisation into disrepute thus threatening its very existence if not dealt with in good time and with the correct measures.

Crisis communication cannot take place without crisis management. Crisis management can be described as, a process of strategic planning for a crisis or negative turning point affecting an organisation, in an attempt to remove some of the risk and uncertainty from the negative occurrence, thus allowing the organisation to control the

narrative (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). Effective crisis management requires crisis communication that can reduce and possibly eliminate the crisis and bring the organisation into a positive light (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). Crisis communication can be described as a PR function with the objective to maintain an organisation's positive reactions with its publics during a crisis, in order to secure its future (Venter, 2000:211). It requires strategic dialogue between the organisation and its public, prior to, during, and after a negative event, in order to minimise damage to the image of the organisation (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). Furthermore, it demands that PR practitioners use the best-crafted message, delivered using the most effective methods to specific audiences (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2).

In a time of crisis, PR practitioners play a key role in ensuring that spokespeople are adequately prepared to respond to media (IPR, 2014). They achieve this through media training, supplying the relevant resources (media contacts) and supporting spokespeople (IPR, 2014). The rise of social media has fostered quicker responses by practitioners and their organisations to crises, however, the messages communicated via social media still have to be well crafted (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). PR practitioners have a responsibility to maintain ethical and professional standards regardless of the tools they are using in order to create a dialogue between their organisation and its stakeholders (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2).

Although social media has made crisis communication easier in that it has fostered fast and frequent two-way communication, it has not eliminated traditional approaches to dealing with a crisis (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). A traditional approach to crisis communications needs to take into consideration an organisations' internal and external stakeholders (Venter 2000; Fearn-Banks 2011). A good crisis communication plan includes messages specified for employees, the media, the community, consumers, investors and industry (Venter 2000; Fearn-Banks 2011), it, therefore runs several programs concurrently, in order to maintain relationships with these stakeholder groups.

One of the biggest crises to befall the South African PR industry as well as the industry on a global scale, is the Bell Pottinger crisis. Bell Pottinger, a global PR firm, was expelled from the Public Relations and Communication Association (PRCA) following un-

ethical conduct (Fin24, 2017). In 2016, the firm chose to represent a Gupta family organisation, Oakbay Investments, run by three brothers who have built a multi-billion-dollar business in South Africa and have strong ties with political leaders in the country (Independent Online, 2018).

Bell Pottinger ran an economic emancipation campaign on behalf of Oakbay Investments. The campaign adopted the term, "white monopoly capital" with the intention of deliberately causing racial tension in South Africa (Fin24, 2017). In late 2016, files were leaked to the media which publicised Bell Pottinger's involvement in the campaign (Independent Online, 2018). The co-founder, Tim Bell, and former chief operating officer, James Henderson, both denied any involvement in the leaking of files (Independent Online, 2018). This was an early sign of the firm's inability to manage its own crisis. Shortly after the files surfaced, Bell Pottinger cancelled its contract with Oakbay Investments, Henderson apologised to the public and later resigned (Independent Online, 2018). All of these efforts were done too late and the company's actions lead to financial loss to the tune of £8 million (Independent Online, 2018).

PRCA found that Bell Pottinger had breached the code of conduct and expelled the firm, stating that they had brought the PR and communication industry into disrepute (Fin24, 2017). This was PRCAs first heavy indictment of a firm's PR conduct (Fin24, 2017). The PR firm not only took part in unethical PR practices but they also failed to immediately admit fault and keep communication lines open, thus failing to effectively deal with a crisis that threatened their existence (Fin24 2017; The Guardian 2017, Independent Online 2017). Bell Pottinger has since collapsed, following failed attempts to secure a buyer (BBC, 2017).

2.3.6. Networking

An organisation's sustainability and future growth not only depends on good products and services but also on how well organisations are able to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders. Successful relationships with stakeholders are pivotal to the success of PR and therefore rely on practitioners having strong networks. Grunig and Hon (1999:2-3) found that networking plays an important role in building and maintaining long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders. Furthermore, it has been well established that organisations generally make better decisions

when they listen to and collaborate with stakeholders before they make final decisions (Grunig and Hon,1999:8).

PR practitioners are accountable to their organisation but also need to maintain relationships with multiple stakeholders, both internal and external. According to Grunig and Hon (1999:11), the value of PR can be determined by measuring the quality of relationships with stakeholders. Therefore, practitioners not only need to build networks with their various stakeholders, but they also need to ensure that they build networks with the same groups their stakeholders have networks with, such as community groups and government (Grunig and Hon, 1999:15). When PR helps the organisation build relationships with key stakeholders, it guards it against financial loss by reducing the costs of possible litigation, regulation, legislation, negative campaigns, boycotts, etc., that can result from bad relationships (Grunig and Hon, 1999:11).

2.4.   Public relations practitioner functions

PR practitioner's complete campaigns by using a set of activities, also known as functions, which ensure the creation, implementation and completion of a PR programme. Although the PR industry encourages practitioners to constantly evolve in an effort to keep up with its fast-changing landscape, traditional functions remain relevant and the section that follows will explore key concepts which characterise these.

2.4.1. Research

Research is a fundamental function which practitioners have to undertake. It involves gathering information about public opinion, trends, emerging issues, political climate and media coverage in order to plan relevant programmes for stakeholders and problem situations (Skinner et al., 2010:10). In addition, it helps practitioners strategise better, provide clients with informed advice, as well as make informed decisions that benefit the organisation or client (Weber Shandwick Seattle, 2016). Research is done before setting out a programme, communicating with a client or making a decision that impacts an organisation and its stakeholders (Skinner et al. 2010; Weber Shandwick Seattle 2016).

Practitioners primarily make use of four types of research, namely; primary, secondary, informal and formal. Primary research can be described as research obtained from observations or experiences, or from the information one gathers personally from other people (Dawson, 2002:40). Secondary research involves the collection of information from studies that other researchers have made of a subject (Dawson, 2002:40). These forms are mostly used in academic research which can be regarded as facts. Informal research takes place without agreed-to rules or procedures and can only be used as a means to provide description (Skinner et al., 2010:33). Formal research refers to qualitative research, an informative and descriptive but not measurable type of re- search — or quantitative research which produces mathematically measurable results (Skinner et al., 2010:33-35).

In most cases, PR research involves investigating three aspects in order to success- fully carry out a PR programme, namely; client or organisation requiring the research, opportunity or problem to be addressed and lastly the target audience (Skinner et al., 2010:31). Mersham et al. 1995 (cited in Skinner et al., 2010:31-32) state that client or organisational research involves five steps, namely; understanding the nature of the business, knowing its mission, goals, priorities and problems, understanding the em- ployees, knowing the financial status and lastly, understanding the importance of cor- porate image and its impact on an organisation. Opportunity or problem research seeks to unearth why an organisation should run a particular programme at a certain time (Skinner et al., 2010:31). Audience research helps identify particular groups which should be targeted for a program (Skinner et al., 2010:32). This enables practitioners to formulate messages suitable for the audience, which is critical for campaign effec- tiveness (Weber Shandwick Seattle, 2016).

2.4.2. Writing

Research is often followed by writing, whether it be drafting a PR plan, a media release or correspondence with a client. A PR practitioner must be able to write strategically and concisely, catering to the medium in which the message is being sent as well as the target stakeholders who will receive the message (Platform Magazine, 2012). Ef- fective communication is at the core of PR and it requires clarity, the use of plain lan- guage, and avoidance of clichés and jargon (Foster, 2008:1).

Practitioners require skills in writing for different audiences and platforms but also need to understand their clients or organisations style so that they can communicate the brand consistently (Foster, 2008:7). Types of content which practitioners need to write includes, but not limited to; media releases, social media content, speeches, newsletters and presentations. PR practitioners are also expected to have excellent editing skills which ensure that information is correct and unambiguous.

2.4.3. Media relations as a function

The media relations function is a complex one. It requires the PR practitioner to consistently ensure that the correct information is delivered by the correct spokesperson to the correct media. The scope of the media relation function is wide; it not only serves to secure publicity but requires PR practitioners to offer media training to their organisations. According to Doorley and Garcia (2011: 70), external stakeholders perceive anyone from the organisation who publicly speaks about the organisation as speaking on behalf of the organisation. Therefore, it is important for organisations to have a centralised point of information to prevent unclear statements from reaching the media and potentially cause reputational harm (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:70). As part of media relations, the PR practitioners function serves to ensure that all employees are briefed on not speaking to media unless they have been given the proper training and authorisation to do so (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:70). This indicates good organisational practice and safeguards the organisation against reputational harm.

An important part of media relations includes packaging information appropriately. Not all communication from an organisation is delivered to media as a press release nor does it address the same group of stakeholders. Therefore, practitioners need to ensure that publications such as house journals, staff newsletters, employee handbooks and annual reports follow a particular format and use of language (Skinner et al., 2010:8).

After packaging the necessary information, a PR practitioner needs to develop procedures to measure, monitor and manage the contact between an organisation's employees and reporters (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:69). Furthermore, they need to know the publications, the correct contact person (journalist) and their 'beat' — a reporter's area of responsibility — to ensure the right placement for an organisation (Doorley and

Garcia, 2011:69). Doorley and Garcia (2011:71) state that, "enlightened organisations establish clear guidelines on who can speak to reporters on what topics, maintain press logs for tracking who has spoken to whom, on what topics, what was said, what follow-up is required, and when a story is likely to appear." The result is earned publicity which is the end goal of media relations as a function of the PR practitioner.

2.4.4. Organising and advising

Offering counsel is possibly the first informal function PR practitioners had to perform. None of the previously mentioned techniques and functions would be successful without a substantial amount of organising and advising, which practitioners do on a daily basis. Their responsibilities range from arranging interview opportunities, organising events, managing a PR programme and providing media training to clients (Skinner et al., 2010:12). Advising clients is done in order to determine the needs, priorities, goals, stakeholders, objectives and messages an organisation seeks to communicate (Skinner et al., 2010:10). It often requires collaborating with management or clients in the problem-solving process (Skinner et al., 2010:10).

2.4.5. Monitoring

During every stage of a PR programme, there is constant reporting or monitoring between management and clients to establish if a strategy is on track or if it needs to be adapted (Augure, 2017). Elements which can be monitored include tracking all coverage an organisation has received by creating a numerical report which gives the client a representation of the publications which covered their news, the number of times the client was mentioned and whether the news had a positive or negative sentiment. This can reveal various trends which assist practitioners in adapting their strategies if necessary. Developing a tracking system also provides PR practitioners with an understanding of a client's reputation (Augure, 2017).

2.5. The current PR trends

Today's PR practitioners need to grow their understanding of business, environmental scanning, ethics, stakeholder engagement and data analytics (PRSA, 2018). The Global Communications Report (2018:7-8) found that the changing media landscape,

technological innovations, great access to data, disruption of traditional business models and political climate, are the biggest factors that will drive change in the PR industry. The report also listed strategic planning, leadership, written communications, social media and multimedia content development as the most important skills PR practitioners need to have over the next five years.

In addition to PR demanding a wide range of skills and strategies from practitioners, the Global Communications Report (2018:9) cited that 50% of PR practitioners at agencies believe that senior management will push for PR to be merged with marketing within the next five years. Although PR and marketing roles are different, the changing corporate landscape and current digital trends have caused the two areas to converge. PR is more concerned with managing stakeholder relationships while marketing's focus is on building brand equity which makes it possible for organisations to effectively track stakeholders, learn their behaviour and predict how they will respond (Rensburg and Cant, 2012:11-12).

Several South African companies have formed full-service agencies offering both marketing and PR services under one roof. The most notable South African agency which has collaborated communication efforts is the King James Group, an independent South African agency made up of seven communication agencies that work in tandem (King James, n.d). Each agency specialises in corporate and brand PR, advertising, branding, digital and social media and lastly content creation, respectively. King James prides itself in being able to create collaborative campaigns through well-integrated teams, operating outside media silos, which they state has a significantly positive effect on the end result (King James, n.d). Positive Dialogue, a South African PR agency also recently announced its merger with the advertising agency, Duke, and digital marketing agency, Mark 1 Media, to form Duke Group (The Media Online, 2019). The group CEO states that it is the, "Only sizeable South African communication group born in the digital era with the skill-set required to engage tomorrow's consumer," (The Media Online, 2019). Both the King James Group and Positive Dialogue have merged to be able to offer clients full-service communication solutions (The Media Online, 2019).

The PR industry's attempt to gain a firm seat at the table may just be within reach. The Global Communications Report (2018:10) found that 26% of PR practitioners in agencies were reporting directly to the CEO, 35% to the corporate communication department, while 21% were reporting to the marketing department at their clients' organisations. This is an indication that there is a growing number of executives who understand the value of PR.

Globalisation has increased pressure on organisations to formulate strategies that focus on engaging with multiple stakeholders. PR practitioners need to play a critical role in bridging the communication gap between internal and external stakeholders. Understanding these audiences will enable management to effectively communicate with their stakeholders, as they will have a view of their needs, interests and expectations (King IV Report, 2016). These needs, interests and expectations can be identified through research and then be incorporated into organisational strategies and activities directed at stakeholders (Steyn and Puth, 2000:187), further cementing PRs role in providing management with valuable information. One of the top emerging trends is the use of spokespeople within organisations. This role usually lies within top management, however, according to Forbes (2017), organisations now realise that it is equally important to invest in leaders outside of the executive team to present a horizontal view of the organisation. This provides a variety of thought leaders with the opportunity to distribute content to different audiences (Forbes, 2017).

Environmental scanning has always formed part of PR practitioners' responsibility. Dozier (1986:4), describes environmental scanning as the gathering of information about publics, their reactions toward an organisation and public opinion towards issues important to the organisation. Practitioners are also advised to scan social media as it provides opportunities for dialogue between brands and consumers which makes PR more valuable to clients (PRSA, 2018). Furthermore, it provides PR practitioners with a seat at the decision-making table.

PR practitioners can no longer rely on quantitative reporting alone — if PR practitioners really want to be transformative, they need to combine quantitative and qualitative reporting methods which include aspects such as brand building (Forbes, 2017). According to PRSA (2018), the most successful PR people will monitor communication results

in real-time and revise strategies when necessary. In addition, successful practitioners will present reports which incorporate stakeholder's overall impression of an organisation. The International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), together with ICCO, IPR, PRCA and The Global Alliance developed the Barcelona Principles, a framework for measuring communications performance (AMEC, 2015). It consists of seven principles which focus on; goal setting and measurement, measuring communication outcomes versus only measuring outputs, measuring the effect of organisational performance, measurement and evaluation require qualitative and quantitative methods, the advertising value equivalents are not the value of communications, social media should be measured consistently, and lastly, measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid (AMEC, 2015). PR practitioners are advised to follow the guidelines stipulated in the Barcelona Principles as they unite the ever-changing media landscape into a transparent, reliable, and consistent measurement and evaluation framework (AMEC, 2015).

All of the above-mentioned PR techniques, functions and current trends are theories upon which this research is based. They serve as a guide for practitioners to carry out their responsibilities. Although they may be applied differently by each practitioner, they are essentially the core elements of PR. Without them, the profession would not exist. Current trends not only provide information on what practitioners are doing today, but they also shape the direction of what practitioners will be doing in the future. They indicate a trajectory of future trends and inform practitioners on what to look out for thus contributing to the evolution of the entire PR profession.

2.6. Summary

This literature review outlines and defines what the PR techniques and functions underpinning this research are and how they are meant to be applied by practitioners. It also highlights current PR trends — describing how PR practitioners can adequately assist their organisations by applying updated techniques and functions. The most notable finding is that 50% of PR practitioners at agencies believe that senior management will push for PR to be merged with marketing within the next five years (Global Communications report, 2018:9). This finding is in line with the statement of the research problem described in chapter one, which highlights that a considerable (26%)

amount of PR agencies currently report to marketing. The available literature indicates that merging PR with marketing will be an ongoing debate for the foreseeable future. Although many scholars and practitioners argue that marketing and PR are different, it is unclear as to what the future on merging the two professions will be. The following chapter will discuss the conceptual theoretical framework and whether it is suitable for examining the above-mentioned PR techniques, functions and current trends.

3. CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"The conceptual theoretical framework is a very general theoretical system with assumptions, concepts, and specific social theories. It is a logical argument or "story" that tells why something takes a specific form or occurs and does so by referring to more general ideas and abstract principles," Neuman (2014:73;85).

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter describes PR techniques and functions as interconnected tools which PR practitioners use to provide services to organisations. The techniques and functions serve as a guide for practitioners to provide organisations with adequate and measurable PR support. Practitioners achieve this by applying their own understanding of how the PR techniques and functions are meant to be used.

This chapter discusses the conceptual theoretical framework of this study and aims to describe research approaches which guided this study. The researcher adopted the constructivist ontology approach and the reflective paradigm of PR as a guide to unearth how PR practitioners in Durban are applying techniques and functions.

The constructivist approach and the reflective paradigm of PR are discussed below in relation to this study. The researcher also discusses how the selected ontology and reflective paradigm of PR assisted in attaining the research objectives of this study.

3.2. Ontology: The Constructivist Approach

In order to reach the objectives and answer the questions of this research, the researcher has selected to employ a constructivist ontology. Ontology can be described as an individual's understanding of what can be defined as a fact or particular reality (Research methodology, n.d.).

A constructivist approach portrays the world as socially constructed, intricate, constantly changing (Tuli, 2010:102-103). According to Bryman and Bell (2018:17), constructivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are being produced by social actors through social interaction. Multiple realities co-exist and are in a constant state of change that is subjective to the individual or collective (Bryman and Bell,

2018:17). In the case of this research, as much as there are pre-existing definitions of the techniques and functions, the application of them is based on the ever-changing perspectives of PR practitioners. Furthermore, the manner in which PR practitioners carry out their duties, are set out by each agency based on their agreements on application. No two agencies are alike in how they understand and apply the PR techniques and functions. In addition, the techniques and functions are affected by current trends which then prompt agencies to introspect and decide on whether a new approach to carrying out their activities is required or not. Bryan and Bell (2018:18) argue that the constructivist approach, when applied to culture, can be understood as, "An emergent reality in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction."

3.2.1. Postmodernism

Constructivism has also been described as a subjective approach to research in which knowledge is relative and subject to an observer's perspective (Bryman and Bell, 2018:17;154). According to Bryman and Bell (2018:17), "Constructivism includes the idea that the researchers' own accounts of the social world as specific versions of social realities and not a definitive version of reality." This can be strongly linked to postmodernism which states that, "Social scientists can uncover a pre-given reality, big ideas or meta-narratives which exist separately from the researcher and without the scientist being involved in what is being researched," say Bryman and Bell (2018:154). The PR practitioners took part in this research but are not necessarily involved in the overall research. They offer their views on how they understand and apply PR techniques and functions but are not a part of formulating the research questions or analysing the findings.

According to Neuman 2014 and Bryman and Bell 2018, postmodernists are of the view that it is not entirely possible for researchers to present social research findings as a definitive and final version of any reality. They attribute this thinking to the view that research reports are versions of a personally lived reality — neither right or wrong in the pure sense (Bryman and Bell, 2018:154). The researcher, in this case, was involved in the data collection process, however, the interpretation of the responses is based on her own knowledge, gathered while compiling the literature review and during the interviews with PR practitioners. Postmodernists view research findings as nonobjective representations of a certain reality and state that if they are to constitute as fact,

the researcher needs to explicitly state how they reached the definitiveness of those findings (Bryman and Bell, 2018:155). Some researchers are critical of postmodernism and view it as a disruptive approach to social research, in that it questions researchers' capacity to know everything (Bryman and Bell, 2018:155). In the case of this research, the findings presented are only one version of reality of how PR practitioners apply the techniques and functions in Durban. They do not represent results that could be unearthed in a different city, province or country.

3.2.2. Discourse analysis

PR practitioners are continuously examining and recreating what the PR techniques and functions are and then adapting their application of them. All of this is done through interaction as practitioners talk about, write about and argue about PR techniques and functions (Porter in Bryman and Bell, 2018:18). This can be described as discourse analysis — a qualitative method for analysing language as a resource. Discourse analysis also argues that talk in research interviews can be used as a legitimate target for analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2018:365). Gill 2000 in Bryman and Bell (2018:365) argues that discourse analysis means searching for a purpose behind the ways in which something is said. This is what the researcher has attempted to do when discussing the findings of this research.

In light of the above-mentioned information, the researcher is of the view that the constructivist ontology best suits the research objectives. This approach allows participants to form their own understanding of how to apply the PR techniques and functions described in the literature review. The understanding of the techniques and functions changes from practitioner to practitioner — each practitioner will interpret how to apply them differently. Furthermore, the constructivist approach allows the researcher to interpret research findings based on her own knowledge gathered through secondary research.

3.3. The reflective paradigm of public relations

Holmström (2004:121) states, "The reflective paradigm is a theoretical model developed to understand the evolution and character of society's legitimising processes, and in this context, the function of PR practice." Holmström (2002:77), further suggests

that in order to understand the societal processes behind the transformation of PR, researchers should adopt a paradigm which focuses on the supra-individual and self-organising evolutionary social processes. This paradigm employs Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems which focuses on the social processes that construct our perceptions of reality (Holmström, 2002:80). It regards social systems as realities that are continuously created and recreated through various flows of communication when those involved develop patterns of meaning that are different from other meaning (Holmström, 2002:80). In other words, PR practitioners in one agency will subscribe meanings of the techniques and functions that are different from another agency. These meanings are derived through continuous, self-referential flows of communication but are guided by boundaries found in the overall PR environment (Holmström, 2002:80-82). This is inline with the postmodern approach in which different versions of reality are being created.

The reflective paradigm suggests that organisations see themselves in a poly-contextual worldview. When applied to public relations, a poly-contextual worldview takes into consideration; stakeholder relations, symmetrical communication and reporting on the triple bottom line (people, planet, profit) — which supplement or replace conventional legislation (Holmström, 2004:121).

Reflection is also characterised by organisations which continuously question, change and open debate prior to making decisions. The main function for reflective PR is identified through a tripartite synthesis of three organisational functions: sensor, leadership and communication (Holmström, 2004:128). According to Holmström (2004:129), reflective PR requires essential qualifications of the practitioner and insight into social conditions, structures and processes of an organisation (sensor function which aims to increase reflection). Furthermore, Holmström (2004:129) states that, "It requires a focus on values and identity policies, that are on the integration of reflection in the organisational decision process (leadership function which aims to integrate reflection)." Lastly, the reflection of corporate self-understanding needs to be communicated through PR practice. This is an increasingly important function as organisational legitimacy relies on perceptions, which continuously change in poly-contextual dynamics (Holmström, 2004:129).

This research essentially aimed to uncover how PR techniques and functions are being applied by practitioners and compare this application to how the techniques and functions were initially meant to be used. In other words, it sought to get a sense of whether practitioners are staying true to what the techniques and functions were designed for and if they have moved away from how these were initially meant to be applied, report back on any changes found. The reflective paradigm of PR described above is suitable for this research and forms a base which the researcher used to reflect on the application of the techniques and functions described in the literature review. It takes into account the ever-changing nature of the PR techniques and functions and highlights how these are determined differently by each agency.

Based on the selected constructivist ontology and reflective paradigm of PR described above, this research will, therefore, employ a qualitative research methodology which will be discussed in detail in the section which follows.

3.4. Summary

This chapter describes the conceptual theoretical framework upon which this research is based. It describes the constructivist ontology and the reflective paradigm of PR as the conceptual theoretical framework suitable for this research. A constructivist approach portrays the world as socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing (Tuli, 2010:102-103). This approach states that multiple realities co-exist and are in a constant state of change that is subjective to the individual or collective (Bryman and Bell, 2018:17). Postmodernism is also addressed in relation to the study and states that research present specific versions of social realities, rather than a definitive version of reality (Bryman and Bell, 2018:17). Furthermore, discourse analysis is briefly discussed outlining; a) how PR practitioners examine, recreate and adapt the application of techniques and functions through interaction as they talk with and argue about them (Porter in Bryman and Bell, 2018:18) and b) how talk in research interviews can be used as a legitimate target for analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2018:365). Both the selected constructivist approach and reflective paradigm of PR are a suitable conceptual theoretical framework as they set parameters for how PR practitioners apply techniques and functions. These approaches are also suitable because they allow the researcher

to apply and interpret research findings based on knowledge gathered through secondary research. Furthermore, they take into account the ever-changing nature of the PR techniques and functions and highlight how they are determined differently by each agency.

4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

"The importance of measurement in research design cannot be overstated. Even the most well-designed studies will prove useless if inappropriate measurement strategies are used in the data collection stages," states Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger (2005:95).

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the constructivist ontology and the reflective paradigm of PR as the conceptual theoretical framework suitable for this research. This chapter will firstly, briefly compare the quantitative and qualitative research methodology, respectively. Then secondly, outline why the qualitative methodology is best suited for this research. The units of analysis, sampling, data collection methods, namely; literature study, interviews, note-taking are also discussed below. The data analysis methods, mainly transcription and thematic analysis are also discussed below.

4.2. Research methodology

The research methodology is the sum of data collection methods and methods of analysis which researchers adopt. The University of Southern California (USC) Libraries (2017) state that it is, "Actions to be taken to investigate a research problem and the rationale for application of specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process and analyse information applied to understanding the problem, thereby, allowing the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability."

4.2.1. Quantitative and qualitative research

A methodology can take the shape of a qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both approaches. Quantitative research is characterised by the collection and analysis of numerical data — assigning numbers to the perceived quality of things (Babbie and Mouton 2009, Bryman and Bell 2017).

Qualitative research assumes that meaning is embedded in the participants' experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the researcher's own perceptions

(Tuli, 2010:102). According to Dawson (2002:14), qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through methods such as interviews and attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants.

Bryman and Bell (2017:31) state that there are three fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research. The principal orientation of quantitative research is deductive, whereas qualitative research is inductive — a deductive approach tends to test theories and an inductive approach tends to emphasise on generating theories rather than proving them (Bryman and Bell, 2017:31). Quantitative research emphasises numerical data collection and analysis as opposed to the qualitative method which emphasises on word content collection and analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2017:31). Quantitative research adopts a positivist approach to research in which, "Only phenomena that can be observed by senses can genuinely be verified objects and sources of knowledge," according to Bryman and Bell (2017:12;31). Quantitative research, more often than not, adopts an interpretivist approach which Bryman and Bell (2017:14;31) state, "Assumes that any research approach needs to respect the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences." Lastly, the quantitative approach views social reality as an external, objective reality whereas, the qualitative approach sees social reality as constantly shifting and emergent, as interpreted by individuals (constructivism) (Bryman and Bell, 2017:31).

Given the nature of this research which sought to understand how practitioners were applying PR techniques and functions and in-line with the chosen constructivist ontology and reflective paradigm of PR, this research will employ a qualitative approach. The application of the PR techniques and functions cannot be quantified; it needs to be understood through analysing content data collected through interviews. Furthermore, the nature of the research is subjective in that the practitioners discuss the PR techniques and functions based on their own application which is different from how the next practitioner would apply them.

4.2.2. Qualitative research

Gubrium and Holstein 1997 (cited in Bryman and Bell, 2017:41), suggest four qualitative research traditions, namely; naturalism, ethnomethodology, emotionalism and lastly postmodernism. The above-mentioned traditions are underpinned by a social

construction of reality. Naturalism is described by Hammersley (2014:8) a means, "To capture the character of naturally occurring human behaviour which can only be achieved by first-hand contact with it, not by inferences from what people do in artificial settings, such as experiments." Ethnomethodology is a social inquiry which seeks to understand how collective members create and maintain a sense of order and understanding in social life (ten Have, 2004:14). Bryman and Bell (2017:41) describe emotionalism as a subjective means to gain access to 'inside' experiences and inner realities of humans. Emotionalism hasn't become a significant stream of research (Bryman and Bell, 2017:41) and has been criticised by Gubrium and Holstein 1997 in Silverman (2010:106) as emotionalist have the potential to blind themselves through interpretation to the ways participants shape their realities. Postmodernism has been discussed at length earlier in this thesis and is a method which is a method, "Sensitive to the different ways social reality can be constructed," (Bryman and Bell, 2017:41).

Qualitative research can take on several research designs such as (but not limited to), phenomenology and case study research (Bryman and Bell, 2017:42). It also involves different ways of collecting and analysing data but importantly, may require consultation of theoretical and empirical literature in order to interpret data (Bryman and Bell, 2017:42).

4.2.3. Criticism of qualitative research

Blumer 1954 (in Bryman and Bell, 2017:43), argued that definitive statements should be avoided when analysing social research as they tend to be excessively concerned with what is common rather than showcasing that variety is possible. Instead, social researchers should sensitise concepts by giving a general sense of what to look for and act as a means for uncovering the variations which phenomena could assume (Blumer 1954 in Bryman and Bell, 2017:43). Bryman and Bell (2017:43) state that this approach may leave researchers with a challenge in that if a concept is too broad, it will fail to provide a useful starting point for research and if it is too narrow, it is likely to have limitations of definitive concepts. It is, therefore, the researchers' duty to find a middle ground and produce relevant research.

In contrast, generalisation is another criticism of qualitative research as it is impossible to know how the research results can be applied in other settings (Bryman and Bell,

2017:50-51). Although research results may provide a starting point for further research, they cannot be applied in different settings, in the absolute sense. This also brings up issues of replication, another criticism which states that qualitative research results are often unstructured and rely too much on the researcher's decisions (Bryman and Bell, 2017:50). The lack of following a standard procedure makes it difficult for other researchers to truly follow how the research came to be which can be affected by the interpersonal relationships the researcher establishes with participants (Bryman and Bell, 2017:50).

Qualitative research has also been criticised for being too subjective as it often relies on the researcher's view s of which parts of the research results are important (Bryman and Bell, 2017:50). Furthermore, it is often difficult to truly establish what the researcher actually did, how s/he chose participants and how s/he analysed results, thus making qualitative research lack in transparency (Bryman and Bell, 2017:50).

4.2.3.1. Validity and reliability

The above-mentioned criticisms may raise issues of validity and reliability which, according to Mason 1996 in Bryman and Bell (2017:43), "Are important measures of the quality, rigour and wider potential of research, which can be achieved by following certain methodological and disciplinary conventions and principles."

4.2.3.2. Validity

Validity needs to showcase what actually exists and what was used to measure the findings (Brink, 1993:35). Campbell and Stanley 1966 (cited in Brink, 1993:35) established two forms of validity, namely; internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which research findings are a true reflection or representation of reality (Brink, 1993:35). External validity refers to the degree to which findings can be generalised across various social settings (LeCompte and Goetz 1982 in Bryman and Bell, 2017:43).

In light of this research, the researcher aimed to understand the application of PR techniques and functions by interviewing practitioners. The practitioners are in this case responsible for providing a true reflection of reality which then gives an indication of how other practitioners may be applying the techniques and functions. While the

research results cannot be generalised to a larger population or location, they do serve as a starting point for establishing how other South African practitioners understand PR techniques and functions.

4.2.3.3. Reliability

"Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the inform-ant's accounts as well as the investigators' ability to collect and record information accurately," says Selltiz et al. 1976 (cited in Brink, 1993:35). LeCompte and Goetz 1982 (in Bryman and Bell, 2017:43) suggested two forms of reliability namely; internal and external reliability. Internal reliability refers to the researcher developing consistent habits using a specific method and then rating results in the same way in order to reduce measurement error (Brink, 1993:35). External reliability refers to the degree to which a study can be replicated (Bryman and Bell, 2017:44). Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2017:44) state that although it is impossible to replicate a social setting of a par-ticular study, researchers should adopt a similar role as the original researcher.

The researcher, in this case, interviewed participants in the same manner, following an interview schedule and measuring all findings by referring to the literature which served as a guide of what techniques and functions are.

Brink (1993:35-36) states that there are some risks to both validity and reliability which are mainly underlined by error — he cautions researchers to be aware of sources of error such as the researcher, research participants, social setting and lastly, methods of data collection and analysis.

According to Brink (1993:36), researchers need to be conscious of any bias towards the research and overcome it through preparation and ensuring that they undergo nec-essary training before conducting interviews. Furthermore, Brink (1993:36) states that researchers can declare their assumptions (if any) about the research upfront so that others may consider them when reading the research. Before conducting the study, the researcher was tasked with drafting a research proposal prior to being allowed to register to conduct the research. Registration was allowed based on the researcher's previous studies. This can be likened to the training which Brink (1993:36) refers to.

Following registration, this proposal was then approved by the ethics board which ensured that the correct measures would be followed in order for the research to be considered valid.

Brink (1993:36) also states that participants may pose a threat if they are not truthful in their responses — they may make things seem better or worse than they really are. The researcher can overcome this by building trust, being attentive and keeping accurate and detailed field notes (Brink, 1993:36). The researcher established contact with the agencies and supplied them with valid information detailing what the research is about, who is the supervisor and from which institution. This facilitated trust between the researcher and the participants as they could validate all the information provided to them by contacting the supervisor.

Social settings may make participants act differently, however, the researcher can overcome this by interviewing the same participants in different settings and observe changes in behaviour (Brink, 1993:36-37). It was not possible for the researcher to ask participants the same set of questions in a different setting. However, participants were asked to provide a meeting place that they were comfortable with. This ensured that the researcher reduced the risk of the participants feeling uncomfortable and putting themselves in a position of not being able to provide accurate information due to the setting.

Finally, the threat to data collection and analysis is dependent on two elements, namely, research design and sampling (Brink, 1993:37). Researchers must have a solid research design to increase the potential for other researchers to reconstruct the original study while also decreasing the chances of the research findings being regarded as invalid or unreliable (Brink, 1993:37). Sampling bias can be avoided by ensuring that relevant participants are selected — they should know the subject well enough to accurately respond to questions (Brink, 1993:37). The study was approved after the researcher provided a full description of the research design adopted, therefore, limiting the chances of the research being regarded as invalid and unreliable. The study involved agencies which (mostly) have been operational for more than 5 years and with established clients. It is unlikely that these agencies were not knowledgeable or unable to answer questions correctly.

4.3. Research design

A research design is a structure which provides the use of a research method and the analysis of the subsequent data (Bryman and Bell, 2017:105). This research employed a case study research design.

4.3.1. Case study research

A case study research design allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth investigation using qualitative methods to obtain data from several sources (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991:2). Furthermore, this approach enables the researcher to develop a detailed analysis, identify themes and make assertions on the subject of investigation (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, n.d). A case can be a single organisation, location or event (Bryman and Bell, 2017:110). This research aimed to establish how PR practitioners in Durban were applying techniques and functions through pre-arranged semi-structured interviews.

Stake 1995 in Bryman and Bell (2017:111) distinguishes between three types of case study, namely, intrinsic, instrumental and multiple or collective cases. Intrinsic cases aim to access insight into particularities of a single situation, rather than insight into other cases (Bryman and Bell, 2017:111). "Instrumental case studies use the case as a means of understanding a broader issue or allowing generalisations to be challenged," Bryman and Bell (2017:11). Multiple or collective cases are characterised by exploring a general phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2017:111). This research is closely linked to an instrumental case study as it aims to understand how practitioners apply techniques and functions in comparison to how they were meant to be used, in addition, if there are any current trends which practitioners have adopted. Thus, it aimed to merely understand and give an account of how techniques and functions have been applied in Durban - which can be contrasted by other researchers to how other cities apply the techniques and functions.

4.4. Research methods

The researcher employed qualitative research methods to collect and analyse data. Data was collected through literature, interviews and then transcribed through content analysis which will be described below.

4.4.1. Units of analysis

The unit of analysis can be described as the objects of a study being analysed for a particular research project (ThoughtCo, 2018). These units can be individuals, specific groups, organisations, artifacts, social interactions or geographical units. For the purpose of this research, the units of analysis are PR practitioners at Durban based agencies.

The researcher created a list of PR agencies in Durban which can be found under **Appendix A** using several websites and social media. This was followed by determining whether the listed agencies were still operational by conducting desktop research of the listed websites, followed up by phone calls to confirm whether the agencies indeed provided PR services. The researcher's initial participant list consisted of 46 companies, 28% of which were no longer in operation. The researcher was then left with 36 agencies to contact — 24% of the agencies took part in the research, 52% of them did not respond following several follow up attempts by the researcher, 12% of the agencies had shifted their business focus and were no longer offering PR services, 6% of the agencies listed a Durban office but upon further investigation, the office was no longer operational and lastly, 6% of the agencies declined to be part of the research, sighting time constraints.

The agencies which took part had an average of 2,5 employees, consisting of an owner, managing director, CEO or similar (who will be referred to as account director throughout the research) and an assistant or account executive (who will be referred to as account executive throughout the research). The researcher spoke only to account directors at all agencies, except one, where both the account director and account executive were interviewed. This was mainly due to the teams being relatively small and not being able to allocate time resources to taking part in the research.

4.4.2. Sampling

Neuman (1997:201) states that, "Sampling is the process of systematically selecting cases for inclusion in a research project." Babbie and Mouton 2009 and Bryman and Bell 2017 describe various basic concepts of sampling, however the most relevant in this case are; population, sample, sampling frame, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. These terms are described below:

• Population can be described as the selected units for a particular study — they can be people, places, organisations, etc., from which the sample is chosen (Bryman and Bell, 2017:170). In this case, the population was selected specifically from Durban.

• A sample is a part of the population selected for a specific study and is based on a researcher choosing between two types of sampling methods, namely; probability sampling or non-probability sampling (Bryman and Bell, 2017:170).

• A sampling frame a list from which all units in the population will be selected as the sample (Babbie and Mouton 2009, Bryman and Bell 2017). The researcher conducted an online search to find PR agencies in Durban which have been listed under **Appendix A** — this list can be referred to as the sampling frame.

• Probability sampling is a method used to select participants at random from a list (sampling frame) containing all the units in a population (Babbie and Mouton 2009, Bryman and Bell 2017). Non-probability sampling is a method in which participants cannot be selected randomly (Bryman and Bell, 2017:170).

There are various types of non-probability samples, however, the researcher has adopted the non-probability purposive sample in which respondents are selected for a specific purpose. Babbie and Mouton (2009:166) state that purposive sampling is characterised by a researcher being able to select their own sample based on their knowledge or judgement of the population and its elements and the nature of the research. A non-probability purposive sample also allows the researcher to identify particular subjects (respondents) for in-depth investigation (Neuman, 1997:206). In this case, the researcher specifically needed to speak to PR practitioners based in Durban to unearth the techniques and functions which they make use of. This information was

collected through interviews which required the participants to discuss, in detail, how they apply certain PR techniques and functions.

4.4.3. Data collection methods

Qualitative data is collected to describe details about people, actions and events in social life (Neuman, 2014:477). This data can be in the form of text, observational notes, interview transcripts, audio or visual tapes and photos. The first step the researcher took in collecting data was to collect data by reviewing existing literature on the technique and functions. This was then followed by creating an interview schedule using the literature review as a guide. The researcher then conducted semi-structured interviews, using a voice recorder and note-taking to collect data from participants. These qualitative research methods allowed the researcher to find out specific information which can be compared and contrasted with information found in other interactions with participants (Dawson, 2002:28).

4.4.3.1. Literature study

When the researcher was reviewing possible research topics, a literary survey was conducted to broadly unearth the information available on the PR techniques and functions. A literary survey is a technique which assists researchers in familiarising themselves with the available literature (Bryman and Bell, 2017:72). It is usually followed by a literature review which was introduced in Chapter 2 of this research.

Although there was limited research available on PR techniques and functions, none of it provided an analysis of the current state of PR in South Africa. This prompted the decision to center the research around current trends, with a specific focus on the application of PR techniques and functions. The literature review outlines definitions and description of what the PR techniques and functions under investigation are and how they are meant to be applied. The researcher made use of books, credible online sources, library databases from various disciplines to gather the information used in the review. The literature review served as a guide to clarify the research questions as well as formulate the questions for participants.

4.4.3.2. Interview guide construction

The researcher followed an interview schedule with a list of questions, created prior to conducting interviews. The questions consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions usually consist of questions which participants can answer freely, however they wish (Babbie and Mouton 2009, Bryman and Bell 2017). Closed-ended questions are usually a set of fixed questions from which participants are able to select an appropriate answer (Bryman and Bell, 2017:199). The researcher made use of a mixture of questions as some information required further elaboration and some required straight forward responses. There are advantages and disadvantages to both open and closed-ended questions but mainly open-ended questions;

- allow participants to provide in-depth responses to which the researcher can prompt further (Bryman and Bell, 2017:199)
- allow the researcher to explore new ideas or ones which the researcher may have limited knowledge on (Bryman and Bell, 2017:199)
- usually require the researcher to interpret the meaning of responses (Babbie and Mouton, 2009:233)
- are time-consuming as they require interviewees to answer questions at length and also require the researcher to arrange pre-coded questions to facilitate easier interpretation which then requires post-coding (Babbie and Mouton 2009, Bryman and Bell 2017)

Closed-ended questions;
- are easily interpreted and can be transferred directly into a computer format (Babbie and Mouton 2009, Bryman and Bell 2017)
- allow the researcher to easily compare and make assertions based on the selected responses (Bryman and Bell, 2017:200)
- reduce the likelihood of participants offering a different perspective (Bryman and Bell, 2017:200)
- are unlikely to cover all possible responses without a long list of options to select from and lastly, may make it difficult for participants to answer if the options are limiting (Bryman and Bell, 2017:200)

Bryman and Bell (2017:202) outline various types of questions however the researcher mainly constructed *questions of knowledge,* which are usually employed to test knowledge or awareness in a particular area. The questions were directly informed by the terms described in the literature review and ordered accordingly. The researcher, through relevant networks, pre-tested the questions by sending them to PR professionals currently working for agencies. Pre-testing is a good way to avoid errors and ensure that the questions are unambiguous (Babbie and Mouton, 2009:244). The test participants provided the researcher with feedback which was then used to adjust the questions. A full list of the questions can be found under **Appendix B.**

4.4.3.3. Interviews

After formulating and pre-testing, the questions, the researcher reached out to the list of agencies (appendix A) via email — see **Appendix C** for the email to potential participants. The email briefly described what the research was about and how participants could be a part of it. Potential participants were asked to take part in a one (1) hour-long, in-person interview in which the researcher would ask questions pertaining to their PR practices. The researcher waited a day before following up with a phone call and email (in cases where the phone was unanswered). Two consent letters were sent out to the agencies that were interested in taking part in the research — an agency consent letter (see **Appendix D**) in which the agencies gave the researcher to permission to conduct the research and an individual consent (see **Appendix E**) form was meant for each participating practitioner.

Once they agreed, the researcher then conducted semi-structured in-person interviews which can be described as an interview strategy in which the researcher can find out information that can be compared and contested with information from other interviews (Dawson, 2002:28). This method enabled the researcher to ask PR practitioners the same set of questions while also allowing for flexibility in case other important information arose (Dawson, 2002:28-29). Following each interview, the researcher updated the questions based to eliminate or include particular questions (Dawson, 2002:29). Rubin and Rubin 1995 in Babbie and Mouton (2009:289) state that qualitative interviewing is an iterative process in which the interviewer repeats the same method of gathering and analysing information in order to come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon under investigation. "The continuous nature of

qualitative interviewing means that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project," Rubin and Rubin 1995 (in Babbie and Mouton, 2009:289).

4.4.3.4. In-person interviews

There are benefits to face-to-face/in-person interviews and telephonic interviews. The most notable benefit is that in-person interviews have a higher response rate and allow an interviewer to observe the interviewee and clarify questions if participants show signs of confusion — which is not always possible with telephonic interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2017:218). The researcher conducted 87,5% of the interviews in-person and the others telephonically. Some participants opted for telephonic interviews as it was the only way they could take part in the study due to time constraints.

4.4.3.5. Recording and note-taking

The researcher met with the participants at a place they were comfortable with and first introduced the study and objectives. Participants were then informed that the interviews would be recorded using a cell phone and that notes would be also be taken. Recording interviews is a technique which allows for a thorough examination of what was said in an interview (Bryman and Bell, 2017:231). Furthermore, it enables the researcher to revisit recordings and repeatedly examine interviewees responses (Bryman and Bell, 2017:231). The main disadvantage of voice recording is that interviewers are at risk of being complacent and not paying as much attention to what participants are saying (Dawson, 2002:66). Note-taking was a secondary means of collecting data used to highlight important issues that came up during interviews. This method doesn't rely on recording equipment but can make it difficult for the researcher to maintain eye contact and focus on what the interviewee is saying (Dawson, 2002:67).

4.5. Data analysis methods

According to Neuman (2014:477), analysing data means to systematically organise, integrate, and examine data to identify patterns of association. The data was analysed through transcription and thematic analysis.

4.5.1. Transcription

Following each interview, the researcher transcribed the participant responses verbatim. Transcribing allows data to be analysed by other researchers and the findings thereof can be used in other ways from those intended by the original researcher (Bryman and Bell, 2017:231). There are various ways to transcribe interview recordings, however, the researcher transcribed the recordings herself. This allowed her to gather themes and draw conclusions following each interview.

4.5.2. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a flexible analysis method that aims to identify, analyse and describe patterns, or themes, across the data set (Bryman and Bell, 2017:350). It can be conducted in an inductive or deductive manner (Bryman and Bell, 2017:351). An inductive analysis involves the researcher developing themes directly from the date without considering pre-conceptualised theoretical frame (Bryman and Bell, 2017:351). The deductive analysis method is informed by the researchers' theoretical framework and is guided by themes identified in previous research on the topic (Bryman and Bell, 2017:351).

The findings were grouped according to the techniques, functions and current trends discussed in the literature review which have all been researched and reported on before by various scholars and PR professionals. The researcher used these as pre-conceived themes and presented the findings according to what respondents said in their interviews. Summaries and conclusions were then drawn based on those transcriptions. It can, therefore, be deduced that the researcher adopted the deductive analysis method.

4.6.   Delineation of the research

An investigation of techniques and functions used by PR practitioners at agencies in Durban, South Africa over a period of 3 months.

4.7. Limitations of the study

The researcher would have preferred to spend a week with each agency in order to gain in-depth knowledge into how PR techniques and functions are applied by practitioners, however, this was not possible as agencies were not in a position to accommodate the researcher. Therefore, the findings presented in this study cannot provide a full report on exact processes, however, they have drawn conclusions based on the information provided by the research participants.

5. CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

"Although the analysis of quantitative data generally occurs later in the research process, this does not mean that you should not consider how you will analyse your data until then…You need to be aware that the decisions you make at an early stage in the research, will have implications for the sorts of analysis you will be able to conduct," Bryman and Bell (2017:312).

5.1. Introduction

The researcher collected data through a literature review, interviews and analysed the data through a thematic analysis method. The researcher sought to gain an understanding of how PR practitioners are applying techniques and functions to present a view of the current trends in the PR industry. This chapter discusses the findings of this study firstly by providing an overview of the agencies and clients they service then secondly, by grouping the main findings according to the techniques, functions and current trends discussed in the literature review (chapter 2). The researcher provides relevant participant responses verbatim and concludes each section with a summary of the findings which emerged from the transcriptions.

This research sought to achieve the following objectives:

RO1: To identify PR techniques used by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO2: To describe the application of PR techniques by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO3: To identify the PR functions carried out by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO4: To describe the application of PR functions by practitioners at Durban agencies

RO5: To compare the current use of PR techniques and functions to how they are meant to be used

RO6: To provide evidence of the current state of the PR industry through tracking the application of PR techniques and functions.

The findings have been grouped according to the following sections:

• Overview of agencies
• PR Techniques

- PR Functions
- Current PR Trends

Each section has subsections with a set of questions focusing on a particular technique, functions or trend. As this was a qualitative study, the findings have been grouped according to the subsection and each subsection was further grouped into relevant themes or specific question posed to the participants. In some sections, fictitious names have been created to protect the identity of the PR companies as well as their clients.

5.2. Overview of agencies

The researcher spoke to a total of eight (8) agencies which have been operational for an average of thirteen (13) years. The average number of team members is 2,5 mainly consisting of an account director and an account executive — only one (1) agency consisted of 5 members and the rest were split between one (1), two (2) or maximum of three (3) members per team. The teams included a senior or founding member (account director), an account executive and an intern / admin or similar. Generally, responsibilities such as writing and research are shared by all members, then the account director is responsible for strategy, client liaison, advising and overall management of the business, while the account executive is mainly responsible for research, monitoring, organising, media liaison, distributing media releases and admin related tasks.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of clients they have — this was split between retainer and project-based clients. Furthermore, they were asked to indicate the industries they service. The researcher did this to gather a sense of the type of clients Durban agencies are servicing. Project clients are classified as those with three to six months contracts. The table below provides a summary of the agencies responses:

Table 5.1. Overview of agency clients

Agency	Retainer Clients	Project Clients	Industries
Agency A	5	7	Accessories, Celebrity Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Education, Fashion and Food
Agency B	7	5	Beauty, Business, Health, Legal, Security and Skincare
Agency C	4	2	Business, Fashion, Investment, Manufacturing, Property and Travel
Agency D	4	13	Business, Professional Sport
Agency E	4	5	Beauty, Events and Health
Agency F	5	2	Manufacturing, Hospitality, Investment
Agency G	6	2	Education, Entertainment, Health and Hospitality
Agency H	1	1	Beauty, Health, Skincare

5.3. Main Findings: PR Techniques

The findings below have been categorised according to the techniques described in the literature review, namely; media relations technique, corporate image, promotional activities, issues management, crisis communication and networking.

5.3.1. Media relations technique findings

The researcher asked participants fourteen (14) questions in the media relations sub-section, six (6) of which were directly related to media relations as a technique. The questions related to the media relations technique were dealing with the type of relationship practitioners have with media, how they stay informed and how they get ahead of potential issues. The findings below have been grouped by;

- Type of relationship
- Staying informed
- Getting ahead of potential issues

5.3.1.1. Type of relationship

The media relations technique is mainly characterised by building mutually beneficial relationships with media. When participants were asked to describe the nature of their relationships with media, most of them said that they had close but professional relationships. They socialised with media but did not necessarily form personal relationships beyond their scope of work. Some of the younger agencies (operating for less than five years) didn't form social relationships outside of their scope of work. Agencies older than five years built and maintained close social but not personal relationships with media.

> "The thing with us is that even though we are Durban based, our clients are national. So for example when we do a campaign for one of our clients, we are dealing with media in Cape Town, Johannesburg and in Durban. We also travel a lot for our clients. If they have an event in Jo'burg, we'll go there, if they have an event in Cape Town, we'll go there. So we interact with them (media) but we don't socialise with them. So we keep our media relationships professional but we nurture them. Once we get to know a person, like an example, this week, we had to send out an article and we said ok well, let's start with the people that we know. The people that do publish our stuff because we already have a relationship with them."

Agency A

> "Definitely relational. You need to build some sort of relationship with them but having said that, I've found that I'm not picking up the phone as often as I used to. People are becoming so busy, they just say, "Send me an email, send me a WhatsApp." Everything is digital now. So, when I first started my business, it was a lot of on the phone and now I would say it's probably 80% email and 20% over the phone. It has changed because you've (I've) built the relationship and now it's (I'm) maintaining it, does that make sense? Just by staying in touch and also I think it's nice for them (journalists) to be able to send me a brief and

I'll find someone who can help them. I help solve a problem for them. Like I had one journalist who had a very specific brief — it had to be a lady of colour, she had to be over 50 and had to be in business with another person of her family for more than five years - I mean that's very specific. So she was very chuffed (that I helped her with this). And it wasn't a client I had, (I) just (found her) through my network so it wasn't necessarily to benefit a client but just to nurture the relationship (with the journalist)."

Agency B

"Ok so, I studied journalism, so some of the very senior guys (journalists) actually studied with me so my relationships go back to my journalism study days. When it comes to a work sort of thing, I mean, you (I) have to be professional regardless of whether I'm friends with them or not, that doesn't change that it is a professional interaction."

Agency C

"It's individual relationships. I think one of our strengths is the fact that we keep pretty good tabs on who is coming in and out of buildings. We'll often get a heads up before they (journalists) move. We don't socialise but we do personalise. I mean it's a strategy of ours to make sure we have fun in a lot of the work do so we build really good relationships. We tend to try and work with people as if they are an extension of our business or one of our friends, so we cultivate really good "off-work" relationships with journalists. We don't go out and socialise with them, but we keep a good personal rapport going with them. Which means that if they move from one particular building to another, we just keep track them."

Agency D

"We don't really have relationships with media."

Agency E

"Many years ago, I was working for a corporate company and they had a rugby suite and I found that so useful because you could invite the media and entertain them a controlled space, for a controlled period of time and I developed

very good relationships over those years and even today, I can call on those people. Of course, a lot of them have moved on. Otherwise, you know, I've had one of my clients for 15 years, so yes you get to know the people (journalists) who run your stories. You get to know what they want and it does make things easier."

Agency F

"I don't socialise with them (journalists) on a personal basis purely because I think that is a dangerous area to work within. But I do socialise with them. Like for example, we will have cocktail function just for media or we, twice a year, often go to Cape Town or Johannesburg and we call on media there and we will have a social get together with them but more so in Durban than what we do in Cape Town."

Agency G

5.3.1.2. Staying informed

Media relations is also about ensuring you provide media with content that they actually want. This requires good relationships and staying informed. When participants were asked how they ensure that the always know what the media is looking for, their responses varied. Some relied on media alerts which are daily email briefs sent to PR professionals from journalists. Others said that it was a function within their business, usually assigned to someone who then informs the rest of the team on what is happening.

"We both are quite different in that I am very social media oriented. So I will be on Twitter most of the day and I'm the one that updates everyone like, "Guys this just happened, this celebrity just did this, this brand launched this," whereas she (other participant) is more of like a networker and maybe youtube, a little bit. So she hears her news, not instantly, but like, she engages with people (journalists) a lot more. She has a lot more face-to-face engagements with people (journalists) and that's how she hears her news and then she will tell us. There are also platforms that send us briefs from media which we have subscribed to."

Agency A

"Well, I try to obviously have a look at through, obviously the news everyday but that all gets sent to my computer, so I have a look at that just to kind of stay up to date with what's happening. And then, there's things like media alerts, which is a nice tool to be able to have a look at every day because that's got certain brief requests that people (journalists) are working on. Obviously for the sort of health, beauty and fashion clients, I get the health editor or the editor, the beauty or fashion editor to send me their briefs — so (if) they're (media) working on the October issue and this is (which details) what they're looking for. So, I make sure that I'm constantly getting those briefs as well and that goes back to just maintaining those relationships."

Agency B

"Well, obviously you need to be looking at what the international trends are, to start with. So, you know South Africa always follows the international side (trends) so if you're not checking in with what is happening internationally within your client's industries, you're gonna be bit lost. And then obviously, you know, you need to read the papers and the media online, etc., so that you can actually see what is happening and what they're (media) talking about. And also, obviously, you know the media, once they know that you have been working for a particular client for a long time and they've (media) been in that sphere for a long time, they'll automatically contact you (for information)."

Agency C

"You keep tabs on them (media) as well. You know, in some cases, we correspond with media in a bunch of different ways. We, obviously, churning out syndicated content to a particular group or a database. We obviously in individual contact with people to the point that we think there is something wrong if they don't come back to us and ask (for content). But then we also maintain them in smaller groups. We've got a couple of WhatsApp groups where yes we maintain individual contact but we do it collectively. So, we'll put 8 or 10 journalists that all have the same thing in common onto the same group and a certain number of material will go out there and it's designed to do a couple of things, one, to make sure that the lazy ones (journalists) get what they need

but also to stimulate the individual to come back to us and ask, "ok, I see where we are going with this particular thing but I'm looking for a different angle, or curated content or can you set me up with something fresh."

Agency D

"So usually the whole process starts with a strategy and a content plan. So that's where we nail down the different types of content and obviously, whatever we might want to achieve through whatever we are creating. So that's where it starts and that's how we ensure (that we are producing the right content). So, we don't just wake up and do the content based on "oh, today this is the topic." We start with a strategy and then we do the content plan in order to know the different types of content that we will put our and then break it down into whatever that piece (content) is."

Agency E

"That's hard. You just gotta read the news yes and basically see opportunity. So, say when I'm watching the news on, for argument sake, Carte Blanche, I see, oh hang on, "What about…" and then you suggest that (the angle or direction to take) to the client."

Agency F

"Ok, so, I (account director) don't have time for reading. I wish I did. And I wish I had time to go through social media to find out what's going on in the world. Uh, so we have appointed that role to an individual within our office to make sure that he is up to date. He loves reading and scrolling through the news and seeing all that stuff. So that's part of his job description, that he does that and then he educates us once a day on what is happening and what could impact any of our clients. So, it becomes a role in our office to make sure (he knows what is happening) and then educating (us)."

Agency G

"Yeah, cause we are very much consumer brands, so…I'm on my phone a lot, watching what people are doing on Instagram, on social media…because that's really where a lot of our work is happening now — in the digital space. So I'm

constantly watching what media, when I say media, I'm talking about digital media, and watching what they're doing, trends, what's going on, what are they posting about, what are they talking about, new things…but not media alerts or anything like that"

Agency H

5.3.1.3. Getting ahead of potential issues

Having a good relationship with media can be highly beneficial for the company as it allows practitioners to be aware of potential issues. If a certain reporter usually covers news on a particular organisation, they also engage with other stakeholders related to the organisation (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:73). This engagement allows them to develop deeper insights which practitioners or management may not always have (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:73). A practitioner with good media relations practices will constantly engage certain reporters to uncover issues which have the potential to harm the organisation's reputation.

Participants were asked if they have ever heard about a potential issue through the media, before their client informed them or knew about the potential issue. Five out of the eight agencies responded that they had this happen to them often and in most cases, their clients were aware but would not brief them to be on alert in case media contact them.

"Lots! Yeah and that would be for my security client. That's the only client I've had that for because just within that client…I mean I've been doing their work for now for over 10 years… and uhh, so for them, I would get, let's say a journalist from the Daily News will say, "I'm doing a story on the high rate of crime in the upper highway area and I want your comment from XX Security say by 2 o clock today." Nobody knows from XX Security, I've only just been informed and the deadline is like now. So we get that like all the time…or a security guard has been…uhm, it's alleged that they were involved in a house robbery. I (media) want comment. So I then have to go back and get all the facts from the right people, quickly draft something, make sure I get all the right channels to approve it before it can then get sent."

*XX security is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.

Agency B

*"Yeah, it often happens. I mean some of our clients… for example one client…
what well find is…sometimes players will talk to agents for example obviously
and agents will speak to media and so it sort of yeah and we find out via via…
sort of like new signings and that sort of thing and where guys are going. It's
never really been anything detrimental to our clients but it's a breaking news
story that would like to break first obviously. We've had some instances where
we have had to do some serious damage control, where there has been sort of
personal (or) political information that has been leaked to the media which is
very destructive to clients and you only pick it up literally on publication. We
occasionally get a heads up or a warning that it's out there but then you're
playing catch up which is tricky."*

Agency D

*"Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've had quite a few of those situations. So in some situ-
ations, they come to us and in some, the same journalist who came to use the
last crisis has now gone to the client directly. So it varies (sometime media lets
us know, sometimes they don't), to answer your question."*

Agency G

*"Uhm, I have had it once, there was a crisis and once of the journalists did
phone me. Uhm but we had already heard about it (from client). But she (jour-
nalist) did phone me and tell, "did you know that this had happened?" Uhm,
and then how do we deal with it? The way we deal with a crisis with this client
— we have to adhere to the global guidelines so we have to refer to the head
office. We do not have the directive the deal with these things on our own."*

Agency H

5.3.1.4. Summary of media relations technique findings

PR practitioners in Durban keep close social relationships with media, that are nurtured
but not personal. They are well informed on which media covers news on their clients

and ensure to keep those groups informed about work which their clients may be up to.

The practitioners stay informed by consuming the news, following trends and keeping up with what is happening on social media. In some teams, all of the practitioners do this and feed information to the rest of the team and in other, it is a function within the business for one person to do this and educate the rest of the team.

Most agencies have previously found out information from journalist without their client's knowledge. In most cases, they were able to respond effectively by ensuring that they know all sides of the story and are able to draft a quick response to media.

5.3.2. Corporate Image findings

The corporate image function is characterised by coordinated communication activities (Overton-De Klerk, 2000:197-199) as well as PR practitioners upholding a positive image of their clients through various activities. It is a combination of various communication efforts by different parts of the business within an organisation such as marketing (Overton-De Klerk, 2000:192).

Participants were asked six (6) questions in relation to how they uphold a positive corporate image of their clients as well as how they manage negative perceptions about their clients. The responses below have been separated into two sections, namely;

• Upholding a positive image
• Managing negative perceptions
• Dealing with negative publicity

5.3.2.1. Upholding a positive image

When participants were asked, *How would you say you uphold a positive impression of your clients?* Their responses varied, no two agencies upheld positive impressions of their clients in the same way.

> *"I think the one thing we're really good at is, we have a broad spectrum of networks and clients. So also what we do often is if we hear that one of our brand*

clients has an event and we have a personal influencer who we also manage that would fit, we bring them together. We're big on brand collaborations."

Agency A

"My gosh, where to start? Uh… I think for a lot of my clients, for them it's about making sure that they are top of mind within their industries. Whoever it is… if somebody thinks security, they must think XX Security. So it's about looking at all aspects of their business and highlighting all of that. So for example, if XX Security sponsors the soccer club in the upper highway area, to make sure that they get coverage in the local paper…so people know about it. So it's always looking for the positives in their businesses that they might not necessarily think is a big deal then highlighting it."

*XX security is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.

Agency B

"It's essential that you do. So for instance, I won't buy a competitor brand. I have a luggage client, I only buy their luggage, I only buy their handbags. I would never be seen with a competitor product. Why would anybody believe me if I'm not supporting my own client? So with my property client, we recently just sold our house using that client. My daughter is now gonna be using them, my mothering in law is gonna be using them so…you have to… if you don't believe in who you're working for and don't wanna work with them yourself then you shouldn't be working with them. So I'm very particular about that. I will only support my clients, so I don't ever buy competitor brands."

Agency C

"It's so difficult but it's so important. We (are) monitoring, particularly on social media. We use some of the analytics, we use things that can keep tabs on all levels of social media, things like Hootsuite. We try and convince as many of our clients as possible to spend money on active monitoring. One of our biggest issues is that they don't but into it, they see it as an expense they can do without. It's a nightmare…but it's so important, you cannot physically monitor all things at the same time. Digital and social is fairly easy to do, you can check

online and you can go search for it…but you actually want that proactively done. And a lot of the good monitoring like your Newsclip and rebook and that sort of thing, they'll actually get it pre-publication. I'll get a clip in my email a day before publication …so you're ahead of the game but it's one of those things that guys (clients) are dropping."

Agency D

"The content is obviously different across our client but we... majority of it is brand story telling. So it's not necessarily, (like anything in particular). It's putting out what our clients stand for and putting through that messaging across all platforms."

Agency E

"Ok so as an example, once a year, they (one of my clients) in Johannesburg for a competition that they sponsor and in the morning of that competition, I set up business interviews with various business journos. So we're not talking about the competition. The media are invited to the competition in the evening but I set up business interviews and I keep following up until…(I secure publicity)."

Agency F

"Well, I think the objectives that are set at the beginning of each year, are…we monitor them very closely. So some clients want ROI on AVE, I mean we all know that AVE is no longer a benchmark but I've got two clients that only want AVE so we will give them that AVE. Ok? Those clients have actually set KPIs for us that we need to target to achieve certain KPIs in AVE. So as much as we try and change that to reach (for example), it just doesn't work. They want the AVE so we apply to that. We have clients that want proof on footfall ok so we report on, well they report back to us on footfall. We have a client that, well is suppose it's the same as footfall. They want table covers. So how many people sit and eat in their restaurant, same as footfall. So each client is very different. So what we try and do is every month in our monthly report, we report back onto the objectives. So we are very target driven. So whatever the target is set at, that's what we will do to achieve…and we have never not achieved.

We also do events, so some of the clients require events or parties so that would be considered as upholding the image of the client. Uh, it's also media liaison… being able to… for them to be able to talk to the right media and stake-holders…stakeholder engagement."

Agency G

"*I think because I've been working on the brand for so long, they are… they feel like my own brands so I've got a personal connection with the brands… and people often associate me with the brands too because it's been so long. So I think that whatever I do, I uphold, you know those brands. Whether I'm dealing with media or regular consumers…I always uphold those brands posi-tively.*"

Agency H

5.3.2.2. Follow up question: What kind of activities do you do to maintain a good image of your clients?

Participants were asked to select activities which they do to maintain a positive image of their clients. The results of this question have been presented below:
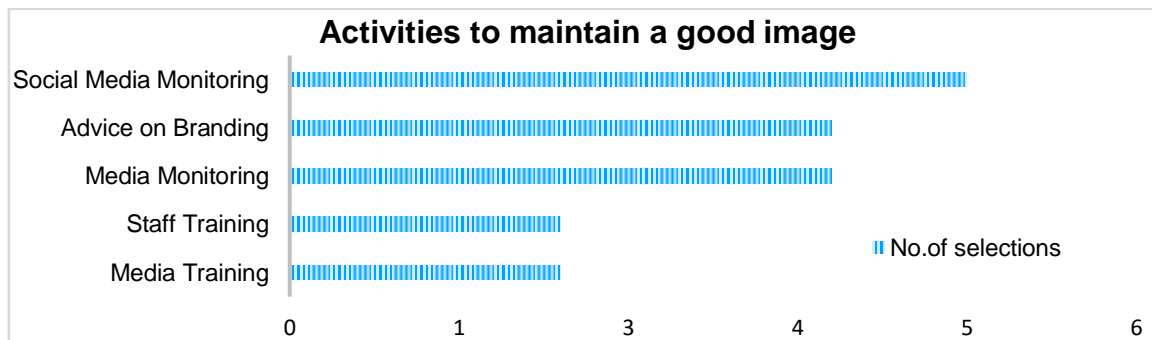
Figure 5.1: Activities to maintain a good image

The key finding is that monitoring conversations and publicity is a large part of ensuring that the client's good image is maintained.

5.3.2.3. Managing negative perceptions

Participants were asked, *how do you manage negative perceptions about your clients?* Their responses varied — some sighted that they've never really had to manage negative perceptions while others said that it was important to speak to the client to make sure they understand what needs to happen in order for their image to be seen in a positive light.

"We always take them (our clients) through a step by step (process) of improving their image or making their image look better. Normally when people start with us, it's either they've never done PR before or there's not even any awareness of them. So for example with Opum, they've never done PR before until last year. We are the first PR agency to work with Opum and they were launched in 1965 or something like that and …so we had to… when they came on to the bus, it was like (they said), "and this person needs to hear about us and Bona (magazine)," and we were like, "Guys, it's a process, we need to take it step by step," It's the first article, the first event inviting media…you know. The first thing we did in December last year was a charity event for the seniors of the area and Opum came with food parcels. I think we had maybe two or three media there because people (media) were like… no one's been invited by Opum to anything before so it was just like, "what, what's happening?" So we always take out clients through a process… it's either we fixing their website first, we're fixing their social media first, before we even get to…now were creating awareness because, we always try and make them understand that everything is like a circle of information. As soon as, like when you hear about us, because you have your phone in your hand, the first thing you're probably gonna do is check, "Are they on Facebook? Are they on Instagram?" And then you'll probably check, "Do they have a website?" And then next thing you go on google and see, "Has anything been written about them?" So we try and make out clients understand how the consumer process works and then once they understand that, then they know that, like when Joe Soap (example), like when they hear my name, first thing they're gonna do is search on their social media, then they're gonna look on the website, then they're gonna google, then this, then that. So once they understand that then it's easier for us to cultivate a positive image."

*Opum is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.

Agency A

> *"Touch wood. I haven't had to but having said that… My biggest client has another PR agency that specialises in crisis communication and they do all of that…all the bad stuff."*

Agency B

> *"Don't think we've had that. We've never…maybe it boils down to working with people that you've got stuff in common with. We've never really had to go and pick up the pieces. We don't normally go out and aggressively pitch for new work. A hell of a lot of our work comes through referrals…so we've never had to out of desperation pick out a Ford (client with negative perception) or anything like that."*

Agency D

> *"Normally I try and chat with the client and say, "Look, this is the problem and then…" and sometimes the clients couldn't be bothered but if they believe that they should bother, then we work out a strategy and then I'll set up (interviews). Then we try and fix that. It depends, I mean if a member of the media phones me and says, "Do you know what an idiot your client is? He…whatever (explains what the client did)," then I'll say, "ok tell me your side, tell me what you know" and then I'll phone the client and I'll say, "Look, I hear…(that this has happened)" and then you try and resolve it that way. So it's normally personal. And you must do this straight away."*

Agency F

> *"With difficulty. You know what, you can't have everybody on your side, you can't have everybody loving your brand and liking you the way you'd like them to. So you just got to pick your areas where you want that target market to like you and make sure that you are communicating enough to those that don't like you to try and get them on your path...but the focus area is always on the positive and not on those negatives because you can put the same effort into both*

and you'll get a lot more from the positive people and the negative people, you'll get once step forward. So we always try and get that step forward but we don't focus on trying to convert them. We do promote uh, target audience... audience target market if I can call it that... so we always try and focus on those people we wanna grab and those are the ones we want to try and pull."

Agency G

"So I'm thinking of my main client, there have been some incidents. Generally, there is a protocol that we have to follow. We first have to notify the correct people in South Africa and also the consumer or customer complaints person and all the necessary people within South Africa. So we notify them. Then we approach global, they then send us the necessary material because usually they have had a similar issue before us. We then get the materials from them. So they usually have media releases or statements prepared. We get sent those press statements, we then work with the lawyer and director to formulate or to utilise the communication that we have received and then adapt it to local. We adapt it to how we feel would be the best way to communicate to the South African media. Their approach is reactive and not proactive. So they say, you only approach media if they approach you first. I would like to proactively send media a statement but no (I have to follow protocol)."

Agency H

5.3.2.4. Dealing with negative publicity

Participants were asked how they deal with negative publicity affecting their clients and mostly responded that they have set protocols which they follow. Most also sighted a quick turnaround time after ensuring that all facts have been accurately recorded. Some responded to negative publicity immediately while others would wait for the media to come to them and ask for comment.

"Well, I normally do that because I'm the crisis person for the team and the crisis person for all our clients, so as soon as something happens… if it's small clients, an individual client, it's normally just the client and I that will be the team. But one of our big clients for example, the first thing that we normally do is, we assemble the crisis coms team, everyone is on the WhatsApp group and you

know, the 45-minute rule, you know you have to respond within 45 minutes otherwise you're gonna miss the boar completely. So within that 30 to 40 minutes, we decide, are we gonna communicate via sms, via WhatsApp, letters, are we gonna phone the media, are we gonna wait for them to phone us. We brief all the secretaries on all the campuses (and tell them), "If someone (media) phones (and asks about this), this is the response." We draft a statement and get that issued to everyone and it gets to (sent) media."

Agency A

"We do have crisis holding statements ready and waiting for the not so big serious things and again, in terms of anything that can be negative, it's to make sure that the right channels are followed, so there's processes involved. SO that's also important and making sure that people understand."

Agency B

"It's interesting… Particularly on social media, we've dealt with this a lot. I mean social media is seen as a legitimate platform where you can legitimately can gripe. And you cannot bully people on social media. If somebody is being completely out of line, you can weigh it inane try and sensor them… and take them down. Our view is that if somebody is engaging you, even aggressively, you need to give them…you need to legitimise that platform so we'll engage with them on behalf of the client and hopefully try and balance the discussion and make sure that all the facts are being accurately represented and hopefully try and stimulate a bigger public discussion to try and counter the damage that's done.

It's so brand and it depends on what the crisis was. I mean I've worked with a client who had a really poor image and… you know it's just being consistent and looking for ways to positively talk them (your clients) up and to talk up their credibility versus the negative stuff."

Agency C

"If you're talking to a particular group, say a branch or a school where everyone will be aware of what's going on. The trick is often to just take a deep breath

*when you see it happening and just make sure that the balance of information is out there… You'll often follow that chain of discussions and look where it resolves itself. So it will get angry, it will get spiteful…you often do the credibility (for your client) a lot of good by going in there with kid gloves and just putting facts out there. I think responding quickly is very important to make sure that you are listening. So the speed of the response and the tone of the response is importan*t."

Agency D

"Not really but one client usually gets negative stuff but client takes care of that. I don't.... they have standard responses and they deal with that."

Agency E

"So I haven't had anything as big as the Ford situation but we've had to deal with a lot of people dying in weird ways. So I think that would be possibly the biggest, I suppose, the crisis I'm closest to. How did we deal with it? Just make sure that you've got an open line of communication and that you are educating people. Stick to the facts. Out turnaround time on crisis stuff is as soon as possible. Get those facts together and it depends on the crisis on whether you distribute that media release or you hold onto it for when the enquiry comes through but be prepared so that when that enquiry come through, you're ready to activate."

Agency G

"Our turnaround time… mmm a day… so I would love to do it within a day but it doesn't happen…there's just so much. So I would say two to three days… I know… There have been some nasties about racial issues that don't event stem from South Africa but it doesn't matter where it is."

Agency H

5.3.2.5. Follow up question: Which tools do you use to counteract bad publicity?

Participants were then asked to indicate which tools they used to counteract bad publicity between social media, media release, crisis holding statements or press conferences. Most of them said they used social media or a media release, to ensure that stakeholders know what their client's stance is:

> *"The first thing would be to issue a media statement or media release… you know nobody has time and the newsrooms are so understaffed so to be holding a press conference etc. when you're sitting with a crisis is no way the cleverest idea. So I mean with social media it would really depend on whether client even has a social media page. So it really, really depends (on the situations)."*

Agency C

> *"You know, the media hate press conferences. In the old days where there were lost of media, they would attend. We had a building of R800billion, a factory, how many media do you think I had (attended)? They don't pitch. But we always try and fix it (the negative publicity) with the relevant media and then send out a press release."*

Agency F

> *"Ok, press conferences don't work in today's world. They are a thing of the past. Again each situation is deal with differently. I try to veer away from social media. Ok, so if you're in a crisis situation, try not go to social media. Try and keep it away from there as much as possible which is difficult and reason being is that there is a confusion between, fake news and what is happening and whether people take your brand seriously on the platforms. So I'm very cautious about social media. Issuing a statement? We will always prepare a holding statement. It would definitely be available like as quick as possible but we do not distribute it as a press release it is absolutely a holding statement. We do not create media releases around a crisis. This is the media statement and that is what will answer all the necessary questions and that is what is fed out."*

Agency G

"Social media if needed. If there is comment on social, we would address it but…I don't do this personally. They (client) do put a statement up on social media for people to see."

Agency H

5.3.2.6. Summary of corporate image findings

Participants didn't have a clear way of upholding a positive image of their clients - they all had different ways of doing this such as; securing relevant interviews and publicity, supporting their clients through using their services or buying their products, and measuring their progress against set PR objectives. A key finding was that they do a lot of monitoring of conversations on social media and monitoring of publicity to ensure that their clients are represented in a positive light.

They also don't have a clear way of managing negative perceptions, apart from speaking to the client and ensuring that the right information is given to media. Negative publicity is dealt with in a short time after all the relevant information has been collated and packaged in a suitable format for media. Agencies always have to follow set and agreed on strategies when responding to negative publicity.

Press conferences are no longer relevant when dealing with negative publicity. Practitioners counteract bad publicity by issuing media statements and ensuring that social media followers are informed about a client's stance on the negative publicity received.

5.3.3. Promotional activities findings

Promotional activities are events used to communicate specific information to specific audiences in order to contribute to a well-functioning organisation (Skinner et al., 2010:8). Participants were asked five (5) questions in this section regarding whether they arrange events on behalf of their clients, if so, what kind of events they arrange and why they arrange events on behalf of their clients.

Two agencies did not arrange events on behalf of their clients — one handled social media for events and some graphic aspects and the other did not handle any aspects of events at all on behalf of clients.

Six agencies arranged events on behalf of their clients and their involvement ranged from arranging all aspects, including inviting media, handling social media, event management elements such as decor and catering.

Participants indicated that they arrange a variety of events which have been presented below:

Types of Events

Type	
Conferences	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Product / Service Launch	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Activations	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Store Promotions	▮▮▮▮▮

▮▮ No. of selections

0   1   3   4   5   6
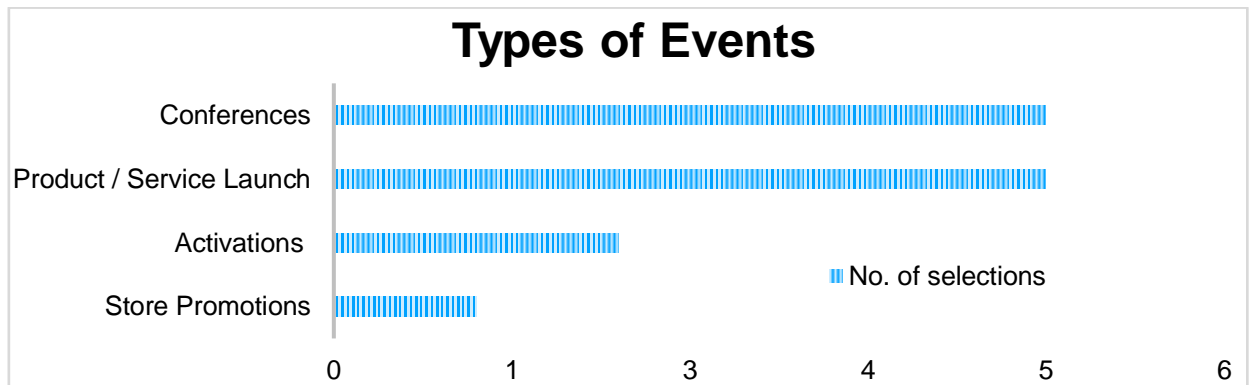
Figure 5.2: Types of events

Participants added:

> "We've done a lot of women empowerment events; I don't know what category those fall under… so conference?
>
> We do the entire event from decor — everything. We love doing it. We chose to do it because I love putting a venue together and have an impact."

Agency A

> "I did earlier and there are certain limits to when you can and you can't or else its seen as a bribe (to media). We used to… we can do smaller low-key things but it's changed. If a client wants an event of some sort, I've got people that I outsource eventing to. Obviously from a media relations (we'll handle it) side but in terms of the venue and the decor and the catering, somebody else doesn't that. We'll do social media, content like speeches, MC management and so on. We'll also get involved in budgets. If client has got ad spend and they not sure where to spend it, or where to get the most bank for their buck. I'm quite fortunate in that although I studied PR and I worked for two different PR firms. After that I then went and worked in the advertising agency world and

worked in three ad agencies so I kind got to see how it works together so I am able to offer clients advice."

Agency B

"Yes. Media events, media trips. So in the travel industry or you have a number of properties you want them (media) to see then you would organise a media trip. And also, internal team building events and that sort of thing. I'm very fussy, so unless I'm working with an events team that I'm confident with then I won't get involved. So I'm not prepared to have my name trashed because people can't organise things properly. I'm very particular, so I will work with an events company that I know and that I trust will deliver to the same standard I would deliver and then I would do the media element (media liaison, MC management, speeches) but I won't just work with anyone. So sometimes they'll (client) ask you, it's either bringing in your media, influencers or celebrities perhaps you've got a really great contact with a really great MC and they'll (client) ask you to get involved."

Agency C

"Yeah, we do. We do conferences, product launches and lots of sports days. From an activation point of view, there is often a launch, then there is going to be retraction period while we are building the PR behind that and then that will lead to the event itself.

Our take is to do what we do best. We don't do logistics, we don't do start and finish banners and that sort of thing. We work alongside event logistic providers and there are quite a couple of them in this business that we work with consistently across all their (clients) events. Where we literally will manage media, PR, social media and in some cases the website, e-newsletters…But they (event logistics team) look after the actual event, nuts and bolts, picket fences — they do all that. We do social media, inviting media to the event and occasionally we'll get involved in speeches. If there is a need to coach out client for speeches, we do it. But it's an interesting part of the business, it's the one side that is shrinking. They (clients) don't want to release a foothold on an event or

a brand. They're (clients) trying to do more with less — so that's a challenge."
Agency D

"We don't do the events; we just manage the social parts of promoting the event."
Agency E

"Not anymore. There is no money. We're talking about Durban, Durban is poor. A lot of them (clients) don't. You know when I first started my business I did a lot of events. I was almost always doing an event. But you just…the (media) landscape has changed. The marketing people handle it."
Agency F

"I think our biggest accomplishment was in 2016, we hosted an activist concert and the target was to get 10000 people to attend the concert, which was a free concert. And believe it or not, it's very difficult to get people to attend a free concert. And it was quite a stressful process to go through because you didn't know… because they dint have to buy tickets, you didn't know how many people you were ever standing on. So was it 6000 today or had we reached 8000 and there's way no way of monitoring that and it was a huge success. We ended up catering for, 12000 which we had catered for but we ended up with 11250 (people attending) or something like that. So it (the events) can be anything from a small stakeholder meeting of two people to something of 11500 people…you know? But I think stakeholder meetings are something that are important and I don't think we focus enough on that from a public relations perspective. I think we take that fore for granted.

You know in 2014, we did everything for that event. From social media — to everything. 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019 - (we did) less of the operational elements. So getting the chair (decor) became someone else's job. And we don't have an issue with that because it means that the event is evolving, it's growing. So it's a positive for us when that happens. But again, it depends, some jobs we do little bits, some jobs we organise everything."
Agency G

"Yes. When there is a new product and they (client) decide to put some spend behind it. So it would be a media launch to which beauty media is invited and sometimes dermatologist and medical people as well. We handle all aspects on the eventing side and then social media and getting media there (to the event) (media relations)."

Agency H

5.3.3.1. Follow up question: What is the underlying purpose of the events you arrange?

Participants were asked to indicate why they arrange events and were asked to select the top reason between; consumer buy-in, increase loyalty or increase number of consumers. The results have been presented below:

Reasons for events

- Consumer Buy-in — 40%
- Increase Number of Consumers — 41%
- Increase Loyalty — 19%
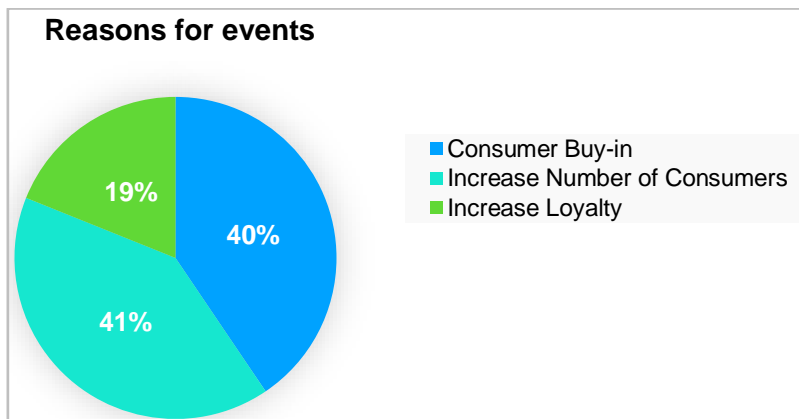
Figure 5.3: Reasons for events

Participants also added:

"So sometimes it's launching a product, so it's creating awareness. Sometimes it's more of …trying to create excitement around the brand. It really depends."

Agency C

"The measure of our success is often participation. The number of people that you've actually…if I can actually stimulate someone to go and look at a website or a page, or enter, ideally buy. That's the biggest yardstick that measures our success."

Agency D

"So usually its…so if I'm hosting an event, it will entail probably like a service or it would be an event that I'm just passionate about… it will be to connect."

Agency E

"Events are also done for media purpose. So you host an event because you want the media exposure. So it's not necessarily for buy-in or consumer product or brand awareness… it's because you want (your client) to be in that publication."

Agency G

"It's to get publicity, to get news stories generated on social media, to get the products into the hands of consumers. We try and win loyalty with media and build relationships with media which will in turn then build customers because they've (media) obviously got following. Ultimately, we want to get the word out to consumers, who are then gonna buy the products. So it's awareness."

Agency H

5.3.3.2. Summary of promotional activities findings

Six agencies handle events or promotional activities on behalf of their clients, but they do this in conjunction with eventing teams. They will manage all the relevant parties and ensure that all elements required for the event are adequately sourced. Two have stopped offering events all together due to budgets cuts from clients. In most cases, if the PR agencies are not handling all aspects of the event, they will take care of all media-related aspects such as inviting media, drafting content for the speeches and social media. They will also occasionally get involved in budgets for the event and advertising. The top two events arranged handled by PR agencies are conferences and product or service launches.

Events are arranged for several purposes, however, consumer buy-in and increasing loyalty were the main purposes. A key finding was that creating awareness and media exposure are important elements to try and achieve when arranging events.

5.3.4. Issues management findings

This research adopted two explanations for issue management:

Issues management is a process to look for potential issues and mobilise resources across an organisation to deal with the issues and to develop and implement practical plans in order to achieve strategic outcomes that benefit the organisation (Jaques, 2010:436).

Issues management is a process undertaken by organisations to identify possible challenges (issues) before they become crises. Organisations then mobilise corporate resources to help safeguard the organisation from reputational and operational harm, and the financial ramifications that the issue may provoke (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:301).

Participants were asked two questions in this section and the responses have been recorded below.

5.3.4.1. Question: How do you anticipate issues on behalf of your clients before they arise?

"Normally our clients are quite nervous anyway…so Opum's senior management team is a cautious group of people so they get worried even is a Hello Peter comes up or something like that. So we actually have a crisis communication document in place for Opum because they just don't like negativity or crisis. So at any given point, anyone has access to that document. All the different parties know that even if something small happens, even if it's a tweet, they know to contact me or the national business manager or the digital manager, or the marketing manager. So we've got a crisis communication plan in place."

Agency A

"I'm just gonna go back to XX Security as an example…we have two monthly PR telecoms where we all phone in from Cape Town, Durban, Jo'burg and their head office and we all talk strategy, are there any trends that are being picked up in your area, are there any events that are coming up that we think we should be watching out for… what's happening within the security industry. So I think a lot of it is keeping your finger on the pulse, specific to that client. And then being proactive, rather than reactive. So it's looking ahead at the bigger picture then breaking it into chunks and then working your way."

Agency B

"Obviously that would come out when you start investigating working with a client and looking at potential pitfalls, etc… So that all needs to be done upfront but you also need to say to the client, "Look, you know what is the likelihood of an issue coming up? What issue has been going (on)?"

Agency C

"It's a collaborative effort. We'll often look for issues, identify issues and try and deal with those head on and try and make sure that we are fully informed so that we can manage those issues. On the flip side of that is managing the unforeseen issues. We deliberately seek out issues, we don't shy away from issues, we'll put issues out there. Stimulating the conversation often gets you more more space, better usage.

We've got a bunch of events with issues that are a serious threat to the brand, and to the client and to the sponsor that is involved… And you can't bury your head in the sand on those. You've got to deal with those issues head on and then try and manage the way people talk about it and the tone of that conversation.

If it sounds like you're proactive and… the minute people perceive that you're covering stuff up, then your control over the conversation goes and then you'll be putting out fires. So we tend to identify those issues put them in front and center of the picture and just, certainly with the content and the quality of the

*information you put out there, (you have to) give the impression that it is under
control and that there is nothing else that could be sourced from that."*
Agency D

"I don't really do issues management."
Agency F

"There is a crisis management plan in place for any crises."
Agency G

*"We don't. Most of the time it (an issue) hits us in the face and we didn't know.
But there are topics that they (client) are trying to do proactively (prepare). But
it would more come from client (to prepare statements) but we're gonna send
out the story."*
Agency H

5.3.4.2. Question: Do you include plans for possible reactions when implementing new campaigns?

*"And then with one of our other clients, because we do a lot of projects, we do
a crisis communication plan per project. One of the projects was quite taboo,
so we knew that people were going to come back with questions. So we put
together FAQs (frequently asked questions), we anticipated… but even with
our personal clients, we are watching them like all the time on social media so
if someone…On their Instagram, we'll follow someone and say to them, "Hey
listen, the photo you've just put up is not on brand, so I think you should take it
down."*

*They (clients) give us a little bit of their concern but it's mostly from us. So what
we did as a team (for one campaign), we went to all the people that we know
use Opum and pitched the campaign to them and then let them ask us ques-
tions and then those questions form (part of the FAQs). So we did our own
research before putting the questions together."*

*Opum is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.

Agency A

"Not really and it's generally separately (case by case)."

Agency B

"We try to but a lot of times clients are very naive and do not think that they're ever gonna have a crisis or an issue management story."

Agency C

"Do we… if a volcano goes off and it impacts the travel trade… Do we prepare a statement? The answer would be yes, we would prepare a statement because it is an outside activity impacting us so we would prepare statement and it would be to educate those in the trade about what the stand is of that particular product in the market place."

Agency G

Not generally. Generally, we haven't been asked to put a whole PR plan together for our clients. So if we do approach a new client, it's usually more product focused approach, rather than a corporate approach.

Agency H

5.3.4.3. Summary of issues management findings

50% of the agencies that took part in the study said that they anticipated issues upfront and worked together with their clients to make sure they know which issues could impact their clients. Others either didn't deal with issues at all or were proactive, rather than reactive to responding to possible issues. A key finding is that participants also didn't have a clear distinction between an issue and a crisis — to them, an issue and a crisis are the same thing. Many referred to using a crisis plan in order to anticipate issues.

Agencies generally didn't have plans in place to deal with issues when they arise. This was often dealt with as and when an issue came up. Only one agency noted that they

prepare statements with a list of FAQs at the beginning of a new project which are shared with the client.

5.3.5. Crisis communication findings

Crisis communication can be described as a PR function with the objective to maintain an organisation's positive reactions with its publics during a crisis, in order to secure its future (Venter, 2000:211). It requires strategic dialogue between the organisation and its public, prior to, during, and after a negative event, in order to minimise damage to the image of the organisation (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). Furthermore, it demands that PR practitioners use the best-crafted message, delivered using the most effective methods to specific audiences (Fearn-Banks, 2011:2). A good crisis communication plan includes messages specified for employees, the media, the community, consumer's investors and industry (Venter 2000; Fearn-Banks 2011), it, therefore, runs several programs concurrently, in order to maintain relationships with these stakeholder groups.

Participants were asked a six (6) questions regarding crisis communication which aimed to understand how agencies were dealing with crises, how they prepared their spokespeople to face the media and whether they prepared messages for other stakeholders. The findings below have been grouped under the following themes:

• Dealing with crises
• Preparing spokespeople during a crisis
• Creating messages for multiple stakeholders

5.3.5.1. Dealing with crises

> *"For me, #feesmustfall was one of the biggest ones but it didn't threaten the existence of the brand… but we have plans in place."*

Agency A

> *"You've gotta work with the entire (internal) stakeholder team and you have got to (involve) everyone from the attorneys, to the senior management team… but you don't have much time in which to do it (respond) because I mean they*

(media) are hacking at your back. So for instance, a recent thing what I did was I usually set up two different WhatsApp groups — the one with the key (internal) stakeholders at senior level and the other one with the other partner agencies that I work with like their (clients) adverting and digital agencies. So that everybody was kept in the loop at all times… there was no having to make three phone calls, to three different people. I mean that's the first thing that you do.

Then you gotta make sure that you touch sides with the journalist that's relevant and go…if they've already been using questions you go, "Listen, I am currently preparing the information, trying to get all the information together, I will only be able to get this to you by lunch time tomorrow, is that gonna work for you?" The local paper will already be in the loop so your first call should always be to touch sides with the actual local paper. When you working the small towns, it becomes more critical (to contact them) to make that editor you best friend."

Agency C

"Quick, accurate, complete disclosure of information and then just be available to run (with the information). Make sure your client is available to run…We've got instances where the client would be really poor in dealing with sort of a crisis coms thing and then we'll take that responsibility on. It's quite a contentious issue, I know there are different views on this but our crisis coms which in its worst case scenario would involve the death of somebody in a very public environment so… time is an issue. We literally assemble all the information and make sure that we handle it sensitively. Make sure that everybody is on side with it all and then just get full and absolute disclosure. And then just be on standby.

Saturate the market with accurate information, balance it right between being empathetic and being accurate. Literally just be on 24hour standby until that conversation goes. And we measure the success of that… about whether it ends at that primary communication. So if you can get out into the media market place, you can't deny people access to that (the crisis), everyone is gonna have access to that, they're gonna run it but if it stops at the communication that you

have put out there, then you have done the job well."
Agency D

"Only one of my clients has a crisis plan in place which I did for them."
Agency F

"We dealt with a big fire in Durban of a warehouse and everyone's houses went black and …We were employed by the company to keep their name out of media because if that clients if that clients name would've been in the media, it would have jeopardised their business extensively. And well, it was just (we handled by) basically by talking to media that we had relationships with to say, "oh what's happening?" You know they (media) didn't even know they were our client; it was us just making enquires with the media. "Have you heard? What's going on? Who's involved?" And then just using our relationships… and steering them away when they were going in that direction."
Agency G

5.3.5.2. Preparing spokespeople during a crisis

"We act as spokespeople for only one client. The first thing that we always do is ask the media what is it that they going to need to know (from client) and sometimes they don't know themselves because as the speech is being delivered. So we just let our client know, "Be prepared, so and so is gonna want to speak to you after the event." And mostly, especially with Poise…Poise is very strict when it comes to media relations. It's like, you don't even want do it, that's how strict it is. You have to get clearance and things like that so… they all get their own media training within the brand so they always know, it's just that you need to warn them that so and so, from such and such publication is gonna wanna talk to you regarding this. Then if the journalist wants to speak about something else, which they (media) always do, then they (client to media) will just say, "Well, today we're only talking about this particular campaign, and that's that.""

82

*Poise is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.

Agency A

> *"Media training and processes so that everybody knows… so if the Daily News phone, the receptionist should know they need to speak to that person."*

Agency B

> *"We act as spokespeople on behalf of spokespeople but from the client side… We would often take the roles of being spokespeople for the event and in the instance that we refer back to the client, it would be at CEO/GM level."*

Agency D

> *"Rule number one, never, ever speak on behalf of your client. You've gotta physically pick up the phone and say, "Hey Bob, the business day is going to be asking you some questions, please remember that you need to focus on this, this and this." There is a critical rule that when people are being interviewed, they need to focus in on the three key messages they want to put across. If you do any sort of research into interview techniques, that's one of the first things they will tell you. It's make sure that you've got what key messages you want to put across and whatever questions you answer; you make sure that you bringing in your key messages into that. If it's a negative thing, we also like for them (media) to put the questions in writing so that there are no misinterpretations of what you (client) said."*

Agency C

> *"They act as spokespeople. I'm the invisible person. You know what, we have had so few crises…There was a problem with one of my big clients and one of the media wanted to go and visit the factory and then I chatted with the marketing guy and I said, "This publication wants to one of the factories, do you want to host this media?" He said, "No, speak directly with the factory manager." The factory manager literally told them everything, down to how much profit they made. So that caused a fall. He (factory manager) had not being trained. The policy now is, if the CEO can't do it, then we must postpone it until the CEO is able to do it because he knows what can be said and what can't be*

(said)."

Agency F

"We put the word into their mouths. Basically on every single crisis client that we have, we have drawn up what they are saying, baring one client. She wants her words — we will guide her. But one out of I don't know how many crises that we've handled is not bad but we do everything for them (clients) (preparing exactly what they need to say)."

Agency G

"When we go to meet media, we will prep them (client) but I wouldn't say in-depth training for clients, no."

Agency H

5.3.5.3. Creating messages for multiple stakeholders

"So what we do is, all the time, we always have a target audience list. And the target audience list will always have, internal staff, it will have consumers, it will have the internal communicators, like the receptionist and stuff like that. So we always draft different…it can be the same message, or it can be different but we all the people are broken up into groups. We normally hand it (the messaging) over to the MD and then the MD disseminates it. We actually don't deliver… the only thing we deliver on behalf of our clients is the media relations part. But then if they (client) have to tell people what's happening, (like) if it's a strike, we can prepare the speech for them but they will deliver it themselves."

Agency A

"Yes. So going back to XX Security, they have internal newsletters that go out once a month. So I'm involved with those."

Agency B

"So if I need to, I will (speak to stakeholders on behalf of clients). Otherwise I will brief the client to get it sorted ASAP. So for instance, if your factory has been shut by workers protesting, you need to make sure nobody can get

through to the switchboard…Have you transferred the calls to someone's cell-phone. Have the security companies been brief that if any media comes, they need to refer them to (the correct person). So those are all the things you need to be thinking of when briefing all your clients. You can't just physically be onsite to do it for them."

Agency C

"Completely different messaging for different groups. First prize for us is that if our relationship with the client is such that they trust us with that they'll let us go with it. In the event that there are major ramifications like potential knocks ons for shareholders or (similar)…The biggest issue for us is always timing and if the involvement of the client and their inevitable approval process is going to mess with the timing of the process, then we'll get aggressive about trying to control it. In a first world, they would trust us because of our involvement be-forehand and I think as long as they're kept informed during the process, they are happy to let us run with it."

Agency D

"Yes, I have one client and on about the 25th of the month, I write a message for the CEO that is approved and posted onto the intranet on the 1st of the month, every month."

Agency F

"We do for one client, both internally for staff and as well as their partners in business. So yes, but very small… it's not a significant project for us. We've done the messaging and we have given it to them and said, "Ok listen, this is the message that needs to go into your newsletter," or we've said, "here's the message that needs to go with these sunglasses and these sunglasses need to go to your staff" and then we've organised the sunglasses. I'm just using that as an example."

Agency G

"For stakeholders, it happens more at a global (head office) level. That's where that corporate communications happens. We don't do much here in South Africa."

Agency H

5.3.5.4. Summary of crisis communication findings

Agencies mostly said that they dealt with crises by referring to a crisis plan, however, this was not always a standard and available document — it was case by case. Most agencies said that it was important to ensure that key internal (clients) and external (media) stakeholders are well informed about a crisis. They noted that all internal stakeholders had to be on board with the response that would be given to media and this was mostly achieved by ensuring that they are all either put on a WhatsApp group or somehow informed in order to approve responses. Participants noted that time was a critical issue when it comes to dealing with a crisis — responses had to be fairly quick and if they were not going to be quick, the media had to be informed of when they would receive a response. Participants also noted that good relationships with media were helpful in a time of crisis.

Only two of the agencies which took part in the study acted as spokespeople on behalf of their clients, the rest prepared their clients to face the media. This was achieved by asking the media for questions before they are able to speak to the client. These questions were then given to the client to ensure that they know exactly what the media is going to ask and are in a position to accurately respond.

Three agencies noted that they created messages for different stakeholders at all times during a crisis. Others referred to internal newsletters sent to clients once a month which were not necessarily related to any particular crisis. Agencies that prepared messages for clients during a crisis usually just prepared the messages and let the client handle the delivery. Only one agency was involved in some of the delivery of messages but mostly with clients they had built long-term trust with.

5.3.6. Networking findings

An organisation's sustainability and future growth not only depends on good products and services but also on how well organisations are able to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders. Successful relationships with stakeholders are pivotal to the success of PR and therefore rely on practitioners having strong networks. Grunig and Hon (1999:2-3) found that networking plays an important role in building and maintaining long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders. Grunig and Hon (1999:11) further state that the value of PR can be determined by measuring the quality of relationships with multiple stakeholders. Therefore, practitioners not only need to build networks with their various stakeholders, but they also need to ensure that they build networks with the same groups their stakeholders have networks with (Grunig and Hon, 1999:15). This ensures that they not only interact with the correct stakeholders but are also able to disseminate relevant information to those stakeholder groups.

This section aimed to understand the quality of relationships PR practitioners form with stakeholders, particularly their clients and stakeholders important to their clients such as employees, consumers or investors. It also aimed to understand how practitioners were sure that they were consistently creating relevant content for the relevant consumers.

Participants were asked a set of 5 questions and the responses have been theme according to;

- Interacting with stakeholders
- Creating relevant content for stakeholders
- Networking events

5.3.6.1. Interacting with stakeholders

Participants were asked if they interact with their clients' stakeholders and what the level of that interaction was, they responded;

> *"Ok so, for example with one of our clients, because they are our biggest client, I spend a full day with them, once a week, every week. So on a Wednesday, I*

go there from 9 o clock until 5 (o clock) and I literally have a desk there and it allows me to interact with everyone, to find out, like the rumours, what's happening, upcoming things and then… Also with that, I'll hear ok, there's a new course launching or something like that, then it allows me to come in here (in the office) and say to the team "I heard they launching a new IT thing, we need like, tell them that we can do the PR for it.""

*Opum security is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.
Agency A

"I'm kind of all behind the scenes. I don't even think they (employees) know that I help with the newsletter."
Agency B

"It would vary by client. For instance, it it's a franchise company then you would deal with a lot of franchisees to get their input on certain things unless you are getting involved with things like employee stakeholder relations, you wouldn't really deal with the other people unless it is to get certain information."
Agency C

"(Interaction with stakeholder is) high. It's an area you have to go to. It's something I think we don't (do enough of) but we do. You split it. Because a lot of out works cyclical or on an annual basis it give you a brilliant chance to bed everything away and the first part of that process is a refocus on who the stakeholders are and for big events that are gonna take up 3 to 4 months of the year, the first thing we do would be a closed door session with the stakeholders, just to try and work out where they're going, who they are and where are the people and just to rekindle that interpersonal relationships and make sure all the guns are pointing in the same direction."
Agency D

"Yeah, sometimes the staff would be my contact when I'm needing something that will assist m with creating content. And obviously like the boss might not have that (information). Some of them are basically people who run the projects

on the ground — partners, representatives, people who lead the projects and all of that."

Agency E

"Yes. My main client. Because I do so much for them, I do a lot of featuring of new buildings and then I have to gather the information from the sales rep (several other people in the business). Like I've just done a story on a beautiful office building in Jo'burg and in the story it's about these particular pavements that we used. I've learnt my lesson; you send it to at least two people to check. The person that I was dealing with was on maternity leave so I sent it to the sales manager and said, "Hi there, do me a favour and just run your eyes through this and tell it's correct." The architect has approved, he (sales manager) gave me the name of the paver, he said this is not that paver, speak to Joe Blocks and double check. The architect didn't know that a different had been (involved). So ja, I deal with all sorts of people."

Agency F

"With some of them yes, with some of them, no."

Agency G

5.3.6.2. Creating relevant content for stakeholders

Participants were asked how they ensure that they are creating the right content for their stakeholders and they had varied responses. Some consulted with clients and others did research. They responded:

"Research. Like you said when you asked us how do you keep your finger on the pulse? That's the same thing that allows us to have good and relevant content is because like…for this month, I was writing a content plan for a client and it was about saving and finances and she (colleague) said, "oh did you know that July is national savings month?" So it's just research and also we don't work independently of each other. The nice thing about being in a small team is that you always know what the other person is doing so you can always contribute. We are always bringing our experiences into the workplace."

Agency A

"You can only test it. One of the nice things about working at an arms distance to your client is that whether you're working with someone who's managing the day to day coms or whether you're dealing with the CEO or an external share-holder, investor or a sponsor is that you can just test (the content) before you go into the public with it. So it's the easiest thing in the world, I mean as part of your normal formulation of a plan or release, it's just to test the tone of that (content) with somebody else in the organisation (client) and ask, "Is this reso-nating with you or am I missing the point?""

Agency D

"So obviously it's critical to meet with the clients and understand what their aims and objectives are, what are they actually wanting to achieve and then taking it a step further and trying to understand who is is your (their) target market and they'll say, "Everyone." And then after a few more questions, talking about the subject, we will actually narrow down who they actually should be speaking to. We will ask questions like "Is it a seasonal product, is it available in KZN, is it available nationally, can people buy it online?" And then they (client) starts thinking, "Who is actually going to be buying our product? Is it the mom, is it the dad, it is the tween?" And once you open that conversation then you narrow down who they should be talking to and based on that I can actually say, "what is your brand personality and how are going to communicate that?" And then we look at the channels we are going to use for that."

Agency B

"So first of all, that's why I only use proper trained journalists. So I could ade-quately write the stuff but I find that it's better if it's a business orientated client, I would use someone at senior business level or someone who has been a bureau chief at a paper to write my business press release. Ditto on the prop-erty client. So that's the first thing, the second thing is that you need to be con-suming national media and international media. You need to see what trends are going but a critical thing is that a lot of PR people will write really bad re-leases and the trick, you need to write your press release in the style in which the media like it."

Agency C

"So usually, the whole process starts with a strategy and a content plan so that's where w nail down the different types of content and obviously whatever we might want to achieve through what we are creating so that's where it starts. That's where we ensure (that were creating the right content). We do check and then obviously when we do the report every month we check what's working and what might have gotten more attention and what are people engaging with the most…so our insights every month help us prepare for

next month."
Agency E

"I just do. I've been in the business for so long."
Agency F

"Well, first of all its educating ourselves, ok? Making sure that we are aware of what their objectives are as stakeholders and making sure that we work in a win, win situation."
Agency G

"We are briefed by client on exactly who we are talking to so we are given exact target markets for that specific product and that's different for each product. Then we are discovering new influencers all the time and we would discover who the influencer is, research the media or right magazines to talk to and we would align that media or influencer with the products specific to the target market."
Agency H

5.3.6.3. Networking events

Participants were asked if they attended networking events on behalf of their clients and they responded:

"We normally host them. So to be honest with you we don't (attend networking events), we host them."
Agency A

"No, I don't."

Agency B

"I try not to. You know why? As a consultant you only have so many hours that you can sell in a day so if you and I are having to go and sit at events just to network for all your clients who doesn't even want to be there, then you can never repeat that time, you can't resell it. So I will do my own sort of networking thing whether it's with other marketing (teams) or the media. If I have set up something where we are sponsoring it and we're there for a reason and there is an objective, then yes I would go but I'm not gonna go there just to sit and chat."

Agency C

"You gotta keep asking, you gotta keep knocking on that door and that's where you have to step out of the routine with your clients and find out, "How are you (client)? What is really happening (with the business)?" Not what is happening in this particular time with this case, meeting or conference."

Agency D

"When I was very busy, I let it slip and now I'm battling because I need to find work because I haven't been networking. The institute of marketing management and PRISA used to have functions and I used to attend them, neither of those two have functions anymore."

Agency F

"Yes, but I hate it. It's just not in me. A lot of our clients have events so they want us to be present and host the events and host the stakeholders that are there so wine tastings, business meetings, business presentations…but we don't do a lot of that. It is also through trade organisations, so we do lease through those elements. We often find that like for example, let's say you, you will network with the same group of people or same mindset of people… so that network is different from another network but have the same mindset or wavelength so what we try and do is say to them "Who are you networking with

now?" Then, let's (we) go and find a synergy to that mindset, that knocks that mindset out of that. But we always look for complimenting topics."
Agency G

"Yes. If media are getting together or if there is an award ceremony, then (we) would attend). Events or when some of our media is attending (then we'll go)."
Agency H

5.3.6.4. Summary of networking findings

Agencies didn't have high interactions with their clients. Only one noted that they interacted with stakeholders by spending a lot of time at the clients' offices to ensure that they are in the loop and on board with upcoming projects. Others rarely interacted with stakeholders unless they absolutely had to. It was especially in cases where they required information for a press release or other content they are working on.

Most participants relied on briefs from their clients to tell them who they need to be communicating to. They didn't have a clear strategy on ensuring that they were producing the right content for the right stakeholders, however, the underlying method they used was research done through consulting with the client, consuming relevant information and researching the relevant stakeholders in order to include them in the PR strategy.

Most noted that they generally don't like to attend networking events unless it is linked to some kind of overall objective of the client, this doesn't form a large part of what the agencies do.

5.4. Main Findings: PR Functions

The findings below have been categorised according to the functions described in the literature review, namely; research, writing, media relations function, advising and monitoring.

5.4.1. Research technique findings

Research ensures PR practitioners are informed at all times on current trends, issues, the political climate and news on their clients in order to plan programmes responsive to stakeholders and problem situations (Skinner et al., 2010:10). In addition, it helps practitioners strategise better, provide clients with informed advice, as well as make informed decisions that benefit the organisation or client (Weber Shandwick Seattle, 2016).

Agencies were asked a set of seven (7) questions related to the research technique, although the questions were separate, they were directly linked to the type of research practitioners do daily and which aspects they scan the media for. The responses have been recorded below:

5.4.1.1. Question: How often would you say you do research on daily basis? Is it primary or secondary research, formal or informal research?

"Everyday. It's both (desktop and in person) because sometimes we will be struggling with something and then she says, "Oh, let me post it on this group," and then she'll post it on the group or shell say, "I'm actually going to see a group of people tonight so I'll ask them the questions." So it's always a combination or we'll phone or we'll do it online. I think we're pretty good with researching and we tackle it on all fronts."
Agency A

"I'd say probably like 25% of my time on research. Mainly computer but if I need to check something (with clients) then I'll email or phone but most of it is computer."
Agency B

"Research would only form a large part of if there is a particular issue or if you are on boarding with a client or you're trying to see what the competitors are doing. I mean obviously it's always good to see what the competitors are doing… but that's an ongoing thing that you would check out. But if its proper proper research, you would really do that when you're on boarding with a client."

Agency C

"Your initial point of contact will come from client and the set of information. Then probably 50% of the research will be external. It will be originated here (at the office), whether it be desktop online research or getting interpersonal feedback from people."

Agency D

"I consume content on all platform every day in order to find if there is something that I can use for next month's content. So I'd say everyday I'm online for that. I subscribe to blogs that send newsletters every now and again and I consume those so you might not call it research but it is cause I might come across something and think, "Oh this is actually good for content next month and then I bookmark it.""

Agency E

"I'm always researching for a story - every story, you have to research. I just did a story on someone who makes a particular kind of plumbing pipe… (asked questions like) "Why would use this particular pipe instead of the traditional pipes? Will these save water?" Ok? (It's) mostly online (research), it's quicker."

Agency F

"All day every day. Both but I think that with the changing world, talking to people has died. So trying to get people over the phone is a nightmare. So as much as I would like it to be in person, it has definitely dropped. You know when I first started, our phones were literally ringing all the time and now…"

Agency G

"In a day I'd say 20 to 30% (of time is spent on research). We start with the clients, they brief us and we brainstorm with client, we then go online. And research and internally we research, brainstorm amongst ourselves so. Our research is formal because it comes directly from client and they have done their research before they brief us."

Agency H

5.4.1.2. Question: Have you ever conducted research with the help of research agencies?

"No, we actually haven't but we've downloaded research results before that helped us like if we're writing an article. For example, the article we were just talking about now about finances, she looked at a particular report that was published about women and savings and investing and then she used that research result to construct and article."

Agency A

"No, they're not a research agency…They do do research but they're not an official agency where they…you can contact them for niche media lists. They're called Enclyclomedia. So I can say to them, "I have a new client, they are in the road repair industry and I need to speak to engineers nationally," and they will send me all the engineers, contacts, publications online, broadcast, nationally. So instead of me physically having to go try and find (all the contacts). So that's a big time saver."

Agency B

"Yes, I have."

Agency C

"No we don't."

Agency D

"Yes, it was o look at what is the perception of the brand in the market place."

Agency F

"We actually working on a project right now with a research company. We have (in the past) but once off and at a distance. Here we are involved in the survey structure. Do I recommend it for companies? I definitely recommend it."

Agency G

"I've been involved but not run it myself."

Agency H

5.4.1.3. Practitioners were asked to indicate the type of research they undertook in order to understand their client, the issue their client wants to address, as well as the target audience relevant to the issue.

They responded:

"We usually do audits, sometimes we'll do a social media or digital audit. But I think a lot of it is… our clients are very open, they phone us all the time and we hear them properly (clearly). We'll come back and dig deeper and we'll look, online, what are they (client) projecting, what kind of news have been out there in them. So I think it's very much a holistic process with speaking to people and doing online research."

Agency A

"I think over the years, I've kinda learnt… a lot of it is based on what's worked for other clients so…I'm just trying to think of examples so it might put it better int context. The business to business guy (client). We had a coffee and he said, "So, what is PR actually?" Cause a lot of people don't understand (PR). So it's a lot of educating and meeting face to face with people (client) …He then said to me, "Ok, so do you think I'm PRable?" And my answer to him is always, and it's true…everybody is PRable. You just need to find the right angle and then going back to what are your aims, what are your objectives. SO for him for example, his goal was, for when he walked into a room, whether it was at a networking event, at a business meeting, or whatever - for somebody to say to him, "I see you everywhere." So it wasn't really a problem but that's what he

wanted. SO then I had to say, "How are we gonna do that?" So then step 1 and I'm very fortunate because I sit in on their marketing strategy session for the year ahead and we plan their whole marketing plan for the year and we slot PR into all of that. And obviously it changes throughout the year but at least you've got a base to work from. So then we look at things, seasonal things, topical things relevant to his business, like when the budget speech came out, we had already prepared a press release to go out on his advise to entrepreneurs based on what was said in the speech. And that's relevant and it's likely to be picked up."

Agency B

"So obviously you would need to do desktop research, you would need to ob-viously pull the media information of whoever you think you're gonna be target-ing. But it's very much, you know how mach do the target people earn, what is their preferred ways of communicating, are they consuming media, are they consuming Instagram versus Twitter, versus Facebook, versus news. Are they millennials versus your more experienced people. So you need to look at all of that."

Agency C

"We…given that what you call an employee is often a participant or someone who is a member of a team. Very important with somebody who is a potential participant or potential client, we try and dig down to those people at a human level so a very personal point of contact. It's really important because it actually guides what you're saying and how you say it.

Social media and point of contact and not just what the people are saying it. But how they saying it definitely moulds what we try and say, particularly when we're try and change the tone of the conversation and modify it or redirect it and point it in a better direction that meets our needs."

Agency D

"So I look at their (client or potential client) current platforms to see what it looks like, if they have a website I go to their website and then I search online for

anything that would pop up on their brand. And then the next thing would then look at their competitors — that would basically be part of it as well to see what they're doing, what type of content their creating, would we then go with the same trends of what they're doing or is there something different that I can offer. So that would basically be it. I sit with the client as well and talk to them as to what vision do they have, what do they want to see and see if we can't bring that alive for them or we then offer something different based on what knowledge we have or whatever research we might have done.

With that (target audience), I think it goes back to looking at the brand and what it does and then if it's doing something that is already out there, we then look at what the audience looks like for similar brands. We look at who might be the consumers of whatever you (client) might be offering."

Agency E

"I prefer to work on a retainer because on a retainer you build all that knowledge. If you're doing a adhoc project (it's not as easy), it takes quite a lot of time (to research). So I go online and then when I've done a bit of background research then I understand and then I go through to the organisation.

(Target audience) Well, it's normally fairly evident."

Agency F

"(Client) I think the first we do is we research the people. We wanna know more about the people involved and I'm talking from a client's perspective. So we want to know, "What's in your (clients) head?" Because the company's objective and what your objective is, is sometimes two different things. So you are saying one thing because you wanting to receive what the company does but you're not happy with our service because we're achieving that (company objectives). Meanwhile you have another thought process in your head, do you know what I mean? So it's understanding who we are dealing with from a client's perspective. I often feel that we as PRs forget about that research about who we are dealing with.

(Opportunity or problem) Sometimes I think I go too far and the issue is that the clients starts troubling we are a part of the business and starts treating us that way so we take it too far, we want to be there, we want to be on site, we want to learn everything we can, we want to know the full story. I am also one of those individuals that believes that when there is a crisis, there is three sides to the story, you story, my story and the truth. So we try and figure out those three different elements and not just work on what we are told is the truth.

(Target audience) we don't do that research, ok? But what we do do is that, let's say for example a client will say to us, "that's my target market." We will then research... I don't think it's actually purposeful research but we'll find out that that is actually their target market. And trying to get that client to move from here to there (on target audience to another) is not possible, it's another story, it's another story. Even though the client knows that target B (clients target) is their market you want to work towards target A (actual target) so that there is a mind-shift in the product perception. So you have to cover both."

Agency G

"It's critical. It's vital that you understand those things. But generally, it would start with client, it would start with a brief. We would need to do a little bit to understand the target market and we do that internally — and ask people, do our own research internally, talk to consumers from that demographic or whatever it is we're looking at."

Agency H

5.4.1.4. Participants were asked to select the aspects they research.

The results have been presented below:
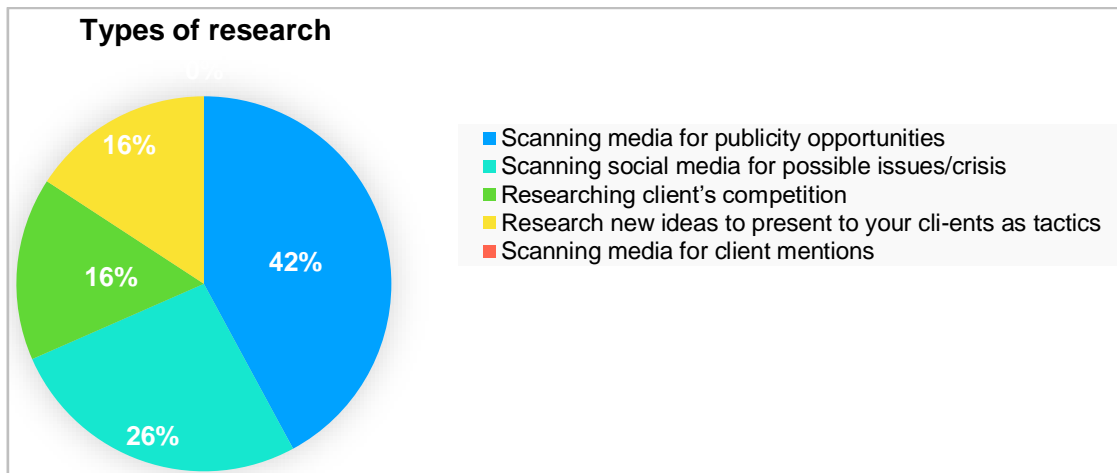
Figure 5.4: Types of research

Participants don't generally scan media for client mentions as they rely on the media monitoring services to do that on their behalf. The top scan they performed was on publicity opportunities followed by social media scans. Participants added:

> "(Scanning opportunities) So I subscribe to a thing called… I forgot what it's called but basically, every morning it tells me what journalist are looking for. We use a lot of online tools. Now that we are talking about it, we actually have so much information that we have to take in on a daily basis in order to be able to be effective with our clients.
>
> (Scanning competition) I wouldn't say we would do a complete competitor analysis but we definitely will go look at what other brands are doing."

Agency A

> "(Scanning new ideas) I don't really have to. I think if anything over the last two years, the only thing I've had to include in my scope is social media. Before that, I never really had to do it. And now that's the only things that's new that clients are interested in."

Agency B

"(Scanning social media) For instance if you're managing your influencers, you need to be checking what they are doing. I also find, like this other client that I've been working with for 12 years, I'll even have friends going, "hey, did you see this celebrity was asking about this particular thing, maybe your client wants to get involved?" So I think the continuity of working with a client also has its benefits."

"(Other research) Obviously within the PR portfolio there's obviously perceptions, you know whether you can change the perceptions and that could be internal and external. So if your (clients) staff are really really unhappy it's going in and checking why they are unhappy, coming up with a strategy to try and turn that around. We sit quite often with the HR team and then going in afterwards and saying, "How has this changed?" And then the same with external, there is also, "how is this particular company performing within the minds of other people, within your target market?""

Agency C

"(Scanning competition) It's a small part of it but it's definitely there. Where we've got competing benchmark clients in other industries, we definitely keep an eye on it (competition).

"(Scanning New ideas) It will often be done in conjunction with the client. I think what makes this business successful is being able to come up with something a little bit out the box so to come up with an original idea whether it will be a statement that has to go into media or a conversation we had with just media or just a stunt but it's always done in collaboration with client. So we'll come up with the main idea and go back to clients. And then if they're gonna do it then they (client) need to support it as well. I think it would fail if it is purely a stunt from a PR agency that had no connection with the client. It's not gonna works unless the client actually buys into it and everybody on their side buys into it and it looks like…not just a stunt."

Agency D

"(Scanning social media) So, it helps because the platform actually has their own session where they do the insights because the tools that I may have might not give me the full information that I want. I use Hootsuite. So with them I feel like they miss certain stuff but when you go on Facebook or Twitter, they give you a bit more detail."

Agency E

(Scanning competition). Yes, and no. so I don't do it on a daily basis but even now and then, we will do it.

Agency G

"We use Newsclip and Meltwater (to monitor the publicity). We will daily look if there is anything (on social media). We're looking, we scan for client's competition. We're also looking out got new influencers. It's a big part of what we do. There's always new people, new influencers, we're scanning influencers. Our clients always want to know about new influencers, and what opportunities there are…"

Agency H

5.4.1.5. Summary of research technique findings

Agencies don't regularly involve research agencies to do research on their behalf. They do general desktop research which is more often than not, informal. Although they will sometimes use credible research from reports, there is no clear way of defining whether that research is formal or informal.

Agencies mostly state their research process by speaking to their clients and then following this up with desktop research. Most of the research information was sourced from client but desktop research allowed them to have other insights their clients didn't necessarily provide such as the correct target market and opportunities. The largest amount of research the agencies conducted was on finding opportunities on behalf of their clients, however this was achieved through varied methods. No two companies had the same approach when it came to research.

5.4.2. Writing findings

An important part of practitioner's responsibility includes being able to write strategically and packaging information appropriately. Due to the fact that writing is a general function of PR, practitioners were asked to indicate which top five (5) documents they prepare on behalf of clients, apart from media releases. The results of this question have been presented below.
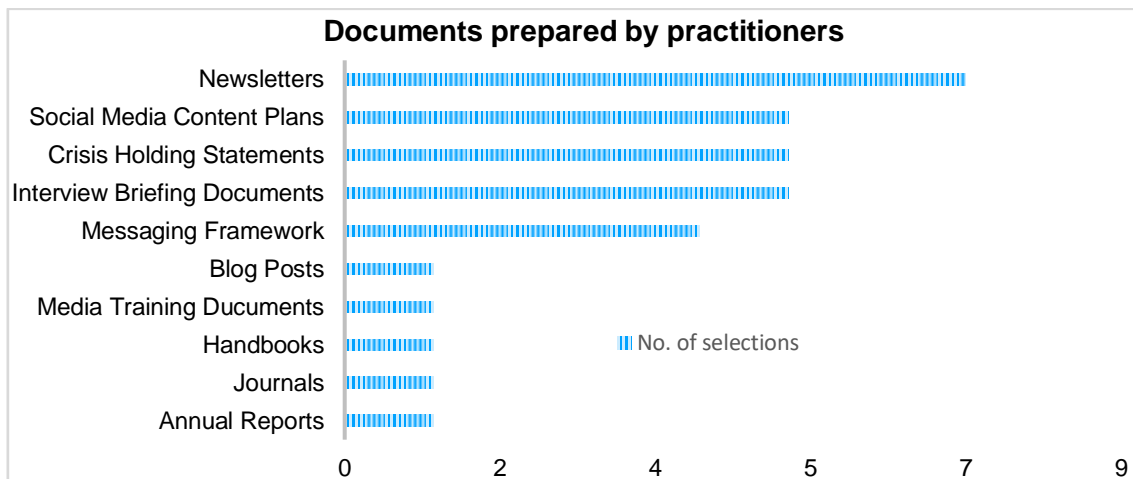
Figure 5.5: Documents prepared by practitioners

5.4.2.1. Summary of writing technique findings

The top five documents were, in order of highest to lowest; newsletters, social media content plans, crisis holding statements, interview briefing documents and lastly, messaging framework.

5.4.3. Media relations function findings

The media relations function involves; ensuring that the correct information is delivered by the correct spokesperson, ensuring that clients are properly briefed on how to deal with media (media training) and pitching or sending information to the right media.

Participants were asked eight (7) questions in relation to the information above and the findings have been grouped in the following manner:

• Media Training
• Types of media requests

- Pitching process

5.4.3.1. Media training

The scope of the media relations function is wide; it not only serves to secure publicity but requires PR practitioners to offer media training to their organisations. According to Doorley and Garcia (2011: 70), external stakeholders perceive anyone from the organisation who publicly speaks about the organisation as speaking on behalf of the organisation. Therefore, it is important for organisations to have a centralised point of information to prevent unclear statements from reaching the media and potentially cause reputational harm (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:70). As part of media relations, the PR practitioners function serves to ensure that all employees are briefed on not speaking to media unless they have been given the proper training and permission to do so (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:70). This indicates good organisational practice and safeguards the organisation against reputational harm.

When participants were asked if they offered media training to their clients and at which level. Most of the agencies did offer training and it was usually offered to top management.

Participants responded:

"Yes, It's usually for top management."
Agency A

"Yes, I've only actually twice had to facilitate the training process. More often than not, I will compile the document and send it to like a coms (communications) manager (client) and they run with it."
Agency B

"We do. We don't use it that often. It's only when there is an obvious need for it… and its actually something we enjoy doing because there is often a lack of skills in that area. So if your client is open to it and we see the need then (we do it) … We've actually had a situation where it's not just the client or the clients marketing manager or coms staff were dealing with but they often have staff or

in our case athletes or players that are quite liable to be exposed to media and they have no skills there, they're terrifying. So we will often do workshops and skills training sessions where we can deal with them. One, to tell them about how to involve us (PR agency) as professionals in that space and secondly, just to give them enough confidence to go off into that space on their own…and do themselves justice and their clients brand justice."

Agency D

"I've suggested it with every one of my clients and every one of them says no. They know it all. But yes, they do need it but don't you know? The boss knows it all, he's a wizard."

Agency F

"Yes, we do. We've trained junior, middle and senior staff — as in CEOs and MDs. If you ask me what I feel that our content is like for media training. I would say that it is low and although we've had compliments and being asked to come back, I think we need to do more work on that."

Agency G

"I don't but I want to. I'm proposing it, especially for crisis communication."

Agency H

5.4.3.2. Types of media requests

Participants were asked to select the top three (3) requests they receive from media which have been presented below. The top three request were which share a ranking are interview requests, product or service information and fact checking requests.
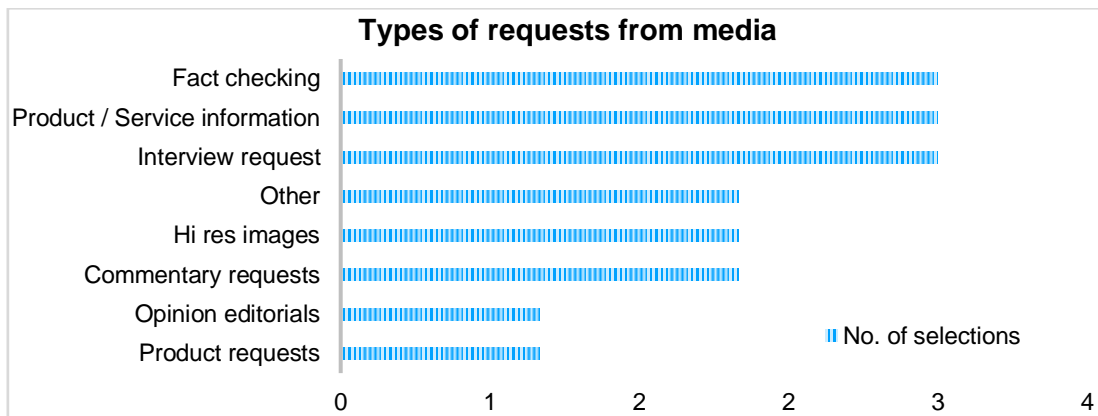
Figure 5.6. Types of requests from media

Participants noted that they have recently been receiving requests from media to draft adapted media releases for their publications which they can copy and past without having to change it themselves. The most notable responses were:

> *"Requests for interviews — for contact with individuals — one on one sessions. What's happened over the last…what we've seen ever the last eight years in particular is that the ability of media to be able to generate original content has just crashed and burnt. Thanks to the demise of the Independent Group and everyone else tumbling around them. I mean, the way newspapers have folder and they're just grossly understaffed at the moment means that face checking, originating original stories just doesn't happen anymore. The amount of original content being generated in newspapers is probably only 5% where it used to be 90% and we used to differentiate between what we buy on the amount of the original content and it's just not there anymore. We'll get contact from a desk editor saying, "I'm desperate for content, what are you working on? Can I rely on you to do this for me and at this time and please make sure it's got images and copy…?" So it kind of shifts the reliance quite heavily on us be-cause the days of people originating original content and being able to produce original content has (ended)… It's happening more and more online but from a print and a magazine point of view, they are becoming more and more reliant on us to be able to do it. So we spoon-feed. It's the cut and paste day and age."*

Agency D

"I would say interview requests, commentary requests and opinion editorials, I would sort of put on the same level. But I would say that those are…where we would like to get more of those kind of enquiries coming through, but we're not but we are trying to get more and more of those to come through. The other, is a lot of "whats ons"—people wanting to know what is happening in the region. So there's a big request for that. We're also finding that there are some publications that requests for our media releases that they can just copy and paste so that is not included there—so it media release information. So they've received it but they want it to be tweaked or something. We will do that for them and they it and send it to print."

Agency G

5.4.3.3. Pitching process

After packaging the necessary information, a PR practitioner needs to develop procedures to monitor and facilitate the interaction between an organisation's employees and reporters (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:69). Furthermore, they need to know the publications, the correct contact person and the type of news they cover to ensure the right placement for an organisation (Doorley and Garcia, 2011:69).

Participants were asked to describe their pitching process. The responses varied, however, most participants noted that it was relationship dependent. In most cases, a pitch starts with an email followed up by a phone call. Participants said:

"It depends on the person that we are pitching to. If we know them, we will phone them first, if we don't, we will email them first. We always feel that a phone call is a bit invasive. So we'll email and then we'll phone them like a day or two later to say, "Did you get it?""

Agency A

"So it was definitely phone calls, uh, followed up by emails and then over the last sort of 18 months to two years, a lot of the media landscape has changed in terms of…there's a load more freelance journalists now and I've also found that for a magazine for example, they used to have one dedicated beauty editor and her assistant and an intern, like there was a little team. They'd have the

same for fashion, they'd have the same for health… and now you're doing life-
style which health, beauty, fashion, everything and all in one hand. So it's being
aware of all those changes. Initially I'd say phone call, and then followed up by
emails, friendly email reminders or touch base emails that kinda thing."

Agency B

"It really depends on who (the media) and what it is. So if it's a product related
thing then traditionally it would be email. If it's uh, it's more of, uh, a crisis situ-
ation, it would be more email with a follow up phone call to check that every-
thing has gone through and the right person has it. Only if it's an exclusive,
would you pick up the phone really. The media just don't have time to field you
know, 500 phone calls from PR."

Agency C

"Depends on the relationship. If there is no relationship, then it would have to
start with a call. If that relationship isn't there, the chances of that working are
quite slim. Once the relationship is there and it's healthy, uh, it could be a
WhatsApp note or an email and that'll start the process. Particularly, I mean
guys are working shifts as well so you often find that when we do in an office
day doesn't correspond with when they're at their desks so that WhatsApp or
that email is (necessary)… and then you can just feed them everything and see
if the fish bites."

Agency D

"I think the way that we normally do it… first of all, we only do targeted media,
so it could be a media list. We will choose certain media to work with. Uh, let's
say it's a national campaign, ok? We will then choose 20 media that we will
identify that that media release will go to… and maybe that media beat has let's
say 100 (media) for arguments sake, we will choose 20 of those 100 that the
media release will go to. Those are broken into online, influencers, print, broad-
cast. Ok so, we then take that and we will say that we want one person out of
each of those that we will focus on. So we will then work with that individual
until we get the story in. If it doesn't work with that one, we will then have a B,

C, D… so first it's an email and then it's a communication (phone call)."
Agency G

"We…so usually, we like to get the new product into the hands of media so we usually start with a press drop. So we deliver the product to them (media) and let them try it. Then we email out a media release on the same day and generally don't have to follow up. That's on the product side. We do do things like news stories where, if there is, for one of our other clients, we would first email out the media release and then follow up."
Agency H

5.4.3.4. Follow-up question: Do you send information to a specific journalist or just anyone at the publication?

Participants were then asked a follow-up question regarding who they send information to. They were asked whether they send information to a journalist they know and hope they pass it on or whether they find the right person. They responded:

"We phone the person that we know and ask them to tell us who has filled the position now… like who is covering that beat. If we do have close relationships with media…the way we conduct ourselves is, you know, were everyone's friend so they are usually quite happy to say you know, "here, let me give you so and so's email address, they're the head of beauty," and then, or even cc (copy) us into an email where they pass it (information) on to the person in beauty. Uh but I think a lot of the time, it's the content that matters most than you know… if you send a person that you don't know really good content, that's relevant at the moment, they love (it)… because then they don't have to any work or research because they have something right there to publish. We just make sure that our content relevant and then it gets published a lot."
Agency A

"A bit of both. Sometimes I will email them (media) and say, "I have a story and this is the angle, who is the right person to speak to?" Or I'll send them something and say, "Is this something you could maybe assist with or who do you suggest I speak to?" So it depends (on what the situation is)."

Agency B

"You need to send it to the right person. Don't waste someone else time. So if I have…if I'm really close to them I might say you know, "I've got this particular story and this is who I have on my list, is that correct?" Or whatever… but generally it's a matter of picking up the phone and going, "Hi, I've got a really great story and it's on environmental or whatever, who is the right person I should be talking to?""

Agency C

"Ask for the contact. You'll often find that we work in a specific beat but we'll occasionally be asked to do something outside of it uh… Good example, one of our clients that we do mountain biking for is involved forestry and our contacts into the commercial forestry sort of journo market are very skimpy so you've just gotta go back to your contact and (say), "I don't know who the hell I'm talking to, who would be the right contact?" … and see if they can push it in the right direction."

Agency D

"The first step is to try and find the right contact. We do have access to various databases so we will try and find that. We will try and do our own homework but often, it's very difficult to get to the right people and sometimes when you think it's the right person, it's not necessarily because in media houses, because the staff has declined…the job positions have declined quite a bit — you find that people are holding two or three different roles which are not necessarily indicated clearly to the receptionist that is answering the phone or detailed on a website or our databases. So we do generally have a contact within each media house that we can quite easily pick up the phone and say, "Hey, Bob, who do I speak to? Who's the best person to speak to in that region? Is it

so and so," but we won't go and cold call and expect them to give us the infor-
mation."
Agency G

"I will look…sometimes they (media) say, "Well I'm not the right person, you
need to speak to so and so" but generally, we will update our media lists and
we will make sure like, "who do we send this out to?" Cause it's very different,
because it might be more of a lifestyle story and we find out who is it that we
have to send to, so we'll generally update our media lists."
Agency H

5.4.3.5. Follow up question: If the media goes directly to your client, does your client go ahead and handle the request or does your client refer media to you?

Participants were asked what happens if media goes directly to client. Generally, their responses were that the clients inform them, the most notable responses were:

"I think we have a very close relationship with our clients so for instance if there
is a drama or maybe something a bit risqué, the first person they will phone is
us. Even if they (media) do try that (go directly to client), the client always sends
them back to us."
Agency A

"We would insist that client lets us know that one, the contact has been made.
We would be more than happy to have that bounced in our direction, just of-
floaded to us. As a second alternative, we would at least know about it, we
would interrogate the process. Make sure that they've (media) got all they need
and if it's anything that we were worried about…to get sight of it before it gets
used even if it's in the formulation stage - you know; they're still working on it.
If it's a contentious thing, we would insist that it comes back to us, rather than
the client just talking (to media). And then hopefully, you've got a good relation-
ship (with media) to just say, "Listen, you want me to just cast an eye on that

copy, just to make sure that it's accurate," so involve yourself in that way long before it is uploaded and printed."

Agency D

"Again, it's… some clients will tell us, some clients deal with it directly and then tell us about it… and it also depends on the situation. So we have been in all of the above on a regular basis. We don't try to own that relationship. We don't go to our client and say, "If media come to you, you must direct them to us." We also don't discourage a relationship between the client and the media. Ok so if the media want to contact them directly then so be it but we try and be three as a tool to both parties so that they actually can't do without us, they need us to be there but we don't stop that relationship."

Agency G

5.4.3.6.   Summary of media relations function findings

Most practitioners offer media training to their clients, but it does not form a large percentage of the work they do. 50% of participants said they do not offer media training and the other 50% did — usually to top management.

The top three requests which practitioners received from the media are; interview requests, product or service information and fact checking requests. A key finding was that agencies are having to adapt media releases to suit certain publications. This is mainly because of the changing media landscape. Journalists no longer have the time to edit stories they receive from the media as a result, agencies edit the information on their behalf to ensure that they are able to secure the publicity.

There is no one way to pitch to media, however all agencies note that it was all dependent on the relationship. In most cases, a pitch starts with an email followed up by a phone call until publicity is secured. In cases where the media has directly asked the client for information, participants noted that they have fairly good relationships with their clients so in most cases, their clients inform them so that they are aware and can intervene if necessary.

5.4.4. Organising and advising findings

The PR techniques and functions described in the literature review (chapter 2) would not be successful without a substantial amount of organising and advising, which practitioners do on a daily basis. Advising clients is done to understand the client's organisational needs, the goals they want to achieve and the messages and objectives the organisation seeks to communicate (Skinner et al., 2010:10). This often requires collaborating with management or clients in the problem-solving process (Skinner et al., 2010:10).

Practitioners were asked a set of five (5) questions regarding the kind of relationship they have with their clients and who generally takes the lead between them and their clients. The responses varied but generally, the agencies try to facilitate close relationships with their clients so that they are able to represent them as well as possible. They responded:

"And then with our other clients, for example with Opum, we started out being introduced to them by their marketing agency and now we are on one-on-one basis with them so we are now their official PR partner. We have the brand manager on WhatsApp. She doesn't go through the marketing team to speak to us, we now have our own PR status meetings with the brand manager. And It's mainly because we are always available, we kind of perfectionists so if something needs to be done, we don't say, "Ok We'll do it tomorrow, or the next day," so people see that and they see that we are effective and we are on the ball so instead of going to a marketing manager that takes a whole week to reply to an email, they'll quickly give us a call and we'll sort the issue our or whatever.

So we always complain because our clients know that we can turn things around so quickly that they rely on that. So for example, a month ago, we had a training event for one of our clients for 16 people and our clients told us, like literally like now, "I need 16 gifts for tomorrow." Customised so not like you must go buy it at Checkers or whatever, because they know that we are so resourceful, they trust us with that. We are, we have a lot of networks, we know almost anyone that can do anything. You need a make-up artist, we have one, we

know everyone. For one of our clients, we manage all of their national PR managers and they need a lot of hand holding. (Our relationship) is professional but we are always respectful and kind and compassionate. We try and keep it quite close."

Agency A

"It's mostly right in the beginning. I think we've got a really good relationship, very good relationship. If you think about it, it's their image that they are putting in your hands. So you kind of want to have a close relationship with your clients. But having said that, there are one or two clients where I deal with a department, the marketing departments. So, although its (for) a big brand, I'm dealing with apart of the wheel. So, that's a bit different where I still send them monthly updates and monthly reports but I might only meet them four times a year face to face. And then the other clients, I literally meet, every month face to face so it depends what the client wants really, I don't want to be a pushy, and in your face. Generally, they take the lead from me for PR."

Agency B

"It's always a collaboration. The client has, you know, obviously hired you for a reason so you need to be giving them good strategic input, otherwise they can just hire a junior to do what you're doing. You do need to need to take the lead but you need to listen to the client."

Agency C

"We go out of our way to encourage really close interpersonal relationships. It goes back to that level of trust in your ability, so if they are confident enough in your ability, you need to be able to counter them and then redirect them in another way. But if you've got a client who's got a coms professional in there and they take a different view, you often just have to go with what their ideas are if you can recognise that they know what they're talking about. If we think that it's really detrimental to them, hopefully the relationship is strong enough that you can be able to guide them and challenge them and redirect them, we'll do it."

Agency D

Some allow me to just go ahead and do it and then some people will want me to give my opinion and then they also add theirs. Sometimes it has to run them (client) to check what we've done.

Agency E

"I would like to advise some more but of course, they are not interested. I spend a lot of time making sure they are happy. I must be clairvoyant, I must know what's going on so I dig around, phone around. "Hi, what's happening, have you got anything new?" Two of my other clients, they tell me (what to do) because I don't know, I don't deal with their organisation."

Agency F

"You know some clients, they want us to do, they will tell us, "I want you to do A, B and C." And we'll say, "But that's not right." So we'll advise them that, "You're not gonna get the return on doing it that way." They will still do it that way, they won't get the return on it and then we'll do it our way and we get the return. So it works differently on each client."

Agency G

It depends how many years they've been there. So some of my clients, they've been there many year and I don't need to advise them. Then there are others that a new brand manager and we have to start right from the beginning and coach and teach. The relationship is very important, I foster the relationship, we go to lunch, we get to know each other. It is all about the relationship. The close you are with your client, the more they share, the more open they are, the better their briefs are, the more they'll include you. You've gotta be included as much as you can be to understand what's going on and get a better understanding. I'd say they take the lead from me.

Agency H

5.4.4.1. Summary of organising and advising findings

Participants generally facilitate close relationships with their clients, however most noted that the longer the relationship, the less time they spend on advising them. The relationships with clients are challenging in that the client will sometimes want the

agencies to just do what they say without taking into consideration the PR implications. So there is sometimes an expectation from clients for PR agencies to act upon instruction instead of collaborating efforts to reach certain goals.

5.4.5. Monitoring findings

Monitoring mainly deals with tracking publicity on behalf of clients. This is done by tracking all coverage an organisation has received and creating a numerical report which gives the client a representation of the publications which covered their news, the number of times the client was mentioned and whether the news had a positive or negative sentiment. Participants were asked how they package their reports and which elements are important to their clients. They responded:

> "We use Newsclip and market IQ. AVE is still a big deal to most clients, especially those that have not moved on to the digital way of things. For Opum, they don't care whether it was negative or positive because when we look at… We look at it in two parts. So we can report on a media relations campaign that we executed so for example, we've just done a thing on networking for Opum, so we report on that and all that matter is how many times was the story published and what is the value collectively. So it's case by case but overall if we're putting together a publicity report, we can either be putting together a media relations report of something that we executed or an isolated project that is currently happening or we are just looking at the month of June - how was the brand exposed. And they are not looking at whether it was sad or not sad, they're interested in so, they focus on sports, CSI and academics. So they want to see, are journalists more interested in our sports, or our academics. Then from that, I do a media audit and we tried to find out why journalists are not writing about our academics then we found out that they think that academics are inferior so it doesn't matter. So then we start addressing that."

Agency A

> We use PEAR (to track publicity). So I physically do all my monthly reports and they are very basic, very straight forward. I find that clients don't want long detail of waffle and graphs and pie charts… cause at one stage I thought, let me try look all cleaver and professional and try and do all this fancy stuff and

they weren't actually interested in it. They literally just want to know…so at the end of every month, clients get PR activities done for them that month, coverage overview, so all the coverage that they have received. So if it's print, you attached the actual clipping of the coverage, the page, if it's online, we give them the link and if its's any audio, we send them the audio clip as well. And then obviously with those, comes an AVE figure, advertising value equivalent, so what they would've paid for the space which is very, very important. In terms of measurability for them they want to know, "So I've paid you R5000 but you've actually generated R100000 worth of free coverage." So it's nice for them to able to measure. And then in my report as well, I'll also say, what's coming up, what we plan to tackle for the following month. So short and sweet.

Agency B

"It depends on the client's budget because for every hour that I spend, they get billed for that so if they want me to spend time doing a daily (coverage) report, then they get billed for that. You know I work with two global clients and there we have to report daily, monthly, weekly, quarterly and they've got a specific formula in which they do it."

Agency C

Some of them (clients) are reluctant to actually pay for monitoring even though monitoring is becoming more and more affordable now. So we would love for a client to commit to paying full scale monitoring, full spectrum including social (media) that we can keep an eye on but a lot of them don't so… It's easier to monitor the digital conversation and the social media conversation, you can get those stats very easily but the reach outside of that is actually difficult, you actually can't do it accurately and you can't promise your client accurate, tangible, financial figures to ta away from that event if they don't do media monitoring.

I think there's such a… there's a real… monitoring is an issue because there is a frustration with how people are attaching value to monitoring. There are really some unscrupulous guys that are going around trotting out numbers that are just… pie in the sky, they're rubbish. So if I hear another social media person saying they've got a reach of 88million and "got you R30million for the R1000

you gave me…" It trashes the business. And what we normally do is that out monitoring on socials, we don't attach any values to that because nobody actually knows who to trust, so we'll give you a concrete value on something in broadcast, or on radio, print, you know something that has gone into a magazine but when it comes to valuing social, and reaches and things like live stream, which is replacing TV. It's so hard to put value on those kind of tings. So we'll give you values, well give you metrics about how many people have seen it but… until somebody is doing it responsibly, we don't put a value on it.
Agency D

Tracking is basically pulled from what the platform gives me, so Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, they have that whole system of tracking everything so I go back there and check. And then when I package it, it's basically all done on Powerpoint with graphs and tables and all of that. (I look at) followers, reach, impressions, engagements, comments, likes, shares, pictures of which post did well and why.
Agency E

"You can't possibly do it on your own. Each client has their own requirement. Clients generally get the clip. Not everybody in the client's office gets the clip. If it's a client that is not getting a clip, I get them all. I forward it to the client when it comes in. So if it's a print article I'll download the print article, I'll send the clip and attach the clip so that they can (see it). Two clients, every Thursday afternoon I do a report which I send to them on a Friday morning."
Agency F

"We get the media monitoring on a daily basis but we supply a comprehensive report but the fifth of every month, monthly."
Agency G

"It's becoming way more important. The return on investment is everything. You have to prove there's auditing now so they have to audit spend. So reports are crucial, what they have spent on a media pack or your time, you have to show

return on investment."

Agency H

5.4.5.1. Question: Which variables do you look at when reporting coverage for your clients?

Participants were asked to indicate which variable they look at when putting together publicity reports. The results have been tallied in the table below, from highest to lowest.

All agencies said their reports included publication and media type, followed by publication date. Others included other elements as seen below, however the language of the coverage did not matter - none of the agencies include this in their coverage reports.
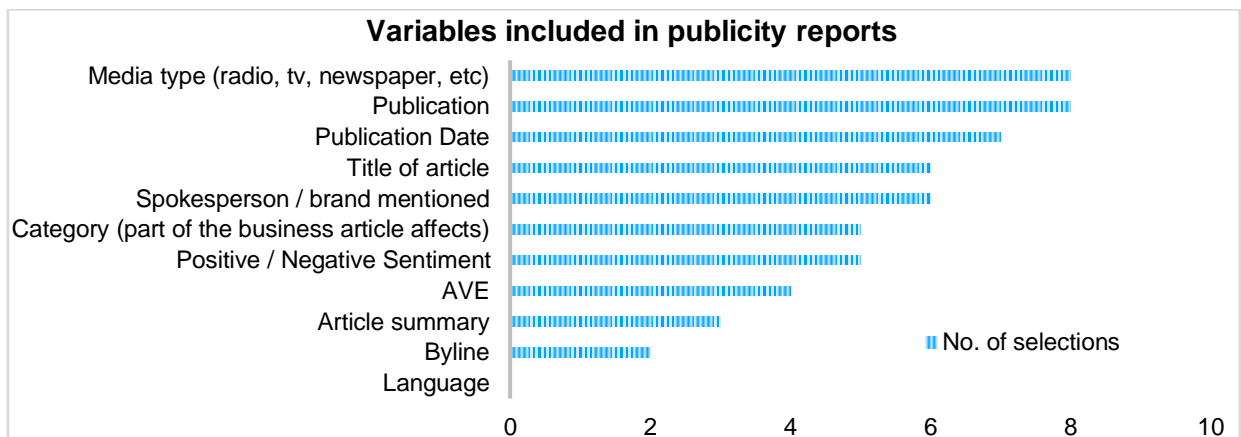
Figure 5.7: Variables included in publicity reports

Participants also added:

> We would give a review. Like what is our feedback on the exposure, like what it has achieved for their business.

Agency A

> "So we've actually started doing this with Opum where we analyse the types of coverage. So we had this many pieces of coverage, print for example…of that, how many were positive, how many were neutral, how many were negative.

And then you get a better idea as to the actual rand value and it's not skewed. And also, online coverage and how that's going."

Agency B

"So if it's been say a full page article or a front page then you obviously highlight those. You have obviously looked at the Barcelona Principles right? So, you'll know that the PR industry is moving away from just putting in the AVE and they are actually focusing in on a whole load of other factors. So I'm quite strict when it come to that (AVE). I got to them and say it's a measurement, it's not the only measurement. And as you will know, PRISA are very against the AVE rule. There is no way that any monitoring team has been able to accurately give you an AVE from online."

Agency C

"Our view on social media … attaching figures to social media is a little different because it's such a controversial thing at the moment. So what we'll do is actually, we'll invariably pitch…first part of the report the client would've seen, is the strategy going into it, we'll a strategy assessment, we'll give them an accurate breakdown of everything that was done into (sent) media — whether it was syndicated, whether it was done personalised. We'll give them a selection of clips that we think reflects the tone of conversation which is important. So that's a subjective thing, there's no values attached to it. But the sentiment and the tone of the conversation is really important to us. And then in terms of analytics, we will ideally present Redbook AVEs of print and broadcast and we will give them detailed analytics on social media and we will give them analytics in terms of website traffic, reach in terms of sms's and email.

The weighting of the AVE is such a contentious issue but unfortunately a lot of the people we deal with, see the emotional value of the event, but their board doesn't. So when they're pitching a review of what they've done back to the board, unless they can actually attach numbers. We've got a couple of people say listen, "Can't we crank in an AVE PR weighting here so that it looks better to my board?" And you've gotta say no."

Agency D

"We also split the AVE. We still report on AVE because it's a point where people at the clients understand. We split AVE into what was earned, paid and mentioned. That's the first split that we do, then the second split we do is what did we contribute to that. So let's say you have R10000 AVE in a month and we would then go analyse that R10000. What we say to the client is that if we did not touch it in any form, that it just happened, that is not our AVE. It is only the stuff that we have touched somewhere on the journey fort to get to publication that we would then claim as our AVE. And we get monitored on that AVE, That's what our KPI is there for."

Agency G

"AVE is not so important, they wanna see reach on social media, they wanna see reach and engagements. They do like to see the AVE but its about quality. What type of quality and exposure…Like we might have had five clips but one of them was a full page where the coverage was prominent, it's quality and then reach.

We would (also include) a review (on the publicity). Like what is our feedback on the exposure, like what it has achieved for their business."

Agency H

5.4.5.2. Summary of monitoring findings

Practitioners generally present clients with coverage reports on a monthly basis and they usually include a clip or snapshot of the coverage as it appeared in a publication, online or an audio clip. All participants included the name of the publication, date and type of media platform in their reports. They noted that AVE is still important to clients because it is a way for them to measure return on investment. A key finding is that the practitioners are trying to move their clients away from focusing on AVE but rather on the quality of the coverage. This was mostly tied to ethical issues pertaining to how the AVE values are actually obtained.

Three out of the eight agencies involved in the study said they used the results obtained from the reports to adapt their overall client strategies depending on the kind of content media was interested in.

Monitoring social media was also a key finding. Seven out of the eight agencies involved in the study included some kind of social media report which looked at measuring the tone of the conversation online.

5.5. Main Findings: Current Trends

The literature review addressed various current trends, however, to streamline the findings, the researcher focused on, department collaborations, environmental scanning, overall client reports and general trends that were reported on by various professional bodies and publications. Participants were asked 14 questions in relation to the topics above and the responses have been captured below under the titles; department collaborations, environmental scanning, overall client report and general trends.

5.5.1. Department collaborations

Practitioners were asked if they collaborate with other communication departments and on what kind of projects. They responded:

"Yes, it's campaigns. We collaborate on campaigns. You can't execute a campaign on one tactic or on one marketing tool because at the end of the day, PR ends up being called a marketing tool as well. So when I worked in corporate, I wasn't called the PR department, we were called the marketing department. And in the marketing department, there was PR and digital and promotions. So I think even now, it's very seldom that PR lead a campaign unless it's a purely media relations campaign."

Agency A

"Yes, It's really just the social media I outsource to."

Agency B

"Yes, so with each particular client, I will work very closely with their advertising agency or their digital agency because it's critical that there is one message going out to the consumer. So you need to be working seamlessly and basically as partners with each client. But generally we'll try and support each other and have each other's backs. And if a client mentions something to me, whether it's negative or positive, I'll give them a heads up. The more you can work together for the benefit of the client, the better."

Agency C

"It's a challenge where we've got a couple of agencies attached to a client. So we work with some clients where we are exclusively in a media/PR capacity and they've got traditional ad agency, they've got a digital design agency and they've got a social media monitoring agency. And the challenge is just to go to the CEO and say you're actually wasting our time unless you can pull all these components together. Unless your single message is being presented across all of those platforms then it's actually potentially a destructive thing. What's happening more and more is that people are actually offloading work to ad agencies or specialist agencies are aggressively coming back to client and taking a portion of the work away. So, we like to present an umbrella function where we can get a single message across traditional channels and social media and digital…. When you lose a slice of that action to an external agency, the coms become very difficult."

Agency D

"It does stick to marketing and communications cause they kinda have all the details. Sometimes it is the sales department."

Agency E

"Not often."

Agency F

"All the time. Yes, we do. We love collaborating so they more we can do (collaborations), the more we can achieve."

Agency G

"Yes, lots and lots. Digital agencies, media agencies — so there is an agency that creates content first of all for media — so that creating print ads, that creating digital videos. There's more than one. Then there is an agency that then will take that and then plan it into the media schedule for digital site. So there is a digital agency that'll actually take that content and then they place it onto Facebook, or website or Instagram. Then there is an agency that puts paid media behind that. So it's spend and the media agency is where the spend comes in — it's like paid media.

We are lost in translation - I'm sometimes doing something (and) they don't know about it. Then they do that and it's different to what I'm doing and it's really challenging. We're trying to get better at collaboration. The agencies are Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, so we all over the place so we try and Skype now to make it more streamlined."

Agency H

5.5.2. Environmental scanning

Dozier (1986:4), describes environmental scanning as the gathering of information about publics, reactions of publics toward an organisation and public opinion towards issues important to the organisation. Practitioners are also advised to scan social media as it provides opportunities for dialogue between brands and consumers which makes PR more valuable to clients (PRSA, 2018). Furthermore, it provides PR practitioners with a seat at the decision-making table. Practitioners were asked five (5) questions regarding their environmental scanning processes. They responded:

"On the ground, we don't normally. I think it's Poise that would have that when they have them in-store activations, then they have people doing those. At Opum, they have in-house research team that does either focus groups and things like that so maybe it will be after an event to find out, you know, "Did it work? Did you like it? Would you do it again?" So there is an actual head of research at Opum that handles that and then they would give us the results."

Agency A

"Yeah but not often. I'd probably say like 10% of my time. Generally, I get feedback from clients but it's difficult to (say) because I've got such a mixed bag of clients. So it's feedback from client or else I wouldn't know.

So XX Security… they are very fortunate because they have a team internally and they get all of the stats. So they look at their own physical stats, area by area, community policing forums, neighbourhood watches, etc. And they have all of that together and from that pie, you can kind of say, "Oh, this is an area

that we need to be focusing on." So it's not something that I have to physically do. I'm involved in the process of analysing all the data that's already provided."
Agency B

"Ja, but that's very much more informal unless the client is paying me to do it. Cause remember every other industry that you are monitoring, although that it the ideal, sometimes they're on really shoestring budgets and don't have the budget to do that so then it needs to be more of an informal thing. So for instance, I will always look out for what competitors are doing.

And generally with social media, you can kind of pick it up. You've gotta be aware that you can't go with the extreme kind of people. I mean I just tell the client to ignore what I call the outliers."
Agency C

"Most of it is online, most of it is digital. So it will be social media or looking at conversations that go on in commentary to pieces that are being published online. We spend a lot of time a lot of time reading blogs and online articles which is a great way of measuring response and sentiment to articles because most of them give you can opportunity…if you get something published on News24 or something there is always a lot of banter. We're awake to it (perception) all of the time. What normally happens is if we've got 2,3,4,5,6 people working on a project there's invariably in the morning a coffee and biscuit session where all we do is talk about in nonspecific terms about what we're working with and that is all what you see, hear, perspective of what we (hear)."
Agency D

"We look at it so like it's usually with the smaller brands. You have to constantly be on the loop about whatever tools they're introducing. New methods of doing something, new ideas, new concepts."
Agency E

"I don't but there's a company that does it, PMR… (I know what the public thinks of my clients) fairly well because you know if you're not getting publicity (that something is not right). I am aware because it's important to know."
Agency F

"Yes, it's really done through the media relations that we have and what the perception is of the product. And what we do is, we base that journalists or editor's perception on their readers. You know, we could be talking to publication ABC - they have 35 000 readers. What do those (readers, what do they wanna know about? And that will then set the indication for us going forward.

I think we could be better at it. You know, we work across so many diverse products, we can't know everything about everything. So we try, like when a client comes on board or there is a new project, we do try and educate ourselves as much as possible from time of quoting. So that when they are ready, we are aware as much as we can be."
Agency G

"Yeah, we do. It's not major though, I would say. It's generally always favourable. People love the brand. So generally people always say, "I absolutely love the brand." Until there is something negative and they say, "I'm boycotting.""
Agency H

5.5.3. Overall client reports

According to PRSA (2018), the most successful PR people will monitor communication results in real-time and revise strategies when necessary. In addition, successful practitioners will present reports which incorporate stakeholder's overall impression of an organisation. Participants were asked three (3) questions regarding their overall campaign reports and how they measure campaign success. They responded:

"We always, always set objectives at the beginning and after the campaign we always go back to the objectives and compare the outcome and what was expected.

Some of them, like Poise, if you get them into Isolezwe, you're done. Whereas at Opum it's more. So each client has a different thing."

Agency A

"It' so difficult (to answer) because then you need to look at it campaign by campaign. At the end of the day, whatever the client's aims and objectives are, that's what I want to achieve. So if it is, like for Aba, they really wanted to push their mother and baby range because nobody knew about it. It was always on the bottom shelf at the back and gathering dust. And then to have a buyer six months' later phone and say," I've seen you in all these publications, I want to stock your product," was like (amazing). I also have a guarantee and it is on my website that if a client doesn't get at least double return on investment, I will give them their money back."

*Aba is a fictitious name created to protect the agencies client.

Agency B

"So if it's a crisis situation it's how much have you been able to contain in the news…it's how much of media have used your report versus going and finding out their own work. So for example, recently with the crisis I had last week, we've only had two negative stories and we've had about (a total) of 12 articles. And when I say negative, the one was actually balance and the other one, they're a junior journalist and I kinda actually had to say to them, "Guys, you're gonna have to issue an apology because you have put allegations in here that you didn't ask questions about." But generally, I literally pick up the phone and the editor. So it's obviously the perception that you've created in the industry. And then obviously, then have people gone into store. I mean this is a critical thing. If it's product related, have people gone into the store and said, "Hey, I saw this in cosmo (cosmopolitan magazine), please can I get it?" So those are tangible business results."

Agency C

"Without falling back on AVEs. We place so much value on the goodwill that you attach to a brand or a client. So I would rather do three pieces where the

tone of the conversation was non-negotiably positive than get 20 pieces out there that actually are not doing anything to the tone. We're lucky because we work with cyclical projects so in as much as that first meeting is always one of just locking ourselves in a room with a client and working out what makes them tick, We'll invariably close it with a meant where we will be blunt about what worked well and what worked badly and where there are avenues to discuss ways of doing things differently. That is an important part of the process. We normally write a sort of SWAT analysis at the end of it all to try and work out what worked well or what certainly needs to be pried up from our side or client's side. And then we normally have a sit down session where we table that and go through them all and actively look for commentary, or disagreement or debate over what we did and what we could do better."

Agency D

"It depends. Quite often we will have a debrief meeting with the people (involved) and then we discuss, "What do you think worked well? What don't you think worked well?" So it's mainly a debrief.

"I use it (AVE) but I give it justice. So I'll give you an example, if there is a five-page article and my client is only mentioned in one column, on one page…In my head (I) say, this is probably worth 10% (of the AVE) and then I adjust the value. I know they (clients) also look at where they get their publicity and I tell them. At the beginning of every year, I get a brief (from client) to say, "ok this is who we're aiming at for this year." So they were very environmentally focused a couple of years ago and they said, "We're not talking environmental anymore (this year). It's not that we don't believe in it…we've spoken about it enough. We need to be talking about something new. So these are the people we need to be talking to." So they want to talk to government. So you adjust your messaging (according to client's brief)."

Agency F

"It's if the client is happy at the end of the day. You know for us, it's very important that the client is happy so to determine what their objective is and make

sure that we are reaching what those objectives are. So in each case its differ-ent you know. How do I monitor it? It might be on footfall; it might be on AVE…we do keep a track of it on an ongoing basis. My three biggest cli-ents…they are 100% AVE."

Agency G

"We would've set objectives. So we set objectives and (measure ourselves against those). So we'll just have a review, say where things went wrong and how we can make do it differently and better. If it's a brand new launch, like an amazing new product and you get five clips, it's not gonna work. They want quantity. But then sometimes, if it's an old historic product then maybe a few quality clips are better."

Agency H

5.5.4. General trends

In line with the 2018 Global Communications Report, practitioners were asked 4 ques-tions regarding general trends in the PR industry. The responses have been tallied and recorded below.

5.5.4.1. Question: How do you expect the PR industry to change in the next 5 years?

Participants were asked to indicate the change they expect to see in the PR industry over the next 5 years and they said:

Expected change in the PR industry
No. of selections

Somewhat	Moderately	Considerably	Drastically
0	0	2	5
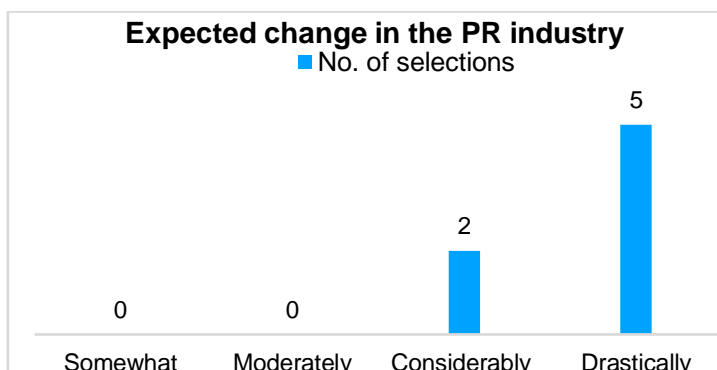
Figure 5.8: Expected change in the PR industry

5.5.4.2. Follow up question: How prepared are you to adapt to this level of change?
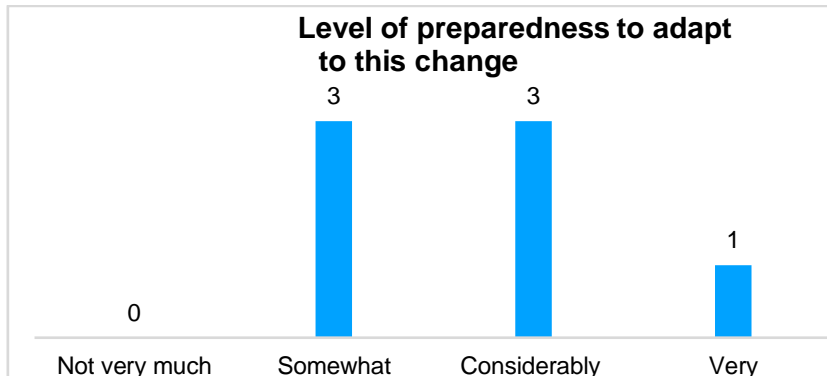
Figure 5.9: Level of preparedness to adapt to change

Participants added:

> "We adapt every day. The amount of changes we do within a week even to our own processes to keep up with new technologies, new communication tactics, you know. We are always finding new tools and new tactics to keep up."

Agency A

> "There is a lot more reliance of the media for paid for content. And there's also a lot more requirement from them… so previously we would be able to send them press releases and they would get published, now they're going, "Unless you are advertising with us, we will not give you editorial." So the job is getting tougher and tougher, so you have to streamline who you are targeting for stuff. And obviously, it's becoming a lot more online driven. I think I have a lot to learn and the digital world is just changing constantly so you kind of need to be constantly ups skilling yourself so we've got a lot of work to do because a lot of work is moving into the digital agencies as well."

Agency C

> "You know you try and update all the time. In the beginning — most of my clients are in manufacturing so they're not trendy, so social media was something they took on very slowly. In fact, I still think they are too slow. Because if you're building a new house (for example), you go onto Instagram and you look

at those things, you look at the latest magazine and thing, "wow, doesn't that look great." And a lot of them, they're not (social media savvy), whereas the fashion people, the food people (are savvy)."
Agency F

"Because I don't think PR is going to be a PR position anymore. I think it's going to move and I think the PR companies need to realise that they need to become a tool to the media house. So they need to realise that their role and responsibility of getting the news out is going to become a lot larger. That old relationship of journalists versus PRs is not going to be around anymore. As much as the journalists want to keep saying that, they're becoming more and more reliant on PR to be feeding them that news. Because what is happening in the publications is that people are leaving and they're not being replaced so the job falls on somebody else. Time is not with us at the moment. So not only are the platforms changing, the tools and the way we communicate is also changing."
Agency G

Most participants noted that they expect drastic changes to occur in the PR industry, however, their level of preparedness didn't match the level of change they expect to see. The most notable comments were regarding changes in the media landscape. The digital media landscape was an element practitioners noted as challenging to deal with even though they made efforts to keep up. It changed so rapidly that a considered effort is required to ensure that practitioners are always informed about digital media changes. Practitioners also noted that there is a heavy reliance from media for PR practitioners to produce ready to print content, therefore shifting a responsibility which was usually fulfilled by journalists to PR practitioners.

5.5.4.3. Question: What do you think will drive change in the PR industry?

The Global Communications Report (2018:7-8) found the changing media landscape, technological innovations, great access to data, disruption of traditional business models and political climate are the biggest factors that will drive change in the PR industry. The report also listed strategic planning, leadership, written communications, social media and multimedia content development as the most important skills PR practitioners need to have over the next five years. Practitioners were asked to indicate factors

that will drive change in the industry as well as PR skills they regard as important. Their responses have been presented below.
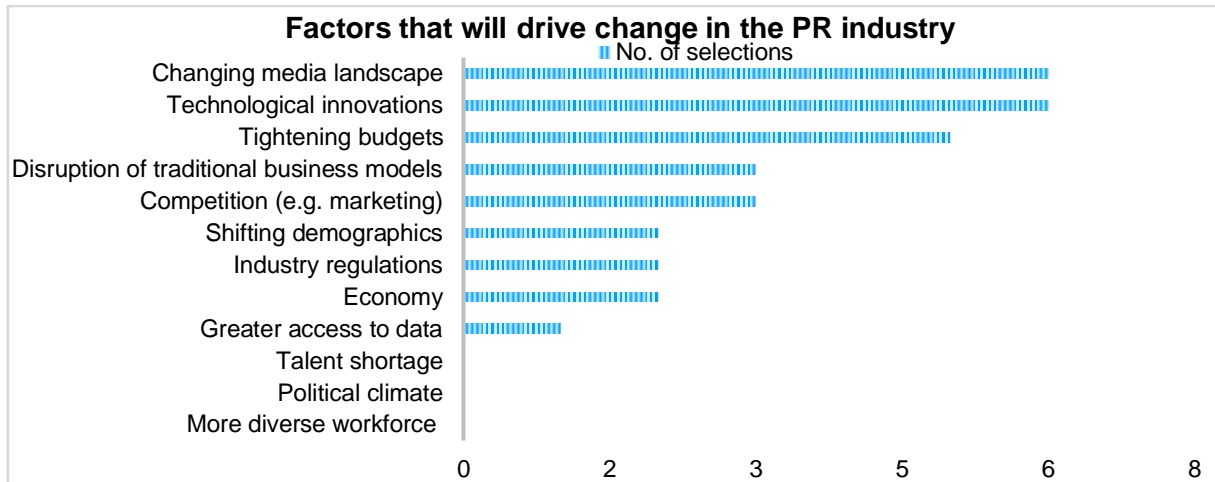
Figure 5.10: Factors that will drive change in the PR industry

Participant's added:

> "I think there is competition but agency models are changing so like we now have a digital marketing…we take on digital marketing and social media. We even sometimes, every now and again web design which was never heard of before. So we keeper competitive edge by also offering more services of our competitors (same services offered by competition)."

Agency A

> "I mean obviously there has been a move into digital space and also, you probably don't have also of people mention that. So in the year where recently we've had a really bad recession and the economy is taking a big beating, the PR wow factor is definitely down where people are only focusing in on what they absolutely have to, they're not doing the nice to haves."

Agency C

> "I think convergence. The ability for PR to successfully converge traditional with media, with video, with digital design…. And to be able to do that cost effectively. Because what I see as a threat is the way that our business is being fragmented by client and has ben fragmented by competition. There's so many

small players that are coming to the market, everybody wants their slice but what they doing is that they are fragmenting the way businesses go about doing this business. So to me, the minute we can cost effectively converge all that communication — that to me is a challenge. I think the days of a single media or PR agency just controlling the tone of the conversation are gone because it's now so stratified that the communication is so multi-layered."

Agency D

5.5.4.4. Follow up question: What do you think are the most important PR skills to have at the moment?
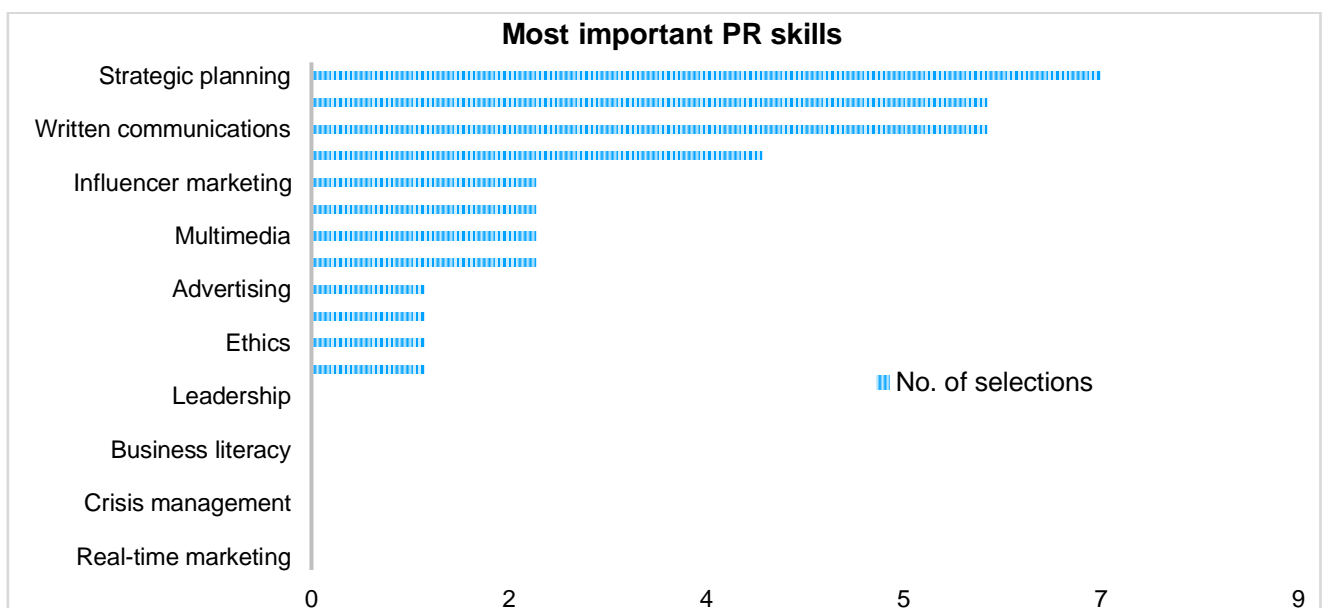
Figure 5.11: Most important PR skills

Participants added:

"So influencer marketing, I think in South Africa is only now started taking off I'd say in the last two years. And it's not the most fun part of PR. It's very difficult to work with influencers. Some are amazing but if you work with somebody who often say something stupid. So it's very difficult to control those kind of things."

Agency C

"Again this influencer marketing. I find it absolutely hysterical. One of my clients was running a short campaign and has produced some short recipes. And the

people that come through…" Would you like to do a collab?" And I ask, "Ok, what do you have in mind?" And you get this picture of this sexy looking person, female…funny enough I haven't had any males coming through (contacting me) saying, "I have 55000 Facebook followers and I can get your product into all 55000 people and it only costs you five arms and 10 legs." I don't know."

Agency F

"Ok, when I employ people and what I'm look for, which you don't have here is attitude. Attitude is a big thing in PR and it's a skill that not everybody has. And when I say attitude, what I mean is that, you need to be open to learning something new every day because that is how fast our industry is changing. You need to be able to have the attitude to adapt to different kinds of people, different levels of people, different everything of people. And I often find that people go into PR for the wrong reasons. They think it's the limelight position, and they're gonna get to dress up every day and look pretty and all of that. And that's not there. So you need to have the right attitude to come into the PR business. Also, every day is different, you don't have the same day. So what we today…you can plan as much as you want for tomorrow, it's not gonna happen because things change so quickly. So, attitude."

Agency G

Practitioners noted that the changing media landscape, technological innovations, tightening budgets, disruption of traditional business models and competition from other communication teams were the top five factors that drive change in the PR industry. This finding has some similarities to the changes recorded in the Global Communications Report but greater access to data and the political climate were not necessarily huge considerations for the agencies which took part in the study.

The agencies which took part in this study noted strategic planning, content development, written communications, media relations and influencer marketing as key skills for PR practitioners. The finding in this study shares some similarities with the Global Communications Report but the agencies which took part do not view leadership and social media as important skills to have at the moment. However, social media and

influencer marketing are somewhat linked so it can be said that the only major difference is that the agencies did not list leadership as a necessary skill in PR at the moment.

5.5.4.5. Question: Do you think the PR industry is regarded as legitimate or illegitimate and why?

All participants responded that they believe the industry is now regarded as legitimate. Their reasons for this response have been recorded below:

"I think now, especially since I started my own company, I hear and we see more and more people saying I need PR. I mean this morning we were tagged by a musician who's been trying to get us to sign him for a year and we keep saying no because people realise that, and I've always said, you can buy into something you don't know. So marketing says the coffee costs R18, PR tells you that the coffee came from Jamaica and it took 20 years to make, and the people that made it are…But also for free, you don't have to pay anyone to tell you that. So you know when they say that people buy people? You buy people not because met you and I like your shirt and your jeans… You buy into people because you actually get to know who they are and you feel draw to them. And PR makes you feel like that. Like once you get to know someone's story, we feel like event time we write about Point and the impact on the community and how they are investing in South African women - that's gonna make me but Poise. It's not gonna be Bona (magazine) and seeing a picture with the price. That's not gonna work.

So people, this generation that we're moving into now, is more emotional. People are becoming… it's either they're angry, or they're really happy or they're depressed and PR feeds into that. We don't listen to brand any more, we wanna listen to people. So especially with our influencer marketing is a great example of how badly we need PR. It's because, Joe Soap (example) has 5000 followers and that's only a little bit but everyone trusts Joe's opinion. So if Joe Soap says, "I always cook with Poise, it's delicious." Best believe those people are going to go get the recipe with Poise and try it. But they're not gonna go get Poise if they go online and there is a little side ad (advert), they don't care about that.

So I think marketing companies are maybe playing a role of PR as well because they are also trying to…even the ads that are playing now, they have more of a human element.”

Agency A

“Legitimate. I think it's changed because there are a lot more PR people out there and a lot of people are understanding it more and seeing the value.”

Agency B

“Legitimate. Other than your outliers like Bell Pottinger.”

Agency C

“Legitimate.”

Agency E

“Yes, (It's legitimate) It's no longer cocktail parties and dolly birds.”

Agency F

"*Yes, (it is legitimate) I think a lot of people don't understand what PR is and I think with the changing platform of our roles in the communication world, we are not doing enough to educate people. We need to spend more time educating and communicating and I wish we'd do more of that kind of thing.”*

Agency G

“I think there's such future for PR. I think it's regarded as legitimate. I think it's going to continue to be important, especially with what's happening with influencers and digital. It's credible and authentic. I think there is so much fake news out there, so the more that we can build our communication for our clients and their brands and make it more authentic and real and communicate it in the right way - I think there is such a need for that.”

Agency H

5.5.4.6. Question: Do you think PR should be merged with marketing? Why?

The Global Communications report (2018:9) cited that 50% of PR practitioners at agencies believe that senior management will push for PR to be merged with marketing within the next five years. The responses to this question were almost all a definite no. Participants noted that the relationship between marketing and PR should be close but the two should not be merged. Practitioners were asked if they think PR should be merged with marking and they responded:

> *"No, we don't shout at people, it's not a one-way communication of buying advertising space. It's a personal and emotional journey doing a PR campaign that's getting people to trust you and to… kind of emphasise the similarities between them (and consumers). So I think if you had to mix marketing and PR it would…You would lose that human element of the PR. I know of a particular marketing manager and I was complaining about her saying, "She's so mean." I mean, I can't imagine her ever doing PR because, you know, you have to grovel sometimes, you have to phone a journalist like 5 times. You have to be nice, but also thick skinned. It's a massaging thing that you do. And a lot of marking people are sales people."*

Agency A

> *"Don't think they should be merged because it is a very different skillset, but I think, going back to me having been in the ad industry as well. We always explain to people, that it's like a pie. So you've got PR, you've got marketing, you've got social media and I explain all the pieces of the pie and how they work together. They are all separate but they do overlap. And they help each other at the end of the day."*

Agency B

> *"No. They need to work in tandem because PR also needs to work, for instance, with the human resources team for internal things. They need to work directly with the CEO for other specific group things. The marketing is very much driven interns of where there is a product that they need to push, things like that. The can work very comfortably hand in hand and if it is not possible to report to the*

CEO then they can definitely report to marketing but to merge them, it starts to get bit (complicated). The skillset is very very different so the marketing person needs to be a lot more savvy in terms of numbers versus PR which is more about the awareness and that sort of thing."

Agency C

"I don't because what normally happens is your traditional marketing is… we are a bolt on to that and the risk you run is that there's not gonna be a congruence between what your PR external bolt on it doing and what your marketing is doing. I think it makes an awful lot of sense to bolt on external PR expertise particularly when it come to the digital side of marketing. But the challenge is always going to be, are you on the same page as that marking team. So that's why we often as a matter of choice will have a conversation directly with CEO, senior management or director level. Which means that you've got a fast track into what is actually happening with the company and where the company and the brand is going. We often find marketing departments quite frustrating. I think the kind of soul that ends up in marketing department doesn't have a lot of the attributes that we are looking for from PR people. So there's often a disconnect between us and the marketing team and the challenge is to make sure that we're always on the same page."

Agency D

"No… cause I feel like it's two separate things like… for me I'd look at PR as not you just selling me anything and marketing is just selling. So I would literally separate it like if I had to do PR for me, I would just be building my brand for me, I wouldn't be selling anything. My PR might be successful without you working with me but because you know me then I've successfully done that. Yet if I was marketing myself, I need you to become a client."

Agency E

"No, cause they're different. It's (PR) one of the tools of marketing."

Agency F

"It is a yes and no answer because it depends on the project. There's some situations where you're working on an objective that needs to be reached where you need to have the marking brain with the PR brain. Do I think that they should be merged? My answer would be yes because I was in a marketing position for so long and I've changed into a PR role but I think what our company does is reputation management and it includes both of them. So we are already merged but our focus is different. So in our agency, our main role is communication. In another agency, it could be marketing but they offer PR. So we often subcontract to a marketing company as their PR division."

Agency G

"There is such a need for all elements of marketing to work together. Not to be merged, as in it's gotta be a standalone but they gotta be more collaboration. The pieces have to all tied together. Not merged as in PR must disappear, it must still exist but must exist more strongly within the other pieces of (the) marketing mix."

Agency H

5.5.4.7. Question: Who do you report to?

The Global Communications Report (2018:10) found that 26% of PR practitioners in agencies were reporting directly to the CEO, 35% to the corporate communication department, while 21% were reporting to the marketing department at their clients' organisations. Participants were unable to answer this question definitively. This was mainly because it varied across all their clients — some reported to both top management and the marketing department, while others reported only to the marketing department. For others it was dependent on the information or period they are working under. Their responses have been recorded below:

"More marketing. With our biggest clients, it's top management but they're a huge client and I've formed a good relationship with top management but I think on most of the other cases it would be the marketing heads."

Agency A

"Mmm A mixed bag — so from the owner right down to the coms guys who dealt with the marketing department. It's kind of a 50/50 split between marketing and top management."

Agency B

"It's either the MD or head of marketing."

Agency C

"75% into CEO and GM level. The rest is marketing or similar… I think we try and de-structure it as much as possible. I mean we'd like to cultivate a relationship with your GMs and you CEOs where we can approach them at any time or day and that's the way we operate. We're an incredibly informal business and we wanna have the same structure going into it so even when we're dealing with big corporates, uh, we'd like to try and facilitate (a relationship) … It's also, I mean by virtue of how we work, it's really easy to keep someone in the loop so that if you know you've had contact from a marketing or a coms person just to then cc (copy) all the correspondence to make sure that all your executive level people are involved and ja, and it's exciting when they get involved and intervene and contribute."

Agency D

"I work with small teams and startups so it's mostly CEO level. It's just with one client where I deal with the marketing department."

Agency E

"I report to the marketing guys. Even though I have access to the top guys, I've worked so long with my clients but I would be very careful not to upset the marketing guy. But when I need information I go to the marketing person because I don't expect the CEO to spend time on, "What colour is it?""

Agency F

"It's very different. Once client I can tell you… we deal with two marketing managers, two communications people and then two CEOs/MDs… so it's very across the board."

Agency G

> *"On a daily basis, it's brand managers and on a monthly basis to quarterly basis, its marketing manager and I'd say quarterly basis its director level."*

Agency H

5.5.5. Summary of current trends findings

Participants reported that they mostly collaborated with marketing, social media and digital agencies. The key finding was that it is challenging coordinating communication across various teams as information is not coming from one central point.

Environmental scanning doesn't necessarily form a large part of what the PR agencies do. Most of the scanning is done by the client who then feeds the information back to the PR team. The PR teams only do general scanning; however, it is not necessarily a formal process.

Overall campaign success is measured by looking at the objectives set in the beginning for each client. Agencies then use the relationships they have built with media to ensure they achieve the objective which are regularly related to being featured in certain publications, a target AVE figure or consumer participation. Following each campaign, most agencies will have a session with their clients where they analyse what worked best and how they can improve for the next campaign.

Most practitioners reported that they expect the industry to change drastically. They attributed this drastic change to the changing media landscape as well as the digital shift, especially with social media.

The top 5 changes agencies expect to see in the PR industry are; the changing media landscape, technological innovations, tightening budget, disruption of traditional business model and competition. The agencies regard; strategic planning, written communication, content development, media relations, social media and multimedia as the most important PR skills to have at the moment.

All agencies believe the PR industry is regarded as legitimate and attribute this to the increasing understanding of PR and demand for PR services. Agencies also noted that PR should not be merged with marketing, however the two fields need to work closely together.

The reporting structure was unclear and dependent on each individual agency and their clients; however, the split was between a marketing head or senior management.

6.   CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"… recommendations may arise from constraints imposed on your study or your insights regarding questions or confirmation of your findings. A conclusion pulls together all your main points of the study and provides a complete idea of your research," Roberts (2010:181-182).

6.1.   Introduction

This chapter concludes the study titled, *an investigation of techniques and functions used by PR practitioners at agencies in Durban.* It firstly recaps the research questions and then draws conclusions and recommendations from the previous chapter according to the respective question and in line with the techniques, functions and current trends. The chapter concludes with key areas for improvement.

The research conclusions and recommendations have been presented in line with the questions below:

RQ1: Which PR techniques and functions are PR practitioners employing today?
RQ2: How are PR practitioners currently applying traditional techniques and functions?
RQ3: How has the application of PR techniques and functions evolved in comparison to how they were meant to be used?
RQ4: Which new techniques and functions have PR practitioners adopted?
RQ5: What are the current trends contributing to the state of the PR industry?

6.2.   Conclusion: RQ1

Below are conclusions based on the research question one (1):

RQ1: Which PR techniques and functions are PR practitioners employing today?

Over the years, various scholars have shaped relevant PR techniques and functions which are now considered crucial elements which assist PR practitioners perform their duties. These were extensively discussed in chapter two of this thesis. The techniques are; media relations technique, corporate image, promotional activities, issues management, crisis communication and networking. The functions are; research, writing,

media relations function, organising and advising, and monitoring. While most of these techniques and functions are still employed today, the findings suggest that issues management and the corporate image PR techniques are not being applied effectively. This is due to practitioners not clearly distinguishing between issues management and crisis communication. Also, the corporate image technique is not necessarily an element practitioners are considering when performing their duties. It is unclear whether they are aware that all their activities need to be geared at improving their clients' corporate image. Media relations, research and monitoring are the most widely applied techniques and functions. In most cases, these techniques and functions are applied daily, therefore making them the most used overall.

6.3. Conclusion: RQ2 and RQ3

Below are conclusions and recommendations based on research question two (2) and three (3):

RQ2: How are PR practitioners currently applying traditional techniques and functions?
RQ3: How has the application of PR techniques and functions evolved in comparison to how they were meant to be used?

6.3.1. PR techniques

Below are conclusions and recommendation based on the PR techniques, namely; media relations technique, corporate image, promotional activities, issues management, crisis communication and networking.

6.3.1.1. Media relations technique

Durban agencies generally have good relationships with the media but there is a lack of proactivity when it comes to getting ahead of potential issues. Most agencies waited for media to contact them regarding certain issues, which means they were reacting to news around them as opposed to taking control of the message. This meant that they were mostly catching up with the media and not using their contacts effectively to stay informed. Therefore, as much as they had close relationships with media, they were not using these relationships to assist their clients.

6.3.1.2. Corporate image

Participants didn't report a universal way of maintaining a positive image of their clients — this varied agency to agency. Monitoring of publicity and social media platforms played a major role in how the agencies measured the public's opinion towards their clients. Practitioners need to relook their strategies and include actual plans on maintaining the corporate image of their clients. At the moment, it seems as though the corporate image is dealt with from a client's point and the PR agencies only get involved once there are negative perceptions. Therefore, the corporate image technique is not currently being effectively managed and requires a clear strategy to showcase PRs involvement in maintaining a positive corporate image on behalf of their clients.

6.3.1.3. Promotional activities

PR practitioners arrange a variety of events, however, the top most arranged events fall in the conference category or the service or product launch category. PR practitioners are mostly involved in managing the event by coordinating all the communication with the various teams involved and ensuring that all elements required for the promotional activity are sourced. In cases that the agencies are not managing an entire event, they will ensure that the media relations and social media are effectively managed. Creating awareness and media exposure are important elements to secure when arranging an event and it was mostly how agencies measured success. It is unclear if any of the PR agency's management of promotional activities prompted consumers to act in a certain way, however, it can be said that their general management of events is good.

6.3.1.4. Issues management

Durban agencies are not adequately preparing themselves and their clients to deal with issues. 50% of the participants only deal with issues when they come up and do not have plans in place to use should an issue come up. Although 50% of the agencies noted that they do anticipate possible issues in collaboration with clients, they did not have a standard document they could refer to should they face an issue — this was only done once the issue occurred.

This lack of preparedness could negatively impact clients and is not a sign of good public relations. If agencies have plans in place, they are able to prevent issues from

becoming crises. Agencies can benefit from being proactive rather than reactive and therefore need to have strategies in place to carefully anticipate issues on behalf of all their clients.

6.3.1.5. Crisis communication

Agencies generally dealt with crises effectively by referring to the crisis plans which they have put in place and ensuring that their clients are well prepared to answer questions from the media. Although agencies have crisis plans in place, there are some elements of crisis communication which they are not applying effectively. A lot of the focus is on ensuring that two stakeholders, particularly the media and the client are satisfied. There was little mention of ensuring that employees are also informed during a crisis. One can conclude that agencies in Durban are dealing with crises effectively, however, can improve it by ensuring that all stakeholders, especially employees, are kept informed during a crisis. This function should not be left to clients to handle; it should be done in collaboration with the PR teams. Taking part in holistic crisis communication, including drafting and delivering messages to all stakeholders of an organisation, can increase PRs value to top management.

6.3.1.6. Networking

Durban practitioners generally did not maintain relationships or network with their client's stakeholders. They mostly relied on information from their clients to tell them who they need to communicate to but put little to no effort in building or maintaining those relationships. Their main goal was to create and maintain networks with media. This is poor management from PR as tapping into their client's stakeholders can provide them with insights they may not have. Therefore, PR practitioners need to make an effort to build wider networks that stretch beyond media and into consumers, employees and even investors. This will allow them to create better content and better strategies because they will have more information from a wide range of groups. Researching and building networks can be the responsibility of one person in the agency who can then find out information that will help the agencies represent their clients better.

6.3.2. PR functions

Below are conclusions and recommendation based on the PR functions, namely; research, writing, media relations function, organising and advising, and monitoring.

6.3.2.1. Research

Research is a daily part of practitioners activities. Most of it is done informally and without the involvement of research agencies. Practitioners have a huge reliance on clients to find out information and there is no clear way of determining whether the desktop research they conduct is formal or informal. Therefore, practitioners can improve their research methods as there is no certainty whether their decisions are backed by credible research.

6.3.2.2. Writing

Practitioners generally do a large amount for writing daily. The top five documents which practitioners are currently preparing, in order of highest to lowest are; newsletters, social media content plans, crisis holding statements, interview briefing documents and lastly, messaging framework.

6.3.2.3. Media relations function

Durban practitioners are for the most part fulfilling their media relations function well. A key finding was that a lot of work has shifted from journalists to PR practitioners. Practitioners are creating content for media that requires little to no editing and the publications are printing it as is. This signals that the media landscape has changed and is demanding more skills from the PR practitioner to be able to create news stories as opposed to drafting media releases. This can be regarded as a trend that will continue to change the industry and may require practitioners to know more about drafting journalistic content.

6.3.2.4. Organising and advising

The key conclusion here is that the longer the relationship between the agencies and a client was, the less they needed to advise them. This is to be expected as newer clients require more nurturing while a relationship is being built. Over time, the clients learn to trust the agencies and therefore trust their processes. The relationship with clients is challenging in that some clients want the agencies to do what they say without considering the PR implications. So there is often an expectation from clients for PR

agencies to act upon instruction. This is not necessarily a negative sign but signals that PR still does not necessarily have a seat at the decision-making table.

6.3.2.5. Monitoring

Agencies in Durban regularly monitor publicity on behalf of their clients and mostly send reports on a monthly basis. Social media monitoring has become a huge part of what they do. Agencies noted that AVE is still important to clients because it is a way for them to measure return on investment. A key finding is that the practitioners are trying to move their clients away from focusing on AVE but rather on the quality of the coverage. This was mostly tied to ethical issues pertaining to how the AVE values are actually obtained. Only one agency referred to the Barcelona Principles which signals that practitioners may not be educating themselves enough on monitoring practices in order to educate their clients. Only three of the agencies reported that their reports helped them create better strategies and make better decisions for their clients. This may be due to the fact that the PR agencies are relatively small and may not be analysing the publicity reports effectively.

6.4. Conclusion: RQ4

Below are conclusions based on the research question four (4):

RQ4: Which new techniques and functions have PR practitioners adopted?

There was no evidence that suggested that there are new techniques that practitioners are applying, but rather, the available techniques and function have been adapted and are generally being used in their original form. A crucial element which is currently affecting the agencies is the changes within digital media, especially dealing with influencers. Although digital media is not necessarily a current PR technique or function, it may soon become one as it evolves.

6.5. Conclusion: RQ5

Below are conclusions and recommendations based on research question five (5):

RQ5: What are the current trends contributing to the state of the PR industry?

6.5.1. Current trends

Below are conclusions and recommendation based on the current trends in the PR industry which have been segmented into department collaborations, environmental scanning, overall client reports and general trends.

6.5.1.1.   Department collaborations

PR teams coordinate with various teams regularly but noted that communication is challenging. This signifies that more and more agencies may need to look into broadening their offering to include multiple services (digital, social media, design) under one roof.

6.5.1.2.   Environmental scanning

PR teams are not adequately scanning their client's industries. This is concerning because if PR is going to provide valuable input to their clients, scanning and research need to form a large part of what they do. This can help cement their credibility in the eyes of corporate organisations.

6.5.1.3.   Overall client reports

AVE continues to form a large part of how clients measure whether PR is successful or not. It is the responsibility of PR practitioners to educate their clients on the available methods to measure success. They need to inform clients that AVE is just one tool and not the only tool.

6.5.1.4.   General trends

Agencies expect drastic changes in the industry and the top 5 factors they expect to drive change in the PR industry are; the changing media landscape, technological innovations, tightening budgets, disruption of traditional business models and competition. This is almost in line with the Global Communications Report (2018:7-8) which found that the changing media landscape, technological innovations, great access to data, disruption of traditional business models and political climate, are factors which will drive change in the PR industry. The difference here is that Durban agencies don't view the political climate and greater access to data as huge factors that will drive change.

The agencies regard; strategic planning, written communication, content development, media relations, social media and multimedia as the most important PR skills to have at the moment. The underlying theme here is that writing will continue to be an important skill for future practitioners to hone.

All agencies believe the PR industry is regarded as legitimate and attribute this to the increasing understanding of PR and demand for PR services. Agencies also noted that PR should not be merged with marketing, however, the two fields need to work closely together.

The reporting structure was unclear and dependent on each agency and its clients, however, the split was between a marketing head or senior management.

6.6. Key areas for improvement

- The PR role is changing. Journalists require more from PR practitioners in terms of creating adapted stories. This will continue as the media landscape changes over the years. PR practitioners need to be ready to play a bigger role and create journalistic content.

- Agencies are generally not as proactive as they should be. They have a heavy reliance on the organisations they represent to spearhead techniques and functions such as issues management, crisis communication and networking. PR agencies need to play an active role in these to showcase their value to organisations.

- Influencer marketing is something that needs to be addressed as changes occurring in the digital media space are demanding that PR practitioners change the way they perform their duties. Evidence suggests that influencers will continue to form an integral part of digital media, therefore, PR practitioners need to find tactics that suit both the influencers needs and their client's needs.

- Practitioners believe that PR is regarded as legitimate, however, most noted that it is still regarded as a marketing tool. A shift is required in this regard as this signifies that PR may not necessarily be seen as a standalone industry by corporate organisations.

- PR practitioners in Durban are reporting to both senior management and marketing teams equally. It will be interesting to see how this changes over the years but it is

important for practitioners to continue striving to gain access to the decision-making table. This can mostly be achieved by ensuring that practitioners are reporting to senior management. Elements such as adequate environmental scanning and research, are vital to helping this process along because they will assist PR in proving their value to senior management.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

5W PR. n.d. *Why writing is important for PR professionals.* http://5wpr.net/writing-im-portant-pr-professionals/ [9 April 2018].

Absa. 2018. *Absa Unveils Fresh New Brand Design and Launches Marketing Campaign as Group Re-sets.* https://www.absa.co.za/media-centre/press-state-ments/2018/absa-unveils-fresh-new-brand-design/ [15 July 2019].

Augure. 2017. *PR and communication reports: The key to added value.* https://au-gure.launchmetrics.com/resources/blog/communication-reports [9 April 2018].

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. 2009. *The practice of social research.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

BBC News. 2017. *Bell Pottinger collapses after South African scandal.* https://www.bbc.com/news/business-41245719 [18 July 2019].

Biernacki, P. & Waldorf, D. 1981. Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research,* 10 (2: 141-163), November 1.

Brandwatch. 2018. *21 PR tools and resources.* https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/pr-tools-resources/ [20 April 2018].

Brink, H.I.L. 1993. Validity and reliability in qualitative research. Curations, 16(2):35-38. June. [Online] Available from: https://pdfs.seman-ticscholar.org/7d15/8fac7ac1d6186ffe9e609f6101c33607cf90.pdf. [11 September 2019].

Brønn, P.S. 2010. Reputation, communication and the corporate brand. In Heath, R.L. (ed.). *The sage handbook of public relations.* 2nd rev. ed. Sage Publications, Inc: Los Angeles:307-320.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2017. *Research methodology: Business and management context*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Business Live. 2018. *Absa's new logo makes poor first impression.* https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/companies/financial-services/2018-07-12-absas-new-logo-makes-poor-first-impression/ [15 July 2019].

Business Live. 2018. *Has Absa rebrand missed the mark?* https://www.businesslive.co.za/redzone/news-insights/2018-07-16-has-absa-rebrand-missed-the-mark/ [15 July 2019].

Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching. n.d. *Qualitative approaches.* https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/qualitative/approaches [28 August 2018].

Channel24. 2016. *The 10 biggest radio stations in SA.* https://www.channel24.co.za/The-Juice/News/the-10-biggest-radio-stations-in-sa-20161202 [23 April 2018].

Dawson, C. 2002. *Practical research methods: A user-friendly guide to mastering research techniques and projects*. United Kingdom: Cromwell Press.

Doorley, J. & Garcia, H. 2011. *Reputation management: The key to successful public relations and corporate communication.* New York: Routledge.

Dozier, D. 1986. The environmental scanning function of public relations practitioners and participation in management decision making. Proceedings of the 1986 a*nnual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,* Oklahoma, 3-6- August 1986. Educational Resources Information Center: 2-29.

Feagin, J.R., Orum, M.O. & Sjoberg, G. (eds). 1991. *The case of the case study*. London: The University of North Carolina Press.

Fearn-Banks, K. 2011. *Crisis communications: a casebook approach*. New York: Routledge.

Fin24. 2017. *How Bell Pottinger made itself look bad.* https://www.fin24.com/Opinion/how-bell-pottinger-made-itself-look-bad-20170912 [18 July 2019].

Forbes. 2017. *13 golden rules of PR crisis management.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2017/06/20/13-golden-rules-of-pr-crisis-management/#3f2f03191bcf [15 April 2018].

Forbes. 2017. *6 PR trends to check out in 2018.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnhall/2017/08/06/6-pr-trends-to-check-out-in-2018/3/#437af92f6b84 [9 April 2018].

Foster, J. 2008. *Effective writing skills for public relations.* London: Kogan Page.

Grunig, J.E. & Hon, L. 1999. *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations.* Gainesville: Paine Publishing.

Hallahan, K. 2010. Public relations media. In Heath, R.L. (ed.). *The sage handbook of public relations.* 2nd rev. ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc:623-641.

Hammersley, M. 2014. *Reading Ethnographic Research: A Critical Guide.* 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

Holmström, S. 2002. The Evolution of A Reflective Paradigm: Public Relations Reconstructed As Part of Society's Evolutionary Learning Processes. In Verčič, D., Jensen, I., Mos,D. & Jon White (ed.). *The status of public relations knowledge in Europe and around the world.* Ljubljana: Pristop Communications:76-91 [Online]. Available from: http://www.susanne-holmstrom.dk/publications/Holmstrom%20-%20The%20Evolution%20of%20a%20Reflective%20Paradigm%20-%20Bled%202002.pdf. [9 April 2018].

Holmström, S. 2004. Intermezzo: The reflective paradigm of public relations. In van Ruler, B. & Verčič, D. (eds). *Public relations management in Europe: A nation-by-nation introduction to public relations theory and practice.* New York: De Gruyter Mouton:121-134 [Online]. Available from: https://books.google.co.za/books?id=wsJ5NEtAJtwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Public+Relations+and+Communication+Management+in+Europe:+A+Nation-by-Nation+Introduction+to+Public+Relations+Theory+and+Practice&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjY8qjA3sjkAhW6URUIHU7tCKYQ6AEIK-DAA#v=onepage&q=Public%20Relations%20and%20Communication%20Management%20in%20Europe%3A%20A%20Nation-by-Nation%20Introduction%20to%20Public%20Relations%20Theory%20and%20Practice&f=false. [10 May 2019].

Holmes Report. 2018. *About the Holmes Report.* https://www.holmesreport.com/footer-pages/about-the-holmes-report [8 April 2019].

Holmes Report. 2018. Global communication report. https://www.holmesreport.com/ranking-and-data/global-communications-report/gcr-2018-research [8 April 2019].

Howard, W. 1982. *The practice of public relations*. Johannesburg: William Heinemann.

Independent Media. n.d. *Isolezwe.* https://www.independentmedia.co.za/en/our-brands/newspapers/daily/isolezwe/ [23 April 2018].

Independent Media. n.d. *Isolezwe.* https://www.independentmedia.co.za/en/our-brands/newspapers/daily/isolezwe/ [23 April 20018].

Independent Online. 2017. *Analysis: How Bell Pottinger met its end in South Africa.* https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/companies/analysis-how-bell-pottinger-met-its-end-in-south-africa-13127573 [18 July 2019].

Independent Online. 2017. *SA cities occupy six of the top business destinations for business travellers.* https://www.iol.co.za/travel/sa-cities-occupy-six-of-the-top-10-business-destinations-for-business-travellers-9446481 [9 April 2018].

Institute for Public Relations. 2008. *Issues management.* https://instituteforpr.org/issues-management/ [15 April 2018].

Institute for Public Relations. 2014. Crisis management and communications. https://instituteforpr.org/crisis-management-communications/ [15 April 2018].

Internal Communications Consultancy Organisation. n.d. *Overview.* https://ic-copr.com/about/ [8 April 2019].

Internal Communications Consultancy Organisation. 2018. World Reports. http://ic-copr.com/services/world-reports/ [8 April 2019].

Jaques, T. 2010. Embedding issue management: from process to policy. In Heath, R.L. (ed.). *The sage handbook of public relations.* 2nd rev. ed. Sage Publications, Inc: Los Angeles:435-446.

Jefkins, F. 1996. *Public relations.* 4th edition. London: Pitman Publishing.

King James. n.d. *About.* https://www.kingjames.co.za/about [31 July 2019].

Lubbe, B.A. 2000. The nature of public relations. In Lubbe, B.A. and Puth, G. *Public relations in South Africa: a management reader.* Isando: Heinemann:3-16.

Malan, J.P. and L'Estrange, J. A. 1977. *Public relations practice in South Africa.* Cape Town: Juta and Company Limited.

Marczyk, G., DeMatteo, D. and Festinger, D. 2005. *Essentials of Research Design and Methodology.* New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Public Relations Society of America. 2018. What lies ahead for public relations in 2018? http://prsay.prsa.org/2018/01/03/what-lies-ahead-for-public-relations-in-2018/ [9 April 2018].

Marklives. 2017. *ABC Analysis Q1 2017: The biggest-circulating newspapers in SA.* http://www.marklives.com/2017/05/abc-analysis-q1-2017-the-biggest-circulating-newspapers-in-sa/ [23 April 2018].

Neuman, W.L. 1997. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* 3rd Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Neuman, W.L. 2014. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* 7th Edition. Essex: Pearson.

News24. 2018. *She has a BA and master's degree but is still unemployed.* https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/she-has-a-ba-and-masters-degree-but-is-still-unemployed-20180305 [23 April 20018].

Olasky, M.N. 1987. *Corporate public relations: a new historical perspective.* Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Overton-De Klerk, N. 2000. Corporate Image. In Lubbe, B.A. and Puth, G. (eds). *Public relations in South Africa: a management reader.* Isando: Heinemann:191-208.

Platform Magazine. 2012. *Spin doctors or word Doctors?: The importance of writing in PR.* http://platformmagazine.org/2012/10/29/spin-doctors-or-word-doctors-the-importance-of-writing-in-pr/# [18 April 2018].

PRISA. 2018. *Effective public relations planing.* https://prisa.co.za/index.php/cpd-programmes/44-cpd-programmes/587-effective-public-relations-planning-1-february-2018 [9 April 2018].

PRISM Awards. 2017. *PRISM Awards 2017 Winners.* http://www.prism-awards.co.za/1203-2/ [23 April 2017].

PRmoment. 2017. *The biggest challenges facing PR in 2018.*
https://www.prmoment.com/pr-insight/the-biggest-challenges-facing-pr-in-2018 [25 August 2019].

Public Relations Society of America. 2013. *#PRin2013: PR to give organisations a new legitimacy.* https://prsay.prsa.org/2013/01/23/prin2013-pr-to-give-organizations-a-new-legitimacy/ [6 August 2019].

RadioBiz. 2017. *See the latest radio Listening trends.* http://radiobiz.co.za/category/rams/ [23 April 2018].

Ragan. 2017. *How to tie PR to tangible business results.* https://www.ragan.com/how-to-tie-pr-to-tangible-business-results/ [6 August 2019].

Rensburg, R. 2003. Public relations in South Africa: From rhetoric to reality. In Sriramesh, K. & Verčič, D. (eds). *The global public relations handbook.* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers: 145-178.

Rensburg, R. & Cant, M. 2012. *Public relations: African perspectives.* 2nd Edition. Sandton: Heinemann.

Reputation Today. 2018. The importance of good writing skills. http://reputationtoday.in/features/the-importance-of-good-writing-skills/ [18 April 2018].

Research Methodology. n.d. Constructivism research philosophy. https://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/epistomology/constructivism/ [14 August 2018].

Research Methodology. n.d. Epistemology. https://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/epistomology/ [14 August 2018].

Research Methodology. n.d. *Interpretivism (interpretivist) research philosophy.* https://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/interpretivism/ [14 August 2018].

Research Methodology. n.d. *Ontology.* https://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/ontology/ [14 August 2018].

Research Methodology. n.d. *Snowball sampling.* https://research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/snowball-sampling/ [23 April 2018].

Rhodes University. n.d. Academic research information and consent form - template. https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/jms/documents/information%20and%20consent%20sheets.pdf [30 August 2018].

Roberts, C.M. 2010. *The dissertation journey: a practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation.* 2nd edition. California: Corwin:181-182.

Roodt, Z. 2011. Recurring crisis of credibility? The state of public relations in South Africa. *Communitas*, 16:15-31. [Online] Available from: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2689/8fd598dcd061c60e21da8b96c6f82557e74e.pdf [17 January 2020].

Sadie, Y. 2000. Public Affairs Issues Management. In Lubbe, B.A. and Puth, G. (eds). *Public relations in South Africa: a management reader.* Isando: Heinemann:250-271.

Silverman, D. 2010. *Doing Qualitative Research.* 3rd edition. London: Sage Publications.

She leads Africa. n.d. *The art of public relations.* https://sheleadsafrica.org/public-relations-career/ [9 April 2018].

Shift Communications. 2016. *What is crisis communications? http://www.shift-comm.com/blog/what-is-crisis-communications/* [18 April 2018].

Shift Communications. 2017. *Three public relations mega-trends in 2017: where are we now?* http://www.shiftcomm.com/blog/three-public-relations-mega-trends-2017/ [18 April 2018].

Skinner, C., von Essen, L., Mersham, G. & Motau, S. 2010. *Handbook of public relations.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Smith College. n.d. Sample participant consent form. https://www.smith.edu/irb/forms/Consent_to_Participate_Form.doc [30 August 2018].

Social Research Methods. 2018. Unit of analysis. https://socialresearchmethods.net/kb/unitanal.php [1 November 2018].

Steyn, B. & Puth, G. 2000. *Corporate communication strategy.* Sandown: Heinemann Publishers.

Ten Have, P. 2004. *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology*. London: Sage Publications.

Time. 2017. *The British PR Firm Disgraced by a South African Racism Scandal.* https://time.com/4926830/bell-pottinger-jacob-zuma-guptas-racism-scandal/ [18 July 2019].

The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa. 2018. *BRC RAM & SEM - February '18 release.* http://www.brcsa.org.za/brc-ram-february-2018-release-presentation/ [23 April 2018].

The Guardian. 2017. *Deal that undid Bell Pottinger: inside story of the South Africa scandal.* https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/sep/05/bell-pottingersouth-africa-pr-firm [18 July 2019].

The Institute of Directors Southern Africa. 2016. *King IV Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa.* http://www.iodsa.co.za/?page=AboutKingIV [9 April 2018].

The International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication. 2015. How the Barcelona Principles have been updated. https://amecorg.com/how-the-barcelona-principles-have-been-updated/ [12 May 2019].

The International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication. 2015. *Barcelona Principles 2.0 launched!* https://amecorg.com/2015/06/barcelona-principles-2-0-launched/ [12 May 2019].

The international communications consultancy organisation and Onepoll. 2017. World PR Report. Available at: http://www.akospr.ru/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/World-PR-Report-2017.pdf [8 April 2019].

The Media Online. 2019. *A sizeable communications group born of the digital era.* https://themediaonline.co.za/2019/07/a-sizeable-communications-group-born-of-the-digital-era/ [31 July 2019].

ThoughtCo. 2018. Units of analysis as related to sociology. https://www.thoughtco.com/wh-units-of-analysis-matter-4019028 [1 November 2018].

Tuli, F. 2010. The basis of distinction between qualitative and quantitative research in social science: Reflection on ontological, e*pistemological and methodological perspectives. Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences,* 6(1): 97-106. [Online] Available from: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejesc/article/view/65384/53078. [9 April 2018].

Ukhozi FM. n.d. *About UkhoziFM.* http://www.ukhozifm.co.za/sabc/home/ukhozifm/aboutus [23 April 2018].

University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business. 2018. *Absa's re-branding has to be more than just a logo.* https://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/fo-absa-rebranding [15 July 2019].

University of Southern California Libraries. 2007. *Organising your social sciences research paper: The methodology.* http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/methodology [15 August 2017].

van Riel, C.B.M. & Fombrun, C.J. 2007. *Essentials of corporate communication: implementing practices for effective reputation management.* New York: Routledge.

Venter, N. 2000. Corporate Image. In Lubbe, B.A. and Puth, G. (eds). *Public relations in South Africa: a management reader.* Isando: Heinemann:209-229.

Weber Shandwick Seattle. 2016. *3 Reasons why research is crucial to effective public relations.* https://webershandwickseattle.com/2016/09/3-reasons-why-research-is-crucial-to-effective-public-relations/ [10 May 2019].

White, J. & Mazur, L. 1994. *Strategic communications management: making public relations work.* Wokingham: Addison-Wesley.

Wise, K. 2005. The importance of writing skills. *Public relations quarterly*, 50 (2: 37-40,48), Summer.

Wisestep. *How to make an interview schedule: 12 Awesome Tips Guide.* https://content.wisestep.com/interview-schedule/ [23 August 2018].

APPENDIX A

NAME	ABOUT	WEBSITE
Activate Communications	Activate is a dynamic integrated brand agency that delivers on-fire brand strategies and positioning, breathing life into unique activations, and leveraging brand spend through effective PR coverage.	www.worldactivate.com
Ahoy! PR	Durban-based Ahoy! PR offers an extensive range of PR and marketing services to ensure that our clients' needs are satisfied through innovative and integrated communication solutions.	www.ahoypr.co.za
Blue Leaf Communications	Blue Leaf Communications is a full service PR agency that specializes in: strategy development & execution; Publicity campaigns; PR programmes; PR for CSI programmes; Media and Communication training; Stakeholder and Investor Relations and Corporate Event Management	www.blueleafcommunications.co.za
Brightspark Communications	A Durban based Marketing agency with a variety of clients from Corporates like Unilever and East Coast Radio to local government clients. Including marketing large events such as the prestigious Volvo Golf Championships.	www.bright-spark.co.za
Brownsky Consulting And Advisories (BSCA)	BrownSky Consulting and Advisories (BSCA) is a 100% black owned and controlled organization and is driven by its team's passion for training, media development and media solutions. We provide expertise in the training/ workshop, consultancy services, coaching campaign planning, implementation and evaluation, communications, and media solutions.	www.bsca.co.za
Chumis'okuhle	Branding, and communications company	
Ck Dynamics Communications	CK Dynamics Communications Consultancy embraces an holistic approach to profiling business through the full spectrum of marketing communication interventions, including public relations, event management, project management and CSR. Let us work with you to profile your business with purpose!	www.ckdynamics.co.za
Cream Communications Events and Marketing	We specialise in communications, events and marketing. Services ranging from media relations, promotion activation, corporate and private functions and branding and re-branding. With a combined working experience of over 20 years in marketing, public relations and sales, cream understand the needs and challenges faced by SMME clients and industry.	www.creamcommunications.co.za
Creative Camp Communications	Creative Camp Communications is a national full service through the line experiential marketing and brand communication agency.	www.creativecamp.co.za
Dane John Group	Dane John Group is a full-service business consultancy offering our valued clients professional services in the SMME sector and beyond.	www.danejohngroup.co.za
Dream Media	Introduces consumers to a new age of shopping information through a variety of media channels using the most powerful mediums. We specialise in providing marketing platforms to small and medium businesses.	www.dreammedia.co.za
Eclipse PR	Established in 1998, Eclipse PR is one of the leading PR agencies in South Africa, with branches in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Clients: Netflix, Coca-Cola, Quest, Heineken SA, RCL, Mars, Diageo, Intuit etc.	http://www.eclipsepr.co.za
Ednom Group	Event management, Corporate Image/Communications.	www.ednom.com
Em-Between Communications	EM-Between Communications is a public relations consultancy that is passionate about assisting clients to grow their brands through increased media coverage and market awareness.	www.embetween.co.za
Espresso	Espresso is a full-service group of marketing, advertising and communications companies headquartered in Durban, South Africa. Our channel-neutral approach means strategic thinking and powerful creative content that delivers across the media mix.	http://www.espressodbn.co.za
Eunique Solutions	All our solutions are customised to meet the Eunique needs of each of our clients. Whatever the requirements of your business may be, we tailor our solutions to fit.	
Fezekisa Communications	Public & Media Relations Agency	www.fezekisacom.co.za
Flagship PR	Innovative PR ideas, sound journalism skills, interactive media relationships and a philosophy to provide value are what keep Flagship PR at the forefront.	www.flagship.co.za
Flourish Marketing	Flourish Marketing is a below-the-line agency specialising in brand activations, promotions and PR. We supply brand ambassadors and serve within the emerging market.	
Fresh Eyes Pr, Communication & Event Management	Fresh Eyes offers tailored PR, communication and event management solutions to maximise brand awareness and presence. Communication and personal brand workshops, as well as media and spokesperson training also offered.	https://fresheyes.org.za
Gameplan Media	Sport marketers, public relations practitioners, media managers	www.gameplanmedia.co.za
Grey Matters Marketing Communications	Marketing, Advertising & Communications	www.greymattersmarketing.co.za
Hello Digital Pr	Hello Digital PR is a division of Kagiso Interactive, an industry leader in mobile application development. We offer a holistic service by providing the ideal platform for maximum product exposure.	www.hellodigital.co.za
Hunt Pr	Media Liaison, Publicity, Strategy, Marketing, Editing	www.huntpr.co.za
In.PR SA	IN.PR is a savvy and vibrant agency that represents the new face of communications, using modern media, listening to clients and being new-age storytellers.	https://www.inprsa.com
Khalima Consultants	Consultants	www.khalimacc.co.za
Ks Entertainment	Killa Site Entertainment & Events is an events management and marketing company established to promote and work SA and to promote a high standard of urban youth culture.	
Marcon Marketing	Marketing Strategy, Marketing Communication	www.marcon.co.za
Mc Enterprises	Public Relations, Quotations	mcenterprises.yolasite.com

Media Link	Media Link, an events, public relations and marketing company was founded in 1984.Today, Vera Vencatasamy and her team of creative communicators who pride themselves on excellence, continue to provide the best, unique specialized service to a list of high profiled clients.	www.media-link.co.za
Memeza Communications	Memeza Communications is a Durban based PR and Communications consultancy, providing various services relating to media and communications. Memeza Communications might be newly developed but comes with a joint contribution of 24 years in the PR field and would like you to be our next client.	www.memeza.africa
Meropa Communications	Public relations, media relations, stakeholder relations, corporate communications, brand building.	www.meropa.co.za
NT Communications	Nothando Tembe Communications Provides a Complete Brand Identity and Marketing Strategy Solution for Brands & Businesses Looking to Build and Grow Online & Beyond	https://nothandotembe.co.za
Ogilvy	Ogilvy South Africa is the leader in the industry, focused on building and transforming brands. Employing more than 900 staff across three offices.	
Olivia Jones Communications	OJC is a leading Public Relations Agency dedicated to exceeding client's expectations. The ability to pinpoint elements critical to influential communication, by fostering productive and mutually beneficial relationships with clients and the media, is what sets OJC apart.	www.oliviajones.co.za
Royal And Roar Communications	Corporate Marketing and Communication agency specializing in Events management, Public relations, Digital strategy, Brand strategy, SME and Promotions. Contact us for more information.	www.royalandroar.com
S & A Marketing Cc	S&A Marketing is an integrated marketing and communications agency. We deliver marketing strategies and PR with a purpose; our aims are always focused on driving sales for our clients and improving brand awareness. We offer the full range of PR, Media, Marketing and publicity services across all mediums.	www.sanda-marketing.com
Seafrog Communication	SeaFrog Communication is a public relations and marketing communication management agency.	http://www.seafrogcommunication.com/
Shirley Williams Communications	A variety of specialist skills are available from Shirley Williams Communications, a company that has established a reputation for offering a sensible balance between creativity, practicality and economics.	www.shirleywilliams.co.za
Sibuze Group	Sibuze Group (PTY) LTD, a 100% black owned company is the marketing, public relations and communications company offering a diverse range of services from strategic marketing, media, public relations, communication and social media strategy.	http://www.sibuzegroup.co.za/what-we-do/
Symbiotic Communications	Symbiotic is a boutique communications and PR company with offices in Durban and partner associates in Cape Town and Jo'burg.	http://www.symbiotic.co.za
Take Note Reputation Management	Take Note implement initiatives with the highest levels of participation, interest and credibility to enable us to deliver the required goals of our clients with our hallmark service ethic of focusing on attention to detail and delivering personalised service.	www.take-note.co.za
Tumbleweed Communications	A full-service communications consultancy offering a personalised PR & Marketing service. Areas of specialisation include public relations, corporate communications, publicity, media management and special events.	
Tynago Communications	Boutique PR consultancy, with clients in Durban and Johannesburg.	www.tynago.co.za
Versfeld & Associates	Versfeld & Associate is a Durban-based specialised communications consultancy that provides services relating to the marketing of events, companies and other business activities with special interest, but not exclusively, in the arts/culture and environment sectors.	www.versfeld.co.za

APPENDIX B

Interview schedule

General Information

Full Name:

Position:_____ Company_____

Number of employees:

1. Tell me about your company?
2. Briefly tell me about what you do in your position as Executive/Manager/Director?
3. How many clients are you currently serving?
4. How many of them are on retainer?
5. How many of them are project based?
6. What is the longest retainer you've held?
7. Which type of clients do you have? Name the fields

Public Relations Techniques

Media Relations

1. How often do you speak to media in a week?

Not often		Somewhat often		Often	

2.

2. What are the top three media requests you receive?

Interview requests		Commentary requests	
Product / Service information		Product requests	
Fact checking		Opinon editorials	
Other:			

3.

3. What percentage of your work is earned media?

4. Describe your relationship with the media?

5. How do you sustain good relationships with media?

6. Do you form relationships with media outside of work in order to build stronger relations with them?

7. How do you ensure that you are always on the pulse when it comes to news that the media may be looking for? Breakdown your process of doing this.

8. Do you ever get "the scoop" from the media? In other words have you had an instance where you found out about a crisis through a media contact prior to your client knowing?

9. Which of the following documents do you usually prepare on behalf of your clients? **Choose five**

Handbooks		Crisis holding statements	
Newsletters		Messaging framework	
Journals		Media training	
Annual reports		Interview briefing documents	
Social media content plans			
Other:			

10.

10. What is your pitching process / how do you pitch to media? Eg, email first, call first

11. Do you send information to a specific journalist or just anyone at the publication?

12. If you have good relationship with a particular journalist but they don't cover the information you want to send out at the time do you:

    a) send it to them and trust them to pass it to the relevant person?

    b) ask them to refer you to someone else?

    c) find the right person and send it to them regardless of the relationship?

13. If media goes directly to your client, does your client go ahead and handle the request or does your client refer media to you?

14. Do you offer media training to your clients?

15. At which level do your clients spokespeople sit?

Top (CEO/GM/COO)		Mid (managers)		Low (techni-cians)	

16.

Corporate Image

1. Which person or department does your agency usually report to?

CEO - top management	
Marketing department	
Corporate communications department or similar	
Other:	

2.

2. How would you say you uphold a positive impression of your clients?

3. What kind of activities do you do to maintain a good image of your clients?

Media training		Social media monitoring		
Staff training		Media monitoring		
Advice on branding				
Other:				

4.

4. How do you do manage negative perceptions about your clients?

5. Absa recently had a rebrand but it wasn't well received by media. Have you ever had to deal with something that?

6. If your client encounters extremely poor publicity — something like the Ford crisis — and the negative publicity is spinning out of control, how do you salvage what's left of your clients image after reputational harm?

7. Which tools do you use to counteract bad publicity (social media, issue a statement, etc)?

Social media		Crisis holding statement	
Media release		Press conference	
Other:			

8.

Promotional Activities

1. Do you arrange events on behalf of your clients?

2. What kind of events do you arrange on behalf of your clients? *Tick appropriate

Conferences		Product / service launches	
Store Promotions		Activations	
Other:			

3.

3. Do you usually handle the entire event or just some aspects?

4. If you're not arranging the entire event, which aspects of it do you manage? *Tick appropriate

Social media		Media liaison (on and offsite)	
Inviting media to the event		Content (speeches, agendas, etc)	
Spokespeople (on or offsite)		MC management, speakers/presenters	
Budgets for advertising			
Other:			

5.

5. What is the underlying purpose of the events you arrange?

Consumer buy in	
Increase loyalty	
Increase number of consumers	

6.

Issues management

1. How do you anticipate issues on behalf of your clients before they arise?
2. Do you include plans for possible negative reactions when implementing news campaigns or PR plans?

Crisis Management

1. Have you ever had to deal with a crisis which threatened the existence of a your clients organisation?
2. If so, what was your process in handling the crisis?
3. Do you act as a spokesperson on behalf of your clients?
4. If not, how do you prepare your clients to face the media during a crisis?
5. At which level do your clients spokespeople sit?

Top - CEO/GM/COO		Mid - managers		Low - technicians	

6.

6. Besides planning messaging for the media, do you ever plan messaging for employees or investors? Or is this taken care of by your clients?

Networking and stakeholder relationships

1. How do you make sure that you are creating relevant content for your clients stakeholders?
2. Do you interact with your clients stakeholders? If so, what is the level of interaction (low/high) and with whom (employees, investors)?
3. How often do you review your clients stakeholders? I'm asking because in order to create relevant content, you need to be aware of who you are communicating to.
4. Do you attend networking events on behalf of your clients? If so, what kind of events?
5. How do you establish or build new networks with consumers or investors?

Public Relations Functions

Research

1. How often would you say you do research on a daily basis?
2. Which one do you do more of? Primary or secondary research?
3. Do you do formal or informal research more?
4. Have you ever conducted research with the help of research agencies?
5. Basic PR research look into three aspects, namely client or organisation requiring the research, opportunity or problem to be addressed and lastly the target audience. Before applying a PR programme, do you research:

   a) Client or organisation — understanding the nature of the business, knowing its mission, goals, priorities and problems, understanding the employees, knowing the financial status and lastly, understanding the importance of corporate image and its impact on an organisation

   b) Opportunities or problems your program is trying to address? Opportunity or problem research seeks to unearth why an organisation should run a particular programme at a certain time

   c) Target Audience

6. Do you?

Scanning media for client mentions	
Scanning media for publicity opportunities	
Scanning social media for possible issues/crisis	
Researching client's competition	
Research new ideas to present to your clients as tactics	
Other:	

7.

Advising

1. How much time do you spend on advising your clients?

Not often		Somewhat often		Often	

2.

2. How would you describe your relationship with your clients?
3. Do your clients take the lead from you when it comes to PR, is it a collaboration, or do you often act upon instruction?
4. Are there any documents you provide your clients before an interview or any other interaction with the media?
5. Which aspects does this document usually include?

Information about the publication		Talking points	
Information about the interviewer		Information about the publication	
Other			

6.

Reporting and media monitoring

1. How do you track publicity on behalf of your clients?
2. Which monitoring service do you use?
3. How do you package the publicity report for your clients?
4. How often do you present client with coverage reports?

Daily		Weekly		Monthly		End of project	

5.

5. Which variables do you look at when reporting coverage for your clients?

Publication		Article summary	
Publication date		Positive / Negative sentiment	
Byline		Language	

Spokesperson / brand mentioned		Category (part of the business it affects)	
Title of article		Media type (radio, tv, newspaper)	
Other:			

6.

6. Are there any other techniques or functions that you are using today that are not mentioned above?

Current PR trends

Department collaborations
1. Do you collaborate with other communication teams?
2. If yes, which ones and on what kind of projects?

Environmental scanning
1. Do you usually scan your clients industry?
2. Do you perform environmental scans to gather information about stakeholders and their reactions towards your organisation?
3. How well do you know the perception about your clients amongst their stake-holders?
4. Are you aware of the publics opinion towards issues that are important to your client? eg, fish company vs water pollution
5. Do you handle social media on behalf of your clients?

Yes	
No	

6.

Overall client reports
1. How does your client measure the overall success of a campaign?
2. Does your client consider advertising value equivalent (AVE) as a big part of measurement?
3. Does your client value the quality of the publicity over the quantity?

General trends
1. How do you expect the PR industry to change in the next 5 years?

Somewhat		Considerable	
Moderate		Drastic	

2.

2. Are you prepared to adapt to this level of change?

| Not very much | | Considerably | |
| Somewhat | | Very | |

3.

3. What do you think will drive change in the PR industry? Choose five

Changing media landscape		Shifting demographics	
Technological innovations		Tightening budgets	
Greater access to data		Competition *(e.g. marketing)*	
Disruption of traditional business models		More diverse workforce	
Political climate		Talent shortage	
Economy		Industry regulations	
Other			

4.

2. What do you think are the most important PR skills to have at the moment?
   Choose five

Strategic planning		Content development	
Leadership		Data and analytics	
Social media		Crisis management	
Written communications		Verbal communications	
Multimedia		Employee communications	
Research		Business literacy	
Media relations		Influencer marketing	
Ethics		Counseling	

Real-time marketing		Advertising	
Media buying			
Other			

3.

3. Do you think PR is regarded as a legitimate or illegitimate industry? Why?

4. Do you think PR should be merged with marketing? Why?

ENDS

APPENDIX C

Help improve Durban PR industry 📩 Inbox ×

Tsholofelo Dumakude <tsholula@gmail.com>   Wed, Jul 24, 9:30 AM ☆ ↩ ⋮
to ▊▊▊ ▾

Hi there,

I'm Tsholofelo Dumakude, a masters student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). I am conducting research on the PR industry in Durban, examining techniques and functions used by practitioners at agencies. I am currently looking for research participants and would be grateful if Ogilvy Durban would be willing to be part of my study.

For your reference, the titled of my thesis is, "An investigation of techniques and functions used by PR practitioners at agencies in Durban." It aims to track current trends in the PR industry using Durban as a case study. My research aims to address the following objectives:

- To provide evidence of the current state of the PR industry through tracking the application of PR techniques and functions
- To identify and explain the PR techniques used by practitioners in agencies
- To explore and describe the PR functions carried out by practitioners in agencies

While my study addresses specific PR practices, the final thesis will make no mention of your name, company or clients. Should your company wish to be part of the study, each relevant team member will take part in an interview which will take approximately an hour. Ogilvy will also be required to sign an agency consent form prior to the interviews and each member will need to sign an individual consent form on the day of their interview — both are attached.

My supervisor is Professor Nirvana Bechan and she can be reached on bechann@cput.ac.za should you wish to speak to her.

Please let me know if Olgivy Durban is interested in taking part.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to your favourable response

179

APPENDIX D

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Consent letter for the collection of research data

Tsholofelo Dumakude is registered for the M Tech (PR) degree at CPUT
(209149655). The thesis is titled, *An investigation of techniques and functions used
by PR practitioners at agencies in Durban,* and aims to track current trends in the PR
industry using Durban as a case study. The specific research objectives (RO) to be
met are:

RO1: To provide evidence of the current state of the PR industry through tracking the
application of PR techniques and functions

RO2: To identify and explain the PR techniques used by practitioners in agencies

RO3: To explore and describe the PR functions carried out by practitioners in agencies

The supervisor for this research is:

Professor Nirvana Bechan

Email: BechanN@cput.ac.za

In order to meet the requirements of the university's Higher Degrees Committee
(HDC) the student must get consent to collect data from organisations which they
have identified as potential sources of data. In this case the student will need to inter-
view your employees (PR executives, managers and directors) to gather data.

The student will ask you and your employees a set of questions regarding public rela-
tions practices. Please note that the final research will not mention the name of your
company, your employees or your clients.

Your employees are under no obligation to take part in the research however, each employee who decides to take part will be required to sign a separate consent form. **If you agree to this, you are requested to complete the form below** (an electronic version will be made available to you if you so desire) and **print it on your organisation's letterhead.**

For further clarification on this matter please contact either the supervisor(s) identified above, or the Faculty Research Ethics Committee secretary (Ms V Naidoo) at 021 469 1012 or naidoove@cput.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Nirvana Bechan
12 November 2018

<<On company letterhead>>

I <<*insert name*>>, in my capacity as <<*insert position in company*) at <<*insert company name*>> give consent in principle to allow Tsholofelo Dumakude, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, to collect data in this company as part of his/her M Tech (PR) research. The student has explained to me the nature of his/her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual staff member to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participants. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at some future time.

In addition, the company's name may or may not be used as indicated below. (Tick as appropriate.

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes				
No				

_____   _____

<<*Insert name*>>   <<*insert date*>>

APPENDIX E

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

Title of Study:	An investigation of techniques and functions used by public relations practitioners at agencies in Durban, South Africa		
Researcher:	Tsholofelo Dumakude		
Department:	Informatics and Design		
Contact number:	+27 714462235	Email	tsholula@gmail.com

Participant information form
* The researcher would like to invite you to take part in the above mentioned study.
* You were selected as a possible participant as the study aims to investigate public relations (PR) practices in Durban South Africa, specifically those adopted by PR practitioners in agency environments.
* Kindly read the form below and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be part of the study.

Purpose of study
* The purpose of this study is to investigate the techniques and functions used by PR practitioners at agencies so as to provide an outlook of the PR industry in Durban.
* The results of this study will be presented as a part of the researcher's final master's thesis.

Description of the study procedures
* If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher who will ask you questions pertaining to the work you do as a PR practitioner.
* The interview will be recorded using the researchers phone as a voice recorder.
* The interview will take a maximum of one hour to complete.

Risks/Discomforts of being in this study
* Note that while your employer has granted permission for you to speak to the researcher, none of the information you share will be given to them.
* Your employer has given permission for you to share information of your pubic relations practices, however, the final study will make no mention of any of your clients.

Confidentiality
* Participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous.

- Information gathered during the research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and all efforts will be made to ensure the confidentiality of participants' personal information.
- Note that while your name will be recorded with the data, it will not be used in the final thesis.
- All identifiable data will be stored securely on a computer with password-restricted access and only the researcher, supervisor and ethics committee members will have access to it.
- All identifiable information will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Right to refuse or withdraw
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the research of this study or CPUT. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Right to ask questions and report concerns
- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by the researcher before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact Tsholofelo Dumakude at tsholula@gmail.com or 071 446 2235. Upon request, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you.

Consent
- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study. By submitting this form you are indicating that you have read the description of the study, are over the age of 18, and that you agree to take part in an interview for a duration of one hour long.
- A signed copy of this form is to be returned to the researcher and one copy to be retained by the you, the participant.

I agree to take part in this study and I hereby grant permission for the data generated from this research to be used in the researcher's final thesis on this topic.

Yes ☐

No ☐

I grant permission for the research to be recorded and saved for purpose of review by the researcher, supervisor, and ethics committee.

Yes ☐

No ☐

I grant permission for the research recordings to be used in presentations or documentation of this study.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Participant's name (print) signature _____

_____

Date_____

Researcher's signature _____

Date_____

Thank you for taking the time to read this consent form.