

REALIGNMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN THE VALUE CHAIN FOR IMPROVED
ORGANISATIONAL ETHICS IN
SOUTH AFRICA

BAREND PIETER VENTER

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**REALIGNMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE VALUE CHAIN FOR IMPROVED
ORGANISATIONAL ETHICS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by Barend Pieter Venter

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor Technologiae in Marketing Management in the Faculty of Business at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Supervisor: Prof. Johann van der Merwe

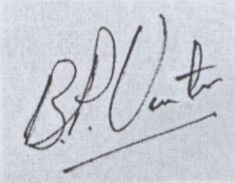
Co-supervisor: Prof. André Slabbert

Cape Town

June 2008

DECLARATION

I, Barend Pieter Venter, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B.P. Venter', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

25 November 2008

ABSTRACT

There is little doubt that public relations faces an identity crisis threatening to relegate this troubled organisational function permanently to the sidelines, unless it succeeds in reinventing itself. Such reinvention is mooted by a number of authors who propose the solution that public relations should rename itself. However, as others are quick to point out, renaming will not be the only solution, and a more extensive realignment of public relations is needed. The reinvention of public relations pertains specifically to its role in the organisation, its reputation (currently negative), and its contribution to the organisation's strategy and ethics.

This thesis examines the problems beleaguering public relations and proposes that Porter's value chain analysis be used as the foundation for the reinvention of public relations. Arguments in support of the use of Porter's value chain analysis are presented, and empirical evidence supporting the likelihood of this approach succeeding is sought – and found.

In conjunction with the problems surrounding public relations, the ethical landscape of the 21st Century is investigated with specific reference to unethical organisational practices so prevalent today. In proposing that Porter's value chain analysis be used to reinvent public relations, the thesis also argues that public relations can play a role in ensuring greater ethical responsibility of organisations.

The relationship between public relations and marketing, so long a thorn in the side of public relations practitioners, academics, and authors, is clarified, and the organisational position of public relations is addressed.

Finally, the thesis argues that public relations should see itself as a support activity in the organisation, where it is involved in organisation-wide communication support to **all** of the primary activities that are carried out to seek, find, create, and deliver value to customers.

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Style and technical presentation

This thesis uses the spelling convention used in the United Kingdom. However, where direct quotes were taken from textbooks using the United States or South African spelling conventions, the original spelling was used.

Grammatically, using the phrase “public relations” in the singular may present some problems. Throughout this text, the phrase was used to refer to a specific discipline (the study of public relations) or a specific organisational function. This reason compels the author to use the phrase with the singular verb, a convention that is used by a number of public relations authors such as Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006), and Skinner, Von Essen, and Mersham (2004).

In order to avoid potential ambiguity, this thesis makes use of the listing comma. Trask (2001: 74) mentions that this convention is widely used in the US, but is also found in the UK, where it is commonly known as the “*Oxford comma*”.

While a number of authors use the abbreviation “PR” to refer to “*public relations*”, this thesis uses the full phrase, except where source texts use the abbreviated form and are directly quoted.

All direct quotes are written in italics for ease of reference, except where longer quotes are used. In such cases, they are presented in a smaller font size.

Where percentages are discussed in the written text, they have been rounded up (if above 0.5%) or rounded down (if below 0.5%) for ease of reading. Tables and graphs reflect percentages containing two decimal points.

In keeping with the guidelines provided by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the use of the words "*per cent*" rather than the symbol for percentage is used in the written text, except where percentages are referred to between brackets or in tables and graphs. In those cases, the "%" symbol is used.

List of references

This thesis uses a list of references, **not** bibliography, which is a list including "*only those sources ... explicitly refer[red] to (and quote[d]) in [the] text*" (Mouton, 2001: 125).

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Pieter and Mollie Venter, without whose love, support, and parental guidance I could not realise my dreams.

OPDRAG

Ek dra hierdie tesis op aan my ouers, Pieter en Mollie Venter, sonder wie se liefde, ondersteuning en ouerskap ek nie my drome kon realiseer nie.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND, RESEARCH PROBLEM, AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

"There were words ... and they were, of course, horribly misleading if not a full blown lie. But they were words for the media moment, an advertising slogan, and no one really expects an advertising slogan to be truthful."

(Watson, 2003: 47)

1. Introduction

The 21st Century saw in its first decade a number of corporate scandals and other evidence of malpractice aimed at enriching the few at the expense of the many. Proven and unproven allegations of corporate scandals, product recalls on an unprecedented scale, and investigations into organisational misdemeanours have become a regular daily news diet for a public growing increasingly wary of corporate malpractice and misbehaviour worldwide and also in South Africa, creating a climate of ever-growing distrust among consumers, thereby eroding attempts at fostering goodwill among stakeholders of many organisations, even those aiming to be ethical.

A few examples of these scandals and other misbehaviours are listed below:

- On 9 January 2002, the US Justice Department confirmed that it was investigating Enron for criminal activities. On 8 July 2004 Enron founder Ken Lay, indicted on a number of charges, surrendered to the FBI and called a press conference at which he protested his innocence. Scarcely two years later, on 25 May 2006, he was found guilty on a number of charges of conspiracy and fraud. Many other senior Enron executives were also found guilty of several criminal activities
(<http://www.chron.com/news/specials/enron/timeline.html>) [accessed on 6 February 2007].
- Other organisations such as Worldcom were also guilty of questionable activities. According to *The Economist* (Anon, 2002: 59 – 61), a number of companies in the United States – including Xerox – were guilty of hiding the true state of their finances from shareholders. This phenomenon did not only occur in the US, with Europe delivering its own scandals in the form of companies such as Lernout & Haspie, My Travel, and Vivendi. In all cases, greed for profit seems to be the prime motivator for companies to hide important financial information from shareholders and the public. The point is made in *The Economist* that many of the activities of these organisations were not necessarily illegal, but certainly unethical.
- In 2007 US toy manufacturer Mattel made headlines worldwide by a recall of millions of toys made in China, citing safety concerns as the cause for such a drastic step. On 21

September 2007, *Time* reported that Mattel apologised to China for this drastic step: "Our reputation has been damaged lately by these recalls ... [and] Mattel takes full responsibility for these recalls and apologizes personally to you, the Chinese people, and all of our customers who received the toys" (Thottam, 2007). These are the reported words of Thomas Debrowski, Mattel's executive vice president for worldwide operations. It is also a matter of public record that Mattel was subsequently sued by their own shareholders for breach of trust.

- South African business saw the arrest of the managing director of financial group Fidentia as a result of gross misconduct on the part of the management team (*Fidentia bosses bust, to remain behind bars*, 2007).
- South African banks have been under investigation for perceived high bank charges that are seen as delivering unjustifiable profit margins. The composition of these banking charges is not clearly communicated to banking consumers (*Banks under scrutiny*, 2006).
- The motor vehicle industry in South Africa was investigated for charging higher prices (on average 14%) than European counterparts for their products (*SA cars are overpriced, says report*, 2006).
- Two managers from Leisurenet were found guilty of fraud totalling millions of rands (*LeisureNet two face stiff terms after fraud convictions*, 2007).
- South African consumers were also victims of unethical bread price fixing scandals, where Tiger Brands colluded with their competitors to fix bread prices. Tiger Brands issued a press statement denying allegations of collusion shortly after these allegations appeared (http://www.manufacturinghub.co.za/20070317_0001.html) [accessed on 5 April 2007].
- Eskom, South Africa's largest (in fact, only) electricity supplier dumped South Africans in the dark in an ongoing campaign of controlled blackouts resulting from an inability to generate sufficient electricity. Instead of taking responsibility for their lack of sufficient planning, Eskom's management cynically used public relations techniques to make the consumer feel responsible by blaming consumers for using too much electricity (http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20080523104316212C830412) [accessed on 30 March 2008].

Scandals, illegal activities, and unethical behaviours on a scale not seen previously have contributed to an erosion of corporate reputations. Concurrent to the erosion of corporate reputations is the erosion of brands, which today are finding themselves in a credibility crisis. Activities such as those outlined in the bullet list above have severely damaged the **relationship of trust** that exists between consumers and organisations from which they buy their products, with the subsequent result that organisations have to spend increasing amounts of money, time, and effort on complying with legislation, implementing mandated

regulatory measures, and marketing communication activities in attempts to restore the trust that exists between them and customers. Building, maintaining, or restoring this relationship of trust implicit in the brand promise has become one of the major challenges facing the modern organisation.

In the words of Blackshaw (2008: 51) “[b]rands today are facing a real credibility crisis, and consumers are putting brand positioning, claims, marketing rhetoric, and advertising to the ultimate torture test.” The fact is that consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the growing phenomenon that organisations yield to the temptation to overpromise and under-deliver. Of course, scandals like Enron and Worldcom are less about under-delivery and more about fiddling with the books, but other organisations like Mattel and Eskom are experiencing a backlash from consumers who loudly proclaim that they no longer trust organisations such as these. Given such a bleak background of deceit, how can organisations today achieve success and remain successful? One solution seems to be found in marketing.

It may be argued that organisations are only successful if their marketing efforts are successful, as Doyle & Stern (2006: 39) point out in their description of the role of marketing:

“[A] business is most likely to achieve its goals when it organises itself to meet the current and potential needs of customers more effectively than competitors”.

In this definition the direct contribution to organisational success of marketing is apparent, and the authors who coined this definition take care to point out that marketing is central to the business since its primary function is to attract and satisfy customers. They argue that satisfied customers are the end result of all business processes, and say that “*dissatisfied customers can rapidly destroy the performance of the business*” (Doyle & Stern, 2006: 41).

Through the years, academics, strategists, marketers, and public relations practitioners have endeavoured to develop theories and practices that would enable organisational success. However, while the understanding of how the business could organise itself to find, attract, and retain customers by satisfying them better than the competition can do so has grown, so has the complexity of the business environment, especially in the field of ethical business conduct.

Organisations that behave unethically or illegally as in the examples listed earlier do not succeed in satisfying their customers, and will start losing them, with potentially disastrous results for the organisation. Of course, customers are not solely satisfied or dissatisfied by

the ethical performance of the organisation, since they buy products or use services that are of value to them. However, as is becoming more and more apparent, today's customers buy **more** than utility. Armstrong & Kotler (2007: 28) discuss the increasing impact on organisations of what they call the *"social-responsibility and environmental movements."* They explain that *"forward-looking companies ... accept their responsibilities to the world around them ... [and] ... view socially responsible actions as an opportunity to do well by doing good."*

This view on marketing as a central organisational function introduces an **ethical perspective** on the behaviour of organisations. One way in which organisations can restore their reputations that are damaged by unethical behaviours is therefore by learning how to behave more ethically by being socially responsible in their marketing. These socially responsible actions have in the past been in the domain of public relations, which means that public relations itself has to find a way in which it can assist the organisation in achieving its goals by being more ethical.

Misbehaviours such as these damage the **relationship** of trust between the organisation and its customers, but also its partners and other stakeholders. For example, in the case of Mattel, shareholders called the company to account for its laxity in product safety control. Marketing recognises the importance of **customer relationship management** in order to sustain the organisation. Customer relationship management in turn depends a great deal on communication (Rensburg & Cant, 2002: 120-121), who describe communication as a *"common denominator in public relations and marketing activities."* This implies that public relations has the task to find a way in which it can assist the organisation in achieving its goals, which, if Doyle & Stern are to be believed, are used to develop marketing and other organisational goals.

Using public relations techniques to achieve marketing objectives (and thereby organisational objectives) is not a new practice, and for many years marketers have seen public relations as a marketing communication tool used as a mass-promotion tool to build *"good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events"* (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007: 390). It is evident, judging from the behaviour of organisations discussed earlier, that a number of organisations cynically try to manipulate public opinion by using public relations for some of the aims outlined in the definition provided by Armstrong & Kotler above. Ken Lay, founder of Enron, used press conferences to protest his innocence, while Eskom used a number of public relations techniques to polish up their deserved bad image.

On the face of it there is, of course, nothing implicitly wrong with using public relations techniques to achieve the marketing aims outlined in the preceding paragraph. However, when organisations use public relations techniques such as these to hide the truth from stakeholders or to create a false positive image, they are acting unethically if not downright illegally. Furthermore, the cynical use of public relations techniques will have the natural consequence that public relations **itself** develops a bad name, as has already happened. The use of public relations techniques to further marketing aims or to hide misbehaviours from the public by marketing managers is a symptom of an age-old debate in public relations: should marketing control public relations, or should public relations control marketing?

As will be shown later in this thesis, public relations academics and practitioners are of the opinion that public relations is a function **greater** than that of marketing, and that it should enjoy a management role in the organisation. Currently, there is insufficient theoretical guidance on the precise role of public relations in the organisation, with the name of the discipline itself being under discussion. This thesis argues that public relations, if unsure about its role in the organisation as a whole, could not fulfil its potential as a vital business function. This confusion should be cleared up. Confusion about the role of public relations in the organisation introduces the **management perspective**.

However, clear understanding of the role of public relations in the organisation, support for its contribution to more ethical organisational management, and clarity on the relationship between public relations and marketing could be rendered meaningless if the practitioners of public relations have divergent opinions on how public relations fits into the organisation. Sterne (2008: 36) makes the point that public relations is managed by a diversity of people with a diversity of opinions on how this function should operate. This may in part be attributed to public relations education. Questions are asked about the educational background of public relations practitioners. The publication in 2006 of a report (entitled "*The professional bond*") on the state of public relations practice and education called for a re-examination of the **education** and **practice** of public relations. The report *inter alia* identifies a growing need for re-examining public relations education – an education that faces "*new issues that must be addressed and resolved*" (VanSlyke, 2006: 85). This introduces the **education perspective**.

These three perspectives will be discussed in more detail in the next section, and collectively form the background against which the research question was developed.

2. Three perspectives on organisational success

The introduction to this chapter paints the canvas against which the research question is asked and this thesis will be developed. The introduction shows that many business organisations currently are misbehaving to the detriment not only of customers, but also those business organisations that wish to make an honest living. It argues that business managers today face a more complex environment in which to conduct business, and introduces three perspectives on these challenges as they relate to the **practice and theory of public relations**. Public relations academics and practitioners are grappling with a number of issues that threaten the role of public relations in the organisation. It will be argued that these issues relate to a greater or lesser extent to the three perspectives identified in the introductory section of this chapter.

2.1 The ethical perspective

The function of public relations, operating as it does in an ethically uncertain world, and participating in unethical practices has, perhaps unfairly, resulted in the name of public relations becoming tainted, if not downright disrespected. There are those authors who argue that public relations has developed a bad reputation because it is unethical in an unethical business environment. Stauber & Rampton (1995: 16) say that public relations practitioners are *“skilled propagandists of industry and government who are affecting public opinion and determining public policies, while remaining (they hope) out of public view.”* This somewhat caustic view on public relations is shared by Ewen (1996: 407):

“Since the mid-seventies, corporate PR’s defection from the idea of universal rights has been glaring. Citing the pretext of economic exigency, more and more corporations have diminished or dismantled the public policies – welfare capitalist programs – that, three decades earlier, were understood as a necessary response to public ultimatums. Simultaneously, image-management, spin-control, and astro-turf organizing – reinforced by demographics and television – have provided the most visible rendition of public life”.

It may be argued that the authors quoted above did so in 1995 and 1996 respectively and that the image of public relations may since have changed for the better. This is not the case. Steyn & Puth (2000: 3) state that public relations has developed a bad name for itself, while Davies, Chun, Vinhas da Silva, & Roper (2003: 33) agree that *“[t]he traditional image of public relations itself could do with some improvement.”* Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg (2004: 15) also mention that the image of public relations has been tainted, and add that *“PR people have been a part of”* activities that were deceitful, thereby implicitly earning this tainted reputation. This is supported by Gibson & Gonzales (2007: 12) who use terms such as

“decidedly damning and certainly controversial” to describe opinions about public relations, opinions that are shared by *“a significant segment of the American public.”*

Sterne (2008: 34) uses even starker description for the image of public relations, quoting a senior communications practitioner who compares the term *“public relations”* with a *“bimbo woman”*. Sterne sternly states that the term *“public relations ... evoked images of spin doctoring, manipulated information and deceptive practices.”*

Cutlip, Center, & Broom (2006: 141) add a dimension of understanding to this less-than-desired image by stating that public relations is not yet fully accepted as a profession, and make the claim that *“the field continues to be plagued with press agents and publicists parading as strategic counsellors and those who are ‘good with people’ but have no knowledge of public relations theory or research.”*

In reaction to the slide into disrepute of public relations, a solution has been proposed: changing the name of public relations to something else. It is proposed by a number of academics and practitioners that public relations should change its name in order to divest itself from its tainted past, and should find a new name for itself, one that would transform its position in the organisation. Steyn & Puth (2000: 3) are of the opinion that *“[o]ne of the reasons for the preferred use of corporate communication is that the term public relations suffers from negative associations because of the way in which the discipline has been (and still is) practised in many organisations.”*

One reason used by advocates for a name change is that the term *“public relations”* has fallen into some disrepute, given the penchant that chief executive officers (CEOs) have for using public relations techniques to rescue organisations from difficult situations. Another reason given is that the position of public relations in the organisation would be better served were the name to be changed. Steyn & Puth (2000: 6) make the argument for using the term *“corporate communication”* rather than *“public relations”* owing to the fact that the *“latter term suffers from negative associations with the way in which the function was practised in the past.”* They argue in addition that a name change could better position public relations in the organisation.

Sterne (2008: 34), in reporting on the views that business in New Zealand has of public relations, reflects on the bad name of public relations, introduces the concept of transparent communication, and comments that *“some PR practitioners need to get up to speed with the current business demands.”*

This thesis argues that a name change is not the sole solution to the dilemma faced by a profession in some measure of discredit. In fact, some authors feel that the name change will accrue to very little benefit for public relations if not accompanied by other, more fundamental changes to its role and position in the organisation. Rensburg & Cant (2003: 62) take the following viewpoint on the name-change debate:

“Public relations departments in organisations are called by a variety of names, such as corporate communications, public affairs or external relations, in an attempt to capture the essence of the concerns of these departments. The important point to note, however, is that while certain organisations concentrate on specialised areas of public relations such as public affairs, *public relations* is the most acceptable term since it encompasses all the communication activities with which organisations are normally involved” [italics in original text].

Opposing viewpoints on the name of public relations such as those discussed in this section directs the student in public relations to ask whether the question is as simple as changing the name. Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 141) state unequivocally that public relations is not yet widely accepted as a profession, and cite “*standardized educational requirements, mandatory certification or licensing, full-fledged devotion to serving the public interest, public acceptance of its social utility, and effective self-regulation*” as some of the issues that beleaguer public relations. Given the discussion so far on (merely?) changing the name of public relations to something else, the solution seems insufficient, especially given an ethically-challenged (to use a politically correct term) business world.

Bad ethical decisions by CEOs and other functional managers, followed by the natural consequences of such bad ethical decisions, coupled with a misunderstanding among certain CEOs and other functional managers of the role of public relations, may very well lead to public relations being used (possibly against its will) as a spin doctoring remedy. This partly contributes to the bad name from which public relations currently suffers. However, in a business world plagued by numerous ethical transgressions, such an inference is not simple or simplistic. In an attempt to understand the **ethical perspective** on restoring public relations to a position of respect in the organisation and society as a whole, some questions need to be addressed:

- What is ethics?
- Should business be ethical?
- What are the dimensions of business ethics?
- Should public relations contribute to ethical business?
- How can public relations make this contribution?

These questions contribute to the formulation of the research questions, and will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis.

2.2 The management perspective

Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 141) are convinced that public relations is a mature profession, one that could make a significant contribution to the organisation's ultimate success, but warn that public relations can only really fulfil its potential in the organisation when it *"is included in strategic management, valued as a source of information and advice, and seen as a rigorously professional and ethical counsellor."*

That respected authors in the field of public relations find it necessary to point out that public relations is currently in many ways searching for its rightful place in the organisation is strong indication that public relations is still experiencing an identity crisis. At this time it is seeking to carve out what it believes to be its rightful place in the organisation during a time when organisations themselves are facing an increasingly hostile environment, partly owing to the fact that consumers and legislators are calling more loudly for organisations to behave more responsibly. This identity crisis is partly reflected in the call by public relations practitioners and academics for a name change of this discipline.

Compounding the identity crisis is a growing need for theoretical guidance, role clarification, and education in public relations as a discipline.

Watson (2008: 16-20), using an international Delphi study among a number of international public relations experts, identifies a number of priorities to be addressed by public relations, including:

- The contribution of public relations to organisational strategy development.
- The value that public relations creates for the organisation.
- Analysis of the need for education.
- Ethics in public relations.
- Management of relationships.

It becomes clear that public relations is in need of realigning itself as far as its role inside the organisation is concerned. However, little theoretical guidance can be found in regard to the hoped-for new role of public relations, other than oblique references to public relations

functioning at the strategic or top management levels of an organisation such as the following:

“[T]he public relations practitioner should operate at the highest level of organizational management and have access to the most senior information and decision-making systems” (Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2004: 6).

Rensburg & Cant (2003: 52) support the view that public relations should enjoy a position at the top of the management structure, but point out that: *“In practice ... the role of public relations is often viewed in terms of its technical aspects and is relegated to a minor status in the organisational structure.”*

Authors such as Steyn & Puth (2000), Holtzhausen (2000), and, specifically, Du Plessis (in Barker & Angelopulo, 2006: 205) are calling for public relations to be viewed as an organisational **activist** function, in which *“public relations practitioners should become activists, and should serve as conscience and change agents for organisations.”*

The cynical attempts at manipulation of public opinion using public relations techniques by organisations such as Enron and Worldcom and the use of downright underhanded public relations tactics to **misrepresent** *“the organisation to the external environment”* (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 18) do not help the cause of public relations at all, playing to the stereotypes evident from the preceding discussion on the image of the discipline. The stereotype of a one-directional communicator formulating and shaping public opinion to the benefit of the organisation, and at the cost of the consumer and society at large, should change.

Sterne (2008: 36) argues that one of the challenges facing public relations in New Zealand lies in developing a relational style that moves *“away from shallow, short-term relationship style[s], sometimes associated with deception and pretence as a way of doing business.”* As the first part of this chapter points out, relationships with customers (among others) are of prime significance to the organisation. Public relations, by the very nature of its definition, focuses on building and maintaining relationships, as the definition used by the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) as cited in Skinner *et al.* (2004: 4) as well as Barker & Angelopulo (2006: 16) clearly shows:

“Public relations is the management, through communication, of the perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders.”

According to this definition, public relations mainly **focuses on relationships** with all of the organisation's identified stakeholder groups, and it does so using communication as its main

vehicle of operations. To public relations practitioners, marketers focus mainly on **customer relationships**, and on creating products for the organisation in order to attract customers.

This is precisely where marketing and public relations fundamentally misunderstand each other. To marketers, public relations is a communication tool to be used in service of the marketing plan. The success of the marketing plan will in turn depend on the success with which product offerings are taken up in the marketplace. Therefore, marketers will focus not only on customers, but on **all** stakeholder groups who may help or hinder the organisation in achieving its mission – and these relationships have to be built and maintained to smooth the road for marketing.

Several attempts have been made at providing theoretical underpinnings for reviewing the role of public relations (more specifically, communication) in the interaction between organisations and their publics, and in identifying the potential that public relations has for benefiting society. Ledingham (2003: 188) emphasises that communication strategies aimed at improving the relationships between organisations and publics could create benefits for both in the economic, social and political spheres. He also mentions that the unit of measurement of the impact of public relations is the **relationship** between the organisation and its publics. This reflects the need for change identified by authors who are not satisfied with the current negative views on public relations.

The identity crisis that public relations is currently experiencing manifests itself in the uneasy relationship between marketing and public relations, where marketers see public relations as a marketing communication tool, while public relations practitioners feel that it is more than that. Rensburg & Cant (2003: 46) argue that public relations and marketing are most commonly confused with one another, and state that public relations is *“typically ... subsumed by the larger, more powerful marketing function.”* They predict correctly that this discussion will continue for a number of years, an ongoing debate that is mentioned by authors like Skinner *et al.* (2004: 44) and Newsom *et al.* (2004: 4). Literature proposing a solution to the relationship between public relations and marketing seems to suggest that the function of public relations should be seen as different from, and more than, marketing. Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 9) argue that public relations and marketing each *“[M]akes unique but complementary contributions to building and maintaining the many relationships essential for organizational survival and growth.”* That it has these unique relationships with publics (stakeholder groups) **other than** customers is what distinguishes public relations from marketing. Therefore, the reasoning goes, public relations should be positioned **outside** the realm of marketing.

Heath & Coombs (2006: 24 – 33) discuss the relationship between marketing and public relations by comparing similarities and contrasting differences between these organisational functions. They point out that public relations and marketing share similarities in that they build **relationships with customers**, seek publicity and promotion for the product/service, and make use of advertising techniques. Where public relations differs from marketing, in their view, lies in the fact that public relations seeks to build and maintain **relationships with a number of stakeholder groups**. In this view they are supported by Skinner *et al.* (2004: 43):

“Public relations has the goal of attaining and maintaining accord with social groups on whom the organization depends in order to achieve its mission. Marketing has the goal of attracting and satisfying customers on a sustained basis in order to achieve an organization’s economic objectives.”

Public relations authors do agree with marketers that public relations should sometimes support marketing efforts: *“In some cases it may be wise to build up publicity to the launch with advertising, ... then combining with public relations in a co-ordinated exercise to make the necessary impact and thereafter maintaining the momentum”* (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 46).

This view on the role of public relations in relationship to marketing is in line with the traditional marketing perspectives cited by, *inter alia*, Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 475-479), Du Plessis, Jooste, & Strydom (2005: 369), and Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff, & Terblanche (2004: 360). Their view is that public relations, in its interaction with marketing, should help to find publicity for the product/service, and build relationships with the customers. It should be noted that marketers see public relations as a marketing communication function – one that is aimed at generating product publicity, and that it should build relationships in order to sell the product. Public relations practitioners believe that their role is wider than that of achieving *“economic objectives”*, as was stated earlier.

However, as public relations authors are quick to point out, the role of public relations in marketing should not be limited to that of *“mere tool”* (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 44), but as one that will also seek to build and maintain relationships with those groups of people (stakeholders) who are of critical importance to the organisation’s mission.

The fact is that public relations authors take care to discuss the differences between marketing and public relations, and that they sometimes mention that public relations and marketing are confused with one another (Newsom *et al.*, 2004: 4; Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 4-5; Cutlip *et al.*, 2006: 7-8).

The management perspective will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but at this stage some questions are raised that will assist in the development of research questions:

- What is the role of public relations in the organisation?
- Is there a relationship between public relations and marketing?
- What is the nature of this relationship?
- What should be the relationship between public relations and marketing?
- What should be the role of public relations in the organisation?

The final perspective, that of education, will receive attention in the next section.

2.3 The education perspective

A lack of sufficient education and training in areas such as marketing, business management, and strategic planning among current practitioners of public relations may partly explain why Porter & Kramer say that *"the prevailing approaches to CSR are so fragmented and so disconnected from business and strategy as to obscure many of the greatest opportunities for companies to benefit society"* (Porter & Kramer, 2006: 80). One of the causes of such fragmentation and disconnection from business may well lie in the education offered to public relations practitioners. As an academic discipline, public relations may have become disconnected from its link to business by focusing too much on communication and communication theories. Ihlen & Van Ruler (2007: 244) specifically refer to the *"intellectual isolation"* of public relations.

VanSlyke (2006: 85) reports on the state of public relations education and training by stating that *"[T]he need for public relations education is escalating rapidly, surfacing new issues that must be addressed and resolved."* However, while the report focuses not only on the need for public relations training and makes suggestions for curricula, it fails to refer adequately to the broader context within which public relations operates. This broader concept includes areas such as strategy, management, and marketing. Currently, this is precisely where public relations training (especially in South Africa) seems to be most at a loss, as Steyn & Puth (2000: 13) echo: *"the core of this problem can also be said to lie with the training that corporate communication managers (and CEOs) receive."* One major problem with the training that corporate communication managers (including public relations practitioners and CEOs and other functional managers) receive seems to be that there is a major focus on communication disciplines and what could best be called *"technical"* aspects of public relations.

A brief review of some current South African educational qualifications in the field of communication and public relations reveals a greater focus on technical aspects of public relations, and a lesser focus on management perspectives:

- PRISA states on the website of its education provider, Provox, that its Diploma in Public Relations focuses on “*core subjects such as Public Relations, Media Practice and Communication Science*” (Provox, 2007). It should be noted that mention of the identified “core” subjects **excludes** reference to business, management, or marketing.
- North-West University (formerly known as Potchefstroom University) offers courses in public relations, but the focus again falls on communication subjects such as organisational communication, intercultural communication, journalism, and media studies (North-West University, 2007).
- The University of Johannesburg offers a BA degree in corporate communication, which offers a focus on communication activities in the organisation, but makes no reference to any business subjects (University of Johannesburg, 2007).
- Tshwane University of Technology offers a BA in Public Relations Management, majoring in subjects like public relations, media studies, and communication science. Surprisingly, the fourth year offers a course in management practice, which means that this university has responded to the management ideals of public relations (Tshwane University of Technology, 2007). It must also be noted that this qualification is offered by the Faculty of Humanities, not business. Marketing and advertising are offered as part of the second year of studies.
- This model is closely followed by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The Btech in Public Relations Management offers public relations, communication science, media studies and management practice, but only refers to advertising and marketing in the second year. However, this department falls under the auspices of the Faculty of Business (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2007).

The brief review above of an *ad hoc* selection of some of South Africa’s better-known public relations education providers shows that, contrary to the expressed wishes of public relations practitioners **themselves** to learn and know more about business and marketing, the educational qualifications on offer still seemingly do not sufficiently satisfy that need. Confusion about the academic home of public relations (humanities, arts, business) in all likelihood contributes to this feeling of neglect. This is not a uniquely South African phenomenon. VanSlyke (2006) reflects in her report that public relations practitioners require more exposure to business subjects such as management and marketing, while Venter

(2004) also points out that public relations practitioners in South Africa articulate a need for education in these fields.

Should public relations wish to be taken seriously as a management function, one which contributes to the success of an organisation, it must therefore start by revisiting its curricula on offer in order to bring into sharper focus the relationship between public relations and other management functions.

It should, however, be noted that it is not only the curricula themselves that need to be redeveloped, but also the **content** of what is taught in the subject matter itself. It is fairly obvious that a subject matter expert in, say, public relations, may swing the focus in this discipline away from the business aspects of the subject in favour of the communication aspects. This is something against which should be guarded.

In addition, it seems as if the problem with public relations not only lies with public relations practitioners, but also with the training (about public relations and communication) that CEOs and other functional managers receive. It may be argued that the theoretical lack of clarity on the role of public relations, reflected in the curricula and by extension public relations textbooks, may also be found in management textbooks. It was already indicated earlier, in the discussion on the relationship between public relations and marketing that public relations is portrayed as a communication tool that should be used by marketing to achieve its objectives.

It is by no means rare to encounter a management textbook that mentions the importance of public relations without clearly delineating its responsibilities. One such text takes care to present its readers with the "typical" structure of a public relations department, giving it six functional areas: research, publications, visitors' programmes, house magazines, media liaison, and special publications (Cronjé, Du Toit, & Motlatla, 2000, 252). This structure is echoed to some extent by Skinner *et al.* (2004) and Cutlip *et al.* (2006), who seem to focus on the technical aspects of public relations and not its potential contribution to organisational functioning. Adapting the public relations curriculum is therefore not enough. Therefore, textbooks in fields **other** than public relations should be adapted to accommodate the new role of public relations in the organisation. In order for public relations to play a strategic role in organisations, and in order for this function to contribute its fullest potential to organisational effectiveness, a broadening of the existing body of knowledge along with an adaptation of existing public relations curricula at tertiary institutions will be required. Such a re-developed curriculum will have an impact on current practitioners of public relations, and may require the development of specialised training programmes aimed at improving the

professional standing of practitioners. This should happen in concert with adapting the current curricula taught at business schools in business-related subjects that refer to public relations.

This education perspective raises the following questions:

- Is the education public relations students receive sufficient?
- What should be done to ensure sufficiency in public relations training and education?
- How could new theory development guide the structuring of public relations education?

3. Public relations: in search of solutions

The preliminary review of literature concerning the practice of public relations in the 21st Century clearly shows that public relations is facing several dilemmas as far as its role in organisations, its view of itself, and its educational curriculum are concerned. Some of the major challenges currently facing public relations are summarised as follows:

- Questionable organisational ethics in the 21st Century make it difficult for a function such as public relations to fulfil its objectives in an ethical manner. While top management may recognise the potential importance of public relations, it yields to the temptation of using it to disguise the truth. This has resulted in public relations practice itself getting a **bad name**. How can this bad name be changed?
- Public relations practitioners are themselves unsure of their role in the organisation, lacking proper theoretical guidance, with the result that the confusion is increased, not addressed. One highly visible and much-debated aspect of this confusion is the relationship between public relations and marketing. Marketers see public relations as a marketing function, while public relations practitioners seek to influence strategy at the top levels of management. This uncertainty about the role of public relations leads to a jockeying for position among marketing and public relations practitioners.
- Public relations education could be seen as one more area in which the name of public relations could be restored by constructing a core curriculum that prepares public relations students for their role in the organisation and society. However, the question may be asked: how can a curriculum prepare students for a job that is uncertain about its organisational position?

Table 1.1 below sets the stage for the discussion of the research question, which is addressed in the next section.

Table 1.1: Three dimensions of an identity crisis

Theme	Public relations issues
Organisational ethics.	Organisations are behaving increasingly unethically, and public relations is required to "pull the irons from the fire." This casts doubt on the professionalism of public relations and gives the discipline a bad name.
Management.	The role of public relations in the organisation is unclear, specifically with regard to marketing.
Public relations education.	Does the education that they receive adequately prepare public relations students for their profession? What should be done to rectify the situation?

These perspectives have been discussed briefly in order to develop a problem statement, and will receive more detailed attention in the literature review discussed in Chapter Two. The problem statement at the heart of the research for this thesis will be discussed in the following section.

4. Problem statement

The preceding section, which discusses the background to the problem statement, cited three perspectives on the identity crisis that public relations experiences in regard to its position and ambition as significant organisational function.

A solution to these problems needs to be found, one that could conceivably address them in a logical and consistent manner. This solution could also serve as the foundation for future development of public relations theory and education. While the themes identified in the preceding section have been dealt with cursorily, they will receive fuller attention in the literature review.

It is hypothesised that, by investigating the role of public relations in the organisation, developing clear guidelines for its role contained in a new model, and with addressing the education of public relations practitioners, public relations can fulfil a more useful role in contributing to the success and ethics of the organisation.

The research question that is addressed by this thesis is:

In what way can public relations restore its good name and gain its rightful position as an organisational function that contributes to the ultimate strategic and ethical success of the organisation?

Addressing this problem will firstly require a literature survey on the following broad topics implied by the problem statement:

- The ethical landscape.
- Organisational role and position of public relations.
- Public relations education.
- New model for public relations.

Mouton (2001: 93) states that literature reviews may be structured according to "*theme or construct*" in exploratory studies. The purpose of this thesis is neither to review or test theories, but to find an answer to a number of questions currently vexing public relations academics and practitioners. As such it is **exploratory in nature**, and will use research method and analysis accordingly.

The literature review on each of these broad headings will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. It is envisaged that the literature survey will guide the researcher to the development of a possible model for the realignment of public relations in the organisation. However, reviewing current literature and developing a model will not adequately address the fundamental research question, and therefore empirical evidence will be gathered to establish whether public relations practitioners do in fact experience the problems or symptoms associated with this identity crisis, whether they feel that public relations could play an ethical role, whether they agree with the implications of the new model, and whether they will be amenable to applying that model in the practice and theory of public relations.

5. Research questions

After a brief overview of literature on the issues identified above, the following questions that guide the formation of the main research question present themselves:

- What is the organisational position of public relations, and what should this organisational position be?

- Is there a link between marketing and public relations, and what should the nature of this link be?
- Is the educational curriculum of public relations sufficient to equip public relations practitioners well for their job?
- Should public relations have a task and role to ensure ethical conduct in the organisation?
- What should this organisational role be?
- Is there a model that could help public relations achieve a new organisational position?

6. Research objectives

- To describe and define the role of public relations in the organisation.
- To describe the interaction between public relations and marketing.
- To investigate the sufficiency of the educational curriculum of public relations.
- To explore a new role for public relations in the organisation.
- To establish the views of public relations practitioners on a proposed "new" role for this function in the organisation.
- To describe the contribution of public relations to ethics in the organisation.
- To describe a model that could improve the function and functioning of public relations.

7. Delineation and limitations

This thesis has a specific focus: the role of public relations in contributing to the organisation's competitive advantage, solving its problematic relationship to marketing, and in fostering and enforcing high standards of ethical conduct. As such, it will not deal extensively with the broader ethical questions; nor will it deal extensively with organisational functions outside that of marketing. For reasons of exploration and discovery, the thesis and its research will focus on the views of public relations practitioners in South Africa, a small group of people (PRISA, membership to which constitutes the sampling frame) currently has an estimated membership of 3 500). It is anticipated, however, that the results of this research could lead to the implementation of the model in a variety of industries, and in a number of countries.

Despite these limitations, it is believed, however, that the development of a proposed model may assist marketers and strategic planners in other departments, different industries, and

even other countries in developing strategies more able to improve ethical behaviour. It could also have a major impact on the education of public relations.

8. Definition of terms and concepts

As was already seen, the debate in public relations circles about renaming the function is gathering speed. It also becomes clear from a preliminary literature review that there may arise some confusion about the exact meanings of terms and concepts. For the purposes of clarity, and to ensure a mutual understanding between thesis and reader, a number of concepts need to be defined in this chapter.

In studying social phenomena, it is not uncommon to find varying definitions for similar concepts. Added to this is the fact that the understanding of social phenomena evolves over time, thereby rendering "older" definitions obsolete, or incomplete. For example, the understanding of what marketing is has evolved from the simple selling concept to the relationship marketing concept (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 9 - 12), while public relations as a dynamic study field is making "[r]apid strides ... in the educational field to provide both theoretical and practical knowledge" (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 3). Furthermore, it is important for author and reader of this thesis to have a common understanding of what is meant by a number of terms that will be frequently used in this thesis. For these reasons, the following core concepts will be defined in this section:

- Public relations.
- Marketing.
- Ethics and business ethics.
- Strategy.

8.1 Public relations

Skinner *et al.* (2004: 4) subscribe to public relations as the "*management, through communication, of the perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders*", while Du Plessis (in Barker & Angelopulo, 2006: 193) adds: "*aligned and coordinated with other communication to contribute to the corporate brand.*"

Heath & Coombs (2006: 7) call public relations

"the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision-making to help any organization's ability to listen to, appreciate, and

respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision.”

They (on page 9) identify five functions of public relations:

- Strategic planning.
- Research.
- Publicity.
- Promotion.
- Collaborative decision-making.

Bagin & Fulgitini (2005: 1) see public relations as an activity that “*explains an individual or organization’s activities to key publics to gain a favourable opinion from those publics.*” On page 9 of their book, Bagin & Fulgitini also state that “[c]ounseling makes PR people more than mere publicists.”

Some authors use terminology such as “*reputation management*”, “*publicity*”, “*corporate communication*” to refer to public relations. For the purposes of this thesis, those terms will also be briefly explained, after which an all-encompassing definition will be attempted.

Reputation management is described by Davies *et al.* (2003: xiii) as a strategic issue broader than functional areas. Linking the brand strongly to the reputation of an organisation, they make the point that reputation is a broad strategic imperative for any organisation wishing to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. They mention that reputation management has its roots in public relations, but also refer to the perception that public relations itself may be tainted. They fail to come up with a succinct definition for reputation management, however, and state that it is in its infancy as a concept, while at the same time having a broader scope than public relations. The core of their argument is summed up thus:

“The role of what is now called corporate communications or corporate affairs is already broader than that of PR and one stage in the possible evolution of PR into Reputation Management” (Davies *et al.*, 2003: 57).

Understanding reputation management requires a focus, firstly, on the meaning of “corporate reputation”, which is seen as “*Observers’ collective judgments of a corporation based on assessments of the financial, social, and environmental impacts attributed to the corporation over time*” (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006: 34). This definition of the term “*corporate reputation*” directly links the way in which observers (such as stakeholders and customers

among others) judge an organisation's behaviour, especially as far as its responsibility to society and the environment is concerned.

Omar & Williams (2006: 270) assert that "[c]ompanies known for being extraordinary and having well-managed corporate reputations will gain the consumer's confidence." They add that a good reputation will result in a competitive advantage.

The evolution of public relations to reputation management or corporate communication is the subject of discussion in an article on corporate communications. In this article, Cornelissen, Van Bekkum & Van Ruler (2006: 117) argue that sufficient theory exists supporting the moniker "*corporate communications*" as a replacement for "*public relations*." However, they point out that "*there is a gap between theoretical deliberations on the relevance and importance of CC, and descriptive accounts of its actual use and embodiment in practice.*"

One area of corporate communication, reputation management, or public relations that springs to more prominence lately is that of corporate social responsibility, which can, as Porter & Kramer (2006: 92) point out, help the organisation to achieve "*competitive success*." Corporate social responsibility has of course long been the responsibility of public relations in the organisation. Jeurissen & Van de Ven (2006: 438), in a review of four books dealing with marketing ethics, point out that corporate social responsibility (CSR) deserves a deeper look, stating that "*[w]hile there is generally quite some tolerance for exaggerated claims in advertising, this tolerance declines significantly when it comes to the marketing of CSR. Being virtuous should therefore take priority over merely seeming virtuous.*" The greater interest taken in corporate social responsibility places the focus on the ethical imperative of the organisation. This ethical imperative reflects its ability to do good.

Edward L. Bernays, held to be one of the founding fathers of the practice of public relations as a profession, calls a professional public relations practitioner someone who "*is an applied social scientist who advises a client or employer on the social attitudes and actions to take to win the support of the publics upon whom his or her or its viability depends*" (in Ewen, 1996: 11).

It is interesting to note, when reading the definitions of public relations discussed so far, that **none** of them makes any reference to ethics or ethical practices – and this in a time when ethics is enjoying renewed interest from academics and practitioners, not to mention media and consumers.

While some authors (like Steyn & Puth, Davies *et al.*, and Cornelissen *et al.*, cited in this section) make compelling arguments for the name change from public relations to, for example, corporate communication, this thesis will persist in using the term “*public relations*”, and will use it to mean the following:

Strategically managing the relationships between the organisation and stakeholder groups in such a way that the organisation's reputation is enhanced, its brand is built, and its vision realised by serving as a support activity to marketing, but also applying communication techniques in a manner that serves ethical business principles.

This definition, while extensive, serves to delineate the focus of public relations as a strategic tool, alludes to the relationship with marketing, while at the same time focusing on the communication role it plays. An important focus in this definition **not** found in definitions under discussion, is the reference to ethics, which should be included in any definition of public relations. While ethics will receive further attention in the next chapter, it is somewhat disconcerting to hear Newsom *et al.* (2004: 148) say that

“[p]art of the problem for public relations people trying to behave in an ethical way is that they are hired to be advocates, whether they are employees of an organization or employees of a firm hired to represent an organization. Public relations people have a role to play ... as persuaders, convincing publics to support that organization.”

The definition constructed in this section helps to set the table for the thesis's aim to develop a role for public relations not only as corporate communication function, nor only as reputation builder or manager, but also as **ethical conscience**.

8.2 Marketing

Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 5) define marketing as “[t]he process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return.” Baker (2003: 15) expands on this definition by stating that emphasis should be placed on the “*mutually satisfying relationships*” as implied in the marketing concept.

Lamb *et al.* (2004: 5) see marketing as function with two facets: “[f]irstly, it is a philosophy, an attitude, a perspective, and a management orientation that stresses **customer satisfaction**. Secondly, marketing is a set of activities used to implement this philosophy” (emphasis in original text).

Two definitions of marketing – one from a leading US and another from a leading South African textbook – both stress that the customer is central to the practice of marketing. More importantly, the customer has to be satisfied. This viewpoint, it will be argued, stresses that the customer should not feel dissatisfied, for example when he/she feels that the organisation has treated him/her unethically.

“Managers need a set of principles that will help them figure out the moral importance of each situation and decide how far they can go in good conscience” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 644). They mention that organisations should be aware of the impact of their decisions on the community, and suggest that organisations should at all times apply high ethical standards in decision-making.

The American Marketing Association has a code of ethics (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 646-647), which identifies the following ethical values:

- Honesty.
- Responsibility.
- Fairness.
- Respect.
- Openness.
- Citizenship.

These principles **should be**, but in many cases are **not**, included in the planning and execution of all the activities of the organisation, if only for reasons of pure self-interest, given that stakeholders have become increasingly important strategic partners to the organisation. One of the key issues to manage in marketing, is that of trust in the product or service and the organisation providing the product or service. Crowther and Rayman-Bacchus (2004: 29) discuss the issue of trust:

“Corporate strategy certainly seeks to build customer confidence and lock in customers as part of its corporate strategy. However the evidence shows the link between trust and performance to be complex and not necessarily positively correlated”.

It is inconceivable to many that marketing and marketing communication do not embrace the values outlined by the American Marketing Association, because *“[w]ithout consulting with stakeholders on their various levels, the future for brands and marketing looks bleak. Successful relationship marketing requires a relationship based on commitment and trust,*

which is underpinned by values including honesty, transparency and integrity" (Baker, 2003: 673).

Baker (2003: 674) adds:

"It is clearly the role of marketing to manage these interfaces, to ensure a consistent delivery of the product promise and the reception of key messages amongst all stakeholder groups, across all markets, over time. ... There is no doubt that one of the key attributes of strategic cause-related marketing is its ability to connect with stakeholder groups on a number of different levels simultaneously."

Managing the interfaces between the organisation and its customers and other stakeholders, building relationships, satisfying customer needs, and taking care of the tension between the financial interests, individual customer interests, and the organisation's and society's interests will inform the definition of marketing that this thesis will use.

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

A process through which the organisation achieves its strategic objectives by creating need-satisfying products/services in a manner that satisfies both organisation and consumer, while at the same time not harming the environment and reflecting high levels of ethical behaviour.

As with the definition of public relations, the focus here falls on ethical behaviour in the marketing relationship. This definition, while not contributing to a new understanding of marketing *per se*, helps to focus the attention on ethics. It serves the purpose also of linking the functional planning and implementation of marketing activities with the strategic goals of the organisation, and maintains a customer focus.

8.3 Ethics and business ethics

"The fact that corporations and governments feel compelled to spend billions of dollars every year manipulating the public is a perverse tribute to human nature and our own moral values" (Stauber & Rampton, 1995: 206).

The quote above can be seen not only as an indictment of the public relations industry (and those corporations and governments that use it to their own advantage), but also of the moral fibre of society within which manipulation is allowed. It pertains, in fact, to the very nature of the current discourse in ethics.

To Benatar (2002: xviii), ethics is about theory (**what** should be done) and application (**how** should it be done). He describes the study of ethics as continuing for more than two thousand years, and emphasises that it is a wide field of study with social and individual implications. In fact, he distinguishes between “*big*” ethical questions (Is capital punishment acceptable or not) and “*small*” or individual choices (Should I tip bad service?). It is clear from his line of argument that ethics will by its very nature involve society and the individual.

Furthermore, he makes the point that there is a difference between **knowing** what is right, and **doing** what is right. To him, ethics should involve both – a set of guidelines, and the moral will to apply those guidelines in everyday decision-making. In this, he is supported by Dellaportas, Gibson, Alagiah, Hutchinson, Leung, & Van Homrigh (2005: 5), who state that ethics “*is a concept that signifies how we act in order to make the ‘right’ choice, and produce ‘good’ behaviour.*” They argue that ethics encompasses “rules” and action; individuals and society.

The study of ethics thus engages itself in finding out what is “good” behaviour, how to ensure that our actions reflect “good” behaviour, and doing so in a way that balances the self-interests of society and individuals.

Dellaportas *et al.* (2005: 6) differentiate between three levels of ethics in organisations:

- Ethics of the governing body.
- Workplace ethics.
- Individual ethics.

To this, a fourth level may be added: the ethics of the consumer. Jones & Middleton (2007: 248) state that consumers “*integrate perceptions of target vulnerability and product harmfulness when making ethical evaluations of specific selling strategies.*” Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 633 – 638) share this view by identifying consumerism, environmentalism, and public actions to regulate marketing (in the form of regulations and legislation) as ethical challenges facing marketing today.

The question that presents itself here is whether unethical organisations can become ethical. At this stage, it seems possible. In an article on whether ethics can be taught, Luthar & Karri (2005: 365-366) make it clear that ethics should be taught as a major component of business education, and could even be a stand-alone course in its own right. This will in turn increase the levels of ethical behaviours among managers. This finding suggests that ethics training should be included as a standard component of not only business subjects, but also public

relations education in South Africa. Important to the definition of ethics, therefore, it is clear that ethics can be taught and should be taught. The question remains whether the ethics thus taught should focus on only one of the three levels of ethics discussed above – workplace ethics. This, however, could be ground for future research and will not form part of this thesis.

Ethics thus encompasses a set of rules, or guidelines, human behaviour and interaction, and learning about ethics. For the purposes of this thesis, the following definition of ethics (including business and marketing ethics) will be used:

Drawing up codes of conduct to ensure that organisations have guidelines for decision-making that will not harm the organisation, its environment, and its customers, and implementing policies and setting up structures that will ensure behaviour that is consonant with these codes of conduct.

This definition focuses the attention on the behaviour of organisations as entities, as parts of a larger system, and as responsible citizens who have to ensure that customers are not manipulated. It also relates to the value of codes of conduct, but only in an environment where the codes of conduct are actively pursued in active implementation of ethics policies. This thesis does not concede that an organisation is ethical when it claims to have an ethical code of conduct. Without active implementation, by a person or department responsible for implementation of ethics, a code of conduct may be relatively worthless. The reader is reminded that a number of organisations guilty of unethical conduct have codes of ethics.

9. Significance of the study

"[T]he narrowness of many management theories, including a narrow focus on maximization of shareholder wealth to the exclusion of the interests of other stakeholders and the negative assumptions of agency theory, are deeply embedded in much management thought and academic articles. Too often, such misguided ideas diffuse from research into teaching and constitute the bulk of ideas conveyed to students in the classroom ... there are other voices out there crying in the dark, struggling to be heard ... [t]hese voices are not necessarily mainstream ... but they do offer perspectives that encompass a broader array of perspectives on the work of management" (Waddock, 2006: 343).

This quote, albeit lengthy, encapsulates an ever-growing understanding that business disciplines, whether it be management, marketing, or, for that matter, public relations, will be all the poorer if they do not take consideration of newly-developed theories and insights from disciplines **other than their own**. Learning from others, accepting that one discipline on its

own cannot function effectively or survive for long without the energy that it gets from interaction with other disciplines, other insights, and other voices is of vital importance to the survival, growth, and future positioning for public relations.

This view resonates what Holtzhausen (2000: 110) proposes when she suggests that public relations “needs to be studied and practiced in every possible way and in all its complexity.” Taking such a postmodern perspective will free public relations from the “metanarratives in the field and the narrow definitions set by its scholars and practitioners” (Holtzhausen, 2000: 110). In the spirit of a post-modern understanding of the world as a set of interdependent systems, this study opens a new perspective on the functioning of public relations, and may yet change the public relations discourse for the next few years.

10. Brief chapter overviews

The thesis will follow the structure below:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter examines the background to the research, outlining the importance of the research, and pointing the way forward.

Chapter Two: Literature review

It was already stated in Chapter One (page 18) that the literature review will focus on four broad areas:

- Ethics.
- Role of public relations in the organisation.
- Public relations education.
- Possible model for public relations.

Chapter Two will address a number of topics.

In the **first** section, the following questions will be dealt with: What is the role of public relations in the organisation? Is this role effective? What can and should be done to improve the effectiveness of public relations?

The **second** section will address the question: If public relations were to realign itself, what should be taught? Should the curricula of major institutions be brought into line with a new understanding of public relations? What are the impacts of this?

The **third** section will address a theoretical model that could help to understand the role that public relations could and should play regarding marketing and business strategy. This will assist in drawing up a final model for the “new” role of public relations in the organisation.

The **fourth** and final section will review the current state of theory regarding not only the practice of ethics within organisations, but also what can be done to ensure that organisations are behaving more ethically.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter will outline the research methodology used to establish the practice of public relations in organisations, as well as the methodology used to test the likelihood of a new model to be accepted.

Chapter Four: Analysis of research results

This chapter will present the basic findings and interpretations of the research conducted among public relations practitioners, as well as the implications of the research.

Chapter Five: Overall conclusions, recommendations, and policy implications

The findings of the research, recommendations, as well as its implications for future research, will be covered in this chapter.

11. Chapter conclusions

As a business function with a tainted past, originally drawing inspiration for some of its practices from individuals such as P.T. Barnum and Joseph Goebbels, public relations in the second half of the 20th Century came a long way towards reinventing itself. It was, however, not fully able to shake its image as spin doctor. Various attempts have been made by academics and practitioners to find the niche that public relations wishes to occupy in the upper stratospheres of organisational management, with mixed results. Facing an uncertain future as academic discipline and business function, public relations may well find itself at the crossroads. Operating in an atmosphere of corporate mischief, and used mainly as a stop-

gap measure to artificially manipulate public opinion, public relations may indeed face extinction.

Such extinction can be avoided. Turning inwards to its view of itself, and, in a true post modern fashion, learning from other disciplines and business functions, public relations can emerge as a business function that guides and directs the organisation in its ethical practices, respected by other functional managers, and helping organisations to form true and lasting relationships with its internal and external stakeholders. Relationships that are strategic in nature by helping and not harming the organisation, society, or other stakeholders.

This thesis proposes that public relations achieve this goal by developing a model for itself that allows it to interact more effectively and efficiently with all of those stakeholders that are of strategic significance to the organisation. The thesis examines the implications of using such a model, and uses empirical research to establish the degree to which public relations practitioners in South Africa are ready to embrace new thinking from outside the traditional ambit of public relations and applying it in the daily practice of a business function that could well be seen as the organisation's ethical conscience.

For public relations, the dawn of the 21st Century may yet be a defining moment.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“After awhile I thought I was asking for an interview with the head of the CIA or even the leadership of the Republic of China. Why such security? The answer is probably obvious: its image is so important to the corporation that protecting it from any adverse publicity, even that which might occur in an interview with a college professor, is of the highest priority.”

(French, 1995: 354)

1. Introduction

Public relations literature is dominated by calls for the elevation of the function to strategic management levels (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 6; Rensburg & Cant, 2003: 52). In efforts to elevate itself in the organisation, public relations has variously:

- Argued for a re-definition of its role in the organisation (Du Plessis *in* Barker & Angelopulo, 2006: 205).
- Defined its role as manager versus technician (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 14).
- Examined its education (Newsom *et al.*, 2004: 13).

That these calls have met with less-than-resounding success is also apparent. As recently as 2007, Devin (2007: 34) points to the fact that public relations is facing a crisis of credibility by mentioning that “[i]ssues of identity, ethics and competence are undermining PR’s reputation.”

While substantial progress has been made in public relations theory building (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003), and public relations theory also “*has the potential to unify a variety of applied communication areas*” (Botan & Taylor (2004: 659), there are still problems with public relations in the day-to-day life of organisations. Public relations theory, if Botan & Taylor are interpreted correctly, has a **communication focus** (which is not wrong), but seems to find itself at a loss when it comes to **management theory** and its role in the organisation. Authors on public relations are unanimous in calling for this discipline to be taken more seriously, and for reforming the practice of public relations to ensure its continued relevance in the modern business organisation, but are finding it hard to build a convincing case for its relevance.

Finding that relevance gives impetus to this research.

2. A postmodern perspective

From earlier discussions in Chapter One it seems as if a multidisciplinary, **postmodern approach** to studying and understanding the problems besetting public relations can add value by helping it to find answers to these problems. In the words of Holtzhausen (2002: 36):

“A postmodern perspective would argue for bringing as many different perspectives to the field as possible. It should also not only be to the benefit of the practitioner. Public relations is much more than [sic] the technical role of an organisational player. It is a major societal force and should be studied as such.”

The literature review and this thesis **intend** to bring a number of different perspectives to the field of public relations. The world of business is becoming increasingly complex, which calls for a more comprehensive understanding of it that requires students, academics, businesses, and even society itself to view and interpret the world as an interrelated series of events. That kind of understanding is facilitated by a non-isolationist approach such as that which is advocated by a postmodern perspective. This can help academics, practitioners, and managers to better understand a discipline that could add substantial value to organisations. In the postmodern idiom, the public relations practitioner is lifted from a role of “mere” communicator, one who has to act on orders from above, and put in a position where he/she can actively bring about change in the organisation, acting as its conscience in representing fairly the views held by all the stakeholder groups. Given the ethical paucity at play today, it is refreshing to consider the role that public relations could thus play in making organisations behave more ethically.

Another perspective that can assist public relations is the systems perspective, which was originally introduced to public relations by Cutlip & Center in 1952. By today, the systems perspective which helps public relations practitioners understand how public relations handles the issues arising from interdependence between people, organisations, and environments. In dealing with this interdependence, the organisation should adapt to its ever-changing environment. Cutlip, Center, Broom, & Du Plessis (2002: 2) are of the opinion that, in order for organisations to survive and prosper, they should:

- Accept that they have a public responsibility in an increasingly interdependent society.
- Communicate with distant and diverse publics.
- Integrate in the communities that they serve.

In the public relations context, the system is described as something that involves mutually dependent relationships that organisations establish between themselves and their stakeholders. It is therefore by definition a multidisciplinary approach.

These two perspectives of postmodernism and systems theory inform the literature survey for this thesis, and can be seen as two of the pillars on which the thesis is built. A third pillar, the backbone, really, is that of the values-driven approach articulated by Guth & Marsh (2000: 17):

“Public relations is the values-driven management of relationships between an organisation and the publics that can affect its success. Values-driven public relations is the process of uncovering not just where the organisation will go but also the principles the organisation will observe in getting there Values-driven public relations also means being accountable for adherence to those values when we evaluate our actions.”

The insights brought about by values-driven public relations clearly pave the way for involvement in ethical management issues by public relations.

It is with these three perspectives of postmodernism, systems theory, and values-driven public relations that the literature will be selected from a number of disciplines:

- Can the text selected provide insight on the way in which public relations can change its role in the organisation from passive executer of orders to active agent of strategic change and response?
- Can the text selected help public relations understand its interdependence on other business functions better?
- Can the text selected shed a light on the values that public relations need to develop, or implement for the betterment of the organisation?

The three perspectives, and the questions asked above, provided sufficient light for selecting and reading and analysing texts that were drawn from disciplines with which public relations not only interacts, but on which its interdependence rests in an organisation, which is seen as a system containing numerous subsystems that must work together to achieve organisational success.

It could be argued simplistically that public relations is a marketing communication tool that enables the marketing function to achieve its objectives, and that marketing objectives in turn enables the organisation to achieve its objectives. Of course, this goes against the grain of

what public relations practitioners are calling for when they advocate a wider role for public relations in the organisation than that of marketing communication tool.

As will be indicated later in this chapter, there is a **first perspective** to be brought to bear on public relations, namely the **management** perspective. This thesis does not seek a comprehensive and fundamental rewrite of public relations, marketing, and organisational theories, but it does ask *whether public relations could deliver greater value in the organisation if it realigns its role in the organisation, specifically where marketing (the proverbial fly in the practitioner's ointment) is concerned.*

A **second perspective** is that of **education** of public relations practitioners. As the preliminary reading reflected in Chapter One already demonstrates, questions are raised about the education that public relations practitioners receive. These questions relate not only to the curricula of public relations, but also to the content of what is being taught. This thesis examines the education of public relations practitioners, and asks *whether their education at present is sufficient to prepare them for the realities of public relations practice in the modern age.*

However, as Chapter One mentions, it is hoped that a new model for understanding public relations may be discovered/designed. Therefore, a **third perspective** will examine literature that may point the researcher in the direction of finding such a model. Given the fact that most of the themes under review in this thesis (except, perhaps, for education) relate to management, it seems natural to survey management literature and theories or models that conceivably could assist the researcher in finding answers to some or all of these questions.

In the preliminary reading stage of the research, the author of this thesis developed a suspicion that one model in particular had the potential of addressing these questions – Porter's value chain analysis (or, as it is lately called, supply chain management). The value chain analysis (discussed more fully later in this chapter) meets the postmodern and systems theory perspectives in that it draws together various disciplines, and analyses the organisation as a set of interrelated systems. While such a supply chain is in itself neutral, it may also show ways in which the values-driven approach may manifest itself in the organisation.

At this stage, the answers that Porter's value chain may bring to these questions will be pure hypothesis, but they could act as a handy guide for literature selection and analysis.

Chapter One shows that organisational ethics in all of its manifestations is becoming an increasingly important topic of conversation, news reporting, debate, and business decision making. The research for this thesis was originally triggered when examples of unethical behaviour started appearing seemingly everywhere, and certainly in a number of different industries in South Africa such as automobile manufacturing, banking, food manufacturing, and electricity supply.

The **fourth perspective** that this thesis addresses is that of **ethics**. While this thesis does not seek to find a new definition of ethics or to continue the debate around the role of ethics in business, it does ask *whether organisational functions such as public relations can contribute to organisational ethics – even in small ways*.

Given the **postmodern** nature of this **exploratory investigation** into the realities of public relations, the author of this thesis decided to use a **thematic approach** to selecting literature. Mouton (2001: 93) mentions that literature reviews organised according to a theme is fairly common in exploratory studies. This study explores the three perspectives outlined in the preceding paragraphs as they pertain to public relations theory and practice. Therefore, the literature search used the following themes as selection criteria:

- Management and public relations.
- Public relations education.
- Ethics and public relations.

Babbie & Mouton (2001: 79 – 80) say that exploratory studies are done to satisfy the curiosity of a researcher, to test whether more extensive study would be feasible, to “*explicate ... central concepts ... of a study*”, to find grounds for future research, and to develop new hypotheses.

The extent to which one or more of these aims of exploratory research were satisfied will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis, but at this stage it is anticipated that the exploratory research reflected in this thesis would fulfil the following objectives:

- Satisfy the curiosity of the researcher.
- Test the feasibility of more extensive research.
- Find grounds for future research.
- Develop new hypotheses.

The title of this thesis implies that the realignment of public relations in the organisation's value chain may contribute to organisational ethics in South Africa. In order to review literature pertinent to these issues, this chapter is divided into four main subsections, namely:

- Section One: Management and public relations.
- Section Two: Public relations education.
- Section Three: Porter's value chain analysis.
- Section Four: An overview of ethics.

Questions that seem to plague public relations have been discussed in Chapter One, and are listed in **Table 2.1** for ease of reference. Possible answers or solutions to these questions are also listed in the table in order to provide a point of reference for the literature review:

Table 2.1: Problems facing public relations

Question/problem	Possible answer/solution
What should be the task of public relations, specifically in the organisation as a whole?	Its task is to manage relationships between the organisation and all of its stakeholders. It should act as the organisation's ethical conscience, thereby ensuring that the organisation does what it says it will do.
Is public relations education sufficient to equip practitioners for their role in the "real world"?	Education is not sufficient at present, and needs to include more reference to business-related subjects.
What is a new model for public relations?	A new model for public relations could be developed on the basis of Porter's value chain analysis.
What can public relations do to become more ethical, and what contribution can it make to organisational ethics?	Public relations could restore its bad name by realigning itself in the organisation, and by delineating its role as ethical partner in business.

Each of the sections that follow has been structured around the three themes discussed earlier. However, within each section, the questions/problems identified in the table above will also be addressed. While **Table 2.1** above suggests potential answers to these questions, the literature review, together with the empirical survey, should provide guidance on the feasibility of these proposed solutions. With this background in mind, the literature review commences by examining what has been written and said about management and public relations.

3. Section One: Management and public relations

As Chapter One already indicated, public relations is finding itself in an identity crisis, one in which it is examining its role in the organisation, as well as its role vis-à-vis marketing. Supportive evidence of an identity crisis among South African public relations is found in a study on their role perceptions (Venter, 2004). This research found that South African public relations practitioners are unsure about the contribution that they make to organisational success. Furthermore, public relations is finding that its name is, to say the least, tainted (mainly as a result of manipulating public opinion and in some cases lying outright to the public), and is trying to remedy the situation by calling for a name change. The name change is proffered as a remedy for a situation where public relations does not get the recognition in the organisation that it feels it deserves. Such a name change is seen as a panacea that will help to refocus public relations' contribution to the organisation, and calls for a realignment of the role of public relations are forthcoming from many quarters. This section in the literature review will focus on the three major areas of concern outlined in this paragraph:

- Role in the organisation.
- Relationship to marketing.
- Name change.

3.1 Role in the organisation

One of the major causes of concern for public relations practitioners is the fact that public relations in the organisation is seemingly not taken seriously, and that public relations is not used to its full strategic potential, but merely as a tool to be used to "save" the organisation from unsavoury public comment. Furthermore, public relations practitioners are unsure about their role in the organisation. Their uncertainty is echoed by other functional departments who are also not sure exactly where public relations fits into the picture. Rensburg & Cant (2003: 46) are of the opinion that *"the role of public relations should be clarified in the organisational dynamics to prevent it from overlapping with other functions, causing confusion and ineffectiveness."*

In addition, public relations debates in the 21st Century are characterised by rallying cries for the function to be elevated to the ranks of the boardroom. Some authors on the role of public relations in the organisation invoke the recommendations of the King II Report on Corporate Governance. Jensen (2003: 6), for example, mentions that the requirements of the report - for relations with stakeholders - *"ensure a strategic public relations seat right next to the CEO of any boardroom table."* The strategic nature of public relations is currently the focus of

much debate. Botha, Chaka, Du Plessis, Krause, Rawjee, Porthen, Veerasamy, & Wright (2007: 28) explain that groups of people who can help or hinder the organisation are of strategic significance to the organisation. For this reason, the organisation needs to build relationships with them. In this view, they are supported by, *inter alia*, Wilcox, Ault, Agee, & Cameron (2000: 142), Steyn & Puth (2000: 17), and Skinner *et al.* (2004: 5). This view helps to explain why public relations practitioners focus on the relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders.

In their book on the subject, entitled "*Corporate communication strategy*", Steyn & Puth (2000: 21) strongly argue the point that "*corporate communication needs to be catapulted from a tradition of technical role-playing in the organisation to a fully accepted and participating strategic management function.*" This tradition of technical role-playing in the organisation stems in part from the fact that public relations has, for many years, been seen as one of the primary marketing communication tools, where public relations has been described as "*communications placed in the commercial media at no charge to the company receiving the publicity*" (Cravens & Piercy, 2006: 34). It is clear that different disciplines view the role of public relations differently, pointing to a possible theoretical confusion about the value that public relations adds to the organisation.

One of the manifestations of this theoretical confusion lies in the fact that public relations tries to position itself as either a technician or as a strategist, where these two roles are almost seen as mutually exclusive. Current literature distinguishes between the technician and strategist roles of public relations practitioners (Skinner *et al.* 2004: 6, Cutlip *et al.*, 2006: 58-59). As **technicians**, public relations practitioners are used as communication specialists who use tactics such as publicity, seminars, open days, and product launches, among other similar tactics, in order to obtain a favourable impression of the brand or product, or the organisation as a whole.

As **strategists**, public relations practitioners will obtain a favourable image for the organisation among its various stakeholder groups, thereby building the organisation's reputation, which in turn will positively affect the performance of the marketing activities.

Rensburg & Cant (2003: 53) reinforce the fact that the position of public relations in the organisation is a matter of debate, but also take care to make the point that public relations should play a more encompassing role in the organisation. They point out that it shares a characteristic with advertising in that public relations is sometimes a function that is outsourced to public relations consultancies.

Outsourcing public relations to outside consultancies is a practice commonly found worldwide, potentially further reflecting the difference between the role of technician and strategist. Skinner *et al.* (2004: 27 – 29) differentiate between what they call “*corporate*” and “*consulting*” public relations, where the former situates public relations within the organisation itself, and the latter situates public relations outside the realm of the organisation. Industry slang would have the two termed as “*in-house*” and “*agency.*” Newsom *et al.* (2004: 5-6) refine this distinction by identifying “*staff member*”, “*agency employee*” and “*independent PR practitioner*” as the roles of public relations. Cutlip *et al.* (2000: 30-32) provide further refinement, identifying the following:

- Business and commercial corporations.
- Public relations firms.
- Associations, foundations, educational institutions.
- Health care.
- Government.
- Non-profit organisations.

It is clear that public relations is practiced under most circumstances either as:

- an **in-house** option, where an organisation has its own public relations department;
- **or** as an **agency function**, where the agency (or independent practitioner) sells its communication skills to an organisation.

Understanding that public relations may be practiced “*in-house*” or used as an outsourced function makes it apparent that the discussion around “*elevating*” public relations gets an interesting twist. The question is in reality one of whether organisations would allow an outside agency to “*interfere*” in their organisational management processes.

The nature of the current practice of public relations therefore exposes it to a potential dilemma, where the outside agency will be hired purely to act as communication **technician** to solve particular communication problems or address particular communication crises. This is a situation that some practitioners may want to avoid in their attempts to have public relations elevated.

It would be interesting to discover whether public relations practitioners themselves agree whether public relations should or should not be outsourced. This view will be established empirically.

The notion that public relations should be seen as “more” than a “mere” technical function of the organisation is supported by a number of texts such as Skinner *et al.* (2004: 6) and Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 8).

For Heath & Coombs (2006: 27 – 30) the strategic role of public relations is clear-cut. Using public relations, the organisation will seek to build and maintain **relationships** with stakeholders that are of **strategic significance** to the organisation. Their focus, however, does not fall as much on the stakeholder (or public), as it does on the relationship itself. To them, this is also what distinguishes public relations from marketing – the focus on relationship-building with groups **other than customers**.

Their classification uses the word “relationships”, and they identify a number of “relationship-building responsibilities”: These are illustrated in **Figure 2.1** below:

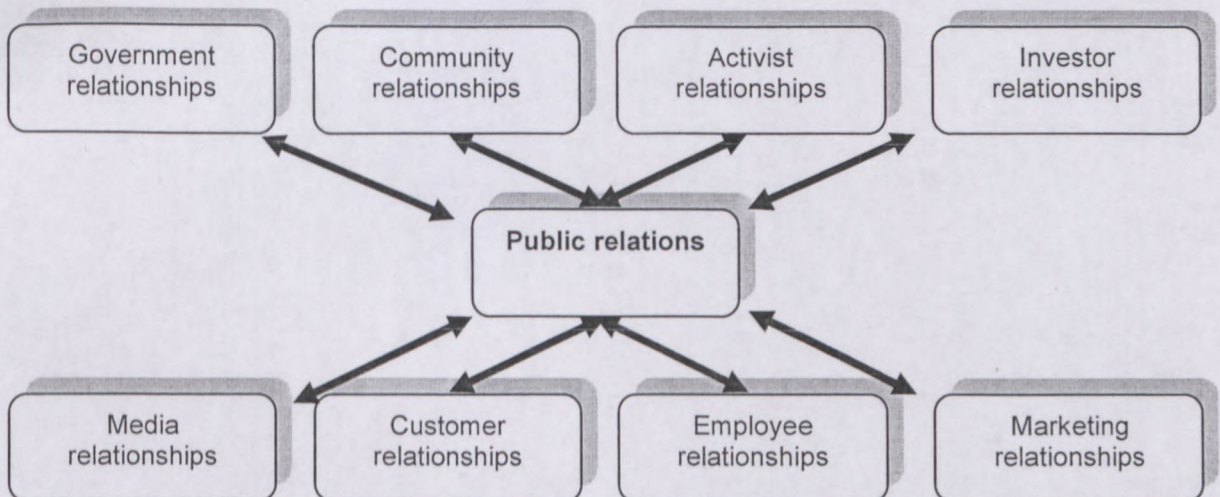


Figure 2.1: Relationship-building responsibilities
(Adapted from Heath & Coombs, 2006: 28)

Of interest to this thesis is perhaps not the variety of relationships identified in **Figure 2.1**, nor is it the fact that marketing relationships enjoy a separate mention, but the fact that relationships with suppliers and intermediaries, for example, are not mentioned. If it is accepted that organisations have an ethical duty to deliver on what they promise, the public relations practitioner should understand the impact of ensuring that suppliers are of good quality, are reliable, and can be trusted. Low quality supplies, unreliable suppliers, or untrustworthy suppliers will damage relationships with, for example, the media, customers, and shareholders. As Mattel discovered to their chagrin, the organisation’s image can be negatively affected by the actions of their suppliers. They were held accountable by

customers, the media, and their shareholders, and it cost them a surprising amount of money and fancy (public relations-driven) footwork to repair the damage done by a situation not of their direct making. The same argument holds true for intermediaries, as an intermediary can experience a crisis of consumer confidence with resultant bad implications for manufacturers depending on those intermediaries. Public relations, as **Figure 2.1** shows, has a number of key relationships to build and maintain. Yet, a full understanding of exactly who those key relationships constitute is not painted, as the discussion around suppliers and intermediaries shows. A theoretical understanding of public relations should include space for those important stakeholders in the organisation. It is, however, significant that the authors quoted in **Figure 2.1** emphasise the relationship-building duties of public relations. This opens the door for a discussion of how such relationship-building duties can be analysed and integrated in the organisation's business processes as implied by the systems perspective on public relations. The quality of such relationships and their impacts on the ethics or perceived ethics of the organisation should also be addressed in a true values-driven perspective.

The focus on relations as identified above by Heath & Coombs is reflected in the definition of public relations adopted by PRISA (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 4):

"Public relations is the management, through communication, of the perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders."

Interestingly, some marketers (see, *inter alia*, Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 447), agree that the role of public relations is to build and maintain relationships with a number of stakeholder groups. Of course, a focus on relationships does lend gravity to the excitement with which public relations practitioners in South African welcomed the focus of the King II Report on stakeholders and relationships with stakeholders. Among others, the King II Report called for the annual reporting on "*the nature and extent of its social, transformation, ethical, safety, health and environmental management policies and practices*" (Institute of Directors, 2002: 35). The King II Report also puts emphasis on the management of relationships with stakeholders, and identifies the organisation's ethical imperative by making two suggestions. The Report firstly calls on organisations to involve their stakeholders in "*determining the company's standards of ethical behaviour*" (Institute of Directors, 2002: 37), and secondly suggests that the organisation should codify its ethical standards.

The King II Report thus implies a greater function for public relations in the organisation, especially where its relationship-building role is concerned. This relationship-building role of public relations, as advocated by a number of authors, and as implied by the PRISA-definition is used by practitioners and academics to justify the strategic nature of their role.

Authors such as Skinner *et al.* (2004: 266) argue that public relations is about creating and managing a positive **reputation** for the organisation, and that this reputation as well as good relationships with stakeholders will benefit the organisation. Corporate image or, as it is also known, corporate reputation, is an area in which public relations has always prided itself as making a valuable contribution to the organisation. In a study on the issues of corporate reputation and strategy, Fombrun & Shanley (1990) found that there is a clear link between a positive corporate reputation and success, while also noting that publics (including customers) construct their perceptions on reputation by using available information about the organisation, no matter where this information is found, and further making the point that this information may be diffuse. One of the aims of integrated marketing communication is to prevent this diffusion from taking place by ensuring that a consistent message is sent out by and about the organisation in a variety of media.

There is consensus among public relations academics, practitioners, and marketers that a major function of public relations is to build a positive, favourable reputation for the organisation. Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 475) mention this, as does Duncan (2005: 556), from the perspectives of marketing and advertising respectively. In public relations literature, reference to the contribution of public relations to a positive image for the organisation is found in almost every text, such as Wilcox *et al.* (2000: 491), Skinner *et al.* (2004: 266), and Botha *et al.* (2007: 256). In fact, the element of reputation has become a discipline of study in its own right, and more and more voices are calling for public relations to be renamed to that of "*reputation management*".

The reputation of the organisation, long held to be a primary responsibility of public relations, is therefore the result of what an organisation **says** and **does**. This has obvious ethical implications, which will receive due attention in the section of the literature review dealing with that subject. Grunig (2006: 3) also draws a link between the organisation's relationships and its reputation.

The point is that "*[t]he essential objective of corporate communication should be to make the organisation more effective through mutually beneficial communication between the organisation and all its stakeholders*" (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 3).

Kuper (2006: 50), however, warns against relying overmuch on the organisation's reputation and image:

"[w]hile there is much to be said for the value of reputation, a word of caution needs to be sounded. In today's society, the highly developed and expensive art of 'spin' can generate a reputation that does not truly reflect the trustworthiness of the person or the institution. A 'good' reputation might reflect a company's wealth or talent at media management, rather than its core ethical ability."

The call for elevating public relations to the top levels of organisational management is given further status in the *Harvard Business Review* where corporate social responsibility (traditionally the domain of public relations – see, *inter alia*, Wilcox *et al.*, 2000: 299; Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 275) is described as "an inescapable priority for business leaders in every country" (Porter & Kramer, 2006: 78). In their article, entitled "Strategy & society: the link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility", these two authors point out that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is indeed important for an organisation wishing to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. However, they also make the point that "people with responsibility for CSR initiatives must have a granular understanding of every activity in the value chain." Porter, an eminent strategist, argues that an important public relations function (that of corporate social responsibility) be **integrated into the organisation's value chain**, and that the people who are dealing with this issue should be properly trained in the organisation and its various activities. This insight by Porter, about the organisation's value chain, is an insight that should be discussed at more length, since it may have far-reaching consequences for the way public relations is understood. For that reason, the value chain concept will be discussed later in this chapter under a separate heading.

It is clear that the role of public relations could be broader than that of marketing, focusing on **all** of the organisation's stakeholders, building relationships with them in order to position the organisation strategically, *inter alia* by developing a positive corporate reputation. This, according to public relations practitioners, renders public relations in a strategic role as management function. However, clarity on the nature of that strategic role is elusive, and is only addressed in part by current public relations literature, which argues for a more involved role for public relations, but which also cannot give a firm description to the exact positioning of the function. In one case, public relations is described as a **staff function** (Rensburg & Cant, 2003: 45), while in another it is painted as a chameleon – top manager when involved in corporate work, and support activity when involved in marketing activities (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 45). Given the already discussed theoretical uncertainty about the role of public relations in the organisation, it is not surprising to discover that it is unclear about whether it should act as staff or line function. This is an aspect of the dilemma that needs to be

resolved. One way of resolving this element is by developing a model that would indicate to public relations where and when it could act as strategist, and where and when it could act as technician. Supposing that an organisation needs public relations to function in two seemingly opposing capacities, it is reasonable to expect that a model could solve the dilemma.

While public relations apologists will argue that the role of strategist takes public relations out of the dominance of the marketing department, and put it firmly in the boardroom, marketers as well as strategists argue that the reputation of the organisation and its relationships with key stakeholders will, in any event, serve the marketing function, which in turn is regarded as a central, indeed **primary**, activity of the organisation. This is proposed by, among others, Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 476), who argue that public relations can play “*an increasingly important brand-building role*”, but who add that “[a]dvertising and public relations should work hand in hand to build and maintain brands.” This sentiment is echoed by Lamb *et al.* (2004: 359) when they say that “[m]arketing managers plan solid public relations campaigns that fit into overall marketing plans and focus on targeted audiences.”

That public relations should support marketing is also advocated by Du Plessis *et al.* (2005: 369). Marketing literature therefore comfortably supports the notion of positioning public relations as a support activity to marketing.

Marketers clearly see public relations as one of the marketing communication tools to be used to build and support the brand as part of a greater marketing plan. Even where public relations will build relationships with stakeholder groups falling outside the traditional gambit of marketing, it will do so in order to enable the smooth implementation of the organisation's marketing plan.

It is also sometimes suggested (though not by marketers) that public relations should play the leading role in marketing planning and implementation. In “*The fall of advertising and the rise of PR*” it is advocated that “*PR is in the driver's seat and should lead and direct a marketing program*” (Ries & Ries, 2002: XII).

Whether marketing should lead public relations, or whether public relations should lead marketing has become the core of a long-waged “*turf battle*” – a fundamental disagreement between public relations and marketing on the contribution of public relations to the organisation.

This so-called “*turf battle*” needs to be addressed by redefining the role of public relations in the organisation, where complete clarity could be developed for the role of public relations.

The literature surveyed on the role of public relations in the organisation so far provides the following insights:

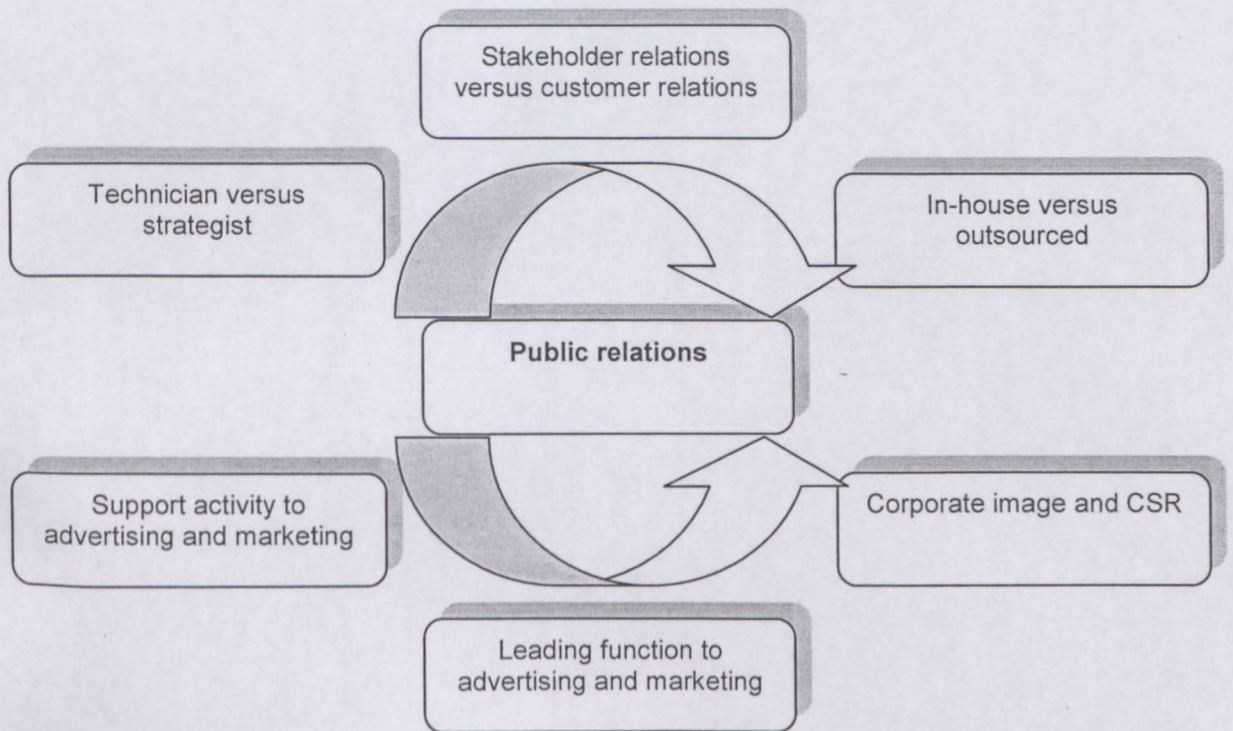


Figure 2.2: Role of public relations in the organisation

It is apparent from **Figure 2.2** above that public relations has many responsibilities, some in seemingly conflicting situations (for example strategist versus technician). Given an apparently conflicting theoretical framework, it is small wonder that public relations practitioners are confused about their role in the organisation. Having to balance a number of functions, and in a number of roles, public relations practitioners are supposed to build a reputation for the organisation, whilst operating with an unclear mandate. In addition they are expected to build this reputation without the support or understanding of a number of other departments, of which marketing seems to be the major culprit. It is imperative that these apparent conflicts be solved in order for public relations to realise its true potential as contributor to organisational efficiency and effectiveness. To what extent are some of the objectives stated in Chapter One of this thesis relevant to this figure and the discussion so far?

Table 2.2 below compares the objectives with the issues outlined:

TABLE 2.2: Public relations organisational role and research objectives

Objective of research	Role of public relations in organisation
To describe and define the role of public relations in the organisation.	Currently, there is role confusion in the literature, as is apparent from several conflicts identified, notably that of strategist versus technician and marketing and advertising.
To describe the interaction between public relations and marketing.	Literature paints a picture of a confusing, and sometimes acrimonious, relationship between public relations and marketing.

The literature reviewed for this section in order to establish how public relations sees its role in the organisation clearly supports the suspicion that there is currently no clear and unambiguous guideline for the role of public relations in the organisation:

- It is either in-house or outsourced.
- It either reports to marketing or it does not.
- It is variously named as corporate affairs, public affairs, corporate communication, etc.
- It deals in a number of activities, but it does not know exactly which.
- It recruits from a variety of fields, such as journalism, languages, and communication.

This is clear indication that public relations is uneasy about its role, and in fact helps to explain why it is in the state of confusion it experiences. There is no doubt that the confusion should be eliminated and that clarity on the role of public relations in the organisation should be found. Given earlier mention of using Porter's value chain as the basis for resolving such a situation, it will bear further discussion. In the penultimate section of this chapter, the possibility of using the Porter value chain analysis as the basis for finding such a role will be discussed in more detail.

One area in particular where public relations distinguishes itself is that of its relationship to marketing. Falconi (2006: 8) laments that "[a]ll too often public relations, in organizations of all sorts, is placed under the marketing communication umbrella and, at times, even under the advertising umbrella." This lament is an echo of years of in-fighting between marketing and public relations, and has led to a number of turf battles between the disciplines. One of

the aims of this thesis is to put an end to that turf battle. It is therefore necessary to investigate the current state of affairs in this debate.

3.2 Relationship to marketing

Still seen by marketers as a function that should be used only to build good relationships with customers in order to sell products and services, public relations seeks to divorce itself from marketing, using the argument that its task is more than that of marketing, since it *“has the goal of attaining and maintaining accord with social groups on whom the organization depends in order to achieve its mission”* (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 43). In addition to divorcing itself from marketing, it is also seeking to position itself as being relatively more valuable to the organisation than advertising.

Not only is public relations seeking to divorce itself from the control of marketing, but it is also looking to reposition itself vis-à-vis another marketing communication tool – advertising. In 2002, Ries & Ries sought to indicate how advertising is becoming **irrelevant** as a marketing communication tool, while public relations is becoming **more relevant**, owing specifically to its credibility. Their argument is supported by Armstrong & Kotler (2007: 392), who state that *“[a]dvertising and public relations should work hand in hand to build and maintain brands.”* In the same vein, some public relations authors argue for public relations to be seen as a management function, elevating it to the level of top management. Public relations practitioners and academics will argue that it is the function of public relations to *“operate at the highest level of organizational management and have access to the most senior information and decision-making systems”* (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 6).

For their part, marketers see public relations as a tool to be used as variable in the marketing mix, with the specific objective of generating sales through positive publicity. This view is shared by a number of authors on marketing, including Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 475), and Lamb *et al.* (2004: 359). Public relations is described by Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 475) as a *“mass-promotion tool”* that builds *“good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building up good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events.”* For marketers, public relations has the primary activity of finding free promotion for the product, and stands in stark contrast to the larger function sought after by public relations practitioners.

The conflicting viewpoints highlighted in the above paragraphs bring to the fore a debate between public relations and marketing that was long in the making. This debate has become standard fare of discussion in many a public relations text, and needs to be settled.

The only result of an unsettled turf battle is that time and resources are wasted. Again, it is believed that the value chain analysis could be of assistance in settling this debate. Rensburg & Cant (2003: 118) refer to the controversial relationship between marketing and public relations, using terminology such as “turf battles.” They state, however, that the traditional divisions separating these two functions have started to disappear. They point out that marketing focuses on the satisfaction of customers through, *inter alia*, relationship building, while public relations focuses on relationship building. Part of the solution in settling this debate would require looking at marketing (long the “master” of public relations via marketing communication) and its own function in the organisation.

This thesis defines marketing as:

A process through which the organisation achieves its strategic objectives by creating need-satisfying products/services in a manner that satisfies both organisation and consumer, while at the same time not harming the environment and reflecting high levels of ethical behaviour.

In achieving the organisation’s objectives in the manner suggested above, marketing has to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of not only customers, but also the requirements of a changing business environment. Given that circumstances within which businesses operate are changing rapidly, Kotler & Keller (2006: 16-23) make a compelling argument for a regular review of marketing practice: *“Marketers in the twenty-first century are increasingly recognizing the need to have a more complete, cohesive approach that goes beyond the traditional applications of the marketing concept.”*

This “more complete, cohesive approach” is termed “holistic marketing”, and consists of four constituent themes, as **Table 2.3** below indicates:

Table 2.3: Holistic marketing
(Adapted from Kotler & Keller, 2006: 8)

Internal marketing	Integrated marketing	Relationship marketing	Socially responsible marketing
Marketing department. Senior management. Other departments.	Communications. Products & services. Channels.	Customers. Channel. Partners.	Ethics. Environment. Legal. Community.

If the review of marketing championed by Kotler & Keller were to be used to look at a “new” role for public relations vis-à-vis marketing a number of possibilities for the contribution of public relations may be identified:

- Internal marketing requires that good relationships be built between departments and that communication techniques be used to build and maintain relationships with all employees.
- Integrated marketing requires the free flow of communication and interdependent planning of all communication activities as they relate not only to the product, but also the organisation’s overall reputation, as well as strong relationships with all members of the organisation’s supply chain.
- Relationship marketing focuses the effort on good relationships with all actors in the organisation’s value chain.
- Socially responsible marketing draws attention to the organisation’s expression of its corporate social responsibility to all stakeholders in the organisation.

However, in spite of the fact that there are numerous areas in which public relations can partner itself with marketing, and cooperate with marketing in preparing the ground for product acceptance, the relationship between marketing and public relations, which is so easily accepted by marketers as an element in the marketing mix (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007: 368), has always been uneasy at best. One of the reasons for this may be that, in the words of Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 7), “*many people confuse public relations with ... marketing.*” This, sadly for the moment, includes many public relations practitioners.

That public relations practitioners would need greater clarity on their role in creating value for the customer and thereby the organisation does become clear in the discussion so far. Cravens & Piercy (2006: 4) put the customer in the centre of all organisational (including marketing) activity by stating that “[*t*]he market-oriented organization understands customers’ preferences and requirements and effectively deploys the skills and resources of the entire organization to satisfy customers.” Other marketing texts support this approach, including Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 4 – 29), and Lamb *et al.* (2004: 10).

The views that the customer should be the focus of organisational efforts have been around for quite some time, and are famously articulated in 1960 with the publication of Levitt’s article “*Marketing myopia*”. It is then perhaps surprising to note that it is still difficult for organisations to implement a customer focus.

For example, the original article by Levitt was re-published in *Harvard Business Review* as recently as 2006. He best summarises the customer-focused approach:

“[T]he entire organization must be viewed as a customer-creating and customer-satisfying organism. Management must think of itself not as producing products but as providing customer-creating value satisfactions. It must push this idea (and everything it means and requires) into every nook and cranny of the organization. It has to do this continuously and with the kind of flair that excites and stimulates the people in it. Otherwise, the company will be merely a series of pigeonholed parts, with no consolidating sense of purpose or direction” (Levitt, 2006: 129).

This focus on the customer has, in some cases, led to organisations trying to obtain customers using any and all means necessary such as pressure selling or manufacturing at the lowest price possible, cutting corners in the production or sourcing processes, with resultant ethical loopholes. In organisations that do understand the customer focus, all procedures, processes, and systems are aligned to create value for the customer, which in turn translates into value for the organisation – its profit. This is a basic precept accepted by managers today, who will analyse and manage all organisational activities according to the value that they create not only for the customer, but also for the organisation. A tool that marketers use to ensure that the organisation can successfully find, acquire, satisfy, and retain customers is the value chain analysis.

To public relations practitioners, however, marketing almost seems like an incidental activity among the many other activities that an organisation carries out in order to build and maintain good relationships (such as media relations, publications, corporate identity programmes, and other communication activities). The focus in public relations therefore falls on **communication** and **relationships**, and this focus has, to a large extent, directed development of public relations training programmes and educational curricula. However, as is clear from the discussion so far, public relations should also focus on its interaction with the rest of the organisation in its quest for producing customer-satisfying goods or services.

There is a bipolar approach to public relations: marketers complain that public relations does not focus on its job as they see it, while public relations practitioners want a bigger slice of the strategic management cake by defining their contribution as more than marketing. If this bipolarity is not addressed by providing clear theoretical direction in, among others, public relations training and textbooks, the debate “public relations versus marketing” will for many years not be settled. Merely changing the name from “public relations” to, for example, “corporate communication” may not be sufficient (the name change will be discussed in more detail in the next section). As was argued earlier in this thesis, public relations should try to

find a model that can help it to understand its role in the organisation, and specifically in relation to marketing.

However, many executives with marketing, finance, or operations backgrounds may not seriously regard a potential repositioning of public relations in a favourable light. Marketers, for one, are content with relegating public relations to the function of marketing communication. Doyle & Stern (2006: 279) describe public relations as *"activities that the organisation undertakes to communicate to its publics that are not paid for directly."* While chief executive officers (CEOs) take a kinder view on the importance of public relations to the organisation, they do not fully understand how public relations can contribute to the organisation's success (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 12), so that, *"in most organisations, corporate communication is only practised ... on the micro level ... where decisions made by other functions or by top management are implemented."* This is compounded by an inability of public relations practitioners in South Africa to articulate their role in the organisation (Venter, 2004). Both Venter (2004) and Steyn & Puth (2000) point out that the theory of public relations needs to be revisited in order to draft a theoretical model for the functioning of public relations in the organisation, and then to train public relations practitioners in their "new" role. In this view, they are supported by VanSlyke Turk (2006: 44), who says that the *"[p]rinciples of public relations and management must be intertwined with and related to business, behavioural science, technology and other disciplines."* This phrase underscores a general theme in her report, which is that public relations education in the United States, but almost certainly also worldwide, should be adapted to reflect the new challenges facing public relations.

In the broader context of marketing communications, two schools of thought emerged – teaching marketing and other business subjects to public relations students (which supports the call for public relations to be strategic) versus those who believe that greater emphasis on communication is needed (thus adding to the technical expertise required).

Bagin & Fulgitini (2005: 154) feel that:

"Those who support the integration of public relations, marketing and advertising claim that such a background will enable proponents to be more readily accepted at the higher management levels. Those who oppose the integrated approach feel that public relations students need a broad background in communication and the social sciences."

The literature on the relationship between public relations and marketing is thus inconclusive regarding the relationship, and seems to perpetuate the divisive rift between two disciplines where (especially) public relations seeks to free itself from the constrictions of being seen as

“mere” marketing tool – although it does concede that in some circumstances it will serve as a support to marketing.

The literature (in both marketing and public relations texts and papers) seems to suggest the following situation with regard to the relationship:

Table 2.4: Marketing versus public relations

The marketing view	The public relations view
Good customer relationships to boost sales. Good media relationships to obtain free publicity. Good corporate image to boost marketing programmes. Used as a marketing communication tool.	Good relationships with all stakeholders to improve organisation’s reputation. Good media relationships to ensure fair treatment in the media. Good corporate image to promote the organisation as a whole. Provide support to marketing communication.

While public relations techniques were in the past used to boost the marketing programme, the weight of literature on the role of public relations also suggests that it does indeed play a role wider than that of marketing support. However, little or no clear guidance is given on the organisational positioning of public relations vis-à-vis marketing.

Skinner *et al.* (2004: 46) identify a number of permutations:

- Separate, but equal functions.
- Equal but overlapping.
- Marketing as dominant.
- Marketing and public relations as same function.
- Public relations as dominant.

It is interesting that public relations has so many permutations in organisational design, since most other functions do not have this ambiguity, and are treated as equal partners in an organisation’s design.

Ehlers & Lazenby (2007: 249), for example, identify a simple functional structure of an organisation as consisting of managers for:

- Marketing.
- Human resources.

- Finance.
- Operations.

Differences of opinion on the role of public relations regarding that of marketing, combined with the lack of clarity on the organisational position of public relations will exacerbate confusion on the role of public relations already identified in public relations literature. This confusion is counterproductive, and a model that addresses the role of public relations in the organisation needs to eradicate that.

Although there is current confusion about the role of public relations vis-à-vis marketing, there are clear indications that there is a strong link between the two disciplines. However, because of the confusion on the side of (especially) public relations practitioners, public relations does not contribute as fully to marketing or organisational success as it potentially can, as Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 476) argue:

“[d]espite its potential strengths, public relations is sometimes described as a marketing stepchild because of its often limited and scattered use. The PR department is usually located at corporate headquarters. Its staff is so busy dealing with various publics ... that public relations programs to support product marketing objectives may be ignored. Marketing managers and public relations practitioners do not always talk the same language. Many PR practitioners see their job as simply communicating. In contrast, marketing managers tend to be much more interested in how advertising and public relations affect brand building, sales, and profits.”

Kotler & Armstrong seem to support the greater involvement of public relations in the marketing effort, while at the same time “blaming” public relations practitioners for ignoring this role. On the other hand, Kotler & Armstrong also seem to state that public relations practitioners who are involved in activities such as corporate social responsibility have a duty to the organisation “*greater*” than the duty to marketing. This in actual fact points to the heart of the problem: Where does public relations belong, and what should its role be? This is a problem that leads to much frustration in public relations circles, and one that should be resolved.

The frustration experienced in trying to fulfil a role when confused gets attention in Steyn & Puth (2000) who constantly refer to this as one of the major issues facing public relations practitioners. It is also apparent from the research carried out among South African public relations practitioners (Venter, 2004). One interesting finding of this research was that a large percentage of South African public relations practitioners (44,6 per cent of them) has a qualification in a field **other** than public relations (Venter, 2004: 66). It may well be imagined

that practitioners who have no formal schooling in public relations may want to concentrate on that which they know – communication. It is clear that a lack of formal public relations training is contributing to the inability of this function to contribute its fullest potential to organisational success.

While the debate surrounding the primacy of public relations over that of marketing rages on, another battle is being played out within the ranks of public relations itself – changing the name of the discipline. A primary reason given for this name change is the disrepute surrounding the current name: that of public relations. Using communication, less-than-ethical companies have in the past sought to manipulate public opinion to line the pockets of the greedy. Kuper, for example, feels that communication is sometimes used to confuse customers, and makes the telling point that “[b]anks, insurance companies and investment brokers often overpromise in the pursuit of new business, but expertly backtrack or summon up an obscure ‘small-print’ clause to help them avoid their obligations when there is an economic shock or major change in the financial environment” (Kuper, 2006: 45).

While the name change has already been discussed superficially in Chapter One, the following section will deal with that issue in some more detail.

3.3 Renaming public relations

As an academic discipline (and in practice), public relations finds itself embroiled in an identity crisis. Steyn & Puth (2000: 3) declare that “*the term public relations suffers from negative associations because of the way in which the discipline has been (and still is) practised in many organisations.*” Parsons (2004: 99) goes so far as to invoke the term “*spin doctor*”, saying that it “*tells a story about a less-than-honourable approach to communicating ... with a wider public.*” As Chapter One of this thesis mentions, attempts are underfoot to rename public relations in order to reposition the discipline, because there is little doubt that the name of the discipline, that of public relations, could benefit from some improvement.

Gibson & Gonzales (2006: 15), while acknowledging that public relations has suffered from bad press, offer an interesting way in which public relations should be improved. They call it “*elegant understatement*”, and suggest that “*exaggeration and puffery [should be replaced] with literal truth or even subtle understatement*”, while others suggest that public relations be renamed as a discipline.

One of the terms bandied about as a possible alternative to “*public relations*” is that of “*reputation management*.” Smythe *et al.* (1992: 5-6) argue that reputation management

requires that the entire organisation and all of its functions need to work together to guarantee their futures, which means that the traditional role of public relations is not enough, and also that an organisation should ensure that what it promises matches up with what it delivers. In other words, if the term "*public relations*" is replaced with that of "*reputation management*", with its wider focus as discussed earlier in this paragraph, then the views of management (so it is assumed) regarding public relations and its role will also change. It is hoped by proponents of the name change that such a name change will transform public relations into a strategically significant function by focusing its efforts on the entire organisation and its overall brand promise.

Authors like Steyn & Puth (2000), who strongly advocate a name-change, also argue that public relations today plays a wider role than in the past, and should therefore be named differently. However, a name-change in itself will not result in a new and improved view of public relations (or corporate communication; reputation management and suchlike) if practitioners themselves kept on practicing old ways. If this were the case, then the name-change would simply result in a form of spin-control, this time of the "*spin doctoring*" discipline itself. A curiously poetic-sounding alternative (corporate diplomacy) is presented by Pedersen (2006: 11):

"Corporate diplomacy is the silent profession, practiced sans fanfare on a daily basis by corporate representatives beseeching local, state and national lawmakers for support of measures vital to the company".

That his description of corporate diplomacy, a term he believes should replace "*public relations*" or "*public affairs*" focuses almost exclusively on its lobbying function indicates the extent to which public relations practitioners seem to disregard the business realities of this function.

In stark contrast to the name-change school stand the views of VanSlyke Turk (2006), who identifies challenges for public relations not as a name-change issue, but rather one of re-training, re-examining, and restructuring the practice of, and education in, public relations. Her argument is that the discipline will only benefit if it **reinvents itself** as a responsible academic discipline firmly rooted in the business and communication sciences.

Changing the name of public relations to something else therefore does not seem to be the only solution to the problems of spin – it seems as if a **fundamental change** in the theory and practice of public relations is required to recover lost respect for a practitioner seen as the "*engineer of consent*" (Bernays in Ewen, 1996: 22). Throwing their hat into the fray, Steyn & Puth (2000: 4) make the telling point that communication should be used "as a

solution to critical problems or to capitalise on opportunities that present themselves.” In their attempt to clean up the image of public relations, they advocate the use of the term “*corporate communication*”, while emphatically believing it to be “*most unfair that the corporate communication function*” should be reporting to another functional area, such as human resources or marketing (Steyn & Puth, 2000: 7).

Re-inventing public relations thus goes far deeper than the almost superficial activity of changing its name to something else. While the name-change school wants the new name to reflect the content of what public relations does, coupled with a new focus on its span of control within the organisation, it will be seen as another futile attempt at dressing the emperor in a new suit. The re-invention of public relations will require the discovery of its true role in the organisation, it should address its interaction with marketing, and it should for once and for all decide what its name should be, whether that name is public relations or corporate communication.

This section of the literature review has:

- Examined the views on the current role of public relations in the organisation.
- Investigated current views on its relationship to marketing.
- Discussed opposing views on the proposed name change of the discipline (which may already be gaining ground, which is why the empirical research should determine what public relations departments call themselves these days in South Africa).

It has found that:

- Confusion exists about the role of public relations in the organisation.
- Public relations practitioners are unsure of their role vis-à-vis marketing.
- Unity of purpose on the name change is absent.

However, the realignment of public relations should also require a realignment of public relations education. What is the current state of affairs regarding public relations education?

4. Section Two: Public relations education

A research survey conducted in 2004 in South Africa found that public relations practitioners are confused about their role in the organisation. One of the factors that contributes to this confusion is the discovery that public relations practitioners “*have educational backgrounds*

that sometimes do not include formal training in public relations" (Venter, 2004: 165). The research survey, at the time, did not prod respondents on their particular backgrounds, and it may provide interesting insights were these backgrounds to be discovered. Newsom *et al.* (2004: 13) do, however, point out that:

"Public relations functions have been delegated to people from other fields: lawyers without any background in public relations or even communications; former media personnel who have been on the receiving end of public relations material but have no theoretical background. Management-trained executives whose business school education did not include any courses in public relations; or marketing experts who have no knowledge of the overall communications components."

The fact that public relations practitioners come from a divergence of study disciplines may in part explain why there is confusion about the role of public relations in practice. It stands to reason that a journalist, for example, will focus on issuing media releases and building media relationships, while a lawyer may focus on the legality of claims made by the organisation. It is necessary to establish whether it is still the case (as is certainly suspected) that a significant proportion of South African public relations practitioners come from a variety of educational backgrounds, and what those backgrounds are. This will be established through primary research.

However, the problem in public relations education is wider than that of practitioners studying in fields other than public relations. The **content** of the body of knowledge needs to be revised from time to time to keep up with the dynamic changes taking place in the world surrounding public relations. There is also a recognised need for "*reflexivity in public relations theory and practice ... continuously reflecting and overturning the theories in the field*", as Holtzhausen (2002: 36) points out. Apart from the **content** of the subject (public relations) itself, the **curriculum** also will need to be revised from time to time.

In an article reflecting on wide-ranging research in public relations theory building in public relations academic journals, Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones (2003: 51-52) come to the conclusion that public relations theory building is doing fine, especially in the area of Excellence Theory, as well as areas such as:

- Women and minorities.
- International practice.
- New communication technologies.
- Legal issues.
- Crisis response.

Is it cynical to comment on the enthusiasm with which these authors laud theory development that has almost **nothing to do** with the organisational position of public relations and its interaction with other business functions? Is this article a reflection of the ardour with which, public relations practitioners chase technical perfection, while ignoring strategic interaction with its major other partners in other business subjects? Is theory development a driving force behind the lack of education in business-related subjects that public relations practitioners **themselves** feel they need?

An earlier investigation into what should constitute the ideal public relations curriculum, Fischer (2000: 19) cites the recommendations of the 1999 *Commission on Public Relations Education*, which urges students in public relations to study another discipline besides public relations, specifically recommending business or behavioural sciences. The ideal undergraduate public relations programme should include subjects such as research, law, writing and production, planning, management of public relations, and planning public relations campaigns. Notably absent are any business subjects. Is it enough for educators and practitioners to recommend business sciences but to exclude it from a core curriculum? Is it here that the tendency to examine women and minorities, rather than business success starts? (Not that the author of this thesis has anything against women or minorities).

A lack of sufficient education and training in areas such as marketing, business management, finance, accounting, and strategic planning among current practitioners of public relations may partly explain why Porter & Kramer (2006: 80) say that *"the prevailing approaches to CSR are so fragmented and so disconnected from business and strategy as to obscure many of the greatest opportunities for companies to benefit society."*

The phrase *"fragmented and ... disconnected from business and strategy"* should alarm public relations practitioners and educators alike. Has the education of public relations become so focused on skills training, and theorising about fringe issues that it is ignoring its interaction with business and strategy?

VanSlyke (2006: 85) agrees that public relations education is in need of an overhaul by saying that *"[T]he need for public relations education is escalating rapidly, surfacing new issues that must be addressed and resolved."* However, while the report focuses not only on the need for public relations training and makes suggestions for curricula, it fails to refer adequately to the broader context such as strategy, management, and marketing, to name but three, within which public relations operates. Whether there is, indeed, a need for

education in these spheres will be established empirically in the survey to be discussed in Chapter Three.

Public relations practitioners want to make strategic contributions, but do not know exactly how to. In addition, they want to play a greater role than “*mere*” marketing communications tool, but are not sure how to. Consensus is that the identity crisis in public relations should also be addressed by education, and the development of a new model could have a number of implications for the educational curriculum of public relations.

What are these potential implications? If it were to be acceptable that public relations should be described and seen as a fully-fledged business function in the organisation, where it plays the strategic and direction-giving role that it seeks, then the argument for including strategic management as a compulsory subject in the core curriculum of public relations becomes self-evident. Becoming involved in strategic decisions affecting the organisation as a whole necessitates a deep understanding by public relations students of strategic management, as well as strategic planning. This will support the **strategist** role of public relations practitioners.

Furthermore, it should be understood that public relations should be involved in specific activities like advertising or marketing, or the production of corporate brochures or other materials that could be used by, for example, the finance department. Skinner *et al.* (2004: 10 – 12) are of the opinion that public relations practitioners should write (among others) product information pieces, training executives from other departments, organising open days (that could include factory visits), and the like. It is apparent that this kind of communication support to departments other than public relations is seen as part of the function of public relations. Giving communication support like this requires from public relations practitioners at least a basic understanding of the roles other business functions play. In this case, the core public relations curriculum should also include basic introductory courses in these disciplines, enabling students in public relations to be more effective and efficient **technicians**.

In keeping with earlier calls for public relations to be viewed as strategist not only technician, it is conceivable that a model based on Porter’s value chain and a potential realignment of the public relations curriculum may therefore prepare students to **operate in both roles** with equal ease and confidence. Should this view be accepted, then the body of knowledge particular to public relations should be examined and, where necessary, adapted to accommodate the new role of public relations.

4.1 Body of knowledge

What does the current body of knowledge require public relations students to know and do?

Given the confusion in public relations theory that is discussed so far in this thesis, it would be interesting to discover what exactly it is that foremost public relations authors and academics believe students should know. To answer this question, the lead of three widely-used (in South Africa) textbooks will be taken. Skinner *et al.* (2004: 8-10) point out that public relations practitioners “*should have knowledge of and training in a wide range of public relations techniques.*”

Three standard public relations texts identify a number of functions that form part of the practice of public relations, and these functions are discussed in **Table 2.5** below:

Table 2.5: Functions of public relations

Skinner <i>et al.</i> (2004: 8-10)	Newsom <i>et al.</i> (2004: 4-5)	Cutlip <i>et al.</i> (2006: 9-22)
Media relations	Press agency	Press agency
Corporate advertising	Advertising	Advertising
Issues management	-	Issues management
Lobbying	-	Lobbying
Networking	-	Development of networks
Promotional activities	Promotion	-
Publications	Graphics in publications	-
Sponsorship	-	-
Corporate image	-	-
-	Publicity	Publicity
-	Public affairs	Public affairs
-	Merchandising	-
-	-	Investor relations
-	Marketing	-
-	Integrated marketing communication	-

Upon seeing the degree to which these texts identify different functions of public relations, the reader is immediately struck by the question of whether this kind of disagreement would be evident in textbooks on finance, marketing, or operations, to name a few. However, in public relations, seminal textbooks reflect the confusion in public relations theory by not agreeing on the basic functions of public relations. It could be argued that public relations

could benefit from a theoretical base that would help it to identify its core functions in relation to organisational management, and that the subjects offered be consolidated for the purposes of providing clear guidance to the students of public relations.

In addition to the functions of public relations, which will impact on the content of a curriculum as far as skills needed and taught are concerned, it is also necessary to have clarity on the competencies (skill and knowledge combined) that public relations practitioners will require.

Skinner *et al.* (2004: 10-12) identify a number of core competencies that a public relations practitioner should have:

Table 2.6: Core competencies of public relations practitioners

Competencies according to Skinner <i>et al.</i> (2004: 10-12)	
Research.	Writing.
Programming, counselling, planning, and advising.	Editing.
Media relations and placement.	Production.
Organising.	Speaking.
Training.	Management.

Significantly absent from this list is strategic planning as a core competency. In any event, this list serves as a good starting point as any against which to measure public relations education – to what extent are public relations students trained in these competencies? A question that could also be asked at this point is whether training in these competencies prepare students to be technicians, and to which extent these competencies prepare them to be strategists. For example, very little evidence of analysis as a competency is found in this table.

While the three texts that are widely used in South African educational institutions (including PRISA) have some commonalities such as press agency and publicity, they do differ in many respects, as the discussion so far indicates. This seems to point to some confusion among noted authors on public relations regarding the body of knowledge (content) that should be taught to public relations practitioners. This could contribute to the confusion (discussed earlier in this thesis) surrounding the role of public relations in the organisation. It would be interesting to establish empirically from public relations practitioners themselves whether they feel that textbooks are sufficient to prepare students for the “*real world.*” This question will be addressed in the empirical research.

Public relations authors are currently unable to agree on the basic content of what public relations practitioners need to know. Furthermore, the training of public relations practitioners seems to focus mostly on narrow technical skills. This results in a student completing a course in public relations prepared to practice technical skills – thus a technician.

Very little evidence exists in the textbooks cited that can help to prepare students for seeking the coveted middle of top management positions by teaching them conceptual skills that are not only narrowly focused on public relations. Robbins & Coulter (2005: 12-13) point out that at top management level the most needed skills are conceptual skills, defined as the *“ability to think and to conceptualize about abstract and complex situations.”*

That conceptualisation is a much-needed skill even in the practice of public relations is supported by Kent & Taylor (2005: 13) who say that organisations (at least in the US) are looking less for people with specific skills and more for *“applicants who are more than technicians who can write news releases.”*

It is at this stage clear that there are anomalies in some of the more popularly-used public relations textbooks in South Africa (Cutlip *et al.*, and Skinner *et al.*), which may be partially causing confusion on the task of public relations in the organisation.

The next step in this discussion is to establish whether the major educational institutions in South Africa offer comparable curricula or not. However, to do this, the functions of public relations need to be clearly delineated in order to serve as some kind of benchmark. Understanding of these functions, and agreeing on them will influence textbooks and curricula. For this purpose, synergy will be sought between the three textbooks cited above.

The synergy will be discussed in the next section, which deals with the structure of public relations curricula in South Africa.

4.2 Structure of curriculum

The textbooks are in agreement on two functions, namely advertising (corporate and otherwise), and media relations or press agency. As far as lobbying, issues management, networking, and public affairs are concerned, the textbooks are in semantic disagreement, but at least agree on the principle of these functions. Corporate image, identified by the Skinner text, is not mentioned by name by the other two, but certainly forms the backbone of public relations.

For the purposes of this discussion, a new typology – based on the three texts – was developed:

- Media relations (including press agency).
- Corporate advertising and corporate image development.
- Networking, public affairs, and investor relations.
- Communication materials production.

Do the South African universities and colleges have curricula that include these subjects? The websites of some of the universities or universities of technology that offer public relations training were scanned to find information on the curricula on offer. Since PRISA, through its training provider Provox also offers public relations education, their offering was included.

The universities or universities of technology included in the comparison (with the exception of Provox) were selected on a random basis, since comparing the curricula is not a central focus of this thesis. While it may be argued that the exclusion of other universities may strengthen or weaken the assertion that curricula in public relations are not, as it were, on par with each other or with current theoretical guidance, it is clear that there are sufficient differences between these institutions listed to warrant further investigation. This is supported by Niemann-Struweg & Meintjes (2008: 225), who assert that public relations training at South African universities and universities of technology is offered “*from different points of view.*” They further argue that public relations education should include training in skills as well as knowledge (thus, competencies) that is needed for the reflective growth of the public relations industry in South Africa.

The curricula on offer have **not** been replicated in detail, since an exhaustive and detailed list will occupy several pages and neither have all qualifications on offer been reflected. However, if the conclusions of this thesis are found to be of interest not only to public relations

practitioners, but also to public relations academics, it could form a major area of future research. Such research could firstly establish empirically whether all South African (and, indeed, international) universities offering public relations have corresponding curricula, and whether these curricula are providing the skills and competencies needed for its students to function properly as public relations practitioners.

The **majors** in each case for what seem to be comparable qualifications are cited in the comparison table below:

Table 2.7: Comparison of curricula

PROVOX (PRISA education provider)	North-West University (NWU)	University of Johannesburg (UJ)	Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)	Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)
Challenges and functions of the PR practitioner. Ethics. Communication theories. Marketing communication. Investor relations. Environmental relations. Corporate identity and advertising. Employee communication. Community relations. Social investment. Special events. Sponsorships. Media relations. Crisis communication. Research. PR campaign planning and management.	Mass, interpersonal, small-group communication. Persuasive communication. Journalism. Corporate communication. Ethics and law. Corporate media. Intercultural communication. Organisational communication. Development communication. Speech communication. Marketing communication. Research methodology. Media liaison.	Interpersonal and group communication. Politics. Business management. Development studies. Industrial psychology. Communication campaign and project management. Communication theories. Persuasive communication. Marketing communication. Audiovisual communication. Journalism.	Public relations. Communication science. Media studies. Social psychology. Industrial relations. Law. A language. Marketing and advertising.	Public relations. Media studies. Communication science. Law. A language. Marketing and advertising for public relations. Organisational communication. Special events. Management practice. Research methodology.

This is how the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (where this thesis was written), describes the course aim of their *National Diploma: Public Relations Management*:

“Graduates will be equipped with the skills to become public relations practitioners. These include: researching how people feel about a company, how management would like the public to see the company, planning an exhibition or a special event, making a speech, editing a house journal, taking photographs, developing a media strategy, writing a press release, organising a conference, making a corporate video, or managing a consultancy” (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2008).

In only two cases (UJ and CPUT) business management seems to feature prominently, while not one single institute seems to offer the subject “*strategy*” as a compulsory major. At Provox, the focus of their offering seems to fall on the development of competencies in specific fields of public relations, while NWU puts the emphasis on communication, a pattern also discerned in the case of UJ, while TUT and CPUT are alone in offering the subject “*public relations*” as a stand-alone major. It seems as if the confusion felt by existing practitioners, and which is reflected in major textbooks is also reflected in the educational curricula of some of South Africa’s more famous public relations departments. Is it any wonder that public relations practitioners feel – and are seen – as less relevant? The new model for public relations should provide clear guidelines for the development of a single, core curriculum that teaches public relations students across South Africa what they need to learn. Compound this with the fact that public relations practitioners have historically come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, and the recipe for confusion is written.

A 2004 study conducted among South African public relations practitioners found, among other things, that:

“[p]ublic relations practitioners in South Africa are in fact confused about their contribution to organisational success. This may be attributed to three phenomena:

- The state of confusion in the existing theory (body of knowledge).
- The fact that public relations practitioners have educational backgrounds that sometimes do not include formal training in public relations.
- The fact that most respondents feel that they require more education and training” (Venter, 2004: 165).

The education that respondents feel they lack includes areas such as strategy, business management, marketing and (perhaps significantly) public relations. It therefore makes a clear case for restructuring of existing undergraduate curricula, as well as necessitating a

long, hard look at the existing professional education on offer to public relations practitioners. It stands to reason that the educational needs, in line with a new model, also be empirically tested, and will therefore be addressed in the survey.

This section of the literature survey dealing with the education of public relations found that there are inconsistencies in textbooks dealing with what should be taught to public relations students. The fact that public relations practice draws people with a wide-ranging educational background is seen as a contributing factor to the “splintering” of public relations into a number of narrow fields of specialisation, such as fundraising, financial public relations, health care public relations, and sports and leisure time public relations.

The question could very well be asked whether public relations has become too narrowly focused on its specific skill set and has lost sight of the strategic contribution that it could (and should) make to organisational success. The inconsistencies found in textbooks seem to be repeated in educational curricula, and again the question could be asked whether educational institutions themselves understand the basic skills and conceptual knowledge that public relations practitioners need. It seems as if textbooks and curricula lack a cohesive theoretical framework linking public relations to its outside business environment.

How do the problems or challenges outlined in this section of the chapter measure up to the relevant research objective? **Table 2.8** below explains:

TABLE 2.8: Education in public relations and research objectives

Research objective	Education in public relations
To investigate the sufficiency of the educational curriculum of public relations.	Education is fragmented at best, compounded by the fact that public relations practitioners are recruited from different disciplines.

As it stands, public relations practitioners receive a fragmented education, preparing them less well for the business world than is optimally hoped, leaving them at the mercy of managers who themselves did not receive “proper” instruction in the practice of public relations in the organisation, and who perceive this function to be a support to marketing where it obtains free publicity for new products or services, and as a communication tool to be used to manipulate public opinion in such a manner as to create a false impression of the organisation.

By allowing themselves to be dictated to by unscrupulous managers, a number of public relations practitioners have indeed acted as “*spin doctors*”, merely acting “*under orders*” to spread what they knew to be tainted, if not downright false, stories to a gullible public in order to save the organisation’s reputation at all costs. A situation such as this is untenable, and needs to be addressed.

However, it is perhaps prudent to summarise the challenges and public relations’ response to these challenges here:

Table 2.9: Challenges facing public relations and responses to them

Challenge	Response
<p>Ethics: Organisations in South Africa are behaving unethically, and will benefit from more ethical behaviour. Organisations are struggling to find answers to questions relating to how to behave more ethically, given the benefits of ethical behaviour. Public relations is part of this struggle, but is unable to clearly articulate its role in ethics.</p>	<p>Governments use legislation, industries use self-regulation, and business disciplines (including public relations) develop codes of conduct to improve ethical behaviour. However, these steps are not enough, and business ethics advocates indicate a need for more to be done. Public relations can play a more significant role in ethics.</p>
<p>Management: Public relations is lobbying to become a more significant management partner in the business organisation, but is meeting with resistance, partly because the name of public relations is tainted, and partly because it is in a tug of war with marketing.</p>	<p>The response from public relations quarters is to change its name, and to differentiate itself from marketing in order to reposition itself. This response is meeting with mixed results so far, given that CEOs and other business managers do not fully understand the contribution of public relations to the organisation. Public relations should play a more significant role in the organisation.</p>
<p>Education: Public relations academics and practitioners opine that the education of public relations students is insufficient and fragmented, a situation compounded by the fact that theory, textbooks, and curricula at some universities in South Africa portray public relations in a fragmented manner.</p>	<p>While debates about public relations education are ongoing, no coherent solution to the dilemma of what to educate is as yet forthcoming, and major textbooks in the field still offer different theoretical perspectives on public relations.</p>

This thesis will offer what it believes to be the starting point of a solution to these problems in the form of a model. In looking for such a solution business literature was surveyed, and a potential candidate was found in Porter’s value chain analysis. Porter (1985: 33) explains that the organisation’s competitive advantage “*stems from the many discrete activities a firm performs in designing, producing, marketing, delivering, and supporting its product.*” He advocates that the organisation examines **all** of its activities by looking at their contribution to customer value (profit), and distinguishes between what he calls primary and secondary activities.

Tellingly, marketing and sales are seen as primary activities, while **public relations receives no mention** in his original work, or latter permutations of the value (supply) chain. A search carried out in EBSCOhost on 8 January 2008, using the keywords "*Porter AND value chain AND public relations*" yielded no results. A similar search, using the keywords "*Public relations AND value chain*" yielded one result – pertaining to the biotechnology industry. The search was repeated on ScienceDirect, with similar lack of results, pointing to the fact that very little (almost nothing) was done to at least investigate the potential of such a business analysis model to understand underlying business processes. While marketing, production management, and management textbooks (to name a few) devote time and space to discuss the impacts of Porter's value chain on business planning, there is no mention in the public relations textbooks discussed in this thesis of Porter's value chain. There could be good reasons for this, but none could be found in any literature surveyed. For example, a practitioner did not, to the knowledge of this researcher, write a paper or textbook explaining why Porter's value chain should NOT be used. Neither could any substantial literature be found that argues FOR the use of Porter's value chain analysis in the positioning of public relations in the organisation. This can be construed as a major gap in current understanding of public relations.

While Porter's value chain has been embraced by many as a planning tool, public relations practitioners may be forgiven for being less than enthusiastic about it, for being left "*in the cold*" by a concept that so fully excludes a function that sees itself as strategically significant.

It is possible and conceivable to investigate the role of public relations in the organisation using the value chain as a point of departure, and to add to the work already done by Porter and others to understand how to "*work closely with managers of other functions to develop a system of functional plans under which the different departments can work together to accomplish the company's overall strategic objectives*" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 43).

The next section will provide an introductory description of Porter's value chain analysis.

5. Section Three: Porter's value chain analysis

NOTE: The summary in this section is based in its entirety on the **source** text: "*Competitive advantage: creating and sustaining superior performance*" by Porter (1985: 36-43). The next section of this chapter, Section 7, will deal with later developments in the understanding of Porter's value chain.

Porter views the organisation as a number of activities that are performed to ensure that a need-satisfying product or service is created. The activities that are performed may be

represented as a chain of events that individually and collectively create customer value and, at the same time, profit margin for the organisation.

The value chain is famously represented in graphic format as follows:

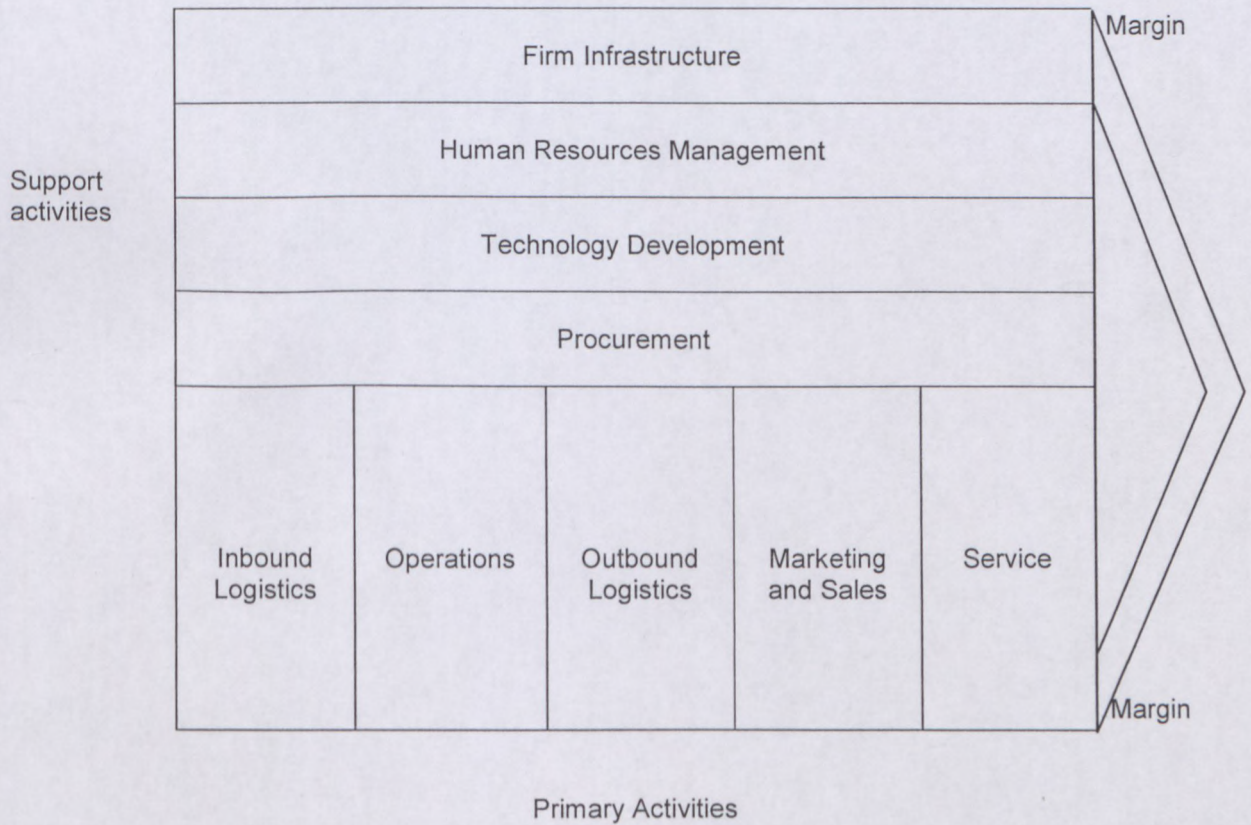


Figure 2.3: Porter's value chain
(Adapted from Porter, 1985: 37)

Essentially, all business activities are divided into two main categories:

- **Primary activities**, directly involved in creating the product, selling it, and lending after-sales assistance to buyers. Primary activities, as **Figure 2.3** shows, comprise inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing and sales, and service.
- **Support activities**, which, by definition, support the primary activities by lending specific assistance, but which are also involved in providing support throughout the organisation. Support activities, as **Figure 2.3** shows, comprise firm infrastructure, human resources management, technology development, and procurement.

The two main categories, in turn, are divided into a number of specific activities relating to each, as the two tables below indicate:

Table 2.10: Primary activities in Porter's value chain

Activity	Description
Inbound logistics.	Ordering, receiving, storing, internal distribution of supplies required to manufacture the product. Sources, builds, and maintains relationships with suppliers.
Operations.	Transformation of inputs into products/services rendered. Deals mainly with internal customers, but requires focus on external customers.
Outbound logistics.	Distributing the product to buyers. Involved in relationships with buyers.
Marketing and sales.	Finding customers and selling the product to them. Construction of a relevant marketing mix. Involves relationships with customers.
Service.	Service provided for the enhancement or maintenance of the product. Involves customer relationships.

Table 2.11: Support activities in Porter's value chain

Activity	Description
Procurement.	Refers to the function of purchasing in all of its guises. Involves relationships with all suppliers to the organisation for all purchased inputs (not only restricted to manufacturing inputs).
Technology development.	Involves the purchase and management of all forms of technology employed by the organisation – ranging from plant equipment to office equipment such as computers.
Human resource management.	Recruitment, hiring, training, development, compensation of all of the organisation's employees. Involves relationships with internal publics, as well as the pool of talent outside the organisation.
Firm infrastructure.	Activities include general management, planning, finance, accounting, legal affairs, government relations, and management of quality. Porter makes the point that this support activity is involved with the entire chain, and not only individual activities.

It needs to be mentioned that the value chain for each organisation is different, and is seen as a source of competitive advantage if managed well.

Essentially, Porter makes the argument that the activities of the organisation, divided into what he calls **primary** and **support** activities, work together to ensure that customer value (margin) is created. However, as was already seen, public relations does not feature in either

primary or support activities mentioned in Porter's original work. This could partly help to explain why Porter's work may have for so long eluded public relations academics and practitioners. However, it is conceivable that this analysis of the organisation's activities could easily include public relations, thereby giving a firm position to public relations in the organisation. In turn, this could help to focus public relations theory development while simultaneously explain to other functional managers what the value is that public relations adds to the organisation. Jüttner, Christopher, & Baker (2007: 382) open the door, in a manner of speaking, for public relations when discussing a conceptual framework for demand chain management by stating that the relationship between marketing and supply chain management needs management. Managing relationships is one of the key precepts of public relations. Using Porter's value chain analysis as the basis for positioning public relations in the organisation will, it is envisaged, address the three problem areas discussed so far.

5.1 From value chain to supply chain: Porter today

It needs to be mentioned that the concept of the value chain, although first described as far back as 1985, is today as relevant as it was 23 years ago. Kotler & Keller (2006: 36-37) still use the **original** concept and diagram in their standard text on marketing management. They believe that the value chain is helpful in identifying five core business processes as they relate to marketing:

- Market sensing.
- New offering realisation.
- Customer acquisition.
- Customer relationship management.
- Fulfilment management.

They also point out that the original value chain concept, with its focus on the individual organisation, was expanded to include other partners in the value delivery process, and is today more commonly described as the **supply chain**. The concept of **supply chain management** is considered a major contributor to business (organisational) success, and is defined as follows:

"Supply chain management (SCM) focuses on integrating and managing the flow of goods and services and information through the supply chain in order to make it responsive to customer needs while lowering total costs. Traditionally, each segment of the supply chain was managed as a separate (stand-alone) entity focused on its own goals. However, the ability of a company to

compete in today's global marketplace is determined by the combined effort of all members of the supply chain" (Russell & Taylor, 2006: 415).

The authors quoted above add that "[s]upply chains require close collaboration, cooperation, and communication among members to be effective", thereby introducing a perspective that could include public relations. The need for communication as one of the key concepts in supply chain management is not identified only by these authors.

To Cravens & Piercy (2006: 311-313) some issues that need to be addressed in supply chain management include relationships between the members of the supply channel, collaboration, information sharing, competitive positioning, and product promotion. While they mention relationships and information sharing, they do not mention public relations by name, although the reference to promotion (given the marketer's perspective on public relations) could be inferred to include public relations. They also mention **communication** as an important element in designing market-driven (customer-focused) organisations (Cravens & Piercy, 2006: 418).

It is apparent that communication, information sharing, relationship-building and maintenance, and positioning (of the organisation as well as its product/s) are key elements in the supply (value) chain management approach. At the same time, it is notable that public relations practitioners for some reason failed to grasp the significance of this analysis for their function. This shortcoming can, however, be addressed if public relations as a discipline chooses to use the value chain analysis as a basis for its realignment in organisational theory and functioning.

One aspect of using the value chain analysis in business organisations is that it served as a way for managers to decide which functions to outsource in order to save costs. According to Doyle & Stern (2006: 82-84), the value chain analysis is a very useful tool for analysing utility and cost drivers (utility and cost are two aspects that create value, which is the difference between perceived benefits and perceived costs) in any organisation. The value chain analysis helps managers to lower **utility cost drivers**, while simultaneously improving **utility drivers**. They identify (corporate) image as a driver of utility, while also identifying the cost of communication as a utility cost driver. Organisations typically analyse all activities identified by the value chain by looking to drive down costs while increasing utility (thus creating value for the customer and the organisation). The expansion of the value chain concept to the supply chain concept means that organisations will do the same with their partners in the supply chain.

One outflow of this way of thinking has led to a situation where organisations outsource certain activities, including communication, production, logistics, and others. By analysing their value chains, organisations could establish what cost drivers they could eliminate from their operations by giving responsibility for specific operational functions to other organisations who could create the needed product or service less expensively than they could. A famous example of such outsourcing is the use of companies based in India to run call centres as effectively as, but more inexpensively than in the United States. Sometimes such outsourcing could lead to embarrassing situations for manufacturers such as happened with Nike and Mattel.

Phillips & Caldwell (2005: 347), for example, specifically mention that organisations outsource those activities that they do not deem necessary for the delivery of value to customers.

From the perspective of public relations, the stringent application of value (and supply) chain analyses is potentially disastrous. This comment will be illustrated using the following hypothetical examples:

- Imagine an organisation headed up by a CEO who realises that public relations is an important function in the organisation, but is unclear about the role of public relations because he/she has an understanding that public relations is a marketing communication function. This CEO will be tempted to outsource public relations to an outside agency. While outsourcing of such a function is not in itself wrong, it may add to the impression that public relations is not part of the organisation's day-to-day activities.
- It is clear from a survey of marketing textbooks that public relations is regarded by marketers as a promotional tool to be used to help sell the product, and protect the brand against negative publicity. This is a narrow view of the technical aspects of public relations, and again threatens the sought-after "*higher organisational position*" of public relations. Again, the argument could be made by marketers that public relations should be outsourced, thereby permanently damning it to fulfilling a technical function.
- One of the great debates in public relations has been that of measurement. As recently as 2007, Grunig comments that "*we need to take a comprehensive view of public relations and find more and better ways to measure the impact on all our publics*" (Communication world, 2007). Should public relations measure the wrong impact on the wrong publics, its measurement will be useless, and it may be

relegated to the sidelines by an organisation embracing the concept of the value chain.

Public relations practitioners need to guard against being sidelined in this manner, and one way of avoiding such a situation is by embracing the supply chain concept in public relations theory. Enough is being said in other disciplines about the key role that communication, relationship-building, and trust play in the supply chain. In an article on supply chain integration, Lee (2000: 33) shows that communication plays a vital role in supply chain management. He makes the point that good communication and “tight relationships” between the partners of the supply chain are prerequisites for success. Lummus, Vokurka, & Krumwiede (2008: 57) mention that the flow of information in the supply chain, through a variety of **communication channels**, improves the integration of the supply chain. Min & Mentzer (2004: 82) offer a brief tactical insight into supply chain management by underlining the importance of company-wide training sessions that will support organisations in implementing and executing supply chain activities.

Arnulf, Dreyer, & Grenness (2005: 228) introduce the key role that trust among partners plays in the supply chain by stating that, without trust among the various partners, the supply chain could be vulnerable. Communication is one way in which organisations build trust.

Arguing for a further dimension in the understanding of the supply chain, Legner & Schemm (2008: 121) propose using the term “*information supply chain*”, which focuses on the problems experienced in sharing information throughout the supply chain. They propose that information be seen in two ways: **transactional** and **contextual**. Where transactional information deals with production-related information such as orders, shipping notes, and so on, contextual information will have a focus on “*partner and product information*”. This contextual information is narrowly described by them as pertaining to product-specific information, the understanding of contextual information may well be widened to include information on the organisation’s other activities, such as its social responsibility. This introduces a possibility for public relations to become involved.

Ellinger (2007: 101) points out that marketing and business education has been too functionally focused to “*make the process oriented integrative decisions that are inherent to industry today*”. He makes this claim against the background of an article he wrote in which he argues for marketing majors to spend more time and effort to study supply chain management. While his arguments centre on marketing, they may as well be true of public relations, which is still currently inclined to take a too narrow and functionalist approach to its role in the organisation, as was indicated earlier in this thesis.

Niezen, Weller, & Deringer (2007: 49) talk about supply management as a “*complex function that is critical to business success, with responsibility for total costs, quality, delivery and innovation throughout a company’s entire supply chain.*” It is significant to public relations that it, too, plays a role, since it is responsible for shareholder, and indeed stakeholder, value.

If public relations, however, decides to investigate itself by using the value chain analysis (embracing the supply chain philosophy), it could conceivably solve a number of problems beleaguering it at this time. This comment will receive more attention in the next section.

5.2 Public relations and Porter

It is initially proposed that public relations be positioned as a *support activity* in the value chain. This view of the position of public relations has a number of advantages, which include the following:

- It would give public relations an organisation-wide responsibility for strategic communication planning.
- It would signal to the primary activities that public relations has a role to play in supporting them in developing relationships internally and externally, as well as providing communication expertise.
- If properly described, it could clearly delineate the responsibilities for public relations in the organisation by indicating its involvement in organisational affairs (corporate identity, corporate social responsibility among others) as well as relationship-building responsibilities (as communication support).
- It could also have an impact on the way in which public relations efforts are measured, and help to show the value that this function adds to the organisation.

Such a use of the Porter value chain for public relations could have great benefits for the theory, academic study, and practice of public relations. These benefits will be addressed in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

It is proposed that the Porter value chain analysis may provide some focus for the designing of public relations curricula, and revision of existing respected public relations textbooks. For example, were it to be seen that public relations is a support activity to the primary activities, and the organisation as a whole, it would dictate, to a greater or lesser extent, the content of what is taught, as well as the design of public relations curricula. For the purpose of illustration, the list addressed in this section could serve as a comfortable starting point.

The table below illustrates how the Porter value chain analysis could be useful in curriculum design:

Table 2.12: Porter, public relations, and education

Public relations as organisation-wide support activity		Public relations as support activity to primary activities	
Function	Subjects	Function	Subjects
Media relations	News writing Media studies Editing	Corporate advertising and corporate image development	Advertising Mass media Corporate reputation Strategic management
Communication materials production	Printing Design Computer-aided design Writing	Networking, public affairs, and investor relations	Economics Current affairs International finance

The list reflected in **Table 2.12** above should not be seen as detailed or exhaustive, and is presented here only for illustrative purposes. The careful design of a new curriculum based on the Porter value chain analysis should be a research project on its own, and could very well be a major policy outcome of this research.

Using the Porter value chain analysis, and positioning public relations as an organisation-wide support activity, will address the three issues identified in this section.

Firstly, it will remove the confusion that exists about the role of public relations in the organisation (organisation-wide support function and communication and relationship management support to all primary activities); **secondly**, it will clearly outline the relationship between marketing and public relations (support function to marketing as far as marketing plans are concerned); and **thirdly** it will remove the debate on whether the name should be changed (it will remain as “*public relations*”).

To what extent does the literature surrounding Porter's value chain analysis address the research objectives? **Table 2.13** below explains:

Table 2.13: Research objectives and Porter's value chain

Research objectives	Porter's value chain literature review
To describe the interaction between public relations and marketing.	If accepted as a support activity to marketing in the value chain view, the interaction between public relations and marketing will be clarified.
To explore a new role for public relations in the organisation.	Using the value chain as a basis from which to devise a model for public relations, a new role for this function in the organisation can be devised.
To describe a model that could improve the function and functioning of public relations.	This model can certainly serve as the basis for improving the contribution that public relations makes to the organisation by clearing up uncertainty over its role and by delineating its responsibilities to other management partners in the organisation.

The research question under discussion in this thesis assumes that public relations as a function in the organisation could make a positive contribution to marketing and organisational ethics were it to understand fully its own role in the organisation. It is proposed that public relations be **realigned using Porter's value chain analysis, with its concomitant impact on public relations education.**

Krajewski, Ritzman, & Malhotra (2007: 9), for example, identify customer relationships management and supplier relationships as two of the core processes identified in a firm. Min & Mentzer (2004: 65) also point to the primacy of relations in the supply chain of a firm, and make the point that **trust**, consisting of credibility and benevolence, is an integral part of any such relationship. This is directly in line with the perspectives offered by values-driven public relations, which sets itself the task of building trust among the various stakeholders in the organisation.

This introduces, again, the ethical perspective. Phillips & Caldwell (2005: 346) are even more to the point when stating that "*[w]ork that considers the firm's relationship with other organizations can be loosely categorized as value chain or stakeholder analysis.*" Relationships built on trust with partners in the value chain will have a number of benefits for the organisation, including "*improved cooperation and better sharing of information*" (Chatain & Zemsky, 2007: 550). The importance of good relationships with other value chain partners is also emphasised by Gulati (2007: 101) who identifies, inter alia, coordination, cooperation,

and connection as three key elements in the organisation in order to, as he calls it, “*help companies transcend internal silos in service of higher-value customer solutions*”. His use of the word connection specifically refers to the building of relationships with partners outside the organisation, an activity that could easily be carried out by public relations.

Incidentally, Gunasekaran, Lai, & Cheng (2007: 561) make provision for the role of public relations in the value chain (or supply chain) by emphasising partnerships and alliances as important elements of what they call the “*responsive supply chain*”. The role that public relations, with its focus on relationships, can play in such a supply chain is clear.

Curiously, the most strongly-articulated call for the organisation’s identity to be seen as an important element in the supply chain does not come from communication or public relations circles, but the *Journal of business logistics*, where (Min, Kim, & Chen, 2008: 285) discuss an organisation’s social identity by saying that firms “*act as if they were social and economic entities and thus should be considered to have social identities.*” This could be read in conjunction with the current understanding that public relations has of the corporate identity.

Furthermore, organisations will attain what Min *et al.* (2008:285) term as “*supply chain identity salience*” when:

- It sees itself as a part of all the activities of a particular supply chain.
- Other organisations identify it as a part of the supply chain.
- It sees itself as an integral part of the daily operations of the supply chain.
- It realises the importance of being seen as part of a particular supply chain.

Should the Porter value chain be used as the basis for redefining the role of public relations in the organisation, the following solutions may be suggested:

Table 2.14: Value chain solutions

Role confusion	Value chain solution
In-house versus outsourced.	Placing public relations in the value chain will make a firm argument for situating public relations within the organisation.
Reports to marketing or not.	Finding a place for public relations will clear up the confusion of whether it should report to marketing or not.
Name of discipline.	Given the focus of public relations on relationships within the value chain, it may be called public relations.
Activities.	Given that it will have the focus of support activity in the organisation, it may develop a clear guideline on its activities.
Recruiting from a variety of fields.	A clear guideline on the role of public relations in the organisation will also provide clear guidelines on skills required, therefore impacting on the recruitment of public relations practitioners.

The use of Porter's value chain could be of great assistance in supporting the role of public relations vis-à-vis marketing.

If it were accepted that public relations be situated as a support activity to marketing. **This does not mean that public relations should be subservient to marketing.** If it is seen as a support activity to marketing, in the eyes of the value chain, it will support marketing only in those areas that public relations practitioners themselves agree that public relations already support marketing.

Positioning it as an organisation-wide support function would put it where it wants to be – next to top management (included as a support activity under “*firm infrastructure*”).

Thus, it would understand its role as relationship-builder (using communication techniques) with a view to strategically supporting the organisation:

Table 2.15: Marketing, public relations, and the value chain

Holistic marketing view	Public relations role	Value chain solution
Internal marketing.	Communicating product-related news and training to all internal departments including senior management.	Support activity to primary activity (marketing & sales), and supporting company-wide activities.
Integrated marketing.	Lending technical expertise to all marketing programmes to communicate product launches for example.	Support activity specifically to marketing & sales as primary activity.
Relationship marketing.	Building relationships with all customers, channels, and organisational partners.	Support activity to marketing & sales, as well as outbound logistics and service.
Socially responsible marketing.	Providing guidance on ethical dilemmas, and “driving” environmental programmes; building relationships with government and other community players.	Support activity to organisation as a whole.

The role of public relations as relationship-builder and communication expert throughout the value chain therefore needs investigation, and the likelihood of this view being accepted will be tested empirically by the research discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Accepting the role of public relations as relationship-builder provides the first argument in support of the use of Porter’s value chain as a basis for a model of the new role for public relations. Finally, this chapter on literature reviewed examines the prevailing ethical condition in modern organisational management.

6. Section Four: An overview of ethics

The first incomplete decade of the 21st Century saw its fair share of corporate scandals and other similar organisational misdemeanours. There is no doubt that a number of organisations are trying to improve on their bottom-line performance *inter alia* by hiding the truth from shareholders, manipulating public opinion, and colluding with one another in activities such as price-fixing. However, calls for increasing transparency, coupled with legislative interest, has put the ethical behaviour of organisations firmly in the public spotlight.

In the words of Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 25):

“[c]orporate ethics and social responsibility have become hot topics for almost every business ... [s]ome companies resist these movements, budging only when forced by legislation or organized customer outcries. More forward-looking companies, however, readily accept their responsibilities to the world around them. They view socially responsible actions as an opportunity to do well by doing good.”

Of course, the central principle of ethics in business, that of **doing well by doing good**, is not observed in the behaviours of many organisations worldwide. Kuper (2006: 2) refers to a “*crisis of trust*” that has developed between organisations and stakeholders, while Rossouw & Van Vuuren (2004: 32) argue that organisations should no longer ignore ethics. Cravens & Piercy (2004: 17) make the case that organisations should achieve the “*highest standards*.” They note that corporate citizenship and a “*secure corporate reputation*” ensure higher earnings for organisations.

The “*customer outcries*” referred to by Kotler & Armstrong in the quote provided above manifest in increasing numbers of media reports relating to ethics. Jeurissen & Van de Ven (2006: 438) point out that the media are becoming more interested in ethics: “*Honesty will prove to be the best policy in a world were [sic] the media is keen to publish the next business scandal*.” This idea is also found in Doyle (2002: 409) where he claims that “*[c]ompanies that pursue policies which look unfair, immoral or dangerous are coming under increasing scrutiny and criticism*”, while Doyle & Stern (2006: 419) point out that “*[e]thics and social responsibility are increasingly important due to high-profile proven cases of unethical mismanagement [and] concerns about the influence of marketing*.”

The ethical behaviour of organisations is also under discussion in South Africa. King (2006: 2) underlines the importance of ethics (and sound corporate governance): “*[h]ow we govern the various entities to which we are a party was brought to the highways of our minds in the last two decades of the twentieth century*”, which he says occurred “*because of corporate*

scandals which led financial institutions and professional bodies to suggest that guidelines were needed on how companies or corporations should be governed.”

Ethics has become important to the general public simply because consumers need to know whether they can trust the organisations that manufacture products or render services that they consume. A higher incidence of unethical behaviours is reported in the media in sometimes sensational terms, which in turn has created **distrust** between consumers and the organisations from which they buy. This distrust places an ever-growing burden of proof on the organisation that wishes to be ethical, and that wishes to be seen as ethical. The large-scale toy recalls (by Mattel) during the first half of 2007 alone is testament to the lengths to which organisations will go to publicly demonstrate their concern for the safety of consumers. In South Africa, too, organisations are feeling the heat of public scrutiny on the one hand, while feeling the pressure from government and regulatory bodies on the other hand to comply with (sometimes burdensome) laws and regulations aimed at ensuring fair play to consumers. At the same time, organisations are under pressure to cut costs and increase profits to please shareholders. This is a situation that creates an ethical dilemma in itself. Weaker managers as well as weaker organisational oversight bodies may therefore be tempted still to cut corners by taking decisions that are unethical, even if the organisations for which they work clearly state that they want to do business in an ethical manner. The modern manager is under pressure to balance these conflicting interests in such a way that the organisation will ultimately benefit in the long run, while simultaneously not harming the environment or society.

Improving ethics in business, then, is a major challenge to the modern manager as Porter & Kramer (2006: 78) unequivocally state:

“Governments, activists, and the media have become adept at holding companies to account for the social consequences of their actions. Myriad organizations rank companies on the performance of their corporate social responsibility (CSR), and, despite sometimes questionable methodologies, these rankings attract considerable publicity. As a result, CSR has emerged as an inescapable priority for business leaders in every country.”

Thus there is pressure on organisations from all quarters to behave more ethically, while one solution as proposed by Porter & Kramer is that of a public relations technique, corporate social responsibility. Freeman (2006: 17) directly links corporate social responsibility to the function of what he calls corporate communication (thus public relations), but makes the claim that corporate communication managers are *“not comfortable”* with integrating corporate social responsibility in their functions because they face the challenge of balancing conflicting interests. However, given the increasing pressure on organisations to act and be

seen as acting more responsibly, this thorny issue needs to be tackled. Porter & Kramer argue that corporate social responsibility should be managed outside of the realm of public relations, a suggestion that will surely not find favour with those arguing for a greater role for public relations. The opportunity for public relations to come to the fore in the organisation, and to contribute to more ethical business practice, is there.

Will public relations step up to the plate, in a manner of speaking, and take to bat? Public relations has, in the past, argued that it should be involved in the ethical conscience of the organisation in line with the views of the values-driven perspective. However, the ethics of public relations practitioners themselves, as well as their views on the ethical task of public relations practitioners in the organisation need to be established empirically. Furthermore, the answer to this question also requires an investigation into the current situation with regard to ethics and business ethics prevalent in South Africa.

The next section will address the ethics of organisations as they stand today.

6.1 Organisational ethics in the 21st Century

In spite of the best intentions of lawmakers, regulators, and boards of companies, ethics is still persistently observed more in the breach than in the observance. A number of theories as to why organisations behave unethically are bandied about, ranging from (perhaps fantastic) conspiracy theories to a firmly held belief that big corporate organisations are inherently evil, intent upon preying on the lesser mortal. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that it is not easy for organisations or individuals to behave ethically under all circumstances. As Micklethwait & Wooldridge (1997: 201-202) put it: *"there is a yawning gap between what people say and what they do"*, while at the same time no single company or person is *"against ethics"* per se. A number of examples of this kind of situation is currently found in South Africa, where, for example, banks will not deliver on their advertised promises, but in the same breath will invoke codes of ethical conduct as evidence that they intend to be ethical.

The problem seems compounded by the fact that the pressures of financial gain, which is created mainly by shareholders, could lead to situations where management teams yield to the temptation of making unethical decisions. In the words of Kane (2003: 11):

"[t]he fundamental dilemma of corporate and public governance is that, at the margin and over short periods, it often pays to hide adverse information. The result is that an ethicist could say that outside stakeholders deserve more complete accountability than can be fashioned from the ethical standards that insiders set and the gaps in the information flows outsiders receive."

Hiding information, one of the most visible ethical breaches, seems as rampant today as it was in the past, along with a number of other ethical transgressions. In order to understand the plethora of ethical transgressions at play in the modern world, it is necessary to understand what is meant by “*unethical conduct*.” Malan & Smit (2001: 25) outline a number of behaviours that they term “*general ethical transgressions*”, such as high executive pay, creative accounting, built-in obsolescence and forcing customers to buy more than they need.

While it may be argued that many of these ethical transgressions are directly attributable to unethical corporate governance practices, marketing itself does not escape the breach of ethical behaviours. Smith & Quelch (1993: 4) cite “*price-fixing, bribery, deceptive advertising, unsafe products*” as some examples of unethical marketing practices, while arguing that **unethical marketing practices** would render the **organisation** morally bankrupt. They describe marketing ethics as “*the application of ethical considerations to marketing decision-making*” (Smith & Quelch, 1993: 10), and argue fairly extensively that marketing should not be seen as a business function that is value-neutral. By the same token it should be argued that public relations is also not value-neutral.

They use the 4 Ps of marketing to identify a number of ethical issues in marketing, outlined in **Table 2.16** below:

Table 2.16: Major ethical issues in marketing
(Adapted from Smith & Quelch, 1993: 13)

<p>Product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product safety • “Me-toos” • Product positioning and market segmentation • Ethics in the delivery of service products • Environmental impacts of product and packaging 	<p>Promotion (marketing communication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deceptive/misleading advertising • Social harm of advertising (e.g. sex/race stereotypes) • Questionable sales techniques and conflicts of interest in selling • Bribery • Direct marketing and privacy issues
<p>Price</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizontal/vertical price fixing • Price discrimination • Predatory pricing • Price gouging • Misleading pricing (e.g. non-unit pricing, bait and switch, inflating prices to allow sales markdowns) 	<p>Place (channels of distribution)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusivity and other forms of discrimination in distribution (e.g. red-lining) • Channel control (including franchising relationships) • Gray marketing • Anti-competitive trade promotions e.g. slotting allowances) • Lower standards in export markets

Evidence of these kinds of behaviours is to be found abundantly in the South African marketplace. In motor vehicle manufacturing, banking, and food production, just to name three different industries, some of South Africa's biggest companies have in recent years been found lacking in ethical behaviour, as the following page shows:

- Some of South Africa's top motor vehicle companies, including Volkswagen, General Motors, DaimlerChrysler, Subaru, Nissan, and Citroen, were accused of *"directly or indirectly fixing price and/or trading condition; or dividing market by allocating customers, suppliers, territories, or specific types of goods or services"* (Faure, 2005). Of course, these companies first denied charges of improper behaviour before paying hefty penalties.
- South Africa's top four banks have not escaped criticism. In the words of Whitfield (2006: 10) *"If you're a client of a South African bank looking for a better deal when it comes to bank charges, we have bad news for you. Not only does it remain practically impossible for an ordinary person to make like-for-like comparisons of the charges levied by SA's different banking groups, but most of the big banks have also actually upped their charges over the past year."*
- Tiger Brands has been accused of colluding with competitors Premier Foods and Pioneer Foods to fix the price of bread. When first accused of this behaviour in the media, they roundly denied this accusation in a statement released to the press. However, in November 2007, Tiger Brands was ordered to pay a penalty of R98 million after admitting to price fixing, as *Mail & Guardian* reported online (Crotty, 2007).

Of course in their promotional materials, companies like these claim that they are not transgressing ethical rules and are operating within the confines of the law. Regarding the enquiry into banking practices, Nedbank, which is one of South Africa's big four banks, has used its website to proclaim its whole-hearted cooperation with the enquiry:

"Nedbank welcomes the Competition Commission Enquiry bringing banking issues into public debate. We are committed to understanding and meeting the banking needs and aspirations of all South Africans. We at Nedbank have already been hard at building great products and reducing banking fees for our clients" (Nedbank, 2007).

Absa, for their part, state the following:

"Responsiveness, efficiency and quality are among the high goals that we set for ourselves, together with integrity and transparency in all our dealings. We value our people and invest in

them to ensure the delivery of these goals, while constantly working to better our knowledge and service standards" (Absa, 2007).

However, in spite of their protestations to ensuring that *"banking needs"* are met, and that *"responsiveness, efficiency and quality"* are primary goals, these banks (among others) have been found lacking. In a third annual review of bank charges in South Africa, *Finweek* (Whitfield, 2007: 12-14) found the following:

- There are *"pockets of change in the structure and composition of bank charges"*, but *"they are few and far between."*
- A number of banks have actually **increased** the cost of banking.
- Not much is being done to implement *"better disclosure and simpler pricing structures."*
- Branches and head offices experience a *"disconnect"* regarding the *"understanding of bank charges."*
- South African consumers do not have a *"single, reliable source of information ... should they wish to conduct a comparative study of their own into the bank charges they pay."*
- Bank staff do not focus on consumer needs, but are *"trained to offer a specific package."*

On the whole, the investigation led by *Finweek*, and conducted by Horwath Forensics, is rather damning:

"While banks grapple with increased consumerism and the threat of State intervention, they find themselves having to balance the demands of their clients with the needs of profit-hungry shareholders. So far, the shareholders are winning" (Whitfield, 2007: 12).

So, while banks are under investigation for their charges, which are perceived to be unfairly high, and while they use a number of marketing communication tools to reassure their clients of their best intentions, they are still not delivering on their promises – at least in the views of a thorough journalist, and most probably in the views of the majority of their clients.

This kind of behaviour is not restricted to banks. A major food manufacturer has also found itself in the hot water recently when it was first accused, then denied, then penalised, for price fixing. After being penalised by the Competition Commission for their price fixing activities, Tiger Brands CEO Nick Dennis said that the price fixing actions *"ran counter to the ethical standards for which we are known and respected"* and promised to take disciplinary

action. He added that “[w]e do not tolerate anti-competitive behaviour in any of our businesses. It is deeply regrettable that this has occurred” (Mail & Guardian, 2007).

Communication actions by these organisations to reassure their publics smack of downright manipulation of the truth, which Hartman & Desjardins (2008: 330) say “is a clear example of disrespect for persons since it bypasses their own rational decision-making”.

The examples provided above provide direct evidence of disrespect for persons, in that the following pattern seems to emerge:

- Companies promise their customers good service and products of high standards.
- Companies are accused of ethical contraventions.
- Companies use public relations techniques (such as media releases) to deny their culpability.
- Companies are found guilty of ethical malpractice.
- Companies ask forgiveness, again using public relations techniques.

This raises the issue of who it is that tells the lie – it becomes obvious from the few examples cited above that one of two statements made via the companies' public relations departments is patently false. They either are guilty or are not guilty. Denying wrongdoing before paying penalties and then issuing a shame-faced *mea culpa* smacks of downright lying. It is actions like these that breach the trust that exists between customer and company. The question that must be asked, however, is whether it is the public relations department or agency that decides to lie, or whether they are ordered to issue these lies by someone higher up in the organisation. This needs to be established empirically, although it may be inferred from the literature covered that public relations practitioners, when acting as technicians, may be free of guilt in the decision to lie, thus belying the impression that it is the public relations practitioner who is the “spin doctor.” The CEO who does not wish the organisation to lie will certainly not allow someone like a public relations practitioner to lie on behalf of the organisation. However, the less-than-truthful CEO will have little or no compunction in instructing the public relations practitioner to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.

It may be accepted that few organisations set out to be unethical or consciously attempts to erode customer trust. However, the **actions** by these organisations, whether they are intentional or otherwise, serve to create in the customer's mind a doubt whether they (the customers) are getting their fair share of the ethical cake. South African organisations like these face a dilemma. On the one hand, the public believes that these companies behave unethically, and at the other hand these companies protest that they wish to treat their

customers ethically. Legislation and regulation are used to guide organisations in the minimum ethical behaviour, which to an extent limits the organisation's goal of maximising profit. Implementing regulations contained in legislation may be costly and cumbersome, as *Harvard Business Review* reported in an article dealing with the effects of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002: "Smaller companies in particular complained about the monopolization of executives' time and costs running into the millions of dollars" (Wagner & Dittmar, 2006: 133). Costly and time-consuming activities may be seen as running contrary to the imperative of profit. The unethical organisation may try to find loopholes in the regulations to avoid paying money, or spending time, in complying with those very rules and regulations that may help the organisation behave in a more ethical manner.

Even ethical organisations (or at least those who claim to be ethical) are tempted to find legal solutions to the dilemma of costly compliance, as was seen from the reaction of South African publishing giant Naspers:

"Naspers said the decision to delist from Nasdaq was driven by high costs of maintaining the listing and registration in the US and complying with US obligations, especially the provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002" (<http://www.thetimes.co.za/article.aspx?id=465692>) [accessed on 20 May 2007].

Legislation, it seems, has some effect on forcing companies to comply with consumer-protecting measures, but owing to the fact that it can be costly and time-consuming, may have the result that companies find ways and means to completely circumvent such legislation, as is clear from the example quoted above.

This action was taken by one of South Africa's largest organisations, one that is arguably highly respected, and definitely one that claims to be ethical. If organisations that are serious about maintaining ethical standards are taking steps to circumvent legislation aimed at ensuring more "proper" conduct, it is an open question what less ethical organisations may do to also avoid the costs of compliance.

While actions such as these are not to be condoned, they do underline the long-held belief that the law is, at best, a blunt instrument.

Surely there are other ways in which organisations can protect the interests of the consumer and the society in which it operates? In fact, is it the responsibility of organisations to protect these interests, or should it be left to laws, regulations, and codes of conduct?

The tension between profit, consumer value, ethics, and the interests of the community are grouped under the so-called "*societal marketing concept*" coined by Kotler & Keller (2006: 22):

"The societal marketing concept holds that the organization's task is to determine the needs, wants, and interests of target markets and to deliver the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors in a way that preserves or enhances the consumer's and the society's well-being."

This concept indicates the importance of ethics in marketing in the organisation. South African companies face a specific dilemma against the background of this concept of marketing. They are increasingly perceived as being unethical, while clearly not wishing to be unethical. They are, on the one hand, guided by legislation and regulation in minimum ethical standards, while on the other hand developing and executing strategies designed to deliver profit. In doing so, they must balance the interests of all of their stakeholders in such a way that they do not earn a bad reputation and consequently lose sales. The interests of stakeholders of course includes the interests of customers.

In order to become more ethical, organisations have in recent years relied on legislation and regulation to guide them in decision-making, hoping that such legally sound and regulatory compliant decisions will be enough to guarantee safe conduct in an uncertain world. However, as the examples cited so far indicate, companies have not always been successful in doing this. Briefly put, in the words of Porter & Kramer (2007: 91): "*The focus must move away from an emphasis on image to an emphasis on substance.*"

Ethics and ethical conduct cannot be guaranteed solely by legislation or regulation. Nor can it rely on codes of conduct, as the examples given earlier indicate – a number of companies found in breach of ethical conduct claim to have codes of conduct governing their decisions. Ethics therefore should be more than compliance with minimum requirements of laws and regulations - it should be the result of a concerted effort by the organisation as a whole. Hill & Jones (2004: 396) emphasise that:

"To foster awareness that strategic decisions have an ethical dimension, a company must establish an organizational climate that emphasizes the importance of ethics."

The creation of a climate conducive to ethics seems to be of primary importance in an ethical company. However, fostering such a climate is difficult when it is not even clear what "ethics" means. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2006: 644-645), for example, it is not easy for organisations to discover what ethics is: "*The best thing to do is often unclear.*"

Plato, in his *Republic*, tells of the young shepherd Gyges who discovers a ring that bestows invisibility on its wearer. Using the powers of this ring, he enters the king's palace, kills him, and takes over his wife and kingdom. Serving as a cautionary tale, this story has been used over the years to illustrate the wickedness of mankind, specifically indicating how a person (or collection of people, for that matter) will act in his/her own self-interest at the cost of others. This behaviour was apparent in the conduct of companies like Enron. But how **should** organisations and society go about to ensure that individuals or collectives do not act in selfish self-interest? What do they do to ensure that their stakeholders are reassured that this is indeed the case? Questions like these have been the focus of discussions on business ethics during the last few decades. Given the nature of human beings to ignore the interests of others, and given the "dog-eat-dog" nature of business, how can ethical behaviour be guided, if not enforced?

Ethical discourse has run the gamut from Aristotle's golden mean (the moderation between excess and deficiency) through Kant's categorical imperative (doing good is an absolute imperative), and Bentham & Mills' utilitarianism (the end justifies the means), finally arriving at Rawls' conclusion that morality is about fairness to all members of a given society (veil of ignorance); while still not providing concrete rules for behaviour (Tubbs & Moss, 2006: 203 – 206).

Current literature on ethics is unanimous in indicating that there are no fixed rules governing ethics, with the understanding that ethical dilemmas are particular to a set of circumstances. In other words, ethical decisions cannot be codified, but are the result of an ethical **process**. Therefore, finding answers to ethical questions is an ongoing quest, with **definitive** answers difficult, if not impossible, to provide. In the words of Wiggins (2006: 279):

"[i]t is impossible to draft for all contexts or conjunctures of circumstances explicit statements of action-specific principles that will be found in each context to be correct, reasonable, or what one intended. It testifies to the plurality and complexity of our concerns – and of the dispositions that sustain them – and it shows something of the vast and expanding scene where we have to act them out. Nevertheless ... the impossibility claim concerning explicit statement does not need to be coupled with the denial that, for every context, there will be some way of resolving how to go forward."

In their enquiry into business ethics, Rossouw & Van Vuuren (2004: 3) state that "[e]thics concerns itself with what is good or right in human interaction ... Ethical behaviour results when one does not merely consider what is good for oneself, but also considers what is good for others." In a similar vein, Comte-Sponville (2005: 9) invokes the spirit of Rousseau, who

said: *"Do good to yourself with as little possible harm to others."* Ethics therefore seems to be a discourse that is more concerned with the understanding that actions have consequences, and that the consequences of those actions should be carefully considered, especially where there is a conflict of interests. As Comte-Sponville (2005: 4) explains:

"It is the sum total of those things that an individual imposes on himself or denies himself, not primarily to further his own welfare or happiness – that would be nothing more than egotism – but in consideration of the rights of others, in order to avoid being a villain, in order to stay true to a certain conception of humanity and of himself. Ethics is the answer to the question: 'What should I do?' It is the sum of my duties, in other words of the imperatives which I believe to be legitimate – even if from time to time, as everyone does, I break them. It is the law which I impose – or which I should impose – upon myself; independently of the judgement of others and of any expectation of reward or sanction."

This understanding of ethics is echoed by Kotler & Keller (2006: 706):

"Business success and continually satisfying the customer and other stakeholders are closely tied to adoption and implementation of high standards of business and marketing conduct. The most admired companies in the world abide by a code of serving people's interests, not only their own."

Serving interests **other than their own** seems to distinguish ethical companies from those who exhibit more questionable behaviour. Jones (in Quinn & Davies, 1999: 415 – 417) makes the point that business organisations have an ethical obligation to society greater than creating jobs and profits: *"[i]t is not sufficient for organisations to have charity budgets and make public-relations gestures to show their commitment to parts of the community, to arts and to sports sponsorships."* In this view, they are supported by Wagner-Tsukamoto (2007: 217). It is clear that ethical behaviour is greater than legal behaviour. Complying with the minimum requirements of legislation is not enough to ensure that an organisation is indeed doing well by doing good. What makes the unethical behaviour of organisations even more surprising, is the fact that ethical behaviour will benefit the organisation. According to David (2005: 20) *"good ethics is just good business!"*

Although not easy to pin down, or succinctly describe in a glib phrase, ethics is still best summarised by the ancients. Cicero (in Van Doren, 1992: 74) had the views that:

"First, the right thing is what is legal, what is required by law. But beyond that, for the law itself is not always just, the right thing is what is honest, open, and fair. Keeping your word, no matter the consequences. Telling the truth, even if you have not taken an oath. And treating everyone – foreigners, slaves, and women – alike, because they are all human beings. All are

equal in their humanness, although in no other way. Their humanness gives them the right to be treated with respect.”

While the advice coming to the reader through the ages seems to be simple on the surface, it is clear that following this advice is difficult, and a number of authors suggest different solutions to the management of business ethics.

So far it becomes evident that ethics is not an easy field, and that answers to ethical dilemmas are not readily found. Furthermore, it is evident that doing the right thing is something organisations are expected to do by lawmaker and consumer alike. But what exactly is meant by “*business ethics*”? It is prudent to answer this question by examining the characteristics of ethical behaviour in the organisation.

Business ethics can be said to exhibit the following characteristics:

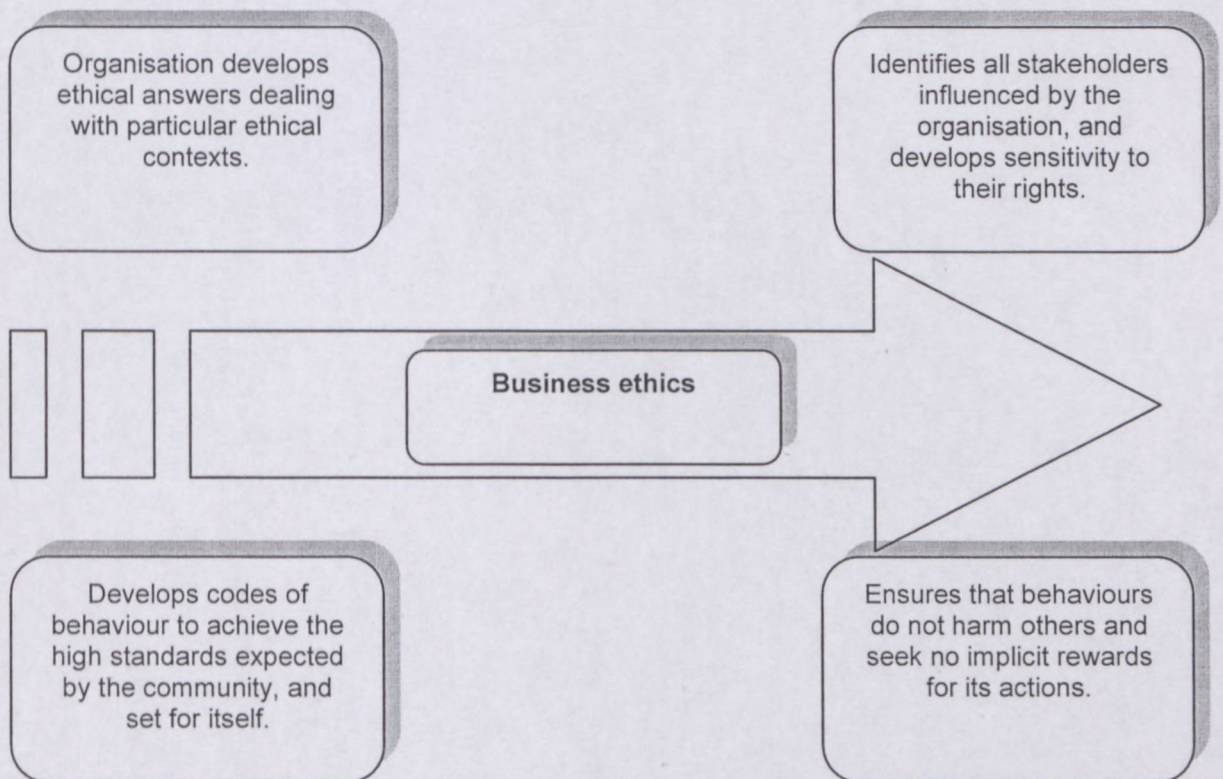


Figure 2.4: Characteristics of ethical behaviour

As **Figure 2.4** shows, business ethics is a process that encapsulates research (in finding out what the stakeholder rights are), discussion and deliberation (in finding answers to ethical questions in certain contexts), planning (by developing codes of behaviour), and implementation (by ensuring that its actions match its ethical intent).

The decisions an organisation makes are have wider implications than the organisation itself and have an impact on the interests of **all** stakeholders (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2004: 4). This impels the organisation to identify the interests of stakeholders, and to act in ways that are responsive to those interests (King, 2006: 9). This, in turn, means that the organisation should develop an ethical responsiveness in all levels of planning and implementation of all strategies – even at departmental level (David, 2005: 20). In the words of Miller & Muir (2004: 4):

“[e]verything a company does has the potential to impact the brand. The culture of the corporation, together with the overall strategic direction of the business, should be aligned to achieve a brand that truly resonates with stakeholders.”

It is against the background of this discussion on business ethics that the definition already discussed in Chapter One of this thesis is repeated here:

Drawing up codes of conduct to ensure that organisations have guidelines for decision-making that will not harm the organisation, its environment, and its customers, and implementing policies and setting up structures that will ensure behaviour that is consonant with these codes of conduct.

The value of this (working) definition is twofold in that it:

- Identifies the **triad of interests** that are involved in ethical implications of business decisions.
- Suggests that **policies and processes** be used to improve the standards of ethical decision-making in organisations.

At this stage of the enquiry it is clear that ethics deals with the greater good of mankind and do not focus only on narrow self-interest. It is also apparent that ethics is about an attitude of all those involved in action and consequence. It means that an organisation (or individual) must act not purely out of self-interest, and must consider the interests of others. This may suggest that organisations who behave ethically will lose profit, because ethical decisions may be costly. However, the contrary appears to be the case. Organisations that take ethics seriously benefit from their ethical conduct. This notion will be discussed more fully in the section dealing with the benefits of ethical behaviour.

Ethics seemingly encapsulates:

- Drawing up rules of behaviour.
- All forms of organisational planning have ethical dimensions.
- All stakeholders are part of the ethical contract.

In fact, the overbearing theme gleaned from the literature reviewed seems to be that ethics is about **doing well by doing good**. Earlier reference was made to the fact that legislation and regulation are but two of the more popular measures used to ensure that companies do not stray.

Typically, governments use legislation as a way of curbing the worst excesses in organisational behaviour. In the case of South Africa, the second draft of the *Consumer Protection Bill*, soon expected in third draft, aims to protect the rights of consumers, regulate marketing and business practices, and ensure higher levels of consumer protection. Other legislative measures include the *Consumer Affairs (Unfair Business Practices) Act NO. 71 OF 1988*, and the *Companies Bill of 2007* (Department of Trade and Industry, 2007).

In August 2002, *Economist* (2002, 49-50) announced a number of measures taken by United States lawmakers to ensure that Enron and Worldcom are not repeated:

"America no longer trusts its corporate leaders to tell the truth without being warned by the sound of prison doors slamming. Thus, new rules requiring chief executives and chief financial officers to sign off on their accounts have become the stuff of headlines."

In the case of the United States Congress, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act is used to enforce proper corporate governance, inter alia by forcing organisations who list on US stock exchanges to comply with a number of criteria. *Economist* also reported that the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), as well as the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and Nasdaq have implemented measures to prevent a recurrence of the two high-profile scandals that rocked the business world not only in the United States, but around the world. It is ironic to note, however, that one of the unintended consequences of Sarbanes-Oxley was that organisations de-listed and took their business elsewhere – proving the case for those who believe that ethical behaviour cannot be enforced by laws.

South Africa, too, has seen its share of proposed and actual measures designed to curb the worst excesses of corporate misdemeanours, such as the *Corporate Laws Amendment Act, 24 of 2006*, and the *Consumer Affairs (Unfair Business Practices) Act, 71 of 1988*. In spite of

the existence of these laws, however, companies in South African are still guilty of ethical transgressions as already indicated in this chapter and in Chapter One.

Of course ethics scholars will argue that legislation is not ethics – an act is either legal or illegal, but not necessarily **ethical**. It is, however, of interest to note that, in a number of cases, organisations behaved according to the letter, if not the spirit, of the law. This does not absolve the organisation from all wrongdoing, however. In order to bridge the gap between legislation and rampant unethical behaviours, business and political leaders have argued for the imposition of **self-regulation**. In the case of South Africa, two highly-publicised events occurred:

- The first was the publication of the King Report on Corporate Governance (King II).
- The second was the introduction, on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), of the Social Responsibility Index.

These two events ensured that corporate behaviour, at least as far as corporate governance and social responsibility are concerned, became part of the vocabulary of business leaders, and renewed interest in ethics in the workplace, resulting in much discussion on ethics. But how to ensure ethical conduct, where legislation and regulation fail to a greater or lesser extent? This is the central question with which organisations that wish to be ethical occupy themselves. In the words of Kennedy- Glans & Shulz (2005: 8):

“Unlike financial reporting systems, corporations have few defined processes or standards to measure, assess, verify, or report on business integrity. Verification of corporate alignment between integrity commitments and practices may be prescribed by law or required by corporate procedures, but these assessments are generally conducted after negative events. Control systems for managing business integrity are evolving – corporations are experimenting with balanced scorecards, triple bottom-line reporting that addresses financial and nonfinancial attributes, and even verification systems. Accountability processes are in an evolutionary state.”

And what can public relations do to become involved in the organisation’s ethical processes? Solomon introduces an interesting view on organisational ethics by discussing the meaning of corporate integrity. He makes the point that employees are normally required to follow the organisation’s rules and regulations as they pertain to the execution of their jobs. However, under certain circumstance *“critical encounters sometimes require a show of integrity that is indeed antithetical to one’s assigned role and duties”* (Solomon, 1999: 40). This means that organisations should expect that some individuals or departments could – and perhaps should – act as the organisation’s ethical voice. What function is better suited for this

purpose than public relations? As the organisation's relationship-builder, public relations can be used as its voice of conscience, because it is ideally placed to balance the best interests of all stakeholders, internally as well as externally. The readiness of public relations practitioners to become involved in organisational ethics of course needs to be tested empirically, but given the fact that ethical processes and systems are still in evolution, it is perhaps a good idea to introduce the notion of public relations as the organisation's conscience.

So what are organisations currently doing to ensure that accountability processes are developed and implemented? The starting point of all organisational activity is its strategy. Cravens & Piercy (2006: 23) state that a well-managed organisation is guided from the top by its business strategy, which in turn is supported by the functional planning in all departments below top management level. They identify a number of key components and issues addressed by the corporate strategy, reflected below in **Table 2.17**:

Table 2.17: Corporate strategy components and issues

(Adapted from Cravens & Piercy, 2006: 23)

Strategy component	Key issues
Scope, mission, and intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What business(es) should the firm be in? • What customer needs, market segments, and/or technologies should be focused on? • What is the firm's enduring strategic purpose or intent?
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What performance dimensions should the firm's business units and employees focus on? • What is the target level of performance to be achieved on each dimension? • What is the time frame in which each target should be attained?
Development strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the firm achieve a desired level of growth over time? • Can the desired growth be attained by expanding the firm's current business? • Will the company have to diversify into new businesses or product-markets to achieve its future growth objectives?
Resource allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should the firm's limited financial resources be allocated across its businesses to produce the highest returns? • Of the alternative strategies that each business might pursue, which will produce the greatest returns for the dollars invested?
Sources of synergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What competencies, knowledge, and customer-based intangibles (e.g., brand recognition, reputation) might be developed and shared across the firm's businesses? • What operational resources, facilities, or functions (e.g., plants, R&D, sales force) might the firm's businesses share to increase their efficiency?

Significantly, ethics does not seem to feature prominently in any of the issues or strategy components that they identify. This could, in a manner of speaking, leave the door open for the organisation forgetting or neglecting to operate ethically (because ethics does not feature

prominently in its strategic decision-making), or to relegate ethics to a separate, add-on function without real teeth. This may partly explain why formal responses to ethics have been fragmented at best. In vaguely subscribing to a code of ethics, executives then promptly forget about ethics and ethical decision-making, and get on with the “*real*” business of making money. It is argued that a function like public relations should be given a responsibility for ethics in organisations. Should public relations have a position as an activity that helps the organisation to build and maintain a good reputation, and should it, as relationship-builder, accept its ethical responsibility, it could be ideally placed in the organisation’s top management as well as functional management structures to ensure that ethical decisions in the organisation are taken. In **not** placing ethics as a separate issue or component, Cravens & Piercy are not alone. Kaplan & Norton (1996: 11) make no specific mention of ethics in their now-famous balanced scorecard (see **Figure 2.5** below), which identifies four **sets of measures** in translating strategic plans into action:

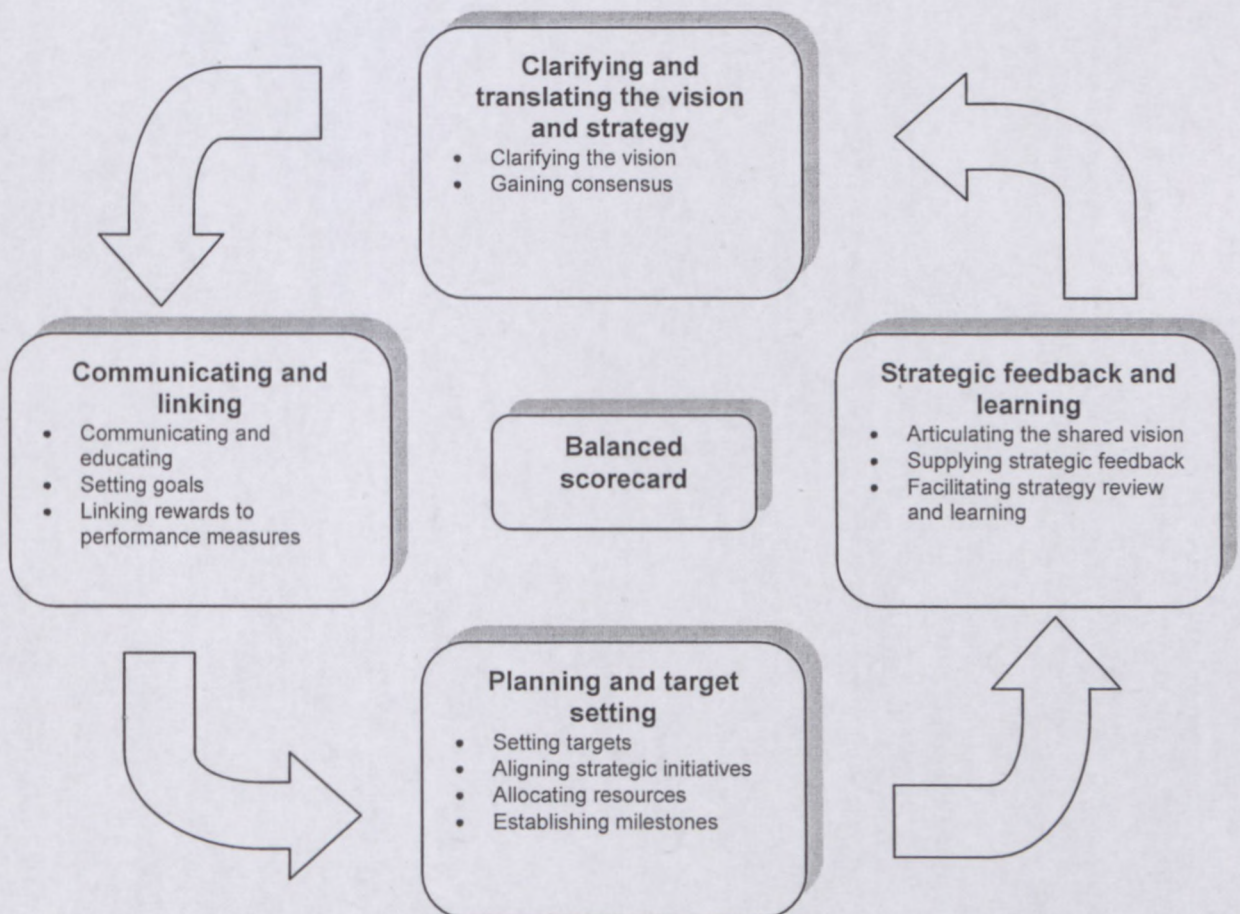


Figure 2.5: Balanced scorecard
 (Source: Adapted from Kaplan & Norton, 1996: 11)

To the public relations practitioner, the model (represented in **Figure 2.5**) proposed by Kaplan & Norton was a godsend, because it placed communication and “linking” (relationship-building) as a central notion in organisational performance. However, the balanced scorecard does not refer specifically to ethics, the focus of this section in the literature review, again leaving the door open for ethics to occupy a vague position in organisational planning, implementation, and control.

Doyle & Stern (2006: 14) mention the Japanese *keiretsu* and composition of European (but not US) supervisory boards as mechanisms that ensure that all stakeholders' interests are represented at the highest levels of organisations, but fail to discuss ethics *per se*. The same holds true for Du Plessis *et al.* (2005) who make virtually no mention of ethics in their book on strategic marketing. Conversely, Ehlers & Lazenby (2007: 5) stress that ethical behaviour and corporate governance form “*the backbone of strategic management.*” David (2007: 22) discusses the importance of ethics, and mentions that a culture of ethics should “*permeate organizations.*” Malan & Smit (2001: 163) are adamant that ethical leadership in organisations is of paramount importance, and take care to mention the role of individual ethics: “*Furthermore, it is a waste of time designing a remedy if those who are meant to put it into practice are still corrupt and incompetent, as the corruption will simply persist*” (Malan & Smit, 2001: 163). Freeman (2006: 19) raises the issue that corporate responsibility should also be communicated to employees, since their involvement in the organisation's ethics is “*essential to bring [core values and commitments] to life*”, a task he believes should be carried out by public relations.

It is clear that organisational ethics should take individual ethics into account. This means that the ethics of employees of the organisation (in whatever form – outsourced or in-house) also affect the ethics of organisations. If the case were true that the ethics of, for example, public relations practitioners are under doubt, the ethical quality of decisions taken would be under doubt. The implication is that an individual wishing to involve him/herself in the ethicality of the organisation should develop or possess a personal code of ethics consonant with those of the organisation that he/she represents. Establishing whether the personal ethics of public relations practitioners are above reproach will be a task of the empirical study. However, employing individuals with impeccable ethics is not enough on its own. The organisation has an ethical duty to ensure that it behaves in a manner that is consonant with its own stated ethics codes of conduct. How will this be accomplished?

Most authors on strategic management and marketing are in agreement that ethics is one of the major challenges facing the modern organisation. They also agree that organisations should take steps to ensure that ethics is being managed by the organisation. But, as has been indicated in the discussion so far, they are not forthcoming with concrete proposals on

how to address the ethical issues facing marketing and business managers. Broadly speaking, organisations will succeed in being ethical when they can successfully bring their conduct into line with the needs of the organisation, customers, and society. This will require much thinking and planning, given the difficulty with ethics at the moment. However, ethics need to be addressed by organisations, who need to recognise that ethics is not longer the sole province of thinkers and philosophers, but concrete issues that need to be solved. Freeman & Phillips (in Frederick, 1999: 136) are adamant that “[i]t is time to ... put more work into pragmatically and optimistically figuring out ways to help us live (and work) better.” Organisations will do so, according to the surveyed literature, by providing leadership and making ethical decisions. Treviño & Nelson (2004: 14-15) state that ethics is about knowing the right thing to do and doing the right thing – a mixture of **philosophy** and **conduct**. They suggest the following ethical decision-making process:

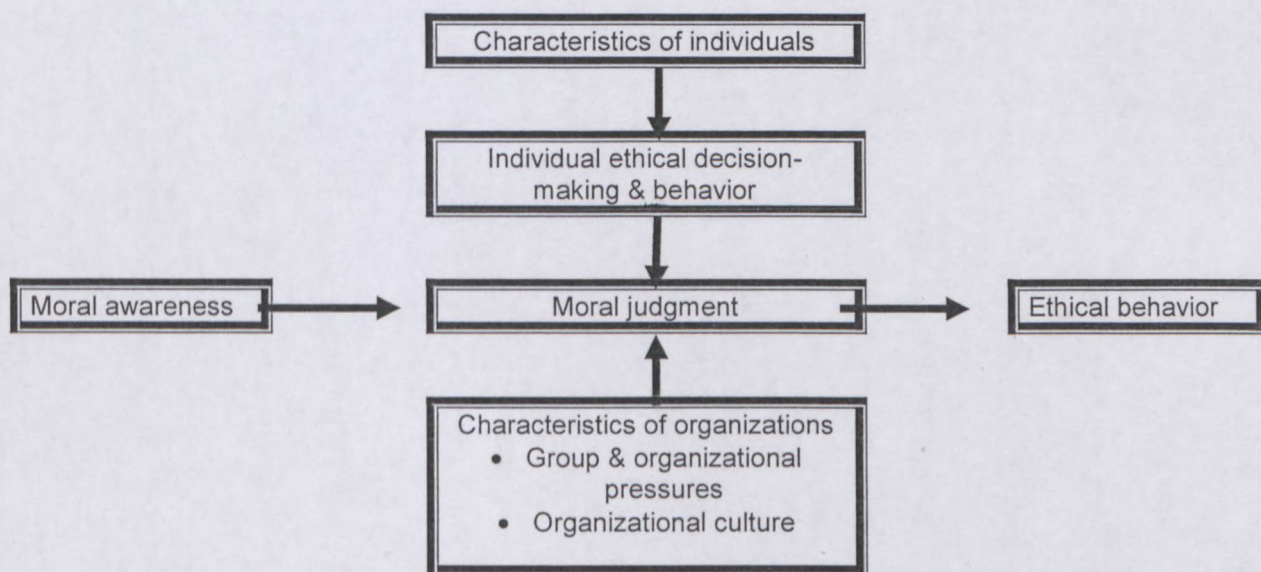


Figure 2.6: Ethical decision-making process
(Source: Adapted from Treviño & Nelson, 2004: 14-15)

Figure 2.6 above illustrates the dilemma faced by the organisation: not only does it have to deal with its own codes of conduct and own culture, but also the ethical awareness of its employees, who in the modern world may come from a variety of ethical frameworks. In order to deal with this dilemma, many organisations provide ethics training to employees, develop codes of conduct, and appoint ethics officers to provide for whistle-blowing (among others) should the organisation transgress its own ethics codes. Of course, organisations also revert to self-regulation by co-operating with other organisations in similar industries in drawing up codes of conduct. Dellaportas *et al.* (2005: 63) make the point that self-regulation is ethical for two reasons; **firstly**, self-regulation enables a profession to improve its

standards that benefit and protect the public, and, **secondly**, it enhances prestige and self-interest.

One example of self-regulation that relates directly to public relations is the *PRISA Code of Conduct*. Skinner *et al.* (2004: 13 – 16) explain that PRISA has a “*Code of ethics and professional standards for the practice of public relations and communication management*”, a code that has recently been adapted to be in line with the “*Global protocol on ethics in public relations.*” Skinner *et al.* limit their discussion on ethics to these two codes, and mention that neither is mandatory, except in the case of the PRISA code, where it can be enforced in cases where practitioners are members of PRISA. They point out that the existence of a code does not guarantee ethical conduct, but that it does reflect an awareness of, and willingness to, engage in ethical practices. The fact that South African public relations finds itself in a crisis where it experiences a bad name may serve as some indication of the relative worth of self-regulation.

Heineman (2007: 106) suggests in an article on ethics in GE that human resources, finance, and legal departments be made responsible for ethics in the organisation, even though they experience a “*fundamental tension between ... [the] dual roles of partner and guardian.*” He suggests that this tension be managed by scrupulous CEOs and CFOs. It is curious if not perhaps a little sad that he does not mention public relations in the same breath as human resources, finance, and legal. More curious yet given the fact that public relations is in a superb position to share the responsibility for ethics in the organisation given its primary mandate as creator and curator of organisational relationships. Partnering with finance and the others is made possible if public relations should be seen and practiced as an activity that has organisation-wide impact. It is sad that it is not mentioned **at all** – perhaps further indictment of the bad name that public relations has developed.

Regarding the decisions taken by the organisation, it is accepted that good business (and marketing) practice dictates that these decisions are taken in an ethical manner, or at least taken with a view to ethical implications beyond the financial bottom line. There is consensus among authors on the subject that ethics in the business environment entails:

- The existence of ethical guidelines for behaviour.
- The individual ethical frameworks of managers and employees.
- The ethics of the consumer.
- The ethics of the society within which the organisation functions.

The marketing programme that an organisation develops and executes is an important instrument used to achieve a balance between customer value, profit, and society:

- **Product** decisions will include reference to quality levels acceptable to customers while not unnecessarily chasing up production costs.
- **Pricing** is aligned with profit objectives and the customer's willingness to pay.
- **Distribution** decisions are carefully taken to maximise the management of the supply (value) chain.
- **Promotion** decisions (generally understood by marketers to include personal selling, sales promotion, advertising, and public relations) are taken to communicate the value created by the organisation to the consumer. Promotion is seen as the primary communication element in the marketing mix (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 427).

To the public relations practitioner it is marketing communication that is of particular interest, since it strives to create and communicate the brand's personality and promise to customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 50). Making use of communication tools such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 427), integrated marketing communication seeks to give a voice to the organisation's **intent** with customers. It is here that the company creates expectations in the minds of its customers; it is here that the company informs, persuades, and reminds its customers what they can expect when they do business with the company; it is here that false promises or undelivered promises can undermine the brand and create the impression that the organisation is unethical. It is here that the relationship with the organisation's most important stakeholder, the consumer, is built. It is here that the organisation should act ethically. However, the contrary seems to be the case, as can be seen from the fact that Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 623) identify misleading advertising (deceptive promotion) as an unethical marketing practice.

O'Malley & Tynan (in Baker, 2003: 33) make the point that successful marketing depends on trust, which is "*essential*" to the process of developing relationships with customers. This trust, in turn, "*centres upon the keeping of promises.*" The success of marketing as a primary activity of the business (Porter, 1985: 40) therefore depends in large measure on the level of trust that the customer, who is or should be the starting and finishing point of marketing planning and implementation, places in the organisation. This trust is the result of a number of ethical decisions and practices by the organisation, and successful strategic marketing as a consequence will need to concern itself with the ethics of the organisation. It is clear that organisations that use public relations in order to hide the truth from consumers, or to

manipulate public opinion, are in breach of ethics. Examples of such ethical breaches have been discussed earlier.

At this stage of the literature review it is clear that it is also the task of functional departments such as marketing to continuously find new ways of heading off challenges posed by the ever-changing environment, and sufficient evidence exists in literature surveyed that ethics in a changing ethical landscape currently pose some of the most severe challenges facing marketing, and public relations as (at least partly) marketing communication tool.

6.2 Marketing and ethics

Kotler & Keller (2007: 16) point out that marketing continually needs to re-invent itself: *"Companies need fresh thinking about how to operate and compete in a new marketing environment."* This *"re-invention"* of the role of marketing in the organisation requires an all-encompassing investigation into and understanding of all planning and activities that relate to the organisation's marketing effort. Kotler & Keller (2007: 17) call this approach *"holistic marketing"* and identify four constituent themes:

- Relationship marketing, including Customer Relationship Management (CRM).
- Integrated marketing.
- Internal marketing.
- Social responsibility marketing, including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Emphasising that modern organisations succeed based on their superior management of marketing networks (the result of relationship-building activities), Kotler & Keller (2007: 34 – 35) propose that organisations use the **value chain** originally designed by Porter to analyse ways in which the organisation should **choose**, **provide**, and **communicate** superior customer value.

Cravens & Piercy (2006: 206 – 210) also subscribe to the use of Porter's value chain as a basis for creating customer value. They specifically identify strategic relationships between the organisation and other partners as well as internal partners as important to the success of value chain management. According to them, relationships can have a number of objectives, including building a **position** in the market. Building such a position has been promoted as one of the areas in which public relations can play a leading role in its relationship to marketing (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 46). Cravens & Piercy (2006: 208) identify trust as one of the guidelines for managing such relationships and emphasise the role that meaningful communication plays in building such trust. Given that public relations defines

itself as a function that builds relationships using communication, the role of public relations in such a value chain approach to analysing ways in which to choose, provide, and specifically communicate value becomes apparent. More discussion on Porter's value chain follows later in this chapter.

Communicating value in turn uses any number of marketing communication tools, including public relations, which is traditionally used by marketing to build "*good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events*" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007: 390).

The value that is chosen, provided, and communicated is manifested in the **value proposition** (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007: 9), which in turn serves as a basis for developing the organisation's branding strategy. Brand equity, the result of all branding activities, results in the organisation having an asset (the brand) that, in the eyes of many, outlasts "*the company's specific products and facilities*" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007: 214).

This brand, so carefully chosen, developed, and communicated,

"is the company's promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits, services, and experiences consistently to the buyers. The brand promise must be simple and honest" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007: 216).

It all seems simple and straightforward: stay in touch with changing environmental influences on marketing by re-inventing it from time to time to ensure that the organisation's value proposition – encapsulated in an honest brand promise – is delivered to the buyer. This will build a strong brand, the organisation's most enduring asset. Anon. (2005: 6 – 7) puts the customer at the heart of all business operations: "*In the absence of customers, the many things that businesses do ... are utterly pointless.*" This sentiment of customer centricity is echoed by a number of texts, notably Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 8 – 12), Lamb *et al.* (2004: 5), and Cravens & Piercy (2006: 4).

The point is that no amount of marketing, public relations, management, strategic planning, or even ethical conduct will be successful if the starting and finishing points of all of these activities do not focus on the organisation's *raison d'etre* - the customer. It is therefore the highest priority of any business activity to focus on the customer. This is certainly no new insight, but it is important to state a customer-centric perspective – the building of good relationships, for example, between the organisation and its various stakeholder groups should ultimately focus on the customer: How will these good relationships help the

organisation to find, satisfy, and keep customers? The short answer to this question is simple. By understanding the strategic significance not only of customers, but also understanding that communication with stakeholder groups may turn them into helpful partners in the organisation's value-building activities, the organisation may succeed in extracting value.

The customer also stands central to any discussion regarding ethics and ethical behaviour. If it were accepted that ethics is about doing well by doing good, the focus again should be the customer. The organisation, while engaged in ethical manufacturing, or while engaged in socially responsible activities, should at no time lose sight of the interests of its customers. A company that is **unethical** breaks trust with its stakeholders. While some unethical behaviours particular to the marketing function have been outlined, the core of ethical marketing is found in the **brand promise**, as well as **delivery** on the contract implicit to the brand promise. In other words, organisations should ensure that they give customers what they promise to give them.

The syllogism appears: Organisation X uses advertising, public relations, and other communication tools to inform customers that they can expect excellent service. Customers find that excellent service is not delivered, hence organisation X is lying. Thus, if customer expectations are not met, the organisation is lying, and is by implication unethical. Miller & Muir (2004: 4) echo this sentiment by stating that "*[b]rands are judged by their actions, and not just their advertising.*" They also point out that a brand strategy is inextricably linked to the strategy of a business by addressing four issues namely:

- Who the customer is.
- What products and services are on offer.
- The organisation's competitive advantage.
- Resource allocation (Miller & Muir, 2004: 14).

Marketing openly declares its customer-centric approach by stating that it seeks to find, satisfy, and keep customers. Strategic planning and strategic management, while concentrating on putting into place business processes designed to make the company successful, also take heed of the importance of the customer. The question is whether public relations, in seeking to build relationships with groups other than customers, has forgotten that the organisation exists because it has customers. If public relations, as it has done in the past, focuses its attention on areas where it believes it adds value, reneging customer focus in favour of marketing, it stands in danger of turning its face away from those who matter the most to the organisation's survival. It is imperative that public relations realises and tacitly

and implicitly acknowledges its fealty to the customer as well. Using the Porter value chain analysis with its focus on creating value will go a long way to help public relations practitioners understand that, wherever they build relationships, they do so in the interest of the customer. In fact, Norton & Kaplan, in their balanced scorecard, state that the way in which the customer sees the organisation is one of the **key strategic elements** in the organisation's success. The use of the balanced scorecard, according to Cravens & Piercy (2006: 3) is gaining popularity, and *"recognizes that short-term cost savings and profit enhancements may undermine the achievement of strategic goals and the building of superior customer value."*

However, there is an ethical tension that exists between the organisation and the customer. On the one hand, the customer wants the best value for money, while the organisation, on the other hand, wants the best money for value. The customer is the organisation's main (if not only) source of income (other sources of income could include investments made by the organisation). As source of income, the customer is therefore also the source of profit. Porter (1979: 141) goes so far as to describe the bargaining power of customers as one of the five forces that determines the profitability of an organisation. The more powerful customers are, the less profitable the company will be. It follows logically, therefore, that an organisation wishing to maximise its profit unethically will benefit from customers who are not powerful (i.e. have little or no bargaining power). Is it any wonder that so many organisations pay little or no attention to the poor and illiterate consumers? It will be interesting to investigate the communication behaviours of organisations who primarily target the illiterate and poor consumer to establish whether those organisations do, indeed, guard the rights of their consumers, or if they focus on the rights of their shareholders. However, this question does not fall under the scope of this thesis, and may prove a fruitful seeding ground for future research.

It is significant to note that in South Africa the consumer seems to be regarded by a number of large organisations with some contempt. On 23 July 2004, *Financial Mail* reported that *"[w]hen SA's competition authorities banned Toyota's anticompetitive behaviour and fined the company R12m, consumers felt victorious. Similarly, when the competition appeal court dismissed SA Airways' application to postpone a hearing yet again, the underdogs in that industry were jubilant"* (Singh, 2004). However, the article then states: *"Unfortunately, consumers are not taking more complaints to the authorities. The result is that only a fraction of anticompetitive cases and pricing issues are being investigated."* Why do South African consumers not assert their rights more frequently?

The question that also follows logically is why should South African consumers need to assert their rights if they were treated ethically? This offers a clue that consumers are not, in South Africa at least, receiving ethical treatment in the truest sense of the word. If unethically treated, or if they perceive that they are unethically treated, consumers may be unhappy with the service they receive. It follows logically that they will be happy if given service they expect. And happy, satisfied consumers seem to be a key to success, as a *Cape Times* article on Nedbank reported in 2006: “Nedbank would focus on client service and staff morale to regain lost market share” (Mafu, 2006). In the same article, Mike Brown from Nedbank commented that “South African banks were well within emerging market benchmarks in terms of pricing.” These nice-sounding words were issued through the public relations department of a bank that stands accused of using underhanded pricing tactics, and is an ironic example of the contempt with which some organisations treat their South African consumers.

Discussing the investigation into high banking fees by the Competition Commission, FNB CEO Michael Jordaan is quoted as saying “[i]n some way we have taken the onus away from consumers to shop around. We should not be a paternalistic society and there should be some balance in the responsibility towards banking costs” (Mail & Guardian, December 1 to 7 2006 Vol 22 No 47). (M&G Business: 8). He goes on to state that customers could change banks if dissatisfied with their banking costs, which in turn may prompt their current bank to lower costs. If the logic that customers are in some way partly responsible for high banking charges is true, it may be seen as an indictment of the customer: It is the customer’s fault that a bank is achieving high profit margins. However, banks like FNB think nothing of it to use advertising and public relations to communicate promises of superior service to their customers.

This thesis argues that advertising making promises of (for example) good service when organisations fail to deliver good service may be seen as misleading. While the **intent** of the organisation is not to mislead, the **effect** is the same: A customer seeing an advertisement promising good service, and then not getting it, will experience a feeling of being short-changed. It is argued that ethical practice is not only about intent, but also about **behaviour**.

Malan & Smit (2001: 25) outline three general advertising transgressions:

- Misleading claims.
- Putting misleading information in fine print.
- Switch selling.

The organisations featured in the examples cited so far in this thesis certainly seem to be guilty of one or more of these advertising transgressions, and serve to illustrate that customer expectations are created by marketing communication tools, but that those expectations are not met. When a company promises a certain expectation to a customer, and then does not deliver on that promise, then it may be seen as practicing unethical marketing. However, this does not mean that the company is by definition unethical – it may simply mean that the company fails in actualising its wish to be ethical. Looking at examples cited so far, and behaviours discussed, it becomes apparent that more work needs to be done to ensure high standards of ethical behaviour.

Schlegelmilch (2001: 110) quite emphatically feels that *“perceptions of what is moral and what is not clearly impact the evaluation of advertising.”* This implies that advertising of a product or service must be **seen to be true** by the customer of the advertised product/service. Ethical marketing thus implies the involvement of the customer perspective on what is ethical and what is not. This is an area in which public relations could conceivably play a role. As organisational relationship-builder with customers, and as the researcher of customer perceptions regarding the organisation, it could advise the organisation in cases where its advertising is perceived as unethical. It is most likely that the advertising agency (an outsourced function) will not do this. It may also be hypothesised that an outsourced public relations agency will yield to the temptation of hiding the bad news.

Truthful advertising also gets attention from Darke & Ritchie (2007: 125), who come to the conclusion that unethical advertising practices undermine advertising itself, with the result that consumers will view even scrupulously honest advertising as unethical, rendering this communication tool less believable. They advocate a situation where organisations take heed of peer advertising and its truthfulness. They also strongly argue that advertising should be ethical, because if not, it will erode the power of a very potent communication tool. The point is that advertising, public relations, and marketing (among others) have to work together closely as a team in order to ensure that advertising does not over-promise, and that manufacturing does not under-deliver. Failure to cooperate will create a “brand gap”:

“Whenever there's a rift between strategy and creativity – between logic and magic – there's a brand gap. It can cause a brilliant strategy to fail where it counts most, at the point of contact with the customer, or it can doom a bold creative initiative before it's even launched, way back at the planning stage. The gulf between strategy and creativity can divide a company from its customers so completely that no significant communication passes between them” (Neumeier, 2006: 15).

This **teamwork** in order to prevent a “brand gap” takes place only by exception, because, for a number of years, public relations practitioners and academics have grappled with the

tenuous relationship between marketing and public relations, and have advocated for a re-positioning of public relations within the organisation in order to give it its perceived “rightful” place as an organisational function that contributes to the success of the organisation. As was already indicated in this literature review, a final and definite solution to that debate has not emerged, and such a solution to the debate should be found. This solution should not describe one function as subservient to the other, since this will perpetuate the tug of war between marketing and public relations. It should take heed of the differences between the two, and use those differences as the basis for model development.

Where developing a marketing strategy is concerned, public relations authors believe that, while public relations can support the marketing function, it should play a wider role than that of “mere” publicity tool. This line of argument is found in a number of public relations texts, including Skinner *et al.* (2004: 44) and Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 68). Ries & Ries (2002: XIV) see public relations as a function that “creates the brand.” South African public relations practitioners agree that public relations should play an important – if not dominant – role in the organisation’s marketing effort. In a 2004 study conducted among South African public relations practitioners, a fairly significant 48 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “public relations sometimes should manage marketing” (Venter, 2004: 199). Whether public relations should do so or not will receive more detailed attention in Section 4 of this chapter, where the relationship between public relations and marketing is discussed. Suffice it to say that organisations wishing to be ethical cannot in this day and age get away with merely stating a wish to be so – they have to incorporate ethics in all levels of strategic planning, and in all facets of functional planning and implementation. Being ethical has a number of benefits for the organisation, and they will be discussed next.

6.3 Benefits of ethical behaviour

Organisations that engage in ethical practices find that they increase their chances of success in the marketplace. Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau (2007: 125) refer to the work done by Creyer & Ross (1997) when they state that “consumer purchase intent has been positively correlated with the degree to which the perceptions of a company’s ethical behaviour exceeded their expectations.” Other authors agree with this view, including Kennedy-Glans & Shulz (2005: 15) who state that corporate integrity enhances competitive advantage, owing to a reputation for reliability built up by an ethical company, while Kuper (2006) argues that ethical businesses have a competitive advantage over less ethical competitors.

Fryxell & Wang (1994: 13) demonstrate that there is sufficient evidence in academic and business research that directly link corporate reputation and financial performance – if an

organisation has a reputation of success, then it benefits financially from that reputation. They do, however, point out that the meaning of "reputation" needs some reinvestigation, owing to the fact that measurement techniques tend to measure reputation with a focus on the companies' **investment** reputation, which has a financial focus. This could skew the ethical decision-making process because the focus falls on the financial stakeholders (specifically shareholders) at possible cost to the other stakeholders.

Turning this financial focus into a more balanced view of the organisation's responsibilities to stakeholders **other than** shareholders was the focus of the King Commission on Corporate Governance in South Africa. The report of the commission, published in March 2002, introduces the concept of the "triple-bottom-line" – advocating that organisations report to stakeholders on three areas of organisational responsibility: *"[t]here is a move from the single to the triple-bottom-line, which embraces the economic, environmental and social aspects of a company's activities"* (Institute of Directors, 2002: 9).

The concept of the triple-bottom-line is echoed by Bellingham (2003: xii) who makes the point that the study of business ethics, broadly speaking, deals with values and conduct, and identifies the organisation, the customer, and society as a triad affected by business decisions and actions. This triad is also apparent in the so-called "societal marketing concept" coined by Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 11): *"[a] principle of enlightened marketing that holds that a company should make good marketing decisions by considering consumers' wants, the company's requirements, consumers' long-run interests, and society's long-run interests."*

Public relations authors were quick to point to the implications of the triple-bottom-line concept for public relations. Jensen (2003: 6) states that the requirements for stakeholder relationships contained in the report "ensure a strategic public relations seat right next to the CEO of any boardroom table", while Motau (2002: 7) feels that corporate citizenship means that the organisation should concern itself with balancing the interests of the organisation, the individual, and society. Consensus among many public relations practitioners is that the triple-bottom-line underlines the importance of good relationships between the organisation and key publics.

For its part, marketing is **as responsible** for the ethics of an organisation as top management is. Kotler & Lee (2005: 9) argue that an organisation's values (how an organisation expresses its ethical worldview) are becoming important in the setting up of a marketing programme. Their reference to *"issues"* that the community, customers, and employees care about is further evidence of an increasing ethical awareness of

organisations. Smith & Quelch (1993: 699) stress that marketing managers should consider ethics during all phases of the marketing process, starting with strategy formulation and ending with implementation. They argue that giving consideration to ethical issues in this manner may alleviate ethical crises later on, adding further weight to a call for greater transparency in organisations. Marketing success, which contributes to organisational success, is in part based on the nature of the relationship between the organisation and its customer – a relationship which is in turn founded on trust – or lack of trust (in the case of a dysfunctional relationship). This is reinforced by Keller (2003: 39):

“Kevin Roberts of Saatchi and Saatchi argues that companies must transcend brands to create ‘trustmarks’ – a name or symbol that emotionally binds a company with the desires and aspirations of its customers – and ultimately ‘lovemarks’.”

While allowing an advertising practitioner some poetical latitude (lovemarks), the implication is clear that a successful brand is based on trust. This trust is also implied by Kotler & Keller (2006: 260): “*A brand is essentially a marketer’s promise to deliver predictable product or service performance.*” Delivering the predictable performance leads to increased trust, which leads to increased brand equity, which leads to higher sales volumes and profits. The syllogism is obvious: **customer trust contributes to organisational success**. This trust is the result of activities undertaken by the organisation to ensure that the promise made to the customer is kept. Marketing communications tools such as public relations are used to communicate this promise to the consumer.

It is the consumer who is the starting and finishing point of all business activity. Anon. (2005: 6 – 7) puts the customer at the heart of all business operations: “*In the absence of customers, the many things that businesses do ... are utterly pointless.*” This sentiment of customer centricity is echoed by a number of texts, notably Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 8 – 12), Lamb *et al.*, (2004: 5), and Cravens & Piercy (2006: 4). Organisations today understand that, without customers, they will wither away and die, and therefore try to take decisions and implement actions aimed at finding, satisfying, and retaining customers. One of the most effective ways in which to do so is by building a strong brand. Doyle & Stern (2006: 163) are adamant that “[b]rands are at the heart of marketing and business strategy”, explaining that a strong, well-liked brand helps the organisation to create preference for its products among consumers. They do caution that some brands may be liabilities, chiefly owing to the fact that the brand owners have done some things to alienate large sections of the market. One of the ways of ensuring that negative branding occurs is by not delivering on the promise to customers.

Miller & Muir (2004: 4) directly state that “[b]rands are judged by their actions, and not just their advertising.” They also point out that a brand strategy is inextricably linked to the strategy of a business. Marketing openly declares its customer-centric approach by stating that it seeks to find, satisfy, and keep customers. And it is becoming harder to do so, since customers are increasingly becoming aware not only of their rights, but are also more inclined to make morally-based decisions. This decision not only accounts for the brand, but also for the organisation behind the brand. Nike learned this lesson the hard way when it was accused of, inter alia, running sweatshops (factories in developing countries using virtual slave labour to manufacture shoes for Nike), even if it “rehabilitated” itself so that “many marketing experts think that the company’s corporate heart is now in the right place” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006: 583). “The age,” proclaim Smythe, Dorward, & Reback (1992: 3), “of the ethical consumer has arrived.” In their book, they discuss the issue of corporate reputation by pointing out how organisations like Tesco in the United Kingdom have changed their marketing strategies to accommodate a more ethical and environmentally conscious consumer. A central thesis in this book is that consumers are currently more aware of ethical issues, and allow their personal ethics to help them in making decisions on where to shop and what to buy. The organisation’s reputation is a result of the interaction between organisation and consumer, where the consumer’s perceptions regarding the ethical behaviour will influence his/her support or rejection of the organisation, and by extension its products or services. Their ideas are supported by Hurley (2006: 57) who makes the claim that companies with a reputation for candour, integrity, and fairness will enjoy higher levels of trust among consumers.

However, marketing may have failed in its application of the societal marketing concept by assisting the organisation in cutting corners through questionable marketing practices, or by hiding the truth from shareholders. In most cases, marketing communication tools – including public relations – have been used in cynical attempts to manipulate public opinion to drum up support for the morally questionable actions of organisations pandering solely to the financial bottom line. This has led to the perception that organisations are unethical, thereby eroding brand trust. Building trust, being seen to be ethical, therefore starts with the organisation’s reputation among all stakeholders who deal with it. And reputation, as was already seen, is the province of the public relations practitioner. “Corporate image is the net result of the interaction of all experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings, and knowledge people have about a company” is how Skinner *et al.* (2004: 8) describe the image or reputation of an organisation. If an organisation has a positive corporate image, it will become a competitive advantage for that organisation. Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau (2007: 125) identify the corporate social responsibility programme as one of the organisation’s sources of competitive

advantage, and list a number of benefits for organisations who manage their CSR programmes well, as **Figure 2.7** below shows:

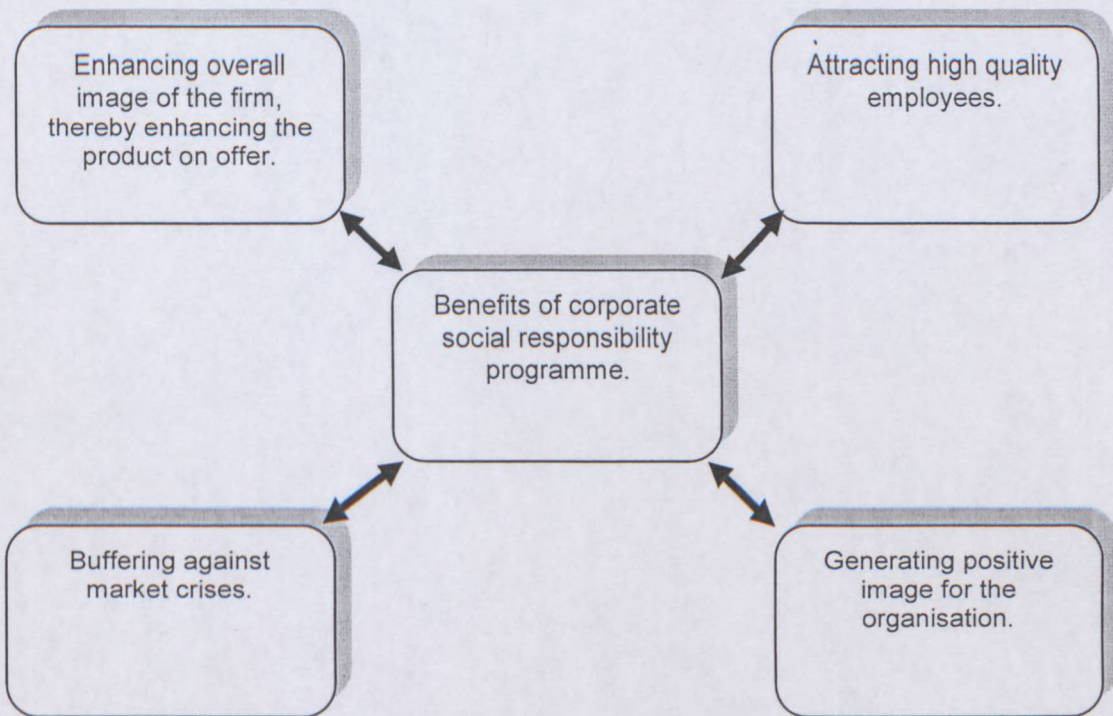


Figure 2.7: Benefits of corporate social responsibility
(Source: Adapted from Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007: 125)

There are several areas in **Figure 2.7** that argue for organisations to operate more ethically by demonstrating their corporate social responsibility. The first area argues that the organisation's image will improve, which improvement will in turn enhance the product. This benefit links organisational image (traditionally under the ambit of public relations) with marketing (enhancing product offering). This benefit, and its implied link to the organisation as a whole but also the product as a part of that whole, could be delivered in part by public relations which will develop and sustain a positive corporate reputation, but which will also assist marketing in enhancing the product offering, for example by developing product launches. However, given the tension between marketing and public relations, and the uncertainty about the role of public relations in the organisation, this benefit may be diminished. A new model for the functioning of public relations in the organisation could partly address this tension.

A second benefit highlighted by **Figure 2.7** is that of attracting employees of high calibre. As is apparent from the discussion around **Figure 2.7**, the ethics of individuals working for the organisation may impact on organisational ethics. This has an implication for public relations

in the sense that an organisation with a positive and ethical image will attract potential employees of high ethical fibre. It also has an impact on the understanding of the individual ethics of public relations practitioners in the sense that a discipline which is accused of nefarious activities might attract nefarious individuals. Thus, not only should organisations be ethical (with the benefit of attracting more ethical employees), but so should a discipline such as public relations. The bad name currently enjoyed by public relations may negate this benefit for itself.

That corporate social investment has become an integral part of the modern organisation's strategic planning is perhaps best encapsulated by Skinner *et al.* (2004: 276), who state that "*being seen as a socially responsible and caring corporate citizen is an important aspect of a company's public relations and corporate image profile.*" Cutlip *et al.* (2006: 25) state that social responsibility should be a higher calling for public relations practitioners:

"In its advanced form, the function responds to long-term social needs, not to immediate special interests that ignore undesirable side effects and negative consequences for society. As practitioners accept their social responsibility and act accordingly, others will understand and value public relations' contributions to organizations and society."

Holtzhausen (2000: 99) goes further than this understanding by stating that public relations practitioners should "*act as community activists, an approach that is not only radical but also ethical and desirable.*" Her use of the term "*community activist*" means that the individual public relations practitioner sees "*change as a positive result of the ongoing struggle for power, especially between entrenched dominant groups and those on the outside wanting to be heard*" (Du Plessis in Barker & Angelopulo, 2006: 205).

Read in this way, and coupled with the understanding that a values-based approach to public relations will assist the organisation in developing values that are of core importance to its mission, and in ensuring that those values are implemented, the impact of the view of a public relations practitioner as activist for **doing good** becomes apparent.

In turn, the values of an organisation, if well-articulated and, more importantly well-implemented, may serve to build a positive image or reputation for the organisation. In earlier discussions, the contribution of public relations to the organisation's reputation (hopefully good reputation) was discussed. The reputation of the organisation may well be enhanced by public relations activities, but the question is: how?

According to Eccles, Newquist, and Shatz (2007: 114), the organisation's "reputational risk" may be managed in the following manner:

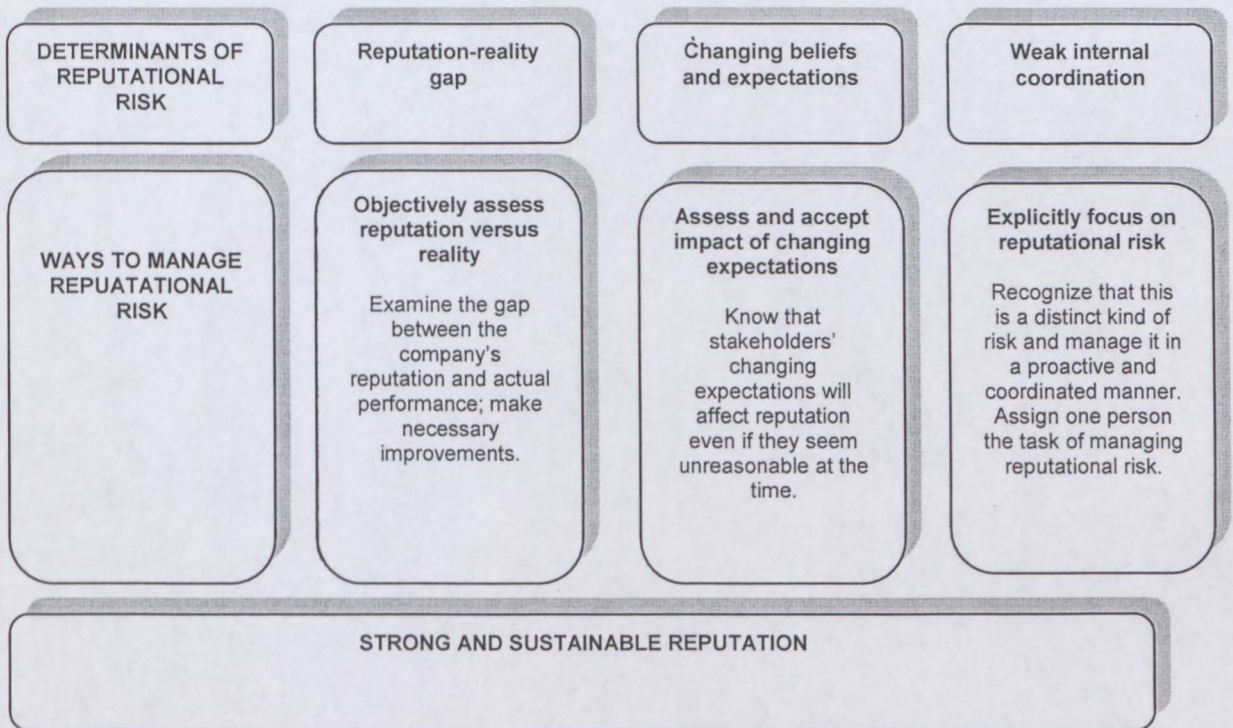


Figure 2.8: Reputation management
 (Source: Adapted from Eccles *et al.*, 2007: 114)

The management of the organisation's reputation, according to **Figure 2.9**, requires a person (read: department or business function) to focus full-time on the organisation's reputational risk, and requires such a person to assess the impacts of changing expectations among all stakeholders. With its focus on relationships, and its ability to manage those relationships, public relations seems to be the ideal candidate for executing this task. However, the question may be asked whether public relations practitioners are sufficiently equipped to assess changing expectations of stakeholders such as suppliers, and to manage those relationships if they are unsure about the exact interaction between those suppliers and the function of inbound logistics. Thus, the education of public relations practitioners need to account for this by preparing students to deal equally well with all departments inside the organisation, as well as all stakeholders.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also received attention from renowned Harvard professor M.E. Porter, who co-authored (with Kramer) an article on the subject in *Harvard Business Review*.

Porter & Kramer (2006: 83) do not view public relations too kindly:

- “The result [of CSR programmes] is oftentimes a hodgepodge of uncoordinated CSR and philanthropic activities disconnected from the company’s strategy that neither make any meaningful social impact nor strengthen the firm’s long-term competitiveness.”
- “Internally, CSR practices and initiatives are often isolated from operating units.”
- “To advance CSR, we must root it in a broad understanding of the interrelationship between a corporation and society while at the same time anchoring it in the strategies and activities of specific companies.”

This is a serious slap in the collective face of practitioners and academics of this field, who have for many years prided themselves as being the sole custodians of corporate image and related activities. But, as Chapter One already indicated, public relations is under fire for being ethically tainted, and the education that public relations practitioners receive focuses too narrowly on communication, and too superficially on business-related subjects. These issues need to be addressed, and addressed fast.

In her book on the subject, Parsons (2004: 29) identifies the dilemma faced by many public relations practitioners who are expected to juggle loyalties between employer, the public relations profession, society, and the self. She makes the point that a transgression on any of these loyalties may result in harm being done to one or more of the other groups with which public relations practitioners interact: *“Ethical living is a balancing act. And juggling the components until we find the right balance is a delicate business”* (Parsons, 2004: 30).

Ethical practices, an understanding of ethics, and an overall ethical awareness are of the utmost importance in the practice of “good” public relations. As Heath and Coombs (2006: 68) point out: *“Public relations has become a sophisticated social science tool, with the potential to be used for both good and evil purposes.”* Skinner *et al.* (2004: 13) echo this view by putting the emphasis on the personal integrity of the public relations practitioner.

One of the ways in which this discipline seeks to encourage ethical behaviour is (in South Africa) the *“Code of ethics and professional standards for the practice of public relations and communication management”* developed and implemented by PRISA – The Institute for Public Relations and Communication Management. This code of ethics is subscribed to (in theory, at least) by all members of this professional body. Implementing such a code of ethics is in keeping with modern practice of most organisations in their stated aims to become more ethical, and also to avoid too much regulation by governments, which would make business more cumbersome.

Textbooks covering public relations, marketing, management, and strategic planning and management are unanimous in their calls for organisations to exhibit ethical behaviour. In a recent textbook, the following comment on ethical public relations is found: *“Let’s avoid featuring a view of reputation management that leads some people to believe incorrectly that public relations distorts the truth to make a bad organization seem good”* (Heath & Coombs, 2006: 7).

In the field of marketing, ethics is also seen as central to the organisation’s marketing efforts, as is argued by Cravens & Piercy (2006: 17): *“Growing emphasis is placed on corporate citizenship and the establishment and protection of secure corporate reputation as an asset with a financial return associated.”*

Ethics also features high on the list of strategic management, and, if not practiced, will damage the organisation, as Kennedy-Glans and Schulz (2005: 34) argue:

“If a corporation fails to account for its actions, corporate stakeholders are constrained in their ability to assess integrity. In an environment charged with distrust, any opaqueness in a corporation’s reporting and assessing of performance will attract suspicion.”

The views on business ethics so far resonate in what Ledingham (in Botan and Hazleton, 2006: 465) views as a *“general theory of public relations”*:

“The relationship perspective of public relations suggests that balancing the interests of organizations and publics is achieved through management of organization-public relationships.”

Sagar, Singh, and Agrawal (2006: 72) argue that consumers today expect marketing managers to make ethically acceptable decisions. They further argue that trust, an essential element of the exchange of value, is embodied in a brand, which in turn is seen as a valuable asset. They make the distinction between ethically correct products and brands, stating that the product may be ethically correct, while a brand may not. They further state that *“[a] brand position is ethical if it is sensitive to various concerns, such as consumer satisfaction, environment protection or even ... price sensitivity”* (Sagar et al., 2006: 73).

Davies et al. (2003: 79) are of the view that *“[i]ndeed a brand is often preferred to an unbranded item due to its implied warranty of **consistent** quality”* (emphasis in original text). This assertion on the value of branding – consumer preference – to the organisation contains two key elements. The first element is that of the warranty (implied or directly stated). This implied warranty is communicated to customers by using the promotion element of the

marketing mix. In the words of Klopper, Berndt, Chipp, Ismail, Roberts-Lombard, Subramani, Wakeham, Petzer, Hern, Saunders & Myers-Smith (2006: 288) marketing communication "*is the voice of the brand.*" The second element is that of the views that the consumer has about the brand, and the extent to which they are consistent with the delivery (or non-delivery) of the brand promise.

That public relations can indeed play a role in helping to forge and communicate brand identity is not under dispute. In fact, it is one of the areas in which marketers and public relations practitioners seem to be in agreement. While Skinner *et al.* (2004: 50) endeavour to explain the role of public relations vis-à-vis that of marketing by pointing to the role public relations can play in "positioning" the product in the minds of consumers, they are actually talking about branding.

More direct reference to the branding role of public relations is found in Heath & Coombs (2006: 370 – 374), who describe the contribution public relations can make to forging brand equity for the organisation and brand loyalty to the product/service. Rensburg & Cant (2003: 173 – 203) discuss in detail the role of internal branding and public relations. Balgin & Fulgitini (2005: 156) agree with Ries & Ries that branding should increasingly be the responsibility of public relations. Their views are in turn strongly advocated by Edelman (2006: 20) who believes that both brands and corporate reputations are built by public relations, and more effectively so than by advertising, because of the two-way communication that public relations achieves with organisational publics.

The two-way communications to which Edelman refers may, however, be used by public relations towards unethical ends. Ewen (1996: 80) states that "*truth is something that can be merchandised to the public*", implying that public relations practitioners can manipulate communication tools to portray the organisation and its product/service in an unwarranted positive light. A good brand, however, is one that reflects integrity.

Another interesting aspect of business ethics raised by Treviño and Nelson (2004: 72 - 73) is that of customer confidence issues regarding truth in advertising. They mention that telling customers an outright lie, or even exaggerating product benefits, will constitute unethical behaviour, with the result that the organisation may be harmed. This implies that the organisation's reputation is linked to ethical or unethical behaviour.

In the words of *The Economist* (2002: 61):

“[t]he real lessons to take away from Enron and WorldCom are that financial reporting can never be an exact science, and that managers will be as greedy as they can get away with. Investors will always need to be armed with scepticism and tough questions.”

It is thus clear that public relations in its role as marketing communication tool as well as in its role of corporate reputation manager has the duty to contribute to the ethics of the organisation. Contributing to ethical management may be somewhat of a prickly pear, but it needs to be tackled, and tackled soon. Literature surveyed on ethics clearly points out that organisations are increasingly coming under the spotlight for their unethical conduct, and also points out that advertising (and other marketing communication tools) are becoming less effective, owing to a gap of trust that is developing. Examples of unethical behaviour by South African companies certainly supports this idea. In the course of the discussion in this section of the chapter, references were made to how the Porter value chain analysis may come in handy to find an ethical role for public relations. Suffice it to say at this point that the success with which public relations embraces its role as the organisation's ethical conscience will depend on how it interprets its role in the organisation, and how it selects, recruits, and trains public relations practitioners, since individual ethics (as has been discussed) will play a role in the ethical management of organisations.

Another pitfall against which organisations should guard is that of using ethics as a positioning strategy (such as environmental issues), since these will create expectations that may not be met, as Schlegelmilch & Pollach (2005: 284) point out. Furthermore, ethics communication is an ongoing process.

The ethical implications for public relations in the discussion so far also become apparent:

- Firstly, the individual ethics of public relations practitioners should be addressed should they be found to be falling short of acceptable standards.
- Secondly, the impact that public relations will have on the ethical deeds of the organisation need to be examined.

The empirical survey needs to establish how public relations practitioners perceive their own ethics, and should also establish whether public relations sees a role for itself in affecting organisational ethics.

Organisations who can successfully create, communicate, and deliver customer value in an ethical manner can feel the benefit of having a competitive advantage over their competitors, because *“in industries where squeezing value from customers is commonplace, a transparent, value-creating offer can exploit customers’ dissatisfaction with incumbents and drive rapid growth”* (McGovern & Moon, 2007. 84). Thus, ethical companies that make ethical practices the rule of the day will find competitive advantage, something that will contribute to the organisation’s success and long term sustainability.

7. Chapter conclusions

The literature review set out to discover the state of debate on the following four topics as they relate to the problem statement discussed in Chapter One:

- Public relations and management.
- Public relations education.
- Public relations and Porter’s value chain.
- Ethics and public relations.

The major findings of the literature review may be summarised in table format as follows:

Table 2.18: Summary of literature review findings

Management and public relations	
Role of public relations in the organisation.	Public relations is unsure of its role in the organisation, and there is no clear guidance on where to position this function. This is compounded by the fact that public relations practitioners are acting either as technicians or strategists.
Relationship to marketing.	The relationship to marketing is tenuous, and needs to be clarified. While there is a link between the two functions, no clear guideline exists to separate/connect the two.
Renaming public relations.	While a strong movement is afoot to rename public relations to something such as corporate communication, the renaming itself is only treating the symptoms of the bad name public relations has developed.
Public relations education	
Body of knowledge.	The body of knowledge is itself confused about what should be taught to public relations practitioners. Very little attention is given to the role of public relations as a strategic partner in the business.
Structure of curriculum	The curriculum is itself, in a number of institutions, focused on communication and “technician” skills.

Porter's value chain	
Original value chain analysis	Organisations are analysed as activities that contribute to value created for the customers. The value chain analysis divides organisational activities into primary and support activities.
Supply chain management	Organisations are viewed as part of a chain of activities among a number of partners, who require trust, good relationships, and communication to cooperate as a unit.
Public relations and Porter	Public relations pays no attention to Porter's value chain analysis. Several areas where public relations can benefit from using this approach are discussed.
Ethics	
Organisational ethics in the 21 st Century	Organisations in South Africa are guilty of a number of ethical transgressions. This behaviour is found worldwide.
Marketing and ethics	Marketing, as well as public relations, can and should make a contribution to the organisation's ethics. While ethics is left largely to self-regulation, organisations are still grappling with ways in which to improve their ethics.
Benefits of ethical behaviour	It pays to be ethical, and one of the benefits of ethical behaviour is a good reputation for the organisation. Good organisational reputation is a core function of public relations.

The problem statement discussed in Chapter One of this thesis states that public relations is experiencing an identity crisis which negatively influences its ability to function as a fully-fledged strategic activity in the organisation. The problem statement asks what can be done to help public relations achieve maturity, and envisages the development of a model that could help public relations to escape from its doldrums. Chapter Two indicates that Porter's Value Chain Analysis may be an instrument that will help to solve the problems faced by public relations. The value chain is explained in that chapter, and the following remarks, based on the value chain and as they pertain to the public relations function, will be made:

Firstly, it is suggested that public relations be firmly placed in the organisation's value chain as a support activity alongside those of human resources, firm infrastructure, and technology development. The reason for this is simple: in every facet of the value chain (and even the extended supply chain), relationships are of importance to the organisation. A number of authors indicate that the competitive advantage of the organisation is at least in part built on the quality of relationships in its chain of activities designed to deliver value to the customer. Given the importance attached to the ability of public relations to build relationships, it seems natural for a function such as this to act as a support activity to the primary activities identified by Porter. Furthermore, a need for communication to flow effectively through the supply chain is identified. This communication is not only operational in nature, but should

also contribute in building trust, and organisational reputation, between the organisation and its internal and external supply chain partners.

The willingness of public relations practitioners to accept such a situation needs to be tested empirically.

Secondly, it is suggested that the placement of public relations as a support activity in the value chain is a good argument **for** the allocation to public relations of its rightful place in the organisation's formal chain of command. To this end, public relations should re-examine its tendency to operate outside the organisation as an outsourced function. This might draw ire and resistance from public relations consultancies, but it will certainly benefit the way public relations is seen and practiced in the organisation.

The willingness of public relations practitioners to consider "*in-sourcing*" rather than outsourcing public relations needs to be tested empirically.

Thirdly, given acceptance that public relations is a support activity to marketing and sales, **but also** to inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, and service (all members of the supply chain), it becomes necessary to revise the educational curriculum of public relations students. Fundamentally, this implies that the public relations curriculum be structured in such a way that students are given at least a basic introduction to these functions and are provided with a good understanding of their contribution to the organisation's operation.

Again, the likelihood of this happening has to be tested empirically.

The above-mentioned three areas of impact for public relations, should it be realigned according to the value chain analysis, only address part of the problem statement, namely the bad name and organisational position of public relations. Another part of the problem statement, that of ethics, is altogether more complex and will require more explanation. This explanation will be carried out in detail in the last chapter of this thesis, but suffice it to say that, for the moment, the public relations function also acts as the voice of the customer, the central focus of the organisation's efforts.

How seriously the customer is regarded by South African organisations also needs to be tested empirically. While consumer research falls outside the scope of this thesis, the views of public relations practitioners on the customer-centricity (or lack of customer-centricity) of South African organisations will be tested among the sample population.

A number of issues need to be discovered that are not sufficiently addressed in the literature that was surveyed so far. To that end, empirical data needs to be gathered and analysed that will further enrich this study. The next chapter will deal with the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.

No more things should be presumed to exist than are absolutely necessary.

(William of Occam in Knowles, 2004: 571)

1. Introduction

To what extent are public relations practitioners willing to support the realignment of their function within the organisation? Do they agree that the public relations curriculum at present does not address the wider needs of business? Are public relations practitioners prone to engage in ethically questionable activities? Who is it that instructs public relations to issue untruths? Questions like these have not been answered by the literature review, and, as was indicated already in Chapter Two, answers to these questions had to be found. This chapter will deal with the methodology that was followed in obtaining those answers empirically – from the public relations practitioners themselves.

Hofstee (2006: 110-111) mentions that the research method should, *inter alia*, be complete in covering the thesis statement; be applicable and reliable; fall within budget; and be realistic regarding the time frame. It is with these guidelines in mind that the research design was constructed.

2. Research design

Burns & Bush (2005: 104-115) outline three types of research design, namely **exploratory**, **descriptive**, and **causal** research designs. This thesis uses exploratory and descriptive research designs.

Described as “*unstructured, informal research that is undertaken to gain background information about the general nature of the research problem*” (Burns & Bush, 2005: 105), an **exploratory research design** was used for the first phase of the research, namely problem statement development (Chapter One), and literature review (Chapter Two). It should, however, be noted that the literature selection for the survey discussed in Chapter Two used a basic thematic structure, and was therefore not, strictly speaking, unstructured and informal.

The second phase of the research used a **descriptive research design**, which is “*undertaken to describe answers to questions of who, what, where, when, and how*” (Burns &

Bush, 2005: 110). The intention of the descriptive research design was to establish whether the findings of the first phase are applicable to the “*real world*” of public relations practice in South Africa, and to test the likelihood of the realignment of public relations to be accepted by public relations practitioners.

Construct validity required the researcher to read about the topic and then to compile a measurement construct – the literature survey and completed questionnaire. This enables the researcher to state with confidence that the test measures **that** which it is supposed to measure.

Design types may be classified into empirical and non-empirical studies. This research uses the **non-empirical** approach in the first two chapters, chiefly focusing on the literature review, which helps the researcher to form an “*overview of scholarship in a certain discipline through an analysis of trends and debates*” (Mouton, 2001: 179).

The conclusions reported in Chapter Two have outlined a number of questions that remain unanswered by the literature review, and had to be addressed in **primary** (empirical) **research**. The empirical research method that was selected was that of the **Internet-based computer-administered survey**, which is “*one in which computer technology plays an essential role in the interview work ... [where] the computer acts as the medium by which potential respondents are approached, and it is the means by which respondents submit their completed questionnaires*” (Burns & Bush, 2005: 195)

The Internet-based computer-administered survey has several advantages, including speed, error-free interviews, real-time evaluation of data, and reduction of interview evaluation concern in respondents. Disadvantages include high set-up costs, and the requirement of technical skills (Burns & Bush, 2005: 195-196). Since the research tool *SurveyMonkey* was used, the set-up costs and technical skill requirements were largely reduced, thus making this option practical and relatively easy to use. While the author of this thesis started his research in South Africa, he had to complete his research from South Korea, which made the choice of this kind of survey even more logical, since physical distance from South Africa would not present any major disadvantages.

The survey is “*usually quantitative in nature and ... aim[s] to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population*” (Mouton, 2001: 152), and is typically best suited to exploratory and descriptive research. The literature review was chiefly exploratory in nature, and therefore the survey was used to describe and quantify the views and opinions of South African public relations practitioners.

3. Methodology

Using the designs outlined in the previous section, the following methods were employed in conducting this research:

- Literature study.
- Empirical research.

3.1 Literature study

Using the literature survey reported in Chapter Two as mainly exploratory research, the approach to selection of textbooks, books, journals, publications and Internet articles were selected on a primarily thematic basis, focusing on the three major themes outlined in Chapter One, namely:

- Ethics (encompassing business and marketing ethics).
- Management (encompassing the role of public relations and relationship to marketing).
- Public relations education.
- Porter's value chain as proposed new model for public relations.

The intention of the literature survey was to discover current discourse surrounding each of these themes as they relate to the research question stated in Chapter One. The theme at hand, in each case, directed the search that was initiated in textbooks, journals and Internet articles. In Internet searches, extensive use was made of two academic search engines, namely *EBSCOhost* and *ScienceDirect*.

Given the postmodern perspective that informs this discussion, literature was drawn from a variety of different disciplines outside the realm of public relations literature. These disciplines include marketing, management, ethics, strategic management, and advertising.

3.2 Empirical research

The literature survey revealed several unanswered questions that had to be addressed using primary research. Using these questions as a basis, a questionnaire was drawn up in order to get answers from public relations practitioners themselves.

Specifically, the questionnaire was designed to obtain answers to the following broad questions:

- Whether the “splintering” of the function of public relations is replicated in the “real world.”
- How public relations practitioners view the role of their function in the organisation.
- What the views of public relations practitioners are on the educational grounding of this discipline.
- What the likelihood is of public relations practitioners accepting a realigned role for public relations in the organisation.

Upon finalisation of a first draft of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted (see Section 7.2), and the feedback from that pilot study was used to finalise the questionnaire, which was then sent to members of the sample population (main study).

4. Sampling

South African public relations practitioners constitute the sampling element required for this thesis. The sampling frame that was used is the e-mail list of PRISA. Established in 1957, PRISA is the professional body for public relations practitioners in South Africa, and is described as “*one of the leading public relations professional bodies in the world*” (Skinner *et al.*, 2004: 22). The CEO of PRISA, Margi Moscardi, was approached to allow this researcher access to the e-mail database of PRISA-members. With the assistance of Susan Richardson at PRISA, the questionnaire was e-mailed to a total number of 1 239 respondents on 23 April 2008.

5. Survey

The survey, as was already mentioned, was designed to obtain answers to specific questions identified by the literature review. The population that was used comprises the membership roll of PRISA. At present it is the only existing professional body in South Africa representing the entire profession of public relations. All of its members are involved in public relations in one way or another, whether as corporate practitioner, private practitioner, or academic. Given this situation, it was felt that their opinions would be representative of the state of public relations in South Africa.

6. Questionnaire

Before sending a final questionnaire to the database, a **pilot study** was conducted in order to test and assess the validity of the questionnaire. Pre-testing the questionnaire (conducting a pilot study) is an important, though, sadly neglected, phase in questionnaire construction (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 244). It helps to identify errors and in general guide the researcher in ironing out difficulties not foreseen when constructing the questionnaire.

Although the pilot needs **not** be tested among representatives of the sample, researchers are encouraged to find "*pilot respondents*" to whom the questionnaire has some relevance. For this pilot, the researcher approached delegates attending the 11th Annual Public Relations Research Conference in Miami, Florida. The questionnaire in this case has direct relevance to the pilot respondents selected.

A copy of the pilot questionnaire is attached to this thesis as **APPENDIX A**.

Feedback from the pilot was used to construct a **final questionnaire** (see **APPENDIX B**).

7. Data collection methods

Two major approaches to data collection were used to achieve the objectives of this research, namely **secondary** and **primary** data collection. While secondary data collection was briefly addressed in Chapter Two (pages 32-33), a few comments (for the purpose of clarity and contextualisation) are reflected below.

7.1 Secondary data collection

In order to ensure that research does not duplicate existing material or address problems that are already solved, it is suggested that an investigation starts with secondary research (Hofstee, 2006: 55).

The secondary research discussed at length in Chapter Two fulfilled the following research **questions** (**Table 3.1**) as they appear on the next page:

Table 3.1: Research questions addressed by secondary research

Research question	Information discovered
What is the organisational position of public relations, and what should this organisational position be?	There is no clarity on the organisational position of public relations. Different sources provide different answers. Clarity on this issue is still elusive after completing secondary research.
Is there a link between marketing and public relations, and what should the nature of this link be?	A link exists, but depending on the source (whether marketing or public relations), the nature of the link is under debate. Clarity on this issue is still elusive after completing secondary research.
Is the educational curriculum of public relations sufficient to equip public relations practitioners well for their job?	This question can be addressed only on completion of primary research. However, indications after completing secondary research are that the educational curriculum focuses on communication subjects and pay little or no attention to business subjects. Literature suggests that a sharper focus on business subjects is required.
Should public relations have a task and role to ensure ethical conduct in the organisation?	Literature clearly shows that public relations as a function could and should be involved in organisational ethics.
What should this organisational role be?	The literature is unclear about a specific ethical role for public relations, although a number of different suggestions are made as to how ethics should be treated in an organisation.

The degree to which the research questions were answered by the literature review obviously impacts on the information solicited by the empirical research. Furthermore, the gaps thus identified could conceivably address the development of the new model for public relations against the background of the Porter value chain, as the penultimate section in Chapter Two indicates. These gaps, and how they are filled by either empirical research or discussion on the Porter model, will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Table 3.2 on the next page shows the research objectives and the degree to which they were met.

Table 3.2: Research objectives addressed by secondary research

Research objective	Information discovered
To describe and define the role of public relations in the organisation.	The organisational role of public relations is found to be problematic. In order to meet this research objective, empirical research on the likelihood of a new model being accepted needs to be conducted in order to fulfil this objective.
To describe the interaction between public relations and marketing.	This interaction is discussed, but not described aptly, showing up an existing turf war between public relations and marketing. This thesis aims to solve that difference of opinion, and primary research will aid in the process.
To investigate the sufficiency of the educational curriculum of public relations.	The surveyed literature seems to be in agreement that the educational curriculum of public relations is currently problematic. Empirical evidence will be sought to establish whether South African practitioners also find the educational curriculum to be insufficient.
To explore a new role for public relations in the organisation.	The literature review indicates a ripeness for exploring a new role for public relations in the organisation that will show its contribution to organisational management on a strategic level.
To establish the views of public relations practitioners on a proposed "new" role for this function in the organisation.	This research objective can only be met by doing empirical research. However, literature suggests that public relations practitioners want to describe a new role for themselves.
To describe the contribution of public relations to ethics in the organisation.	Secondary research is at best unclear about the role of public relations regarding organisational ethics. While it indicates a strong desire from public relations quarters to be included in organisational ethics, literature does not provide sufficient guidelines for this inclusion. Porter's value chain is mooted as a possible candidate for achieving this objective, and will be discussed in more detail once some ethical aspects of public relations practice in South Africa were investigated empirically in more detail.
To describe a model that could improve the function and functioning of public relations.	Discovery in secondary research of the value chain analysis guides the development of this model. The final chapter in this thesis will discuss the model in more detail.

7.2 Primary data collection: Pilot questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted at the 11th Annual Public Relations Research Conference held in Miami from 6-9 March 2008. Approval for using this conference as a pilot platform was obtained from the conference organiser, Don W. Stacks. This conference was attended by a number of academics and practitioners from all over the world (mostly academics). In 2008, a total of 130 delegates indicated that they would attend. It was unfortunately not possible to ascertain whether the full number attended, since roll call during the proceedings was not held. The author of this thesis presented a paper during this conference (based on the literature survey), and handed out questionnaires to delegates attending this presentation, with a request for delegates to complete the questionnaire. Consequently, 71 questionnaires were handed out. A total of 22 individuals returned completed questionnaires (31% response rate), making for a more than sufficient sample for the purposes of piloting a questionnaire.

Although the focus of the thesis is public relations in South Africa, the content of the work has universal relevance, and academics and practitioners from all over the world were able to contribute their insights to this study in this manner. It was interesting (given the size of the sample) to compare some results from the pilot questionnaire with results from the actual data gathering in South Africa. While it may be true that non-South African public relations practitioners may feel differently about certain issues, it was significant to note that, in the majority of cases, respondents from the pilot study agreed with the views of respondents in the main study. Given the high-nature profile in public relations of delegates, their input was valuable from both research **design** and **insight** points of view.

While the purpose of a pilot study is to establish the validity of a measuring instrument, results from such a study may be included in the main report should major problems with reliability not occur. Both criteria were satisfied by the pilot study, since it established the validity as well as reliability of the questionnaire. A Pearson coefficient test was conducted on the questionnaire as well.

It is stressed that the results from the pilot study are not used to compare with South African respondents' results, and that the results from the pilot study are used to **enrich** the discussion around issues that do not solely pertain to the South African situation. Care is taken to ensure that generalisations are not made off a small sample. However, given that this is an exploratory study, inclusion of the pilot study results will add a dimension of understanding to these vexing questions.

Results from the pilot questionnaire were codified into an Excel spreadsheet, and graphs and tables were generated to make the results more readable. Only results that have relevance to the final questionnaire were used, and tables containing the relevant results are included in **APPENDIX E** to this thesis.

7.2.1 General feedback on pilot questionnaire

Some verbal feedback was given to the author by respondents, ranging from commenting on the length of the questionnaire, to general statements. Apart from comments about the length of the questionnaire, which is a valid concern, verbal feedback, if not reflected in writing on the forms handed back, was ignored. Most of the verbal concerns (apart from comments on the length) have in any event found their way into the written feedback. Comments were carefully weighed, and the design of the final questionnaire took those comments into account. For the purposes of completeness, a full record of all of the written comments is recorded in **APPENDIX D** to this thesis. In any event, the pilot questionnaire was remarkably useful, showing up some meaningless questions, and in assisting the researcher in shortening the final questionnaire (one of the frequent comments on the pilot questionnaire was that it took too long to complete). Consequently, some questions or parts of questions were **deleted** from the pilot questionnaire in order to construct the final questionnaire. However, a large portion of questions was found to deliver particularly relevant results, and no new questions were found to be needed for the purposes of the final questionnaire. As a result, most of the responses from the pilot study were found to be valid for inclusion in the discussion of results in Chapter Four of this thesis.

7.3 Primary data collection: Final questionnaire

After weighing the comments on and analysing the data gathered from the pilot group, the final questionnaire was constructed. It was designed to collect the following information:

- Biographical data on respondents.
- Opinions on the role of public relations in the organisation.
- Opinions on ethics in the organisation and society.
- Views on the proposed new role of public relations, and public relations education.

The data collection was done using a **structured self-reporting questionnaire**. The final questionnaire (see **APPENDIX B**) was sent to the database of PRISA with the help of Susan Richardson. A total of 1 239 e-mails were sent to active PRISA members on the afternoon of Wednesday, 23 April 2008. Included in the e-mail was a letter to PRISA members (see

APPENDIX C), urging them to complete the survey. The covering letter was signed by Prof. A. Slabbert, head of research of the Faculty of Business at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, thereby confirming that this research project may be considered “*legitimate*” in the eyes of respondents. In order to minimise non-response, all members were reminded on two different occasions to complete the questionnaire online. The final reminder was dispatched on 15 May 2008, and the cut-off date (on which results were collated) was 20 May 2008. The data gathering thus took place over a period of four weeks.

An online research tool, named “*SurveyMonkey.Com*” was used to enable ease of use (for respondents) and ease of data capture. On the homepage (www.surveymonkey.com) it is stated that this research tool assists researchers with the design, gathering, and analysis of data. The research tool was proposed by Corrie Uys from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. *SurveyMonkey.Com* is described by Fluss (2007: 10) as “*inexpensive and easy-to-use*” and able to “*create, issue, and collect survey results.*” While this survey tool is not able to do sophisticated analytics or reporting capabilities, those were not seen as hindrances in the analysis and interpretation of this thesis with its focus on exploration.

Initially, some electronic glitches were discovered when some respondents e-mailed PRISA, and pointed out that they were not able to complete the survey online. The glitches were ironed out, and an explanatory e-mail, serving as a second reminder, was sent out to the database. In cases where individuals sent e-mails informing the research team about electronic glitches, they were answered and thanked individually, and asked to complete the survey.

In essence, this was a mail survey. The sample is relatively small and geographically dispersed. By virtue of their membership to a professional organisation (PRISA), the respondents share a relatively high interest in the topic under survey. For these reasons, the e-mail survey is ideal.

The length of the questionnaire is 13 questions, taking between 10 – 15 minutes to complete online. As such, it may be described as of “*moderate*” length. Zikmund & Babin (2007: 231) mention the fact that a moderate questionnaire is typical of the Internet survey, and point out that data collection is instantaneous, allowing for faster data collection and analysis.

8. Format for presentation of results

Two sets of results will be presented in Chapter Four, namely:

- Results from the pilot study (respondents will be called **US Respondents**).
- Results from the main study (respondents will be called **SA respondents**).

The table below shows the number of questionnaires sent out, number of responses, and response rate for each of these two sets of results:

Table 3.3: Questionnaire responses – actual numbers

Item	US Respondents	SA respondents
Questionnaires sent.	71	1239
Number of responses.	22	101
Percentage response rate.	31%	8%

Damschroder, Zikmund-Fischer, & Ubel (2005: 273) quote Couper, who cites online response rates ranging from 8 per cent to 60 per cent. This online research response rate is at the lower end of the international response rates. However, the low response rate is not of major concern, given the **exploratory nature** of this thesis. As the final chapter shows, more empirical research, and in more countries, will need to be done to explore some of the themes discussed so far.

The decision to include the responses gathered from delegates to the Miami conference was not taken lightly, given that the title of this thesis implies a South African focus. However, as the literature survey discovered, and as results from the pilot study indicated, the themes under examination in this research are not only limited to the South African situation. The particular profile of the US respondents (mainly academics in the field of public relations) is highly relevant to this research, which therefore makes their responses relevant and valid to the topics under discussion.

The pilot study was conducted primarily to finalise the questionnaire, and therefore responses on questions **excluded** from the final questionnaire will **not** be discussed in this thesis. This makes for a more equitable discussion of results.

While the profile of respondents is typically discussed in the chapter dealing with the presentation of results in many theses, Mouton (2001: 124) mentions that the sample profile may also be discussed in the chapter on research methodology.

In the case of the pilot study, the profile has relevance on the research method owing to the high level of interest that respondents have in the subject covered in this thesis. In the case of the main survey, the profile of respondents is seminal to the presentation and interpretation of results. The response rate, at 8 per cent is low, and 101 respondents may be seen as a number at the lower end of acceptable responses. However, the level of interest in the subject, academic background, years of relevant experience, and so on raises the profile of respondents, and lends weight to their responses. A person with 25 years of experience in public relations may bring insights not duplicated by ten respondents with one year of experience amongst them.

For these reasons, the sample profile will be discussed in this chapter of the thesis, while the results will be presented and interpreted in Chapter Four, using the two groups of respondents as earlier indicated – **US respondents** and **SA respondents**. Given the small number of respondents and the danger of generalising, it was decided to name both groups “respondents”, thus indicating that the results of both surveys are only applicable to those who completed the questionnaires. It would also be irresponsible if not pointless to conduct too deep analytical and statistical manipulation of data, and the decision was taken to report only that which can be reported on. The reader is reminded that this is an exploratory study, and therefore this approach is acceptable.

9. Sample profile

As was mentioned earlier, the sampling frame was the e-mail database of PRISA. According to Skinner *et al.* (2004: 22-24) PRISA has an accreditation system for members, using academic qualification and experience as key principles for affording various membership levels to members. Points are allocated to individuals enrolling as members, ranging from 5 points for “student” status to 70 points for Accredited in Public Relations (APR) status.

The questionnaire was mailed to the following profile:

Table 3.4: PRISA registration levels

Membership level	Minimum points required	Number of recipients
Public relations practitioner.	50	401
Chartered public relations practitioner.	60	483
APR (including fellow, honorary, and retired).	70	355
TOTAL		1239

The sampling frame excluded students, affiliates, and associates, who collectively have little or no experience in public relations, although qualified in this discipline. This makes for a potentially high-level respondent profile as far as knowledge and practical experience are concerned. The sample discussed refers to **public relations practitioners** in South Africa, who are also members of PRISA. As was stated earlier, 101 respondents reacted to the request to complete the questionnaire.

In the case of the **US respondents**, the sampling frame consisted of delegates to the 11th Annual Public Relations Research Conference in Miami in 2008. As would be expected, most of these respondents are academics.

The profiles of each of these groups of respondents will be described in detail in the two subsections that follow.

9.1 Sample profile: US respondents

On average, respondents indicated 15 years' experience in the field of public relations, giving depth to their insights in the field when combined with their high levels of academic qualification.

It is not surprising that a large number of respondents (55% of them) indicated their precise job title as that of “professor”, since this was an academic conference:

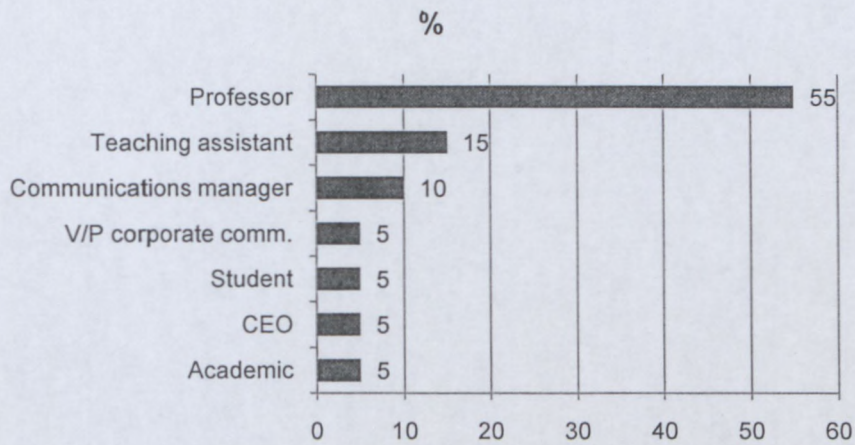


Figure 3.1: Job titles of US respondents

It is, however, interesting to note that at least two out of every ten US respondents (a total of six respondents) are from the non-academic world, which means that the respondents are not “pure” academics, bringing some measure of real world experience and insight to this research. In any event, the relatively high academic and non-academic status (CEO for example) of respondents is indicative of an average respondent who has spent a number of years and a lot of effort in understanding public relations and its related fields. In keeping with their high occupational positions, US respondents are also very well educated, with nearly eight out of every ten respondents indicating a post-graduate qualification (suspected to be at PhD level). Since the questionnaire was originally not developed for academics, but rather practitioners, allowance for a doctoral qualification in the response column was not made.

Suffice it to say that US respondents are highly qualified, thereby lending further gravity to their responses:

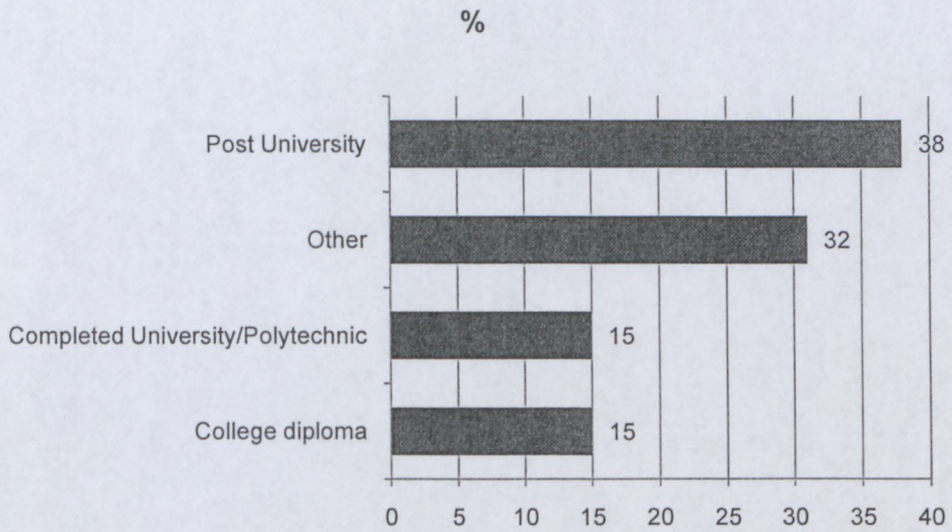


Figure 3.2: Qualifications of US respondents

Again not surprisingly, most respondents majored in the fields of public relations and communication:

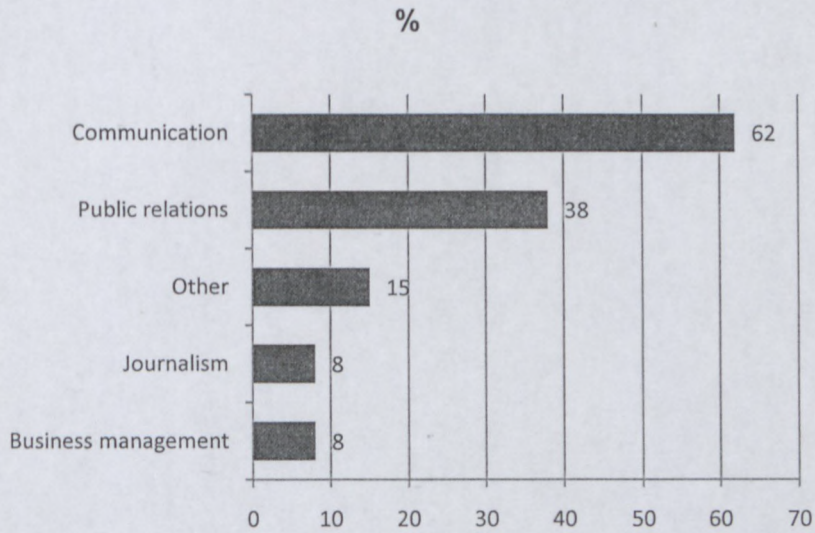


Figure 3.3: Major fields of study of US respondents

Some respondents were from countries like Turkey, Australia, South Africa, Switzerland, and even South Korea. However, the majority has indicated English as their first language, thereby creating no problems as far as language of the questionnaire (English) is concerned. More than seven out of every ten respondents (73%) indicated that they work in academia, thereby showing that they are of high educational calibre, and that their responses are highly relevant to this research, virtually necessitating a close look at their opinions. These will be presented alongside those of the South African respondents, and compared or contrasted where their opinions might further enrich the understanding of the relevant topic under discussion.

9.2 Sample profile: SA respondents

Job titles of PRISA-members who responded to the questionnaire vary greatly. Ranging from chairman and CEO to futurist, a diversity of job titles is found present. Candidates were asked to provide their specific job title. For the purposes of analysis and interpretation, broad categories were drawn up to reflect the general trend in jobs held by respondents using keywords from job titles provided. For example, where a respondent answered "Public relations officer", the key phrase is "public relations". Where another respondent answered "Communications officer", the keyword is "communications". For self-described CEOs, managers, or directors, the keyword to describe these will be "management":

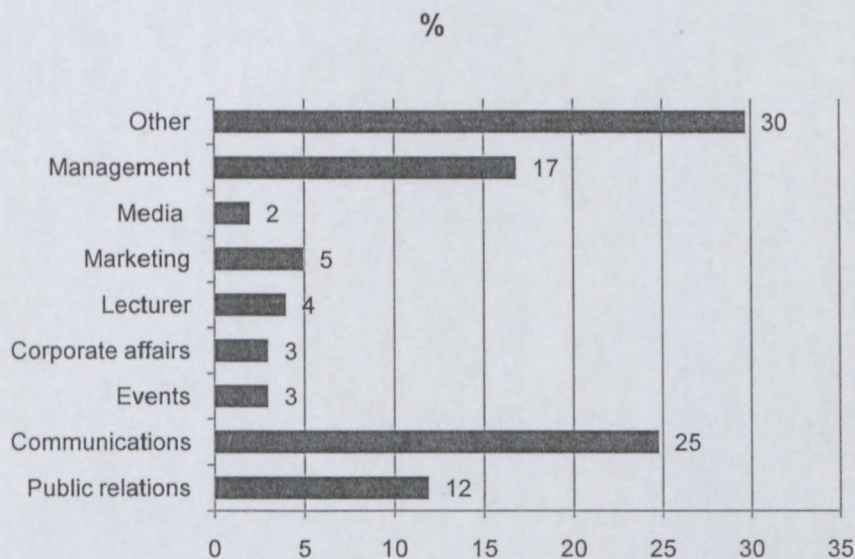


Figure 3.4: Job titles of SA respondents

While **Figure 3.4** shows broad categories of job titles (one respondent goes by the title of “*futurist*”), it does reflect a fairly wide diversity of jobs held by respondents, adding to the validity of information collected by the questionnaire.

In addition to a wide variety of jobs held, respondents are from small to large companies, reporting employees numbering as few as one, to employees numbering 70 000 in one case. Again, this adds to the validity of the data. For reporting reasons, responses were categorised as follows:

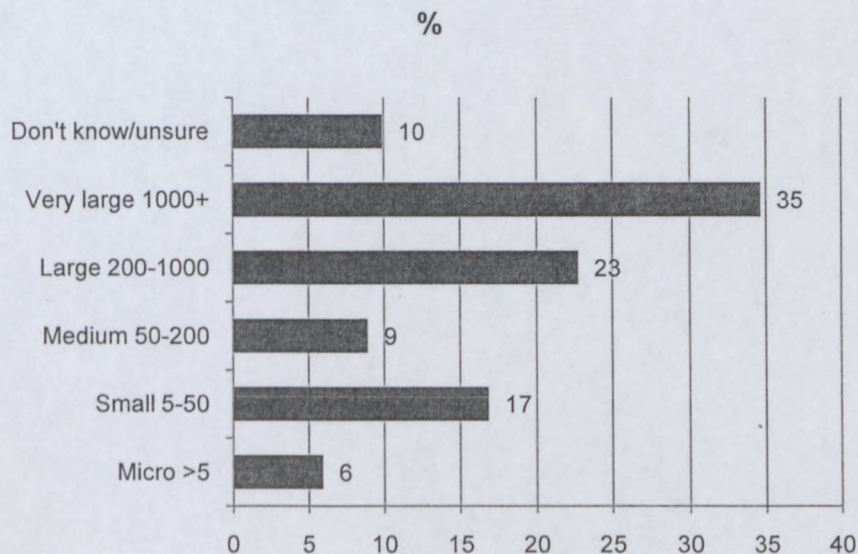


Figure 3.5: Company size of SA respondents

This shows a healthy spread of organisations represented by the sample, although a slight bias in favour of very large organisations is apparent. This may be partly explained by the fact that, to small and micro organisations, public relations is sometimes seen as a “luxury”, and not part of the small business organisation as a separate function.

The sample is also fairly evenly spread in geographic terms, with most of the respondents (15%) living and working in Gauteng, followed by Pretoria (6%), Cape Town (5%), Durban (5%) and Eastern Cape (5%). Some respondents reported Windhoek (Namibia) and Gabarone (Botswana) as their place of work. There is no clear geographic bias in the sample, making responses representative of (at least) major South African metropolitan areas.

SA respondents are experienced in public relations. While some reported one year of experience (and, in one case, none), others reported experience of up to 40 years. In any

event, the average years of experience in public relations is calculated at approximately 12 years for the average respondent, meaning that respondents are well-qualified to address some issues raised in the questionnaire. A variety of industries are represented by the sample:

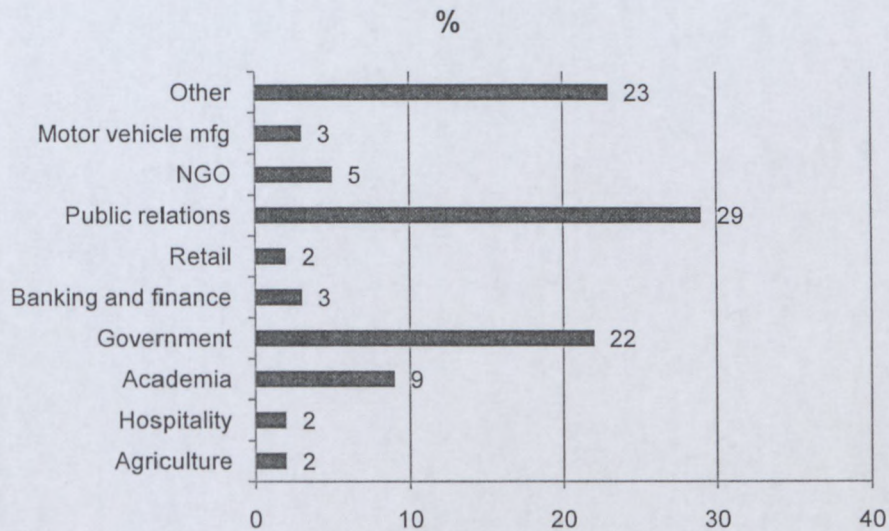


Figure 3.6: Industries of SA respondents

It is somewhat disconcerting to notice that no representatives from any of the following industries responded to the questionnaire:

- Wine and alcoholic beverages
- Beer brewing
- Food manufacturing

This could either mean that those industries are not interested in belonging to professional organisations such as PRISA, or that they are wary of participating in research, believing that they or their organisations could, somehow, be negatively affected. It is documented in this thesis that the food manufacturers in South Africa such as Tiger Brands have been involved in price fixing scandals.

In all, the profile of SA respondents is that of a well-qualified, reasonably experienced group of people who work in public relations and related fields, and who represent South Africa's major business cities. Even though the number of responses is small, the **quality** of responses will not be under doubt.

10. Shortcomings and sources of error

A major perceived shortcoming of the research will be the relatively low response rate, although still within acceptable margins. This is, however, offset to a large extent by the quality of respondents, as the previous section on the biographical profile of both groups of respondents indicates. All efforts were made to ensure a high response rate:

- The e-mail to respondents was sent under a covering letter from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.
- Respondents were reminded to complete the questionnaire on two separate occasions, taking into account a spate of public holidays around 1 May 2008.
- Respondents were given sufficient time in which to complete questionnaires.

In spite of these efforts, a final response rate of 8,15 per cent was achieved. This could be attributed to a number of phenomena, including a general decreasing tendency to react to research requests, and feelings of antipathy towards PRISA, under whose aegis the questionnaire went out. However, the reasons for low response are mere speculation.

Another issue that needs to be raised in this section relates to the number of completed questionnaires, and completed questions. Not all respondents who returned their questionnaires completed them (in other words, they did not provide answers to all questions). On average, 77 per cent of questionnaires were fully completed. For the purposes of academic rigour, a table containing detailed analysis of responses received per question for Sections B, C, and D of the questionnaire, where the strength of feeling on a number of statements is tested, is included here.

Table 3.5: Summary of number of responses per question – Section B

Section and question	Total respondents	Missing	Total answered
B13.1	101	11	90
B13.2	101	11	90
B13.3	101	11	90
B13.4	101	11	90
B13.5	101	12	89
B13.6	101	13	88
B13.7	101	12	89
B13.8	101	11	90
B13.9	101	11	90
B13.10	101	13	88
B13.11	101	11	90

Section and question	Total respondents	Missing	Total answered
B14.1	101	12	89
B14.2	101	11	90
B14.3	101	11	90
B14.4	101	13	88
B14.5	101	13	88
B14.6	101	11	90

Responses in Section C tended to be somewhat lower:

Table 3.6: Summary of number of responses per question – Section C

Section and question	Total respondents	Missing	Total answered
C15.1	101	16	85
C15.2	101	18	83
C15.3	101	16	85
C15.4	101	16	85
C15.5	101	16	85
C15.6	101	16	85
C15.7	101	17	84
C15.8	101	17	84
C15.9	101	18	83
C15.10	101	17	84
C15.11	101	17	84

Section D showed a further small drop in replies given:

Table 3.7: Summary of number of responses per question – Section D

Section and question	Total respondents	Missing	Total answered
D16.1	101	22	79
D16.2	101	22	79
D16.3	101	23	78
D16.4	101	22	79
D16.5	101	22	79
D16.6	101	22	79
D16.7	101	24	77
D16.8	101	22	79
D16.9	101	22	79
D16.10	101	22	79

In spite of the low response rate, however, the author of this thesis is confident that the validity of the research is not severely compromised given the relatively high **quality of respondents** in both groups.

11. Chapter conclusions

Neuman (1997: 19) is of the opinion that exploratory research may be the beginning of “a *sequence of studies*”. He argues that exploratory research “*rarely yields definitive answers*”, and that researchers exploring new ground frequently have to be flexible, open to new thinking, and “*explore all sources of information*”.

While this thesis covers some familiar ground in revisiting what is already known about public relations in the organisation, ethics, and education in public relations, it is also trying to break new ground by linking theories from different disciplines to current understanding of the problems faced by public relations. This thesis meets some of the goals of exploratory research that Neuman (1997: 20) outlines:

- Sketch a good picture of what is currently happening in a discipline.
- Develop ideas and conjectures.
- Investigate whether further or additional research is feasible.
- Develop some sense of direction for research in future.

It is in the spirit of what Neuman understands to be the purpose and goals of exploratory research that this thesis should be understood, since it is certainly aiming to describe (using literature and empirical data) what currently is happening in public relations, specifically with regard to its organisational uncertainty.

It is developing ideas, and making some conjectures, based in part on empirical data, of what the way forward could be, and in trying to develop a direction for future research, which, in this case, is research based on the use of Porter’s value chain in the organisation to realign public relations.

Did the research method yield results that aids the thesis in achieving these aims? The next chapter will examine those results in more detail to see whether this is indeed the case.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Virtue does not come from money, but from virtue comes money and all other good things to man,
both to the individual and to the state.

(Socrates in Knowles, 2004: 745)

1. Introduction

Chapter Two, the literature review, identified in its conclusion **five areas** in which empirical research was suggested:

- The willingness of public relations practitioners to accept the suggestion that public relations be seen as a support activity in the organisation according to the value chain analysis.
- The extent to which public relations practitioners agree that public relations should/should not be outsourced.
- Whether public relations practitioners agree that the educational curriculum be adapted to include more reference to business subjects in order to develop a more solid understanding of the organisation's functioning.
- The views held by public relations practitioners on the centricity of the customer.
- The role that public relations could/should play in organisational ethics.

The questionnaire was designed accordingly to gather empirical data on the opinions of public relations practitioners in South Africa on these issues. It was structured in four sections:

- A – Biographical data
- B – Opinions
- C – Execution of public relations
- D – New role of public relations

Questions asked about the role of public relations in the organisation, organisational ethics, and public relations activities guided the development of a research question and the next section, which deals with overall conclusions, will address the extent to which the literature studied and empirical findings address the problems thus identified. Mention was made in Chapter Three that the questionnaire was piloted among a group of academics (and some practitioners) who gathered in Miami in March 2008 to participate in the 11th Annual Public

Relations Research Conference. Given the high-profile nature of the participants in this pilot study, and given that they are involved in research and education, thereby grappling with most of the issues identified in this thesis, their views are considered highly valid, and can therefore be discussed as part of the research process. In all cases, their views may be contrasted with those of South African public relations practitioners, thereby providing a more comprehensive empirical picture of the issues dealt with. However, the intention is not to generalise findings from either group of respondents, since the number of respondents in each case was low. Furthermore, it may be argued that like is not compared to like. The point of this research is not to compare views of practitioners to that of academics; neither is it to compare South Africans to (mainly) Americans. The point of this research is to establish whether public relations is indeed experiencing some measure of identity crisis, and to find out if a suggested new approach may find fertile ground. The reader is reminded of the research question:

In what way can public relations restore its good name and gain its rightful position as an organisational function that contributes to the ultimate strategic and ethical success of the organisation?

The reader is also reminded that this is an exploratory research. This chapter, which analyses the results of the empirical research, will therefore refer to two groups of respondents:

- **US respondents**, meaning those respondents who participated in the pilot study.
- **SA respondents**, meaning those respondents who participated in the main research survey.

Owing to the fact that this thesis, in its title, makes specific reference to the state of affairs in South Africa, the opinions of US respondents will be used only to enrich the responses gleaned from the SA respondents. It was, however, remarkable to discover that the issues felt to be important in South Africa, and the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a number of statements, were almost identical with those of the US respondents. The responses gathered from the pilot questionnaire therefore enrich this study, especially given the relatively low number of responses in South Africa.

This chapter will not discuss the results as they appeared in the logic of the questionnaire, but rather examine the results as they pertain to the five areas suggested in Chapter Two as outlined above. The analysis starts from the foundation of understanding the profile of the respondents – who are they? Do they have experience in public relations? Are they qualified

to give considered opinions on the issues at hand? These and other questions were fully addressed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

The first of five areas identified in the introduction to this chapter will be addressed next – to what extent are public relations practitioners in South Africa ready to accept the notion that public relations be seen as one of the organisation-wide support activities in the organisation? In other words, are public relations practitioners ready to accept the role of public relations as a support activity in the value chain?

2. Support activity in the value chain

Before investigating whether or not respondents are likely to adapt recommendations on positioning public relations in the value chain, some of the issues identified in the first two chapters have to be addressed. The first such issue relates to the name of public relations. Is it indeed the case that public relations goes by many names in South Africa? The affirmative seems to be the case.

Respondents gave the following information on the name of the public relations department in their various organisations:

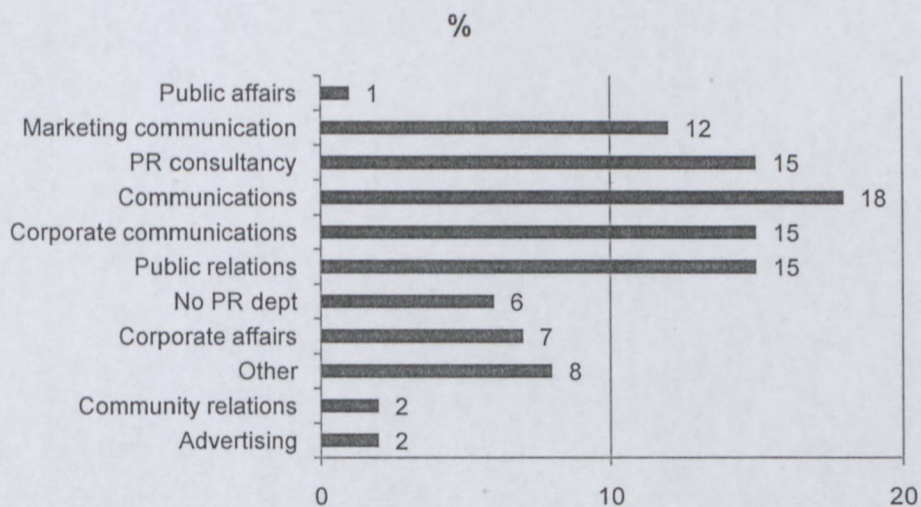


Figure 4.1: Name of public relations department – SA respondents

Clearly, then, “*public relations*” is not called “*public relations*” in South Africa, but neither is it called anything else specifically, although the most popular moniker seems to be “*communication*”. It is also interesting to note a fairly high response for “*marketing communication*”, which raises the issue of a turf war between public relations and marketing

possibly swinging into the favour of marketing. In any event, the data supports the suspicion that the name of the discipline itself has splintered, and has not consolidated around “corporate communications” as is advocated in some quarters.

Were the same respondents to be asked what the names would be of other departments such as marketing, finance, or production, the profusion of different department names will in all likelihood be much less than in this case. Naming something is describing what it does. That public relations practitioners, academics, and business managers cannot agree on what to name the practice of public relations is a strong indication that there is uncertainty in South Africa about the precise organisational role and function of public relations. Incidentally, even US respondents (although from fairly similar places of work such as universities) are not free from the splintering of naming their departments.

The pilot study results show a similar pattern of differently-named public relations departments in universities represented by the US respondents, as **Figure 4.2** below shows. While public relations as a department name wins by a margin (nearly a quarter of respondents), other departments fulfilling similar functions have different names such as corporate communication, public affairs, or marketing communication.

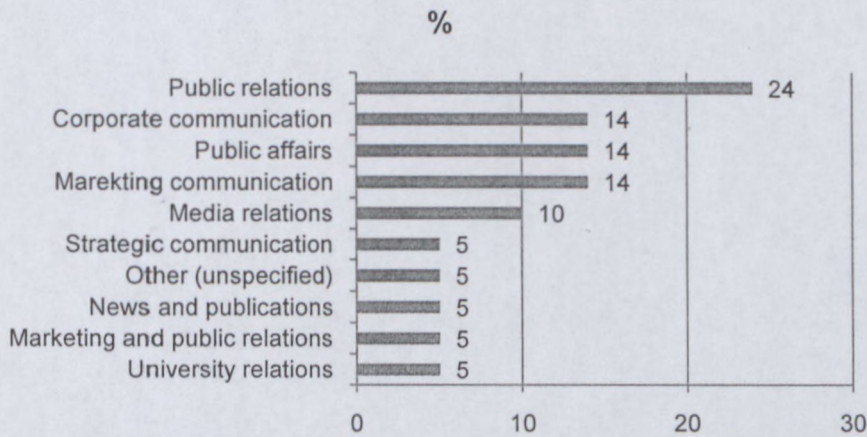


Figure 4.2: Name of public relations department – US respondents

This splintering is also reflected in the fact that public relations draws its practitioners from a divergent academic field.

When asked to state their major fields of study, respondents replied as follows:

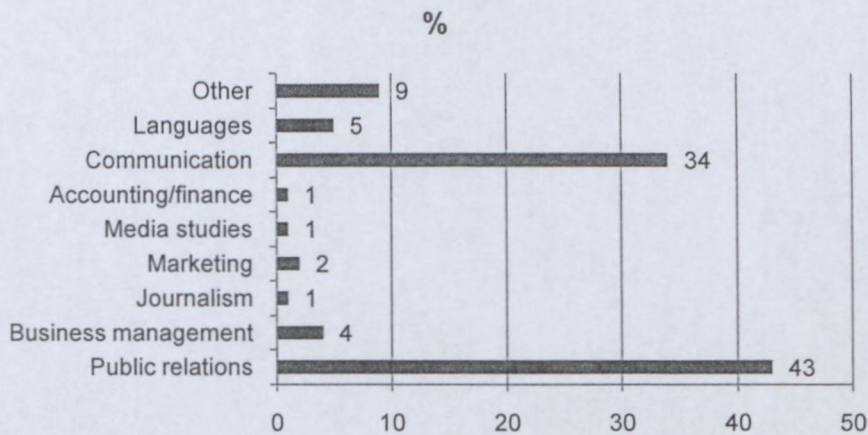


Figure 4.3: Major field(s) of study – SA respondents

Understandably, public relations and communication would feature strongly, with 76 per cent of respondents having those majors, but which still leaves nearly three out of every ten respondents from other fields of study. This supports the finding in the literature study that the profession has not established itself firmly as a profession, requiring a **professionally relevant education**. Definitely, if a pedantic approach were to be followed, only 43 per cent of respondents (less than half) in fact studied a relevant major – public relations. This reflects not only on the profession in the sense that any person and any training will do, but also reflects on the possible overlap between especially communication and public relations, a fact that may well reveal a theoretical confusion about the organisational role and function of public relations. For a profession that wishes to be seen as an equal partner in business, this kind of academic background may be found not to measure up to standard, and therefore needs to be addressed.

2.1 Views on organisational function

How do respondents see their function in the organisation? As the literature survey indicated, no clear guideline exists on the functioning of public relations, and the empirical survey was partly designed to discover whether this theoretical confusion translates into practical confusion. Along with this is the suspicion that a misunderstanding of their organisational functioning may, inadvertently, lead public relations practitioners into ethical “traps”, thereby rendering the name of public relations besmirched, as it already seems to be. The responses to the questions that could solicit relevant information have been, to say the least, enlightening, as **Table 4.1** on the following page reveals.

Table 4.1: Views on role of public relations – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.	23.3	31.1	23.2	1.1
It is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light.	47.8	28.9	13.3	3.3
Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.	18.4	49.0	24.5	2.0
Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.	6.0	18.0	52.0	6.0
In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.	30.7	24.9	14.9	0.0

The responses reflected in the table above indicate a number of significant insights into how well or badly SA respondents understand their functioning in the organisation, with perhaps the most telling insight revealed in the first statement.

More than six out of every ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is the responsibility of public relations to develop the organisation's mission. There are a number of problems with this understanding. The development of an organisational mission is typically a **collective effort** of top and middle management. Ehlers & Lazenby (2007: 2) mention that strategic management is a process that involves **all** of the functional managers of the organisation, while the mission statement is the "*foundation for the development of long-term objectives and the selection of strategies*" (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 67). Given that the formulation (development) of a mission for an organisation involves **all** of the functional managers and given that it is such an important aspect in organisational strategic management, it would seem at best presumptive of public relations practitioners to indicate that the development of the mission should be the responsibility of public relations. Therefore, this insight as reflected in the survey is a clue that public relations practitioners do not clearly understand their function in the organisation. It also points to a misunderstanding of what strategic management entails.

The opinion that public relations should develop the organisation's mission is shared by US respondents, supporting the universal lack of strategic understanding:

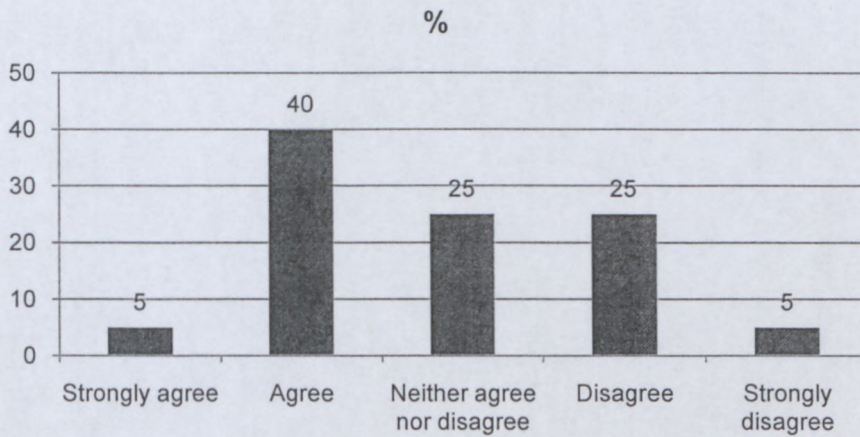


Figure 4.4: Public relations should develop mission – US respondents

Another tile in the mosaic is added by the insight that 77 per cent of practitioners (and 42% of US respondents) believe that the organisation should **always** be presented in a favourable light by the public relations function. Of course, it may (and surely will) be debated that it is precisely the function of public relations to present the organisation in a favourable light. Should this be the case, why, then, do 17 per cent of respondents (and 34% of US respondents) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that *“it is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light”*? Do they believe that public relations should sometimes present the organisation in an unfavourable light? Conversely, do those that agree believe that the organisation should be presented in a favourable light, regardless of when it does wrong? Seemingly yes, as the response indicates to the following statement: *“Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations to defend the organisation’s actions”*. The responses to this statement are reflected in **Figure 4.5** on the following page.

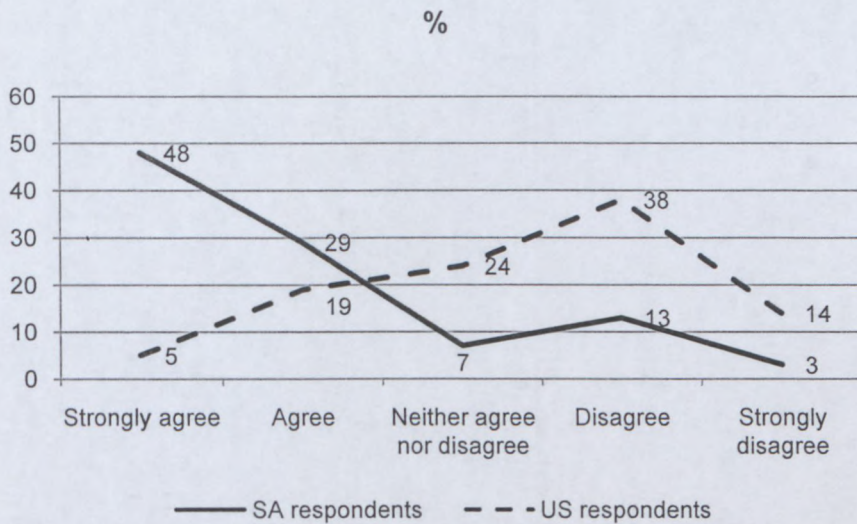


Figure 4.5: Defending the organisation's actions even when it does wrong

It is a significant observation that South African respondents are decidedly in favour of defending organisational actions, even in the face of wrongdoing. In the US, which arguably has a more regulated industry, the tendency is to disagree with the statement, while South Africa, with its less-regulated environment (and where examples of organisational wrongdoing abound) feels that defending the organisation under all circumstances is in order. This could reflect the general moral decay so prevalent in South Africa, or a more ethically lax approach among South African practitioners. Since a comparison here cannot be drawn based solely on the results from a pilot test, it is an insight that could prove fertile ground for future research on the issue.

Again, it may be argued that the word "*defend*" indicates that it does not mean presenting the organisation in a favourable light by lying (for example), and that this is, again, the purpose of public relations. However, the disagreement between respondents is an indication that they lack clarity on the function of public relations. Either it defends the organisation, or it does **not** defend the organisation. What is it to be? The jury on this issue seems to be fairly evenly split. In any event, the literature does not specify whether public relations should or should not present the organisation in a favourable light at all times, and neither does it indicate whether the organisation should be defended even when it is doing wrong. It is, in fact, argued that taking the view of always defending or presenting the organisation in a favourable light opens the door for misrepresentation, manipulation, and downright malpractice. As the definitions discussed, and provided, in Chapter One indicate, it is the task of public relations to build and maintain **relationships** favourable to the organisation. By focusing too strongly on the perceived task of presenting the organisation's case favourably (even when it does wrong) may lead the less well-trained public relations practitioner (or, for

example, BA Languages graduate) to believe that the function of public relations truly is that of spin doctor, an image from which it wishes to escape. Managing relationships in any event will require the honest practitioner to acknowledge when the organisation did wrong, as was the case with Mattel. Always defending the organisation, in some of the other cases cited like that of Tiger Brands may lead to a perception that the organisation is manipulating opinion to its own benefit.

That public relations practitioners understand the functioning of other departments in the organisation is believed to be true by a significant proportion of respondents, however, more than a quarter believe this **not** to be the case. A similar pattern is detected in the opinions of the participants in the pilot research, although the US respondents take a slightly more jaundiced view:

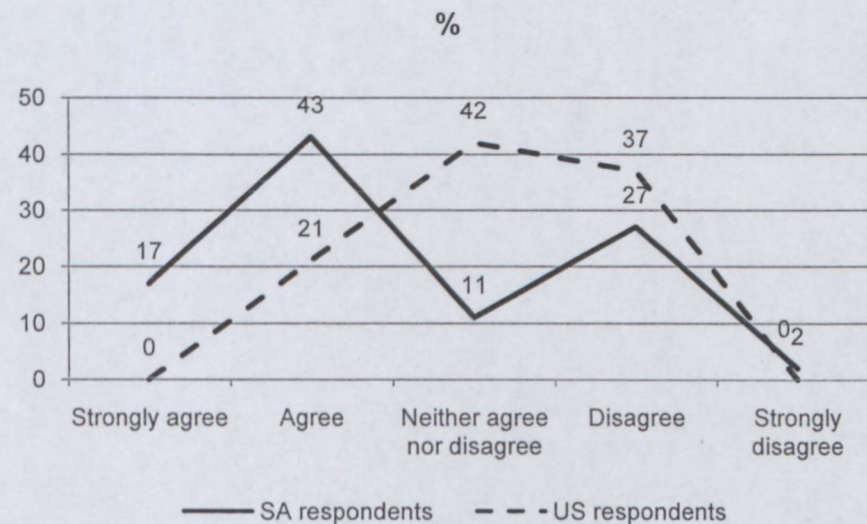


Figure 4.6: Understanding how other business departments function

Interestingly, nearly 43 per cent of US respondents chose the middle road in answering this question by neither agreeing nor disagreeing. It is not possible here to conjecture about the causes of this middle road approach, especially given the fact that the US respondents were a small sample. This again could prove grounds for future research. However, conviction among South African respondents, that public relations practitioners show a good understanding of how other business departments function is definitely lacking, indicating that public relations practitioners may need to address this perceived weakness in their armoury.

It is rare that, say, a journalist will be asked to perform a job as financial auditor, or that (even more rare) a woodworker be asked to perform surgery on human patients. However, on the face of it, anybody who wants to is allowed to practice as a public relations practitioner. To what extent do practitioners themselves feel that their job is a professional one, one that requires a professional and relevant tertiary qualification? Curiously, nearly 15 per cent of respondents did not feel it necessary to have such a relevant tertiary qualification. It is, however, heartening to note that the majority of respondents did feel it necessary, showing that much has so far been done by professional public relations bodies like PRISA to professionalise public relations. However, it needs to be pointed out that, even if the majority of respondents feel that a relevant tertiary education is needed, a number of them may not possess the relevant degree.

Views shared by respondents in both groups at this stage are indicative of a conflict of opinion on the function of public relations in the organisation, and may well be symptomatic of the fact that theory is itself confused, or that practitioners do not have relevant qualifications or are simply ill-prepared by their education to perform optimally within the organisation. This does not completely address the issue under discussion in this section, although painting a part of the picture. The next subsection will take a closer look at a key area of debate in the organisational role of public relations, namely that of line or staff function.

2.2 Line versus staff function

A central issue identified in the literature review is the confusion about the fact whether public relations should be a line function, or whether it should be a staff function. This has not yet been settled, and contributes at least partly to the confusion about the organisational functioning of public relations. The question was whether this theoretical confusion is replicated in practice, or whether it is found only in theory. Respondents in both the pilot study and main survey were given two statements relating to this issue:

Table 4.2: Line versus staff function – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL the departments in the organisation.	28.2	52.6	6.4	1.3
The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	25.3	29.1	25.3	5.1

Functional managers such as production and marketing are normally seen as **line managers** in the organisation where they are responsible for a function within the organisation. Human resources and administration, on the other hand, are seen, as **staff functions** responsible for lending support to all departments in the organisation.

The distinction between line and staff function, and whether public relations should be one or the other, has long been discussed in management and public relations textbooks.

Taking a logical step forward, one may even be tempted to include the discussion surrounding technician or strategist in a discussion on line function versus staff function. Be that as it may, Chapter Two points out that public relations is itself unsure where it fits into the picture, a notion supported by **Figure 4.7** below where respondents indicate that public relations is a staff function, but at the same time should act as a line manager:

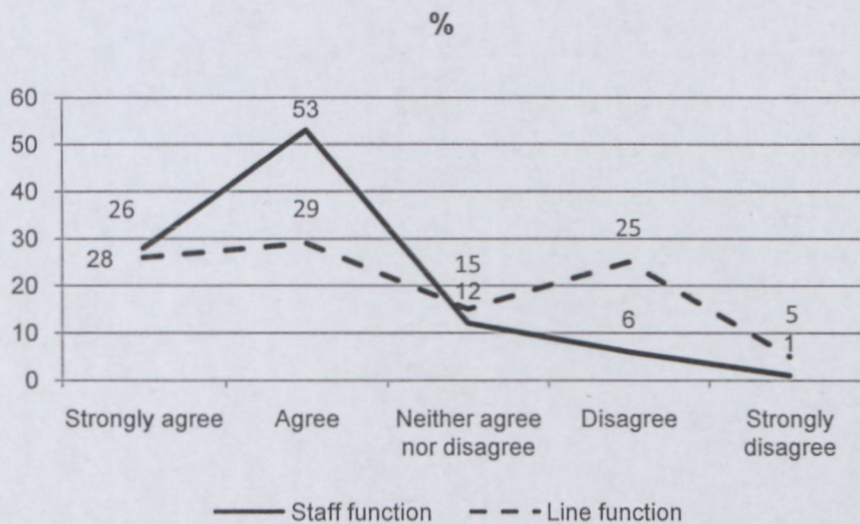


Figure 4.7: Line versus staff function comparison graph – SA respondents

This supports the theoretical view that confusion about this particular point exists, a confusion that has contributed to the haziness regarding the position of public relations in the organisation.

This confusion was also found among US respondents, as the results from the pilot study show:

Table 4.3: Line versus staff function – US respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL the departments in the organisation.	36.84	52.36	0	0
The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	10.53	26.32	21.05	0

Theory discussed in the literature review points to confusion about the organisational function and role of public relations, and these two sets of information, more so than other research results, confirms beyond doubt that the confusion is perpetuated in practice, not only in South Africa, and among practitioners, but potentially also in other countries, as the results from a small pilot among leading academics in the field show. To date, at least in current public relations literature, a satisfactory solution to this confusion is not found. It is proposed that the value chain analysis could address and even solve this problem.

While the potential solution was discussed earlier, it is briefly repeated here for purposes of contextualisation. The Porter value chain analysis differentiates between primary and support activities. Should public relations be positioned in the organisation as a support activity, evidence in support [sic!] of which is becoming increasingly evident, then the "*line versus staff*" debate will be settled elegantly – probably saving much paper (used in arguing one or the other position) in the process. In this line of understanding the role of public relations, it will be a "*staff*" function inasmuch as it will serve the entire organisation, and a "*line*" function inasmuch as it will manage its support to the primary activities. This will satisfy the apparent contradiction pointed out in this subsection. The focus, as was mentioned earlier, of examining the value chain as a potential solution to the problems faced by public relations, is that of relationships between actors in the value chain. To what extent does this resonate with reality?

2.3 Relationship role in organisation

As Chapters One and Two argue, public relations has the focus of building and maintaining **good relationships** with strategically significant stakeholder groups both in- and outside the

organisation. This focus is emphasised by Heath & Coombs (2006) as well as the PRISA-definition of public relations. Certain textbooks dealing with the value chain also point out that relationships are central to the effective functioning of the value chain.

Do respondents agree that the building of relationships is an important part of the practice of public relations? Several questions establishing their views on this matter were included in the questionnaire, and are reported in **Table 4.4** below:

Table 4.4: Relationships with others – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As a public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.	30.6	60	2.4	1.2
Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.	29.4	43.5	8.2	2.4
Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	54.8	44	0	0

An interesting anomaly appears when studying the results presented above. Respondents claim to have a good relationship with other line (functional) managers in the organisation, yet, in the same breath, they acknowledge that those managers with whom they have good relationships **do not understand** the value that public relations adds to the organisation. Skinner *et al.* (2004: 12) identify training (**also of other managers**) as one of the key responsibilities of public relations practitioners. Yet, by their own acknowledgement, public relations practitioners seem to have failed at this task, since more than seven out of every ten respondents claim that other line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.

Furthermore, and again in spite of their claimed good relationships with the other line managers, 97 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that *“other line managers need to be informed of the role that public relations plays in the organisation”*.

Their views are shared by the US respondents:

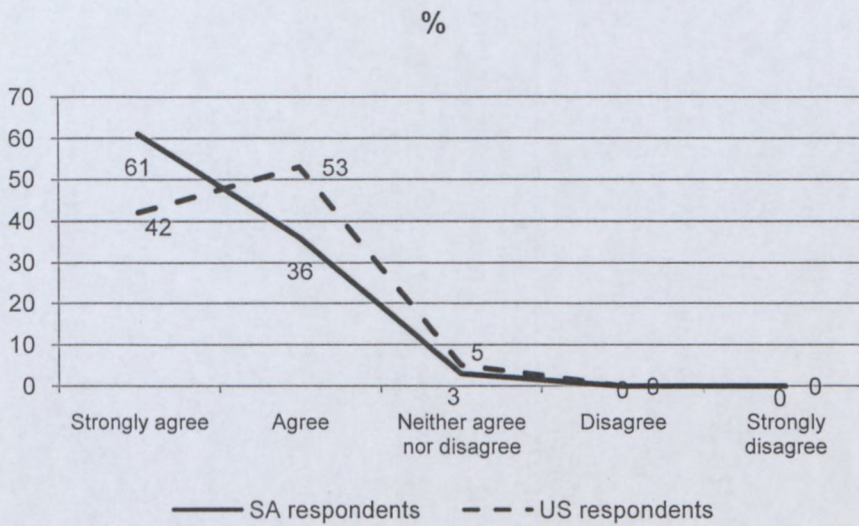


Figure 4.8: Line managers need more information on public relations

And, perhaps most significantly, both practitioners and US respondents are divided on the kind of interaction that there needs to be between public relations and other line managers. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement:

“Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers.”

This question required a very specific response to a very specific question, addressing the heart of what some may believe is the value that public relations adds to the organisation.

In fact, when this question was designed, the expectation was that most (if not all) respondents would almost automatically agree with it. After all, the definition of public relations as adopted by PRISA directly implies that the core value that public relations adds to the organisation is its ability to **manage relationships** with all internal and external stakeholder groups, groups that include suppliers, through the medium of communication. In the same breath, it is generally assumed (and certainly found in practice) that other line managers focus on studying areas like finance and production, and are not trained in communication.

However, in spite of the assumption that this question would receive a “no-brain” answer, responses were, to say the least, surprising:

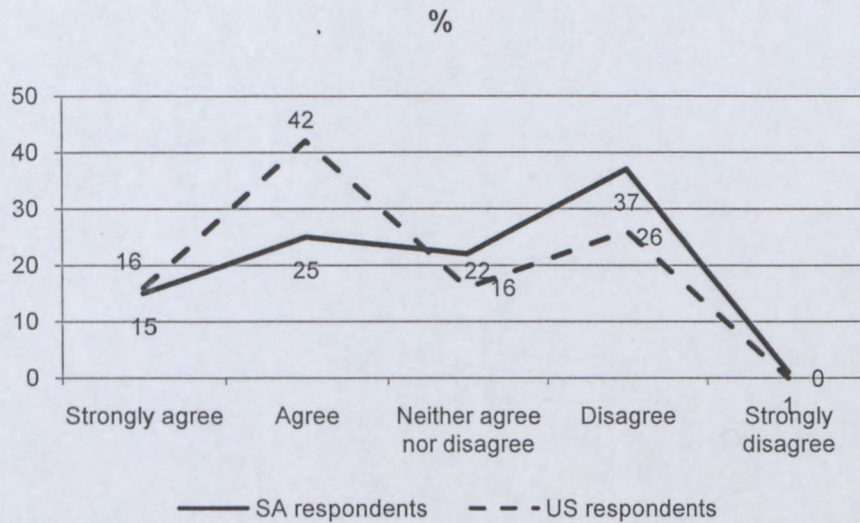


Figure 4.9: Reliance on public relations to manage relationships

The response to this question may indicate a number of issues pertinent to this research:

- **Firstly**, it seems as if disagreement to the degree reflected above indicates disagreement with the fundamental task of public relations – building relationships with all stakeholders through communication. In other words, line managers **do** have training in communication, and should **not** rely on public relations to manage relationships.
- **Secondly**, disagreement may indicate that respondents believe that communication or at least relationships with groups such as suppliers is **not** the responsibility of public relations, but rather that of functional managers.
- **Thirdly**, disagreement may indicate that respondents want public relations to be involved in activities other than communication – such as developing mission statements.

However, no matter how the results from this question are interpreted, the fact remains that, especially as far as South African public relations practitioners are concerned, there is no clear understanding of the role of public relations in the organisation, especially as a support to the other departments. Yet, this is precisely the area in which most public relations theory directs its attention – relationships. This is the one area in which public relations can and should carve a significant niche for itself in the organisation by adding **very specific value**,

the value of relationship-building and relationship management with all stakeholders through communication.

It is not enough for practitioners to claim good relationships with other managers – whether existing or wished-for – if those good relationships do not yield tangible results, like line managers in fact understanding what public relations does in the organisation and what the value is that it adds to the organisation. The question may, however, be asked: How can other line managers understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation, when its practitioners themselves do not know? It is again conceivable that the use of Porter's value chain may be invaluable in addressing this perceptual shortfall, even if it only succeeds in directing the attention of public relations practitioners, academics, other functional managers, and top managers to the specific value added to the organisation's value chain by public relations – the value of relationship-building and maintenance, using specific training and expertise in communication.

In several instances, the literature points out that top management fails to understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation. As a consequence of this failure, public relations is not properly used as a resource in the organisation. Significantly, the respondents in both the pilot and main surveys have indicated that this is indeed the case, as **Figure 4.10** below clearly illustrates.

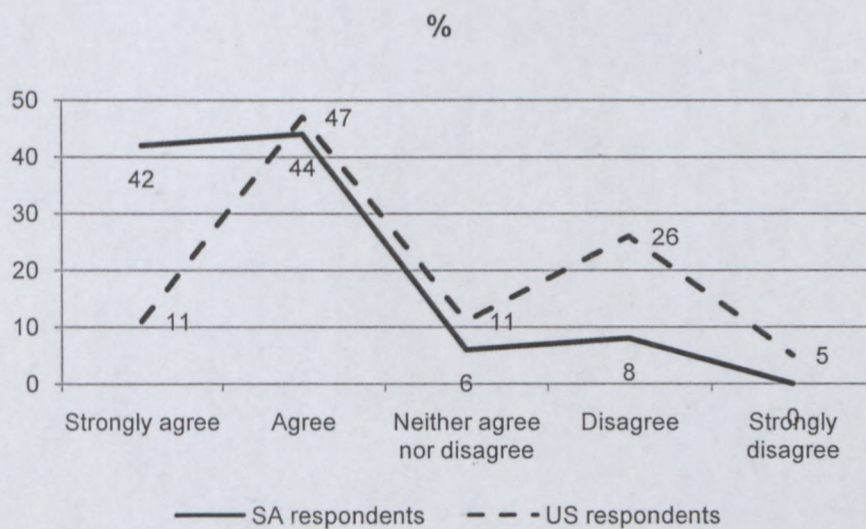


Figure 4.10: Top management does not understand public relations

The failure to understand the impact of public relations in the organisation may be attributed to a combination of two main factors:

- **Firstly**, public relations practitioners – in word and deed – failed to convince top management of their function's value to the organisation. This failure may, in turn, be attributed to theoretical confusion and educational shortcomings.
- **Secondly**, top managers are possibly rarely exposed to formal training in public relations, but are exposed to textbooks like those in marketing which emphatically puts public relations firmly in the marketing fold, not explaining the bigger role of public relations.

The wished-for understanding by top management of public relations and its value to the organisation may be addressed elegantly by Porter's value chain. Should public relations successfully adopt this analysis as the basis of its realignment, and convincingly carve out a role for itself in the organisation according to the value chain, it may have a cohesive basis on which to convince other disciplines (including marketing and management) to adapt their textbooks accordingly. This may result in a much better understanding of public relations by top management.

This section in the chapter sets out to clarify the first of five major areas for empirical research identified in the introduction:

The willingness of public relations practitioners to accept the suggestion that public relations be seen as a support activity in the organisation according to the value chain analysis.

To what extent do the conclusions drawn from the pertinent research results address this area?

Firstly, it was found that public relations practitioners are indeed confused about their organisational function, as the literature survey suggested. However, practitioners and US respondents have indicated in their answers a willingness to accept new thinking on a new role for public relations.

Secondly, it was found that there is confusion between the role of line and staff function. However, respondents are willing to accept a supporting role for public relations in the organisation by indicating their willingness to accept that public relations should sometimes act as a support function.

Thirdly, respondents are emphatic that relationships within the organisation are important to them, but express frustration that other line managers and top management do not understand the value of public relations. This indicates a strong willingness to accept guidance that will help to solve this problem.

Discussion on each of these issues pertaining to the first area of empirical research clearly shows how Porter's value chain analysis may address and solve problems encountered. Results so far also clearly show that public relations practitioners (and US respondents) would be ready to accept this line of thinking in developing a new and greater understanding of public relations.

Therefore, the answer to the first area of empirical concern is a clear *"yes, public relations practitioners are indeed willing to accept the idea that public relations is a support activity according to the value chain analysis"*.

The attention now turns to the second area of empirical concern identified in this chapter's introduction, namely, the extent to which public relations practitioners feel that public relations should or should not be outsourced.

3. Outsourcing public relations

The outsourcing of public relations, an option long used by a number of organisations, leading to the formation of the public relations consultancy as a viable business in its own right, poses a potential threat to the functioning of public relations within the organisation, especially as a significant contributor to the organisation's strategic management. Simply put, organisations tend to outsource those functions not deemed to be of core importance to the organisation's successful operation. For example, it is extremely rare for organisations to outsource operations, or marketing, or finance, but less rare for them to outsource public relations or advertising.

The outsourcing of public relations also could lead to ethical problems, especially when consultancies are tempted to accept clients who may be representative of conflicting interests. In order to maintain a steady stream of income, consultancies are also less likely to act strictly in the ethical interests of the organisation.

A third area that could be problematic in the use of consultancies – at least from the perspective of public relations practitioners – lies in the fact that organisations are less likely to involve consultancies in strategic planning processes.

Public relations practitioners and academics alike indicate convincingly that the outsourcing of public relations is not a good idea. This notion was tested using two questions in two different places in the questionnaire.

Respondents were asked to give their opinion on whether “public relations as a function should NOT be outsourced”:

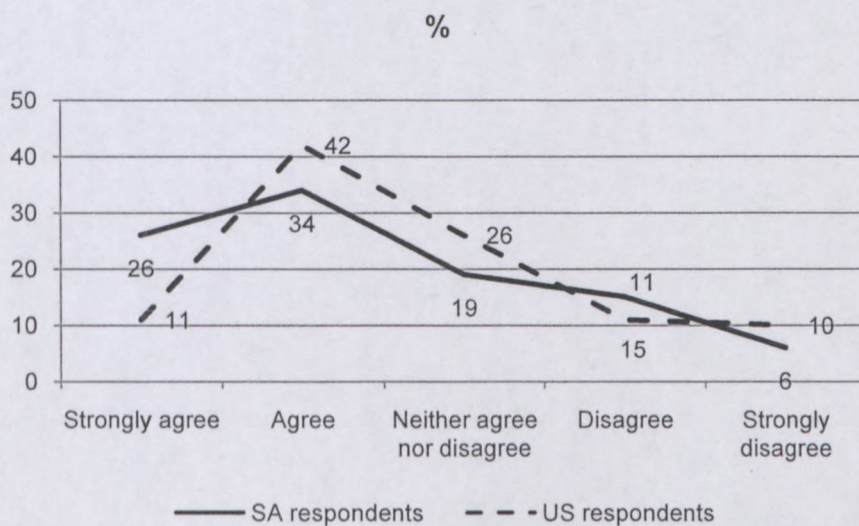


Figure 4.11: Public relations should not be outsourced

In the case of each of the two groups of respondents, more than half felt that the function should **NOT** be outsourced. It is, however, of some significance to note that in both instances nearly a quarter of respondents chose to neither agree nor disagree with this notion, further supporting a possible lack of theoretical clarity on the outsourcing or not of public relations as a function.

Included in both groups of respondents were employees or owners of public relations consultancies, and it may be safely deduced that those respondents voted in favour of outsourcing public relations – after all, consulting is their life blood. In any event, whether outsourced or not outsourced, it is untenable that a function so centrally important to the organisation should be considered unimportant enough by business managers to outsource it, thereby – by definition – rendering it in a lesser role to the organisation, something against which many authors protest.

The question of outsourcing was addressed twice in the questionnaire. This acted in part as an internal reliability test.

Respondents were asked their opinions on whether “*public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced*”:

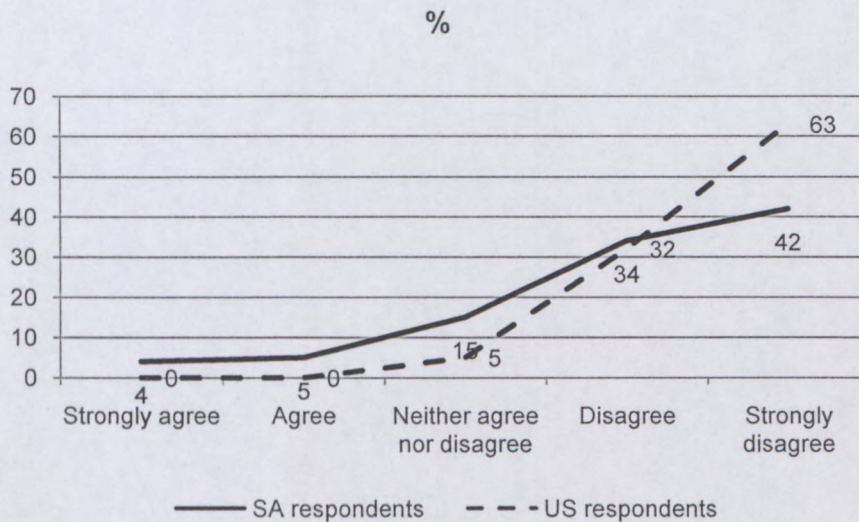


Figure 4.12: Public relations does not belong in the organisation

Is it significant that the disagreement becomes stronger when the issue of outsourcing public relations is **worded** a little differently? In this second statement, the phrase “*public relations ... should be outsourced*” is used, different from the other statement that says “*public relations should NOT be outsourced*”. The percentages of neither agreeing nor disagreeing drop significantly in favour of rejecting the notion, and even the percentages of those agreeing with outsourcing drop. This does indicate an emphatic wish (if nothing else) on the part of public relations practitioners and academics that public relations belongs **inside the organisation**. However, in spite of the strength of feeling that was discovered on this issue, it is still acceptable in the literature surveyed that public relations is seen as a function that is outsourced as a matter of course.

It is again suggested that the Porter value chain analysis will go a long way towards giving clear and proper guidance to the habit of outsourcing public relations by clearly and firmly positioning public relations inside the organisation as a valuable organisational activity that creates customer value by managing relationships. Working closely with the organisation as a whole (firm infrastructure including top management, human resources; as well as primary activities) will strongly argue against the outsourcing. Therefore, the response to this specific

issue identified in the introduction to this chapter is a convincing indication that public relations practitioners would be ready to accept new theory that **excludes** the potential for outsourcing public relations. Clearly, respondents feel that public relations should **not be outsourced**.

4. Adaptation of educational curriculum

The literature surveyed clearly points to a need for the revision of the educational curriculum of public relations. Consensus in the literature is that there is a need for public relations to include business subjects in curricula, and specifically requests that strategic management be included as a major study area.

A brief survey of curricula at South African institutions revealed a strong focus on communications and media studies, with a lesser focus on business subjects.

In Chapter Two, a need for empirical research regarding the content and curriculum design of public relations qualifications was outlined. Consequently, the pilot and final questionnaires were designed to include a number of questions that address this issue:

Overall, these questions can be grouped in the following categories:

- The sufficiency of public relations education.
- The need for education in business studies.
- The need for education in strategy and strategic management.

The responses will be addressed using the above framework. Considering the nature of the topics under discussion in this section (education), the responses obtained from the pilot study will also be included in every case, since most respondents in the pilot study are academics in the field of public relations, and would therefore have insightful views on this universal problem.

4.1 Sufficiency of public relations training

Is public relations training sufficient to prepare students for the practice of public relations, and do SA respondents feel that they were prepared in class and by textbooks for the challenges of the “real world”? Their opinions on these issues are reflected in **Table 4.5** on the next page.

Table 4.5: Public relations training – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	11.8	38.8	23.5	2.4
My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.	25.3	48.1	11.4	1.3

One out of every four respondents felt that public relations practitioners are in fact not well-trained. While it may be argued that it is a fairly small percentage, it needs to be borne in mind that only 51 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs, showing clearly that there is doubt whether public relations training in South Africa is sufficient. However, it is interesting to note that when the same question was given a little bit later, but this time pertaining to the **individual** answering – “prepared *me* well for *my* job” – respondents were more cautious of disagreeing.

How do US respondents view the same issue?

Table 4.6: Public relations training – US respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	0	47.37	10.53	0
My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.	29.41	47.06	11.76	0

The same phenomenon occurs – in the first instance, when faced with a **general** statement, US respondents are more inclined to disagree, or at least abstain (42 per cent chose to neither agree nor disagree), but when personalised, nearly eight out of every ten respondents were confident that they were well-prepared.

Of course, given the fact that a high number of academics have post-graduate qualifications, it makes sense that they feel so confident about their **own** training.

The fact remains that a number of respondents, especially among practitioners, are not at all confident that public relations training is sufficient preparation. The sufficiency of education therefore needs to be addressed, especially since practitioners and academics also seem to agree that textbooks are not sufficient preparation for the “real world”, as **Figure 4.13** reflects:

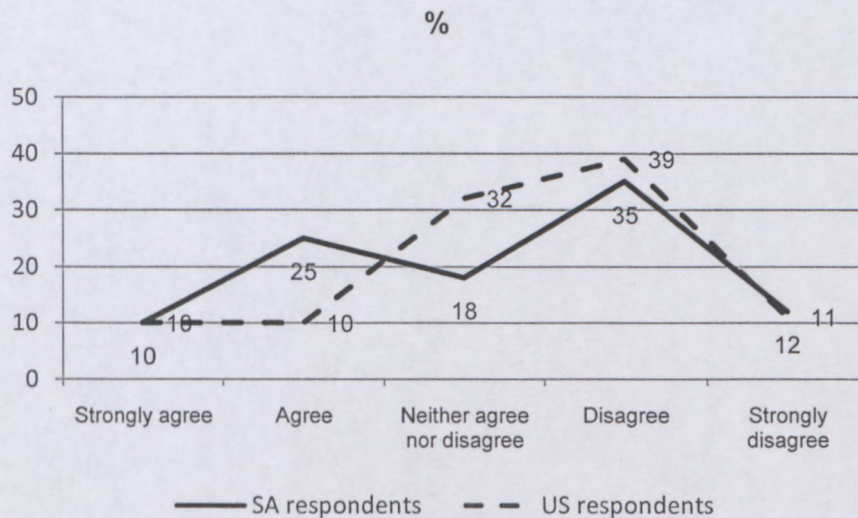


Figure 4.13: Textbooks are sufficient preparation

It is obvious that a textbook in and of itself is never sufficient preparation – for that purpose, other learning processes are also required. However, the wording of the question is specific: “Public relations textbooks provide sufficient **guidance** for the ‘real world’”. The use of the word “guidance” was intentional, and the reaction shows that SA respondents and US respondents feel that the guidance thus offered by textbooks is lacking. This also needs to be addressed. One of the ways that may be suggested is that authors of textbooks take cognisance of the realignment of public relations and restructure seminal textbooks accordingly. This will surely not be a minor exercise, but will have the result that public relations education is more harmoniously aligned to the realities of the business world.

4.2 Need for education in business studies

While some may feel that the training in public relations is sufficient in order for them to do their jobs, and to do it well, they **do** agree that public relations practitioners need to learn more about business subjects in their training. Their views are supported by the pilot group. This need for business education is also identified in the literature selected and surveyed for

this research. A number of questions pertaining to business education were asked of both groups, and **Table 4.7** below shows their responses:

Table 4.7: Need for business training – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	45.9	52.9	1.2	0
In delivering support to other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	34.5	54.8	3.6	0
Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	27.8	51.9	3.8	1.3

SA respondents are practitioners, individuals who are in daily contact with the “*real world*” execution of public relations training, and who feel that, in general, they have been sufficiently prepared to do their job, are adamant that they require more training in business. It is also significant to note that there is strong agreement among public relations practitioners that training in business will enable them to deliver **support** to other line managers. This offers a clue that respondents, at least in South Africa, will be amenable to the implementation of Porter’s value chain analysis in plotting a new role for public relations in the organisation, where public relations will deliver support to the primary activities of the organisation. Do the US respondents included in the pilot study agree?

Table 4.8: Need for business training – US respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	47.37	52.36	0	0
In delivering support to other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	15.79	47.37	15.79	0
Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	21.05	52.63	5.26	5.26

Curiously, nearly 16 per cent of US respondents disagreed with the second question above, perhaps indicating an unwillingness to accept the notion that public relations should be seen as a support activity. After all, academics are at the forefront of those battling to position public relations as a strategically significant function operational at the top levels of management. To position it as “support” may, in the eyes of academics, “demean” public relations. However, this concern should and can be addressed by ensuring that public relations academics (and practitioners) understand what is meant by “support activity” in Porter’s value chain. The positioning of public relations as support activity was already discussed at some length.

In addition to the clearly expressed need for public relations curricula to include business subjects, the need for training in strategic management was addressed by the questionnaire, and will receive due attention in the next subsection.

4.3 The need for training in strategy

Given that there is a movement afoot to position public relations as a strategic function, it is not at all surprising to discover that both practitioners and academics strongly feel that strategic management should be taught to public relations practitioners:

Table 4.9: Need for strategic training – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	50	42.9	0	0

The same holds true for US respondents:

Table 4.10: Need for strategic training – US respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	47.37	52.36	0	0

Thus far, a clear need for training in business-related subjects as well as strategic management has been identified. It is interesting to see what subjects have been indicated by South African practitioners as being “essential” and what subjects are seen as “nice-to-have.” Respondents were provided with a list of typical business subjects taught at business schools, and asked to indicate whether the subjects are “essential”, “nice to have”, or “not at all essential.” Here are their responses:

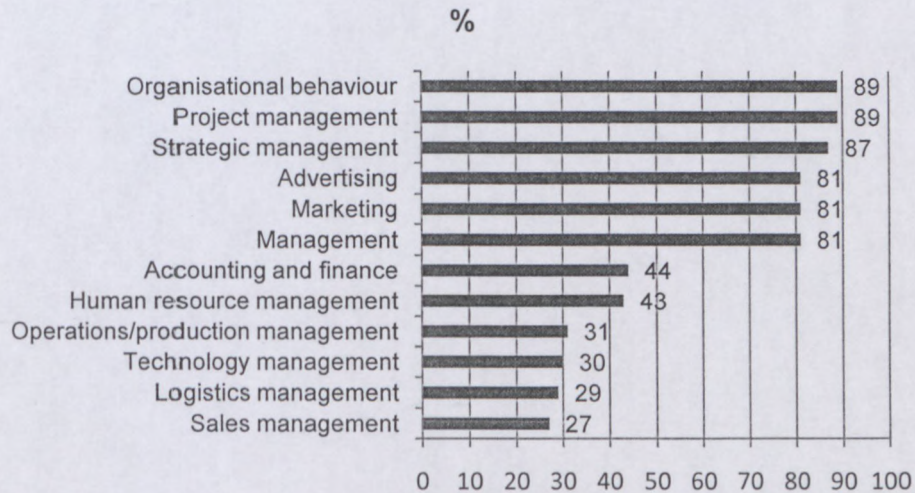


Figure 4.14: Essential subjects – SA respondents

Here is what the SA respondents indicated to be the “nice to have” subjects:

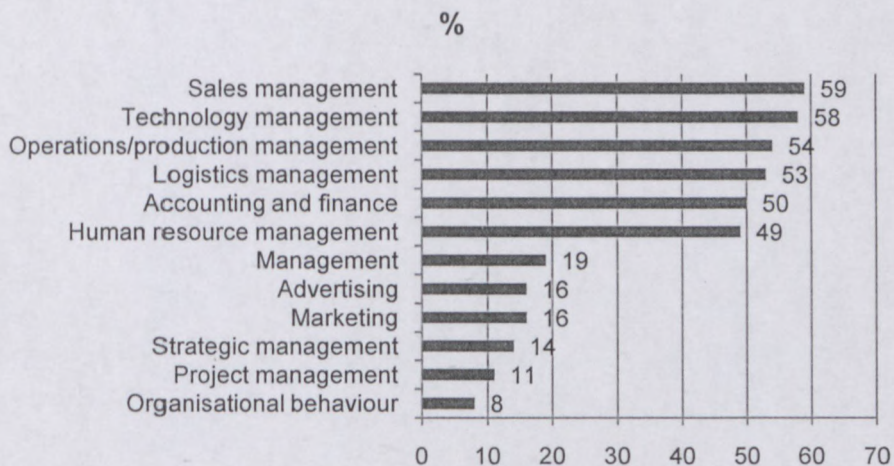


Figure 4.15: Nice-to-have subjects – SA respondents

The research conducted among both US respondents, academics who specialise in public relations, as well as SA respondents, most of whom are public relations practitioners in South Africa indicates very clear trends among the questions relating to the training in public relations today:

- Public relations training is at present not sufficient to prepare practitioners fully to function in the business organisation.
- There is a strongly expressed need for public relations education and training to include business-related subjects in the curriculum.
- Public relations practitioners and academics require more training in business subjects and strategic management.

The impact of these trends will be felt most strongly among academic institutions offering qualifications in public relations. This impact will receive more attention in Chapter Five of this thesis.

The fourth area in which a need for empirical research was identified relates to the way in which the customer is viewed not only by public relations, but also the organisation. It is a generally-accepted tenet of ethical behaviour that organisations who wish to be ethical should do well by doing good. Central to doing good is the notion that the customer is viewed with some respect by the organisation. Literature has so far indicated that in a number of cases organisations treat their customers with greater or lesser levels of contempt. The next section will discover whether the contempt thus identified is replicated in the views of public relations practitioners.

5. The centrality of the customer

Customers are normally the victims when organisations behave in unethical manners. In the case of the examples cited in Chapters One and Two of this thesis, the customer clearly emerges as the vanquished:

- South African banks seem to overcharge for their services, but underperform on promises made to customers.
- South African vehicle manufacturers did the same.
- South African food companies who operate as cartels may be accused of taking bread from the mouths of the poor.

These kinds of behaviours should not be tolerated by responsible boards, responsible managers, and certainly not by governments and consumers in general. However, at the moment at least, organisations persist in these behaviours, possibly because they believe that they have, like the shepherd Gyges, cloaked themselves in invisibility. A solution implied in the research problem is that public relations could potentially act as the voice of the customer in the organisation, holding it accountable to its own stated ethical principles. However, in spite of evidence that customers are not treated fairly or ethically, the view of public relations practitioners may be that that is just a perception, and that customers are getting what is promised to them. To discover the views of public relations practitioners on this matter, a number of questions pertaining to organisational behaviour, as well as the treatment of the customer, were included in the questionnaire. The responses (again from both groups) were quite interesting:

Table 4.11: Treatment of the customer – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	14.4	26.7	31.1	13.3
Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.	22.5	55.1	7.9	0
Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	1.1	24.4	43.3	8.9

While 41 per cent of respondents feel that consumers need to find out what their rights are, four out of every ten respondents indicate that it is **not** the responsibility of consumers to find out these rights. This implies that either Government or organisations (and perhaps consumer bodies) have the responsibility to explain their rights to consumers. However, the question that may be asked here is very simply this: Why should organisations not take the responsibility on their shoulders to educate consumers on their rights? Chapter Two indicates clearly that organisations that are ethical have a competitive advantage in the long run. It also indicates that all of the organisations in the industries who have been found lacking in the ethical department have indicated that they adhere to strict codes of conduct as far as treatment of consumers is concerned. Would it not therefore be to the advantage of an organisation that is truly ethical to take upon its shoulders the responsibility for educating consumers on their rights? And could this responsibility not be primarily that of public relations in its efforts to build good relationships not only with customers but also with government and activist groups (to name but two)? The centrality of the customer is well-discussed in marketing literature, but with the focus of satisfying customer needs. Perhaps

public relations could adopt its own customer-centric philosophy by accepting that the need for accurate and true information is as much a consumer need as is the need for food, clothing, entertainment, and so on.

In some of the cases cited in Chapter Two where organisations have been found to treat customers somewhat unethically, spokespersons from those organisations were quoted as saying that it is the responsibility of the consumer to establish (for example) how bank charges are calculated. In a time where South Africa's sole electricity supplier, Eskom, is cynically using public relations techniques to convince consumers that it is, in essence, their fault that there are rolling power cuts, the reader will be forgiven for cynically smiling at the manipulative technique inherent in blaming consumers for an organisation's inability to deliver on its implied promises of customer satisfaction.

Incidentally, US respondents feel even more strongly than South African respondents do that it is not the task of the consumer to find out what his/her rights are:

Table 4.12: Treatment of the customer – US respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	4.76	28.57	33.33	14.29
Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.	9.52	52.38	9.52	0
Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	0	14.29	38.10	9.52

Definitely, practitioners and US respondents agree that consumer rights are not sufficiently safeguarded, opening debate (again) on whose task it is to ensure that consumer rights are protected – organisations, governments, or society? The societal marketing concept, as well as the King II Report, accepts that organisations today have a responsibility towards their shareholders **as well as** customers and society. Balancing what are seen as essentially conflicting interests is the ethical challenge facing the modern organisation. As was indicated, some organisations merely succumb to trickery (Enron, Worldcom), while others use semantics to try to manipulate public opinion (banks, motor vehicle manufacturers), and while yet others evade measures altogether aimed at improving ethical behaviour, citing burdensome paperwork and costs (Naspers). Could the answer not lie in the role of public relations as ethical conscience for the organisation? Accepting that it is a function responsible for managing strategically significant relationships, public relations seems to be

in an ideal position to represent the interests of all stakeholders in such a manner that the organisation benefits strategically.

It is a basic rule of ethical behaviour that an organisation ensures that it **does what it says it will do**. Another rule of ethical behaviour is to ensure that the organisation does **no harm** – to either itself, its shareholders, its customers, or society. Enough evidence exists to suggest that a number of organisations in South Africa are in breach of one or more of these ethical principles.

Most certainly, it is apparent that organisations use advertising to specifically make promises to customers in the hope of attracting them, but then breaking those promises:

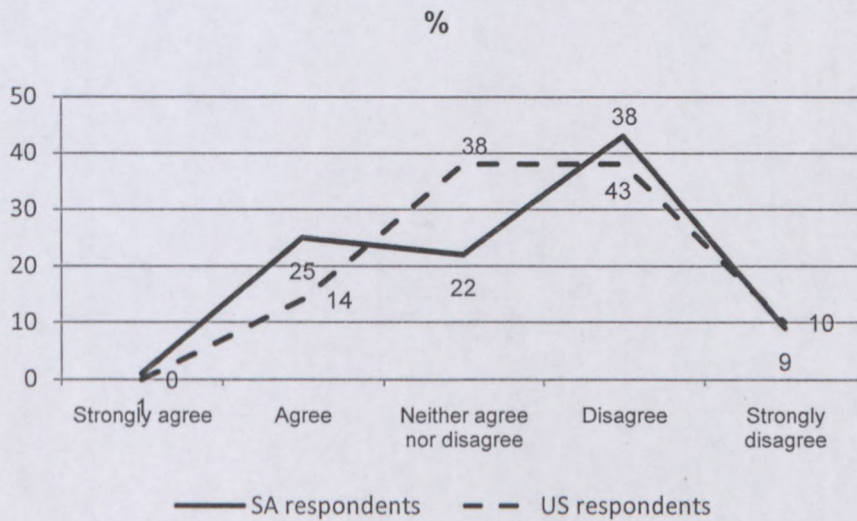


Figure 4.16: Customers get the service advertising promises

On average, half of respondents in both groups clearly feel that customers do not get the service that they are promised in advertising – a clear breach of not only general ethical behaviour (do not lie), but also a clear breach of organisational ethics, and specifically relating to the well-documented issues about truthful advertising. Accepting that, in many cases, public relations is used as a support to the marketing and advertising campaigns of large organisations, it may therefore be inferred that the public relations function itself is involved in making promises to customers, promises that are later broken by accident or design. Therefore, the tainted name of public relations is to some extent deserved. A name-change alone, however, will not alter this, and therefore public relations should ensure that it actively builds and maintains for itself a reputation as an ethical role-player in the organisation. This should be done **firstly** by ensuring for itself a theoretical position in the

organisation that is understood and accepted by all (currently, this is not the case). **Secondly**, it should ensure that the education of its practitioners is of the highest standard, and relevant to the business world. **Thirdly**, it should ponder its own ethics, and how individuals are attracted and ethically prepared for the pitfalls peculiar to this profession. These recommendations will receive more attention in the section in Chapter Five that deals with policy implications.

The final question identified in the introduction to this chapter that needed empirical research was that of the ethical role of public relations in the organisation. The next section will deal with the results that pertain to this issue.

6. Public relations and organisational ethics

As Chapter Two explains, ensuring ethical behaviour in organisations poses its own challenges, and is seen as a **process**. Organisations, governments, and society in general are searching for ways in which ethical behaviour in organisations can be better managed. One of the assumptions identified in Chapter One of this thesis is that public relations, if realigned in the organisation, can make its own contribution to organisational ethics. One of the factors that strongly militates against this notion is of course the fact that public relations is a tainted organisational function, leading to the name change discussions. However, as Chapter Two asks, who is it that puts the spin into public relations? Empirical evidence in answering that question was sought. Furthermore, do public relations practitioners and US respondents feel that they should be involved in organisational ethics? This final subsection in Chapter Four directs its attention to the results of the questions relating to ethics. Questions may be grouped around three issues surrounding ethics and public relations:

- Organisational ethics.
- Ethics of top management and public relations.
- Ethical wishes of public relations practitioners.

The results to the questions will be discussed next.

6.1 Organisational ethics

That organisations in South Africa are guilty of ethical misbehaviour has been well documented in Chapter Two. However, organisational representatives (through public relations techniques such as press releases) may argue that reports on these misbehaviours are exaggerated, and that the media are vindictive. They may also choose to argue, as Tiger

Brands' Nick Dennis did, that these misbehaviours are isolated incidents. Do public relations practitioners, who sometimes find themselves in the heat of the battle in a manner of speaking, share the **former** (organisations are unethical) or **latter** (isolated incidents) opinion?

Respondents were given a number of statements relating to the ethical behaviour of organisations, and their strength of feeling on each of those statements was tested. The results are shown in **Table 4.13** below:

Table 4.13: Organisational ethics – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.	15.8	55.7	12.5	1.1
When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.	6.7	26.7	27.8	1.1
Organisations never tell lies to consumers.	6.8	4.5	51.1	18.2

Seven out of every ten respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that organisations tend to be less than truthful. Obviously, this statement does **not** reveal whether or not organisations are *per se* untruthful, but it **does** reveal that the public (in the view of respondents in South Africa) does not trust organisations. However, regardless of the truthfulness of organisations, they should take cognisance of the fact that a perception of untruthfulness exists – a perception that they should address as a matter of urgency, given the direct link between transparency, trust, and brand image. Chapter Two points out that a positive brand image results in profit for the organisation, and that trust is an important element of a positive brand image. Should public relations successfully reinvent itself, and succeed in creating the impression that its practitioners are to be trusted, then it will be able to help re-build the ever-crumbling trust base.

One factor that does contribute to the perceptions that organisations tend to hide the truth is of course the fact that the public increasingly feels that the explanations provided by organisations cannot be trusted. One out of every three respondents feel that, when an organisation explains its actions, the explanation is not to be trusted. Again, as with the statement discussed previously, this result does not prove that organisations do lie. However, given that the respondents in this survey are public relations practitioners with an average of 15 years of experience, it is safe to assume that they found themselves in situations where

they had to explain the organisation's actions knowing that the explanation is not entirely truthful. In the cases discussed in Chapter Two and elsewhere such as banking practices, vehicle pricing, bread price fixing, the Eskom debacle, it becomes apparent that organisations cannot be trusted even when explaining their actions. Thus, the public perception that organisations hide the truth, and that their explanations cannot be trusted is an accurate one. The empirical data bears out that the public is beginning to grow increasingly aware of the fact that not all organisations act in a truthful manner.

Nearly seven out of every ten respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that organisations never lie. This question was specifically worded very precisely and bluntly using strong language, and solicited a strong response. According to South African public relations practitioners, **organisations do tell lies.**

Successful brands, as the literature survey points out, are successful because they are trusted. Successful brands are successful because the organisations that produce those brands are trusted. Successful brands are successful because the partners involved in the process of creating customer value have good relationships with one another and trust each other.

Unsuccessful brands, by implication, are unsuccessful because customers feel that they cannot trust them or the organisations that make them. The literature points out that there is a direct link between trust, positive corporate image, and success.

Therefore, South African companies that are suspected of being less than truthful should take heed of this fact, or risk being dumped for other, competitive, brands. In an age of globalisation, competition is on the increase, and consumer choice is growing wider. Consumers are becoming more aware of their rights, and are becoming more ethical when making purchase decisions. In a world of choice, the unethical organisation that lies to its consumers will find itself increasingly losing customers and, ultimately, profit.

A dilemma facing the truly ethical organisation is of course the fact that customers do not find it easy to distinguish between those organisations who pay lip-service to ethical standards and those who are ethical in their approach to their customers. They have to work harder to avoid being tarred with the same brush.

6.2 Ethics of top management and public relations

Chapter Two asks the question: Who puts the spin into public relations? In discussing this question, it argues that public relations practitioners are not necessarily themselves guilty of making the decisions to lie, and that they merely “act on orders from above”. This notion was tested empirically, with a number of questions designed and included in the questionnaire to establish what is happening in South Africa. The responses yielded some interesting insights, not only into the ethics of management and the views of management on public relations, but also on the ethics of public relations practitioners themselves.

Table 4.14: Who puts the spin into public relations? – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told.	12.2	40	24.4	7.8
Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.	10.1	24.7	30.3	10.1

The first statement that top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told reveals particularly interesting responses. Firstly, more than half of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that public relations practitioners are expected to do as they are told. This is a strong clue pointing to the fact that public relations practitioners are not in charge of the decision to lie – if they are expected to do as they are told, then it follows logically that they will be told to lie. This, then, puts a nail in the coffin of the school of thought that accuses public relations practitioners of being spin doctors. In the case of organisations where public relations practitioners are expected to do as they are told, they will not be allowed to invent the lie themselves, and they will also not be expected to decide whether to lie or not. It is a decision that will be handed to them by top management.

More than one third of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told, signifying perhaps an independent spirit in those organisations. Two possibilities exist here. **Firstly**, the possibility is that the public relations practitioner is an outsourced function, where top management has an “arms-length” approach to the execution of public relations and where they can use the excuse that their public relations agency acted without orders or consent. **Secondly**, the possibility is that organisations where top management do not expect public

relations practitioners are supposed to do as they are told have a laissez faire approach to management, leaving each department to its own devices and desires. An approach like this, it may be argued, leaves the door open for public relations practitioners to make their own decisions – decisions that could conceivably be harmful to the organisation.

Of course, some may argue that public relations, in its capacity as advisor, should not slavishly follow the dictates of top management, and should be managerially positioned where it could issue its own orders to, among others, top management. This line of argument, however, does not take into account the nature of strategic management, where managerial decisions result from teamwork rather than individual whimsy.

But, be that as it may, public relations practitioners in South Africa are expected to do as they are told by top management, which means that they are not left alone to decide whether to lie to the organisation's publics. Therefore, it is disingenuous – if not downright dishonest – for some to make the accusation that public relations and public relations alone is responsible for putting the spin on the organisation's communication efforts.

In fact, more than 30 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation. It is also curious to see that, in the case of this particular statement, nearly one third of respondents chose the middle road by neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. It is reasonable to deduce from this that, in those instances, organisations also expect public relations practitioners to lie, but that respondents chose to remain neutral, not wishing to divulge that their management expects them to lie, but also not wanting to lie themselves by disagreeing with this statement.

The statement is direct and designed to solicit a binary response – either an organisation expects someone to lie, or it does **not**. It is difficult to imagine a situation where a respondent does not know whether the organisation expects public relations to lie. The relatively high percentage of respondents who chose the neutral answer here is therefore an indication that the wish to lie is more prevalent than what seems to be the case. Certainly, the reality reflects clearly that many organisations blatantly lie to customers – see the discussions on the bread price fixing, bank charges, Eskom, and other related cases.

Incidentally, the US respondents (with one exception) share the feelings expressed by South African respondents:

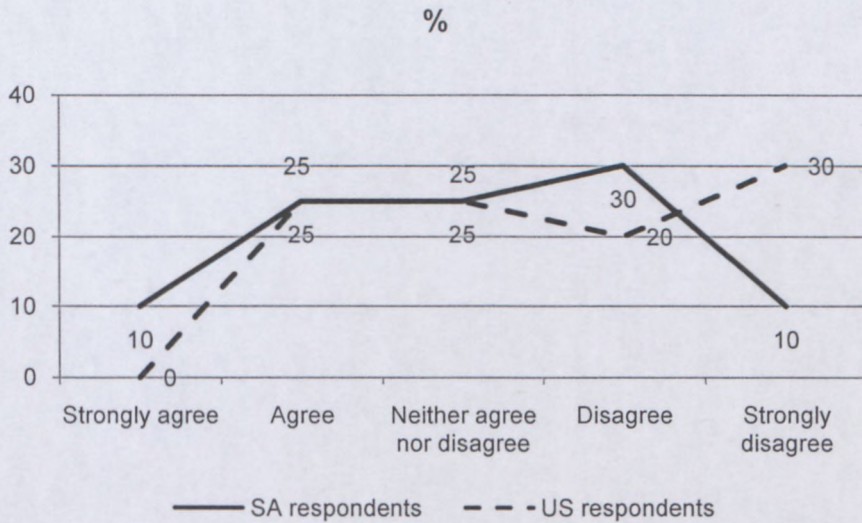


Figure 4.17: Organisations expect public relations to lie

Three out of every ten US respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners are expected to lie, possibly indicating that, in the US at least, top management shows more understanding of corporate governance and is more reluctant to issue lies to the public. However, one out of every four US respondents agreed with the statement, and a further one out of four respondents chose the neutral answer, indicating a possible unwillingness to indict the organisations for which they work.

The fact remains that more than 30 per cent of SA respondents indicated that organisations would expect the public relations function to tell lies, a worrying situation at best.

The responses to these two questions may lead some to argue that public relations should not be blamed for the lies they issue, and that it should be absolved from the sin of spin. The reality is not as clear-cut as that, since the ethics of public relations practitioners themselves are also under doubt, as was shown earlier and is reflected in **Figure 4.18** on the next page:

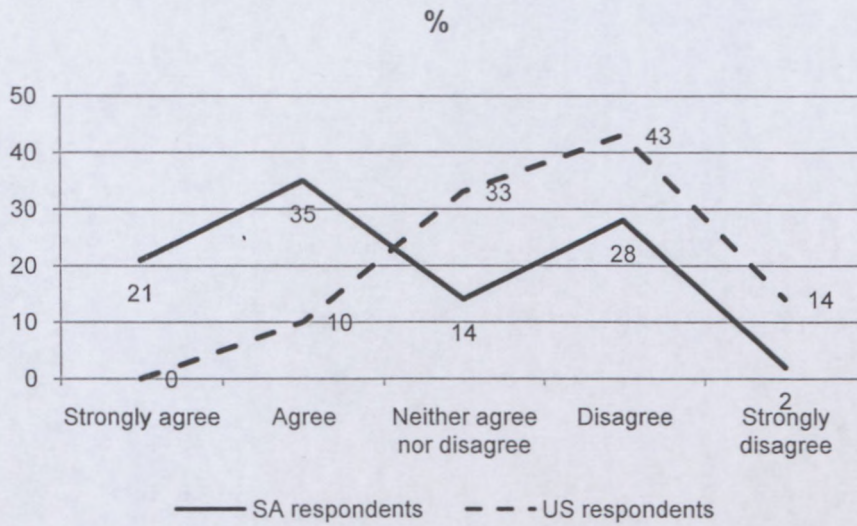


Figure 4.18: Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner

Three out of every ten South African, and more than five out of every ten US respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners are ethical. Public relations practitioners and academics therefore convincingly support the suspicion that public relations practitioners are less than ethical, which clearly shows an area where improvement is needed. If people are themselves unethical, then it is highly doubtful that they will act in ethical manners when operating on behalf of organisations that require them to lie. This is a double whammy, and will need to be addressed.

6.3 The ethical wish of practitioners

Do public relations practitioners believe that they should be involved in the ethics of organisations that they represent, and what should be the nature of that involvement? These two questions are addressed in this subsection. It is fairly clear that most respondents do believe that public relations should be involved in organisational ethics:

Table 4.15: Public relations and organisational ethics – SA respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	51.1	36.7	2.2	1.1
Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.	55.7	43	1.3	0

The responses are mirrored by the US respondents:

Table 4.16: Public relations and organisational ethics – US respondents

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	33.33	52.38	4.7	0
Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.	63.16	21.05	5.26	0

However, the strongly stated wish of both practitioners and academics to be involved in providing not only ethical guidance but also ethical training is belied by the fact that these same respondents, in the main, feel that public relations **practitioners are unethical** (see **Figure 4.18**). This may, at first sight, seem anomalous, since the unethical person can surely not be expected to provide guidance on ethics, especially since he/she is already operating in a very unethical environment.

The difference between reality (practitioners are unethical) and theory (public relations should guide ethics) is an ethical gap that should be closed. However, this is not an easy task, especially given the fact that it is difficult, in the opinion of some authors, to teach ethics.

Certainly, as was indicated in Chapter Two, organisational ethics deal with the ethics of individuals, society, and the organisation, and therefore systems should be developed to take account of these “differential” ethics. This may partly mean that the selection of candidates for public relations training should address the selection of ethical candidates.

This is an area that needs to be addressed.

7. Chapter conclusions

The empirical data completes a picture that was painted in the first half of this thesis, and gives quantitative weight to some suspicions that were raised in the discussion on the crisis staring public relations in the face.

The main findings of the empirical survey are reported below:

Table 4.17: Main findings of empirical survey

Issue	Main finding(s)
The willingness of public relations practitioners to accept the suggestion that public relations be seen as a support activity in the organisation according to the value chain analysis.	Public relations practitioners are ready to accept the idea of using the value chain analysis to describe public relations as a support activity in the organisation.
The extent to which public relations practitioners agree that public relations should/should not be outsourced.	The great majority of respondents reject the practice of outsourcing public relations.
Whether public relations practitioners agree that the educational curriculum be adapted to include more reference to business subjects in order to develop a more solid understanding of the organisation's functioning.	Gaps in the educational curriculum are identified, and consensus is that more business subjects should be included in core curricula in order to develop a greater understanding of the organisation's functioning among public relations practitioners.
The views held by public relations practitioners on the centrality of the customer.	The customer is important to public relations practitioners, although some feel that the customer is a responsible partner in the organisation's functioning.
The role that public relations could/should play in organisational ethics.	Public relations should play a leading role in organisational ethics.

What are the implications of these findings? How will these findings affect the practice of public relations, and how will they direct the development of educational curricula? To what extent do these findings support the thesis statement, and how do they support the assumptions made in Chapter One? The next – and final – chapter will address these questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

P[ublic] R[elations] in Western liberal democracies generates little trust in the receivers of its messages.

(Moloney, 2005: 554)

1. Introduction

Chapter One of this thesis posed the question whether public relations, by realigning its position in the organisation, could contribute to marketing and organisational ethics. It also described a crisis facing public relations. In discussing the problem statement, it identified three major areas in which public relations is facing a crisis:

- Tainting public relations by using it as a mechanism to disguise the truth.
- Uncertainty about the role of public relations, leading to a situation where it has to fight for its rightful place, especially in regard to marketing.
- Uncertainty among public relations practitioners themselves about their contribution to the organisation, as result of a lack of theoretical guidance coupled with insufficient education.

Chapter Two provided a literature review supporting the notion that public relations is finding itself somewhat at sea, and also supports the notion that the realignment of public relations could be done using Porter's value chain analysis as a starting point. It specifically asked a number of questions:

- Who is it that puts the "spin" into public relations? Who requires public relations to be used as a manipulative tool to save the organisation's name when it is guilty of wrongdoing? Is it the public relations practitioner, or someone higher up in the organisation?
- What is the role of public relations in the organisation, and how should it be changed to address the challenges identified?
- Is current theory and education sufficient to prepare public relations practitioners for their role in the organisation, or should it be changed?

Chapter Three described the method used to gather empirical data in order to address questions that were not sufficiently answered by the literature survey. It also addressed the way in which confirmation of the thesis statement was sought. Finally, Chapter Three described the profile of two groups of respondents – pilot survey and main survey, and found

that respondents were of high quality as far as their knowledge of, involvement in, and experience in public relations are concerned.

Chapter Four reported and analysed the findings of both surveys (pilot and main), and drew some preliminary conclusions regarding specific issues that were raised in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five (this chapter) presents the overall conclusions of the literature survey and empirical research, reports on the recommendations to address the problem under discussion in this thesis, and provides policy recommendations.

Section Two of this chapter deals with the most significant conclusion of this research. In Chapter One the research question asked whether there is a way in which public relations can:

- Restore its good name.
- Gain its rightful position as an organisational function.
- Contribute to the organisation's strategic and ethical success.

The literature review showed a number of areas where public relations is experiencing problems, and explores those problems in some detail. This exploration showed that public relations does have a bad name, and is seeking to change that bad name. It also showed that public relations is grappling with its organisational position, and is seeking to position itself as a strategic function in the organisation. The literature review also showed that public relations could make a more comprehensive contribution not only to the organisation's strategic success, but also its ethical success. Ethics was indicated as a major area of concern for the modern organisation. However, as literature on each of these perspectives was surveyed and discussed, it seemed as if more questions were asked than answered. For example, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that public relations wants to realign itself in the organisation, but was not sure how to do so.

In going forward with the reading of the literature review and in grappling with the research question, the researcher intended to find a solution to these problems.

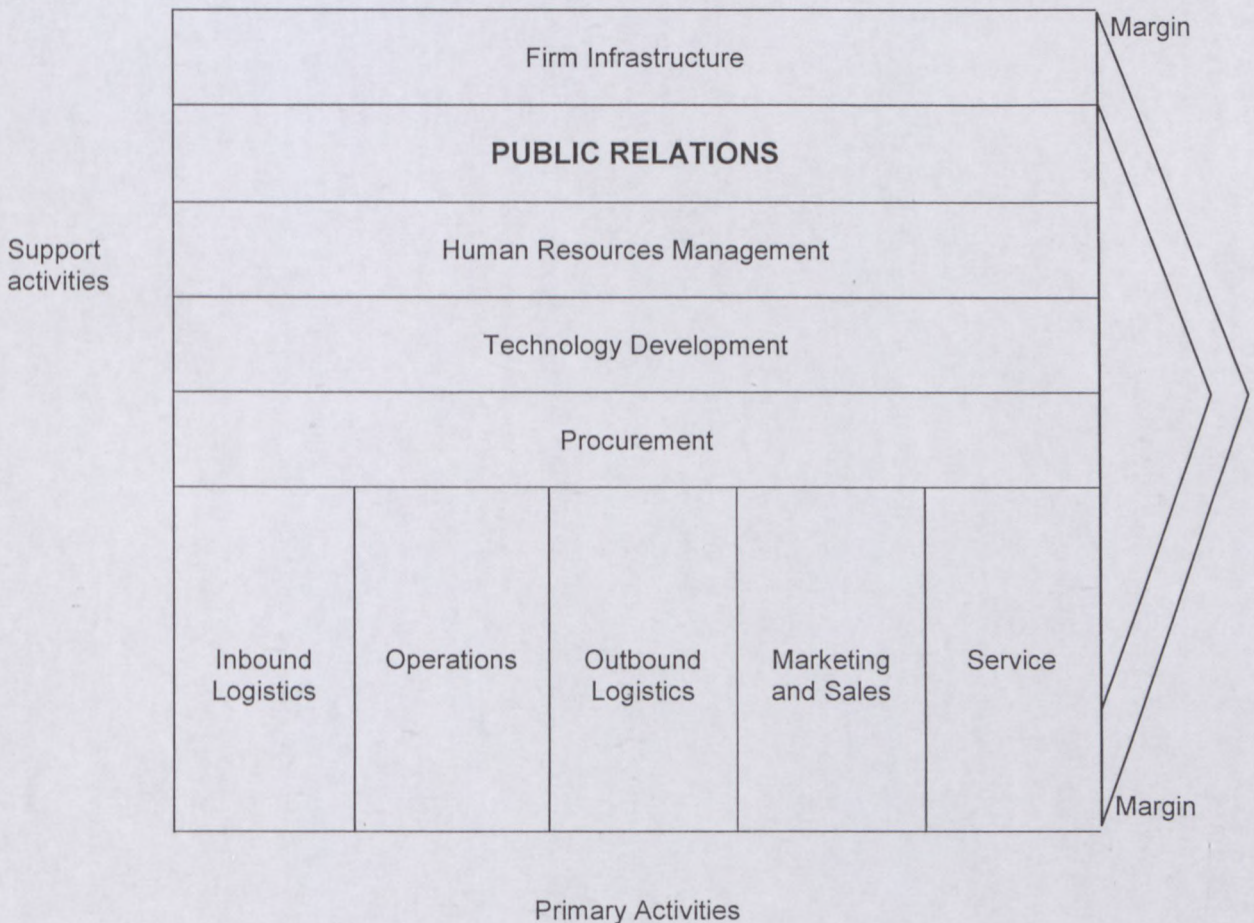
During the preliminary and in-depth reading phases of this research project, a possible candidate presented itself: Porter's value chain analysis. Kotler & Armstrong (2006: 43) describe the value chain as a tool that can be used to help managers understand how they can cooperate more closely with other functional managers in drawing up plans that enable the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives. This tool, as the literature review shows,

is used extensively by managers other than public relations managers in their planning and implementation of functional strategies. It is a planning tool that is understood by these managers, and could provide an ideal platform for public relations to position itself in the organisation, thereby potentially addressing a number of problems currently experienced. Such a model could address if not solve the following problems:

- By positioning public relations in an unambiguous framework, it would solve the problem of whom public relations should report to.
- By broadly sketching the contribution of public relations to the creation of value in the organisation, it would solve the problem of what it is for which public relations is responsible.

How will this work? Firstly, the model should be adapted to reflect the position of public relations:

Figure 5.1: Porter's value chain: adapted to public relations



As **Figure 5.1** shows, it is proposed that public relations be positioned in the organisation as a **support activity** with responsibilities stretching across the entire organisation. This view can be extended to include the supply chain. As an organisation-wide support activity, public relations will have responsibility to execute a number of tasks:

- It will be responsible for managing the organisation's reputation (already widely accepted as a public relations function). This reputation, as literature on the value/supply chain shows, is important to the primary activities in a number of ways. For example, to inbound logistics operators, it will be to their benefit in the sense that suppliers will be more inclined to cooperate with organisations that have solid reputations.
- As reputation manager, and as function responsible for building and maintaining the organisation's good name, public relations will advise top management on communication issues pertaining to the organisation as a whole.
- Public relations will be responsible for coordinating and potentially directing the flow of all communications between the organisation's functions internally as well as externally. As an organisation-wide support function tasked with communication, it will have the theory-base on which to ensure that communication channels are created and maintained and used to their fullest potential. For example, it could write, edit, publish, and issue a magazine aimed at keeping intermediaries (outbound logistics) informed about the contextual issues in organisational communication.
- As a relationship-builder, public relations could help the management of the organisation to build and maintain close relationships between top management (an element in firm infrastructure) and all of the other functions in the organisation. For example, it could implement in-house forums where the employees in, say, operations, get to share information and insight with the employees of marketing and sales. While such forums exist in the formal structures of many organisations, communications forums could help to strengthen the more informal communication channels in the organisation, thereby ensuring greater understanding and cooperation among channel members.
- It will give greater focus to the responsibilities of public relations where it comes to customer relationship management. Public relations could easily be made responsible for all communication materials aimed at strengthening relationships between customers and the primary activity of service.
- As support activity to inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing & sales, and service, public relations could fulfil its obligations as communication technician, assisting those primary activities in achieving their stated goals through the provision of communication and relationship management expertise.

- One of the most significant aspects of the value chain view on public relations is the potential that it has for giving public relations the responsibility to plan and implement ethical procedures. It is accepted that organisations need to be more ethical. One of the basic concepts inherent in business ethics is that the organisation does well by doing good to itself, its stakeholders, and its environment. Public relations, as a two-way communication and relationship-building function, is ideally positioned to act as the organisation's ethical conscience, reporting to the organisation on ethical issues involving all stakeholders (including the organisation itself).

At this stage the seasoned public relations practitioner may feel that these suggestions are all "old hat", and that public relations has been doing these things all along. This is true, but, as the frustration experienced by practitioners and academics shows, public relations may have been doing these things in a fragmented, or *ad hoc*, or intuitive basis. Many a public relations practitioner will also reflect his/her frustration at having to expend time and energy to convince top management to allow it to fulfil these functions. It is envisaged that the use of this model (a model understood by all other functional managers) will give theoretical and practical weight to the **function** as well as the **position** of public relations in the organisation.

The next section, which deals with overall conclusions, will address the extent to which the literature studied as well as the empirical findings address the problems that were identified in Chapter One.

2. Overall conclusions

The problem statement that served as the basis for the research question addressed by this thesis is:

In what way can public relations restore its good name and gain its rightful position as an organisational function that contributes to the ultimate strategic and ethical success of the organisation?

Does the research reflected in this thesis sufficiently address this research question?

To that question, the short answer is "yes." Sufficient evidence is found in literature and among responses received from public relations practitioners in South Africa that public relations is experiencing a bad reputation and wants to restore it; that it needs to play a more extended role in the organisation; and that it could and should make a more concrete contribution to the organisation's strategic and ethical success.

While secondary and primary research, discussed at length in Chapter Two and Chapter Four, overwhelmingly support the answer, the tables (below) in this subsection briefly summarise the findings regarding the three central issues relating to the problem statement:

- Ethical involvement of public relations in the organisation.
- Need for the realignment of public relations in the organisation.
- Need for addressing the educational curriculum of public relations.

Respondents, in the main, agree that public relations practitioners and organisations are unethical, and that steps should be taken to improve the ethics of organisations:

Table 5.1: Ethical involvement of public relations in the organisation

Ethical issue	Evidence
Weak organisational ethics.	<p>Literature survey: Sufficient evidence in literature surveyed (especially newspaper and magazine articles on- and offline) exists to support the fact that organisations behave in unethical manners.</p> <p>Empirical research: Practitioners agree that organisations are in many instances unethical.</p>
Weak public relations ethics.	<p>Literature survey: Academic literature skirts the issue of the ethics of public relations practitioners, but articles in mainstream media show that public relations practitioners are not seen as ethical.</p> <p>Empirical research: Respondents agree that public relations ethics is under a cloud of suspicion.</p>
Marketing and ethics.	<p>Literature survey: Marketing should be ethical and a number of ethical breaches in South African marketing are identified. Communication to customers about products or services is a major area in which ethics can go astray.</p> <p>Empirical research: Public relations practitioners should strive to be ethical, but are not, and should take the lead in the organisation's ethics training and decision-making.</p>
Benefits of ethical behaviour.	<p>Literature survey: Clear benefits of ethical behaviour are identified, and specific links between ethical behaviour and profitability are identified.</p> <p>Empirical research: The empirical research does not address benefits of ethical behaviour, although ethical behaviour is seen as important by respondents.</p>

It is also clear that public relations is confused about its role in the organisation, and is looking for a new way in which to position itself, as **Table 5.2** shows:

Table 5.2: Realignment of public relations is necessary

Realignment issue	Evidence
Confusion about the role of public relations in the organisation.	<p>Literature survey: Several texts identify the organisational position of public relations as problematic, especially as far as its role of strategist versus technician is concerned.</p> <p>Empirical research: Practitioners are confused about their organisational role.</p>
Marketing versus public relations.	<p>Literature survey: Confusion reigns as far as the relationship between marketing and public relations is concerned, with one text suggesting several permutations in order to solve this problem.</p> <p>Empirical research: While the empirical research does not specifically address this issue, respondents indicate a willingness to act in support to marketing.</p>
Identity crisis – renaming public relations.	<p>Literature survey: Some texts suggest that public relations should be renamed, but other literature suggest a more extensive look into the way in which public relations is currently practiced.</p> <p>Empirical research: The naming of public relations departments reflects a splintered approach to naming the discipline. Respondents are divided in their views, which supports the notion that the practice of public relations also needs to be overhauled.</p>

The educational curriculum also needs to be addressed, as **Table 5.3** shows:

Table 5.3: The educational curriculum should be addressed

Education issue	Evidence
Body of knowledge.	<p>Literature survey: There is no doubt that the body of knowledge should be adapted to current reality.</p> <p>Empirical research: Practitioners identify a need for more business-related subjects to be included in public relations educational content.</p>
Structure of curriculum.	<p>Literature survey: Curricula in South Africa reflect the fragmentation in public relations theory.</p> <p>Empirical research: Respondents feel that educational curricula should be adapted.</p>

After completing the literature survey and empirical research, the findings were interpreted and presented in Chapter Four. To come to a satisfactory conclusion in this research, the extent to which this thesis addresses the research questions will have to be discussed. A number of sub-problems that relate to the research question have been identified, and will each be discussed under a separate heading in the subsections that follow.

2.1 Organisational position of public relations

The original research question was:

What is the organisational position of public relations, and what should this organisational position be?

The **first part** of the question is descriptive in nature, and was addressed sufficiently by the literature as well as empirical survey. Both surveys indicate that there is currently – in theory and in practice – confusion on the organisational position of public relations. Literature was unclear about the organisational position of public relations. Chapter Two cites some textbooks that mention this confusion while at the same time calling for a solution to the confusion. Empirical research reflects this confusion among respondents, as is evident from the responses to the following specific statements:

Table 5.4: Role of public relations in the organisation

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree
Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation.	32.6	54.3
The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	23.4	31.9

Line function versus staff function. Strategist versus technician. Marketing support versus organisation-wide management. These are all issues with which public relations practitioners have been grappling, unable as yet to come up with clear guidelines that state unequivocally what the role of public relations should be in the organisation.

The **second part** of the first research question is exploratory in nature, and asks what the organisational position of public relations should be. Implicit in this second part is the question whether public relations practitioners would be open to suggestions on a new look at the organisational position of public relations.

Answering this question was a little bit more complicated, especially since a number of issues have been identified in the organisational positioning of public relations. Chapter Two and the second section of this chapter argue that Porter's value chain analysis may serve as the basis for clearing up these issues. The issues and potential solutions to them are provided in tabular format for ease of reference:

Table 5.5: Issues in organisational position of public relations

Issue	Potential solution
Relationships with all stakeholders versus relationships with customers exclusively.	Public relations would be directed to give equal focus to all stakeholder interests. If other line functions were to have an equal understanding, brought about by the Porter value chain, they will also be less tempted to "hijack" public relations for narrow parochial interests in the belief that "their" function controls public relations.
In-house versus outsourced.	Understanding that public relations is an essential support activity in the organisation would remove any temptation to outsource the function in the mistaken belief that it will save the organisation money, since "public relations is not an essential value-added function."
Corporate image and CSR.	Public relations practitioners will, with the Porter value chain focus, have a wider understanding of the organisation-wide impact of public relations, and will in all likelihood focus less intensely on corporate image or CSR issues where they previously felt that their major contribution to the organisation was to be found.
Leading function to advertising and marketing.	Understanding its role as a support activity will direct public relations practitioners to accept that, under given circumstances, advertising and marketing should take the lead.
Support activity to advertising and marketing.	Although a support activity to the specific functional areas such as marketing and sales, public relations will also serve as a support to inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, and service, thereby rendering it a wider role in the organisation.
Technician versus strategist.	As support activity, the public relations practitioner will of necessity act as a technician, but with the understanding that this support activity is organisation-wide, it will automatically also be seen as a strategic function, and public relations practitioners will be called upon to fulfil their strategic obligations.

2.2 Marketing and public relations

The research question discussed here was:

Is there a link between marketing and public relations, and what should the nature of this link be?

The surveyed literature, drawn mainly from public relations and marketing sources, is unanimous in its view that there is of necessity a strong link between public relations and marketing, but is equally unanimous in perpetuating a dichotomy – some even refer to it as a turf battle – between the role of each in regard to each other. It may be stated without much fear of contradiction that this battle rages on – at least as far as literature is concerned. The current state of the debate relates specifically to two viewpoints:

- Public relations should direct marketing.
- Marketing should direct public relations.

Empirical evidence suggests that, in some organisations, marketing is winning this war, while, in others, public relations is winning, as was evident from the fact that some organisations have public relations departments, while others have marketing or marketing communication departments directing the public relations function. The first part of the question is settled without much contradiction – there **is** a link between public relations and marketing.

The second part of the question relating to the **nature** of the link provided a bit more problematic to investigate, since the literature was at best unclear and at worst divisive on the nature of the link between these two currently-at-war functions. Empirical evidence from a 2004 research study (Venter, 2004) suggested that public relations practitioners in South Africa were themselves unsure how to position their function in regard to marketing.

It is proposed that the use of Porter's value chain analysis will go a long way to addressing this dichotomy and to end the long-standing turf battle, and empirical evidence gathered from this research survey seems to support the use of Porter's value chain: If it is seen as a support activity, it means implicitly and explicitly that public relations will, where necessary, act as the support to **all** of the primary activities, marketing and sales **included**.

In answering the questionnaires, respondents were quite satisfied to agree that public relations sometimes should act as a support activity in the organisation, "*where it lends*

support to ALL departments in the organisation.” On the basis of this response it may be argued that public relations, in this capacity, also lends support to marketing as one of the departments in the organisation. Should the use of Porter’s value chain analysis be accepted as the basis for realigning public relations, then the age-old turf battle between marketing and public relations may also be settled once and for all.

2.3 Public relations education

The research question discussed here was:

Is the educational curriculum of public relations sufficient to equip public relations practitioners well for their job?

The surveyed literature clearly indicates a need for the realignment of the public relations curriculum, but was vague about what subjects to include. It also became clear that the South African curriculum was in need of some overhaul, and empirical research was conducted to establish what subjects are important to public relations practitioners, who, incidentally, also agreed that the educational curriculum needed overhaul, since they were not unanimous in their agreement that the curriculum, as it stands, is sufficient to prepare them for their jobs as practitioners. Furthermore, respondents indicated that public relations textbooks, at the moment, do not offer sufficient preparation for “real world” problems faced by practitioners. While it may be argued that textbooks alone do not suffice as education, it is argued that textbooks guide students and lecturers alike. As such, textbooks providing theory should be revised to ensure that practitioners are more fully prepared for challenges facing them.

The empirical research indicated a strong need for the realignment of public relations education, as well as a specific call to include in public relations curricula the following subjects that were felt to be essential:

- Strategic management.
- Marketing.
- Management.
- Operations management.
- Human resources management.
- Accounting and finance.

While a number of respondents did feel that public relations education as it stands does not do a bad job of preparing students for their successful functioning in the practice of public relations, they did agree that some alignment of public relations curricula would be in order. The answer to the research question, then, of whether public relations education is sufficient, is not an emphatic “yes”, but neither is it an emphatic “no.” Education should therefore not be completely overhauled, but definitely realigned with the realities of the interaction that public relations has with marketing and other similar business disciplines.

2.4 Ethics and public relations

Two research questions pertain to ethics. The **first** research question discussed here was:

Should public relations have a task and role to ensure ethical conduct in the organisation?

Respondents from both groups (US respondents and SA respondents) were adamant that public relations can and should play a leading role in organisational ethics. Public relations should provide ethical guidance, and should involve itself in the ethical training in the workplace. As such, public relations students should be taught ethics.

How exactly this should be done is unclear, apart from the stated wishes of both groups of respondents that public relations should:

- Provide guidance on ethics in the organisation (this could mean that public relations practitioners act as ethics officers, and that they should provide ethics training in the organisation).
- Ensure that its practitioners are given ethics training in order to equip them for their role.

This could prove to be one of the most problematic dilemmas faced by public relations today. **Firstly**, given that public relations has a tainted name, and its practitioners are viewed with suspicion, it would be a hard sell indeed to convince organisations to appoint “*spin doctors*” as ethical guardians and trainers. **Secondly**, given that ethical processes and systems are in a state of development, public relations practitioners need to convince management to include the public relations function in ethical systems, but they need to do so on the basis of theory that does not even delineate a clear role for public relations in the organisation. **Thirdly**, most literature on ethics seems to agree that ethics cannot be taught, and that the ethics of the individual are important to consider when dealing with organisational ethics.

This has implications for human resources, who have to search for and find candidates whose individual ethics resonate with those of the organisation.

The second research question pertaining to ethics asks:

What should this organisational role be?

In line with the views of the postmodern and values-driven approaches to public relations, it is suggested by this thesis that public relations finds and fulfils its potential activist role in the organisation by assuming responsibility (in addition to already-existing responsibilities) for ethics in that they should represent the ethical interests of customers, outside stakeholders, the environment, and the organisation itself. Given that organisations will benefit from more ethical conduct, a function such as public relations with its relationship-building and communication skills can do much to ensure more ethical conduct in all departments of the organisation. It could be of some value to public relations to accept this kind of responsibility while acknowledging its role in the organisational value chain as support activity, where it should by definition be organisationally poised to contact with all functions of the organisation.

As support activity to the organisation as a whole, it will be well-positioned to give ethical direction, by assisting in or directing the development of ethics policies, and it will be positioned to give effect to those policies, in the knowledge that good ethics directly contributes to good reputation, which in turn translates into profits for the organisation. As a function that is also in daily contact with the views of others on the organisation, they are thus ideally posed to advise top management on ethical issues that may affect the organisation's strategic success.

As support activity to primary activities (such as marketing) they can ensure more ethical marketing and marketing communication practices, thereby making a vital contribution to these activities. In another hypothetical situation they could give valuable support to inbound logistics by warning them of the ethical pitfalls of dealing with organisations whose ethical credentials may be under suspicion, and guide and advise them on selecting suppliers whose ethics are beyond reproach. These are only two examples of how public relations could fulfil a more responsible ethical role in the organisation. More research on this area will contribute greatly to public relations fulfilling its function as organisational activist with a values-based approach to organisational stakeholders throughout the value chain.

2.5 A new model for public relations

The final research question asks:

Is there a model that could help public relations achieve a new organisational position?

There is little doubt from the literature survey that the Porter value chain analysis will serve as an elegant solution to the major headaches facing public relations in the organisation. Empirical proof that support the solutions provided above was found in a number of questions, discussed below:

Table 5.6: Empirical support for Porter's value chain analysis

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.	8.2	12.2	57.1	16.0
In delivering support to other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	36.7	55.1	4.1	0.0
Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.	6.1	2.0	36.7	40.8
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	42.9	49	0.0	0.0
Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	55.1	42.9	0.0	0.0
Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	25.5	57.4	4.3	2.1
Public relations as a function should NOT be outsourced.	23.4	29.8	12.8	10.6

While the questions cited in **Table 5.6** above do not directly mention Porter's value chain by name, each one refers directly or implicitly to the solutions proposed by that analysis. In each case, respondents included in the survey have shown themselves willing to accept the implications that emanate from the use of Porter's value chain analysis.

All of the research questions identified on pages 18-19 in Chapter One have been satisfactorily addressed by the research. The attention now turns to the research objectives.

3. Research objectives

To what extent were the research objectives stated in Chapter One (page 19) met? The literature survey and empirical research found the following results relating to the stated research objectives, as **Table 5.7** below indicates:

Table 5.7: Meeting the research objectives

Research objective	Literature survey finding	Empirical survey finding
To describe and define the role of public relations in the organisation.	Public relations is unsure about its role in the organisation, and various theoretical perspectives are given.	Some empirical evidence is given to support the theoretical confusion.
To describe the interaction between public relations and marketing.	The link between public relations and marketing, though not debated, is unclear. Some argue that marketing should direct public relations, and others argue the opposite.	While the empirical survey did not focus on the link <i>per se</i> , evidence is given that public relations should sometimes support marketing – as well as other business functions. However, if seen as an organisation-wide support activity, it will also help to direct certain marketing activities.
To investigate the sufficiency of the educational curriculum of public relations.	Literature surveyed question whether public relations education is sufficient to equip practitioners for the demands of the 21 st Century. Calls are made for educational curricula to be redesigned, specifically incorporating greater emphasis on business and strategy.	Respondents also expressed concerns that the educational curriculum of public relations is not sufficient, and call for more focus on business and strategy.
To explore a new role for public relations in the organisation.	Literature expressed a desire for new theoretical models describing the role of public relations in the organisation. The use of Porter's value chain analysis may contribute significantly as way to describing and defining the role of public relations in the organisation. It is suggested that public relations be positioned as a support activity in the value chain.	Respondents tacitly indicated a need for a new role for public relations in the organisation.

Research objective	Literature survey finding	Empirical survey finding
To establish the views of public relations practitioners on a proposed “new” role for this function in the organisation.	The literature survey clearly shows a need for a new role, but offers little guidance.	Respondents showed a willingness to accommodate some of the implications of the Porter value chain as a model for public relations in the organisation.
To describe the contribution of public relations to ethics in the organisation.	The ethical behaviour of organisations is influenced by a number of factors such as organisational culture, the culture of society, and the culture of individuals. No single function is found that in itself influences ethics, however, top management plays a key role in the shaping of organisational ethics.	Public relations practitioners should influence ethics by being ethical themselves (which currently they are not), by receiving training in ethics, and by becoming a part of ethical decision-making and ethics training in the organisation.
To describe a model that could improve the function and functioning of public relations.	Literature on public relations does not provide clear guidance on the functioning of public relations in the organisation. However, a model developed by a strategist – Porter – does provide some room for positioning public relations in the organisation.	While the empirical survey does not try to establish what new model could be developed, it does test the likelihood of public relations practitioners to accept a suggested model based on Porter’s value chain. Empirical findings suggest a strong likelihood of such a model to be accepted.

As the table above suggests, the research objectives of this thesis are met.

4. Policy implications and recommendations

Solving the crisis that public relations faces will require the following to be done:

- The theory of public relations should be revisited in order to make it more cogent, coherent, and to put it in line with prevailing knowledge in strategic management thinking. This will ensure that public relations practitioners **as well as** their top managements and colleagues from other functional departments will have a clear understanding of the role and function of public relations in the organisation.
- In tandem with the redevelopment of public relations theory goes the realignment of public relations curricula to include strong emphasis on public relations as a management function **equal to** the other management functions in the organisation.
- In order to ensure greater ethical performance, the selection of public relations students, as well as the training of public relations practitioners should receive

attention. Furthermore, public relations organisations like PRISA should exercise greater control in ensuring the ethical conduct of its members.

- Public relations academics should engage in ongoing discourse with colleagues from other organisational functions to encourage them to also realign theory to include public relations in its “rightful” role as organisational partner – **support activity to all organisational departments**, and support activity to top management in their execution of duties.
- Engaging in ongoing research to establish the finer detail of the “new” role for public relations.
- The case should be made strongly that the practice of outsourcing public relations should be stopped, since it creates too many ethically grey areas. Public relations belongs inside the organisation, and should be positioned accordingly.

5. Future research

As Chapter Three stated, the research for this thesis was mainly exploratory in nature, with the intent to find areas in which research can be conducted. Owing to the fact that a number of different topics or themes were explored, and in more than one academic discipline, the research has successfully identified a number of lines of research.

The first research implication of this thesis emanates from the relatively low response rate. While the results discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis are applicable to those respondents who completed their online questionnaires, the number of respondents made it difficult if not impossible to extrapolate responses to all PRSIA-members. Furthermore, not all public relations practitioners in South Africa are members of PRISA, and the conclusions of this research cannot be seen as representative of all public relations practitioners in South Africa.

Therefore, the next logical step in this research would be to repeat the study in South Africa, soliciting the response of a larger respondent base, one that would include a sample representative of all public relations practitioners in South Africa. While the literature study in this thesis, coupled with the responses to this research, clearly shows that these problems are felt throughout the industry, it would be significant to add more statistical weight to what has been discussed so far.

It would also be prudent to ask similar questions of functional managers other than public relations practitioners to establish their views on the role of public relations in the organisation. Based on the literature review, it is hypothesised that other functional

managers could also reflect the uncertainty over the role of public relations in the organisation, and to test their views on the potential inclusion of public relations in the value chain.

The empirical survey focused on the views of South African public relations practitioners, while referring in some instances to what a small number of mainly US respondents had to say about the issues. It would be significant to establish whether the challenges facing South African public relations practitioners are limited to South Africa or not, and to what extent. While the results of the pilot study seems to indicate that the challenges are more or less experienced on a universal scale (this also emanates from the literature survey), it cannot be stated with confidence in the absence of empirical data.

It would be particularly significant to repeat (a variation of) this research among business leaders and decision makers to find out what they believe to be the potential role of public relations, especially given the recommendation that it may be realigned according to Porter's value chain analysis.

The proposal that public relations be realigned in the organisation using Porter's value chain analysis as a point of departure opens up several veins of future research. Firstly, research on the strategic impact that Porter's (adapted) value chain may have on organisational design, and the firm position of public relations in that design, could be done in order to clearly describe that new role. Secondly, public relations theory could be revisited to make provision for the inclusion of this model in the general body of knowledge. This in itself would open up more veins of research. For example, new textbooks could be written (or current textbooks updated) that would describe and explain the role of public relations not only in the organisation, but also its responsibilities as equal partner in the value chain.

The literature review referred to the fact that public relations curricula are currently aligned to different schools of thought, but that they have to be revisited. The positioning of public relations in the Porter value chain could have major impacts for future research in public relations education. Firstly, more in-depth research needs to be done to establish the extent to which public relations curricula do not meet the requirements of the (new) public relations arena. Secondly, in-depth research needs to be done to establish what should be taught to enable public relations practitioners not only to function more effectively in business organisations, but also what it is that they need to know to interact effectively with other partners in the organisational value chain.

Chapter Two made brief mention of the fact that other functional managers do not fully understand the role of public relations in the organisation. This was partly supported by the empirical survey, showing that functional managers need more education on the role of public relations. One of the factors that contribute to this state of affairs is the fact that textbooks in disciplines other than public relations do not provide sufficient theoretical grounding for understanding public relations. It is proposed that content analysis be done on textbooks in, for example, management, marketing, operations, human resources, and finance to establish exactly how public relations is portrayed. A possible outflow of this research could be that textbooks (or at least those parts of textbooks dealing with public relations) in other disciplines be adapted to reflect the new role of public relations.

The empirical survey indicates a willingness of respondents to accept some implications of the Porter value chain. It is suggested, given the small respondent base, to conduct more and more in-depth research in the likelihood for this model to be widely accepted by public relations practitioners. Should the results of that research yield positive outcomes, then the model should be tested *in vivo*.

The purpose of exploratory research is, *inter alia*, to find grounds for future research. In this case, the research reflected in this thesis has succeeded, as the discussion in this section of the chapter clearly shows. For the public relations student a number of potentially exciting research topics has been uncovered, and it is hoped that this research agenda be operationalised in the interests of the future direction of public relations, a business function and academic discipline that is currently beset by a number of problems that hinder its deployment as a strategic management partner in the organisation's value chain.

6. Conclusion

The identity crisis facing public relations may be solved. Instead of turning it into an involuntary scapegoat for many organisational ethical misdemeanours, and turning it into a willing slave of those wishing to cloak themselves in the invisibility offered by the ring of Gyges, it could choose to realign itself according to the analysis offered by Porter in his value chain.

This will require new thinking on the part of public relations academics and practitioners, requiring them to firstly think "*out of the box*", and secondly by them accepting the fact that public relations will become a strategically significant player in organisational management only if it accepts that it is a support activity ("*support*" being a word that is anathema to many practitioners) to other primary organisational functions.

Should this occur, public relations as a function will have a better-than-fighting chance of surviving. Should it choose not to realign itself, it faces the danger of extinction, and the concomitant danger of being relegated to the sidelines of organisational management, where it will be used cynically as a tool to manufacture and manipulate public opinion, deserving of its bad name.

Renaming public relations is at best a weak attempt at addressing the crisis in which this discipline finds itself. It should actively work to make itself an integral part of the organisation, where it will add the value sought. As such, it will finally be able to play a significant role in making organisations more effective, more ethical, and, by consequence, more productive.

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APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A: Pilot questionnaire
- APPENDIX B: Final questionnaire
- APPENDIX C: Letter sent to PRISA members
- APPENDIX D: Written responses to pilot questionnaire
- APPENDIX E: Tables of selected responses to pilot questionnaire
- APPENDIX F: Frequency tables
- APPENDIX G: Descriptive statistics

APPENDIX A

PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

(NOTE: In its original form, the pilot questionnaire was printed on A4-sized paper. For the purposes of saving space in this publication, font sizes were decreased).

PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE
INSTRUCTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please read all questions carefully Questions that have more than one answer are indicated by means of an (*). Specific instructions per question are indicated in SMALL CAPS.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. My precise job title is: _____

2. My highest qualification is: TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Up to 12 years (Matric)	Completed university/Polytechnic degree
College Diploma	Post University/Polytechnic degree
Polytechnic Diploma	

3. My preferred language (at home) is: PLEASE SPECIFY HOME LANGUAGE _____

4. The following best describes my organisation's industry: TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Agriculture	Wine and alcoholic beverages
Hospitality	Beer brewing
Academia	Public relations
Government	Non-government (NGO)
Banking	Motor vehicle manufacturing
Food manufacturing	Motor vehicle dealerships
Retail	Other PLEASE SPECIFY

5. My organisation consists of ____ employees. PLEASE STATE THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES. IF UNSURE, PLEASE ESTIMATE

6. The estimated annual sales of my organisation total _____. PLEASE ESTIMATE ANNUAL SALES IN US DOLLAR.

7. The office where I operate is situated in _____. PLEASE STATE COUNTRY OF OPERATION

8. In my organisation, we mainly use the following language(s) to communicate to our clients/customers (*): IN THE CASE OF MULTINATIONALS, PLEASE NAME THE LANGUAGE(S) MOST COMMONLY USED IN YOUR COUNTRY OF OPERATION

9. In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by: TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Public relations department	None
Marketing department	Don't know
Outside PR agency	Other PLEASE SPECIFY
Outside advertising agency	

10. The following best describes my major field(s) of study(*): TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Public relations	Accounting/finance
Business management	Communication
Journalism	Law
Marketing	Languages
Media studies	Other PLEASE SPECIFY

11. I have been working in the field of public relations for _____ number of years. PLEASE SPECIFY THE NUMBER OF YEARS

SECTION B: PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTIONS

12. Companies have to build relationships with several groups of people in order to achieve their mission. Below is a list of such groups. Please rank them in order of importance to your department: PLEASE INSERT THE RELEVANT NUMBER IN THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Financial institutions such as banks	
Shareholders	
Media such as newspapers, radio, television	
Government departments	
Local people living in the vicinity	
Suppliers	
Intermediaries	
Customers	
Competitors	
Employees of my company	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

(1 = highest rank; 11 = lowest rank)

13. Now, think of the group of people you have ranked (in the question above) as most important. How do you (or your department) communicate with this group? TICK/SHADE THE RELEVANT BLOCKS

Communication medium	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Annually	Never
E-mail					
Telephone/cell phone					
Memorandums					
Meetings					
Internal newsletter					
Bulletin board					
Videoconferencing					
Speeches					
Press conferences					
Brochures/pamphlets					
Posters					
Informational multimedia					
In-house journal					
Other PLEASE SPECIFY					

14. When communicating to the group that you have identified in question 11, what is the normal objective of your communication? (*) (Please select only the most important TWO). TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCKS

Instructions		Relationship-building	
Requests		Reminding	
Information		Other SPECIFY	

15. When you have to communicate to more than one person, and you use a method of communication such as a newsletter or brochure, do you (*): TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Do it yourself		Ask the marketing department to do it	
Ask a subordinate to do it		Ask the public relations department to do it	
Ask a colleague to do it		Outsource	
Ask the advertising department to do it		Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

16. In your organisation, what is the public relations department called?

TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Advertising		Corporate affairs	
Public relations		Marketing communication	
Corporate communications		Strategic communication	
Public affairs		Sales promotion	
Corporate advertising		My organisation does not have a public relations department	
Communications		I work for a public relations consultancy	
Community relations		Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

17. Here follows a list of some opinions. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them:
TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is the job of public relations practitioners to present the organisation in a favourable light.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations practitioners to defend the organisation's actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising of a product or service can stretch the truth a little bit, since everyone knows that advertisements tend to exaggerate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners must always give a positive message to the organisation's customers, because it helps the organisation to sell its product.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners should do as they are told by top management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners should not advise the organisation, since they do not have training in business subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner (like telling the truth).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When an organisation does not deliver on the promise in its advertisements, customers will not be unhappy, because they expect advertisers to exaggerate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations make mistakes from time to time, which means that it is not always possible to deliver the advertised promise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An organisation should never admit when it makes a mistake, because then people will think badly of the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethics in my organisation forms part of all planning, from strategic level down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My organisation does not worry too much about ethics, just about getting the job done without breaking the law.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All the workers in my organisation understand its mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The organisation's mission is communicated well to all employees and other stakeholders in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is the primary activity of public relations to communicate the organisation's mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION C: ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOURS

During the last year, a number of organisations have come under the spotlight for their behaviour.

18. Referring to the above-mentioned general statement, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree	Disagree	Strongly
Selling products at the lowest possible price always benefits customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not enough is being done to safeguard customers' rights.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When competitors agree NOT to compete on price, the customer is not really badly affected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The information found on the labels on food items is generally correct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the information found on the labels on food items is not correct, it is because the company made an honest mistake.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations never tell lies to consumers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations take ethical shortcuts because they only focus on making a profit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations do not have to bother about doing the right thing as long as they do not break the law	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legislation makes it very difficult to do business, so it is in order to "take some shortcuts" as long as the consumers are not harmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is not possible for organisations to practice good corporate governance since it is difficult and expensive to comply.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shareholders should get maximum return on their investment, regardless of the organisation's ethics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An organisation should practice ethical business, but not to the detriment of shareholders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION D: EXECUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

19. As a public relations practitioner, you must think of how public relations as a function is executed in your organisation. Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations delivers a valuable support to marketing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The services of public relations practitioners are essential to communicate with staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The services of public relations practitioners are essential to communicate with internal and external clients/customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The organisation as a whole benefits from the actions by public relations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations does not add enough value to the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Line managers trust public relations practitioners to communicate with their staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Line managers trust public relations practitioners to communicate with internal and external clients/customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations should support all of the organisation's communication needs – internally as well as externally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In my industry, our success depends on building and maintaining good relationships with all of our stakeholder groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX B

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE
INSTRUCTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions that have more than one answer are indicated by means of an (*). Specific instructions per question are indicated in SMALL CAPS.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

2. My precise job title is:	
3. Number of employees in my organisation (ESTIMATE).	
4. Annual sales (or revenue) of my organisation (ESTIMATE).	
5. Town/city where I work.	
6. Number of years I have been working in public relations.	

2. My highest qualification is: PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Up to 12 years (Matric)	
College Diploma	
Technikon Diploma	

Completed university/Technikon degree	
Post-graduate degree	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

20. My preferred language (at home) is:

Afrikaans	
English	
English/Afrikaans	
Other European language	
Sotho	

Xhosa	
Zulu	
Other African language	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

21. The following best describes my organisation's industry: PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Agriculture	
Hospitality	
Academia	
Government	
Banking	
Other financial services	
Retail	
Non-alcoholic beverages (manufacturing)	

Wine and alcoholic beverages	
Beer brewing	
Public relations	
Non-government (NGO)	
Motor vehicle manufacturing	
Motor vehicle dealerships	
Food manufacturing	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

22. In my organisation, we mainly use the following language(s) to communicate to our clients/customers (*): PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Afrikaans	
English	
English/Afrikaans	
Other European language	
Sotho	

Xhosa	
Zulu	
Other African language	
PLEASE SPECIFY	

23. In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by: PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Public relations department	
Marketing department	
Outside PR agency	
Outside advertising agency	

Advertising department	
Marketing communications department	
Don't know	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

24. The following best describes my major field(s) of study(*): PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Public relations	
Business management	
Journalism	
Marketing	
Media studies	

Accounting/finance	
Communication	
Law	
Languages	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

25. In my organisation, the public relations department is called: PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

Advertising	
Public relations	
Corporate communications	
Public affairs	
Corporate advertising	
Communications	
Community relations	

Corporate affairs	
Marketing communication	
Strategic communication	
Sales promotion	
My organisation does not have a public relations department	
I work for a public relations consultancy	
Other PLEASE SPECIFY	

26. Here follows a list of some opinions. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations practitioners to defend the organisation's actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner (like telling the truth).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All the workers in my organisation understand its mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The organisation's mission is communicated well to all employees and other stakeholders in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During the last year, a number of organisations have come under the spotlight for their behaviour.

27. Referring to the above-mentioned general statement, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations never tell lies to consumers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is not possible for organisations to practice good corporate governance since it is difficult and expensive to comply.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION D: EXECUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

28. As a public relations practitioner, you must think of how public relations as a function is executed in your organisation. Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION E: NEW ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONSS

29. As a public relations practitioner, you are aware of several issues that need to be addressed to make public relations more effective. Below are some statements that may aid in achieving that goal. Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations as a function should NOT be outsourced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other line managers need to be informed of the role that public relations plays in the organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations as a function is generally disregarded by top management because they do not understand the full impact of public relations activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public relations textbooks provide sufficient guidance for the "real world."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. Below is a list of subjects normally offered by business schools. Please indicate which ones, in your opinion, are essential to the study of public relations, and which ones are not: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Essential	Nice to have	Not at all essential
Management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accounting and finance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Operations/production management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human resource management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logistics management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sales management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisational behaviour.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX C

LETTER SENT TO PRISA MEMBERS

April 2008

Dear

A doctoral student of the Faculty of Business, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, is conducting a survey on the state of public relations in South Africa, and would greatly appreciate your input as a practitioner.

To complete this questionnaire would only take 10-15 minutes of your time and would constitute a valuable contribution to the practice of public relations in South Africa.

Here is the link to the survey:

<http://203104374@cput.ac.za>

Please note that your address and response will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

As the link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address, please do not forward this message.

The CPUT thanks you very much for your participation and the contribution that you are hereby making to research and to the body of knowledge.

.....
Prof. André Slabbert
Head of Department: Research
Faculty of Business
Cape Town campus

APPENDIX D

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire Number	Question number	Comment
1		No written comments
2	16	"Other" – PR and advertising educational institution
3		No written comments
4	20	Statement "Public relations as a function should be outsourced" Comment: "Repeat"
	20	Statement "My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation" Comment: "N/A. no training"
5	9	"Multiple is OK – for instance, ours is split between HR & Business Development"
	10	"At what level? (Multiple questions?)"
6	17	Statement "Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner" Comment: Word "always" is circled with accompanying question mark
7	12, 13, 14, 15	None answered
8	7	"Not sure what this means? Country? Within organization?"
Note: Questions not answered – only suggestions given	12	Statement "Government departments" Comment: "regulators? Policy makers?"
		Suggestion: Add nongovernment groups/activist groups
	13	Suggestion: Web logs or other social media?
	14	Suggestion: Persuasion? Opinion changing? Behavioural? Purchase intent? Change policy?
	17	Comment: "Because of the nature of these questions, you may receive responses mostly in the middle – so you may want to use a 7-point scale or 9-point scale – using semantic differential between strongly agree and strongly disagree with a neutral in the middle.
9		No written comment.
10		No written comment.
11		No written comment.
12	20	Statement: "The focus of public relations should move away from communication to building relationships" Comment: "They are reciprocal! False dichotomy.
13	General comment	"Take a close look at the use of 'all' and 'always'. Also the Likert agree/disagree may be insufficiently precise – maybe 1 – 7 scale? Also – 'sometimes' is a valid answer for some of these"
	13	"Scale is too restrictive – quarterly, - periodically – sometimes N/A not included"
	19	Statement "As a public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers" Word "all" circled, accompanied by question mark. Statement: "In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions" Word "all" is circled, accompanied by question mark. Statement: "In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification" Comment: Statement is questioned.
	20	Statement: "My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation" Word "training" is circled. Comment: "Formal or experiential?" Statement: "An important function of internal communication is providing training in ethical decision-making" comment: "Probably not – topic training.
14		No written comment.

15	13	Heading "As needed strategically" suggested as added option.
	17	Number scale suggested.
	20	Statement "Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers." Comment: "Two questions. Split up."
16		No written comment.
17	General comment	"NOTE: I have 2 titles, one for my agency and one for our largest client, AT&T, which has completely outsourced its PR/corp comm. Function to the agency. Why did they do this? They decided that PR would never be a core competency of the corporation, and that they would have better access to best practices through an outsourcing model"
	19, 20 not answered.	
18		No written comment.
19	17	Statement: "People suspect that most organizations hide the truth from them." Comment: "Depends where, what country/region" Statement: "When an organisation does not deliver on the promise in its advertisements, customers will not be unhappy, because they expect advertisers to exaggerate." Comment: "Confusing – rewrite" Statement "Organisations make mistakes from time to time, which means that it is not always possible to deliver the advertised promise." Comment: "Two questions in one."
	18	Statement: "If the information found on the labels on food items is not correct, it is because the company made an honest mistake." Comment: "Depends on the country and industry."
	19	Statement: "Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced." Comment: "This is not a view in most of the US, Eastern & Western Europe. They all would disagree with this statement."
		Statement: "Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation." Comment: some handwriting was illegible – "...to equal PR with secretarial/administrative type roles." Statement: "Public relations should be treated as a function equal to that of marketing." Comment: Some handwriting was illegible ".you will not get to the heart of their answers, some people can say disagree and mean that they see PR as less important, not more. I suggest clarify the question." Statement: "The focus of public relations should move away from communication to building relationships." Comment: Some handwriting was illegible "...you may find different reasons for disagreement..."20
20	20	Statement: "Public relations should be treated as a function equal to that of marketing." Comment: "Higher than marketing."
21		No written comment.
22	2	What if you have a Master's or PhD?
	12	Think about a Likert scale. 5 point scale."
	17	Likert scale should have opposite order – start with disagree on left. Statement: "Ethics in my organisation forms part of all planning, from strategic level down." Comment: "No idea how to answer."
	19	Statement: "In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification." Comment: Word "tertiary" is circled, accompanied by question mark.

APPENDIX E

TABLES OF SELECTED RESPONSES TO PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 17: Here follows a list of some opinions. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light.	4.7 6	38. 10	23. 81	28. 57	4.7 6
Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations practitioners to defend the organisation's actions.	4.7 6	19. 05	23. 81	38. 10	14. 29
It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	4.7 6	28. 57	19. 05	33. 33	14. 29
Advertising of a product or service can stretch the truth a little bit, since everyone knows that advertisements tend to exaggerate.	0	14. 29	9.5 2	57. 14	19. 05
Public relations practitioners must always give a positive message to the organisation's customers, because it helps the organisation to sell its product.	0	19. 05	23. 81	33. 33	23. 81
Public relations practitioners should do as they are told by top management.	4.7 6	4.7 6	9.5 2	38. 10	42. 86
Public relations practitioners should not advise the organisation, since they do not have training in business subjects.	0	0	10. 00	35. 00	55. 00
Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner (like telling the truth).	0.0 0	9.5 2	33. 33	42. 86	14. 29
People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.	33. 33	38. 10	23. 81	4.7 6	0
When an organisation does not deliver on the promise in its advertisements, customers will not be unhappy, because they expect advertisers to exaggerate.	4.7 6	0	19. 05	42. 86	33. 33
Organisations make mistakes from time to time, which means that it is not always possible to deliver the advertised promise.	9.5 2	47. 62	19. 05	19. 05	4.7 6
An organisation should never admit to making a mistake, because then people will think badly of the organisation.	0	0	4.7 6	33. 33	61. 90
Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.	0	25. 00	25. 00	20. 00	30. 00
Ethics in my organisation forms part of all planning, from strategic level down.	30. 00	40. 00	10. 00	20. 00	0
My organisation does not worry too much about ethics, just about getting the job done without breaking the law.	0	9.5 2	9.5 2	42. 86	38. 10
Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	33. 33	52. 38	9.5 2	4.7 6	0
All the workers in my organisation understand its mission.	9.5 2	33. 33	14. 29	28. 57	14. 29
The organisation's mission is communicated well to all employees and other stakeholders in the organisation.	14. 29	38. 10	9.5 2	19. 05	19. 05
It is the primary activity of public relations to communicate the organisation's mission.	9.5 2	47. 62	9.5 2	28. 57	4.7 6
Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.	5.0 0	40. 00	25. 00	25. 00	5.0 0

Question 18:

During the last year, a number of organisations have come under the spotlight for their behaviour.

31. Referring to the above-mentioned general statement, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Selling products at the lowest possible price always benefits customers.	0	15.00	20.00	40.00	25.00
Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.	9.52	52.38	28.57	9.52	0
Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	0	14.29	38.10	38.10	9.52
When competitors agree NOT to compete on price, the customer is not really badly affected.	4.76	4.76	28.57	38.10	23.81
The information found on the labels on food items is generally correct.	0	71.43	14.29	9.52	4.76
If the information found on the labels on food items is not correct, it is because the company made an honest mistake.	0	9.52	33.33	47.62	9.52
When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.	0	19.05	38.10	42.86	0
Organisations never tell lies to consumers.	0	0	9.52	66.67	23.81
Organisations take ethical shortcuts because they only focus on making a profit.	0	42.86	42.86	14.29	0
Organisations do not have to bother about doing the right thing as long as they do not break the law	0	0	4.76	47.62	47.62
Legislation makes it very difficult to do business, so it is in order to "take some shortcuts" as long as the consumers are not harmed	0	4.76	14.29	71.43	9.52
It is not possible for organisations to practice good corporate governance since it is difficult and expensive to comply.	0	0	4.76	66.67	28.57
Shareholders should get maximum return on their investment, regardless of the organisation's ethics.	0	0	23.81	47.62	28.57
An organisation should practice ethical business, but not to the detriment of shareholders.	0	14.29	14.29	52.38	19.05
Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.	0	14.29	38.10	23.81	23.81

32. As a public relations practitioner, you must think of how public relations as a function is executed in your organisation. Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	0	47.37	42.11	10.53	0
Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.	0	21.05	42.11	36.84	0
Public relations delivers a valuable support to marketing.	5.26	52.63	36.84	5.26	0
Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.	0	15.79	47.37	36.84	0
The services of public relations practitioners are essential to communicate with staff.	26.32	68.42	0	5.26	0
The services of public relations practitioners are essential to communicate with internal and external clients/customers.	36.84	63.16	0	0	0
As public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.	5.88	47.06	47.06	0	0
The organisation as a whole benefits from the actions by public relations.	44.44	50.00	5.56	0	0
Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	47.37	52.36	0	0	0
Public relations does not add enough value to the organisation.	0	5.26	5.26	68.42	21.05
Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.	15.79	52.63	10.53	21.05	0
In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	15.79	47.37	21.05	15.79	0
Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.	0	0	5.26	31.58	63.16
Line managers trust public relations practitioners to communicate with their staff.	0	33.33	27.78	38.89	0
Line managers trust public relations practitioners to communicate with internal and external clients/customers.	5.56	55.56	22.22	16.67	0
In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.	12.50	31.25	43.75	12.50	0
Public relations should support all of the organisation's communication needs – internally as well as externally.	52.63	42.11	0	5.26	0
In my industry, our success depends on building and maintaining good relationships with all of our stakeholder groups.	63.16	21.05	15.79	0	0
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	47.37	47.37	0	5.26	0
Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	47.37	52.36	0	0	0

33. As a public relations practitioner, you are aware of several issues that need to be addressed to make public relations more effective. Below are some statements that may aid in achieving that goal. Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements: PLEASE TICK/SHADE THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK IN EACH INSTANCE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	21.05	52.63	15.79	5.26	5.26
Organisational effectiveness will be much enhanced if solid relationships are built between the organisation's management and all internal and external customers.	42.11	57.89	0	0	0
Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers.	15.79	42.11	15.79	26.32	0
Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation.	36.84	52.63	10.53	0	0
The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	10.53	26.32	42.11	21.05	0
Public relations as a function should not be outsourced.	10.53	42.11	26.32	10.53	10.53
My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.	29.41	47.06	11.76	11.76	0
In my organisation, public relations is always the last department to be called in to help execute marketing strategies.	0	15.79	26.32	42.11	15.79
Public relations should be treated as a function equal to that of marketing.	52.63	26.32	0	15.79	5.26
The value that public relations adds to the organisation lies in its ability to build and maintain relationships that are beneficial to the organisation.	42.11	52.63	5.26	0	0
Other line managers need to be informed of the role that public relations plays in the organisation.	42.11	52.63	5.26	0	0
Public relations students should be well-trained in strategic planning and management.	73.68	21.05	5.26	0	0
Organisations should stop using public relations only in crisis situations.	52.63	26.32	10.53	5.26	5.26
Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.	63.16	21.05	10.53	5.26	0
An important function of internal communication is providing training in ethical decision-making.	42.11	26.32	26.32	5.26	0
Public relations as a function is generally disregarded by top management because they do not understand the full impact of public relations activities.	10.53	47.37	10.53	26.32	5.26
Public relations practitioners are not sufficiently trained to provide counselling and advice to other line managers.	0	42.11	15.79	42.11	0
The focus of public relations should move away from communication to building relationships.	10.53	10.53	36.84	36.84	5.26
Public relations is an essential function inside the organisation.	68.42	31.58	0	0	0
Public relations textbooks provide sufficient guidance for the "real world."	10.53	10.53	31.58	36.84	10.53

APPENDIX F

FREQUENCY TABLES

		Job Title			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Account Executive	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	AIRLINE RELATIONS	1	1.0	1.0	2.0
	assistant director - communications	1	1.0	1.0	3.0
	Assistant PR Manager	1	1.0	1.0	4.0
	business development manager	1	1.0	1.0	5.0
	Business Unit Director	1	1.0	1.0	5.9
	Chairman and CEO	1	1.0	1.0	6.9
	Chief Communications Officer	1	1.0	1.0	7.9
	CLIENT SOLUTIONS DIRECTOR	1	1.0	1.0	8.9
	Club Chairman	1	1.0	1.0	9.9
	Coastal Manager	1	1.0	1.0	10.9
	Committee Secretary	1	1.0	1.0	11.9
	Comms co-ordinator	1	1.0	1.0	12.9
	Communication Director	1	1.0	1.0	13.9
	Communication Officer	2	2.0	2.0	15.8
	Communication Officer (Contract)	1	1.0	1.0	16.8
	Communication Officer: Intern	1	1.0	1.0	17.8
	Communication Practitioner: Promotions and Sponsorships	1	1.0	1.0	18.8
	Communication Specialists	1	1.0	1.0	19.8
	Communications Consultant	1	1.0	1.0	20.8
	Communications Manager	1	1.0	1.0	21.8
	Communications Officer	5	5.0	5.0	26.7
	Corporate Affairs Manager	1	1.0	1.0	27.7
	Corporate Communications Officer	1	1.0	1.0	28.7
	Customer Care Officer	1	1.0	1.0	29.7
	Debtors client services	1	1.0	1.0	30.7
	Deputy Communications Adviser	1	1.0	1.0	31.7
	Deputy Director Communications	1	1.0	1.0	32.7
	Deputy manager communications	1	1.0	1.0	33.7
	Deputy Managing Director	1	1.0	1.0	34.7
	Director	1	1.0	1.0	35.6
	DIRECTOR	1	1.0	1.0	36.6
	Director Marketing and Promotion	1	1.0	1.0	37.6
	Director: PR and Communication	1	1.0	1.0	38.6
	Director: Marketing and Communication	1	1.0	1.0	39.6
	Divisional Manager Corporate Affairs	1	1.0	1.0	40.6
	Editorial manager	1	1.0	1.0	41.6
	Employee Communication Specialist	1	1.0	1.0	42.6
	Events Co-ordinator	1	1.0	1.0	43.6
	EVENTS MANAGER	1	1.0	1.0	44.6
	Executive Assistant	1	1.0	1.0	45.5
	Futurist	1	1.0	1.0	46.5

Group Corporate Communication Manager	1	1.0	1.0	47.5
Head of Brands	1	1.0	1.0	48.5
Head of Corporate Communications	1	1.0	1.0	49.5
Head of Product	1	1.0	1.0	50.5
Internal Communications Manager	1	1.0	1.0	51.5
Learnerships - general factotum!	1	1.0	1.0	52.5
Lecturer	3	3.0	3.0	55.4
Manager Public Relations and Taxpayer Education	1	1.0	1.0	56.4
Manager: Communications	1	1.0	1.0	57.4
Manager: Events & Stakeholder Relations	1	1.0	1.0	58.4
Manager: Income Development and Public Relations	1	1.0	1.0	59.4
Managing director	1	1.0	1.0	60.4
Managing Director	7	6.9	6.9	67.3
Managing Member	1	1.0	1.0	68.3
Managing Partner	1	1.0	1.0	69.3
Media & Communications Co-ordinator	1	1.0	1.0	70.3
Media and Publications Officer	1	1.0	1.0	71.3
Office Manager	1	1.0	1.0	72.3
Owner	3	3.0	3.0	75.2
Owner/Corporate Communication Consultant	1	1.0	1.0	76.2
PR and Strategic Communications Account Manager	1	1.0	1.0	77.2
PR Manager	1	1.0	1.0	78.2
Practitioner: Public & Corporate Affairs	1	1.0	1.0	79.2
Public Relations & Communications Officer	1	1.0	1.0	80.2
Public Relations and Promotions manager	1	1.0	1.0	81.2
Public Relations Consultant	2	2.0	2.0	83.2
Public Relations Officer	2	2.0	2.0	85.1
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER	1	1.0	1.0	86.1
Public Relations Practitioner	1	1.0	1.0	87.1
Publications and Media Manager	1	1.0	1.0	88.1
Recruitment Consultant	1	1.0	1.0	89.1
Regional communication manager	1	1.0	1.0	90.1
Self employed consultant	1	1.0	1.0	91.1
Senior Communication Advisor	1	1.0	1.0	92.1
Senior Communications Officer	1	1.0	1.0	93.1
Senior Consultant	1	1.0	1.0	94.1
Senior lecturer	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
Senior Lecturer	2	2.0	2.0	97.0
senior marketing officer	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
Writer	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
yadayada	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Company Size Number of employees in my organisation (ESTIMATE).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	--200	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	+ _ 500	1	1.0	1.0	2.0
	+ -790	1	1.0	1.0	3.0
	+/- 1000	1	1.0	1.0	4.0
	1	1	1.0	1.0	5.0
	10	1	1.0	1.0	6.0
	100	1	1.0	1.0	7.0
	11 000	1	1.0	1.0	8.0
	120	1	1.0	1.0	9.0
	125	1	1.0	1.0	10.0
	1267	1	1.0	1.0	11.0
	13	1	1.0	1.0	12.0
	13 000	1	1.0	1.0	13.0
	135	1	1.0	1.0	14.0
	14	1	1.0	1.0	15.0
	1400	1	1.0	1.0	16.0
	15	1	1.0	1.0	17.0
	150	3	3.0	3.0	20.0
	1500	1	1.0	1.0	21.0
	18	1	1.0	1.0	22.0
	180	1	1.0	1.0	23.0
	183	1	1.0	1.0	24.0
	2	5	5.0	5.0	29.0
	2 000	1	1.0	1.0	30.0
	20	1	1.0	1.0	31.0
	20 000	1	1.0	1.0	32.0
	200	2	2.0	2.0	34.0
	2000	1	1.0	1.0	35.0
	22	1	1.0	1.0	36.0
	2250	1	1.0	1.0	37.0
	25	2	2.0	2.0	39.0
	250	1	1.0	1.0	40.0
	2500	1	1.0	1.0	41.0
	3	1	1.0	1.0	42.0
	30	1	1.0	1.0	43.0
	300	1	1.0	1.0	44.0
	3000	2	2.0	2.0	46.0
	3000-5000	1	1.0	1.0	47.0
	32000	2	2.0	2.0	49.0
	33 000	1	1.0	1.0	50.0
	34000	1	1.0	1.0	51.0
	35	1	1.0	1.0	52.0
	3500	1	1.0	1.0	53.0
	380 - 400	1	1.0	1.0	54.0
	4	5	5.0	5.0	59.0
	4 000	1	1.0	1.0	60.0
	40	2	2.0	2.0	62.0
	4000	1	1.0	1.0	63.0
	44 000	1	1.0	1.0	64.0

450	1	1.0	1.0	65.0
4500	1	1.0	1.0	66.0
48 000	1	1.0	1.0	67.0
484	1	1.0	1.0	68.0
5	3	3.0	3.0	71.0
50	2	2.0	2.0	73.0
58	1	1.0	1.0	74.0
6	1	1.0	1.0	75.0
6 000	1	1.0	1.0	76.0
60	1	1.0	1.0	77.0
600	1	1.0	1.0	78.0
6500	1	1.0	1.0	79.0
680	1	1.0	1.0	80.0
7	1	1.0	1.0	81.0
70 000	1	1.0	1.0	82.0
700	1	1.0	1.0	83.0
726	1	1.0	1.0	84.0
8	1	1.0	1.0	85.0
8 000	1	1.0	1.0	86.0
800	1	1.0	1.0	87.0
9	4	4.0	4.0	91.0
About 400	1	1.0	1.0	92.0
approx 2000	1	1.0	1.0	93.0
don't know	1	1.0	1.0	94.0
Less than 10	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
More than 500	1	1.0	1.0	96.0
more than1000	1	1.0	1.0	97.0
N/A	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
One	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
we have 49 branches	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	99.0	100.0	
Missing	1	1.0		
Total	101	100.0		

Annual Sales Annual sales (or revenue) of my organisation (ESTIMATE).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ?	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
+/- 500	1	1.0	1.0	4.0
+R5 million	1	1.0	1.0	5.0
\$1 000 000	1	1.0	1.0	5.9
0	2	2.0	2.0	7.9
1 billion	1	1.0	1.0	8.9
1 million	1	1.0	1.0	9.9
100 mil	1	1.0	1.0	10.9
1000000	1	1.0	1.0	11.9
11 million	1	1.0	1.0	12.9
12 mill	1	1.0	1.0	13.9
130 million	1	1.0	1.0	14.9
2 500 000	1	1.0	1.0	15.8
2 mil	1	1.0	1.0	16.8
2-m	1	1.0	1.0	17.8
2,5 million	1	1.0	1.0	18.8
267 Million	1	1.0	1.0	19.8
3 million	1	1.0	1.0	20.8
30 000	1	1.0	1.0	21.8
35478	1	1.0	1.0	22.8
37000000	1	1.0	1.0	23.8
4.9 million	1	1.0	1.0	24.8
4000000	1	1.0	1.0	25.7
4mil	1	1.0	1.0	26.7
5 Million	1	1.0	1.0	27.7
500000	1	1.0	1.0	28.7
50MIL	1	1.0	1.0	29.7
600 Million	1	1.0	1.0	30.7
6bn	1	1.0	1.0	31.7
7 million Rands	1	1.0	1.0	32.7
700000000	1	1.0	1.0	33.7
945000000	1	1.0	1.0	34.7
About R2 Billion	1	1.0	1.0	35.6
ain't sure (public institution)	1	1.0	1.0	36.6
Billions	2	2.0	2.0	38.6
Cant disclose	1	1.0	1.0	39.6
confidential	1	1.0	1.0	40.6
don't know	3	3.0	3.0	43.6
government funded	1	1.0	1.0	44.6
government	1	1.0	1.0	45.5
Government department	1	1.0	1.0	46.5
K90 billion (\$1=K140)	1	1.0	1.0	47.5
n/a	2	2.0	2.0	49.5
N/A	2	2.0	2.0	51.5
N\$30m	1	1.0	1.0	52.5
no idea	1	1.0	1.0	53.5
No sales/Revenue	1	1.0	1.0	54.5
Non Profit Organisation	1	1.0	1.0	55.4
None	1	1.0	1.0	56.4

Not for disclosure	1	1.0	1.0	57.4
not known	1	1.0	1.0	58.4
Not prepared to answer	1	1.0	1.0	59.4
Not sure	2	2.0	2.0	61.4
NPO	1	1.0	1.0	62.4
Over R50 billion	1	1.0	1.0	63.4
R 1.9bn	1	1.0	1.0	64.4
R 100 million	1	1.0	1.0	65.3
R 18 bn	1	1.0	1.0	66.3
R 4 million	1	1.0	1.0	67.3
R00000	1	1.0	1.0	68.3
R1 bill +	1	1.0	1.0	69.3
R1.2-m	1	1.0	1.0	70.3
R10,9 million	1	1.0	1.0	71.3
R1000000	1	1.0	1.0	72.3
R140m	1	1.0	1.0	73.3
R18m	1	1.0	1.0	74.3
R19-million	1	1.0	1.0	75.2
R2 000 000.00	1	1.0	1.0	76.2
R2 billion	1	1.0	1.0	77.2
r250 000-500 000	1	1.0	1.0	78.2
R28m	1	1.0	1.0	79.2
R2million	1	1.0	1.0	80.2
R3 million	2	2.0	2.0	82.2
R300 000	1	1.0	1.0	83.2
R350 million	1	1.0	1.0	84.2
R3m	1	1.0	1.0	85.1
R40 million	1	1.0	1.0	86.1
R500.00	1	1.0	1.0	87.1
R500m	1	1.0	1.0	88.1
R50m	1	1.0	1.0	89.1
R600,000.00	1	1.0	1.0	90.1
R60m	1	1.0	1.0	91.1
R63billion	1	1.0	1.0	92.1
R660 million	1	1.0	1.0	93.1
R78 billion	1	1.0	1.0	94.1
R90 000	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
USD12 Billion	1	1.0	1.0	96.0
Unknown	1	1.0	1.0	97.0
unsure	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
We're a Medical Scheme	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
xxxx	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Workplace Town/city where I work.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Alberton	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Alice Eastern Cape	1	1.0	1.0	2.0
Blantyre	1	1.0	1.0	3.0
Bloemfontein	1	1.0	1.0	4.0
BLOEMFONTEIN	1	1.0	1.0	5.0
Boksburg	1	1.0	1.0	5.9
Braamfontein Johannesburg	1	1.0	1.0	6.9
Bryanston	1	1.0	1.0	7.9
cape town	1	1.0	1.0	8.9
Cape Town	12	11.9	11.9	20.8
Centurion	1	1.0	1.0	21.8
CT	1	1.0	1.0	22.8
Durban	3	3.0	3.0	25.7
DURBAN	1	1.0	1.0	26.7
Durban and Cape Town	1	1.0	1.0	27.7
Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal	1	1.0	1.0	28.7
East London	2	2.0	2.0	30.7
Eastern Cape	1	1.0	1.0	31.7
Elandsfontein, Germiston	1	1.0	1.0	32.7
Fourways/Sanston	1	1.0	1.0	33.7
GABORONE	1	1.0	1.0	34.7
Gaborone, Botswana	1	1.0	1.0	35.6
Garankuwa Township - Pretoria	1	1.0	1.0	36.6
Glen Vista	1	1.0	1.0	37.6
Joburg	1	1.0	1.0	38.6
Johannesburg	22	21.8	21.8	60.4
JOhannesburg	1	1.0	1.0	61.4
Jozi	1	1.0	1.0	62.4
Jwaneng, Botswana	1	1.0	1.0	63.4
Kleinzee	1	1.0	1.0	64.4
La Lucia / Durban	1	1.0	1.0	65.3
Mafikeng	1	1.0	1.0	66.3
Midrand, Johannesburg	1	1.0	1.0	67.3
Nelson Mandela Metropole	1	1.0	1.0	68.3
Phalaborwa	1	1.0	1.0	69.3
Pietermaritzburg	2	2.0	2.0	71.3
Port Elizabeth	1	1.0	1.0	72.3
pretoria	3	3.0	3.0	75.2
Pretoria	9	8.9	8.9	84.2
PTA	1	1.0	1.0	85.1
Richards Bay	1	1.0	1.0	86.1
Rosh Pinah	1	1.0	1.0	87.1
Rustenburg	1	1.0	1.0	88.1
Sandton	2	2.0	2.0	90.1
Sandton, Johannesburg	1	1.0	1.0	91.1
Scottburgh	1	1.0	1.0	92.1
Stellenbosch	2	2.0	2.0	94.1
Sunninghill, Gauteng	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
Thohoyandou	1	1.0	1.0	96.0

Tshwane	1	1.0	1.0	97.0
Windhoek	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
WINDHOEK	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
Windhoek, Namibia	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

PRYears Number of years I have been working in public relations.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
1-2 years	1	1.0	1.0	2.0
10	6	5.9	5.9	7.9
10-15 years	1	1.0	1.0	8.9
10yrs	1	1.0	1.0	9.9
11	2	2.0	2.0	11.9
12	6	5.9	5.9	17.8
13	2	2.0	2.0	19.8
13 years	1	1.0	1.0	20.8
14	1	1.0	1.0	21.8
14 yrs	1	1.0	1.0	22.8
15	6	5.9	5.9	28.7
15 years	1	1.0	1.0	29.7
16	4	4.0	4.0	33.7
18	2	2.0	2.0	35.6
2	3	3.0	3.0	38.6
2 (total)	1	1.0	1.0	39.6
20	6	5.9	5.9	45.5
21	1	1.0	1.0	46.5
22	3	3.0	3.0	49.5
22 (Total)	1	1.0	1.0	50.5
25	4	4.0	4.0	54.5
27	1	1.0	1.0	55.4
28	2	2.0	2.0	57.4
3	4	4.0	4.0	61.4
30	1	1.0	1.0	62.4
4	6	5.9	5.9	68.3
40	1	1.0	1.0	69.3
5	4	4.0	4.0	73.3
5 years	2	2.0	2.0	75.2
6	5	5.0	5.0	80.2
7	6	5.9	5.9	86.1
8	8	7.9	7.9	94.1
8 yrs	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
9	1	1.0	1.0	96.0
Five	1	1.0	1.0	97.0
NONE	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
on and off - all my life	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
One	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Qualification My highest qualification is: PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 12 years (Matric)	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
	College Diploma	11	10.9	10.9	15.8
	Technikon Diploma	17	16.8	16.8	32.7
	Completed university/Technikon degree	34	33.7	33.7	66.3
	Post-graduate degree	27	26.7	26.7	93.1
	Other	7	6.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Qualification Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Accredited Public Relations Practitioner (APR)	1	1.0	3.1	3.1
	Also a Post-graduate Diploma in Mkting Management	1	1.0	3.1	6.2
	APR	2	2.0	6.2	12.5
	B.Ed	1	1.0	3.1	15.6
	BA APR	1	1.0	3.1	18.8
	BA HNS Communications Science	1	1.0	3.1	21.9
	BA Hons. Eng Lit. and Education Diploma	1	1.0	3.1	25.0
	Basic PR and business communication certificates	1	1.0	3.1	28.1
	Chartered Public Relations Practitioner	1	1.0	3.1	31.2
	CPRP	1	1.0	3.1	34.4
	currently doing post graduate in marketing	1	1.0	3.1	37.5
	Currently registered for an Horns Degree	1	1.0	3.1	40.6
	Damelin certificate, Event Management Certificate, Pastel Certificate	1	1.0	3.1	43.8
	Dphil	1	1.0	3.1	46.9
	DTech	1	1.0	3.1	50.0
	Global Marketing/Germany	1	1.0	3.1	53.1
	In completion of Diploma	1	1.0	3.1	56.2
	International Personnel Services Consultants	1	1.0	3.1	59.4
	MA and APR	1	1.0	3.1	62.5
	MBA	1	1.0	3.1	65.6
	ND: Public Relations	1	1.0	3.1	68.8
	NDip P.R Management	1	1.0	3.1	71.9
	NDip: Public Relations Management	1	1.0	3.1	75.0
	PhD Communication Management	1	1.0	3.1	78.1
	PR Practice	1	1.0	3.1	81.2
	PRISA	1	1.0	3.1	84.4
	PRISA certification, NQF 6 courses	1	1.0	3.1	87.5
	PRISA PR Courses & DAMELIN Marketing	1	1.0	3.1	90.6
	Public Relations Certificate / Current Studies Master of Arts Media Studies - Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	1	1.0	3.1	93.8
	Training now recognised as post graduate	1	1.0	3.1	96.9
	unisa studies for BA Communications Science degree	1	1.0	3.1	100.0
	Total	32	31.7	100.0	
Missing		69	68.3		
Total		101	100.0		

Language My preferred language (at home) is:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Afrikaans	19	18.8	18.8	18.8
English	52	51.5	51.5	70.3
English/Afrikaans	4	4.0	4.0	74.3
Sotho	6	5.9	5.9	80.2
Xhosa	5	5.0	5.0	85.1
Zulu	6	5.9	5.9	91.1
Other African language	9	8.9	8.9	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Language Other

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Cantonese	1	1.0	6.7	6.7
Chichewa	1	1.0	6.7	13.3
English/German	1	1.0	6.7	20.0
isi-Swati is my home alternative language	1	1.0	6.7	26.7
Oshiwambo	1	1.0	6.7	33.3
Setswana	5	5.0	33.3	66.7
Tshivenda	1	1.0	6.7	73.3
Tswana	2	2.0	13.3	86.7
Venda	1	1.0	6.7	93.3
Zulu	1	1.0	6.7	100.0
Total	15	14.9	100.0	
Missing	86	85.1		
Total	101	100.0		

Industry The following best describes my organisation's industry: PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agriculture	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
Hospitality	2	2.0	2.0	4.0
Academia	9	8.9	8.9	12.9
Government	22	21.8	21.8	34.7
Banking	1	1.0	1.0	35.6
Other financial services	2	2.0	2.0	37.6
Retail	2	2.0	2.0	39.6
Public relations	29	28.7	28.7	68.3
Non-government (NGO)	5	5.0	5.0	73.3
Motor vehicle manufacturing	3	3.0	3.0	76.2
Other	24	23.8	23.8	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

IndustryOther

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ADVERTISING	1	1.0	2.2	2.2
	Book publishing	1	1.0	2.2	4.4
	Chemicals and plastics	1	1.0	2.2	6.7
	Climate Change Facilitation	1	1.0	2.2	8.9
	Commercial Transport	1	1.0	2.2	11.1
	Communication Consultancy (Advertising, PR and Training)	1	1.0	2.2	13.3
	Consultancy	1	1.0	2.2	15.6
	DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION	1	1.0	2.2	17.8
	Education	1	1.0	2.2	20.0
	Education (FET College)	1	1.0	2.2	22.2
	Electricity Generation	1	1.0	2.2	24.4
	Forestry	1	1.0	2.2	26.7
	Freight and Railway business	1	1.0	2.2	28.9
	Freight Company	1	1.0	2.2	31.1
	Gaming & Entertainment	1	1.0	2.2	33.3
	Generalist	1	1.0	2.2	35.6
	Healthcare thus is not hospitality - question does not make provision for adequate answer	1	1.0	2.2	37.8
	higher education	1	1.0	2.2	40.0
	Higher Education (University)	1	1.0	2.2	42.2
	Hobby in Aviculture	1	1.0	2.2	44.4
	Local Government	1	1.0	2.2	46.7
	Marketing & advertising	1	1.0	2.2	48.9
	Marketing Communications	1	1.0	2.2	51.1
	Media Monitoring	2	2.0	4.4	55.6
	Medical Scheme	1	1.0	2.2	57.8
	Mining	4	4.0	8.9	66.7
	Mining - Public Entity	1	1.0	2.2	68.9
	non profit organisation PBO	1	1.0	2.2	71.1
	Not indicated: actual answer is marketing/consulting	1	1.0	2.2	73.3
	Parastatal	1	1.0	2.2	75.6
	Petro Chemical	1	1.0	2.2	77.8
	Port authority	1	1.0	2.2	80.0
	Ports Authority	1	1.0	2.2	82.2
	Postal Service Provider	1	1.0	2.2	84.4
	Public Entity in Safety and Security	1	1.0	2.2	86.7
	Public relations management	1	1.0	2.2	88.9
	Revenue Administration	1	1.0	2.2	91.1
	Software Development	1	1.0	2.2	93.3
	Sports & Entertainment Marketing	1	1.0	2.2	95.6
	Statutory Body Legal	1	1.0	2.2	97.8
	WP Blood Transfusion Service	1	1.0	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	44.6	100.0	
Missing		56	55.4		
Total		101	100.0		

CUSTOM TABLES

Table 1

	Count	Responses	Column N %	Column Response % (Base: Count)
Afrikaans In my organisation, we mainly use Afrikaans to communicate to our clients/customers.	20	20	19.8%	19.8%
English In my organisation, we mainly use English to communicate to our clients/customers.	82	82	81.2%	81.2%
EA In my organisation, we mainly use English/Afrikaans to communicate to our clients/customers.	20	20	19.8%	19.8%
OtherEur In my organisation, we mainly use Other European language to communicate to our clients/customers.	1	1	1.0%	1.0%
Sotho In my organisation, we mainly use Sotho to communicate to our clients/customers.	14	14	13.9%	13.9%
Xhosa In my organisation, we mainly use Xhosa to communicate to our clients/customers.	11	11	10.9%	10.9%
Zulu In my organisation, we mainly use Zulu to communicate to our clients/customers.	13	13	12.9%	12.9%
OtherAfrican In my organisation, we mainly use Other African language to communicate to our clients/customers.	11	11	10.9%	10.9%
Total	101	172	100.0%	170.3%

Table 2

	Count	Responses	Column N %	Column Response % (Base: Count)
PRDept In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by PRDept	44	44	43.6%	43.6%
MarketDept In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by MarketDept	10	10	9.9%	9.9%
OutsidePR In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by OutsidePR	6	6	5.9%	5.9%
MarketCommsDept In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by MarketCommsDept	22	22	21.8%	21.8%
DeptOther In my organisation, the function of public relations is executed by DeptOther	26	26	25.7%	25.7%
Total	101	108	100.0%	106.9%

Frequency Table

MajorStudy My major field of study:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public relations	43	42.6	42.6	42.6
	Business management	4	4.0	4.0	46.5
	Journalism	1	1.0	1.0	47.5
	Marketing	2	2.0	2.0	49.5
	Media studies	1	1.0	1.0	50.5
	Accounting/finance	1	1.0	1.0	51.5
	Communication	34	33.7	33.7	85.1
	Law	5	5.0	5.0	90.1
	Other	10	9.9	9.9	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

MajorStudyOther Major Field of study Other

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Aviation (Air Traffic Management), Aviculture	1	1.0	3.8	3.8
BA English/Drama majors	1	1.0	3.8	7.7
BA humanities (English and Drama)	1	1.0	3.8	11.5
Cert in PR MANAGEMENT	1	1.0	3.8	15.4
Communication	1	1.0	3.8	19.2
Communication Science	1	1.0	3.8	23.1
Developed more than 33 Courses in Communication (including PR, Marketing, Reputation management etc)	1	1.0	3.8	26.9
Economics and finance	1	1.0	3.8	30.8
Education	2	2.0	7.7	38.5
Educational drama honours	1	1.0	3.8	42.3
History	1	1.0	3.8	46.2
Languages, marketing & PR. More than one degree	1	1.0	3.8	50.0
Liberal Arts	1	1.0	3.8	53.8
Musicology, theatre	1	1.0	3.8	57.7
Photography	1	1.0	3.8	61.5
Political Science	1	1.0	3.8	65.4
PR/Bus.Man./Journalism/Media/Comms. were all studied	1	1.0	3.8	69.2
Psychology	2	2.0	7.7	76.9
Public Realitions	1	1.0	3.8	80.8
Public Relations / Communication	1	1.0	3.8	84.6
public relations and Journalism	1	1.0	3.8	88.5
Recruitment	1	1.0	3.8	92.3
Sociology	1	1.0	3.8	96.2
teaching & communication	1	1.0	3.8	100.0
Total	26	25.7	100.0	
Missing	75	74.3		
Total	101	100.0		

PRDeptName In my organisation, the public relations department is called

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public relations	16	15.8	15.8	15.8
	Corporate communications	16	15.8	15.8	31.7
	Public affairs	1	1.0	1.0	32.7
	Communications	18	17.8	17.8	50.5
	Community relations	2	2.0	2.0	52.5
	Corporate affairs	7	6.9	6.9	59.4
	Marketing communication	12	11.9	11.9	71.3
	My organisation does not have a public relations department	6	5.9	5.9	77.2
	I work for a public relations consultancy	15	14.9	14.9	92.1
	Other	8	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

PRDeptNameOther PR Department name Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Communication and media liason	1	1.0	5.9	5.9
	Group Communications Department	1	1.0	5.9	11.8
	Marketing and Communication	1	1.0	5.9	17.6
	Marketing and Coporate Communication	1	1.0	5.9	23.5
	marketing department	1	1.0	5.9	29.4
	Marketing Department	1	1.0	5.9	35.3
	No functional role per se	1	1.0	5.9	41.2
	No PR department	1	1.0	5.9	47.1
	no PR department but have PR officer	1	1.0	5.9	52.9
	Part of Club management	1	1.0	5.9	58.8
	Public and Corporate Affairs	1	1.0	5.9	64.7
	Public Relations and Communication	1	1.0	5.9	70.6
	Public Relations and Marketing - Has not had a head and staff complements for the past 6 years but has a yearly budget allocation which is utilised accross departmental disciplines	1	1.0	5.9	76.5
	Public Relations and Strategic Communication	1	1.0	5.9	82.4
	Public Relations and Taxpayer Education	1	1.0	5.9	88.2
	Stakeholder Management	1	1.0	5.9	94.1
	We are a communications agency	1	1.0	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	16.8	100.0	
Missing		84	83.2		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_1 It is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	43	42.6	47.8	47.8
	Agree	26	25.7	28.9	76.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	6	5.9	6.7	83.3
	Disagree	12	11.9	13.3	96.7
	Strongly disagree	3	3.0	3.3	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_2 Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations practitioners to defend the organisation's actions.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	14	13.9	15.6	15.6
	Agree	23	22.8	25.6	41.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	7.9	8.9	50.0
	Disagree	34	33.7	37.8	87.8
	Strongly disagree	11	10.9	12.2	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_3 It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	13	12.9	14.4	14.4
	Agree	24	23.8	26.7	41.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	12.9	14.4	55.6
	Disagree	28	27.7	31.1	86.7
	Strongly disagree	12	11.9	13.3	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_4 Top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	11	10.9	12.2	12.2
	Agree	36	35.6	40.0	52.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.9	15.6	67.8
	Disagree	22	21.8	24.4	92.2
	Strongly disagree	7	6.9	7.8	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_5 Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner (like telling the truth).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	19	18.8	21.3	21.3
	Agree	31	30.7	34.8	56.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	12	11.9	13.5	69.7
	Disagree	25	24.8	28.1	97.8
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.2	100.0
	Total	89	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	12	11.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_6 People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	16	15.8	18.2	18.2
	Agree	49	48.5	55.7	73.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	11	10.9	12.5	86.4
	Disagree	11	10.9	12.5	98.9
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.1	100.0
	Total	88	87.1	100.0	
Missing	System	13	12.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_7 Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	9	8.9	10.1	10.1
	Agree	22	21.8	24.7	34.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	22	21.8	24.7	59.6
	Disagree	27	26.7	30.3	89.9
	Strongly disagree	9	8.9	10.1	100.0
	Total	89	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	12	11.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_8 Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	46	45.5	51.1	51.1
	Agree	33	32.7	36.7	87.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	7.9	8.9	96.7
	Disagree	2	2.0	2.2	98.9
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_9 All the workers in my organisation understand its mission.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	15	14.9	16.7	16.7
	Agree	35	34.7	38.9	55.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.9	15.6	71.1
	Disagree	19	18.8	21.1	92.2
	Strongly disagree	7	6.9	7.8	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_10 The organisation's mission is communicated well to all employees and other stakeholders in the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	18	17.8	20.5	20.5
	Agree	42	41.6	47.7	68.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	12	11.9	13.6	81.8
	Disagree	13	12.9	14.8	96.6
	Strongly disagree	3	3.0	3.4	100.0
	Total	88	87.1	100.0	
Missing	System	13	12.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B13_11 Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	21	20.8	23.3	23.3
	Agree	28	27.7	31.1	54.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	18.8	21.1	75.6
	Disagree	21	20.8	23.3	98.9
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B14_1 Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	20	19.8	22.5	22.5
	Agree	49	48.5	55.1	77.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	12.9	14.6	92.1
	Disagree	7	6.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	89	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	12	11.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B14_2 Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	1	1.0	1.1	1.1
	Agree	22	21.8	24.4	25.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	20	19.8	22.2	47.8
	Disagree	39	38.6	43.3	91.1
	Strongly disagree	8	7.9	8.9	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B14_3 When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	6	5.9	6.7	6.7
	Agree	24	23.8	26.7	33.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	34	33.7	37.8	71.1
	Disagree	25	24.8	27.8	98.9
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B14_4 Organisations never tell lies to consumers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	6	5.9	6.8	6.8
	Agree	4	4.0	4.5	11.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	17	16.8	19.3	30.7
	Disagree	45	44.6	51.1	81.8
	Strongly disagree	16	15.8	18.2	100.0
	Total	88	87.1	100.0	
Missing	System	13	12.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B14_5 It is not possible for organisations to practice good corporate governance since it is difficult and expensive to comply.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	2	2.0	2.3	2.3
	Agree	6	5.9	6.8	9.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	6.9	8.0	17.0
	Disagree	54	53.5	61.4	78.4
	Strongly disagree	19	18.8	21.6	100.0
	Total	88	87.1	100.0	
Missing	System	13	12.9		
Total		101	100.0		

B14_6 Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	7	6.9	7.8	7.8
	Agree	11	10.9	12.2	20.0
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	7.9	8.9	28.9
	Disagree	52	51.5	57.8	86.7
	Strongly disagree	12	11.9	13.3	100.0
	Total	90	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	11	10.9		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_1 Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	10	9.9	11.8	11.8
	Agree	33	32.7	38.8	50.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	20	19.8	23.5	74.1
	Disagree	20	19.8	23.5	97.6
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.4	100.0
	Total	85	84.2	100.0	
Missing	System	16	15.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_2 Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	14	13.9	16.9	16.9
	Agree	36	35.6	43.4	60.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	8.9	10.8	71.1
	Disagree	22	21.8	26.5	97.6
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.4	100.0
	Total	83	82.2	100.0	
Missing	System	18	17.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_3 Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	6	5.9	7.1	7.1
	Agree	14	13.9	16.5	23.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.9	16.5	40.0
	Disagree	46	45.5	54.1	94.1
	Strongly disagree	5	5.0	5.9	100.0
	Total	85	84.2	100.0	
Missing	System	16	15.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_4 As public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	26	25.7	30.6	30.6
	Agree	51	50.5	60.0	90.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	5.0	5.9	96.5
	Disagree	2	2.0	2.4	98.8
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.2	100.0
	Total	85	84.2	100.0	
Missing	System	16	15.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_5 Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	39	38.6	45.9	45.9
	Agree	45	44.6	52.9	98.8
	Disagree	1	1.0	1.2	100.0
	Total	85	84.2	100.0	
Missing	System	16	15.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_6 Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	25	24.8	29.4	29.4
	Agree	37	36.6	43.5	72.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.9	16.5	89.4
	Disagree	7	6.9	8.2	97.6
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.4	100.0
	Total	85	84.2	100.0	
Missing	System	16	15.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_7 In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	29	28.7	34.5	34.5
	Agree	46	45.5	54.8	89.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	6	5.9	7.1	96.4
	Disagree	3	3.0	3.6	100.0
	Total	84	83.2	100.0	
Missing	System	17	16.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_8 Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	3	3.0	3.6	3.6
	Agree	4	4.0	4.8	8.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	12.9	15.5	23.8
	Disagree	29	28.7	34.5	58.3
	Strongly disagree	35	34.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	84	83.2	100.0	
Missing	System	17	16.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_9 In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	31	30.7	37.3	37.3
	Agree	29	28.7	34.9	72.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	7.9	9.6	81.9
	Disagree	15	14.9	18.1	100.0
	Total	83	82.2	100.0	
Missing	System	18	17.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_10 In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	42	41.6	50.0	50.0
	Agree	36	35.6	42.9	92.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	6	5.9	7.1	100.0
	Total	84	83.2	100.0	
Missing	System	17	16.8		
Total		101	100.0		

C15_11 Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	46	45.5	54.8	54.8
	Agree	37	36.6	44.0	98.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.0	1.2	100.0
	Total	84	83.2	100.0	
Missing	System	17	16.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_1 Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	22	21.8	27.8	27.8
	Agree	41	40.6	51.9	79.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	12	11.9	15.2	94.9
	Disagree	3	3.0	3.8	98.7
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_2 Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	12	11.9	15.2	15.2
	Agree	20	19.8	25.3	40.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	17	16.8	21.5	62.0
	Disagree	29	28.7	36.7	98.7
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_3 Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	22	21.8	28.2	28.2
	Agree	41	40.6	52.6	80.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	8.9	11.5	92.3
	Disagree	5	5.0	6.4	98.7
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	78	77.2	100.0	
Missing	System	23	22.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_4 The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	20	19.8	25.3	25.3
	Agree	23	22.8	29.1	54.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	12	11.9	15.2	69.6
	Disagree	20	19.8	25.3	94.9
	Strongly disagree	4	4.0	5.1	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_5 Public relations as a function should NOT be outsourced.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	20	19.8	25.3	25.3
	Agree	27	26.7	34.2	59.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	14.9	19.0	78.5
	Disagree	12	11.9	15.2	93.7
	Strongly disagree	5	5.0	6.3	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_6 My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	20	19.8	25.3	25.3
	Agree	38	37.6	48.1	73.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	11	10.9	13.9	87.3
	Disagree	9	8.9	11.4	98.7
	Strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_7 Other line managers need to be informed of the role that public relations plays in the organisation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	47	46.5	61.0	61.0
	Agree	28	27.7	36.4	97.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	2.0	2.6	100.0
	Total	77	76.2	100.0	
Missing	System	24	23.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_8 Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	44	43.6	55.7	55.7
	Agree	34	33.7	43.0	98.7
	Disagree	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_9 Public relations as a function is generally disregarded by top management because they do not understand the full impact of public relations activities.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	33	32.7	41.8	41.8
	Agree	35	34.7	44.3	86.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	5.0	6.3	92.4
	Disagree	6	5.9	7.6	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D16_10 Public relations textbooks provide sufficient guidance for the "real world."

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	8	7.9	10.1	10.1
	Agree	20	19.8	25.3	35.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.9	17.7	53.2
	Disagree	28	27.7	35.4	88.6
	Strongly disagree	9	8.9	11.4	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_1 Management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	68	67.3	86.1	86.1
	Nice to have	11	10.9	13.9	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_2 Strategic management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	70	69.3	88.6	88.6
	Nice to have	9	8.9	11.4	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_3 Accounting and finance.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	39	38.6	50.6	50.6
	Nice to have	35	34.7	45.5	96.1
	Not at all essential	3	3.0	3.9	100.0
	Total	77	76.2	100.0	
Missing	System	24	23.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_4 Marketing.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	63	62.4	80.8	80.8
	Nice to have	14	13.9	17.9	98.7
	Not at all essential	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	78	77.2	100.0	
Missing	System	23	22.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_5 Advertising.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	55	54.5	70.5	70.5
	Nice to have	21	20.8	26.9	97.4
	Not at all essential	2	2.0	2.6	100.0
	Total	78	77.2	100.0	
Missing	System	23	22.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_6 Project management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	72	71.3	91.1	91.1
	Nice to have	7	6.9	8.9	100.0
	Total	79	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	21.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_7 Operations/production management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	21	20.8	27.6	27.6
	Nice to have	41	40.6	53.9	81.6
	Not at all essential	14	13.9	18.4	100.0
	Total	76	75.2	100.0	
Missing	System	25	24.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_8 Human resource management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	32	31.7	41.6	41.6
	Nice to have	37	36.6	48.1	89.6
	Not at all essential	8	7.9	10.4	100.0
	Total	77	76.2	100.0	
Missing	System	24	23.8		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_9 Logistics management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	25	24.8	33.3	33.3
	Nice to have	36	35.6	48.0	81.3
	Not at all essential	14	13.9	18.7	100.0
	Total	75	74.3	100.0	
Missing	System	26	25.7		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_10 Sales management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	18	17.8	24.3	24.3
	Nice to have	45	44.6	60.8	85.1
	Not at all essential	11	10.9	14.9	100.0
	Total	74	73.3	100.0	
Missing	System	27	26.7		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_11 Technology management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	28	27.7	37.8	37.8
	Nice to have	37	36.6	50.0	87.8
	Not at all essential	9	8.9	12.2	100.0
	Total	74	73.3	100.0	
Missing	System	27	26.7		
Total		101	100.0		

D17_12 Organisational behaviour.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Essential	71	70.3	91.0	91.0
	Nice to have	6	5.9	7.7	98.7
	Not at all essential	1	1.0	1.3	100.0
	Total	78	77.2	100.0	
Missing	System	23	22.8		
Total		101	100.0		

APPENDIX G

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
B13_1 It is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light.	90	1	5	1.96	1.180	1.391
B13_2 Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations practitioners to defend the organisation's actions.	90	1	5	3.06	1.327	1.761
B13_3 It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	90	1	5	3.02	1.307	1.707
B13_4 Top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told.	90	1	5	2.76	1.183	1.400
B13_5 Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner (like telling the truth).	89	1	5	2.55	1.178	1.387
B13_6 People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.	88	1	5	2.23	.931	.867
B13_7 Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.	89	1	5	3.06	1.171	1.372
B13_8 Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	90	1	5	1.66	.823	.678
B13_9 All the workers in my organisation understand its mission.	90	1	5	2.64	1.211	1.468
B13_10 The organisation's mission is communicated well to all employees and other stakeholders in the organisation.	88	1	5	2.33	1.069	1.143
B13_11 Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.	90	1	5	2.48	1.124	1.264
B14_1 Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.	89	1	4	2.08	.829	.687
B14_2 Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	90	1	5	3.34	.985	.970
B14_3 When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.	90	1	5	2.90	.925	.855
B14_4 Organisations never tell lies to consumers.	88	1	5	3.69	1.043	1.089
B14_5 It is not possible for organisations to practice good corporate governance since it is difficult and expensive to comply.	88	1	5	3.93	.881	.777
B14_6 Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.	90	1	5	3.57	1.112	1.237
C15_1 Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	85	1	5	2.66	1.041	1.085

C15_2 Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.	83	1	5	2.54	1.129	1.276
C15_3 Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.	85	1	5	3.35	1.055	1.112
C15_4 As public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.	85	1	5	1.84	.738	.544
C15_5 Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	85	1	4	1.56	.566	.320
C15_6 Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.	85	1	5	2.11	1.000	1.001
C15_7 In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	84	1	4	1.80	.724	.525
C15_8 Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.	84	1	5	4.06	1.045	1.093
C15_9 In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.	83	1	4	2.08	1.095	1.200
C15_10 In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	84	1	3	1.57	.626	.392
C15_11 Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	84	1	3	1.46	.525	.276
D16_1 Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	79	1	5	1.99	.840	.705
D16_2 Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers.	79	1	5	2.84	1.126	1.267
D16_3 Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation.	78	1	5	2.00	.883	.779
D16_4 The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	79	1	5	2.56	1.258	1.583
D16_5 Public relations as a function should NOT be outsourced.	79	1	5	2.43	1.206	1.453
D16_6 My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.	79	1	5	2.15	.975	.951
D16_7 Other line managers need to be informed of the role that public relations plays in the organisation.	77	1	3	1.42	.547	.299
D16_8 Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.	79	1	4	1.47	.574	.329

D16_9 Public relations as a function is generally disregarded by top management because they do not understand the full impact of public relations activities.	79	1	4	1.80	.868	.753
D16_10 Public relations textbooks provide sufficient guidance for the "real world."	79	1	5	3.13	1.213	1.471
D17_1 Management.	79	1	2	1.14	.348	.121
D17_2 Strategic management.	79	1	2	1.11	.320	.102
D17_3 Accounting and finance.	77	1	3	1.53	.575	.331
D17_4 Marketing.	78	1	3	1.21	.437	.191
D17_5 Advertising.	78	1	3	1.32	.522	.273
D17_6 Project management.	79	1	2	1.09	.286	.082
D17_7 Operations/production management.	76	1	3	1.91	.677	.458
D17_8 Human resource management.	77	1	3	1.69	.654	.428
D17_9 Logistics management.	75	1	3	1.85	.711	.505
D17_10 Sales management.	74	1	3	1.91	.623	.388
D17_11 Technology management.	74	1	3	1.74	.663	.440
D17_12 Organisational behaviour.	78	1	3	1.10	.345	.119
Valid N (listwise)	62					

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of the mean
It is the job of public relations practitioners to always present the organisation in a favourable light.	90	1.96	1.180	.124
Even when the organisation does something wrong (like polluting the environment), it is the job of public relations practitioners to defend the organisation's actions.	90	3.06	1.327	.140
It is the responsibility of customers to find out what their rights are.	90	3.02	1.307	.138
Top management expects public relations practitioners to do as they are told.	90	2.76	1.183	.125
Public relations practitioners always act in an ethical manner (like telling the truth).	89	2.55	1.178	.125
People suspect that most organisations hide the truth from them.	88	2.23	.931	.099
Top management expects public relations practitioners to lie in order to save the organisation's reputation.	89	3.06	1.171	.124
Public relations practitioners should provide guidance on ethics in my organisation.	90	1.66	.823	.087
All the workers in my organisation understand its mission.	90	2.64	1.211	.128
The organisation's mission is communicated well to all employees and other stakeholders in the organisation.	88	2.33	1.069	.114
Public relations should develop the organisation's mission.	90	2.48	1.124	.118
Not enough is being done to safeguard consumers' rights.	89	2.08	.829	.088
Customers in general get the service they are promised in advertising.	90	3.34	.985	.104
When a company explains its actions to its publics, the explanation can be trusted.	90	2.90	.925	.097
Organisations never tell lies to consumers.	88	3.69	1.043	.111
It is not possible for organisations to practice good corporate governance since it is difficult and expensive to comply.	88	3.93	.881	.094
Corporate social responsibility programmes are sufficient to demonstrate the organisation's corporate citizenship.	90	3.57	1.112	.117

Public relations practitioners are well-trained for their jobs.	85	2.66	1.041	.113
Public relations practitioners have a good understanding of how other business departments function.	83	2.54	1.129	.124
Public relations practitioners do not understand the production/operations function of the organisation.	85	3.35	1.055	.114
As public relations practitioner, I have a good relationship with all of the other functional managers.	85	1.84	.738	.080
Public relations practitioners can benefit from more training in business-related fields of study.	85	1.56	.566	.061
Line managers do not understand the value that public relations adds to the organisation.	85	2.11	1.000	.108
In delivering support to all other line managers, public relations practitioners need training in all business functions.	84	1.80	.724	.079
Public relations as a function does not belong in the organisation, and should be outsourced.	84	4.06	1.045	.114
In order to do my job well, I have to have a relevant tertiary qualification.	83	2.08	1.095	.120
In order to function on a strategic level, public relations practitioners need training in strategic management.	84	1.57	.626	.068
Public relations practitioners should cooperate closely with all other line managers in the organisation.	84	1.46	.525	.057
Public relations practitioners require training in business subjects like operations management to add value to the organisation.	79	1.99	.840	.094
Line managers other than public relations managers are not trained in communication techniques, and should rely on public relations practitioners to manage relationships with groups such as suppliers.	79	2.84	1.126	.127
Public relations sometimes should act as a staff function, where it lends support to ALL departments in the organisation.	78	2.00	.883	.100
The organisation's public relations manager is a line manager, and should be expected to perform as such.	79	2.56	1.258	.142
Public relations as a function should NOT be outsourced.	79	2.43	1.206	.136
My training in public relations prepared me well to perform my function in the organisation.	79	2.15	.975	.110
Other line managers need to be informed of the role that public relations plays in the organisation.	77	1.42	.547	.062
Ethics training is an important component of the practice of public relations.	79	1.47	.574	.065
Public relations as a function is generally disregarded by top management because they do not understand the full impact of public relations activities.	79	1.80	.868	.098
Public relations textbooks provide sufficient guidance for the "real world".	79	3.13	1.213	.136

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