

**Towards the two-way symmetrical communication model: The use of
Social media to create dialogue around brands**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Atrium in Applied
Media Studies in the Faculty of Arts at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

JANUARY 2011

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DECLARATION

I, **CHRISTELLE MATTHEE**, in accordance with Rule G4.6.3, hereby declare that:

- This treatise is the result of my own original research and that this work has not previously been submitted for assessment to another university.
- This research contained in this treatise is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Atrium in Applied Media Studies in the Faculty of Arts at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.
- All sources used or referred to in this treatise have been documented and recognised.

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Abstract

Social media has radically altered today's media landscape, and presents public relations practitioners with new possibilities and opportunities to promote their companies. Social media enables public relations to observe in order to find out what people need; what content they are looking for; and how your company can help them. However, will engaging in online conversations give an organisation's consumers a voice?

Past PR models illustrate how methods of communication was established and used in the past. However, the Grunig and Hunt two-way symmetrical model creates the possibility of two-way communication (dialogue) between consumer and organisation in which the power relations are equal.

By applying Web 2.0 (social media) to these models, one can explore new ways of two-way communication.

Finally by applying these elements to each other, a case study can be created to prove if social media can be used to create a dialogue between consumer and organisation.

Keywords: Social Media, Public Relations, Communication, Conversation.

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to:

Dr. Dirk Coetzee. Senior lecturer in the Department of Classical & Near Eastern Studies at the Free State University

Gugile Nkwinti, (MP) Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform.
(B.Admin, UNISA; Post Graduate Diploma in Economic Principals, London University; and MSc Public Policy and Management, London University)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

Marketing and communication is essential to any organisation and is generally referred to as the most important aspect of any business strategy. Large organisations spend millions on the marketing of their organisation, whereas smaller companies rely on more creative and cost efficient methods. In the particularly competitive world of today, social media is now the new approach to marketing an organisation and a means of encouraging a dialogue between the organisation and its consumers. Concisely put, it means using social media such as blogs, community sites, video sharing sites etc. to market a product or a business.

Popular websites like *LinkedIn*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Flickr* and *YouTube* are considered to be an important hub for marketing and communication. The promotion of an organisation using these sites offers a huge amount of steady traffic every day. In today's world, social networking is extremely successful and social media-marketing and communication is very important to an organisation because of the sheer number of people that access these sites regularly.

There are some very important reasons why this type of marketing and communication is so essential for an organisation:

- It is a low cost investment when compared to the other options available. Social media is generally free to use. Marketing and communicating the same thing through conventional methods would cost an organisation thousands.
- These sites get a lot of traffic and they in turn generate traffic to an organisation's website.
- These sites also act like a word-of-mouth concept that people tend to believe when compared to commercial advertising.

1.2 Public relations and technology

Social media is but one of the many tools currently available to public relations practitioners as part of the supposed "PR 2.0"-movement (Breakenridge 2008). Mutually the contention of PR 2.0 and the creation of social media all indicate the distinct impact that technological shifts and the resulting changes in people's communication habits have had on the landscape of public relations. When public communication habits change so too must public relations practitioners' attempts to communicate with those changed habits of the public.

Hunt and Grunig in 1984 emphasized the importance of two-way communication in creating mutual understanding between organisations and the public they communicate with

internally and externally. Their Two-way Symmetrical model of public relations was based on the writings of public relations practitioners such as Ivy Lee, Edward Bernays and John Hill (Grunig 1992:289) who first indicated the possible significance of dialogue between an organisation and the public they communicate with.

Ever since, a large amount of public relations focus became the foundation, through communication, of this relationship of understanding. As a result of the striving towards the creation of mutual understanding through communication, public relations practitioners developed various communication tools to assist them in delivering accurate, targeted messages to the public (Grunig 1992; Wilcox and Cameron 2006:340).

Ultimately, public relations practise had to adjust to the continuous evolution of the nature of communication and communication channels, which resulted in the development and implementation of new communication tools and, in a number of cases, the phasing out or replacement of traditional communication tools used in the public relations industry.

With the advent and increasing popularity of the Internet, public relations witnessed the rise of “PR 1.0”. *PR 1.0*, which Breakenridge (2008) describes as the stabilising time after the dot-com crash of the 1990s (2008:17), allowing public relations practitioners to use Internet-based applications for research, distributing communications and form closer relationships with stakeholders. Three main reasons why *PR 1.0* was beneficial to public relations practitioners are:

- A Two-Way Highway: instant response by PR professional to stakeholders’ queries;
- Easier Editorial Coverage: provision of targeted, complete information to journalists;
- Longer, Stronger Relationships: building and nurturing of relationships with journalists. (Breakenridge 2008:17-19)

These aspects were eased by the development of tools using Internet technology such as e-mails, websites, web newsrooms, and e-newsletters etc., which allowed public relations practitioners to provide information to stakeholders much quicker than before.

PR 2.0, however, offers public relations practitioners a collection of advanced tools powered by the Internet that allows practitioners to identify research, reach and communicate with a much a wider audience than before. Wright and Hinson’s (2008, 2009) research of the impact of technology and social media on the practice of corporate public relations supports this statement as they have found, “The development of various new technologies has significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them dynamic new media many are using to communicate effectively with a variety of internal and external audiences” (Wright & Hinson 2008:1-2).

The development of *PR 2.0* tools are mainly based on the principles of “Web 2.0” (O’Reilly 2005). The term “Web 2.0”, was based on an understanding of “the Web as a platform” (O’Reilly 2005:1) and it includes core principles such as:

- Services, not packaged software,
- Architecture of participation,
- Cost-effective scalability,
- Remixable data-source and data transformation,
- Software above the level of a single device, and
- Harnessing collective intelligence (O’Reilly 2005:1).

PR 2.0 provides tools that display many of these principles such as *Really Simple Syndication* (RSS) feeds, multimedia tags, wikis, forums/chat walls/discussion boards, ratings, consumer reviews (collective intelligence), social media networks and channels, SMNRs and others.

PR 2.0 tools, for example RSS Feeds, multimedia tags and wikis display many of the collaborative characteristics of *Web 2.0* principles and provide new tools for communication. However, a shift in technology and communication methods does not replace the technology that came before it (regular mail, fax machines, landlines and copiers). *PR 2.0* provides extra tools for public relations practitioners to reach their publics; it does not necessarily completely replace the tools that came before it. Instead, *PR 2.0* tools provide an alternative or compliment to existing public relations and communication tools.

1.3 Social media in South Africa

Social media is a great way of connecting with consumers and getting feedback, and it has definitely exploded in popularity in developed countries. South Africa has many social networking sites that are bustling with information. Over 5 million South Africans are online, and more are joining every day. *Fuseware* (2010) points out the following:

- The biggest SA based network is *MXit*, which is used by over 15 million people locally and many millions more globally. Although *MXit* has traditionally been a chat network clients used for cell phones, it has started embracing social media on the web by allowing companies to interact with *MXit* users via the *TradePost* service. *MXit’s Evo* suite of products is also another way they are innovating and extending their product line by evolving onto the web.

- *Blueworld* is a relatively new social network that has simply exploded in the last few years due to its sheer openness. Almost all profiles are completely open, allowing people to share the pictures and notes with the world and not just their friends. Companies have not engaged this site as effectively as they could have.
- *Twitter* receives over 500 000 visitors from SA every month, so there is definitely a large market segment where companies can engage people. Many SA companies have created innovative campaigns on *Twitter*, such as the recent *Woolworth's* love bird's competition.
- *Facebook* has received plenty of attention from locals, and is currently the 2nd most visited site in the country (after *Google*). There are massive opportunities to engage with your customers on *Facebook* – but this site isn't appropriate for all businesses. It has worked very well for businesses with a large online customer base that already have a loyal following.

In addition to the big social networks, many blog sites have taken off with thousands of South Africans wanting to be heard online. The big names here are *Blogger* and *News 24* blogs.

1.4 Significance of the study

As a relatively new public relations tool in the South African public relations context, it has been found that although social media has been utilised in South Africa, research into the use of the social media in the South African public relations context is an underrepresented field of study.

Social media allows consumers, journalists and all interested parties to click through to “purpose-built” pages and sites. These social media pages may include the likes of a dedicated *Facebook* Group or *Fan* page, a devoted *Twitter* profile, topical blogs about the brand, organisation, product, service or information, a *YouTube* channel for the brand, a *Flickr* photo stream for the brand, *Technorati* and *Delicious* (deli.cio.us) site pages tracking the development of the topic and so on.

These varieties of tools provide an opportunity for the brand to engage with consumers through social media channels and allow consumers to communicate with representatives of the brand and with each other.

Primarily, *PR 2.0* tools rely on social media to accomplish their goals of providing information to stakeholders and initiate dialogue among the public. It is important to determine whether or not social media succeeds in its goal of creating conversation on social media networks and sites about the brand it advocates, and secondly, to provide

insight on how successful strategies could be employed to initiate this type of consumer-driven dialogue as a public relations tool.

As a result of this study, South African public relations practitioners, working within the *PR 2.0* field, will gain a better understanding of the use of social media as a public relations tool, with specific insight into the way in which social media channels can be used to draw and host consumer-driven conversation about the brand, information, product or service.

1.5 Problem statement

To what extent can social media be used to create a two-way dialogue between consumers and organisations?

[Is social media capable of being applied to the Grunig and Hunt two-way symmetrical model to demonstrate that this is possible?]

1.6 Research aims/ objectives

- To identify how public relations can enhance dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders by using social media.
- To determine consumers' and organisations' behaviour with social media applications and websites.
- To test researched data with the Grunig and Hunt two-way symmetrical model and apply the *First National Bank* case study to test whether the proposed theory is successful.

1.7 Research design and method

The paper will be based primarily on a content analysis, which will form the theoretical basis. The majority of the study will focus on academic literature and texts. The secondary approach will include qualitative research in the form of a case study of *First National Bank's* social media activities. The *First National Bank* case study I shall develop, will aim to identify the various services and products that are available through social media. I shall also seek to identify which social media mediums are used based on the specific target audience, for example, how social media tools differ from those of a large corporation to those of a pensioner living in a rural area. The case study will only focus on indicating the social media services available to clients and the appropriate feedback. The results will be tested against

the theoretical assumption of Grunig and Hunt (1984) by proving or disproving the theory whether the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model is relevant to Web 2.0.

The investigation on past PR models will be conducted by means of academic literature. The models will be used to illustrate how methods of communication were established and used in the past. These models will be analysed in terms of historical context and how they have developed public relations to the present day. In addition data will be investigated utilising the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model. The data will also consist of academic literature, which will lend support in establishing how communication is established and used to create two-way communication (dialogue) between the consumer and an organisation. Turning to a more modern approach of my study, I shall look into the new world of *Web 2.0* or more commonly known as *social media*. The investigation will include academic literature, individual encounters (blogs) and various website searches. The literature retrieved will include and explore the following:

- Social networks
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Podcast
- Forums
- Content communities
- Microblogging, etc.

The literature investigation will attempt to establish how these elements function, and how communication on these is established and used. Following the investigation of the above mentioned, I shall set out to use the individual findings of the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model and *Web 2.0* (social media), and apply it to one another. The endeavour will indicate how dialogue will be achieved with *Web 2.0* (social media). Social networks, blogs, wikis, podcast, forums, content communities, and Microblogging will be tested by the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model. The case study's focal point is the *First National Bank (FNB)*. Their implementation of *Web 2.0* (social media) has been remarkable. I shall investigate *First National Bank's Web 2.0* initiative by analysing the current advertising campaigns (print, television, radio, and online). I shall also establish *Web 2.0* services offered to clients.

First National Bank has been chosen because of their on-going innovation and drives to find new ways of doing business. They show a willingness to involve themselves with their clients and share in decision-making. *First National Bank* "provides personal, commercial and corporate banking services to more than 6 million customers across South Africa, from

large corporate accounts to accounts for teens and pensioners” (www.fnb.co.za), and each of these accounts can be managed or queried on through various forms of social media. *First National Bank* is the only bank to date that has taken the initiative to advertise their new social media services (mobile, online banking, *PayPal* etc.) to prospective and existing clients. They have also shown that with their slogan, “How can we help you?” they do in fact want to help make banking a more convenient experience.

Finally, the research I have done will be compiled and I will apply my findings on *First National Bank’s Web 2.0* initiative to the Grunig and Hunt two-way symmetrical model. As a result test whether the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model is successful in creating a dialogue between consumer and organisation.

The research applied to the study will concentrate on understanding the preferences, attitudes and behaviours of consumers in a market-based economy. This, through systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis, and dissemination of information will serve the purpose of identifying each component individually. The goal of the research is to identify and assess how changing elements of social media impacts customer behaviour.

The primary focus of the study is to prove that applying *Web 2.0* (social media) to the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model can indeed create a dialogue between consumer and organisation.

The creation of a case study, using *First National Bank’s* social media initiative will form the secondary focus of the study, as it will be of support in applying real life situations to an existing model of public relations communication. Data collection will focus on two levels, primary and secondary.

Primary:

- Academic Literature
- Articles and journals

Secondary:

- Online searches
- Consumer blogs
- Consumer networking websites

Processed data will be captured and worked into the primary focus of the study. Data will be tested and deemed successful or unsuccessful, regarding the outcome of findings.

1.8 Theoretical framework and rationale

Before embarking on this study, I wish to set out the motivations and particular topics of interest I will focus on. Grunig's (1984) four models of Public Relations represent the following:

1. **Press agency/publicity model** is characterised as a one-way communication, it uses persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to behave as the organization desires.
2. **Public Information model** is also characterised as a one-way communication. This model uses press releases and other one-way communication techniques to distribute organisational information. Public relations practitioner is often referred to as the journalist in residence.
3. **One-way asymmetrical model** uses persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to behave as the organization desires. It does not use research to find out how the public feels about the organisation.
4. **Two-way symmetrical model** is a form of two-way communication which uses communication to negotiate with publics, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organization and its public(s).

Each of these four models of Public Relations plays a focal role in the development of public relations. In the study I shall embark on identifying each of these model's historical contexts and roles they played in the development of public relations.

The study's focal point, however, will fall on the fourth model of Grunig's (1984) models of public relations, the two-way symmetrical model. The role of the two-way symmetrical model is for practitioners to serve as the "catalyst for conflict resolution and consensus" (Guth *et al.* 2005; 7). Their goal is to encourage two-way communication that leads to mutual understanding and cooperation.

The over-arching aim of professional public relations activity makes it possible for the public's attitudes to influence an organisation's behaviour. Grunig (1984) conceptualised two-way symmetrical communications as a normative model which explains how public relations *should* be practised. From the outset Grunig's (1984) model set-out the differences between how public relations were being practised and how it should be practised (Newsom *et al* 2004;13)

Social media sets a new landscape for two-way communication in public relations, which allows organisations to distribute information without relying solely on mainstream publications and communicating directly with the public, customers and prospects.

Web 2.0 (social media) is best described as a set of applications or websites that not only gives information, but interacts with the person using it while it gives the information. This interaction can be as simple as allowing a person to comment on a specific article to a more complex as asking a person to recommend a movie based on the ratings of people with similar interests. By applying the social media aspect to *Web 2.0* a person is provided with the ability to communicate in a two-way manner.

According to Flew (2008) *Web 2.0* caught on because it has been embedded within a variety of features that have long been central to the Web as a communications infrastructure, i.e. participation, interactivity, collaborative learning and social networking (also known as *Web 2.0*). Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media, which share the following characteristics:

- Participation
- Openness
- Conversation
- Community
- Connectedness

Internet methods such as blogs, *Twitter*, email/text blasts, *MySpace* and *Facebook* take an informal approach to conversing with people, anticipating a response, but are unable to determine if the message is accurately comprehended. Internet methods have emerged as a quick and convenient way of speaking to the public. While dialogue is encouraged online, the feedback can be less than desired and/or incapable of reaching the intended audience.

Thus, public relations should strive to create two-way communication, between organisations and its public. This calls for the application of the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model. Drawing on systems theory, Grunig and Hunt's model is based on their understanding of organisational and management practice. This approach is demonstrated in their definition of public relations, which states: "public relations activities are part of the *management of communication between an organisation and its publics*" (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.7-8).

By applying Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model to social media, public relations can incorporate all forms of communication – which will not be limited to

online press releases and bloggers – it can utilise every element of building relationships while maintaining the significance of the spoken word (*Sims 2008*), as well as enhance conversation.

Finally, by looking at *First National Bank's* recent social media initiative, a case study can be used to test if Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model is successful when applying *Web 2.0* (social media) and by doing so to prove that, when an organisation uses these elements, dialogue between it and the consumer can be achieved.

1.10 Conclusion

The following two chapters will provide an overview and analysis of the available literature related to the topic of this research, with a specific focus on the way in which technology has impacted the practice of public relations as a communications activity. This includes an overview of the evolution of public relations, the introduction of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) typology of public relations models and the historical figures that developed public relations. Also, *Web 1.0* and *Web 2.0* developments and their role in the creation of *PR 1.0* and *PR 2.0*, as well as a discussion of the communicative influence of social media and the online conversations that drive it will be discussed. Finally, the manifestation of these influences on public relations in the form of the potential two-way communication will be examined.

CHAPTER 2: THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

2.1 Introduction

Working within the milieu of the prevailing “public opinion, laws, politics and societal norms of the country or countries in which they work” (Bates 2002), public relations practitioners create programmes and structure messages aimed at creating favourable support for the goals of the organisations they represent. Obtaining significant, positive news and feature coverage in the print and broadcast media is a key objective.

Public relations emphasises information and persuasion as well as diplomacy. Due to its subtleness, public relations are, occasionally viewed as ‘propaganda’ or, ‘spin’ - the intentional manipulation of public opinion without regard for what is accurate or true.

According to Bates (2002), public relations’ record of historical achievement suggests a much deeper and abiding respect for and adherence to openness and honesty in its trade and communication. Public relations evolved as a professional enterprise in the 20th Century, most noticeably in the United States of America, but its roots can be traced throughout civilisation.

The theoretical framework for this research study centres on the understanding and application of Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) two-way symmetrical communication model. An understanding of key developments and concepts that has shaped the practice of public relations within a new media environment, and directly or indirectly influenced the dialogue between an organisation and its publics is necessary.

Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) Models of public relations which have been used widely in public relations theory, helped to explain how public relations in the context of a 130-year timeline have evolved. Although all four models are practiced today in varying degrees, the ‘ideal’ model is the two-way symmetrical model.

This chapter aims to provide the historical context in which the development of public relations can be seen. Firstly the concept of public relations as a form of communication will be discussed by the discussion of Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of public relations. The discussion of these models will aim at providing the definition, historical context and the role of the prevailing historical figures that practiced a respective theory of their time.

2.3 Defining Public Relations

Public relations as a field have seen the development and adaptation of various definitions of the term “public relations” in an attempt to capture the core qualities of this broad field.

Public relations, according to The British Institute of Public Opinion, can be described as “the

deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics” (Wilcox & Cameron 2006:6).

The Institute for Public Relations and Communication Management of Southern Africa (PRISA) defines it as “the management, through communication, of the perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders” (PRISA 1998:1).

Bates (2002) defines public relations as the management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization, commercial or non-commercial, and the audiences or publics on which the success of these bodies depends. These publics may include the following: customers, investors, employees, suppliers, legislators, competitors, government officials and other influentials.

Of late, the term “corporate communication” has been introduced as an alternative to public relations (Puth & Steyn 2000; Van Riel & Fombrun 2008; Wilcox & Cameron 2006). With its description as corporate communication, Van Riel and Fombrun (2008:22) define this communication management function as “a coherent approach to the development of communications in organisations” that encompasses marketing communications, organisational communications and management communications.

Wilcox and Cameron (2006) point out some core, defining principles which present public relations as being:

- Deliberate: Intentional activity;
- Planned: Organised activity;
- Performance: Based on policies and performance;
- Public Interest: Mutually beneficial to an organisation and its publics;
- Two-way communication: Dialogue and feedback is crucial; and
- Management function: Integral part of organisational strategy and management.

(Adapted from Wilcox & Cameron 2006:6)

2.3 Communication modelling

As is seen from the definitions of public relations, one can see that it is fundamentally a communication activity. Public relations displays similar characteristics to models of mass communication such as the ‘Shannon and Weaver’s Information Theory Model’ (1949), and ‘Westley and MacLean’s Transmission Model of Mass Communication’ (1957) (Fourie *et al.* 2001:223-228).

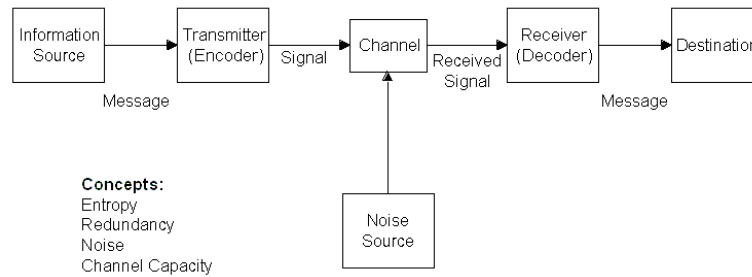


Figure 2.1 Shannon and Weaver's Information Theory Model (1949)

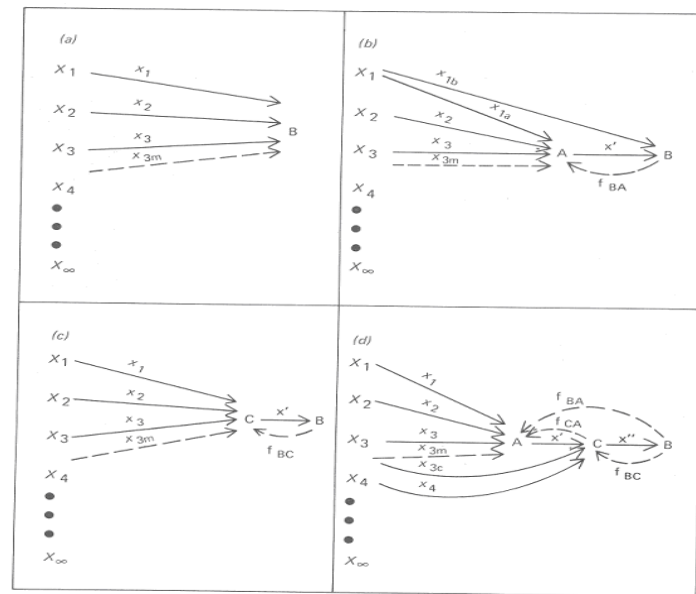


Figure 2.2 Westley and MacLean's Transmission Model of Mass Communication' (1957)

These models, by means of varying degrees in complexity, represent elements during the communication process. Fundamentally, these models represent three important elements, namely the communicator or sender, the message, and the audience or receiver. Whereas Shannon and Weaver's model accredited the role of "noise" or interference in communication, Westley and MacLean's model goes further by placing emphasis on feedback. It proposes that "mass communication is a self-regulating process guided by the interests and demands of an audience that is known only by its selections and responses to what is offered and is thus shaped by feedback from the audience" (Fourie *et al* 2001:227).

While public relations can also be traced using the elements of these models such as a sender, message, receiver, noise, context and in ideal instances feedback, it is the dynamics and balance of power between these elements, according to Grunig and Hunt (1984), that reveal which dimension of public relations is practiced by an organisation.

2.4 History of Public Relations

According to Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg (2004) public relations is a concept that has no central, identifiable founder, national origin or founding date because it focuses on efforts to influence – not only opinions but behaviour. Much of documented history can be construed as the practice of public relations. Whereas primitive societies were ruled mainly through fear and intimidation, more advanced cultures depended on discussion and debate. Bates (2002) points out that, as rulers sought to build consensus, persuasion became less and less grounded in force and more and more grounded in words.

History shows that underdeveloped societies were relatively simple. As they become more sophisticated and multi-layered, the “interplay of relationships becomes more intricate” (Black 2001; 8). So, for society to exist, a minimum level of agreement has got to be achieved. Newsom *et al* (2004) explains that this agreement is usually reached through “interpersonal and group communication”. To reach an agreement requires more than just the simple act of sharing information, it requires “a strong element of persuasion” (Newsom *et al.* 22; 2004), on all the parties concerned in the decision-making process.

One can safely say that public relations are as old as civilisation itself, because persuasion is to this day the driving force of public relations. This is palpable in many of the tactics used by public relations professionals; it is used today, just like it has been used by leaders of various societies for centuries. Bates (2002) states that the three main elements of public relations, namely: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people are practically as old as society. Of course, the means and methods of accomplishing these ends have changed as society has changed.

Black (2001) noted that the concept of public will and the power of public opinion were widely acknowledged as vital for any politician’s success. According to Bates (2002) this is rather evident in the following:

- Whether they were promoting their image as warriors or kings, leaders of ancient civilisations such as Sumeria, Babylonia, Assyria, and Persia used poems and other writings to promote their prowess in battle and politics.
- In Egypt much of the art and architecture (statues, temples, and tombs) was used to impress on the public the greatness of priests, nobles, and scribes.
- In ancient Israel, the Bible and other religious texts became a powerful means for moulding the public mind.
- With the growth of the Hellenic world, the word, both written and spoken, exploded as a force for social integration.

- The Athenian market place became a centre of public discussion concerning the conduct of business and public life. Oratory flourished, and the public interest became a central concern of philosophical speculation.

Throughout history, one can point out how public relations has been used to support political causes, promote wars and religion, to sell products, publicise events or even people, etc. Earlier examples include the following:

1095 – Pope Urban II promoted war against the Muslim caliphate to the east. He sent word through his information network (cardinals, archbishops, bishops and parish priests) that to fight in this holy war was to serve God and to earn forgiveness of sins.

1215 – Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, used promotion tactics to lobby for a political cause. He mobilised an influential group of barons to stand up for their rights against King John, and these men ultimately forced the king to agree to the terms of the Magna Carte.

15th Century – Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian statesman and political philosopher, used his talents as a publicist to support a political party in power. His ‘The Prince and Discourses’ are essentially treatises on how to govern people firmly and effectively. Machiavelli’s work for Cesare Borgia relied heavily on opinion control and propaganda – techniques associated with ‘issues management’ (Newsom et al. 23 - 24; 2004).

Bates (2002) also points out that in ancient Rome, the force of public relations was evident in phrases such as “vox populi, vox Dei” - “the voice of the people is the voice of God” - , and “res publicae” - “public affairs”- from which our word, “republic”, has been derived. Julius Caesar carefully prepared the Romans for his crossing of the Rubicon in 49 B.C.E. by sending reports such as “Caesar’s Gallic Wars” (52 B.C.E.) on his epic achievements as governor of Gaul. Caesar also wrote his Commentaries as propaganda for himself. Recognizing the power of news to mould public opinion, Caesar published a daily paper called *Acta Diurna* (“daily acts” or “daily records”) that continued for 400 years.

He further states that public relations continued to evolve even during medieval times, using the ‘new media’ of that day, such as the Bayeaux Tapestry, a woven wall tapestry that extolled the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. It was not until the Renaissance and Reformation that the foundation of the modern world arose—and with it the underpinnings of the kind of public relations that has become vital to the management of public and private institutions. Great documents of liberty crystallized the power of public opinion. For example, the *Magna Carta*—the thirteenth-century English charter of rights and liberties.

The word “propaganda’ originated in the Catholic Church. In the seventeenth century, it set up its *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, the ‘congregation for propagating the

faith” (Bates 2002). In doing so, it recognised the need for a third party to aid communication between government and the public. Along with the spread of new knowledge in new forms—“such as translations in the fifteenth century of the Bible from Latin into everyday languages, mass printed books, and newspapers” (Bates 2002)—there was a sudden increase of public communications.

With the birth of the press the 1450s period introduced a new age of mass media. Very few inventions had such a profound effect on human culture. Older forms of media had existed before the birth of the press, but did not reach and persuade people in large numbers at once. With the press in place, its by-products (for example, advertising posters, publicity releases, books, party publication, etc) have been used by public relations professionals ever since.

England’s rebellious American colonies produced a host of public relations experts who used oratory, newspapers, meetings, committees, pamphlets, and correspondence to win people to their cause. Included among them were “Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, John Peter Zenger, Samuel Adams, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. Adams has been called the great press agent of the American Revolution for fashioning the machinery of political change” (Bates 2002). Many American legends are the result of public relations campaigns. For example:

- The story of Daniel Boone was created by a landowner to promote settlement in Kentucky.
- Davy Crockett’s exploits were largely created by his press agent, Matthew St. Clair, to woo votes away from President Andrew Jackson.

However, the master of all nineteenth-century press agents was Phineas T. Barnum. Showman par excellence, Barnum created a wave of publicity stunts and coverage that made his circus, “The Greatest Show on Earth,” an irresistible attraction in every city and town it visited after its inception in 1871.

Up until the nineteenth century the press was privately owned and relied heavily on the acting government for support. Media coverage, which reached a specific readership and has a defined and measurable audience, became the goal for the public relations practitioner. Black (2001) points out that this practitioner would be indicative of status, conferring kudos and implying editorial endorsement. Development in printing and the beginning of a more sophisticated form of mass media led to the provision of more “communication channels and routes to target audiences” (Black 2001; 9).

Periods of political, economic and social crises swiftly encouraged the fast development in public relations practice and more use of public relations techniques. All these factors “moved public relations forward and helped define it as the discrete and defined management practice we know today” (Black 2001; 9).

2.4.1 Public Relations of the 20th century

Public relations to this day utilise rhetoric, symbols and slogans. This is considerably palpable in history. By means of history one can see how public relations have evolved over the years and also how it has improved as technology progressed. The United States of America has the best documented examples of the public relations evolution:

Public Relations Time Line (1900-2002)	
1900	Publicity Bureau of Boston established as first public relations firm.
1904	Ivy L. Lee becomes public relations counsellor.
1913	Ludlow Massacre establishes value of corporate public relations
1923	Edward L. Bernays publishes <i>Crystallizing Public Opinion</i> , first book on professional public relations
1929	Bernays stages "Torches of Freedom" march to promote smoking
1948	Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) founded.
1950	PRSA Code of Professional Standards adopted.
1955	International Public Relations Association (IPRA) founded.
1965	PRSA Accreditation established.
1970	International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) founded.
1989	Exxon Valdez crisis becomes PR nightmare.
1998	Council of Public Relations Firms founded.
2000	PRSA Code of Ethics revised as inspirational guidelines.
2002	PRSA promulgates Universal Accreditation as standard for practice.

Figure 2.3 Public Relations Time-line 1900 – 2002 (Bates 2002)

2.4.1.1 1920's

During the 1920s, public relations and advertising developed in scope and stature. According to American history, the former advisor of President Wilson, Walter Lippmann, expressed concern over the implications of public opinion. In *Public Opinion* (1922) he wrote that "the public no longer formed its own opinion, particularly about government policy; instead, people's opinions, like their knowledge, were fed to them by the media in the form of slogans and stereotypes".

However, he did point out that the moulding of public opinion is in fact a two-way process. Society as it stands, contains "innumerable large and small corporations and institutions, voluntary and semi-voluntary associations, national, provincial, urban and neighbourhood groupings, which often as not make decisions that the political body registers" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 33).

During the World War 1 period, numerous companies learned from the experience, and concluded that social responsibility was good for public relations and therefore it was

good for business. Consequently, opinion research developed rapidly as a field as companies developed new tactics for exploring the needs and wants of their stockholders, the market, and the general community.

2.4.1.2 1930's

Following the stock market crash in 1929, the United States' economy was in the grip of a depression. The utmost challenge to public relations was to sell 'good cheer' to an already confused and frightened public. This challenge was felt by government, "successive presidents responded by trying to convince the country that a return to prosperity was around the corner and that the only thing to fear was fear itself" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 33).

The National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce carried out a comprehensive campaign in 1938; it was based on the slogan "What helps business helps you" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 33).

2.4.1.3 1940's

During World War 2 the public relations efforts were seen to be more sophisticated, synchronized and incorporated than those of the public relations efforts of World War 1. In American government a very significant event occurred, which affected public relations. This was marked as the creation of the "War Advertising Council, which handled war-related public service announcements and created slogans like: 'Loose Lips sinks Ships'" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 35).

The introduction of films also proved positive. The use of film as a medium for public relations purposes, expanded immensely during the 1940's. In 1943 Frank Capra made a documentary film for the U.S Signal Corps "to inspire patriotism and build morale" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 36). Hollywood also produced innumerable movies, specifically to glorify the American fighting forces.

Apart from the films, individual companies tailored to the war in their own different ways, often using public relations. *Lucky Strike Cigarettes* made such an adaption. During wartime, ink was more than often in demand, so the American Tobacco Company had to change the colour of the packaging from green to white. Thanks to public relations, "the change caused the company only a moments regret" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 36). A new campaign was launched with a new slogan: 'Lucky Strike Green has gone to War'. Lucky Strike consumers in America were proud of their new package because it signified that their brand was doing its part for America.

2.4.1.4 1950's

During the 1950's, America once more experienced a booming economy, which was largely due to the rise in consumer goods. The population was growing and more people had access to a good education and were entering the 'white-collar' workforce. Technology progress, notably the introduction of the following: "television, satellites, atomic energy, and the mainframe computer" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 36). Industry also showed growth nationally and internationally.

So with the growth in the economy, public relations also grew. In 1953 the International Chamber of Commerce set up a commission on public relations, and in 1954, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) developed its first code of ethics. About a year later, the International Public Relations Association was founded.

By encouraging corporate investment in society, public relations increased its own influence within the organisations they functioned and also gained respect. Television, which dominated America during this period, had an enormous effect on public relations growth. Television on its own proved to have had a "powerful medium capacity for persuasion" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 37) as was evident from the start. Although Social Scientists criticised television control over public opinion, it soon became very clear that television proved to be helpful as well as harmful to public relations.

The *Revlon Company* first enjoyed glorious PR from its sponsorship of a popular American television program, but when the "\$64,000 Question was exposed to fraud, *Revlon* suffered acute embarrassment and a wave of public criticism for its failure to meet its social responsibility" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 37).

2.4.1.5 1960's – 1970's

By the late 1960's, public relations had matured into a full-blown professional enterprise, "comprising, in the United States, several hundred public relations agencies, large and small, and more than 100,000 individual practitioners. Public relations specialists became an integral part of top management, often reporting directly to the president or CEO of the institutions they served" (Bates 2002).

Part of the driving force for this growth in the 1960's and into the 1970's was the great outburst of political turbulence that engulfed the world. The United States found themselves in crisis during the 1960's and 1970's. Because of this crisis, modern public relations professionals had to show skills like "social sciences, as well as communication and management skills" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 37).

Also, new emphasis was placed on non-marketing problems and according to Newsom *et al* (2004;37) much more consideration was given to consumer movement, corporate-government relationships were scrutinised, PR people gained increasing responsibility within the corporate structure” - the burgeoning consumer movement sought to “protect the average person against unsafe products, unsanitary working conditions, unfair pricing and other breaches, real and alleged, of the expanding social contract that said, in effect, the ‘Customer is King’”(Bates 2002) - hence, the public relations role became more demanding within the multinational companies who sought help with dealing with nonconformist youth and minorities.

Looking into the United States’ history, one can see the nation seemed to stay divided, be it in “civil rights, disarmament, the space program, the Vietnam war and peace movement, conservation, farm labour, woman’s liberation, etc” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 37). Consequently, public relations became important during the deliberation of both sides.

2.4.1.6 1980’s – 1990’s

During these two periods, the growth of public relations practice and education continued at an incredible pace. The era of technology changed the world, and emphasis was placed on the need for improved communication tools. A new wave of cultural awareness surfaced as the struggle for equality among the races and sexes continued, even after massive changes in these areas changed the norms. New issues arose to spark other manifestations of activist militancy—“much of it focused on environmental and quality-of-life issues” (Bates 2002).

Business and government became the main targets for initiatives aimed at curbing “air pollution, water pollution, deforestation, and the general threat of ecological disaster caused by global warming and the destruction of the world’s natural habitats” (Bates 2002).

Thus, public relations practitioners were called upon to assist in “addressing these highly charged issues and, in communicating what their employers or the activist organizations they represented were doing to improve matters. This period also witnessed the growth and extension of consumer activism around issues such as unfair labour practices and unbridled corporate expansion and market control, ...” (Bates 2002).

The conventional advertising and public relations tactics of the 1970’s improved. This was now the time for ‘strategic planning’ and the coordination of ‘integrated communication elements’ and “greater awareness of the need to integrate an organisation’s different ‘voices’ to ensure consistency of message statements and to enhance credibility” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 43).

The distribution and compilation of information in the 1980's led to new techniques and tactics within public relations. With the help of computer technology, the microcomputer was brought into the public relations office, and with that, led to desktop publishing. This dramatically improved the appearance of internal publications and as well as the sophistication of graphic for reports, speeches and adverts.

The introduction of the World Wide Web created new platforms for public relations, furthermore presenting new opportunities and problems. Tools such as e-mail, chat rooms, web pages, etc, and all sorts of organisations and individuals had a presence on the Web. Within organisations the implementation of e-mail had a dramatic effect on the internal arena, which led to a more powerful key component to internal communication.

The Web changed media relations significantly. Web pages gave basic information about the organisation and also access to other information in the form of text, graphics and pictures. Some organisations also started posting their news releases on their Web pages. The Web instantly turned into a fact finding tool, but the verification of Web information credibility still remained a problem.

The 1990's showed a remarkable improvement on computers and the term 'out-sourcing' came into effect. Many public relations professionals "began to work for themselves because they were let go of by organisations [;] as independent contractors, they established their own clientele, servicing many customers, often including their previous employers" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 47). Media coverage during the 1980's and 1990's became aggressive – "mainly because of the perceived manipulation of public attitudes by sophisticated PR campaigns" (Newsom *et al.* 2004; 50).

The term '*public relations*' is widely used today, and is mostly applied incorrectly. The ignorant use of the term leads many people to call themselves practitioners – this is due to the way the media uses the term. This causes a negative response which is evident from the way government officials use it by "putting public relations spins on news and using PR gimmicks" (Newsom *et al.* 2004: 50).

2.4.1.7 2000's

The twenty-first century has become prominent for instant communication. But among the challenges that confronted practitioners early in the New Millennium was the "aftermath of the dot.com era collapse in the late 1990's, followed quickly by the greed-induced meltdown of ethics in companies such as Enron and Worldcom. The Enron-Worldcom scandals alone had extraordinary consequences" (Bates 2002). Most conspicuously, these scandals made it tougher for public relations practitioners to prove their value in assisting clients and employers to serve the public interest while pursuing private goals.

However, the age of New Media and the Internet made the access of information available immediately. The 2000's is the age of viral communication – a major story breaks in America and 5 minutes later it is on world news. A good example of that were the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in the United States (11 September 2001). The story promptly aired across the world within minutes. Many other technological advances have improved instant communication, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

2.5 Grunig and Hunt's four Models of Public Relations

In his first study of public relations behaviour, Professor James Grunig (1976) took the idea of one-way and two-way models of communications, but elaborated the idea by including the purpose of communication as well as direction thereof. He used Thayer's (1968) concept of 'synchronic' – "to synchronise the behaviour of a public with that of the organisation so that the organisation can continue to behave in the way it wants without interference" (Grunig 1992; 287) - and 'diachronic'- "to negotiate a state of affairs that benefits both the organisation and the public" (Grunig 1992; 287).

After extensive studies, Grunig concluded that the terms 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' did not describe precisely the difference in purpose he had in mind for the two kinds of public relations. He then replaced the terms with the "terms 'asymmetrical' and 'symmetrical' to describe the purpose of public relations as striving for balance" (Grunig 1992; 287) rather than the "unbalanced communications and effect" (Grunig 1992; 287).

A four-model typology of public relations practice was presented by Professor James Grunig of the University of Maryland and Todd Hunt of Rutgers State University in their 1984 book, *Managing Public Relations* (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 63).

The four models, which have been used widely in public relations theory, helped explaining how public relations in the context of a 130-year timeline have evolved. Although all four models are practiced today in varying degrees, the 'ideal' model is the two-way symmetrical model.

2.5.1 Press Agency/Publicity Model

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) claimed that the press agents of the mid nineteenth century were the first full-time specialists to practise public relations. The Press Agency model is characterised as one-way communication, primarily through the mass media, to distribute information that may be exaggerated, distorted, or even incomplete to 'hype' a cause, product, or service.

The model is used as a way of persuading and manipulating a desired audience to act as the organisation wishes. It is sometimes called the P.T. Barnum model as it is almost

pure propaganda. Barnum skilfully promoted his circus using the axiom: “there is a sucker born every minute” (Grunig 1992; 287). Its purpose is advocacy, and little or no research is required. In this model, the truth is not a priority.

P.T. Barnum was the leading historical figure during this model's heydays from 1850 to 1900. Phineas T. Barnum was the great American showman of the 19th century, a brilliant and brazen promoter, and according to Harris (1973), Barnum weathered accusations of fraud with the attitude that there was no such thing as bad press, and he became one of the wealthiest men in America. Barnum, who was born in 1810, used elaborate language and exaggeration to promote his assortment of attractions which included European opera singer Jenny Lind, Jumbo the elephant and conjoined twins Chang and Eng Bunker in an age when the public hungered for entertainment.

In 1835, he encountered Joice Heth who was a disabled African American woman whom, her sponsors claimed to have been 160 years old and had been the infant George Washington's nurse. Seeing her possibility as a human curiosity, Barnum purchased the right to exhibit her, along with the documents validating her age, and set her upon her couch in Niblo's Garden in New York City. She was extremely popular, but when interest began to flag, a newspaper item appeared suggesting that Joice was not human at all but an "automaton" made of whalebone, Indian rubber, and springs. The exhibition hall was full once more, for Barnum always knew how to use the news as well as the advertising sections of newspapers” (Harris 1973). After her death in 1836, an autopsy attested that Joice had been barely 80 years old. Barnum was as astonished as everyone. According to him, he learned, that "the public appears disposed to be amused even when they are conscious of being deceived” (Harris 1973)

Thanks to Barnum, General Tom Thumb (real name: Charles Stratton) became one of the sensations of the century and was Barnum's greatest attraction. He was a midget, 25 inches tall and weighed 15 pounds when he became Barnum's employee in 1842, but he was "exceptional at singing, dancing and performing comedy monologues” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 48). He even got widespread “European booking for Thumb by introducing him first to society leaders of London” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 48), who were delighted by him. An invitation to the palace followed where he then entertained “Queen Victoria, King Louis Philippe, and other royalty with his songs, dances, and impersonations in miniature” (Harris 1973), and subsequently Thumb played to full houses every night. Barnum, even in his time, knew the significance of third-party endorsement.

In 1850, Barnum promoted Jenny Lind, the ‘Swedish Nightingale.’ Lind was famous in Europe, but unknown in America, until Barnum took her on a “national tour and made her a pop icon even before the Civil War” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 49). He acquired full house on opening nights everywhere by donating a fraction of the proceeds to charity. As a public

activity, the event attracted many of the “town’s opinion leaders, whereupon the general public flocked to attend succeeding performances” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 49) – a tool still used today by entertainment publicists. The immensely profitable tour of this ‘gracious Swedish Nightingale’ was prepared with ingenious public relations but conducted with dignity and generosity” (Harris 1973) by Barnum.

Today, press agency is ink, so it is the sales-driven approach in the organisation that does whatever it takes to get publicity for clients in the media without resorting to paid advertising. Press agency is “not above truth-bending or lying to reach its pragmatic objective” (Horton [no date]). It will fabricate facts if the need arises. Persuasion applied is for short-term advantages. Press agency is a long-standing part of PR, and it will continue to stay. Press agency has altered over the “decades into ‘ink with ethics,’ that is getting exposure while maintaining respect for facts” (Horton [no date]), but if that fails, achieving publicity is more important than facts.

James L. Horton cited a brilliant example of Press Agency of today by stating that “Chris-topher Buckley’s hilarious novel, “Thank You for Smoking” lampoons this type of practitioner brilliantly, and post presidential debate commentary from Democrats and Republicans is a quadrennial example of spinning. Press agency includes any technique that manufactures news -- publicity stunts, faux surveys, fake committees, constructed events and other tactics practitioners continue to use”.

Press agency is alive and well in many areas today, the most prominent fields of practise are sports, theatre, music, films, and the classic Hollywood publicists.

2.5.2 Public Information Model

At the beginning of the 20th century, according to J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), a second model of public relations, the public information model, developed as a “reaction to attacks on large corporations and government agencies by muckraking journalists [so, the] leaders of these organisations realised they needed more than the propaganda of press agents to counter the attacks on them in the media” (Grunig 1992; 288). These organisations opted for hiring their own journalists as public relations practitioners to “write press ‘handouts’ explaining their behaviour” (Grunig 1992; 288). These practitioner however, chose to write only good things about the organisation, but the information was generally the truth and accurate.

The public information model is also a one-way distribution of information, not necessarily with a persuasive intent. It is based on the journalistic ideals of accuracy and completeness, and the mass media is the primary channel. There is fact-finding for content, truth and accuracy is very important. This PR model is used as a way to disseminate information relying on very little research and no feedback from the public.

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified **Ivy Lee**, a former journalist, as the primary historical figure “whose work characterised the public information model” (Grunig 1992; 288).

The mishmash of “stubborn management attitudes and improper actions, labour strife, and widespread public criticism” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 52) produced the first public relations counsellor, Ivy Ledbetter Lee (July 16, 1877 – November 9, 1934).

When Lee launched his public relations firm, he issued a “declaration of principles that signalled a new model of public relations practise: *Public Information*” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 52). Lee’s accent was on the distribution of truthful, accurate information rather than the misrepresentation, hype, and exaggerations of press agency. Lee’s declaration said, “This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news... In brief, our plan is, frankly and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and the public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which is of value and interest to the public...”(Turney 1998).

Lee was to become one of the most well-known pioneers in public relations. Lee assisted in developing many of the techniques and principles that practitioners follow today. He believed in “open communications with the media, and he was candid and frank in his approach to the press” (Bates 2002). He understood that good corporate performance was the basis of good publicity. He also believed that business had to tell its story “honestly, accurately, and openly in order to win public understanding and support” (Bates 2002). Two of his most famous clients were the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Rockefeller family.

On their behalf, he developed a publicity policy of “the public be informed” in contrast to the infamous statement of financier William Vanderbilt, “the public be damned.” He later evolved his philosophy in 1906 into the *Declaration of Principles*, the first expression of the theory that public relations practitioners have a public responsibility that extends beyond obligations to the client.

Thus, when he sent news releases and other statements to the press, Lee included a copy of his *Declaration of Principles*, the content of which is quoted above (Bates 2002).

Lee was retained by the Pennsylvanian Railroad as a ‘publicity counsellor’ to handle media relations. His first task was to encourage management that the policy of operating in secret and refusing to talk with the press was a bad strategy for nurturing goodwill and public understanding.

When the next rail accident occurred, Lee “issued what is often considered to be the very first press release, convincing the company to openly disclose information to journalists, before they could hear information from elsewhere” (www.diglib.princeton.edu), and took reporters to the accident site. Although such action appeared to the conservative railroad directors to be reckless indiscretion, they were pleasantly surprised that the company

received fairer press comment than on a previous occasion. It was not long before other railroads also adopted a more open information policy.

Lee advised a number of companies and charitable organisations during his life, but he is best known for his work with the Rockefeller family. Lee's most important work was for the Rockefeller family, in 1914. In that year John D. Rockefeller, Jr., asked for his guidance in managing the alleged "Ludlow Massacre that began in 1913 in southern Colorado when some 9,000 people went on strike. In April 1914, an accidental shot led to a battle in which several of the miners, two women, and 11 children were killed" (Bates 2002).

With the Rockefeller name being ridiculed across the land, Lee told John D., Jr., to practice a policy of openness. He had Rockefeller visit mining camps after the strike was over to see for "himself the conditions under which miners worked. He also advised John D., Sr., who was being attacked by muckrakers as an arrogant capitalist, to let the public know about his charitable contributions, which he had kept secret" (Bates 2002).

Lee also recognised the "importance of directly reaching opinion leaders who, in turn, were highly influential in shaping public opinion" (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 52). He is remembered today for his four important contributions to public relations:

- Advancing the concept that business and industry should align themselves with the public interest,
- Dealing with top executives and carrying out no program unless it had the active support of management,
- Maintaining open communication with the news media, and
- Emphasising the necessity of humanising business and bringing its public relations down to the community level of employees, customers, and neighbours. (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 53)

Today, relationship building became a major part of the Public Information model. It is the certainty that business should build long-term trust with the population that allows it to survive and trusting the population that allows it to succeed. Arthur W. Page's principles exemplifies this point of view:

- Tell the truth
- Prove it with action
- Listen to the customer
- Manage for tomorrow
- Conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it
- Remain calm, patient and good-humoured.

Almost all greatly regulated companies in the U.S., such as "utilities and pharmaceutical companies, understand the need to cultivate and keep the trust of regulators, and they

understand the connection between customers and regulators. Trust has become a major issue in the post-bubble business world. It was lack of trust in *Enron* that sent it off the cliff and lack of trust in *Arthur Andersen* that destroyed that firm. Relationship building protects a firm's long-term competitiveness," (Horton [no date]).

Government, non-profit groups and other public institutions are the primary fields of practise today. One-way communication is the focus of the public information model. It uses press releases, brochures and Web content to disperse information. They tell the story or/and provide the information and hope someone is paying attention.

2.5.3 Two-way Asymmetric Model

Some public relations practitioners began to base their work on the behavioural and social sciences. Scientific persuasion is the purpose, and communication is a two-way concept with imbalanced effects. The model has a feedback loop, but the primary purpose of the model is to help the communicator to better understand the audience while also persuading it.

Research is used to plan the activity and establish objectives as well as to learn whether an objective has been met. . Many corporations and businesses use this model. Evaluative research is conducted "but the results are used strictly to alter public attitudes in favour of the organization's objectives" (PRHistory).

Foremost among these practitioners was **Edward L Bernays** in the 1920's. Edward Louis Bernays, born in Vienna (November 22, 1891 – March 9, 1995) is considered one of the fathers of public relations, due to his brilliant campaigns and extensive self-promotion. As a nephew of Sigmund Freud, he took an interest in psychology and based his practise on it. Behavioural and social sciences were based on research, thus, the introduction of a scientific approach made the practice of public relations two-way: "Practitioners both sought information and gave information to its publics" (Grunig 1992; 288). He and his colleagues went well beyond publicity in their roles as "consultants to business, government, and not-for-profit enterprises" (Bates 2002).

Sciences are based on theories, and the theories introduced by Bernays were those of "propaganda, persuasion, and the 'engineering of consent'" (Grunig 1992; 288). Bernays conceptualised a third model of public relations "that emphasised the application of social science research and behavioural psychology to formulate campaigns and messages that could change people's perceptions and encourage certain behaviours" (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 55). By means of this approach, Bernays was one of the first to attempt to manipulate public opinion using the subconscious.

Unlike Ivy Lee's model (Public Information Model), Bernays's model was fundamentally one of advocacy and scientific in nature, but the "purpose of feedback was to

formulate a better persuasive message” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 55). Thus, James Grunig labelled this model as the ‘two-way asymmetrical’ model.

Bernays used “third party authorities” indirectly to manipulate public opinion. Bernays stated that “If you can influence the leaders, either with or without their conscious cooperation, you automatically influence the group which they sway.” A popular example is that of the bacon industry wanting to promote their product. He came up with the following idea:

He performed a survey on physicians and reported their recommendation that people eat hearty breakfasts. He sent the results of the survey to 5,000 physicians, along with publicity pushing bacon and eggs as a hearty breakfast. No mention was made about bacon, but subsequently sales soared as people “took the advice and started eating the traditional breakfast of bacon and eggs” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 56).

According to the New York Times "He helped shape public relations by favouring the use of endorsements from opinion leaders, celebrities, doctors and other "experts" to strengthen the arguments his clients wanted to make. In addition, he favoured surveys, releasing the results of experiments and polls to make a better case for his clients' positions and products,"(*New York Times* (March 10, 1995).

Bernays also drew upon his uncle Sigmund's psychoanalytic ideas for the benefit of commerce in order to promote products as diverse as cigarettes, soap and books. In *Public Relations, Strategies and Tactics* Wilcox illustrates the following samples:

Ivory Soap

Procter & Gamble sold its Ivory Soap by the millions after Bernays came up with the idea of sponsoring soap sculpture contests for school-aged children. In the first year alone, 22 million schoolchildren participated in the contest, which eventually ran for 35 years. Bernays's brochure with soap sculpture tips, which millions of children received in their school, advised them to “use discarded models from face, hands, and bath, adding, “You will love the feeling of cleanliness that comes from Ivory soap bath once a day.” Thomas Harris, a Chicago counsellor, quotes Bernays, “Soap sculpture became a national outlet for children’s creative instincts and helped a generation that enjoyed cleanliness.”

Light's Golden Jubilee

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Thomas Edison's invention of the electric light bulb, Bernays arranged the worldwide attention-getting Light's Golden Jubilee in 1929. It was his idea, for example, that the world's utilities would shut off their power all at one time, for one minute, to honour Edison. President Herbert Hoover and many dignitaries were on hand, and the U.S. Post Office issued a commemorative two-cent postage stamp.

Bernays's clients included President Calvin Coolidge, Procter & Gamble, CBS, the American Tobacco Company, *General Electric* and *Dodge Motors*. Bernays revolutionised public relations by combining traditional press agency with the techniques of psychology and sociology. Here are a few examples:

- In the 1920's, working for the American Tobacco Company, Bernays sent a group of young models to march in the New York City parade. He then told the press that a group of women's rights marchers would light "Torches of Freedom." On his signal, the models lit *Lucky Strike* cigarettes in front of the eager photographers. *The New York Times* (1 April 1929) printed a story, headlined, "Group of Girls Puff at Cigarettes as a Gesture of 'Freedom.'" This helped break the taboo against women smoking in public.
- Bernays handled publicity for the 1920 regional convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Atlanta.
- Bernays used his Uncle Sigmund Freud's ideas to help convince the public, among other things, that bacon and eggs was the true all-American breakfast.
- Bernays helped the Aluminium Company of America (Alcoa) and other special interest groups to convince the American public that water fluoridation was safe and beneficial to human health. This was achieved by using the American Dental Association in a highly successful media campaign.
- In 1934, Bernays spent \$30,000 organizing a "green fashions ball" in the hope that it would stimulate women across the country to colour-coordinate with Lucky's green packaging.

Bernays defined the "profession of "counsel on public relations" as a "practicing social scientist" whose "competence is like that of the industrial engineer, the management engineer, or the investment counsellor in their respective fields." To assist clients, PR counsellors used "understanding of the behavioural sciences and applying them—sociology, social psychology, anthropology, history, etc."(Biographybase) In Propaganda, Bernays disputed that the scientific manipulation of public opinion was necessary to overcome chaos and conflict in society:

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ... We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ... In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons ... who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind" (Bernays 1928).

Bernays frequently wrote about public relations and the ethical responsibilities it holds – “even to the point of advocating the licensing of public relations counsellors. He eventually advocated that public relations should be a two-way street of mutual understanding and interaction” (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 57) with the public rather than mere scientific persuasion.

While asymmetrical communication is a two-way street, the objective is anything but balanced. It’s all about persuasion to prompt a transaction, thus its popularity with marketers. A popular case study illustrates how this approach was used by *Pepsi*:

On June 10, 1993, an elderly couple claimed that they had discovered a syringe floating inside a can of *Diet Pepsi*. For the next two weeks, the management of *Pepsi-Cola* worked round the clock to mount a massive public relations campaign. Media relation executives used television to launch offense strategies.

One video release illustrated the high-speed can-filling lines, eliminating the public's fear of an unsafe canning process. Another pictured a woman who was caught at a convenience store inserting her own syringe into an open *Diet Pepsi* can. *Pepsi* cooperated fully with the FDA and its investigative efforts. On June 21, 1993, Commissioner Kessler held a press conference calling the *Pepsi-Cola* controversy a hoax. *Pepsi* administrators then placed ads in newspapers and periodicals that read, "Pepsi is pleased to announce...nothing." (Metapr)

Two-way asymmetric public relations model can also be called ‘scientific persuasion’. It employs social science methods to develop more persuasive communication and it generally focuses on achieving short-term attitude change. This model incorporates lots of feedback from target audiences and publics and is used by an organization primarily interested in having its publics come around to its way of thinking rather changing the organization, its policies, or its views.

2.5.4 Two-way Symmetrical

Gaining mutual understanding is the purpose, and communication is a two-way street with balanced effects. This model is based on a free exchange of information that is used to alter attitudes in both the organization and its publics. Formative research is used mainly to learn how the public perceives the organisation and to determine what consequences organisational actions/policy might have on the public. The results may be counselling management to take certain actions or change policies. Evaluative research was used to determine whether a public relations effort has enhanced the public’s understanding. This idea, also expressed as ‘relationship building’ is to have policies and actions that are mutually beneficial to both parties. (Wilcox *et al.* 2006; 63)

Closer investigation proves that the two-way symmetric model relies on honest and open two-way communication and mutual give-and-take rather than one-way persuasion; focuses on mutual respect and efforts to achieve mutual understanding; emphasizes negotiation and a willingness to adapt and make compromises; requires organizations engaging in public relations to be willing to make significant adjustments in how they operate in order to accommodate their publics; and seems to be used more by non-profit organizations, government agencies, and heavily regulated businesses such as public utilities than by competitive, profit-driven companies. (Turney 1998)

The field of practice today includes organisations that engage in issue identification, crisis and risk management, and long-range strategic planning. **Edward Bernays**, later in his life, supported this model and is considered a leading advocate of this approach. Communication is the key to developing strong relationships, also between businesses and their publics (employees, customers, shareholders, etc). What public relations is all about is “people learning about each other and developing a mutual understanding” (Waddington 2008). This makes the two-way symmetrical model ideal.

Today the two-way symmetrical model enables two groups of people to share ideas and gain something from the experience. This is an ideal way to communicate and technology has made it easier than ever before. Many companies are taking advantage of new web technologies to encourage two-way communication.

Dell is one company that has had good experience with the two-way symmetrical model. In February 2007 *Dell* launched a new website called *IdeaStorm*. The *IdeaStorm* website “allows users to submit articles, comment on existing ones, or vote them up or down” (Waddington 2008). *Dell* received an overwhelming number of “requests to offer an alternative, open-source operating system as an option on new *Dell* computers. This flurry of responses eventually convinced *Dell* to begin offering computers with the Ubuntu (Linux) operating system pre-installed (Waddington 2008).

What worked in this case was that not only did consumers get precisely what they required from *Dell*, but *Dell* also proved that they were listening to their customers and were prepared to give them what they sought.

2.6 Conclusion

In retrospect, public relations have fulfilled its role in society despite the many setbacks that seem to go hand in hand with the practice from time to time. What began as mainly a “U.S. enterprise in the early 1900’s, with a few agencies and a few hundred practitioners, has grown, almost inexorably, to become a global enterprise, far surpassing what even the most visionary of its early proponents imagined” (Bates 2002).

Public relations practitioners have flourished. As a group these practitioners became more similar in their education, knowledge and skills. On the job, they became the “promotional voice for thousands of public and private interests, performing a wide variety of communications functions aimed at persuading customers, employees, stockholders, taxpayers, investors, donors, legislators and others to support those interests” (Bates 2002).

Each of the four models of public relations should serve as a normative theory of public relations. They should be used to guide a public relations practitioner how to be a press agent or public information specialist, for example. However, both the press agency and the public information models represent one-way communication approaches to public relations, meaning the dissemination of information from organisations to publics, usually through the media.

I support Grunig and Hunt’s theory that the two-way symmetrical model defines the most effective way of practising public relations. In the next chapter I shall investigate the organisations’ actions in exploring the traditional channels of communications, as well as the new phenomenon of ‘social media’ to determine if two-way communication is evident, and elaborate on these ‘old’ and ‘new’ mediums.

The aim of the next chapter will attempt to highlight social media as a means of effective two-way communication, as benefits of this include:

- Relies on honest and open two-way communication and mutual give-and-take rather than one-way persuasion;
- Focuses on mutual respect and efforts to achieve mutual understanding;
- Emphasises negotiation and a willingness to adapt and make compromises;
- Requires organisations engaging in public relations to be willing to make significant adjustments in how they operate in order to accommodate their publics

(Grunig & Hunt 1984)

The application of Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) two-way symmetrical to social media can also attempt to initiate conversations a public relations professional might never have started, develop existing relationships in an easy, informal way and also listen to what consumers are saying about the company and about any relevant issues. The public relations professional can target people in their preferred media as well as finely target according to criterion. Networking becomes easier and the public can get to know personalities behind a brand or company.

CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND NEW MEDIA

3.1 Introduction

Public relations have immeasurable value in any organisation. This value ensures the growth an organisation needs to develop within the cultural, religious, socio-economic and political context in which an organisation practice. The value of public relations is reflected in various ways.

It can represent the needs, interests and desires of the organisation's various publics. It opens a dialogue between an organisation and the public it affects. This dialogue can encourage mutual adjustments between an organisation and the public it serves. Public relations focus on what Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg (2004) refers to as society in the broadest sense and should work in the greater interest of society, rather than the narrow interests of the organisation it serves (Newsom *et al* 2004; 14).

Public relations provide useful information to target audiences about various aspects of their organisations products or services. It aids management to formulate, advocate and teach objectives that are sounder. The principles of public relations reflect what Newsom calls the "basic cooperative natures of the people" and as a result public relations practitioners earn their reputation as problem solvers. And finally, by being socially responsible means upholding these obligations (Newsom *et al* 2004; 14).

Within a majority of public relations definitions, it is clear that it is a discipline concerned with the exchange of information. So in practice Phillips & Young (2007) states that it typically involves conveying this information to internal and external audiences, and then also trying to receive information from a range of stakeholders. There is a demand on the exchange of information, and the challenge for the public relations practitioner is to understand how the information is exchanged and then work out how to "influence such exchanges in a way that benefits the client" (Phillips *et al* 2007; 4).

This chapter will focus on the communication process between organisation and its publics and also introduce theories through the discussion of literature in the following disciplines of public relations, new media studies, marketing, and consumer behaviour studies. By illustrating on the compilation of literature from researchers, developers and thought-leaders within the various disciplines, this chapter will attempt to present an outline of the developing practice of public relations in the Web 2.0 environment. And thus aim to generate a framework of two-way symmetrical communication.

Firstly, to understand how information was shared between organisation and its publics, a discussion on how technological advance made communication possible today will be investigated than followed by a discussion of the traditional channels of communications. Since, the sending of information was split into mass communication and micro-

communication. These were distinguished by a “qualitative difference between that which is made available to large numbers of people and involves a decidedly asymmetrical relationship between provider and audience” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 4 - 5), and which is essentially an exchange between individuals, which may be more symmetric of nature.

Secondly, an important medium in the movement towards public relations as a two-way symmetrical process, the impact of the creation of the Web on public relations will be discussed. An overview of the manifestation of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 will be presented, with a specific focus on how these communications revolutions initiated and influenced the development of what Breakenridge (2008) terms PR 1.0 and PR 2.0.

In addition, Social media is a significant platform in PR 2.0 and a fundamental feature of two-way communication. Explanation of core terms, characteristics and principles of social media will be discussed.

3.2 Technological advances in communication

Communication is one of the most important parts of human life. Communicating with each other and passing information and understanding each other are of vital importance to survive in society. Methods of communication, verbal and non-verbal have come a long way. The following section aims to highlight some of the most noteworthy occurrences in history to provide context for the technology we have available to us today in order to communicate.

3.2.1 Ideographic or syllabic writing

33rd century B.C.: Sumerians invent writing from commercial inscriptions, and 19th century B.C.: Babylonian cuneiform adapted from Sumerian script.

Waddell (1927) indicates that besides the primary word-sound and meaning expressed by the pictorial signs employed for writing the spoken name for the object pictured, the Sumerians adapted syllabic pictographs to the fuller expression of speech and abstract ideas by making the signs express also various ideas connected with the objects pictured:

For example: The pictograph of the Sun stands not only for the Sun itself and its name, but also for shine; light; bright; glow; warm; heat; and day.

Waddell (1927) also states that “a further stage was the use of ideographs merely for their sound as phonogram, without any ideographic sense, for spelling words more than one syllable. This usage is termed ‘syllabic’ as opposed by the later ‘alphabetic’ spelling; and it continued in Sumerian and Babylonian down till the latest period”.

The various ideographic words in the Sumerian vocabulary are catalogued and their respective meanings defined in the copious bilingual glossaries in Sumerian and Babylonian of the Assyrian and Babylonian grammatical tablets to the number of the thousands of words.

31st century B.C.: Egyptian hieroglyphics developed from Sumerian models.

Signs found in Egypt were called by the Greeks 'hieroglyphs' or 'sacred writings' as the ancient scripts were especially used by the priests for sacred writing long after they had become more or less obsolete. The term 'hieroglyph' is also applicable to the Sumerian writing believed to be the parent of the Egyptian hieroglyph system.

According to Timothy Ministries Dictionary of Theology (2005), hieroglyphs consist of three kinds of glyphs: phonetic glyphs, including single-consonant characters that functioned like an alphabet; logographs, representing morphemes; and determinatives, which narrowed down the meaning of logographic or phonetic words.

Timothy Ministries Dictionary of Theology (2005) also points out that as writing developed and became more widespread among the Egyptian people, simplified glyph forms developed, resulting in the hieratic (priestly) and demotic (popular) scripts. These variants were also more suited than hieroglyphs for use on papyrus. Hieroglyphic writing was not, however, eclipsed, but existed alongside the other forms, especially in monumental and other formal writing. The 'Rosetta Stone' contains parallel texts in hieroglyphic and demotic writing. These are just three of the major historical events in history that developed the written word. Some of the historical events are listed below:

- *25th century B.C.: Harappan culture of Indus Valley has ideographic script.*
- *19th century B.C.: Chinese develop writing, perhaps independently.*
- *17th century B.C.: Minoan "Linear-A" script adapted from hieroglyphics.*
- *15th century B.C.: Hittite cuneiform adapted from Babylonian writing.*
- *12th century B.C.: Assyrian cuneiform is adapted from Babylonian writing.*
- *6th century B.C.: Early Persian cuneiform influenced by neo-Babylonian script.*
- *5th century B.C.: Cuneiform dies out as Babylonian speech falls into disuse.*
- *3rd century A.D.: Mayans of Central America have an ideographic script.*

(McGaughey 2005)

3.3.2 Alphabetic writing

Approximately 3700 years ago, West Semitic-speaking people of the Sinai became workers (or slaves) under the influence of Egyptian rule. Lawrence (1996) points out that the "Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols these Semitic speakers saw made an impression on them,

and encouraged the adoption of a limited number of hieroglyphics to write down sounds in their language". Phonetic Egyptian hieroglyphs only recorded the consonants, and not the vowels, the Sinaitic script also adopted this convention. The result is a peculiar system where symbols were parallel to Egyptian hieroglyphs, but recorded a language related to Phoenician and Hebrew. The result was the Proto-Sinaitic, also known as Proto-Canaanite.

11th century B.C.: Greek alphabet derived from Phoenician script. (Greek and Latin branch)

Traditionally the Greek alphabet was derived from the Phoenician alphabet. However, the Greeks modified the set of signs they had received to suit the sounds in their language. They also changed some letters to systematically represent vowels. The earliest Greek inscriptions actually recorded several slightly different scripts. The similarities between the different variants are extremely overwhelming, and imply the presence of a very early Greek script that later developed into the local variants. Lawrence (1996) states the following:

This confusion regarding the earliest Greek is due to the fact that no archaeological remains of this script have been found thus far. The earliest examples only date from the 8th century BCE, when different scripts are already in evidence. Many scholars place the time of the Greeks' adoption of the alphabet from the Phoenicians sometimes between 1200 BCE and 900 BCE. The older date would give a longer time for the proto-Greek alphabet to develop into its local forms, but there are no archaeological remains of any writing from this period. The later date would satisfy the lack of evidence, but gives less time for the script to diverge.

Other alphabetic evolutions within this particular section include the following:

- *16th century B.C.: First alphabetic script, North Semitic, appears in Palestine.*
- *11th century B.C.: Early Hebrew script derived from North Semitic prototype.*
- *3rd century A.D.: Runic script of Northern Europe derived from Etruscan.*
- *4th century A.D.: Gothic script of Bulgaria derived from Greek and Latin.*
- *5th century A.D.: Grantha script of India derived from Gupta.*
- *8th century A.D.: Kavi script of Java is derived from Grantha.*
- *9th century A.D.: Glagolitic script, based on Greek, introduced in Bulgaria.*

(McGaughey 2005)

3.2.3 Printing

105 AD: Chinese imperial court announces the invention of paper.

The eunuch Tsai Lun introduces his invention of paper to the Han emperor of China. Recent archaeological evidence shows that people in north-western China were making paper in the two centuries before its formal introduction at court.

According to Alfred (2008) Chinese emperors made paper a tool for imperial administration and the diffusion of knowledge. It was a lighter alternative to heavy pages made of bamboo, and far less expensive than pages made from silk. Papermaking was a secret process until it spread to Korea in the sixth century, thence to Japan in the seventh. The technology spread to Tibet and Central Asia. Then Arabs captured some Chinese papermakers in 751, and the formerly secret process reached the Middle East. Arab scholars preferred linen paper to the sheepskin or calfskin parchment that was then in use. Paper continued its westward spread, and the first paper mill in Europe was built in 1150.

6th century: Chinese engravers master art of wood-block printing.

Woodblock printing has a long history in China and was already perfectly developed more than a thousand years ago, in the Tang Dynasty (630-930). As Shancun (1996) points out, it was skilfully engraved and finely printed, not only a medium for transmitting a message but also a charming object in itself. The skills required to produce it indicate that a substantial period of development took place before it was created.

Shancun (1996) shows that, by the time of the Song (960-1278) and Yuan (1278-1367) Dynasties, woodblock art was thriving and techniques quickly developed for printing in a number of styles, and both literary and utilitarian books with illustrations were produced in large quantities, soon becoming commodities.

With the introduction of the multiblock coloured woodblock print in the 17th century, the qualities of an original painting could be reproduced, and books like Scenes from the Huan Cui Hall, Illustrations of the Poetry of the Ten Elders from Little Ying Island, and The Ten Bamboo Letter Papers became important collectors' items among scholars and connoisseurs. (In contemporary Europe, woodblock printing was still in its infancy.)

1814: The Times (newspaper) produced on steam rotary printing press.

With regard to C Lomas's paper *'the steam driven rotary press: The Times and the Empire'*, the following facts are evident:

The 19th Century introduced Britain to a new era of development and invention. Britain's Industrial Revolution marked the beginning of steam power. The first working steam engine was invented in 1698. In 1765 James Watt realised the steam engine was very inefficient and decided to work on it to progress its design. In 1775, Watt's fully developed steam engine went into production. Steam power went on to have a huge influence on the spread of newspapers. Until Johannes Gutenberg invented the first ever printing press in 1440, printers had been relying on wooden printing presses for over 350 years.

Lomas also states that in 1811 the invention of steam power was applied to the printing of newspapers. Friedrich Koenig created the steam driven rotary press which was described as an 'improved' hand press. Koenig first invented a 'single cylinder machine' which involved the type being curved around a cylinder. The most significant of this invention was:

- *Printing was becoming increasingly important and was used as a means of exchanging new ideas, inventions and discoveries;*
- *Enabling future generations to access the intellectual achievements of the past.*
- *Enabled information and opinions to be spread more easily and openly within a democratic environment.*

Lomas states that "after the invention of steam, Britain's strength was dependent on the steamship, this provided newspaper reporters with transport to travel overseas to different events and worldwide. Along with new technologies, this also meant that Britain could control and defend the empire". The following event occurred in the development and distribution of the written word:

- *850 A.D: Chinese make books with hard covers and printed pages.*
- *11th century: Pi Sheng, Chinese alchemist, prints with movable type.*
- *1498: Aldus Manutius publishes set of Aristotle's writings.*
- *1617: Rapburne and Burgess patent printed maps.*
- *1847: Richard March Hoe (USA) designs rotary press.*
- *1886: Mergenthaler's linotype machine installed at New York Tribune.*

(McGaughey 2005)

3.2.4 Electric telegraph

This phase introduced the beginning of electronic communication; however, the electric telegraph is a now outdated communication system that transmitted electric signals over wires from location to location that translated into a message.

1832 – 1844: Samuel F.B. Morse

Samuel Morse (professor of arts and design at New York University in 1835) proved that signals could be transmitted by wire. According to Bellis (1997) Morse used pulses of current to deflect an electromagnet, which moved a marker to produce written codes on a strip of paper - the invention of 'Morse Code'. Later the device was modified to emboss the paper with dots and dashes.

1851: Telegraph cables were laid under the English Channel; and 1866: Telegraph cable crossing Atlantic Ocean is laid.

In McNamara's (1997) article *The Invention of the Telegraph Changed Communication Forever: a Communication Revolution Wired the World in the 19th Century* the following became evident:

In 1851 a functional telegraph cable had been laid across the English Channel. Not only could news travel between Paris and London, but the technological feat seemed to symbolize the peace between Britain and France just a few decades after the Napoleonic Wars. An American businessman, Cyrus Field, became involved in the plan to put a cable across the Atlantic in 1854. Field raised money from his wealthy neighbours in New York City's Gramercy Park neighbourhood, and a new company was formed, the New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Company. The cable was finally put in place in 1866. Messages were soon flowing between the United States and Europe.

Another significant occurrence was in 1872 when J.B. Stearns invented a method of duplex telegraphy.

3.2.5 Telephone

The telephone was introduced as the evolution of the telegraph. The telegraph and telephone are both wire-based electrical systems, and Alexander Graham Bell's success with the telephone came as a direct result of his attempts to improve the telegraph.

1876: Alexander Graham Bell invents and demonstrates telephone.

When Bell began experimenting with electrical signals, the telegraph had been an established means of communication for some 30 years. Although a highly successful system, the telegraph, with its dot-and-dash Morse code was basically limited to receiving and sending one message at a time.

According to Bellis (1997b) Bell's extensive knowledge of the nature of sound and his understanding of music enabled him to conjecture the possibility of transmitting multiple messages over the same wire at the same time. Although the idea of a multiple telegraph had been in existence for some time, Bell offered his own musical or harmonic approach as a possible practical solution. His "harmonic telegraph" was based on the principle that several notes could be sent simultaneously along the same wire if the notes or signals. This was followed by the following inventions and historical events:

- 1877: Thomas Edison and others develop carbon telephone transmitter.
- 1892: Automatic telephone exchange using Strowger's selector allows direct dialling.
- 1915: First coast-to-coast telephone conversation in the United States.
- 1977: Fibre-optic telephone cables are installed.
- 1983: MCI places order for 90,000 miles of fibre optic cable.
- 1984: Court ruling ends A T & T monopoly of telephone service.

(McGaughey 2005)

1997: Camera phone is invented.

The camera phone, like many complex systems, is the result of converging and enabling technologies. Over the years there have been many videophones and cameras that have included communication capability. Some devices experimented with integration of the device to communicate wirelessly with Internet, which would allow instant media sharing with anyone anywhere. For example: *In 1995 Apple experimented with the Apple Videophone/PDA.*

Gye (2007) indicates that personal photography allows people to capture and construct personal and group memory, maintain social relationships as well as expressing their identity, as mobile phones are constantly carried, camera phones allow for capturing moments at any time. Mobile communication also allows for immediate transmission of content (for example via Multimedia Messaging Services), which cannot be reversed or regulated.

The invention and further development of the telephone has proved to be one of the most effective ways of verbal communication, as well as communicating in non-verbal ways, such as sending text messages (known in South Africa as SMS) and pictures. The mobile phone will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

3.2.6 Radio and Television

The invention of radio and television introduced a means of communicating to the masses. With these mediums, one message could reach a wider audience. The means of mass communication is discussed in more detail in this chapter.

The following table indicates the benchmarks for each invention:

Radio		TV	
		1861	Joseph May notices that sunlight affects electrical resistance of selenium.
1873	James Clark Maxwell writes treatise on electromagnetic waves.		
		1884	Paul Nipkow develops mechanical television device.
		1897	Karl Ferdinand Braun invents cold-cathode "Braun" tube.
1888	Heinrich Hertz experiments with radio waves.		
1895	Guglielmo Marconi broadcasts letter "S" in Morse code by radio.		
1901	Marconi broadcasts letter "S" across Atlantic Ocean.		
1904	Reginald A. Fessender transmits speech by radio.		
1904	John A. Fleming invents vacuum tube to detect radio waves.		
1907	Lee DeForest invents audion tube to amplify radio signals.		
		1908	Campbell Swinton writes paper on possibility of "distant electric vision".
1912	David Sarnoff receives radio message from the sinking Titanic.		
1913	Edwin H. Armstrong patents way to amplify radio signals.		
1918	Armstrong invents super heterodyne circuit.		
1919	Radio Corporation of America is formed.		
1920	First commercial radio station, KDKA, begins broadcasting.		
1921	First paid radio commercial.		
		1923	John Logie Baird patents television system with Nipkow disk.
		1923	Vladimir Zworykin invents iconoscope, a workable television camera.
1925	Edwin Armstrong begins work on FM broadcasting system.		
1926	First radio network, NBC, is formed.	1926	Baird and Jenkins demonstrate television with mechanical scanning device.
		1927	Philo T. Farnsworth patents "image dissector", a more advanced camera.
		1928	Zworykin patents television system with electronic scanning.
		1933	In London, EMI applies for permission to begin television broadcasts.
1934	Robert Watson-Watt invents radar device.	1934	Farnsworth demonstrates electronic television system in Philadelphia.
1935	Nielsen Company measures radio audiences in the United States.		
		1936	London Television Service begins regular broadcasts.
		1938	First sports telecast takes place in London (a soccer match)
1939	Two-way radio communication developed for military use.	1939	RCA unveils U.S. television broadcasting at New York World Fair.
1948	Transistor developed at Bell Laboratories.		
		1949	John Cameron Swayze becomes anchor of Camel News Caravan.
		1951	First sitcom, "I Love Lucy", aired on U.S. commercial television.
		1953	F.C.C. approves system of broadcasting colour television.
1958	SCORE communication satellite sends signals to earth.		

(Information sourced: McGaughey 2005)

3.2.7 Computers

Since Alexander Graham Bell the methods of communication technology has developed at an alarming rate. This actually shows us that mankind was actually waiting for a technological breakthrough that would push us to the next step in communication. According to the website 'Computers and Technology' (1997) almost every thing that concerns communication uses the technology; and Graham Bell discovered not only the telephone, but the base for all modern communication methods. The following table indicates the rapid technology advances from the 1800s to the end of the 1970s:

1800s		1960s	
1835	Charles Babbage invents "Analytic Engine", foreshadowing computers.	1960	Livermore Advanced Research Computer (LARC) built with transistors.
1835	George Boole publishes treatise on binary algebra.	1962	J.C.R. Licklider of MIT presents concept of "galactic network" in memos.
1867	Charles Sanders Peirce applies Boolean logic to electric circuits.	1964	IBM introduces mainframe computer, IBM 360.
1872	Lord Kelvin develops analog computer to predict tides.		Control Data introduces CDC 660 supercomputer developed by Seymour Cray.
1910s		1965	FORTRAN, user-friendly computer language, is created.
1911	Computing Tabulating Recording Corporation (later IBM) is incorporated.		Computer-controlled word-processing system replaces tape system.
	Monroe invents a comptometer calculator to multiply and divide.		Lawrence Roberts links computers in California and Massachusetts to create first wide-area computer network.
1930s		1969	U.S. Department of Defence creates ARPANET computer network.
1937	George Stibitz creates electrical circuit to apply Boolean algebra.	1970s	
1939	IBM engineers and Howard Aiken of Harvard start on the Mark I computer.	1971	Engineers at Intel invent the microprocessor.
1940s		1972	Nolan Bushnell introduces "Pong" video game.
1941	Konrad Zuse produces digital computer, the Z3, in Germany.		Ray Tomlinson sends first E-mail using @ in address.
1943	Alan Turing's "Colossus" computer breaks the German Enigma code.	1973	Development of Infostrada, a national computer network in Poland
1946	Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator (ENIAC) computer is built.	1974	Ethernet, a local area network, is developed at Xerox PARC.
	Von Neumann, Goldstine, and Burks publish paper on computer concepts.		First personal computers introduced.
1948	Von Neumann develops computer memory system.	1976	First time that a bar code scanned supermarket groceries
1949	ILLIAC I built at University of Illinois employing the Von Neumann design.		Cray Research sells first supercomputer.
	Norbert Weiner publishes book, "Cybernetics".	1977	Video games now controlled by microprocessors.
1950s			A glove device to facilitate computer interaction patented
1951	UNIVAC I machine installed at U.S. Census Bureau.		George Lucas' computer effects in Star Wars revolutionize filmmaking.
1956	Computer beats human player in chess game.		Apple II personal computer is introduced by Jobs and Wozniak.
1957	IBM unveils FORTRAN programming language.	1979	ARCNET, local area network, is installed at Chase Manhattan bank.
1959	Jack St. Clair Kilby of Texas Instruments invents integrated circuits.		Pac-man video game first sold in Japan.
			Laser scanning begins to read bar-code data.

(Information sourced: McGaughey 2005)

During the 1980s technology grows dramatically. In 1981 IBM introduced its PC, igniting a fast growth of the personal computer market. The first PC ran on a 4.77 MHz Intel 8088 microprocessor and used Microsoft's MS-DOS operating system (Computer History Museum; 2006). 1982 hosted the following:

- High-school student creates first computer virus.
- French postal and telegraph service hooks up nation on Minitel network.
- :-) is used for the first time.

1984 Apple Computer launched the Macintosh, the first successful mouse-driven computer with a graphic user interface. Based on the Motorola 68000 microprocessor, the Macintosh included many of the Lisa's features.

Apple's commercial played on the theme of George Orwell's "1984" and featured the destruction of Big Brother with the power of personal computing found in a Macintosh. Applications that came as part of the package included MacPaint, which made use of the mouse, and MacWrite, which demonstrated WYSIWYG (**W**hat **Y**ou **S**ee **I**s **W**hat **Y**ou **G**et) word processing. (Computer History Museum; 2006)

Also, In 1985 Microsoft introduces its first version of Windows as well as Microsoft and IBM introduces new operating system, OS/2. 1989 Microsoft introduces new product, Microsoft Office.

The 1990's saw the following in communication technology:

1990: Alan Entage creates the Archie, first tool for searching web files.

1991: Mark McCahill at University of Minnesota creates Gopher to search files and World Wide Web begins; Michelangelo computer virus detected in United States; Computer servers introduced; and WebCrawler becomes first crawler-based search engine.

1995: America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy begin offering dial-up internet service; Microsoft introduces Windows95; Jeff Bezos launches Amazon.com as online book seller; and Craigslist, created by Craig Newmark becomes online service in San Francisco.

1998: Larry Page and Sergey Brin found Google while at Stanford.

1999: Peak of the dot.com financial bubble which burst two years later

The 2000s saw a major boom in technology, and is still rapidly improving and expanding.

The following list includes only a handful of technological advances:

- Google, Yahoo and Msn (now "Bing") search engines increase trafficability of the internet.
- Due to an increase in ability to store data, USB flash drives rapidly replace zip disks and 3.5-inch diskettes

1. Blogs, portals, and wikis become common electronic dissemination methods for professionals, amateurs, and businesses to conduct knowledge management.
2. Wikipedia begins and grows rapidly, becoming the largest encyclopedia and most well known wiki in the world.
3. DVDs, and subsequently HD DVDs and Blu-ray Discs, replace VCR technology as the common standard in homes and at video stores.
4. Due to the major success of broadband Internet connections, Voice over IP begins to gain popularity as a replacement for traditional telephone lines. Major telecommunications carriers begin converting their networks from TDM to VoIP.
5. Wireless networks become more commonplace in homes, education institutes and urban public spaces.
6. GPS (Global Positioning System) becomes very popular, especially in tracking items or people, and for use in cars.
7. Peer-to-peer technology use: internet telephony (Skype), file-sharing.
8. The entire video game industry's profits surpass the movie industries in 2004.
9. Most cell phone carriers offer video viewing services, internet services, and some offer full music downloads, such as Sprint in 2005. The large majority of the public owns a cell phone, leading to a sharp decline in the use and locations of payphones.
10. Craigslist.org, a popular online classified site.
11. Cell phones gain the ability to access the Internet.
12. Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) telephones and the Internet slowly begin to merge: Examples are Vonage and Skype.
13. Webcomics by amateur cartoonists begin to surpass the popularity of traditional print comic books and newspaper strips. Flash movies and Fan Fiction also become popular.
14. Social networking programs such as MySpace, Xanga, Facebook, Friendster, and MyYearbook become extremely popular among teens and twenty-something's inspiring others to share and trade personal information via online.
15. Informational and educational web sites abruptly decline as the internet becomes more of a place for advertising and other types of media, such as the use of such chat boards including MySpace and Facebook.
16. The interactivity of the internet becomes more prominent with websites such as Wikipedia, YouTube and somewhat MySpace where users can become contributors without a specialised knowledge in HTML technology.

(Russo; 2010)

Today we can pick up a telephone and call any one around the world. We have the internet, satellite communication and so many other ways that we can communicate. Consider the

internet; it is one of the largest forms of passing and gathering information. Today many households, companies, schools, organisations, businesses and many other corporations use the World Wide Web. It can be used for many purposes like:

- Advertising,
- Sending and receiving e-mails,
- Publishing personal information, and
- Gathering information.

Internet usage “surpasses TV viewing in 2004 and satellite TV loses ratings as network television ratings gradually increase” (Russo 2010). A couple of centuries ago mankind did not even dream of communicating with the use of the sky, much less dream of something like satellite communication. A couple of decades ago we did not dream of what we could do with satellite communication.

Today satellite communication has become one of most powerful methods of communication. Everything from phones to the internet to the TV and radio can be used through satellite communication. Through satellite communication it is possible for an individual to communicate with anyone who has a similar communication device. This can be done from anywhere in the world.

The best and worst part about communication is that it evolves, develops and expands. The way we see the world today will be completely different to how we might see the world in another 10 years time. Communication methods and ways might change and expand in ways. The next section will explore how communication advanced into the media we know today.

3.3 Traditional Communication Channels

The traditional form of communication channels are split into two paths, namely the private and public channels. This conveys media to and from various publics. According to Newsom *et al* (2004) public channels are dominated by mass and specialised media, accessible to anybody who chooses to “subscribe, tune in or sign on” and private channels are normally used by “media directed to a particular chosen individual or group” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 229). Traditional communication channels are still popular with many public relations practitioners, and are still used. These channels include:

1. Controlled and uncontrolled media
2. Internal and external media

The traditional channels of communication should not be ignored by the public relations practitioner today, as it still holds value for any organisation.

3.3.1 Controlled and uncontrolled media

Public relations also make a distinction between media, namely, controlled and uncontrolled media. For example, controlled media creates more of a “guarantee that the message crafted for that medium will be delivered to the audience created, without modification, barring some kind of technical failure or human error” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 230). Controlled media includes media where the public relations practitioner has a say over the content of the message. This is usually because controlled media contains “communication that has been paid for, so the client will have a choice about the format of the message, the copy itself and even the placement of the communication” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 145).

The term uncontrolled media means that the practitioner does not have any direct control over media content. The media manager has control over “whether or not to use the media communication or even write his or her own stories about the organisation” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 145). Uncontrolled media is not paid to run the story or to publicise an event. The media decides on all the aspects related to the communications effort.

Examples of Controlled and Uncontrolled Media are the following:

	Controlled Media	Uncontrolled Media
Print media	House journals, information brochures, handbooks and manuals, newsletters, bulletins, bulletin boards, posters, periodicals, annual reports, commemorative stamps, exhibits and displays, mobile displays, suggestion boxes, instructions, orders, pay inserts, flyers, written reports, financial statements, training kits, consumer information kits, teacher and student kits, student games, specific window displays.	News releases; feature stories; photographs with captions; media kits; business feature articles; pictorial publicity; letters to the editor; background editorial material.

Audio-visual media	Transparencies for overhead projectors, telephone calls and recorded messages, multi-media exhibits and displays, CD and DVD, visual multi-media window displays and training aids, oral presentation with visuals, slide shows, corporate film and DVD	Broadcast news releases; photo opportunities; radio and television public service announcements; broadcast interviews; news videotapes for television; news or media conferences; special programmes for radio or television; pictorial publicity; recorded telephone news capsules and updates form an organisation; informing and influencing editors and media gatekeepers such as news directors, public service directors, financial editors, columnists and reporters .
Inter-personal media	Formal speeches, lectures, seminars, conferences, panel discussions, question and answer sessions, oral testimonies, employee counselling, committee meetings, legal, medical or miscellaneous counselling, staff meetings, demonstration and training programmes, interviews, personal instruction, the grapevine	Interviews; personal appearances; news conferences; informing and influencing editors and media gatekeepers through personal visits; appearances and testimony, committee meetings or government commission question-and-answer sessions with press.

Table 3.1 Controlled and uncontrolled media and corresponding Communications Efforts (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 146)

3.3.2 Internal and external media

This form of media is mostly print or electronic and is classified as internal or external. This will be discussed in detailed with examples where possible.

3.3.2.1 Internal media

When dealing with internal communication, the public relations practitioner needs to perform an internal communication audit to establish employee attitudes before deciding what media vehicle to use. This information possibly will find out staff attitudes about their jobs, management, the organisation, and existing communication efforts. Media tools that can be used include online communication; print publications; interpersonal communication media and; audiovisual media.

On-line communication allows the employees to receive news and information at their desks almost immediately. They can be used to create interactive communication with employees. With the help of technology and its dispersal throughout organisations implies that “many organisations now rely more and more on intranets to disseminate information to

interact with employees” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 148). Popular tools include: e-mail, voice mail and tailored intranets.

There are still many internal print media tools available to the public relations practitioner. These tools include bulletins; newsletters; news tabloids; magazines; annual reports; specialty publications; outside publications can be used internally; underground publications; bargaining unit publications; bulletin boards and; electronic publications. Audiovisual media is a platform used to communicate with specific employee groups.

Traditional audiovisual media includes flip charts and overhead transparencies. Today presentations can be made to employees with programmes like *Microsoft PowerPoint* with the help of projectors. Many organisations use multi-media presentations that include many audiovisual formats. Also popular, as Newsom *et al* (2004) points out is the internal video (Video ‘newsletters’ for employees), is used to communicate the corporation’s culture, to inform employees about corporate resources available to instruct and train employees in new techniques or new jobs and to give the employees the organisations side of controversial public issues it may be implicated in (Newsom *et al* 2004; 241).

Interpersonal communication media is the most used medium of communications. According to Rensburg *et al* (2002), organisations should generate opportunities to communicate person to person to group, and use newsletters and video as support media. Speeches can be a great tool for communication, as the person delivering the speech is seen as the medium. Newsom *et al* (2004) indicates that speeches usefulness as a tool is extended and “speeches are often published as brochures and sent to special audiences” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 242), as well as printed with additional information.

Meetings, according to Newsom *et al* (2004) allows management to “interact with employees and to gain feedback” and external meetings is now used as a “proactive device to share concerns about an issue or environmental situations” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 242), which is usually covered by the media. Examples of other interpersonal communication include small group meetings, presentations, interviews, briefings, and conversation.

3.3.2.2 External media (Mass communication media)

External communication is most commonly referred to as mass communication media. The two major players for these communication channels include the press and broadcast media.

According to Rensburg *et al* (2002) the press is the most versatile and resilient of all mass communication media and includes regional, national and international newspapers and magazines and “sophisticated electronic media has not destroyed the press in industrial countries and, as literacy grows in developing countries, so the press develops to satisfy the

demand for knowledge, news and entertainment” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 151). Print media is distinguished between newspapers and magazines.

When we are thinking of advertising and publicity, newspapers almost immediately comes to mind. Popular newspapers in South Africa are, the dailies (Cape Times, Beeld, The Star, and Sowetan); the weeklies (Argus, Rapport, and Sunday Times); regional newspapers in most cities and towns, Pretoria News (daily) and Benoni City Times (weekly) and; free-sheets (knock-and-drop) newspapers that are delivered door-to-door, free of charge. Their circulations are large and there is saturation coverage of residential areas.

Magazines offer efficient channels of communication to specialised publics. Magazines can be divided into many categories. The main magazine categories are consumer magazines, - which include weekly (You, Keur, Farmer’s Weekly); fortnightly (Fair Lady, Sarie); and monthly (Cosmopolitan, Living and Loving), and then trade, technical and professional magazines such as Financial Mail, Finance Week. These magazines meet the needs not catered for by commercially published newspapers and magazines.

Broadcast media are quite different from the press, unlike printed messages; it is difficult to retain broadcast messages. They frequently must be engaged at the exact time of broadcast. This form of media can be tremendously valuable in “public relations programmes if they are understood and used properly, especially as broadcast media publics may well exceed the readership of newspapers and magazines” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 153).

Regarding television, in South Africa there are the national networks of the SABC (SABC 1, 2 and 3), as well as the independent stations, e-TV and M-Net. A number of advantages of television as a medium are that programmes are watched mostly at home or in a social setting (Sports Bars). Perhaps the furthestmost advantage as discussed by Rensburg (2002) is the blend of sound, movement and colour, which provide realism, because it is a visual medium. This applies to people, places and objects. Viewers tend to “watch rather than listen to television” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 153).

Television has the ability to introduce new interests to viewers, which leads to a demand for information in a more comprehensive and “permanent form, such as new magazines, newspaper features and books” (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 153). Recent advancements have made it possible to record and play back programmes, also known as DSTV’s PVR. The public relations practitioner can make use of the following on television:

1. News bulletins
2. Discussion programmes (Chat shows, discussion panels, debated and interviews)
3. Give-away programmes (Game shows, contests)

4. Magazine programmes (Special Assignment , Carte Blanche)

Radio broadcasting plays a practical and omnipresent role in South Africa's public information system. The characteristic that makes radio so different from all other mass communication media is that it can often be an immediate medium, so, instant announcements can be made. There are numerous radio stations in South Africa:

1. International and national stations such as Radio RSA and 5FM,
2. Regional stations such as Jacaranda FM, and
3. Independent stations such as Radio 702 and Algoa FM.

Radio has various advantages as a medium, for example, it has the familiarity of the human voice and it can be a portable medium. So a person can listen to the radio while doing everyday activities. Radio is an effective way of reaching people of "different ethnic groups and languages in developing countries, including large numbers of people who cannot read, through either personal or public radio's [...] Radio has good saturation of local audiences at a relatively low cost" (Rensburg *et al* 2002; 154). Public relations practitioners can use the radio for:

1. News programmes,
2. Live studio interviews,
3. Taped interviews, and
4. Phone-ins and talk radio.

3.4 Communication revolution: Web 2.0

In research on public relations and the Internet, the possibility of interactivity between the organisation and the public is a subject of high significance. Interactivity is one of the main characteristics of the Internet, and has been the subject of a considerable number of studies in the discipline of communications (Downes & McMillan, 2000; Ha & James, 1998; Rafaeli, 1988; Schultz, 2000).

With regard to the degree of interactivity that organisational websites and other social media tools have, several authors in public relations have identified two basic approaches: the dissemination of information and the generation of relationships between the various organisations and the public's (Esrock & Leichty, 1998, 2000; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; White & Raman, 1999).

In the first approach, the level of interactivity is low, and the use of the Internet is used with the essential objective of diffusing information and trying to influence the image of the company that the various publics have. The focus of this section falls under the second approach, which is where the degree of interactivity is high, and the Internet is used to make communication easier and to establish and build relationships by allowing dialogue and interaction between the organisation and its diverse types of publics.

3.4.1. New Media Studies: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

Public relations had to adapt to various considerable communication evolutions, the most momentous of which is the creation of the World Wide Web or Web 1.0, and its succeeding improvement into Web 2.0. The section aims to provide an outline of Web 1.0 and its evolution into Web 2.0, as well as its resulting influence on public relations.

3.4.1.1. The beginning: Web 1.0

With the conception of Web 1.0 or the “World Wide Web” by Sir Tim Berners-Lee in 1989 a remarkable transformation occurred in the way people communicated and it also had a momentous influence on business. Flew (2008) describe four unique features of the World Wide Web which initiated its rise to popularity during the 1990’s:

1. The introduction of multimedia capabilities - Video, music, graphics, data and text could be integrated into webpage’s.
2. It was based on hypertext principles. This allowed for widespread networks of information to be available across the Internet.
3. Hypertext principles gave rise to the creation of web browsers which gave users easy access to wide databases of information. (the creation of web browsers such as Marc Andreessen and Eric Bina’s Mosaic and Netscape’s Netscape Navigator as the forerunners of modern web browsers such as Google and Yahoo!).
4. The creation of Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) allowed reasonably simplified methods to write source code for the World Wide Web.

(Flew 2008:7-8)

Although Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and the basic foundations of the Internet already existed by 1989 (Castells 2002:28-51), it was the creation of the World Wide Web (also referred to as the Web) as a type of Internet “interface” that spurred the mainstream adoption of the Internet as a communication, information and entertainment medium accessible to a much larger section of the population than ever before. Despite the

early recreational Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), its use in organisational context set the research agenda through the 1980s.

As the popularity of the World Wide Web grew, new forms of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) communication channels became part of people's daily communication routines. Baym (2002: 62) describes these new forms as, 1) Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication, such as mailing lists; newsgroups and message boards on the Web. 2) Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication includes chat; MUDs and MOOs (multi-user places constructed through text for purposes of role-playing, social interaction and education); Instant Messaging (IM); and graphic user worlds (e.g. Second Life).

The Web's influenced communication beyond one-to-one communications in the introduction of Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication such as message boards. Participants on these could engage in public debate. Not only could these discussions simulate almost real-time conversation, but spatial limits applicable to traditional mass mediums such as newspapers, radio and television did not apply.

Around 2000 the Internet encountered a set back with the chaos of the "dot.com crash" where countless online businesses and investors in Internet technologies (IT) and Web-based interfaces marked the end of Web 1.0. (Flew 2008:19; Breakenridge 2008:15)

The subsequent restructuring of the Web created a new term in 2003, which we know as Web 2.0. (Flew 2008; 16).

3.4.1.2. The revolution: Web 2.0

Flew (2008) explained that the concept of Web 2.0 is important to understanding new media. After the dot-com bubble burst in 2001 it marked a turning point for the web.

According to O'Reilly (2005) many people concluded that the web was overhyped, when in fact bubbles and consequent shakeouts (the point at which an ascendant technology is ready to take its place at centre stage) appear to be a common feature of all technological revolutions.

The term Web 2.0 was popularised by Tim O'Reilly from O'Reilly Media thanks to a Web 2.0 Conference between O'Reilly Media and MediaLive International in 2004 O' Reilly (2005) explains that Dale Dougherty (web pioneer and O'Reilly V), noted that far from having "crashed", the web was more important than ever, with exciting new applications and sites popping up with surprising regularity. Furthermore, the "companies that had survived the collapse seemed to have some things in common" (O' Reilly 2005). In his article '*What Is*

Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software'

O'Reilly attempted to clarify just what they meant by Web 2.0, and formulated their sense of Web 2.0 by the following example:

Web 1.0		Web 2.0	
DoubleClick	-->	Google AdSense	
Ofoto	-->	Flickr	
Akamai	-->	BitTorrent	
mp3.com	-->	Napster	
Britannica Online	-->	Wikipedia	
personal websites	-->	blogging	
evite	-->	upcoming.org and EVDB	
domain name speculation	-->	search engine optimization	
page views	-->	cost per click	
screen scraping	-->	web services	
publishing	-->	participation	
content management systems	-->	wikis	
directories (taxonomy)	-->	tagging ("folksonomy")	
stickiness	-->	syndication	

Figure 3.2. Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (Source O'Reilly 2005)

The development and evolution of Web 2.0 has not only changed the way individuals and organisations use the Internet, but has also significantly impacted the way in which public relations practitioners reach those individuals and represent those organisations. According to Flew (2008) Web 2.0 caught on for two reasons; firstly, it has embedded within it a range of the features that have long been central to the Web as a communications infrastructure (scope for participation, interactivity, collaborative learning, and social networking), as well as positive networking effects from harnessing collective intelligence, meaning that the improvement of quality of participating increase, the more users sites will attract, and secondly, a range of the fastest growing websites of the "2000s have been based on Web 2.0 principles.

3.4.1.3. The principles of Web 2.0

O'Reilly (2005) defines Web 2.0 as the approach to the Internet as a decentralised platform in which the user controls his/her own data and contributes to the collective intelligence through user participation. Figure 1 below summarises the core principles first associated with Web 2.0 by O'Reilly Media, and which are today still valid as characteristic of Web 2.0.

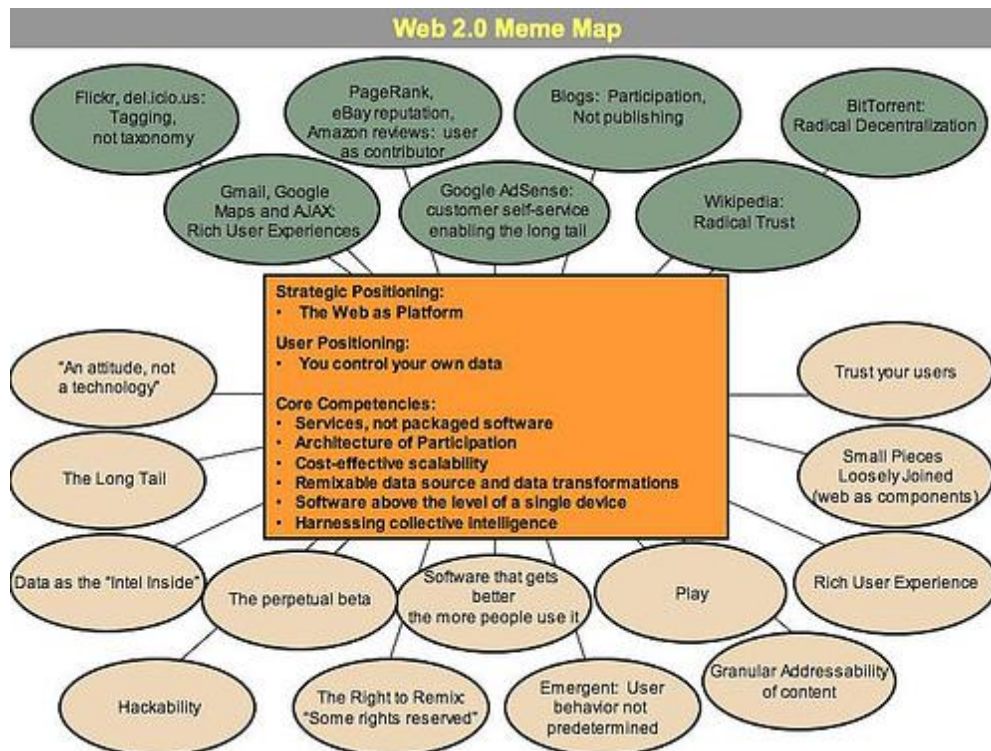


Figure 3.3 Web 2.0 Meme Map (Source: O'Reilly 2005)

These primary characteristics of Web 2.0 listed during the Web 2.0 Conference in 2004 included the "concepts of collective intelligence, open source software, Creative Commons, multi-device use of software, perpetual Beta testing and rich user experiences" (O'Reilly 2005). What is significant about these characteristics is that the end-user of the Internet played a central role in each of them.

For example, website that comply with these principles include sites such as the photography site *Flickr*, the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, the online user-generated video site *YouTube*, aggregated Web job (blog) sites such as *Blogger*, *Livejournal* and *Tecnorati*, and the various personalised Web spaces such as *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *Friendster* and *Bebo*. In their overview of design and application principles that underpin and drive Web 2.0, Musser and O'Reilly (2007) identified the following principles:

Principle	Example
Harnessing collective intelligence – deriving the benefits of large-scale ongoing participation and user co-creations and peer review of content to continuously improve the quality of the service.	Google, Wikipedia, Flickr, Amazon, Del.icio.us
Data as the next 'Intel inside' – new wealth form online enterprises to be derived from database management	Amazon, eBay, Craigslist
Innovation in assembly – open APIs that allow for online remixing of content ('mash-ups') and the use of RSS (Really Simple Syndication)	Google Maps, Yahoo!, Flickr
Rich User Experiences, that promotes user interaction and immersive engagement with the available online content	Google Maps, Gmail, Netflix
Software above the level of a single device – services that can span across media devices, particularly mobile media such as mobile phones and PDA's	iTunes, TiVo
Perpetual Beta testing – software is incrementally released and understood as a service rather than a final product	Google, Flickr, Open source software more generally
Leveraging the 'long tail' – recognising that there is a move from mass markets to niche markets, but that niche markets can be sustained over a long period of time	Amazon, eBay, Google
Lightweight models and cost-effective flexibility – Web 2.0 marketing works off word of mouth rather than high up-front costs in business set-up and marketing	Digg.com, Flickr

Figure 3.4 Principles of Web 2.0 (Source Musser & O'Reilly 2007)

The concept of Web 2.0 clearly implies a relationship to the earlier Web 1.0. The network was until recently primarily a source of information through an interlinked but “essentially static websites, and complemented by channels for interaction such as e-mail, discussion lists and instant messaging” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 103).

O'Reilly identified some of the differences as “being about to move from personal websites to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from Web content to outcome of a large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process, and from content management systems to links based on tagging, or what is known as ‘folksomony’” (O'Reilly 2005).

According to Phillips *et al* (2007), folksonomies are user-generated classifications that help to link or aggregate different content into common themes, which are a powerful tool to help people ‘pull’ content that if relevant.

A useful aspect of Web 2.0 is that it allows new channels to be integrated – one channel of information and its associated content, plus contributions by third parties and the associated sharing capability, to be integrated and absorbed into another channel (Phillips *et al* 2007; 103) – like in the case of social networking site *Bebo*; a page can include Google Maps, YouTube videos, Slideshows to podcasts and so on.

Tim O’Reilly (2006), who has been a “key thinker and promoter of Web 2.0, defined it as ‘the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move of the Internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules of success on that new platform’ (Flew 2008). The rules stipulate the following: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them ... [or] harnessing collective intelligence (Flew 2008).

Web 2.0 heralds the development of the web from a storeroom of information and communication technologies into a space for symmetrical communication: “a platform that aids the transfer of knowledge and conversations and a place where people can easily mix and match both” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 103). This has massive implications, and is palpable in what Phillips *et al* (2007; 103) identifies as a sudden significance of channels like Facebook, Wikipedia and blogs.

The concept of Web 2.0 has caught on. It has embedded within it a range of the features, namely; participation, interactivity collaborative learning, and social networking, as well as positive networking effects from harnessed collective intelligence. Flew (2008) draws attention to the fact that some of the fastest growing websites in the 2000s are based on Web 2.0 principles, and that these and other Web 2.0 sites and software are “many-to-many in their connectivity, decentralised in terms of control, user-focused and easy for new users to use, open in terms of their technology standards and their Applications Programming Interface (API), relatively simple and ‘lightweight’ in their design, their administrative requirements and their start-up and ongoing development costs, [and] expected to evolve and change over times, as users make new modifications to the sites” (Flew 2008;17).

3.4.1.4. From PR 1.0 to PR2.0

There have been many changes over the last couple of years. Between a span of five years, people have seen a dramatic change in the use of the internet. Bastien Beaucamp (2009) created the chart to provide a snapshot of where public relations stand as an industry.

THEN (in 2004)	TODAY (in 2009)
PR and Media fear of blogs	PR and Media embrace them
Blogging is an alternative media	Blogs are a mass media (as a group)
Had to justify blog to boss	Boss is on Facebook
Use of blogs to be covered in Media	Use of blogs for themselves
People and small business had restricted access to Traditional media.	With YouTube, Twitter, Blogs, traditional medias are more accessible
Too many blogs	Google is the blog
Trust in traditional media	Trust in peers
PR is about creating message	PR is about an "open source" message and leveraging relationships
Blogs stretch the traditional news cycle in a second cycle.	Social Media creates a third news cycle that starts before the blogs and the traditional media.
Users go to Website to access content on blogs.	Users stay in their Facebook or Twitter profile page, granular content comes to them.
Content oriented people	People oriented content
Bloggers fear the Spin and lack of transparency from PR agencies	Bloggers fear the Spin and lack of transparency from PR agencies
Hope to change Transparency and Spin	Little breakthroughs :)
Blogs are organizational record-keeping	Social-media sites too.
Need for PR measurement	Need for PR measurement
Dial-up was still in use	Surf on cellphones
Low level of women blogging	Equal level of women in Social Media

Figure 3.5: The Steve Rubel Stream 2009 (Source: Rubel 2009)

Brian Solis (2008a) explains that Public Relations are experiencing a renaissance and it did not begin this revolution because of Web 2.0 or the Social Media trend. He states that it started in the 90's when the Web gained mass adoption. PR is now more capable and influential than simply writing and sending press releases to contacts generated by media databases. Solis (2008a) also states that the media landscape has been completely blown open to not only include traditional media, but also bloggers and most importantly the very people we want to reach, our customers.

About 100 years ago, Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays created and defined the art and science of modern-day public relations and their philosophies and contributions can still be used to further evolve public relations today. Bernays inspired the PR 1.0 publicity and spin machine, which Solis (2008a) characterise as "hype, spin, buzzwords, and spam". Comparing the Web 1.0 platform to PR 1.0, communication moves toward a two-way asymmetric approach – which is today practiced by many companies.

Rensburg *et al* (2003) explains that the increase of the popularity of the Internet and Web 1.0 as a communication channels means that:

1. The Internet is a *multimedia environment*, making it possible to present text, video, graphics and animation online. This translates into a powerful business presentation tool, as well as an easy-to-use tool from the user's point of view. The Internet's

multimedia features can contribute to a greater impact on the mindset of the press, organisational stakeholders and other interested parties.

2. It is a *digital environment*, meaning that any information made available on the Internet can be easily reused and adapted for press releases by others.
3. It is a *hyper-mediated environment*, making it possible to bring or link together relevant information from other sources spread across the globe.
4. Large amounts of *information can easily be stored* and updated on the Internet. This information is available to anyone with access to the Internet. This is another powerful feature of the Internet since product details and other marketing information that would normally represent too much information to include in a television, radio or print communiqué can now be shared with the firm's publics over the Internet. Thus, greater amounts of information that are useful in the decision-making process can be made available to stakeholders and other interested parties over the Internet.
5. Any information disseminated on the Internet by an organisation is immediately *available to a geographically dispersed audience*.
6. Information presented on the Internet can be made *interactive*, thereby allowing users to provide feedback. In so doing, the public's perceptions of actions being undertaken by a company can be gauged quickly and easily, and possible follow-up actions or alternative actions can be put into play.
7. The Internet is an *'always on' environment*, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This makes it possible to deliver a public relations message whenever it is necessary, without having to wait for a newspaper to be published.
8. The Internet is a *flexible environment* – it is possible to add or change information at the last moment, which is often difficult with other media. This makes the Internet a valuable tool for keeping the target audience informed of fast-changing circumstances.
9. If well designed, the Internet can serve as an *intuitive easy-to-use channel* that facilitates interaction between stakeholders and the organisation.
10. The Internet allows an organisation to *reach the masses*. (Rensburg *et al* 2003; 211 - 212)

The Internet is as a whole a 'new' form of communication channel, and within it are various mediums or tools to achieve interaction and dissemination of information.

By the mid 2000s, there was yet another communication shift, now known as Web 2.0 and the rise of social media which as Solis (2008a) describes it "forces PR to stop broadcasting and start connecting". In response to Web 2.0's democratising power through which the Internet user became an active part of the constant evolution of this communication channel,

public relations thought leaders called for the establishment of a new audience-focused approach to public relations.

Solis (2008a) defines PR 2.0 as “the realization that the Web changed everything, inserting people equally into the process of traditional influence”. He states that practitioners are now presented with the opportunity to not only reach our audiences through media gatekeepers, but also use the online channels where they publish and share information to communicate more directly and genuinely.

Solis (2008b) states that essentially PR 2.0 is the understanding and practice that communications is a two-way process and incorporates the tools, principles, strategies, and philosophies for reaching, engaging, guiding, influencing, and helping people directly in addition to the traditional cycle of PR influence.

Engagement and relationship building is central to PR 2.0 and Web 2.0 tools are facilitating the two-way conversations between organisations and stakeholders. PR 2.0 provides a variety of communication tools utilising Web 2.0 principles such as blogs, RSS feeds, memes and multimedia tags for social bookmarking, wikis, forums/chat walls/discussion boards, ratings, consumer reviews, social media networks and channels, SMNRs and more. These tools can be used alongside traditional public relations tools and media channels to enhance the reach and impact of public relations activities.

Of the tools used for PR 2.0, this research paper will focus on social media and the use of social media tools used to facilitate two-way communication between an organisation and its publics. The next section will analyse its use of social media, it is therefore necessary to provide an overview of the definition and dynamics of social media.

3.4.2 What is social media?

With Web 2.0 and the Internet as a ‘new’ form of communication channel for practitioners, the rise of social media creates a new central tool. These channels are seen as either public or private paths for messages to and from various publics. Social media is a “conveyances for messages in those channels” (Newsom *et al* 2004; 229). According to Newsom *et al* (2004), Public channels are dominated by mass or specialised media available to everyone who chooses to subscribe, tune in or sign in, whereas private channels are more commonly used by media directed to a particular chosen individual or group. With Web 2.0, the public relations practitioner need to understand that these might adjust in classification depending on the form of social media it embodies.

With public relations being an evolving profession, where communication plays a vital role, there is exceeding pressure to build and maintain relationships, “craft targeted messages, and deliver news that is timely on behalf of the brand” (Breakenridge 2008; 13). It is thus safe to say that public relations is there to build relationships, so that individuals talk about the brand, rather than the brand talking about itself through advertising etcetera.

In the past public relations relied heavily on third party influences, such as the media to endorse brands. But now, the Internet changed everything. Interaction has now become the key focus of public relations practitioners. Today, the practitioner not only provide “important information that is useful, but you also give you customer a means to communicate in two-way conversation with you at all times” (Breakenridge 2008; 14).

Over time, the Web evolved into thousands of communities. These people that form part of these communities all seek to gather and share information, and also to make informed decisions. It falls in the hands of the public relations professional to tap into these communities and provide the desired information the ‘community’ need, and more importantly, create a communication flow between the two. This is where social media applications become vital.

These applications enable the public relations professional to directly communicate with the consumer. Breakenridge (2008) points out that although brands always have the media for editorial coverage, brands can now also use the Internet to engage in direct communication with its target audience.

There are various definitions and terms that describe and attempt to classify social media. These definitions are primarily divided into technologically orientated and user-orientated descriptions. Basically, technology orientated definitions focus on the technology and technological design that enables the creation of social networks, while user-orientated definitions place emphasis on the user as enabler of social media.

Boyd & Ellison (2007) provide a technically focused definition of social network media as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site”.

Breakenridge (2008) however, places the user as participant and content creator centrally in her definition, stating that “social media encompasses all the online technologies

that people collaborate on, including their opinions and experiences as well as sharing different perspectives.”

While both these definitions of social media have value, the combination of these definitions provides the most accurate definition of social media for the context of this research paper. Drawing from definitions provided by Boyd & Ellison (2007), Breakenridge (2008) and Flew (2008), social media will be defined as a web-based communications infrastructure that allows users to make connections with other users in order to facilitate participation, interactivity, collaborative learning and establish social relationships.

3.4.3 Types of social media

Within social media it is necessary to distinguish between the different types of social media available. As the social media world is immensely populated, constantly developing, and new channels are added it is not possible to provide a complete list of all social media channels at any time.

Solis and Thomas (Solis 2008c) in August 2008 introduced *The Conversation Prism* as an attempt to provide an evolving visual representation of social media and the conversations that drive it - A revised version, known as *The Conversation Prism v2.0* was released in March 2009.

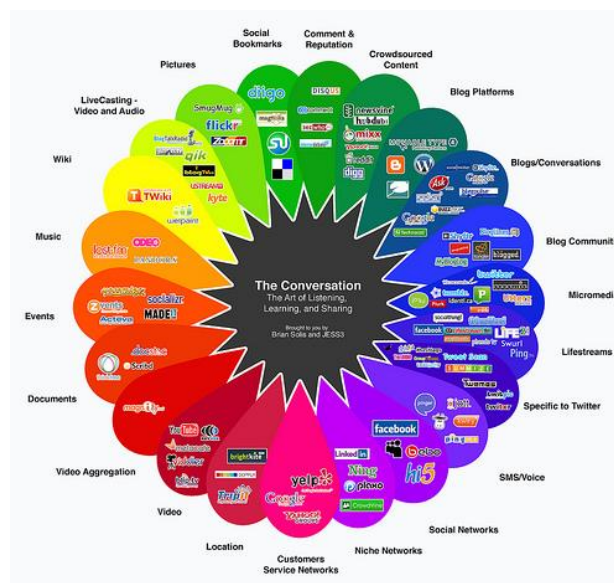


Figure 3.6: The Conversation Prism (Source: Solis 2008c)

The Prism categorises and lists various social media channels and attempts to provide a model for the utilisation of social media channels to create brand value through social media conversations. Solis and Thomas' *Conversation Prism v2.0* (Solis 2009c) and an additional overview of literature (Boyd & Ellison 2007, Mayfield 2008, Breakenridge 2008, Flew 2008)

provides a level of consistency as to which mediums can be classified as social media. Some mediums overlap between social media categories. These broadly include, but are in no way limited to:

3.4.3.1 Social networks

Social network sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication. Social networks on the Web are like contained versions of the sprawling blog network. People joining a social network usually create a profile and then build a network by connecting to friends and contacts in the network, or by inviting real-world contacts and friends to join the social network. These communities retain the interest of their members by being useful to them and providing services that are entertaining or help them build their networks. These include niche interest sites, *Facebook*, *Friendster*, *MySpace*, *Bebo*, *LinkedIn*, *Hives*, and *lamtri.com*

3.4.3.2 Blogs

Web logs, or 'blogs', are user-generated websites where entries are made "either by individuals or by groups, in an informal journal style, and are displayed in reversed chronological order" (Flew 2008; 96). Most blogs are "interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites" (Mutum *et al* 2010). They can also provide links to other blogs, websites, or media resources (video blogs – 'vlog' and photo blogs – 'photoblog').

According to Flew (2008) the term 'blog' refers to both the online artefact created and to the act of maintaining such online resources, or blogging". The combined community of all blogs is known as the blogosphere. Almost all blogs are found on the internet therefore, they perhaps are seen as "interconnected and socially networked, through blogrolls, comments, linkbacks (refbacks, trackbacks or pingbacks) and backlinks" (Mesure 2009; 11).

Solis and Thomas (Solis 2009) further categorises blogs into Blog Communities, Blogs/Conversations, and Blog Platforms. These include *Blogs.com*, *Shyfr*, *blogcatalog*, *VOX*, *xanga*; *backtype*, *blogpulse*, *technorati*; and *tumblr*, *Wordpress* and *Typepad*, along with the many individual blogs available.

3.4.3.3 Wikis

These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. According to Wikipedia It is also a website that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified markup language or a WYSIWYG text editor. Wikis are typically powered by wiki software and are often used to create collaborative wiki websites, to power community websites, for personal note taking, in corporate intranets, and in knowledge management systems. Characteristics of Wiki's follow the following concepts:

1. A wiki invites all users to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki Web site, using only a plain-vanilla Web browser without any extra add-ons.
2. Wiki promotes meaningful topic associations between different pages by making page link creation almost intuitively easy and showing whether an intended target page exists or not.
3. A wiki is not a carefully crafted site for casual visitors. Instead, it seeks to involve the visitor in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the Web site landscape. (Cunningham 2003)

A wiki enables communities to write documents collaboratively, using a simple markup language and a web browser. A wiki is essentially a database for creating, browsing, and searching through information. A wiki allows for non-linear, evolving, complex and networked text, argument and interaction. (Black 2007)

The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia which has over 2 million English language articles. However there are other examples of large wiki projects:

1. Wikia – a community of wikis on different subjects
2. wikiHow – it is a practical 'how to' manual for everything e.g. writing a business plan
3. Wikinews – Wikipedia's news project

Others include *Wikipedia* and *Socialtext*.

3.4.3.4 Podcasting

Podcasts are audio and video files that are available on the internet and that users can subscribe to. It is distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. A consumer uses a type of software known as an aggregator, sometimes called a 'podcatcher' or podcast receiver, to subscribe to and manage their feeds. Download Podcast software includes:

1. Windows: Juice, Doppler, iTunes
2. Mac: Juice, Transistr, iTunes

The video services subscription feature makes a podcast a powerful as a form of social media. It effectively puts private individuals or brands on a level playing field with traditional media organisations when it comes to competing for people's attention with AV content online.

Podcasts, like personal video recorders (PVRs), are part of a shift in media consumption patterns, which increasingly sees people watching or listening to content when and where it suits them. This is sometimes known as time-shifting. When a new podcast is posted to the web, all the subscribers' podcast services (such as iTunes) are automatically notified and download the programme to their computer's hard drive. The podcast can then be either listened to on the computer or downloaded onto an MP3 player, such as an iPod.

These include such as *Blogtalkradio*, and *kyte*.

3.4.3.5 Social tagging and social bookmarking

O'Reilly (2005) identified some of these as being about to move from personal websites to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from Web content to outcome of a large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process, and from content management systems to links based on tagging, or what is known as 'folksomony'.

Phillips *et al* (2007; 104) identifies 'folksonomies' are user-generated classifications that help to link or aggregate different content into common themes which are a powerful tool to help people 'pull' content that if relevant. A useful aspect of Web 2.0 is that it allows new channels to be integrated – He also states that one channel of information and its associated content, plus contributions by third parties and the associated sharing capability, to be integrated and absorbed into another channel– like in the case of social networking site *Bebo*; a page can include Google Maps, YouTube videos, Slideshows to podcasts and so on. Others include: *technorati*, *Delicious* (formerly *del.icio.us*), *Stumbleupon*, *magnolia* and *furl*.

3.4.3.6 Micromedia (Microblogging)

Micro-blogging is tool that combines elements of blogging with instant messaging and social networking. A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that its content is typically much

smaller, in both actual size and aggregate file size. A microblog entry could consist of nothing but a short sentence fragment, an image or embedded video.

Twitter is the clear leader in this field with over 1 million users. Other notable microblogging players include Pownce and Jaiku, which offer various different features, but for the purposes of this e-book it makes sense to focus on the Twitter format.

With Twitter, users can expect:

1. Send messages of up to 140 characters instantly to multiple platforms.
2. 90% of Twitter interactions are not made via the Twitter website, but via mobile text message, Instant Messaging, or a desktop application such as Twitterific.
3. Its flexibility is further enhanced by the ability to subscribe to updates via RSS.

Uses of Twitter vary. It's popular among home workers and freelancers, where other people use it to stay in touch with a close network and share thoughts or start conversations. Its suitability as a vehicle for breaking news has encouraged the BBC and CNN to introduce Twitter feeds. Even candidates for the US Presidency have taken to Twitter (for example, Barack Obama).

One type of personal blog, referred to as a microblog, is extremely detailed and seeks to capture a moment in time. Some sites, such as Twitter, allow bloggers to share thoughts and feelings instantaneously with friends and family, and are much faster than emailing or writing. Types include: *Twitter*, *Mxit*, *Yonkly*, *Pownce* and *Jaiku* and *yammer*.

3.4.3.7 Purpose-specific social sharing sites (Content communities)

These are communities which organise and share particular kinds of content. Content communities look similar to social networks; however, they focus on sharing a particular type of content.

For example, YouTube is the world's largest video sharing service, with over 100 million videos viewed every day. Members of YouTube can upload videos or create their own channels of favourite videos. Also, Digg is a news and content community. Members of this site submit links to news stories that they consider will be of interest and these are voted on by other members. At the time a story has "garnered about a critical number of votes, it will be moved to the front page where it will receive wider attention from members as well as more casual visitors to the site. Others include *Flickr* (photo sharing), *YouTube* (video sharing), *Last.fm* (Online radio, music sharing), *iLike* (music sharing), *Scribd* (document sharing), *Tripadvisor* (travel information sharing).

Each of these social media channels has its own set of unique characteristics, basic principles of contacts, networks and sharing is central to them. These principles are also the key elements which make social media advantageous to public relations professionals. Used within the public relations and PR 2.0 context, these social media channels can be used as tools to facilitate and sustain conversations about an organizations brand.

3.4.4 Social media characteristics

Social media integrates two-way communication, and allows all users to communicate. However, social media cannot exist without the following characteristics:

3.4.4.1 Interaction

Whereas traditional media is about broadcast (content transmitted or distributed to an audience) social media is better seen as a two-way conversation (interaction). Interactivity is commonly seen as the fundamental characteristic of social media. Flew (2008) states that it is usually presented as a trait of social media that differentiate them from 'old media' which could only offer passive consumption.

According to Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly (2003) interaction "stands for more powerful sense of user engagement with the media text, a more independent relation to sources of knowledge, individualised media use, and greater user choice" (Lister, M. Dovey, J. Giddings, S. Grant, I. Kelly 2003; 20).

While many forms of media offer some form of interactivity, the exclusive character of the Internet in this regard relates to the distinctive elements of interconnectivity and interoperability. Flew (2008) indicates that interconnectivity refers to the capability to easily connect interactions across different networks, whereas interoperability refers to the capacity to access all available forms of information and media content using different operating systems. Interactivity can take place at numerous levels of engagement. One must be able to distinguish the three levels of interaction:

1. User-to-user interaction, or the ways in which computer-mediated communication intersects with, or is at odds with, other rules, codes, and conversations of interpersonal communication;
2. Para-social interaction, where online media generate new forms of user engagement with the content, which may range from the navigational practices of accessing and organising content to generate 'hypertext', to the immersive practises associated with engagement with 'rich media' content such as multi-player games; and

3. User-to-system interactivity, or the ways in which users engage with the devices they are using, as studied in fields such as human-computer interaction (Reeves & Nass 2002 & McMillan 2005)

3.4.4.2 Participation

Social media encourages contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested. It blurs the line between media and audience. Participation is a concept used in three ways. Firstly, in the environment of the 'digital divide', it refers to "inequalities in access to [social] media and the opportunity to use ICTs to participate as a user, worker, citizen, or consumer" (Flew 2008; 31).

Secondly, it identifies the "distinctive properties of [social] media that make more open and interactive than traditional communication technologies" (Flew 2008; 31). Social media requires a rethinking of traditional sender-receiver models of communication," since Interaction [...] demands a two-way (or multi-directional) model of communication. With the interactive features of new media, the receiver is recognised as an active participant" (Kenney *et al* 2000).

The third relates to the second, and concerns the matter of whether the "participatory culture that is promoted by social media is connected to wider processes of democratisation of media access and used in the context of the rise of the creative industries" (Flew 2008; 32).

3.4.4.3 Openness

Most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to accessing and making use of content – password-protected content is frowned on.

3.4.4.4 Community /User-generated content/user-led innovation

Social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities share common interests, such as a love for photography, a political issue or a favourite television show. Almost all Internet content is user-generated, as the "medium by its very nature promotes interactive, many-to-many modes of communication. The phenomenon of user-generated content, however, refers specifically to the ways in which users as both remediators and direct producers of [social] media content engage in new forms of large-scale participation in digital media space" (Flew 2008 35 – 36).

For example, massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs) develop their “particular dynamism as media forms from the productivity of the players themselves and the investments they make in the evolution of the game itself” (Humphreys 2004). They represent a model of media production that is “recursive, non-linear, and ongoing” (Flew 2008; 36), leading to the emergence of what is termed, the rise of the “‘prod-user’, who engages with such sites interchangeably as both producer and a consumer, often simultaneously” (Burns 2005; 23).

Such a perception of the online user as “participant in co-production points in the direction of the open source movement in the software development realm, and its championing of collective intelligence as a cornerstone of better software in the software realm” (Flew 2008; 36). This in turn links to “user-led innovation, and the ‘democratisation of innovation’, where ‘users of products and services – both firms and individual consumers – are increasingly able to innovate for themselves’ and, through digital networks in the knowledge economy, these innovations can be distributed, shared, and improved upon by user communities” (von Hippel 2005; 1).

3.4.4.5 Connectedness

Most kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness, making use of links to other sites, resources and people. The most prominent tools here are the RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Feed and Atom. These tools allow people to subscribe to a site and be informed when its content is changed and added to. Most newspapers, television and radio station, “blogs and many websites offer RSS subscription to their content. RSS heralded the mass use of ‘many-to-one’ communication” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 104).

From the public relations perspective, the social networking site Facebook will be used as an example of how the above mentioned characteristics apply as it has a wider range of applications and tools for interactivity and participation between organisation and its publics. While the majority of these applications are fun and geared towards non-business related events, the use of some of these applications can provide benefit to an organisation.

Social networking is becoming increasingly popular, many “companies, groups, organisations, and consumers are getting started with social networking” (Breakenridge 2008; 130). It is changing the way organisations do business. Breakenridge (2008) noted that social networking and social media applications are supporting organisations in a range of functional areas, like sales, public relations, customer service, product development, human resources, and knowledge management. According to Marketing-Jive (2007) These social media sites can be beneficial for the practitioner and their respective organisation,

which include Branding; Customer Engagement; Reputation Management; New Customer Acquisition; Lead Generation; Client Retention; The Viral Effect and; Feedback Mechanism.

The public relations practitioner can set up a group or page on Facebook for their representative organisation. Facebook Pages are Facebook's solution of choice for corporations and brands looking to advertise on Facebook. Facebook users interact with Pages in much the same way Facebook users can interact with a Group. Fans on a Facebook page can post photos; videos; links; discuss topics on the discussion board and/or; comment on the Page wall.

This leads to conversations that take place online, which are particularly important for public relations practitioners to consider. These conversations – including new posts and the conversations that occur around these posts – not only provide practitioners with valuable information about the audience, but can also be driven by consumers across widespread networks, build consumption communities and influence consumer behaviour.

These Pages are more flexible in the fact that unlike Groups the public relations practitioner can add Applications to enhance the organisations Page. These Pages also utilise a number of methods to communicate with users that the practitioner can tap into. For example: 1) Send updates to users which appear as notifications on the homepage, 2) Updates can be targeted by age, gender, and location' 3) Communication through Page Updates can contain text and plain non- anchor tagged hyperlinks, 4) Pages can also send status updates that will appear in a fans' Homepage and, 5) Friends can then Comment or 'Like' a status update that they find entertaining – which means increased engagement for the Page.

3.4.5 The value of two-way communication

A very vital step in public relations is communication. According to Wilcox and Cameron (2006) communication is the implementation of a decision, the process and the means by which objectives are achieved. The strategies and tactics may take the form of news releases, news conferences, special events, brochures, viral marketing, speeches, newsletters, Webcasts, and the like. They also state that the “communication process are to inform, persuade, motivate, or achieve mutual understanding” (Wilcox *et al* 2006; 172).

For this to be effective, Wilcox *et al* (2006) states that the following criteria should be met; 1) what constitutes communication and how people receive messages; 2) how people process information and change their perspective; 3) what kind of media and communication tools are most appropriate for the message.

Most communication models incorporate four basic elements. For example David K. Berlo's S-M-C-R (1960) model (Wilcox *et al* 2006); It has a sender/source (encoder), a

message, a channel, and a receiver (decoder). However, a fifth element, feedback from the receiver to the sender, was incorporated in modern models of communication.

Feedback can be seen as two-way communication, as one-way communication is seen as the dissemination of information, which is less effective. Two-way communication establishes a dialogue between the sender and the receiver. Grunig (1991) explains that communication is balanced between the sender and receiver, in the symmetric model; understanding is the principal objective of public relations, rather than persuasion.

According to research done by Wilcox *et al* (2006), most organisations have mixed motives when they engage in two-way communication with their publics. Even though they employ dialogue to better adjust to the needs of these publics, their motives are more asymmetrical, where they use dialogue to convince their public to their point of view.

Traditionally, the most effective form of two-way communication is two people talking face-to-face and small group discussions. In both forms the message is fortified by verbal and non-verbal cues and the opportunity for feedback is instant. However, barriers mount in the case of large group meeting and mass media. Even though the organisational material can reach a large number of the public, the distance between sender and receiver considerably lengthens. Communication becomes less effective because the receiver is no longer connected with the source, so feedback is not immediately possible, as well as the reality that the message may undergo distortion as it passes through mass media gatekeepers.

Dialogue or conversations between consumers and between consumers and a brand have long been an important part of public relations and marketing. Now, with the rise of Web 2.0 and social media, these conversations can involve more participants, across more channels and locations, and more instantaneously than before. In an attempt to provide an understanding of the value of conversations to public relations, Brian Solis and Jesse Thomas in March 2009 developed a full-scale model named *The Conversation Prism v2.0* mapping the principles involved in social media conversations and the way in which communication professionals can identify and engage social media as a part of an organisation's Customer Relationship Management strategy (Solis 2009).

Solis and Thomas' *Conversation Prism v2.0* (Solis 2009) provides a theoretical model to engage social media in communication practice, it is necessary to understand why these conversations represented by Solis and Thomas' *Conversation Prism v2.0* are indeed significant within the public relations perspective.

Almost all online conversations give practitioners information about the nature of the audience and their attitude towards a brand. Breakenridge (2008:71-84) draws attention to the ability to use social media and the conversations that take place within social media networks as monitoring tools for a brand. She suggests that by tracking the conversations

on these sites, public relations practitioners can determine what the audience's perceptions of a brand is, as well as their attitude towards communication issued by the brand.

This sequentially allows communications professionals to gauge audience reactions to both the message issued by the organisation and the communication by consumers that follows, and respond to it as needed (Breakenridge 2008:74-75). The use of social media conversations as a monitoring tool, public relations practitioners and organisations are now able to monitor social media and provide timely responses to consumer comments on social media channels.

Online conversation has the ability to spread information virally across an extensive network and various media platforms. Meerman Scott (2008) calls this concept "word-of-mouth" viral marketing. It is where people share useful and memorable content on the Web with their network of contacts, often via social media sites. Web content can be said to become "viral" if this sharing process is continued in large numbers for a prolonged time, thus passing the information from one person to the next like a word-of-mouth chain reaction. The more the content is distributed, the higher its popularity escalates, and as a result its distribution circles out even wider (Meerman Scott 2008).

Solis (2009) remarks that it is important to realise that online conversations are not new. He states that "Social Media didn't 'invent' conversations and it did not unearth online conversations either; nor did it provide, for the first time, platforms for consumers to share their thoughts, opinions, and advice. Online groups and opinion sites existed since Web 1.0. And, before that, bulletin boards and forums hosted online discussions" (Solis 2009).

As mentioned before, conversations were present as face-to-face meetings, rumours, gossip, letters, or whatever preferred medium was used to convey the dialogue. In public relations the concept of conversations as an influential factor is clearly manifested in dimensions such as the study of public opinion and persuasion, and the identification of opinion leaders and segmentation of key publics (Wilcox & Cameron 2006:219, Puth & Steyn 2005:199).

Social media and Web 2.0 have placed a renewed emphasis on conversations as key influencers, especially with regards to the way in which conversations can influence opinions among consumers, and influence coverage in traditional mainstream media. Much of social media's influential capabilities lay in its ability to create online brand communities for consumers to interact with likeminded people and the brand itself.

Dholakia, Bagozzi & Klein Pearo (2003) suggest that consumers often seek out the conversations of virtual communities, and their participation in the virtual community is driven by five values, which include;

1. Purposive value (including informational value and instrumental value obtained from giving and receiving information from the community),

2. Self-discovery (which can confirm and influence personal tastes and preferences),
3. Maintaining interpersonal connectivity (the need to communicate with others),
4. Social enhancement (gaining acceptance as a member of the community and the elevation of status as a knowledgeable community member), and
5. Entertainment value (for the fun and relaxation derived from interactions with the community).

In the case of blogs for example, in terms of general online media and communications practices and habits, bloggers display the above mentioned values overwhelmingly. These individuals, according to Flew (2008) consume a large amount of online media content – particularly news, they are highly engaged with other forms of technology-based social interaction, and also tend to source material more widely than other media users.

In terms of the values proposed by Dholakia, Bagozzi & Klein Pearo (2003) Pew Internet Service (2006) found the following of what motivates people to establish and maintain blogs:

Reasons for developing a Blog: US Blogger survey 2005 -06	Major reason %	Minor reason %	Not a reason %
To express yourself creatively	52	25	23
To document your personal experiences or share them with others	50	26	24
To stay in touch with family and friends	37	22	40
To share practical knowledge or skills with others	34	30	35
To motivate other people to action	29	32	38
To entertain people	28	33	39
To store resources or information that is important to you	28	21	52
To influence the way other people think	27	24	49
To network or to meet new people	16	34	50
To make money	7	8	85

Figure 3.7 Motives for developing a blog: Pew Internet Survey of US bloggers (Source: Flew 2008; 97)

In favour of an organisation's brand, the potential creation of a brand community on social media platforms is thus very important. A study done by Ostrow (2009) suggested that consumers actively seek out the virtual community of a brand or connect with brands via social media through suggestions from their friends, website links or other advertising. Of his study participants:

52% had connected with a brand through social media while 42% had said something positive about the brand on the social media platform and only 23% said something negative towards the brand.

The study thus points towards the potential for brands to connect with consumers through social media as well as the potential for user engagement and conversation between social media users about the brand or organisation.

The conversations that take place online, predominantly on social media channels are important for public relations practitioners to consider. These conversations – including new posts (messages, photographs, videos, and/or links) and the conversations that occur around these posts – not only provide practitioners with valuable information about the audience, but can also be driven by consumers across widespread networks and influence consumer behaviour.

Solis (2008d) on the other hand reminds public relations practitioners to take note of the conversations that occur around specific social media posts in the form of comments and feedback on original social media posts, rather than only focusing on the originally produced post itself. Public relations practitioners as content creators should be aware that hosting conversations and staying connected to the conversations surrounding their content requires “a fragmented, proactive process of tracking down and responding to feedback” (Solis 2008e).

3.5 Consumer behaviour

To apply social media effectively, the public relations practitioner should be aware of consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour is changing. Consumers want things quickly and done correctly. They want to interact on their level and on their time. The era of waiting for anything is in the past. We live in the age of instant gratification. Consumers are rapidly adopting the use of technology for their research, services and shopping needs. Practitioners need to recognise this change and adapt it to their online strategies.

According to David Smith (2010), today's customer can be heard loud and clear, seeing as their voice can be heard everywhere, including review websites, blogs, YouTube videos, Tweets, Facebook updates, and other social media outlets. Public relations practitioners have to pay attention because social media is changing the way customers do business.

Until recently, place-bound, face-to-face interaction was the only means of gaining direct access to a public's behaviour. Meyrowitz (1985) states that the physical barriers and boundaries marked by walls and fences as well as the passageways provided by doors and corridors directed the flow of people and determined, to a large degree, the number, type, and size of face-to-face interactions. Yet, it is not always the physical setting that determines the nature of the interaction, but the pattern of information flow.

Meyrowitz (1985) proposed the term 'social information', and it refers to the 'stuff' we learn about other people, products, services and organisations through the act of communication. At base, the information of concern here deals with social behaviour. So, while places create one type of information-system, there are many other types of situations created by other channels of communication.

This wider view of situations as information-systems (rather than the traditional places), is especially relevant to "electronic media because [it] has tended to diminish the differences between live and mediated interaction" (Meyrowitz 1985; 38). This information system is now fundamentally computer-mediated communication. Although computer-mediated communication was not invented with interpersonal interaction in mind, the rise of "the Internet has clarified that this technology is fundamentally social" (Baym 2002, 62).

Aspects of the internet that do not seem social – such as business sites, online information services- have "integrated social opportunities such as chat spaces and bulletin boards" (Parks, M.R. and Roberts, L.D. 1998) into their sites. But today, the Internet has dramatically involved within social interaction. Not only is it reserved for the general public, but many organisations have joined in. It is the responsibility of the public relations practitioner to bring the organisation to its publics.

It is also the responsibility of the public relations practitioner to be aware of their "audiences' social media sophistication and interactivity" (Breakenridge 2008; 188). Every public relations practitioner should study their target audience's behaviour, and assess their interest and use of social media. Perner (2008) proposes the following to help the public relations practitioner understanding issues such as how: 1) The psychology of how consumers think, feel, reason, and select between different alternatives (e.g., brands,

products, and retailers); 2) The psychology of how the consumer is influenced by his or her environment (e.g., culture, family, signs, media); 3) The behaviour of consumers while shopping or making other [communication] decisions; 4) Limitations in consumer knowledge or information processing abilities influence decisions and [communication] outcome; 5) How consumer motivation and decision strategies differ between products that differ in their level of importance or interest that they entail for the consumer; and 6) How marketers can adapt and improve their [communication] campaigns and [communication] strategies to more effectively reach the consumer.

For the public relation practitioner, the brand they represent, they need to change and be flexible as time and technology changes. Web 2.0 and the organisation's brand have according to Breakenridge (2008) similar preferences and behaviours, and many consumers want to receive direct communication from their [organisation]; have easy access to [organisation(s)] and any information regarding products and/or services; be able to ask questions about products and services; get a quick response when they have an inquiry; hear a voice from a company and know a company's position on certain issues that might affect their industry; believe they can trust the people behind the [organisation]; drive and control their communication; see how other people feel about a company, its products, and/or services; interact with people who have similar viewpoints; share information with others, including photos, videos, podcasts, and blogs; discuss favourite books, movies [...] and anything else they can share their thoughts about openly in a community of members with like interests and contribute information and create content in an open-source forum

The most obvious way that social media has changed consumer behaviour is just by "giving customers a bigger voice" (Smith 2010) than they have ever had before. To enable consumers to participate in a content building forum is the "penultimate of social media, where users build, test, and add to the content of the forum" (Breakenridge 2008; 191). For example, Wikipedia, this truly demonstrates Web 2.0 and how people engage and interact in a community. For consumers, Wikipedia means "community control over communications and endless opportunity" (Breakenridge 2008; 191).

By subsidising a social networking site, or creating your own networking site, "and branding it after your company, you are engaging and allowing other people to partake in a very intimate conversation between your company and them, and solely between your customers" (Breakenridge 2008; 192).

In a study by "Euro RSCG, 31.5% of U.S. social media users said they feel empowered to do things they've always wanted to do and 20% have lashed out against brands and companies online" Smith (2010). In a nutshell, consumers feel empowered to say the things they have

always wanted to say but never had the outlet to do so. The “anonymity and safety provided by social media lets customers feel more confident” Smith (2010) in communicating their true feelings about the organisation they interact with.

All this does have an effect. Customers use the information they find through social media to influence their buying decisions, customers are likely to pass this information on to others, and trust information they find through social media more than traditional advertisements. So, customers are using social media to research organisations before doing business with them.

It is clear that consumers are being influenced by social media. So, if a public relations practitioner wants to influence their consumer positively to do business with their respective organisation, they need to build a strong social media presence. Building a strong social media presence requires consistency. It requires actual engagement with the target demographic, building relationships that help earn their trust and their business.

3.6 Transparency

The marketing and public relations departments (and a few other individuals, such as salesmen) were the ‘mouthpieces’ of the organisation. They saw that only they would have the opportunity to interact with “opinion-influencing third parties” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 7) for instance journalists, mass media and the consumers. Today however, that has all changed, as those within and without utilise the new communication channels that are becoming available to them.

Transparency is a vital component that every public relations practitioner needs to take into consideration when dealing with social media. Since mass media has been fragmented, and most people got their news and lifestyle information from a handful of print and broadcast media, today it is evident that this media landscape has changed drastically. But also has access, since “every stakeholder can and does provide knowledge and opinion into networked communication systems freely” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 7). These networks consist of mobile phone SMS, e-mail and instant messaging (IM).

This is the age of consumer-generated content. Multi-media is now a reality, but more importantly the “boundaries and distinctions between audience and producer are vanishing” (Phillips *et al* 2007; 7), just as blogs and other forms of social media allow organisations an effective environment in which to create dialogues and communicate directly with publics and stakeholders, so they allow all external users to communicate freely with each other.

Transparency is one of those social media buzzwords being pitched in a social media campaign. Traditionally transparency is referenced with news media to inform the public why and how information is gathered from various sources. In media, transparency leads to credibility; it builds the trust from someone reporting information by providing credible sources.

Transparency has to be considered in a wide context. It is today, one of the fundamental elements that drive online public relations, (where the other elements include: internet agency, internet porosity, richness in content and reach). These elements are mediated by three components, namely:

1. The platforms or devices [people] use to access the internet
2. The many and growing channels for communication
3. The contest in which all these elements come together for people to [use]

(Phillips *et al* 2007, 38)

Through traditional media (print and broadcast) transparency implies openness, communication and accountability. This is seen for example; when government meetings are open to the press and the public or when budgets and financial statements may be reviewed by anyone. Transparency provides a framework for good practice.

In social media, the same theory holds true, yet it also has a double meaning.

According to Sutton (2009) Transparency in social media, especially “pertaining to blogging and covering a product, brand or service means that the [public relations practitioner] is giving [the public] an honest non-biased opinion or truth when writing or covering a particular topic.

Online this can mean that, “I am who I say I am online and that my reason for posting or having a discussion about a product, brand or service does not have any hidden agendas” Sutton (2009). Transparency is about trust and with everyone trying to grab your attention online whether it is through a YouTube video, blog post, or Facebook, trust will be one of the key ways organisations will try to sell services to customers.

3.7 Conclusion

The literature review presented in this chapter attempted to provide the contextual background from which social media can be understood and analysed. It is evident that the development of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has encouraged considerable changes in the way public relations is practiced today, and the introduction of social media plays a significant part in this development. With PR 2.0 and the conversational nature of social media we

have moved considerably closer to the elusive Two-way Symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig 1984). Organisations, media producers and consumers are navigating the social web as equal producers and participants. New approaches and tools are being sought after for the dissemination of information and support for an organisation.

This study attempts to provide insights into the use of social media in South Africa and in assessing the potential application and value of social media tools for their organisations. In the following chapter, a detailed description of the research will be applied to First National Bank, and finally applied to Grunig's (1984) models of public relations to test if true two-way symmetrical communication can be achieved.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1. Introduction

The following chapter describes the research framework used in this study. The study is primarily a content analysis, which includes qualitative research in the form of a case study of *First National Bank's* social media activities. The *First National Bank* case study will aim to identify the various services and products that are available through social media. It aims to identify which social media platforms are used. The case study will set out to point out the social media services available to clients where a conversation can be initiated. This approach will be tested against the theoretical assumption to either prove or disprove the theory that the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model is relevant to social media.

4.2 Research framework

In this section, the research framework of this study will be introduced, including an explanation of the research question, aim and objectives addressed by the study, the data analysed to answer the research questions as well as a brief summary of the context selected to justify the analysis of the data.

4.2.1 Research question

This study aims to provide perspectives that could help answer the following research question:

To what extent can social media be used to create a two-way dialogue between consumers and organisations?

[Is social media capable of being applied to the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model to demonstrate that this is possible?]

4.2.2 Aim and Objectives of the study

The research aim and objectives that the study sought to answer are as follows:

4.2.2.1 Aim

To determine the effectiveness of social media in obtaining two-way communication about the organisation's brand, information, product or service advocated by the social media platform chosen.

4.2.2.2 Objectives

- To identify how public relations can encourage dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders by using social media.
- To determine consumers' and organisations' behaviour with social media applications and websites.
- To test researched data with the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model and apply the *First National Bank* case study to test that the proposed theory is successful.

4.2.3 Texts analysed in study

During this study, a case study was constructed representing a South African example of social media used as a public relations tool. The case study is focused around *First National Bank* (hereafter *FNB*). The case study was created by sourcing data from the dedicated social media platforms used by *FNB*.

The texts sourced from the dedicated social media platforms were used to conduct a content analysis with the aim of answering the research questions posed in the study. As the dedicated social media platforms contain a very large amount of texts, (some which are irrelevant to the study), sampling methods were used to delimitate the number of texts to a manageable amount as well as avoid data overload due to irrelevant texts.

Purpose:

To determine the frequency and ratio of topic-specific dialogue by creators and users of dedicated social media platforms, as well as the frequency with which a subject is represented in a certain way in dialogue by users of dedicated social media platforms in order to determine the attitudes of users towards the subject, as well as the themes in the communication.

The texts that were analysed as part of the content analysis include:

Social media platform:

- **Facebook**
Fan page wall posts, links posted, photos and videos posted by creators and users on fan page within a specific time frame. Topic-relevant wall posts, links posted, photos and videos posted by users on fan page within a specific time frame.

- **YouTube**
Videos uploaded by the creator, comments left by viewers of videos within a specific time frame. Topic-relevant comments left by viewers of videos uploaded by the creator within a specific time frame
- **Twitter**
All tweets by creator within a specific time frame.
- **Flickr**
All photos uploaded by creator, and comments made by users on these photos within a specific time frame.

A detailed description of the sampling process used to determine which texts will be used in the content analysis can be found in section 4.3.1.1 of this chapter.

4.2.4 The analysis context

The context within which the analysis of texts was performed was informed by knowledge of social media, computer mediated communications (CMC), *Web 1.0* and *2.0* principles, *PR 2.0* strategy, brand communities and social media as a communications tool. The knowledge of these communication trends and influencers includes knowledge obtained through theory as is reflected by the literature review presented in Chapter 3 of this study.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following important considerations:

- The popularity of a particular social media platform within a particular geographical location or community may influence the likelihood of users within the location or community to join the channel and may also influence the regularity with which users visit the social media platform.
- Participation on social media platforms is voluntary, but joining a social media platform does, however, not guarantee interaction.
- Users interaction with one another through various methods such as commenting on, approving/disapproving posts, replying to messages, sharing images, audio or video clips, sharing links or forwarding posts.
- Through interaction between social media users on a particular platform, dialogue or a narrative can be created around a specific topic (this could be short-lived or continuous).
- Over time, a social media platform can serve as a host to a community of users interested in the particular subject advocated by the social media platform.

- The users on a social media platform may post communication that reflects a positive, negative or neutral attitude about the particular subject promoted in the social media platform.
- The attitudes displayed by regular users of a particular social media platform may be likely to influence the attitudes of other users.
- Social media platforms are increasingly susceptible to spam.
- Social media, like print, broadcast or other online media, can be used as a communication tool between senders and receivers and can therefore be analysed as a communication channel that conveys communication messages. Media and communication theory, within the scope of the *Web 2.0* context, can thus be used as a supplement to analysis of communication transmitted through social media.
- The social media platforms analysed in this study has been analysed using international perspectives, but the study particularly aims at providing insights into the use of these tools within a South African public relations perspective.

4.3 Research design and methods

This study's primary data was obtained through qualitative methods. However, in order to address the objectives of the study, a mixed methods approach was used. A case study was built around *FNB*. In order to analyse the information collected as part of the case study, the research design used in this study includes the undertaking of a qualitative content analysis of relevant texts found on the social media channels introduced by the case study. This section aims at providing insights into the selection and sampling of texts for content analysis.

4.3.1 Selecting and sampling texts

4.3.1.1 Case study and content analysis

The Internet has created many opportunities for a diverse array of organisations. Their diversity has generated numerous business models that were expected to generate sufficient revenues for online profitability. However, as Gay, Charlesworth & Esen (2007) point out that as the Internet environment has matured it has become evident that few models would achieve this alone. Most major Internet players now recognise the need to apply a number of models simultaneously to provide several revenue streams in order to survive and prosper.

It is apparent that many online organisations are now bending to customer pressure and "offering other tools such a telephone and text messaging (SMS) to complete transactions and provide customer service" (Gay *et al* 2007; 72). In addition, some are

seeking a physical presence to complement their online venture. We are now seeing a convergence emerging between the activities of businesses with their roots in both the physical and virtual world. As a result the “Internet is less dominant than we expected four years ago and the consumer now expects fully integrated ‘multi-channels’ for their convenience” (Forrester 2003).

In their book, *Managing Public Relations* (1984), professors James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt describe four theoretical models for public relations practice that have become starting points for examining how the profession works. Irrespective of which model is used (press agency and publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric) the Internet has an influence.

The case studies for *First National Bank (FNB)* were selected as social media within the South African geography as *FNB* hosts a broader presence online. At the time the study was initiated, *FNB* displayed a structural adherence to the social media principles as introduced by O’Reilly (2005). *FNB* clearly demonstrated the potential application of the social media as a *PR 2.0* tool that can be used to engage a social media audience in conversation about information, a brand, product or service. *FNB* also provided integrated social media links to social media platforms specifically introduced to provide a virtual space for *consumer-driven* conversation about the information, events, services and products.

It was thus convenient to build a case study around *FNB*. In order to answer the research question posed by the study, it required studying communications on social media channels that held dedicated social media platforms for *FNB*. This narrowed the study of social media communications to seven specific social media channels, including *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Flickr*, *Twitter*, *Mxit*, *delicious.com*, and *RSS* feeds. However, each of these channels required further consideration before analysis could take place.

The social media channels involved in this study are divided on whether they were an online (computer-based) or mobile application. It is important to note that many social media sites that originated as online sites have now become popular mobile sites due to mobile technology, while others that were originally introduced as mobile applications have become popular as online social media sites.

Although most online channels have a combination of text and image-based material, some channels showed a dominant type of content based on its purpose; this will be illustrated through the case study.

While these social media platforms use *FNB*, not all social media platforms provided texts that could be used for analysis. For instance, *Mxit* does not provide an accessible digital trail of communication in the public domain that can be analysed as part of the content analysis, thus no communication between the organisation and social media users that took

place on *Mxit* could be accessed for the content analysis in this study, the only *Mxit* activity available is the purchasing of *Moola*.

In order to provide accurate insights into the way in which social media channels could be used for two-way communication *calls for texts for an in-depth content analysis to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr*. The remaining social media channels were, however, considered during the conducting of a limited designations analysis in order to determine the dialogue by creators and users of dedicated social media platforms, presented. An in-depth assertion analysis was however only performed using selected texts used in the social media channels.

Texts were sourced from the social media platforms *Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr*. The texts contained in the dedicated social media channels were vast in number and in some instances completely irrelevant to the subject matter. It is important to note that one of the objectives of the analysis was to determine the certain way dialogue is created by users and *FNB* of dedicated social media platforms presented in the social media channels.

4.3.2 Application of content analysis

4.3.2.1 Indices

The content analysis applied in this study and the analysis of its results was in part influenced by three major indices as described by Krippendorff (2004) including:

- “The *frequency* with which a symbol, idea, reference, or topic occurs in a stream of messages is taken to indicate the *importance of, attention to, or emphasis on* that symbol, idea, reference, or topic in the messages.
- “The *numbers of favourable and unfavourable characteristics* attributed to a symbol, idea, or reference are taken to indicate the *attitudes* held by the writers, the readers, or their common culture toward the object named or indicated.
- “The frequency of co-occurrence of two concepts (excluding those that have grammatical or collocation explanations) is taken to indicate the *strength of associations* between those concepts in the minds of the members of a population of authors, readers, or audiences.”

(Krippendorff 2004; 59)

4.3.2.2 Content analysis procedure

In order to complete the content analysis, the selected texts were read to identify conversations within a particular social media platform. Common affirmations in the texts were compiled and listed as patterns determined through citation or paraphrasing.

Informed by the three indices stated in section 3.3.2.1 of this study, the categories pertained to the mentioning of certain elements of the particular subject, as well as the disposition represented by communications. This included whether the descriptions used to communicate about the respective topic suggested a positive or negative attitude towards the topic. From the content analysis, the following information could be identified:

- *Ratio* of user commentary about the particular topic on the social media platform;
- Whether the communications content on the social media platform is generated by social media users or the Organisation (i.e. is the subject stimulating consumer-generated conversation?);
- The attitudes of the users towards the subject based on their communication.

In addition, the case study analysis aimed to provide assumed insights into the social media strategies used by *FNB*.

4.4 Credibility Criteria for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research endures attacks on its unique and distinct approach to examining the world and seeking understanding from it. The present section looks at alternative paths to producing research that merits attention, respect and acceptance.

Lincoln (1985) start by explaining that traditionally in the social sciences there have been four criteria used to evaluate the merit of research: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. Critics of qualitative research have long argued that there is no merit to qualitative studies because they do not achieve internal and external validity. Perhaps, some have refuted, that is because validity criteria are inappropriate measures for evaluating qualitative work. Deniz and Lincoln (1994) explain the traditional notions of validity and offer up the concept of trustworthiness as a replacement:

Some analysts argue that validity may be an inappropriate term in a critical research context, as it simply reflects a concern for acceptance within a positivist concept of research rigor. To a critical researcher, validity means much more than the traditional definitions of internal and external validity usually associated with the concept. Traditional research has defined internal validity as the extent to which a researcher's observations and measurements are true descriptions of a particular reality; external validity has been defined as the degree to which such descriptions can be accurately compared with other groups. Trustworthiness, many have argued, is a more appropriate word to use in the context of critical research. It is helpful because it signifies a different set of assumptions about research purposes than does validity. (Denzin 1994, p. 151)

Lincoln (1985) discusses each criterion and explicate steps qualitative researchers can take to ensure that they are achieving results that are credible, transferable,

dependable, and can be confirmed. This section will briefly outline the five criteria for credibility and explain how each is achieved:

Activity 1: This will increase the probability that credible findings will be produced:

- Prolonged engagement—the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the culture, testing for misinformation, building trust. (Lincoln 1985, p.301)
- Persistent observation—identifying and assessing salient factors and crucial atypical occurrences (Lincoln 1985, p. 304)
- Triangulation—the use of different sources, methods, theories and sometimes investigators to resist easy interpretation of phenomena (Lincoln 1985, p. 305)

Activity 2: This provides an external check of the inquiry process:

- Peer debriefing—helps keep the inquirer “honest,” exposing him or her to searching questions by an experience protagonist playing devil’s advocate and tests working hypotheses emerging in the inquirer’s mind (Lincoln 1985, p. 308)

Activity 3: Is aimed at refining working hypotheses:

- Negative case analysis—refining hypothesis until it accounts for all known cases without exception (Lincoln 1985, p. 309)

Activity 4: Is for checking preliminary findings and interpretations against raw data:

- Referential adequacy—testing archived data against raw data, using external analysts (Lincoln 1985, p. 313)

Activity 5: Is aimed at providing for the direct test of findings and interpretations with the sources:

- Member checks—data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected (Lincoln 1985, p. 314)

To obtain credibility, the qualitative research conducted within this treatise will follow the criteria presented by Lincoln (1985) very closely.

4.5 Ethical considerations

This study in no way attempted to infringe the rights of its participants. The following ethical considerations were taken into account:

4.5.1 Ethics: content analysis

As data for the content analysis was obtained from the sourcing of communication by both the organisation and social media users on the selected social media platforms, the identity or partial identity of social media users may be revealed on the social media sites. However, the content posted by the users were sited within the public domain as the communication took place on the public comments, public discussion board or public message area of the specific social media platforms.

Even though social media users' identities were revealed, it had no significance on this study and did not affect the study by any means. The social media users' profile names were not revealed in this treatise in order to protect their privacy. Instead, the term 'user' or '*FNB*' was assigned to distinguish between users if necessary.

These social media users, who posted content on the respective social media platforms, were not informed of this research as the communication on these social media platforms was analysed as public media texts.

Thus, by informing social media users of the study would have had the risk of a potential change in their behaviours, which in turn might have influenced the accuracy of the data of the study. The primary researcher was not actively involved in the communication process on these social media platforms.

4.6 Conclusion

The data from the content analysis along with the conclusions reached from the analysis of communication on the social media platforms and case study aided in determining the extent to which the social media platforms motivate consumer-driven dialogue about the brand, information, product or service advocated by an organisation. In the next chapter, a detailed report on the findings of this study will be provided.

The analysis will aim to point South African public relations professionals towards a better understanding of social media platforms as a potential tool to create valued consumer-driven dialogue among social media communities about a particular brand.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research findings of the study will be reported and interpreted in an attempt to provide insights into the use of the social media platforms as a potential tool to stimulate conversations about a brand or brand-related topic online. The research findings were obtained through selected texts sourced from the respective dedicated social media platforms introduced, which are used by *First National Bank* as well as content generated by social media users, to supplement and verify the content analysis inference.

The content analysis provided insights into the different types of conversations taking place on the respective social media platforms, which also includes:

- The subject and themes of communication,
- The tone of communication, and
- The categorisation of the message as user generated or creator generated communication.

From the research results conclusions could be drawn about which social media platform is most valuable to the brand in terms of the user-generated communication taking place on the respective platforms.

This helped to determine which social media platforms consumers were most comfortable with to interact with *FNB*, as well as determine in which way they interact with the brands on the social media platforms. In addition, it provided the opportunity to determine the users' activity on the social media platform, and helped to identify the users' motivations for joining the platforms.

The findings presented in this chapter are consequently an interpretation of raw data collected through content analysis as described in Chapter 3 of this treatise.

5.2 Structure of research findings report

The research methodology applied in this study allows for a primary section of research data, namely the case study of *FNB's* social media initiative. To ease the presentation of the research findings, the case study has been subdivided to present the data obtained through content analysis research. The case study is structured as follows:

- Social media strategy
- Social media news release content
- Social media links and content

- Social media conversations (as per channel):
 - Message *ratio*
 - Message origins
 - Message tone
- Case study summary and recommendations

It is necessary to note that the case study was compiled by means of extensive research, data accumulation and analysis from various public channels. Although the intended social media strategy was not provided by the organisation selected due to disclosure policies and strategic competitiveness, information suggesting the strategy was gathered and analysed to provide insights into the social media strategy employed as part of *First National Bank*.

5.3 Research findings

5.3.1 Theoretical and contextual considerations and structure details

The following theoretical and contextual considerations were applied to each research subsection represented in the research structure of the case study:

5.3.1.1 Social media strategy

The social media strategy detailed in this subsection of the research describes the main elements of the strategy and tactics applied by *FNB*. The purpose of noting the social media strategy used by the *FNB* is to provide additional context for the analysis of the social media platforms and to provide a view of the conversation in an approach to social media.

5.3.1.2 Social media platforms and content

In this section of the research report structure the social media platforms incorporated in the particular social media initiative are provided. Each of these social media platforms provides access to a dedicated channel which is meant to host conversations around the brand, product or service being advocated by *FNB*. A summary of the content analysed from each of the dedicated social media platforms is also provided in this section of the research report structure, while a brief description of the research methodology and rationale is also provided.

5.3.1.3 Social media conversations (as per channel)

5.3.1.3.1 Message ratio

According to Krippendorff (2004), message *ratio* is believed to indicate the popularity of a particular topic within a social media platform. When analysing a message on a social media platform dedicated to a brand and specifically linked to it as a platform for conversation about a topic, one can expect the *ratio* of messages about the topic advocated by the organisation to be high.

When the *ratio* of messages about the topic presented is significantly low on the social media platform, the particular platform serves no purpose in advancing conversations about the desired topic and therefore should have its inclusion as a dedicated social media platform reconsidered. Alternatively, the communicators who issued the particular message should actively strive to stimulate conversation about the desired topic on the social media platform to make it relevant to its readers. This presumption applies to the case study analysed and thus applies to the particular social media platforms assigned to *FNB*.

Within the context of the social media, each platform utilised by *FNB* is geared towards creating general conversations about the organisation and/or products and services represented. In the case of the *FNB* this would be conversation about online and cellphone products and services, as well as other campaigns, events and organisational involvements. Krippendorff (2004:59) proposes, “the frequency with which a symbol, idea, reference, or topic occurs in a stream of messages is taken to indicate the importance of, attention to, or emphasis on that symbol, idea, reference, or topic in the messages”.

5.3.1.3.2 Message origins

Social media (as has been described in Chapter 3), is valued for its ability to stimulate “horizontal or peer-to-peer communication, as distinct from vertical or top-down communication” (Flew 2008:107). This is facilitated through the interaction and participation by users of a social media platform by engaging in conversations around a topic.

Flew (2008) states that social media has become associated with the empowerment of the user as content creator and the minimal interference or filtering of communication on these channels by traditional message creators such as journalists, public relations practitioners, organisations or even the government.

Within a social media platform, the user generated conversations can therefore be considered to be of a higher value to public relations practitioners and other readers than those messages produced by the communicators of the organisation, brand or product to which the social media platform is dedicated.

While the user-generated messages of the social media platform can be analysed to determine the attitudes and opinions of the users towards a particular brand or product, it is

as important to consider the organisation-generated messages. The reasons for this are twofold:

- It helps to determine the correlation or differences between the desired messages as distributed by the organisation and those messages disseminated by the social media users subscribed to the dedicated platform, and
- It reveals the organisation's reaction time and management approach towards compliments, complaints, issues or queries raised by users about the product, service or brand.

Also, other social media users may evaluate the response by the organisation on the social media platforms as a measure of their proficiency, involvement and consideration for their customers or potential customers' interests.

5.3.1.3.3 Message tone

This may reveal important information about the attitudes and brand disposition of the message creator towards the topic (Krippendorff 2004). This may suggest that the tone can have a great impact on the interpretation of a message by some readers.

For the purpose of this study the focus falls on the information publicised through the content analysis of existing messages. The tone of the messages in the social media platforms will add additional dimension to the study through the general impressions created by the messages on the particular social media platform. This is of importance to public relations practitioners as it has the potential to influence either positively or negatively on the organisation, the organisation's reputation and the value of the product or service.

5.3.2 FNB Case study

This section will firstly provide an overview of *FNB* as an organisation and the traditional channels of communication used, as this is the driving force for their social media initiative. Secondly, the section will provide the proposed subdivided structure as described above.

A) FNB Overview

FNB brand positioning is a natural extension of the *FNB* vision and values. *FNB* is all about providing sensible, convenient and, above all, helpful banking solutions. The image that the *FNB* brand creates for their customers is critical to their success.

"How can we help you?"

This slogan is a friendly and positive question which promises a great deal. And *FNB* takes it very seriously to deliver on this promise. The slogan relates back to their strategy of building enduring, rewarding relationships. According to *FNB*, they pride themselves on being a values-based company and these values guide their actions and behaviours to help them achieve their vision. These values are the following:

Pride begins with taking pride in what you do and the contribution you make. It's about having a real sense of belonging to and contributing to a great company, a caring and diverse community and a miraculous country - without being boastful or arrogant.

Respect is about respecting yourself and earning the respect of others. It cannot be demanded, and manifests itself in the regard you show for the feelings, rights and abilities of others - even if these are different from your own. This value encourages us to deal with work and life responsibly.

Accountability is being able to account for our own actions and having the courage to be answerable for them. In *FNB's* owner-manager culture, we never walk away from problems.

Innovation is about coming up with new ideas. *FNB* employees should feel empowered to innovate, because we value and nurture new ideas. All *FNB* employees play a part in creating an environment that is conducive to innovation

Ubuntu is about having a sense of community, connectedness and unity of purpose, grounded in trust and humanity. It's about having compassion for our colleagues, partners, community and ourselves. Ubuntu helps us build a unified organisation where one business unit cannot win at the expense of another business unit. (www.fnb.co.za)

B) Traditional communication channels

The two major players for communication channels used by *FNB* include the press and broadcast media. The press remains is the most versatile and resilient of all mass communication media and includes regional, national and international newspapers and magazines.

Popular newspapers in South Africa that *FNB* utilises are the dailies; the weeklies; regional newspapers and; free-sheets (knock-and-drop). Magazines also offer efficient channels of communication to specialised publics. Magazines can be divided into many categories. Magazine advertising include the weekly; fortnightly; monthly; as well as trade, technical and professional. These advertisements are used to inform their consumers of new services and products, activities they are involved in, sponsorships, as well as competitions

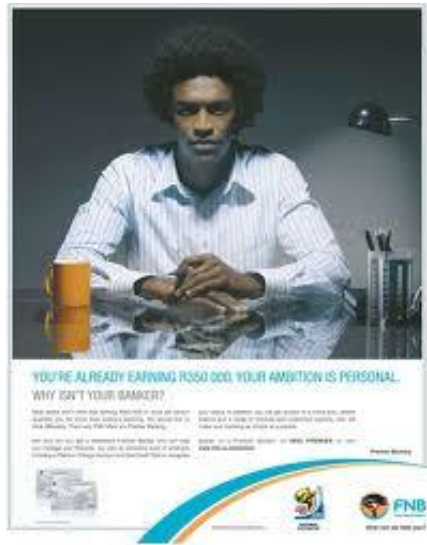


Figure 5.1 FNB Print Advertisement

The print advertisement in Figure 4.1 is an example of one of FNB's products and services. This is aimed at the appropriate target audience that will fall under the requirements for this service/product. The aim of this advertisement is to educate and inform the prospective consumer of the respective service/product.

Print media remain a powerful medium for any organisation to advertise, inform and educate potential consumers and the general public of their activities. With the advent of social media, these forms of media aim to drive the consumer to the organisation website to obtain more information.

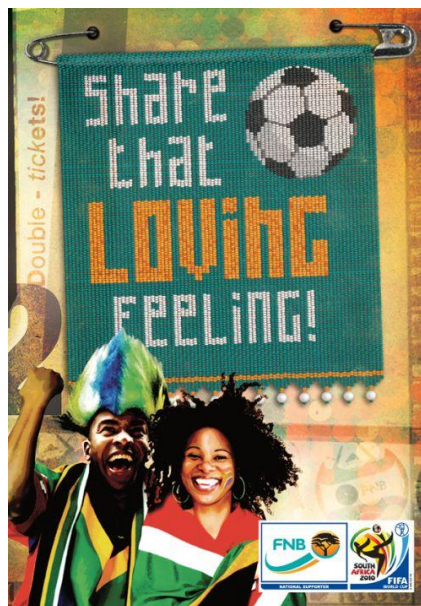


Figure 5.2 Soccer World Cup 2010 Advertisements

FNB was the first South African corporate to sign up as an official National Supporter of the 2010 *FIFA* World Cup that took place in South Africa. *FNB* took on the role of *FIFA*'s Official South African Bank to provide full service banking, including commercial and corporate transactional banking, foreign exchange transactions, as well as on and off-site ATMs at various locations serving *FIFA* competitions in South Africa. These competitions included the 2010 *FIFA* World Cup and the 2009 *FIFA* Confederations Cup. The sponsorship came with a package of advertising, promotional and marketing rights for both competitions in the financial products category within South Africa.

The advertisement depicted in figure 4.2 is one of many print advertisements that circulated before the World Cup. The aim of these advertisement were to build national pride among the people of South Africa, promote the World Cup as part of the build up, as well as a campaign to obtain new clients with offering these new clients with a chance to win tickets to witness of the World Cup.

Broadcast media is especially used by *FNB*. Broadcast media in South Africa includes television and radio, still remains a powerful medium to reach the population of South Africa. In the past year *FNB* has utilised broadcast media in the following ways:

Soccer World Cup

Together with the print media advertisement, television and radio advertisement were used for the run-up to the World Cup. These advertisement were aimed at nation building, national pride and to create excitement for the games. The following advertisement that were aired on national television (available on social media site *YouTube*) aimed to highlight certain issues South Africans faced regarding the run-up to the games, as well as informing the public about ticket give-aways. The advertisements are as follows:

- 2010 *FIFA* World Cup *FNB* TV Commercial – Airport Delay:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjPazSFQrWA>
- 2010 *FIFA* World Cup *FNB* TV Commercial Francois Pienaar – Build up:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UAf_7HNLtI
- 2010 *FIFA* World Cup *FNB* TV Commercial Lucas Radebe – Build up:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1nn4nr5VgA>

Product/services advertising

FNB uses radio and television advertisements to inform and educate their consumers of products and services, latest innovations, as well as their reward programme. The

advertisements are unique, as they are about everyday situations, involving everyday people. These advertisements have now become a driving force for consumers to visit the *FNB* website to obtain more information, since traditional communication channels are very limited in time. These advertisements were aired on national television (available on *YouTube*):

- *FNB* Personal Choice Himesh from *FNB* spent time with Belinda in Uppington (Free cellphone and online banking)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1E5t6ZpZw&list=PLB1B69291652801D1&index=7&playnext=3>
- *FNB* Cellphone banking
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3U8FNN_8Ro&NR=1
- Cellphone Banking from *FNB*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-HWc_XaAj8&feature=channel
- *FNB* brings *PayPal* to South Africa
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wuZIHPvU38&feature=channel
- *eWallet* from *FNB*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFdkkhzL6zQ&feature=channel>
- Fly *Kulula* air for up to 20% less with *FNB* and *eBucks*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbBuYPHfA9w&NR=1>
- *eBucks* Weed Eater
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mRqolrTDG8&feature=related>
- *eBucks* Fridge
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4lglouUsws&feature=related>
- *eBucks* Groceries
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUsL5_q1oW0&feature=related

It is evident that a majority of the traditional communication channels used by *FNB* are now focused on driving their consumers to their website. With the development of the digital space growing at the rate it is currently doing, consumers are becoming much more focused on saving time. *FNB* can add value by assisting them to use the facility in a clever way to continue adding value to their businesses. More people are doing business online instead of going into branches to save time and from a security point of view travelling is no longer required.

5.3.2.1 Social media strategy

The social media strategy used by *FNB* has not been obtained directly from the organisation due to their disclosure policies. So the social media strategy is drafted from information made available on the *FNB* website and popular blogs of South African thought leaders.

It is apparent that *FNB* is serious about innovative ways of interacting with their clients, as well as enriching the *FNB* brand through the use of various social media platforms. This can be seen in the following:

- ***FNB* Website**

Michael Jordaan, *FNB* CEO, states the following: “While there is a lot of information about managing your finances, there is nothing that breaks through the clutter. For the first time in South Africa, *FNB* is shifting the approach by offering an innovative financial initiative to help consumers by providing practical information they can really understand and implement” (Chris M. 2009). *FNB* aims to empower South Africans to make their own informed decisions relating to their personal finances via the web.

FNB recognises that managing finances is not an easy task. The website provides financial information and tips to help people simplify the complexity of their consumers’ personal finances. The website is aimed at the ‘man on the street’ and therefore the information provided is easy to understand, simple and logical.

According to Chris (2009) the key concept behind ‘How Can We Help You’ is ‘Financial Ubuntu’. *FNB* aims at attracting an active online community that shares personal finance trials, tribulations and learning. Information from credible sources is aggregated on a single platform and shared. In addition to providing content and information, the website provides an interactive real-time web-forum where people can post comments and receive feedback from the forum immediately. With the forum *FNB* believes it is in the best interest of their consumers and the South African community at large.

FNB has chosen the web as its main means of communication because it facilitates a conversation with communities through relevant content. It is all about exchanging information and not just delivering a marketing message.

To ensure that the site provides useful and relevant information, it is moderated by an editorial policy to ensure visitors are getting appropriate information. *FNB* has set up the website using its internal web team, but the content is managed by an independent content editor who has a strong consumer editorial background. In addition to their website, *FNB* has launched a Mobile site. This site houses the same information that is found on the website,

with the result that users, who do not have access to a computer, can now browse through the *FNB* mobile site.

A prominent focus for this case study is the online and cellphone banking services. *FNB* strives to create the following convenient and easy services for their consumers:

FNB - Cellphone and Online Banking		
	Cellphone Banking:	Online Banking:
Description of Service:		
	With Cellphone Banking you can bank wherever you are, whenever you want. Anyone on any network with any cellphone can use it.	FNB's Online Banking is a web-based electronic banking solution allowing you the benefit of direct, secure and real-time electronic access to your FNB accounts, as well as the opportunity to manage your finances anytime, anywhere.
Service benefits:		
Buy Mobile Prepaid Airtime for yourself or someone else	a	a
Buy Vodacom data bundles, SMS bundles and Big Bonus Vouchers	a	a
Buy Prepaid Airtime for people living in other countries	a	
Set-up Prepaid Scheduled Top-Ups	a	a
Buy Prepaid Airtime or Global International Airtime	a	a
Buy Prepaid Electricity	a	a
Check balances on one or all of your accounts	a	a
Get a mini statement	a	
Transfer money between your own FNB accounts	a	a
Make third party payments to pre-defined beneficiaries	a	a
Pay Traffic Fines	a	
Buy MXit Moola	a	
Buy Lotto	a	a
Play Soccer 6	a	
Let someone know that you have paid them via payment notification		a
View and download account statements		a
Apply for products online		a
Send Money using eWallet from FNB		a

Figure 5.3 Online banking and Cellphone Banking Services (adapted from: www.fnb.co.za)

FNB has other innovative services available on their online efforts. These services are linked to cellphone banking and online banking. These are the following:

Cellphone banking:

- *Telephone banking:* Easy, secure and convenient, one number is all you need. Telephone Banking provides all FNB transactional accountholders with flexible banking via a single number
- *Virtual Branch:* FNB's Virtual branch allows you to have your bank cards and/or cheque books delivered right at your doorstep. Transact by using FNB Online Banking, Telephone Banking, Cellphone Banking, or any FNB ATM.
- *Cell Pay Point:* A secure, easy to use online payment solution, that is not limited to credit card payment.
- *MXit Moola:* If you are registered for Cellphone Banking from FNB you can buy MXit Moola directly from any of your FNB transactional accounts.
- *InContact Pro:* FNB Commercial's *inContact-Pro* is an electronic platform designed to help you manage the money in your Business Accounts by means of instant sms's or e-mail messages.

Online banking:

- *Online Banking Enterprise™:* A web-based electronic banking solution that allows you the benefit of direct, secure and real-time electronic access to your FNB accounts.
- *Virtual Branch*
- *Top Up and Withdraw service with PayPal:* This service is exclusive to FNB customers and allows you to top up and withdraw funds from your PayPal account via your qualifying FNB account.
- *InContact Pro*

FNB is always looking for new and innovative ways to assist their consumers in doing their banking in more convenient ways, and also to save them money. Just like online banking and cellphone banking, the following innovations include *PayPal*, *eWallet* and *eBucks*.

However, this initiative deviates from the social media concept. The website in this case study is a convenient way of gathering information on products and services, obtaining relevant contact details and accessing banking needs through online and mobile banking. In

accordance to Grunin and Hunt's models, the FNB website will be classified as a Public Information Model of public relations.

- **FNB Shine 2010 website**

FNB launched *Shine 2010*, an online social networking platform which offers a place for South Africans to gather together, learn and communicate in the run-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Jacobson (2008) explains that *Shine 2010* serves as the first port of call for 2010 good news, offering insights into the critical infrastructure projects and serving as an outlet for the positive stories that are not 'currently' being told.

Shine 2010 provides news and feature articles but also offer interactive and engaging content online. This approach ensures that the community can consume the good news according to their own preferences.

The website includes a blog, podcast interviews, a *Facebook* group, a *YouTube* channel and the *FNB* Roving Reporters interviews: a first for a South African corporate – will serve as citizen reporters, hitting the streets to source video interviews with key influencers, whilst also polling public perception ahead of 2010.

Jacobson (2008) states that visitors to the site have found positive news about South Africa and the upcoming World Cup in news articles, blog posts and podcast. It is really good to see a major corporation in South Africa launch a project like this.

Shine 2010 is one of *FNB's* digital initiatives. Furthermore, the bank continues to engage in social media with *MXit* and *FNB Facebook* employee groups. Other content published on the *Shine 2010* site includes *Flickr*, *YouTube* and *del.icio.us*. There is a lot of content available which users can share on other social media platforms, for instance *Facebook*.

- **Facebook**

The *FNB Facebook* page is actively updated. Here is a link to the *YouTube* video site http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7_w7pbqUUKU; this link invites users to join the *FNB Facebook* page. It encourages users to participate in the content *FNB* uploads as well as encouraging user-generated content to be posted on the page. The page has many features that will encourage interactivity, such as events, discussions, regular *FNB* related news updates, photos and so on.

It is evident by investigating the *Facebook* page, that *FNB* also encourages their users to not only comment on their posts, but also voice their concerns and ask about banking service related questions, as seen on the following *FNB* post:



Figure 5.4 Facebook News Feed

While the majority of posts and comments are authored by *FNB's* RB Jacobs, *FNB* maintains a visible yet constructive presence on the *Facebook* site by initiating conversations, informing users of the latest *FNB* information, but also in replying to user comments and questions posted through posts and/or comments. This mid-level involvement by *FNB* is very beneficial to the brand and the *Facebook* site's reputation as it creates the impression that *FNB* is in touch with the needs of its clients. It also succeeds in creating an impression of involvement and initiative without suggesting asymmetrical communication channels which would position *FNB* as the major controlling force of communication on the *Facebook* page. The *FNB Facebook Page* thus comes across as a channel specially created for *FNB* clients displaying the ideal element of *PR 2.0* – the democratisation of communication through the creation of two-way symmetrical, transparent communication between an organisation and its publics.

- **Flickr**

Publicity photographs of the *FNB's* 2010 World Cup involvement as well as *FNB* brand photographs are hosted on the photo-sharing social media channel *Flickr*. The dedicated social media space introduced by *FNB* for *Flickr* is majorly a 2010 World Cup *Shine 2010* photostream which contains a total of 200 photographs and another two sets of photographs. The *Flickr* platform contains relevant content to users looking for more information or visuals of the 2010 World Cup. The links to this platform have been an

important step to ensure that there are a number of relevant visuals on the platform in order to make it a relevant site for readers to visit. *Flickr* is a relevant social media platform for *FNB*. This proved successful due to the build up towards the 2010 World Cup as well as other brand awareness campaigns *FNB* hosted. Content on the *Flickr* platform hosted only a few comments on the *Flickr* 2010 World Cup *Shine 2010* photostream. However, this social platform did not completely succeed in initiating in two-way communication; it did, however succeed in making visual content available for any interested party.

- ***Twitter***

Once again RB Jacobs, the official *FNB* Guy mans the station on the social media site *Twitter*. This site is focused around textual content. Here *FNB* inform their followers on the latest services, events and more. However, they main focus is to assist their clients in any queries, problems and complaints. This social media platform is a great source for getting in touch with *FNB* immediately and directly when they experience problems. This allows for swift and immediate action from *FNB* in addressing the problems at hand.

While the majority of posts and comments are authored by social media users, *FNB* maintains a visible yet unobtrusive presence on the site by replying to user comments and questions posted through the tweets. This mid-level involvement by *FNB* is very beneficial to the brand and the *Twitter* site's reputation as it creates the impression that *FNB* is in touch with the needs of its clients. Simultaneously, it succeeds in creating an impression of involvement and initiative without suggesting asymmetrical communication channels which would position *FNB* as the major controlling force of communication on the site. The *FNB Twitter* site also comes across as a channel specially created for *FNB* clients, displaying the ideal element of *PR 2.0*—communication through the creation of two-way symmetrical, transparent communication between an organisation and its publics.

- ***YouTube***

As seen with the traditional channels of communication, the videos available for *FNB* is focused around the 2010 world cup and advisements aired on television. However, the videos received a fair amount of responses and comments, although not creating a large amount of dialogue.

On the evaluation of the communication content represented by the comments left to the *FNB* videos, it is clear that the videos are possibly the ideal choice for visual material to be used in the social media strategy. Comments may be negative, neutral or positive, so, *FNB's* attempt to promote services and other brand related activities through the *YouTube* channel, it will remain beneficial to keep carefully choosing well-crafted videos that will

accumulated more interactivity from users. It is crucial that *FNB* monitors comments by users, as some of these comments can influence the reputation of the *FNB* brand.

In theory, the social media strategy employed by *FNB* thus suggests that the social media platforms could be utilised to encourage consumer-driven conversation about the brand, information, product or service advocated by the *FNB*.

5.3.2.2 Social media platforms and content

The social media platforms presented for *FNB* and the content of which was analysed by means of content analysis include:

- *Shine 2010*
- *Facebook*
- *Flickr*
- *Twitter*
- *YouTube*

The posts were subjected to a limited designations analysis in order to determine the *ratio* with which *FNB* was referred to directly in the assortment of posts. This aided to determine whether social media, that the users of the *FNB* were encouraged to utilise, join in the conversation about *FNB* services, product, and brand involvement. Also, an analysis was conducted on the messages within the research time frame in order to determine the social media users' attitudes towards a topic, as well as the intensity of the users' opinions expressed in the communication.

The research time frame for this case study stretched from 1 May 2010 to 30 November 2010, to include the *FIFA* 2010 World Cup.

5.3.2.3 Social media conversations (as per channel)

5.3.2.3.1 Message *ratio*

In the following section, the message *ratio* on each of the social media platforms utilised by *FNB* will be discussed:

- *Shine 2010*

The *FNB 2010 Shine* hosted three focal areas for potential interactivity, and was an active social media platform linked to the *FIFA 2010 World Cup*. These three areas included:

- A blog
- Embedded *YouTube* videos, and
- Podcasts

The blogs consisted of 169 blogs that were generated by *FNB* for fans and concerned citizens to read and comment on. These blogs ranged from 25 June 2008 to 20 July 2010. The aim of the blog is for South Africans to find news, opinions and information about the event from people who want the 2010 World Cup to succeed.

The blogs however did not accumulate any comments, so no two-way communication was achieved. The blogs in this case failed to generate a conversation, but did however play a role in informing the target market of relevant 2010 World Cup affairs.

The embedded *YouTube* videos consisted of 48 videos, and allowed the users to comment on the videos featured. The videos were posted from 21 June 2010 to 1 July 2010. The embedded videos had a similar aim as the blog, i.e. to allow users to find news, opinions and information about the event from people who want the 2010 World Cup to succeed.

The embedded *YouTube* videos generated a total of 398 comments. One video in particular, *Green Point Stadium will be ready for 2010 World Cup*, accumulated 304 comments. In this video, it is rather evident that user-generated conversation is achieved.

The embedded *YouTube* video section of the *FNB 2010 Shine* website achieved the desired two-way communication. *FNB*, however, generated the content, but users participated and interacted with one another or posted their own personal opinion.

Podcast in the *2010 Shine* website provided insight on various topics and national concerns. The podcast section consisted of 21 items that were posted from 26 June 2010 to 20 July. Six of these posts generated a total of 63 comments. The podcast titled "Should prostitution be legalised for the 2010 World Cup?" generated 39 comments and also gained a 5/5 rating by users.

The podcast section of the *FNB 2010 Shine* website did not generate a lot of comments, but do however succeed in initiating two-way communication, as it allow users to participate and interact with another users or posted their own personal opinion.

- *Facebook*

The timeframe for research here is from 1 November to 30 December. The reason for this is to allow for more relevant content to be gathered as the *Facebook* page contains huge volumes of *FNB*-generated and User-generated content. The *FNB* website allows users to share *FNB* content on their *Facebook* profile as well as allow them to join the *FNB Facebook* page. From 1 November 2010 to 30 December 2010 *FNB* generated the following:

- *FNB* generated 49 posts of which accumulated a total of 618 user-generated comments
- User generated post were counted at 154 post and accumulated 169 *FNB* and User generated comments of which was:
 - Positive: 50 posts
 - Negative: 33 posts
 - *FNB* Queries: 57
 - Relevant Information: 2

This content of the posts were found to be:

- *FNB* generated: post included new or improved services and products, warnings on scams and fraudulent activities, notes, events, event photos, responses to queries and complaints and so on. There were also posts that were commented on as well as posts that were not commented on.
- User-generated: positive and negative. Users either praised *FNB* as a brand or complimented services and products. There were also complaints about certain services and products, technical difficulties or a general dislike of the *FNB* brand. There were also posts that were commented on as well as posts that were not commented on.

The *FNB Facebook* profile has 8421 fans, 11 notes, 2 related *FNB* pages and 5 photo albums. These applications host only a few likes and comments.

- *Flickr*

Publicity photographs of the *FNB*'s 2010 World cup involvement as well as *FNB* brand photographs are hosted on the photo-sharing social media channel *Flickr*. The dedicated social media space introduced by *FNB* for *Flickr* is majorly a 2010 World Cup *Shine 2010* photostream which contains a total of 200 photographs and another two sets of photographs. The *Flickr* platform contains relevant content to users looking for more information or visuals of the 2010 World Cup. The links to this platform have been an important step to ensure that there are a number of relevant visuals on the platform in order

to make it a relevant site for readers to visit. *Flickr* is a relevant social media platform for *FNB*. This proved successful due to the build up towards the 2010 World Cup as well as other brand awareness campaigns *FNB* hosted. Content on the *Flickr* platform hosted only a few comments on the *Flickr* 2010 World Cup *Shine 2010* photostream. However, this social platform did not completely succeed in initiating in two-way communication; it did however succeed in making visual content available for any interested party.

- *Twitter*

The *FNB Twitter* site hosts (until 30 December 2010) 1645 followers and 3 356 Tweets. The main focus of the *Twitter* site is to assist their clients in any queries, problems and complaints. This social media platform is a great source for getting in touch with *FNB* immediately and directly when they experience problems. This allows for swift and immediate action from *FNB* in addressing the problems at hand.

While the majority of posts and comments are authored by social media users, *FNB* maintains a visible yet unobtrusive presence on the site by replying to user comments and questions posted through the tweets. Simultaneously, it succeeds in creating an impression of involvement and initiative without suggesting asymmetrical communication channels which would position *FNB* as the major controlling force of communication on the site. The *FNB Twitter* site also comes across as a channel specially created for *FNB* clients displaying the ideal element of *PR 2.0* –communication through the creation of two-way symmetrical, transparent communication between an organisation and its publics.

- *YouTube*

As seen in the section of tradition communication channels, the videos found on social media site *YouTube* are mostly advertisements that aired on television. These videos are difficult to find, as the search includes the *American First National Bank*. This section did not generate any relevant comment, so it did not succeed in two-way communication between *FNB* and its users.

However, the embedded *YouTube* videos on the *Shine 2010* site did generate two-way communication.

5.3.2.3.2 Message origins

From the content analysis performed on the contents of the social media platforms used by *FNB*, the following conclusions were drawn with regards to the origins of the messages:

- *Shine 2010*

The website hosts relevant information about the issues surrounding the 2010 World Cup. However, the posts and user comments on this site that fall within the research time frame were analysed to determine whether the messages were created by *FNB* and its representatives or by the general social media users.

Blog:

Of the 169 blog posts analysed, all of the posts were created by *FNB*. All of the blogs were created by *FNB*, and were focused around the World Cup and related National matters, for example:

- Planes, trains and awesomeness!
- A World Cup should go to the roadwork's crews
- Taking the world into our hearts (and homes)

There were no comment generated for any of the blog posts published on the site, but users were able to share the content on other social media platforms.

Embedded *YouTube* Videos:

The total embedded *YouTube* videos are 48. *FNB* also generated the videos found on the *Shine 2010* website. These were also focused around the World Cup and related National matters, for example:

- Greenpoint stadium will be ready for the 2010 World Cup.
- Kudzuzela, the dawning of a new South African icon.
- The inspiration behind the 2010 World Cup.

These embedded videos generated 398 user generated comments, which allowed for various topics of conversations, opinions and topic related views to occur. It is evident that *FNB* did not participate during the conversation, but allowed for users to voice themselves about the topic covered in the respective video.

Podcasts

The section that hosted the podcast generated 21 items and received a total of 63 comments. The content here was also generated by *FNB*, with the same aim to educate and inform their users of the World Cup and National issue, for example:

- Should prostitution be legalised for the 2010 World cup?

- Amajobjob – innovative products for 2010 aim to lift South Africans out of poverty
- Rent your house out during the 2010 World Cup.

Similar to the embedded *YouTube* videos, *FNB* did not participate in the dialogue. Users were able to comment and converse with other users about the related topic.

So, with regards to the *Shine 2010* website, the content was authored by *FNB*. The social media user was allowed to participate in the generated content, whereas *FNB* had no visible presence after the content was generated. The site succeeds in creating an impression of involvement and initiative but it does however suggest an asymmetrical communication channels which would position *FNB* as the major controlling force of communication on the site's content.

- *Facebook*

Wall posts and comments were analysed as part of the communication content from the *FNB* page on *Facebook*. The *FNB* page was created by the organisation and monitored by RB Jacobs, the posts uploaded by this individual is considered as *FNB*-controlled messages.

FNB generated 49 posts of which accumulated a total of 618 user-generated comments, and the user generated post were 154 posts and had 169 *FNB* and User generated comments. The *Facebook* social media platform thus provides sufficient space for user-generated content, and the platform actively engage with its users. In the case of *FNB*, *Facebook* provides much greater interaction opportunities through its potential for users to upload wall posts, links, photographs, videos and engage in discussions, yet users display the low levels of participation that the previously mentioned social media platforms do.

This may in part be due to the fact that users rather make queries about banking related matters, comment on *FNB* and other user-generated content, or, from what is evident, either praise or complain about *FNB* products and services. The *FNB Facebook* page stimulates and provides motivation for interaction on a regular basis, furthermore the page is constantly monitored and new content is uploaded.

While the majority of wall posts and comments are authored by the social media users, *FNB* maintains a visible and constructive presence on the site by replying to user comments and questions posted through the wall posts or comments. This involvement by *FNB* is very beneficial to the brand and the *Facebook* page's reputation as it creates the impression that *FNB* is in touch with the needs of its customers. *FNB's Facebook* page thus comes across as a channel specially created for their consumers displaying the ideal element of *PR 2.0* –communication through the creation of two-way symmetrical, transparent communication between an organisation and its publics.

- *Flickr*

Much like the *YouTube* channel created by a user, *Flickr* also hosts a user profile which displays the content uploaded by the particular *Flickr* user him- or herself. The *Flickr* photostream for *Shine 2010 World Cup* is linked the *FNB Shine 2010* website and displays the content uploaded by *FNB* as a corporate body and *Flickr* user.

All photographs on the *Shine 2010 World Cup* photostream are *FNB* generated content, whereas the potential comments by other social media users using the *Flickr* channel would be classified as social media user-generated content.

In terms of the *Flickr* social media platform, 200 photographs are *FNB*-generated content while no relevant social media user-generated content exists as there are no relevant comments on any of the 200 uploaded photographs.

The *Flickr* social media platform therefore performs the poorest in terms of its interaction of social media users to participate in conversation about the 2010 World Cup. However, *Flickr* remains a useful public relations tool for the hosting of high resolution photographs for all stakeholder purposes.

- *Twitter*

The *FNB Twitter* site hosts 1645 followers and 3 356 Tweets. The main focus of the *Twitter* site is to assist their clients in any queries, problems and complaints. This social media platform is a source for getting in touch with *FNB* immediately and directly when they experience problems. This allows for swift and immediate action from *FNB* in addressing the problems at hand.

The majority of posts and comments are authored by social media users. *FNB* maintains a visible presence on the site and replies to user comments and questions posted through the tweets. The social media platform succeeds in creating involvement and initiative and suggests symmetrical communication channels which would position *FNB* as mutual communicator on the site. The *FNB Twitter* site comes across as a channel specially created for *FNB* clients displaying the ideal element of *PR 2.0* –communication through the creation of two-way symmetrical, transparent communication between an organisation and its publics.

5.3.2.3.3 Message tone

An analysis of all relevant content from the social media platforms revealed the following dominant message tones for each of the *FNB* social media platforms. The following social media platforms hosted the most relevant information:

- *Shine 2010*
 - *Facebook*
 - *Twitter*
- *Shine 2010*

In the case of message tone, the 'blog' section was elimination, as it did not generate any comments.

Embedded *YouTube* Videos:

Of the 48 embedded videos analysed, relating to *FNB* (which excludes spam and foreign language posts) a total of 7 videos posts displayed the most comments towards the content created by *FNB*. These posts appear to create a debate around the topic of the video. The tone varied from positive to negative.

As mentioned before, the embedded video entitled *Greenpoint stadium will be ready for the 2010 World Cup* accumulated 304 posts.

Negative message tones include:

- What?? Green point??? THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY AFRICAN NAME SUITABLE FOR IT??
- Doesn't look like the stadium will be ready in time!

Positive message tones include:

- Instead of focusing on an African name for Green Point, we should be rallying around South Africa getting this stadium ready - simple as that.
- The stadium is great but is far away from ekasi where many mzantsi soccer supporters stay. I'm looking beyond 2010, guys!
- Great progress has been made. I can see the stadium closing up now from where I'm sitting...It will be done by 2010 that's for sure. Soccer is brewing in the WC I don't think it will be as empty as we think it will. I think the WC soccer body can appeal to SAFA or League organisers to send a few matches this side for a change. Not sure how successful we'll be after what my team did at Newlands...
- I think people are confused. The stadium remains on schedule for December 2009 completion as it has been since day 1. The stadium is 88 days ahead of its initial contractual completion date. The roof and facade will be complete by end September with the pitch ready mid-October. There are no schedule issues. The stadium already has an operator i.e. SAIL/Stade de France who will run the stadium post 2010. Three test events are planned before the 2010 kick-off with many other exciting ventures planned after the World Cup.
- Let's all just leave the negativity -being realistic is good but let's adopt a more positive and "CAN DO" attitude-it goes a long way!!
- Very nice site!

(*Shine 2010*)

Another video, entitled *Kuduzela, the dawning of a new South African icon*, accumulated 31 comments:

Negative message tones include:

- So the world will watch #SA elitists blow their poncey #kuduzelas at sanitised #WC2010, just to satisfy Fifa, our new football overlords who must be obeyed at all times. The real #vuvuzela-blowing loyal #SA soccer fans are sidelined again. But it doesn't matter. The average soccer-mad SA soccer supporter who pay their hard-earned money week in and week out won't be able to go to the games anyway! Nice one, Danny Jordaan and FNB (How can we NOT help you?)
- Please, people, think of the KUDUS! Save a Kudu, buy a Vuvu today.
- You're all missing the point here. The man-in-the-street and woman-in etc who spend their hard-earned cash week in and week out going to PSL games and passionately blowing their vuvuzelas are being sidelined by the Fifa big brass who want to sanitise the World Cup and make it more palatable for the world's telly watchers who don't usually spend a cent on football or follow a team. They will take the passion out of the beautiful game and spoil it for those who really care about it. It's elitist marketing bollocks and I'm sick of ponces and banks who ambush the big money-spinning tournaments and sideline the ever-loyal fans. To *FNB* (and *FFTB*, who is too much of a wuss to give his/her real name): How can you help me? By sticking to banking and reducing my bank charges. Drop the schmarketing ploys and leave football to The People - who can't afford to bank with you.
- A really cool idea... needs to be promoted MUCH better... i'm afraid this "low-budget" video will not make the cut. sorry.
- Kuduzela??? Just the name itself sounds pathetic. Europeans sing at the their matches, South Africans blow their Vuvuzela's at soccer matches and wi'll continue to do so!!!!
- No thanks! we already have the vuvuzela, try that at other sporting codes..soccer is already sorted..Dankie!
- but why ? but why? why why why?
- *FNB*, as a loyal customer who has been with you for years I am disgusted with this and your attempt to change our soccer culture just because the current one doesn't please you and doesn't put money into yours and your acquaintances back pocket. How dare you think you can COPY something that has been in effect (and absolutely loved by true supporters) for over a decade and try change it a year before the world cup. No doubt you will try use your influences to 'blackball' the Vuvuzela completely and only allow these into stadiums. This is cultural intolerance at its worst and consider me an ex-customer.
- Its like choosing the lesser of two evils. Please ban the vuvuzela and ban the kuduzela. Are there no uniquely african songs to sing? Why use an instrument that's sole purpose is to make a monotonous noise. At least blow it at a specific time. I want to go football games but I HATE THE NOISY VUVUZELA!

Positive message tones include:

- I don't see what the fuss is about - i mean with eh vuvuzela.....I have been going to the stadium since i was 9 years old and believe me the more i hear the vuvuzela the more I want to go in...It draws you to the stadium.....Forget your kuduzela please. Vuvuzela will stay please!!! Enough already
- Hey, the purpose of the KUDUZELA is to SAVE Kudus - it's an injection-moulded replica made with recycled plastic and a percentage of the manufacturing price goes to a SANParks

conservation project. Will FNB make money from it - no, but it will be used to drive prepaid airtime purchases... and yes, I am from FNB ;-)

- I support the KUDUZELA...it is made largely of recycled material and SANParks and our animals are going to benefit, so all in all it seems like a win win situation...a better sounding instrument that will use "waste" saving us from a bit of landfill and to the benefit of our animals. FNB place a drum outside each branch for your customers and others to deposit suitable plastic items used in the manufacturing process!!!!
- Can't you all see the bigger picture here? It is a great initiative. It changes the mundane and brings additional sounds to the stadium. Why are you all so negative? We live in a rainbow nation; let's think out side of the box. We have 11 different languages so let's have 11 different sounds in the stadium! Well done FNB. I think you have put some great thought into this and the fact that a charity will be benefiting from this is great.
- Kuduzela - Vuvuzela. What is the difference. The point is to make a lot of noise. The added initiative to preserve our wildlife is a great idea. I don't think FNB is trying to take away the Vuvuzela. As a consumer, I love having choice. Now I can choose which one I want to take to the game. I think I will take both, I would love to be able to join in to both sounds, maybe even make one of my own to bring my own unique sound. FNB has always given me a Choice in investment and banking options, as have the butcher in my preference in meat. Thank you *FNB* for giving me a choice in what I want at a soccer match.

(Shine 2010)

The overall tone in this particular video is negative, with users expressing their general dislike of the product, since it makes an unbearable noise. However, the analysis indicates that there is a balance between the negative and positive tones of the comments. The comments, however, do reflect a negative view of *FNB* as an organisation, as many of the users indicate that it is a 'money-making' initiative of *FNB*.

Podcasts:

Of the 21 podcasts analysed relating to *FNB* (which excludes spam and foreign language posts), a total of 3 videos posts displayed the most comments towards the content created by *FNB*. These posts appear to also create a debate around the topic. The tone was found to be more against the topic than for it. The podcast entitled '*Should prostitution be legalised for the 2010 World Cup*' accumulated 39 posts.

Negative message tones include:

- no..no...no....
- @USER I think to some extent some of these women enjoy it, I don't see whats wrong with that?
- I think its a good idea and will be practice is a safer enviroment. its about time lets go legal and give the girls code names for tax returns. unfortunately with one good thing came a bad thing the law must take it cause on human trafficking
- I don't support it because this will spread more diseases
- No no no, from a man's spoit of view "YES" Just imagine television adverts, pamphlets and radio adverts advertising Ikuku for sale.. that will be very BAD
- No ways prostitution,drugs,illegal weapons,alcohol goes together.Ubuntu is at stake.Never! Never!

- No Never what kind of good person would use or except that .there is enough abuse on woman and children in SA ,why add more .whats next lets legalise drugs because that what these people use to
- This is insane, It should not even be considered. This women should look for other jobs(car wash)will do for them
- these thing is totally insane women should just try and think of something else
- it should be legalised that is how they make money
- no prostitution is bad and it will bring our country down it is very dirty it should not be legalised
- big no no no ,women are our mothers we can't sell them for price or what so ever to make a living. let respect them for what they are. never sell them for any amount
- A BIG NO
- Prostitution should Not be legalised.God created us in His own Image.Our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.Let's unite and come against Prostitution in our Land
- I think prostitution should not belegalised because this will incourange young generation to sleep around for money and this will ruin their future, because they wont dream big
- NO.....NO.....NO I DONT THINK ITS A GOOD IDEA FOR IT TO BE LEGALISED WHY SHOULD SOUTH AFRICA DO WHAT OTHER CONTRIES DO TO WOMAN I DONT THINK ITS A GOOD IDEA AT ALL NEVERTHELESS MONEY OR NO MONEY ITS NOT OKAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- PLSE GOVERNMENT DON'T LEGALISE IT BETTER CREATE OTHER JOBS FOR THEM .LADIES YOU ARE THE BOBY OF CHRIST PLSE DON'T DO THAT .
- wtf? no prostitution should not be legalized!!!! what are we teaching our kids? to have no respect for ourselves. There are other women who have it bad but they find jobs, not degrade themselves. It's also not respecting the FIFA because these women are showing disrespect for their country.
- prostitution makes women feel dirty, it should not be legalised. women must look for the things to do or find other jobs.....this is really crazy.
- to all those in favour of prostitution been legalized think again because that lady could be your mother ,sister or granny on the street
- no no no it should not be legalized

Positive message tones include:

- Prostitution should be legalized - period.
- What an awesome job, these women get paid to have sex!
- YES, why not!!
- The state has no business interfering with what happens between consenting adults.The ciminilization of prostitution has deprived women of rights (such as the right to go to the cops for protection), consumed law enforcement resources better spent on violent crime and laid women open to exploitation.Morally, and reasonably, prostitution MUST be legalized - for the sake of the women involved in the industry.
- Yes, oh yes..because those poor girls are hopeless of life and what happens to be what they reffer to as what puts bread in their table without hurting or killing anyone in the process is seen as illegal practise and please, don't come here talking about morals, that doesn't bring bread on the plate, if we legalised gay and *** marriages, we might as well legalise prostitution!
- let's make money and let's do it officially this time.....
- yes, why not? Prostitution is seen as one of the oldest professions in history
- Prostitution has been going on since before the common era. It is the oldest profession known to mankind. Legalise it.
- closer n closer to becoming the city of my dreams----> amsterdam

- i think it should be legalized,
- i think yes prostitution should be legalized-in that case the will be less rape cases.

(Shine 2010)

The user-generated comments reflect a debate about a very serious South African topic. It is rather evident that the content motivated users to converse with each other in order to voice their opinions about the topic presented by *FNB*.

- *Facebook*

The tone of the *Facebook* wall posts that falling within the designated research time frame on the *FNB Facebook Page* range from the following:

155 wall posts created by social media users (excluding *FNB*-generated wall posts) and falling within the research time frame a total of 50 wall posts were positive in tone, while another 30 were negative in tone and the other 57 were queries. From these wall posts, 169 comments were accumulated by *FNB* and other users. Examples of these are the following:

Positive User-generated Posts:

User: Wow just downloaded FNB connect!!! Can do int calls at 25c per minute!! [thanks] FNB now can chat to my friend wayawayaya :-)

Comments:

- User: Ish...yenzeka kulama phone enu kphela?
- User: Don't think so hey! it's 4 FNB clients
- User: Okay..will check it tomorrow..sengphumile
- User: FNB only - u will have to Switch!
- User: Yep

User: I won a BB Torch! :D thank you FNB!

Comments:

- User: wow

User: Remember that brilliant FNB advert with a sheep herding a group of Border Collies, and the song "Who Let the Dogs Out" - I wish you'd put it on YouTube.

User: FNB ROCKZ!!!!

Negative User-generated Posts:

User: Went to change my account today. Was told I mustn't take a smart account, but rather a cheque acc and pay R90/month. Really, FNB, R90/month when I draw money twice a month and have no debit orders? Please teach your staff there are other accounts, and not just cheque accounts.

User: fnb tembisa plaza has the worst service ever,how does a bank operate without a branch manager or sumone acting for that matter,iv been standing in the queue that has no more than 10 people for more than an hr and this is just to get a new card.there's one 1 person working and she's also just dragging her feet.....:-(

User: why do fnb charge so much money? I'm angry because i'm a student and fnb charge me close to 200r every month and that makes me not to afford the rent, food and transport to school. Maybe it will be better if i quit banking with fnb.

Comments:

- **FNB:** hi there. why don't I get someone to call you and work out a better way to bank with us? pls email me your contact details? rbjacobs@fnb.co.za
- **User:** [thanks] i wil

(Facebook 2010)

While the *Facebook* dedicated social media platform contains messages that are mostly positive in tone, the use of the platform is adequate to gain optimum advantage from this positive tone. The case of negative interaction between *FNB* and the subscribers of the *FNB Facebook* page is fluid and convincing and the platform does display the clear elements of two-way communication. *FNB* proves to maintain their visible presence on the *Facebook* platform, as they comment on almost all queries and negative wall posts in order to assist their users wherever possible. The high and frequent levels of participation by users of the social media platform, illustrates that the social media platform is:

- Actively used by users, i.e. user-generated content
- Constant conversations occur between user and the organisation (as well as other users)

These elements can be seen in *FNB* generated content. Of the 49 *FNB* generated wall post, 618 comments were made. These ranged from further queries about the post, as well as negative and positive responses. A steep influx occurred when *FNB* hosted competitions, as the most comments were recorded from the 3rd of December 2010 with the launch of the *FNB* Mobile site. Examples of these are the following:

***FNB* generated Posts:**

FNB: SA Temporarily Abroad: Any resident who has departed from South Africa to any country outside the Common Monetary Area, with no intention of taking up permanent residence in another country.

Comments:

- User: Do tell more...
- User: Time period?
- FNB: SA Temporarily Abroad:

An FNB consultant will take care of all aspects relating to the banking needs. This ranges from opening resident accounts, cross border transactions as well as any exchange control compliance issues. We can open accounts for you prior to your return to South Africa.

When applying for an FNB account, a Consultant will send you full application forms which you will need to complete and send back.

You will need to include the following documents:

Latest proof of income (overseas)

Clear certified copy of your green bar-coded RSA identity document OR a valid passport
Proof of residency (a certified copy of latest utility bill reflecting your current residential address details)

3 months' latest bank statements from your overseas bank

The process

When the completed forms and the requested documents are faxed or emailed an account will be opened*.

You will then be able to deposit money (a deposit must be made within the first three months in order to ensure activation of the account); however, you will only be able to withdraw money from this account once the original documents have been viewed and authenticated in terms of FNB's 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) requirements, and signed copies have been placed on record.

* Qualifying Criteria and Terms and Conditions apply

Contact Details

To speak to one of our consultants

While in South Africa, dial 011 352 5025

- **User:** I have been workin outside SA for many years and not taken permanent residency?
- **User:** That is gud news for the residents living abroad!!

FNB: FNB Economics provides economic and financial data and comment on the performance of the South African economy as well as the global economy.

Comments:

- **User:** If the source of data is FNB then we hope we are secured to walk the path safe of life. I trust FNB
- **User:** There is not something amazing about South-African economy . They just know how to manage the simplex system and incrising the banking payment that why the currencies and exchange rates of south Africa is stable . That all !
- **User:** @Patrice,I tend to differ with you .I am not an expert in economy, The whole world is looking at South Africa, both political and economical. We have big guys here with big brain, it might look simple but trust me South Africa has great influence in the growth of the whole continent (Africa).I admire ANC policy...

(Facebook 2010)

- *Twitter*

The *FNB Twitter* site hosts 1645 followers and 3 356 Tweets (at the end of the research timeframe). As mentioned before, the main focus of the *Twitter* site is to assist their clients in any queries, problems and complaints. This social media platform is a source for getting in touch with *FNB* immediately and directly when they experience problems. This allows for swift and immediate action from *FNB* in addressing the problems at hand.

The majority of posts and comments are authored by social media users and RB Jacobs who respond to these 'tweets'. Examples of how *FNB* handles these queries are as follow:

- @[User](#): You will not receive rewards on Petrol Card linked to your Cheque Acc. More info - www.fnbfuelrewards.co.za via [TweetDeck in reply to User](#)
- @[User](#): Mail me at RBJacobs@FNB.co.za via [TweetDeck in reply to User](#)

- @User: Strange, and you using *120*321# , can you email me your contact number Plz. via [Slandr Mobile Twitter in reply to User](#)
- @User: Great to hear! ;-) via web [in reply to User](#)
- @User: Was this at the Clearwater branch? What happened? Plz mail me the details so i can investigate. via web [in reply to User](#)
- @User: Hi, tweeted you this morning, anything I can assist with? via web [in reply to User](#)

(Twitter 2010)

FNB maintains a visible presence on the site and replies to user comments and questions posted through the tweets. The *FNB Twitter* site displays the ideal element of *PR 2.0* – communication through the creation of two-way symmetrical, transparent communication between an organisation and its publics.

From the content analysis of the message origins and tones of the communication on the *FNB* social media channels were identified along with social media users' participation behaviour and attitudes towards social media content. The analyses showed that the *Shine 2010* website, *FNB Facebook* page and *FNB Twitter* channels were the most successful in stimulating social media users' interest. The conversations on these social media platforms also reflect the relevant discussions advocated by the *FNB*. The *Flickr* and the YouTube channel, however, were largely unsuccessful in stimulating, hosting and sustaining user-generated conversation about the content on the platforms.

5.3.3 *FNB* Case study summary

The *FNB* social media platforms provide the space for social media users to converse about the *FNB* brand and *FNB* services and products, as well as events and competitions. From the content analysis of relevant texts on these platforms it was found that the selection and use of social media platforms by *FNB* was not entirely successful.

The *FNB Shine 2010* website was successful as most of the social media elements (embedded *YouTube* videos and Podcast) created an opportunity for conversation to take place on this channel. Although the comments left on the posts were negative in a number of cases, *FNB's* contribution of content on the videos and podcast helped to steer users to interact and converse with each other. Also, in allowing negative commentary on the two sections, *FNB* created the impression of a willingness to acknowledge and listen to user's opinions. Social media users demonstrate a clear involvement in the participation of the content for the videos and podcasts, thus making space for it where users feel involved with the brand. If not for the end of the World Cup and the participation of *FNB* on the user

comments, this platform would have become one of the most valuable resources for *FNB* in the social media spectrum.

The *Facebook* and *Twitter* social media platforms are the most successful platforms on the social media spectrum. These two platforms enable both *FNB* and Users to communicate in a two-way symmetrical manner. These two platforms present an immediate and real-time contact point for *FNB* and the social media user. The *Facebook* page hosts *FNB* generated content, which users can use to educate themselves on the latest products/services, news, events and competitions, and thus further query about the topic or add their opinion. The page also hosts user-generated content, whereby users can compliment, complain and query, thus enabling *FNB* to respond directly with the user to resolve any conflicts and problems.

The *Twitter* page, however, is especially designed for technical and service/product queries. This enables users to also contact *FNB* on an immediate and real-time basis to resolve any problems they may encounter. By nurturing and constantly monitoring these two platforms, *FNB* can communicate with its clients directly in a more convenient manner.

The *YouTube* and *Flickr* platforms were less successful due to the lack of interaction potential between the organisation and social media users. The *Flickr* platform had 200 relevant photographs and *YouTube* only made television advertisements available. *Flickr* remains a useful platform for the hosting of high resolution print-ready photographs, and, if applied more creatively, would prove to be an excellent public relations tool.

In the case of *YouTube*, it would have been wise to follow the example of the *Shine 2010* website and rather have *FNB* related videos embedded on social media platforms, such as *Facebook*, or have a link to direct users to the *YouTube* site to view the relevant video.

5.4 Summary

In summary, it has been found that three of the social media platforms used by *FNB* did stimulate user-generated conversations about *FNB*'s services/products, news, events and competitions. Close monitoring of the social media platforms needs to continue as well as *FNB* generated stimulation to motivate conversation on stagnant content. The creation of a presence on the *Facebook* and *Twitter* platforms and content for platforms has been more beneficial to the *FNB*. Social media channels are thus useful tools, but a level of intelligent creator-generated input is needed where necessary to stimulate and steer conversations about desired topics, as well as monitor any user-generated content and comments.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In conclusion of this research study, this chapter will provide an outline of the research findings including the limitations encountered during the study, the primary conclusions drawn from the data analysis and the recommendations that can be made based on these conclusions. Recognising that the research performed in this study reflects only a diminutive portion of the potential research within the field of social media and public relations, additional areas for future research are highlighted.

6.2 Limitations encountered during the study

Minor limitations were encountered during the study. However, these limitations did not affect the course of the research. Limitations encountered related to the content analysis include:

- The unpredictable nature of signal from my service provider resulted in research time being lost, as the signal dropped and denied being reconnected. This problem was addressed by contacting my service provider, who gave me a software update.
- The availability of some online text was also unpredictable, as some saved links did not want to respond or load. This problem was addressed by either re-researching the webpage or researching a similar text.

These limitations were manageable and effectively did not affect the course of the research or the results thereof.

6.3 Summary of research

This study gave insights into the field of public relations research in South Africa. Investigating the use of the social media as a communication tool to initiate social media conversations about a brand, product or service, the study also focused its research on the extent to which the social media platforms succeeded in motivating and hosting user-generated conversations about the brand, product or service advocated by these particular dedicated social media platforms.

The study aimed to provide insights into the way in which South African social media users interact with the social media platforms created as part of social media strategy. In addressing the research aim a set of research objectives helped guiding the development of the research. The research objectives addressed in the study include:

- Identifying how public relations can encourage dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders by using social media.
- Determining consumers' and organisations' behaviour with social media applications and websites.
- Testing researched data with the Grunig and Hunt two-way symmetrical model and apply the *First National Bank* case study to test that the proposed theory is successful.

To fulfil the research objectives and answer the research question, a case study was compiled, reflecting the social media platforms used by *FNB*. The social media platforms used by *FNB* included *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Flickr*, *YouTube* and other viral marketing initiatives. The case study consisted of the results of the content analysis performed on the contents of the dedicated social media platforms identified as part of literary review as well as the results of a research found among the conversations that took place on the dedicated social media platforms identified in the case study.

6.4 Research conclusions and recommendations

From the literature review and results of the case study compiled and analysed during the study, a number of conclusions and recommendations were made which may help guide the future use of social media and social media strategies. A number of findings relating to communications professionals' application of social media in South Africa were identified. These recommendations are accordingly discussed:

6.4.1 Social media conversations

Well managed social media platforms can be a useful tool for the initiation of conversations among social media users; however, the effective distribution of the conversations and monitoring of the social media platforms is crucial.

Roughly half of the social media platforms linked to *FNB* succeeded in hosting topic-relevant user-driven conversations about the brands, products and services advocated by *FNB*. The conversations on the social media platforms introduced by *FNB* strongly reflected the communication themes. *Facebook* and *Twitter* platforms were the most successful in hosting user-generated conversation.

The *Flickr* and *YouTube* platforms showed the least interaction between social media users and the organisations. Although the *Flickr* and *YouTube* platforms showed low levels of participation between *FNB* and the social media users, it does not warrant the dismissal of the channels, because both of these platforms have the potential of being used advantageously in a social media strategy if applied and managed correctly.

Although the conversations on the social media platforms for the case study may have been in line with the topic promoted by *FNB*, the disposition of the conversations were not always positive. *FNB*'s dedicated social media platforms in particular do generate negative commentary by social media user, which may reflect poorly on *FNB*'s services and conduct. This was evident in the case of *Twitter* and *Facebook*. However, *FNB* successfully address these problems by responding. By responding and managing the comments left in response to these social media platforms *FNB* will divert the potential for negative users to negatively influence other social media users' perception of the brand and the product.

The *FNB* dedicated social media platforms do however reflected positive conversation about the brand and services, although some of the platforms, including *YouTube* and *Flickr* did not succeed in generating observable conversations about the brand by social media users on the platforms. These platforms, if not used for the creation of two-way communication among social media users, remain important tools for marketing of *FNB* brand initiatives. So, minor changes to the management of the platforms may help increase social media users' activity on the platforms.

The *FNB* dedicated social media platforms, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* show that the social media spaces are being utilised by social media users and provide an opportunity for contact between *FNB* and their potential customers. It can be said that social media users actively search for different platforms to connect with the organisations on social media channels, which is an indication of a demand for these platforms.

6.4.2 Recommendations

From the research conducted, further recommendations can be made relating to each of the social media platforms used in the social media strategies followed by *FNB*:

Facebook was found to be the most popular social media tool among users. Text, links, photographs and videos can all be combined on a single platform. Public relations practitioners should thus help stimulate conversations on the platform if the platform becomes stagnant. By regularly updating useful and relevant content on the platform, it will help the platform feature more prominently in social media users' feeds when using the channel.

YouTube can also be a popular social media channels, although this channel primarily functions as a marketing tool with results being difficult to predict. *YouTube* is mostly useful in that it can be shared on other social media channels and provides the opportunity for rich content promotion through video. However, videos uploaded onto the *YouTube* channel must be carefully selected and the commentary must be monitored.

Flickr is certainly a useful channel to host high resolution media photographs. However, South African users appear not to favour engaging with the channel, and are more likely to upload their photographs to a platform, for instance *Facebook*. Also, by using a platform such as *Facebook*, the organisation can also share and use the photographs uploaded by users easily and widely for a greater amount of applications than on the *Flickr* channel. Yet, by creatively using the *Flickr* channel public relations practitioners could persuade more users to engage with it by creating a *Flickr* group where users can submit their photographs, instead of only having a profile with creator-generated photographs for users to comment on.

Twitter provides an opportunity for an organisation to keep users updated about the new developments, activities, products and services. *Twitter* as a micro-blogging channel provides the space for communicators to share brief bits of information multiple times per day. Social media users in South Africa are becoming more at ease with *Twitter* and public relations practitioners should remember that *Twitter* is unlikely to be successful as a tool unless it is supported by other social media channels as part of an integrated social media strategy. *Twitter* can function as a useful tool to promote content such as the organisational web page, *YouTube* videos or competitions across social media channels (as seen with *FNB's* mobile site – users have to search the mobile site for dot in order to enter the competition) do not initiate the opportunity to host conversation about a topic on the organisation's profile. *Twitter* does provide the space for direct and real-time interactivity between social media users and a representative (such as *FNB's* RB Jacobs) of the organisation. Public relations practitioners must therefore be aware that *Twitter* entails considerable input from the public relations practitioner or representative in order to ensure consistently updated tweets and promptly respond to enquiries directed through the organisations *Twitter* account.

However, Grunig (2009) specifies that in some ways, public relations have not been changed by the revolution in digital media. Many public relations practitioners for a long time have had the illusion that they could choose their publics, control the messages received by their publics, control the cognitive interpretations publics form about organisations, and persuade publics to change their attitudes and behaviours. He also states that “our descriptive theories have shown for many years that publics create themselves and control the messages” (Grunig 2009; 15) to which the public is exposed to. It has been evident that publics shape their own representation and behaviours.

Grunig (2009) theorises that his global theory is a normative theory that argues that public relations will be most effective throughout most parts of the world when it follows the generic principles and applies them with appropriate variations for local cultural, political,

social, and economic conditions. These principles can be incorporated in the social media strategy of a respective organisation. These essential principles can be summarised as:

- *Empowerment of public relations:*
The chief communication officer is part of or has access to the dominant coalition or other coalitions of senior managers who make decisions in the organisation.
- *Integrated communication function:*
Excellent departments integrate all public relations functions into a single department or have a mechanism to coordinate the departments responsible for different communication activities.
- *A separate management function:*
Many organisations splinter the public relations function by making it a supporting tool for other departments such as marketing, human resources, law, or finance. When the function is sublimated to other functions, it cannot move communication resources from one strategic public to another as it becomes more or less important—as an integrated function can.
- *Headed by a strategic manager rather than a communication technician or an administrative manager who supervises technical services:*
Technicians are essential to carry out day-to-day communication activities. However, excellent public relations units have at least one senior manager who directs public relations programmes. Should this not be the case, direction will be provided by members of the dominant coalition who have no knowledge of public relations.
- *Involved in strategic management:*
Public relations develops programmes to communicate with strategic publics, both external and internal, who are affected by the consequences of organisational decisions and behaviours and who either demand or deserve a voice in decisions that affect them—both before and after decisions are made.
- *Two-way and symmetrical communication:*
Two-way, symmetrical public relations use research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflict and to cultivate relationships with both internal and external strategic publics' more than one-way and asymmetrical communication.
- *Diverse:*
Effective organisations attempt to increase the diversity in the public relations function when the diversity in their environments increases. Excellent public relations include both men and women in all roles, as well as practitioners of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
- *Ethical:*

Public relations departments practice ethically and promote ethical and socially responsible organisational decisions and behaviours.

(Grunin 2009; 2)

Regarding the social media channels discussed, basic concerns should be kept in mind when using the channels as platforms for the interaction between an organisation and social media users, and these are the following:

- Monitor what is being said about the organisation: Organisations must remember that some of the conversations may be in praise of the organisation while others may not. Organisations should consider creating a series of *Google Alerts* that will notify them whenever the company is mentioned online.
- Organisations should promote their social media presence offline: This promotion includes for example:
 - the inclusion of a reference to social media platforms in traditional communication channels;
 - the inclusion of the mentioning of social media in employee e-mail signatures;
 - Inviting website visitors to connect via social media services.
- Organisations should address all queries and trouble-shooting on a real-time basis.
- Finding the right social media channel is vital. Not all social media channels will succeed in initiating conversation, thus having for instance two platforms that work, will ensure that the organisations public will engage and participate on those dedicated channels.

6.5 Opportunities for further research

The social media field and the Web are constantly changing and the public relations practitioner should adjust their approach to use of these tools in order to efficiently interact with their organisations' publics. This study focused on one of the many social media communications tools available to public relations practitioners, but the research had to evaluate social media as a *PR 2.0* tool although this has a much wider reach.

The study provided an overview of the use of the social media platforms as well as an in-depth look at the use of the social media to initiate and host conversation about a brand, product or service. It is acknowledged that while the research provides a useful perspective on the functioning of these communication tools in a South African context, further research in the field is required. This may include:

- An analysis of the use of social media by journalists gathering information in South Africa,
- A study of the perceptions of public relations professionals towards the social media channels as a communications tool,
- An investigation of the application of social media of consumers,
- An examination of the potential use of the social media as a further viral marketing tool,
- An analysis of consumer perceptions of brand communication in traditional communication channels versus social media channels,
- A competitive social media analysis between rival organisations in South Africa, and
- A critical analysis of organisation-generated content used in South Africa to sway public opinion about a brand or organisation.

6.6 Conclusion of the study

The traditional media flurry of so many practitioners has been replaced by a social media flurry. Each day public relation practitioners distribute “announcements of conferences, seminars, online discussions, publications, books, websites, and blogs” (Grunig 2009; 1). Grunig (2009) also notices that many practitioners have merely transferred their traditional media skills and techniques to social media. The new appeal concerning social media will have a positive outcomes for the public relations profession provided that social media is used to its full potential. Grunig believes that social media will inevitably make public relations practice more “global, strategic, two-way and interactive, symmetrical or dialogical, and socially responsible” (Grunig 2009; 1).

However, the symmetric two-way public relations approach does not make it imperative that two individuals in such a relationship can ever truly be equal. An organisation engaged in this form of public relations can attempt to disguise itself as part of an equal two-way relationship, but ultimately holds a considerable advantage in terms of communication-based power, and even if that power is not exercised, it nevertheless casts a shadow that will affect the reception of the communication by the organisations publics.

Although, Grunig attempted to redirect such criticism by arguing that "the modern environment allows consumers to take a much greater level of control, meaning that the traditional one-way method of discourse is replaced by the two-way process whereby companies and public relations agents have to listen to other opinions if they hope to remain relevant" (Grunig et al 1984; 37), but it's possible to argue that this is a simplistic reading of the mechanisms of public relations that fails to give due consideration to the ability of

companies to leverage what is terms "background power" (Davis 2007; 285), i.e. an unspoken degree of control over any given public relations situation.

Alternative strategies have emerged to challenge the domination of the two-way approach. Some of these "are developments of Grunig's basic formulation, and involve the deployment of powerful lobbying groups designed to critically alter the societal and cultural background against which decisions are made" (Davis 2007; 237).

To reach the two-way state as a profession, however, Grunig (2009) advises public relations practitioners and scholars to minimise the "extent to which the symbolic, interpretive paradigm of public relations affects their thinking and institutionalise public relations as a strategic management, behavioural paradigm" (Grunig 2009; 2). Social media provides tools that facilitate this paradigm shift. Thus, these media have the potential to truly revolutionise public relations—but only if a paradigm shift in the thinking of many practitioners and scholars takes place.

The two-way symmetrical model presented by Grunig and Hunt (1984) is extremely effective with the online tools available. However, Grunig (2009) advises that public relations, when practiced according to the above mentioned global theory, will help organisations to achieve their goals, cultivate relationships in societies as well as reduce conflict.

The ability to share and organise content has changed dramatically, and this approach towards social media translates into excellent communication. This will allow the respective organisation to achieve the best form of communication. I believe that technology will enable these tools to continuously change for better communication to better suit the organisations' needs and the online publics' preferences.

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