AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN MARKETING THE CORPORATE IMAGE IN SELECTED ORGANISATIONS

BY

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS TREATISE

PR	Public Relations
IPR	British Institute of public relations
PRISA	Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa
USA	United State of America
IPRA	International Public Relations Association
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
E- Mail	Electronic Mail
PTY:	Proprietary
LTD:	Limited
NPA	National Ports Authority
SAPO	South Africa Port Authority
IGR	Inter Governmental Relations
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
CSI	Corporate Social Investment

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[1] **http://www.nelsonmandelabay.gov.za/Content.aspx?objID=10**

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This work is dedicated to the memory of my late sister Adèle Mbuyi Lukusa, June 24th, 1984 - March 28th, 2006.

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DECLARATION

I, ADOLPHINE CAMA LUKUSA, in accordance with Rule G4.6.3, hereby declare that:

- This treatise is is the result of my own original work, and that this work has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University for another qualification.

- This research paper is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's degree in Media Studies.

- All sources used or referred to have been documented and recognized.

  I hereby give consent for my treatise, if accepted, to be made available for photocopying, for interlibrary loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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ABSTRACT

The profession of public relations has suffered negative associations and connotations as far as its role and practice are concerned. Alongside these, there are theories put forward within the field suggesting ways that could be used to assist public relations practitioners to become more successful in serving their organisations, marketing their organisation's corporate image as well as reversing public relations' negative legacy which has long existed as suggested by Steyn and Puth.

This treatise argues that the real situation of the practice of public relations, its roles and the successes of PR practitioners in marketing the corporate image of their organisation might differ from what theories proposed. Thus this study seeks and intends to correlate what has been theorized with current practice in the profession. In addition, this study reflects and corroborates public relations practitioners' roles in marketing the corporate image of organisations within the proposed new strategic role and through the existing traditional roles as compared to theory. Finally, this study also helps establish required changes to the traditional roles of the practitioners with the aim of reflecting the current situations in the existing selected organisations.

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the views and perceptions of public relations practitioners and managers of selected organisations were examined through a survey by questionnaire. This data was then analysed to determine their roles in marketing the corporate image of organisations in terms of the new strategic role and through the existing traditional roles as compared to theory.

The sample included public relations practitioners and chief executive officers of Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd , Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and Transnet National Ports Authority.
The findings seem to support the hypotheses of the study in concluding that:

- The strategic roles identified in theory such as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice, and
- Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations.

It is the hope of the researcher that, the findings of this investigation will set foundations for further research on the assessment and estimation of the practice of the public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of organisations.

CHAPTER ONE

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This opening chapter of the study is devoted to clarifying the research objectives, stating the problem and its significance, formulating the hypotheses, delimiting the study, defining key concepts and sketching the structure of the report.

In many government, parastatal and private organisations whether seeking profit or not in their operations, public relations practitioners and public relations practice play a very important role. As Rensburg and Cant (2003:34) indicate, public relations exist in every company and institution, irrespective of whether or not the company or institution wants it.

Within an organisation, activities such as phone calls, newsletters, public letters including its everyday encounter with its public to name only few form a perception and an image in its public's minds about the organisation. Various images come into the public minds based on how the organisation has identified itself to the public. If an organisation's portrayed identity does not coincide with the image perceived by its public, the organisation's reputation and corporate image might suffer and as a result this might also affect the management of the entire organisation.

The roles of public relations practitioners are thus very important and crucial in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public. These roles contribute to the development, the sustainability and a good functioning of the organisations. Public relations practitioners' roles also contribute to identifying, establishing and extending the organisation's sphere of influence. The practitioner's roles help in monitoring, controlling and establishing its corporate identity and corporate image.

At this stage of the study, it is important to define what an organisation is. Mersham and

Skinner (2002: 4) perceive an organisation as having two elements, which are people working together towards a common goal. People in an organisation fulfil different roles which are assigned to different levels. They are motivated by various aspects such as salaries, achievements, promotions and teamwork.

On the other side, an organisation, as Lubbe and Puth (1994: 2-3) suggest, is made up of a number of different groupings of people so-called publics, stakeholders or audiences, each with a specific relationship to the organisation. They additionally propose that an organisation's 'raison d'être' in society stems from its ability to meet the needs of each of these publics. They have also insisted that an organisation's credibility is based on how it is perceived to meet the needs of its various publics and those of the society as a whole. This perception is reflected in its public or corporate image. Simply stated, the combination of opinions of the organisation's public on how it meets the needs of the publics makes up its corporate image. The broader tasks of public relations are to listen to the opinions of the various publics, to interpret the information it receives and to evaluate the implications for organisational policies and actions, and finally to propose and implement changes.

Marketing the corporate image of an organisation is not an easy task that can be achieved in a day within an organisation by a public relations practitioner. Some industries, financial services, chemicals factories, nuclear utilities, etc. suffer from a serious (corporate) image problem. In the eyes of many, they are seen as exploiters, inefficient, having fat-cat bosses, etc. Varey (2002: 193).

As Morconi (1996: xviii) mentions, Walt Disney, Ralph Lauren, Ted Turner, John Sculley, Ross Perot, Lee Iacocca and Martha Stewart are a few of the names of people who have learned to master *I*mage *M*arketing for themselves and their companies. Others have tried with notable successes and failures.

Meanwhile, according to Dowling (1994: 8) quoted in Varey (2002: 195), corporate identity is the symbols (such as logos, colour scheme) that an organisation uses to

identify itself to people.

Since corporate image is sometimes deemed as the organisation reputation, therefore, reputation is considered by a growing number of management practitioners and scholars to be an intangible asset that enables the enactment of relationships among the corporation and their public. Sound ethical and responsible behaviour is not enough. Performance improvement must be communicated if a positive reputation is to be built and defended (Varey, 2002: 193).

According to Dozier and Grunig quoted in Grunig et al. (1992: 395), "Public relations must be placed high in the organisation hierarchy and must be practised strategically if it is to make the more effective and, thus, to be excellent".

Meanwhile, in many existing organisations the roles of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of the organisation to the public are taken for granted, neglected and even attributed to other departments within the organisations.

It should also be noted that, public relations' roles have become the subject of extensive research by public relations scholars. Roles define everyday activities of the public relations practitioners and practitioners roles are keys to understanding the functions of public relations in marketing the image of an organisation to the public. Practitioners' roles are at the nexus of a network of concepts affecting professional achievement of practitioners (Dozier and San Diego in Grunig et al. (1992: 328).

According to Kitchen (1997: 16), pubic relations practitioners fail to realise their full potential because of how their roles are perceived within organisations. He adds that the question whether public relations practitioners are allowed by management to fulfil their potential various roles played in organisations are considered, along with implications for the profession (Kitchen, 1997: 7).

According to sir Anthony Cleaver, chairman of IBM UK, quoted in Haywood (1994: 3),

public relations is a long term exercise; a reputation which is built over many years can be damaged in a second.

Up-and-coming South African organisations being in a Third World country need to bring development and sustainability within the country and build a good corporate identity and corporate image to the public. This key responsibility lies on the roles played by public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of these organisations

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This treatise attempts to reach the following objectives:

- To examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth;

- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public;

- To uncover and solve misconceptions (if any) around the issue of what the strategic role of public relations management means to public relations practitioners;

- To establish the most significant changes required to the traditional roles (such as expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem-solving facilitators and the newly discovered role of strategist) of public relations practitioners (if needed) in order to reflect the current and ideal situation of their role in South African organisations;

- Finally, to come up with sound recommendations concerning the roles of public relations in marketing the corporate image of an organisation.

1.3 AIM

The aim of this study is to examine, the value judgment and best practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of an organisation. This study will also investigate factors that affect a public relations practitioner while playing his/her role in marketing the corporate image of his/her organisation to the public and those that affect the practice of public relations within organisations.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Several theories on how the PR practitioners can market the image of their organisations exist. This study intends to correlate what has been theorised with current practice in the profession. The problem therefore lies in finding how PR practitioners market the corporate image of their organisations as compared to what has been theorised and how existing factors affect the success of these practitioners' endeavour.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE AND JUSTIFICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The great importance of this study is based on its likelihood to generate original data which will help highlight, correlate and utilise the existing theories to provide a real picture of PR practitioner's functions in marketing the corporate image of their respective current organisations.

In addition, this study will contribute to a better understanding of the current situation facing PR practitioners in terms of the newly discovered strategic role.

The findings of this investigation will also set foundations for further research on the assessment and estimation of the practice of the public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of organisations.

1.6 HYPOTHESES

This treatise will try to prove or disprove the following hypotheses.

i) Some public relations practitioners are not yet manifesting their role of strategists within Port Elizabeth organisations.

ii) The strategic roles identified in theory as being the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice.

iii) Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations.

iv) Public relations practitioners' success in accomplishing their roles of marketing the corporate image of an organisation depends on four fundamental roles which are:

      i) Communication technicians,

      ii) Expert prescribers,

      iii) Communication facilitators, and

      iv) Problem-solving facilitators.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will be delimited to South African government and private organisations in Port Elizabeth with a public relations department that has a minimum of five years of existence. The year limits have been adopted in order to target only experienced and relevant organisations.

Limitations of time, financial resources and accessibility of some vital potential respondents have in some way contributed to limiting this study to local organisations with a minimum of five years of existence. Nevertheless, it is expected that, the results of this investigation which was focused on the city of Port Elizabeth might give some insight or light and might reflect the overall situation in the country and can even be possibly extended to some Southern African countries.

Difficulty of access to some top level management within organisations may as well be anticipated. This will also add another challenging dimension to the research process.

The geographical and economic position of the city Port Elizabeth makes it practically difficult to come across organisations with headquarters based in Port Elizabeth.

1.8   THE DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following concepts which have a direct bearing on this study deserve defining so as to rule out possible misunderstanding.

1.8.1   Assessment

An assessment is a critical evaluation of information for purposes of guiding decisions on a complex, public issue.

1.82   Organisation

Within the field of corporate communication, the term organisation is preferred to alternative terms such as company, firm, corporation, enterprise, or business. An organisation is defined as a rational, goal-directed entity characterised by a structure of hierarchy, division of labour, policy procedures and rules (Seeger 1997: 9).

1.8.3   Organisational communication

Communication theoretically oriented, focusing on knowledge rather than skills. It concentrates predominantly organisation as a system and mostly follows a structural approach to studying communication in organisations (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 6).

1.8.4   Parastatal organisation

An organisation owned or controlled wholly or partly by the government.

1.8.5 Private organisation

A company whose ownership is private and, thus, does not need to meet the strict Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filing requirements of public companies.

1.8.6 Profession

An occupation or a career.

1.8.7 Professional

A person who is expert at his or her work or a person formally certified by a professional body of belonging to a specific profession by virtue of having completed a required course of studies and/or practice.

1.8.8 Practitioner

A person engaged in the practice of a profession, occupation, etc.

1.8.9 Product

It is defined as a set of tangible and intangible, attributes, including packaging, colour, price, quality and brand, plus the services and reputation of the sellers (Stantion et al., 1992: 188-190).

1.8.10 Public Relations / Corporate communications

"Public Relations is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders" (PRISA, 1998: 1).

1.8.11 Public/ Stakeholder

These two terms are often used when referring to a group of individuals who are influenced by or who influence the organisation (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 4).

1.8.12 Perception

Perception can be defined as "the process in which individuals arrange and interpret sensory impressions in order to make sense of their environment" (Smit and Cronje, 2002: 312).

1.8.13 Reputation

Reputation is a collection of perceptions and beliefs, both past and present, which reside in the consciousness of an organisation's stakeholders, its customers, suppliers, business partners, employees, investors, communities, regulators, governments, pressure groups, non-governmental organisations and the public at large (Rayner, 2003: 1).

1.8.14   Role

Role can be defined as a prescribed or expected behavior associated with a particular position or status in a group or organisation.

1.8.15 Strategy

Strategy can be defined as an organisation's pro-active response to an ever-changing environment: the instrument that enables an organisation to find synthesis between its goals and resources in view of the risks and challenging environment. It is an indication of an organisation's position for future, the rather than the how. It is also an approach, design, scheme or system that directs the course of action in a specific situation (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 29).

1.8.16 Strategist role

A strategic role is a corporate communication role played at the macro or top management level of an organisation (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 20).

1.8.17 Strategic Management

Strategic management is defined as the process whereby all the organisational functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies which are aligned with the environment, in order to achieve the long term objectives of the organisation and therefore gain a competitive advantage through adding value for the stakeholders (Ehlers and Lazenby, 2004: 2).

1.8.18 Third world countries

This is the term used to describe the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania.

1.8.19 Theory

A theory can be defined as a belief, policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into six chapters. Each chapter is related to a part of the research process.

Chapter Two presents an in-depth literature review and a discussion giving a brief synopsis of public relations and marketing corporate image. Aspects of both areas are discussed, with an emphasis on how they affect public relations practitioners. The issue of public relations' bad legacy is addressed. This is followed by a discussion on how public relations and public relations practitioners are viewed in organisations through their roles. The newly discovered role of public relations practitioners is discussed and its applications in organisations are then examined and a conclusion is provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter three comprises the discussion on elements affecting public relations practitioners in marketing corporate image, followed by marketing view of the corporate image. A discussion around the formation of corporate image and forming employee's corporate images shall also be presented. In addition, the processes of marketing any product will also be illustrated and then will come a conclusive part to the chapter.

Chapter Four depicts the research framework. The process and the strategies that exist for marketing corporate image of organisations are discussed. The specific research questions, the data collection methods and the sample selection process are presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five covers the qualitative data analysis and the presentation of results and discussion. The results of each company are discussed and reasons for the observed outcomes are revealed and examined; and where appropriate, the results are related to the works of other authors and other corporate social investment programmes.

Chapter six consists in summarizing the study, conclusions based on the interpreted

collected data. The recommendations for further use at tertiary institutions (within academic programmes) and companies practising corporate communication programmes shall be provided together with the final conclusions to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is mainly based on literature review and discussion of the concept of public relations or corporate communication, its perception within organisations and the negative legacy of public relations.

It attempts to assess how successful public relations practitioners are in marketing the corporate image of an organisation in comparison to what theory stipulates. Different aspects as elaborated by different scholars such as, factors creating pressure on public relations practitioners' performance within organisations, public relations in relation to other management functions; the importance of an organisation's structure, organisational classification according to function, where to locate public relations department within an organisation, public relations and practitioners nominations within organisations, and corporate image marketing shall be discussed.

In addition, concepts such as corporate image, identity, reputation, culture and super brand and the impact they have on the success of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of organisations will also be discussed.

Finally, the steps in the formation of the corporate image, the formation of employees' corporate images, and the concept of product marketing process will be examined. Allusion to how these processes play very important roles in the success of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of organisations shall be made and discussed.

2.2 DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS

Using the term public relations creates a variety of ideas in different people's minds. People use the term public relations to refer to many things, paying little attention to precise definitions.

The term 'public relations' is difficult to define. This has worried public relations practitioners and scholars throughout the history of the discipline. A number of definitions have been proposed, some of which are recognised by authoritative sources in public relations. Although the definitions are somewhat different from one another, what is common amongst all of them is the use of key terms such as management, organisation, communications, and publics.

The term 'public relations' is defined by Lattimore et al. (2004: 5) as a leadership and management function that helps achieve organisational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organisational change.

Cutlip et al. (2000: 6) in their turn define it as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends".

 Stanley (1982: 40) on the other hand also defines public relations similarly to Cutlip et al. as a "management function that determines the attitudes and opinions of the organisation's publics, identifies its policies with the interests of its publics, and formulates and executes a programme of action to earn the understanding and goodwill of its publics".

Meanwhile according to *Public Relations News*, one of several commercial newsletters serving the field, public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organisation which the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Cutlip et al., 1994: 3).

The British Institute of Public Relations (IPR) on its side suggests that public relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behaviour (Newsom et al., 2004: 2).

On the basis of all these definitions, the question that arises then is what exactly is meant by management function. Does this mean that public relations is equal to the management function or does it mean that public relations is equal to one of the management structures, branch or department?

To enlighten this question that many could be battling with and that, if not clearly understood, could mislead many in thinking and believing that, management function could mean this department within an organisation being considered or put at the top management level of an organisation. Particular attention should therefore be directed to Grunig and Hunt who came up with the most authoritative and prevailing definition. They described public relations as the management of communication between an organisation and its public (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 3).

This definition then dispels the confusion that could be extracted from previous definitions by making it clear that corporate communications or public relations is the management of communication functions that determines the attitudes and opinions of the organisation's publics, identifies its policies with the interests of its publics, and formulates and executes a programme of action to earn the understanding and goodwill of its publics.

The above definition extracted from Steyn, Puth, Grunig, Hunt, Stanley, Cutlip et al. goes in accord with the definition adopted by the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) in the past which emphasized concepts of mutuality and social obligation in the following words:

'Public relations' is defined as a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the organisation and its various publics both internal and external (Skinner and Von Essen, 1995: 4).

In 1998 PRISA changed its definition to describe a more strategic managerial role:

'Public relations' is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders (PRISA, 1998: 1).

For the reasons discussed above, the definition that will be considered by the author of this research is the PRISA one. The above definition is favoured by the researcher since it emphasizes the importance of two-way communication and the requirement to serve public interest while counselling management.

Though it should be acknowledged that there are literally hundreds of definitions, public relations thus according to Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994: 3) reflects the evolution of this maturing function in organisations and society. They also indicate the struggle of an emerging profession seeking its unique identity).

2.3 SYNOPSIS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Modern-day public relations originated in the United States and the development of public relations there to a large extent determined its development in other countries. The use of the Boston Tea Party to whip up support for breaking ties with Great Britain, and the effect of the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the plight of black people in America, are often cited as examples of early public relations (Meril et al., 1991) cited in (Mersham et al., 1995: 4).

According to Newsom et al., (2000: 30-31) some historians credit Thomas Jefferson in

1807 as the first person who combined the words "public" and "relations" into "public relations". Others say that the term was coined by the lawyer Dorman Eaton in an address to the Yale graduating class of 1882. Regardless of that 'public relations' was not used in its modern sense until 1897, when it appeared in the Association of American Railroad's Year book of Railways Literature (Newsom et al., 2000: 30-31). The real success of the term can be accredited to Edward L. Bernays whom Irwin Ross calls "the first and doubtless leading ideologue of public relations".

Public relations or corporate communication originated from a tradition of press agentry and publicity. Its development can be understood through two approaches:
a) The system approach and,
b) The structural approach

2.3.1 The System Approach

The system approach illustrates the widening scope of the practice of public relations in relation to the social and economic standing of the country. Following this approach, 'public relations' is well documented in countries such as the USA and Great Britain. In South Africa however, according to Lubbe and Puth (1994: 3), the development of the scope of the public relations as part of its social and economic development and its establishment as a fully-fledged management function in business and industry has not been comprehensively researched and documented.

Rensburg and Cant (2003: 42) on the other hand account that after World War II, public relations gained prominence in South Africa. The first public relations practitioner in South Africa was appointed by the South African Railways in 1943, while the first public relations consultancy opened in Johannesburg in 1948.

Since the development of public relations in South Africa has not been without international influence in terms of its practice and its teaching, it can be assumed that the phases of development from the practices of fundraising and 'press agentry' to

information provision and counselling of management coincide with those of the USA in particular. (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 3)

According to Lubbe and Puth (1994: 3), the origins of public relations from a system perspective can be traced back to the dawn of civilisation. Its fundamental elements of informing, persuading and integrating people were basic to earliest society just as they are today. The beginning of modern public relations can be traced to the rise of democracy and in particular to the presidency of Andrew Jackson when the so-called common man won the ballot and a great democratic middle class came into being which began to concern itself with issues.

In trying to have an understanding on the development of public relations in South Africa, attention should be directed to historical world events through which public relations can be viewed.

There are three historical world events phases that can be distinguished through the system perspective in widening scope of the practice of public relations. The three overlapping stages namely manipulation, information, and mutual influencing and understanding. Their development was sequential, but all three still exist (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 3).

According to Lubbe and Puth (1994: 4), South Africa entered the first phase (namely, manipulation) during the period between 1860 and 1910, when South Africa moved from an economy which was primarily based on agriculture towards an economy centred on mining, '… the over- supply of unskilled workers, together with their weak position, left labours vulnerable to a system of management which Bozzili defines as crude, arbitrary and openly exploitative'.

South Africa entered the second phase (i.e. information) in 1937 when the government recognised the need for an organisation to disseminate official information and create the bureau of information as a division of the Prime Minister's office. The first public

relations officer in South Africa was appointed in 1943 by the South African Railways, while the first public relations consultant officer was opened in Johannesburg in 1948 (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 4).

The third phase, (i.e. mutual influencing and understanding) in which organisations try to enlist public relations support to their affairs. This process has advanced to such an extent today that the duties of public relations practitioners go far beyond the skills of communicating, because effective communication requires planning and implementing organisational objectives. The public relations practitioner, like his or her counterparts in other functional areas of the organisation, must be adept at influencing policy decisions and developing strategies to implement them (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 4).

Nevertheless, what Lubbe and Puth suggest should be enquired, is it valid in all cases that effective communication requires planning and implementing organisational objectives? And is it only communication policy decisions that they are addressing? It seems as if their arguments insinuate all policy decisions which will be a generalization of things and this could lead to more confusion.

The current situation of corporate communication / public relations reveals that organisational roles performed by practitioners in the past are an essential indicator of prevailing functions of public relations. In other words, they are the basis on which existing current functions of public relations form their backbone.

2.3.2 The Structural Approach

The structural approach depicts the professionalisation of public relations in terms of the establishment of professional bodies representing the public relations industry. The development of public relations in terms of its professionalisation in South Africa has been well documented with the establishment of the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 4-6).

According to Lubbe and Puth (1994: 4-6) in reviewing the structural development of public relations, there are three important areas namely the formation of professional associations, the formation of code of conduct and the licensing or accreditation of practitioners that should be distinguished. The formalisation of public relations into specific organisations began as early as 1915 in the USA with public relations forming a part of the Associated Advertising Clubs. In 1947 the Public Relations Society of America was established and in 1964 the voluntary accreditation of public relations practitioners began. The International Association of Business Communicators was formed in 1970 and also has an accreditation scheme. The Public Relations Society of America adopted a Code of Professional Standards for the practice of Public Relations in 1954 which has been revised and adjusted to its current status. In 1949, two Dutch and four British public relations practitioners developed the idea of organising public relations on an international basis, the objective being to raise the standard of public relations practice in various countries and improve the professional quality and efficiency of public relations practitioners. As a result the International Public Relations Association was eventually established in 1955 in London where the constitution was formally adopted and the first IPRA Council was appointed. Since 1955, the IPRA Council has been meeting annually. The IPRA Code of Conduct was adopted in 1961 and has served as the basis for similar codes of many national public relations associations, including the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA).

The Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) was established in 1957 with a membership of 18. Today, the institute has a membership of approximately 3800, and represents about 70% of people practising public relations in corporate and consultancy sectors. PRISA has members from most of the Southern African states such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, South Africa (Transkei, and Bophuthatswana). In 1986 PRISA established its Accreditation and Ethics Council which grants accreditation to public relations practitioners and also acts as a disciplinary body. All members of PRISA subscribe to a code of conduct based on the International Code of Athens and the IPRA Code of Conduct. (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 5).

2.4 MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

To describe the way in which public relations has been practised in the past and how it should be practised in the future one needs to look at the four models of public relations as proposed by Grunig and Hunt (L'etang and Pieczka, 2006: 13).

As L'etang and Pieczka (2006: 13) suggest, there are four models which describe the typical way in which public relations programmes are conducted which also encompass the two levels (the technician and the management) at which public relations practitioners operate. These models are:

1. The Press Agentry model
2. The Public Information model
3. The Two-way asymmetrical model, and
4. The Two-way symmetric model

2.4.1 The Press Agentry

Also referred to as Publicity, this model came to be known first, in the period from 1850 to 1900, immediately following the historical examples that were described as public relations-like activities (Grunig and Hunt, 1984:25).

Dennis, L. Wilcox et al. (2001:24) also suggest that Press Agentry is simply an extension of the activities of those who, in ancient civilizations promoted athletic events such as the Olympic Games and built an aura of myth around emperors and heroes.

On the other hand Newsom et al. (2004: 29) suggest that Press Agentry really began in about 1830, with the birth of the penny press when newspaper prices dropped to a penny each, circulation and readership boomed, but so did the price of newspaper advertising. Press agents exploited "freaks" to publicize circuses, invented legends to promote politicians, told outrageous lies to gain attention and generally provided plenty of popular entertainment if not much real news.

In this model, public relations serves a propaganda function. Practitioners spread the faith of the organisation involved, often through incomplete, distorted, or half-true information.

Lube and Puth also suggest that this model describes public relations as being a little more than a publicity function that is striving for coverage in the mass media. This model is primarily based on the technician role of public relations (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 8). The sole purpose of this model is to promote an individual, an organisation, or a product, therefore encouraging a one-way flow of information to the public. Press agentry is creating newsworthy stories and events to attract media attention and to gain public notice (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1994: 13).

2.4.2 The Public Information Model

According to Rensburg and Cant (2003: 219) the public information model emphasises the dissemination of accurate information through the mass media and controlled media such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail.

Again this role focuses on the technician role of public relations. Within this mode the public relations practitioner functions fundamentally as a journalist whose job is to report information objectively about his organisation to the public considering the fact that this model is based on one-way flow of communication from an organisation to its publics, communication is viewed as telling, not listening.

When critically looking at the information and press agent/publicity models, what needs to be elucidated here is that, the purpose of a model is to explain not to promote considering that this is not a photographic model but a theoretical. The explanation of the model needs to be depicted from reality but, it seems as if the nature of this role is more focused only on certain parts of reality. As such attention should be paid to this fact in order to avoid generalizing reality situations.

2.4.3 The Two-Way Asymmetric Model

The two-way asymmetrical model of public relations brings the research component into public relations practice. Information is not only disseminated but based on research carried out to determine the most appropriate channels and messages to persuade public to behave as the organisation would like (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 8).

Within this model, communication focuses on a two-way flow of communication, with organisations sending messages to publics and then receiving feedback from those publics. Practitioners of two-way asymmetric model have a function more like that of the press agentry, although their purpose can best be described as scientific persuasion. They research about attitudes and behaviour to persuade publics to accept the organisation's point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organisation.

According to Grunig (1984: 22) cited in Mersham et al. (1995: 38), press-agentry, public information and two-way asymmetric are symmetrical models. In other words, they attempt to change the behaviour of public without changing the behaviour of the organisation

Based on what the literature review has provided, one should be cautious while implementing the two-way asymmetrical model in order to avoid confusion, as questions arise in mind such as what 'research' is needed?, What is the nature of such research? Is it marketing, psychological or any other type of research? Is it the message or the channel that needs to be tested? These questions need to be answered before one can embark on applying this model based on the fact that what theorists say is mixed up as to them Asymmetrical model is again symmetrical. In addition, the 'research component' emphasised on here sounds as an exaggeration.

2.4.4 The Two-Way Symmetric Model

Set apart from the other three models is the two-way symmetrical model. An organisation

that uses the two-way symmetrical model uses research and dialogue to manage conflict, improve understanding and build relationships with public. With the symmetrical model, both the organisation and publics can be persuaded and both also may change their behaviour (Mersham et al., 1995: 38).

According to Lattimore et al. (2001: 58) the two-way symmetrical model describes public relations efforts in terms of its research-based description as the use of communication in improving understanding with strategic publics. This model attempts to adjust the organisation to its environment as well as adjusting the environment to the organisation. It focuses on the use of social science research methods to achieve mutual understanding and two-way communication rather than one-way persuasion.

As Lubbe and Puth (1994: 9) suggest, within the two-way symmetric model there is a requirement of technician and management roles of public relations for success to be achieved. This model also coincides with the system approach discussed earlier on.

Both in the two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric models practitioners' communication flow two ways from the organisation to the publics and vice versa. But the big difference that exists between the two modes is that, the two-way asymmetric model is 'asymmetric' because the effects of public relations are imbalanced in favour of the organisation. The organisation does not change as a result of public relations; it attempts to change public attitudes and behaviour while with the two-way asymmetric model practitioners carefully plan what they communicate to publics to achieve maximum change in attitude and behaviour. Communication from publics comes as "feedback." Many public relations practitioners today use feedback as a synonym for two-way communication (Grunig and Hunt, 1984: 22).

Again curiosity arises in mind, based on the description of the way in which public relations has been practised in the past and how it should be practised in the future as illustrated above through the four traditional models of public relations by different

scholars to mention few Grunig, Hunt, Cutlip, Center, Broom Lubbe and Puth. Should it still be held valid regardless of different changes such as economic, political, social and technological? Should we still be rigid and constant in suggesting that the four models of public relations are and should be the way public relations should be practised in future?

Grunig (1984: 22) also argues that 'excellent' public relations departments adopt the more realistic view that public relations is a symmetrical process of compromise and negotiation and not a war for power. In the long run, the symmetrical view is more effective. Organisations get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want. Grunig believes that in spite of practitioners' good intentions, it is difficult, if not impossible to practice public relations in an ethical and socially responsible manner using an asymmetrical model.

Is what the theories / models have put forward feasible in reality? Can an organisation 'adjust' to its environment outside all contexts? Can the PR do the adjusting or the CEO? When considering all these questions one can forecast a lot of inherent problems. This does not mean that the theories are untrue; one should understand that they are contextually true and that conclusion should be made within a narrow context and be generalised.

Based on what has been discussed and on what the reality might reveal, in this treatise the two-way asymmetric and the two-way symmetric models will be favoured considering the reasons that with the two-way asymmetric model, communication focuses on a two-way flow, with organisations sending messages to publics and then receiving feedback from those publics. This model relates to the roles of public relations practitioners in the way that, practitioners of two-way asymmetric model have a function more like that of the press agentry, although their purpose can best be described as scientific persuasion. They research about attitudes and behaviour to persuade publics to accept the organisation's point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organisation. The two-way symmetric, practitioners carefully plan what they communicate to publics to achieve maximum change in attitude and behaviour.

These two models will also assist in helping the research come across obstacles that public relations practitioners face when marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve.

The enumerated challenges which will come from collected data from the selected organisations will therefore be considered as feedback that could be measured against what the theories suggest.

2.5 TRADITIONAL ROLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

The role of public relations practitioners is rapidly changing, responding to the changes around us: the rise of consumer-generated social media, globalization, the incredible personalization of information system, greater expectations on corporations for transparency and social responsibility, and the nature of environment in which organisations are built, grow and eventually mature.

Drawing on the earlier work of Broom and Smith (1979), and Broom (1982), Cutlip et al. describe four types of public relations roles that practitioners may fulfil:

1.   Communication Technician;
2.   Expert Prescribe;
3.   Communication Facilitator; and
4.   Problem-Solving Facilitator (Kitchen, 1997: 16).

These roles are what have been known as Public relations traditional roles. These roles describe the practice of public relations within organisations. At one time or another, practitioners play all these roles to varying degrees.

2.5.1 Communication Technician

This role describes practitioners who are involved in production work but not in policy or

programme making. When operating in this role, practitioners are not present when management defines problems and select solutions. Through this role public relations practitioners produce communication and implement the programme sometimes without full knowledge of either the original motivation or the intended results. Public relations practitioners do not contribute significantly to management decision making and strategic planning (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1994: 40).

2.5.2 Expert Prescriber

Through this role, the practitioner conducts research and defines the problem, develops the programme and takes responsibility for its implementation. The expert prescriber role however leads to passive management involvement that frustrates practitioners for being held responsible for the programme results while having little control over critical parts of the situation. This role can be linked to the two-way asymmetric and publicity of press agentry models (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 15).

2.5.3 Communication Facilitator

Also referred to as Communication liaison, within this role the public relations practitioner is concerned with the quality and quantity of information flow between management and publics. Communication facilitators are boundary spanners, who improve the quality of decisions that are related to policies, procedures, and actions of both stakeholders and organisations. This role can be linked to the public information and two-way symmetric models of corporate communication (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 15).

2.5.4 Problem-Solving Facilitator

Here the practitioner is more engaged in a rational problem-solving process that involves planning and co-coordinating public relations activities with the top personnel in an organisation, usually senior management. Through this role they become part of the strategic planning team (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1994: 43).

Steyn and Puth (2000: 16) elucidate that the expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem solving process facilitator are interchangeable, conceptual components of the same empirical role, the corporate communication manager role, while the technician roles are therefore uncorrelated, indicating that they are unlikely to be played by the same person in an organisation. They additionally suggest that the use of research is the only way the practitioner is an important differentiator between the manager and the technician roles.

2.5.5 The Strategic Role of the Corporate Communication Practitioner

The strategic management role of corporate communication can be defined as '….. a process of thinking through the current mission of the organisation, and the current environmental conditions, and combining these elements by setting forth a guide for tomorrow's decisions and results' Steyn and Puth (2000: 17).

Steyn and Puth way of defining strategic role of corporate communications here above can be only valid in a communication organisation. How can the corporate communication officer help in an engineering or mining field?

Additionally, Steyn and Puth (2000: 20) suggest that from the shortcomings of practitioners discussed earlier on in previous roles, it is clear that the activities performed by practitioners in the two traditional roles are no longer sufficient to deal with organisation's increasingly turbulent environments. They then advocate that the roles research in the South African environment indicates that CEOs now expect three roles from the corporate communication practitioners:

- **The role of 'strategist'**: played at the macro or top management level of an organisation. According to Steyn and Puth (2000: 20-21), having a practitioner in this new role should surmount the shortcoming of practitioners described by CEOs and remove most of their dissatisfaction

with the lack of strategic direction displayed by the corporate communications function.

- **The role of 'manager':** played at the functional, departmental or divisional level of an organisation. Here the practitioner has the responsibility of developing a corporate communication strategy and policy for the organisation. (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 20-21).

- **The role of 'technician':** this role is played at the implementation or programme level. Here the practitioner is responsible for implementing communication plans or campaigns directed at the stakeholders (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 20-21)**.**

It should be pointed out that organisations cannot achieve communication excellence without practitioners playing the technician role. The technician role by itself does not contribute toward the organisation success and does not satisfy organisations CEOs' expectations. To satisfy these expectations an organisation needs to have a practitioner functioning or playing the strategist and redefine manager roles of corporate communication.

Based on all that has been discussed on the roles of public relations practitioners, this study will try to show how far what theories suggest can compare to the current situation in reality.

2.6 NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

The term corporate communications is increasingly being used to describe the management function that is still referred to as public relations by much of the academic literature and the public. The term corporate communication is also in line with prevailing practice in many organisations. According to Steyn and Puth the reasons for the preferred use of corporate communications is that the term public relations suffered

from negative associations because of the way in which the discipline has been practised in many organisations. The negative legacy of public relations made it increasingly difficult to retain the name in a new paradigm of theory and practice. (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 3).

The profession of public relations and its practitioners in many organisations are hardly appreciated and recognized and this, as Steyn and Puth describe it, is hardly conceivable to find a gathering of corporate communication practitioners where their lack of appreciation and recognition in the corporate environment is not a topic for fierce debate and complaint. The subjects of these debates have remained relatively consistent over the last fifty years and these are:

- Top management do not understand the importance and value of corporate communication / Public relations.

- The corporate communication / public relations function does not enjoy any access to top management and / or the chief executive officer (CEO) that is so essential for the function to add real value to the organisation.

It is most unfair that the corporate communication / public relations function should be reporting to another functional area, such as human resources and marketing.

The budget allocation for corporate communication / public relations is totally inadequate for the important projects that need to be undertaken in the interest of the organisation (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 7).

The questions in many people's minds are: What could be the reason for the legacy that public relations or corporate communication projects? Why are the practitioners of corporate communication / public relations most of the time unsuccessful in their attempt to gain recognition and access to strategic management level of the organisation?

According to Steyn and Puth, based on recent research it is clearly indicated that virtually nobody at top management level, at least of all the CEOs, disputes the necessity and importance of communication to the organisation. Public relations / corporate communication finds itself in an unenviable and undesirable position simply because it

has been unable to think, behave and perform strategically in the organisation. For a variety of reasons, the corporate communication function seems to have become an operational mode in many organisations. Instead of being an equal participant in determining the visionary and strategic direction of the organisation, and particularly in identifying and managing its strategic issues and stakeholders, corporate communication seems to be predominantly occupied with executing operational plan that are conceptualised and initiated by other management functions. Corporate communication seems to be an executioner of plans rather than an originator of strategies (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 8).

In addition to what Steyn and Puth said, the best public relations person is impotent and wasted unless used and supported by the company. The way to do this is to bring public relations to the heights of management where public relations advice can be regularly and easily inserted into the development and evolution of the company's policies and practices. The public relations executive cannot explain, interpret or defend company policy unless he has seen it at its conception and birth, and participated in both (William E. Wall, president, Kansas Power and Light Company) cited in Simon (1984: 16).

It might be true that the public relation practitioner's knowledge of the company situation helps in facilitating him/her in his/her task of planning, defending, researching, representing and protecting the company that he/she serves. Does it means that if the public relations department is not put at the top level of the organisation, and does it mean that the fact that some public relations joined or start serving their organisations failing to witness when they were born and conventionalized make them unfit in explaining, interpreting or defending the company's policy?
Well, the outcome of this study will then try to justify and show how far the current reality of the practice of public relations is and to how far public relations practitioners are in marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve as compared to some of the theories stated above by some scholars.

This chapter intended to highlight evaluate and analyze the roles of public relations and

that of its practitioners in marketing the corporate image of an organisation. The scopes of the field of public relations and different public relations models depicting roles of public relations practitioners have also been discussed. In doing so, the researcher has identified various roles, their perceptions within organisations and to what extent they do assist public relations practitioners in their daily activities.

CHAPTER THREE

FACTORS INFLUENCING PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS' PERFORMANCE WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A multitude of factors affect the performance of public relations practitioners in their everyday duties. These factors vary in nature and ranges.

For success and achievement of good results as Black (1972:15) insinuates, top management must be in favour of the public relations programme and must contribute to its success. He also says, if public relations is to be successful in its role in management, it must be organized thoroughly.

According to Beard (1997: 13-14), there are other environmental factors which create pressure on public relations officers and interfere with their performance. Some management colleagues may have a poor view of the function. This can be due to a total lack of understanding of the scope and capability of the activities. It can result from the prejudice based on abuse of the terminology such as the dread 'just a public relations exercise' beloved of the media. Beard suggests that the problem is compounded by the fact that events management is often within the responsibility of the public relations officer, thus simulating the 'gin and tonic' image, now thankfully fast-fading. He also adds that the idea that 'getting on well with people' is the major qualification for working in public relations is another myth which may yet take decades to disappear.

3.1.1 Public Relations in relation to other Management Functions

Public relations is most of the times confused with other management functions within

organisations. It is also a fact that most of the time public relations departments and personnel are found mainly in rather large organisations and that other functions of the organisations question the idea of public relations practitioners feeling of operating at a top management level in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

According to Simon (1984: 16) public relations must directly report to top management because virtually all actions and activities of an organisation have public relations ramifications. Thus, the public relations executive can perform most effectively when he /she is in a position to provide input where top management decisions are being made.

What Simon suggests again might be valid only for public relations communication strategies decision, not other decisions of the organisation such as building extra offices for the company, etc.

It should be noted that organisations engage themselves in different activities and these activities are coordinated in order to accomplish the organisations' goals and objectives within a constantly changing environment. The various activities can be divided into seven broad categories or functional areas of management and these functional areas are the following:

1　The function of general management through which management formulates policy and develops strategies for effective utilisation of all the resources of the organisation's disposal.

2　The marketing function, which entails all those activities and responsibilities required for the successful marketing of the products or services of the organisation.

3　The financial function, which includes all those activities which facilitate the acquisition, utilisation and control of the money the organisation needs to finance its activities and to buy necessary materials and equipment.

4　The production or operational management function, which includes that group of activities concerned with the physical production of products and output or services.

5 The purchasing function, which is responsible for the acquisition of all products and materials required by the organisation to function profitably, namely raw materials, components, tools, equipment and, in the case of a dealer, the inventory.

6 The human resources management function, which is responsible for the appointment, development and maintenance of the human resources of the organisation,

7 The public relations function, which is to establish good relations with those directly and indirectly concerned with the organisation and its products or services (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 9-10).

Nevertheless, this should not be considered as a rigid existing categories or functional areas of management in which various activities can fall.

Within an organisation, regardless of the number of activities it engages in and the number of functional area existing , it is very important for the manager to ensure that each functional area is aware of the activities that it is in charge of and responsible for. In addition, employees work and performance within their specific functional areas should be evaluated and acknowledged by the organisation. As Down and Adrian (2004: 60) suggest, motivation is fostered upon employees by clarifying what is to be done, how well they are doing and what can be done to improve performance.

3.1.2 Importance of Organisational Structure

This is another factor that affects the public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve. Within an organisation there are different functions and departments which correlate and collaborate with the aim of working together toward the organisation's goals and objectives. Public relations, being among the departments of organisations, it has served several roles and functions within different organisations in past years and has been expanding from its traditional functions which have been discussed earlier on.

The role of public relations and public relations practitioners within an organisation often depends on the type of organisation, the perception of top management including the capability of the public relations practitioner.

It should also be noted that a public relations department can operate at different levels and the level where this department is situated determines or will have a significant effect on the workload and the way the practitioner operates. As Lubbe and Puth suggest, the number of major departments in an organisation is determined by the size and nature of the organisation. When an organisation is established, the number of major departments may be limited to marketing management, financial management and product, but as the organisation expands, departments of human resources and public relations may be included, either separately or as one department. They additionally say that, the different departments may occupy different hierarchical levels and heads of each department may lie at different managerial levels, which has implications for their authority and decision making responsibility (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 29).

The power and influence of a public relations department usually result from access to top management, which uses advice and recommendations to formulate policy. That is why public relations, as well as other staff functions, is located high in the organisational chart and it is called upon by top management to make reports and recommendations on issues affecting the entire company (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 103).

According to Beard (1997: 15-16), in a large operation the central or corporate department sets the standards for public relations and will have to take a broad overview of all activities. It may control directly the work of subsidiary or regional public relations officers. Alternatively, the officers will report to local general managers with a 'dotted line' to corporate public relations. Either way there has to be a coordinated approach to communicating to ensure that a consistent message about the organisation is presented. Beard also says, in corporate departments PR officers report to the senior managers of the organisation who are under pressure to produce results. In turn this leads to pressure to perform for the public relations professionals. Meanwhile Wilcox and Cameron insinuate

that research also indicates that the type of organisation involved may be less significant in predicting the role of a public relations department than are the perceptions and expectations of its top management. In many organisations, top level management perceives media relations and publicity as primarily a journalistic and technician function. In large scale mechanical organisations of low complexity, there is also a tendency to think of public relations as only a support function of the marketing function (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 99).

According to Wilcox and Cameron, such perceptions by top management severely limit the role of public relations department as well as its power to take part in management decision making. Instead, 'public relations' is relegated to being a tactical function, simply preparing messages without input on what should be communicated. In many cases, however, public relations personnel self-select technician role because they lack a knowledge base in research, environmental scanning, and problem solving total communications strategy (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 99).

Lubbe and Puth bring forward the idea suggesting that, organisations have different classifications following their individual activities. Among the classifications, they have listed the following:

- Organisational classification according to function,
- Organisational classification according to product,
- Organisational classification according to geographical location (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28).

3.1.3 Organisational Classification according to Function

The organisation's classification also has a huge impact on the practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve. This example given by Lubbe and Puth shows how the classification of an organisation according to function can have an impact on the work and efforts of public relations practitioners. Here the organisation's activities are classified into functions such as purchasing management, operational management, marketing management, public

relations management and so on. Here emphasis is put on the similarity of specialised skills and responsibilities, irrespective of particular goals (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28). This is clearly represented in diagram1.

Diagram 1: An organisational classification according to function (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28).

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│Management││management ││management││management││management││ Relations│
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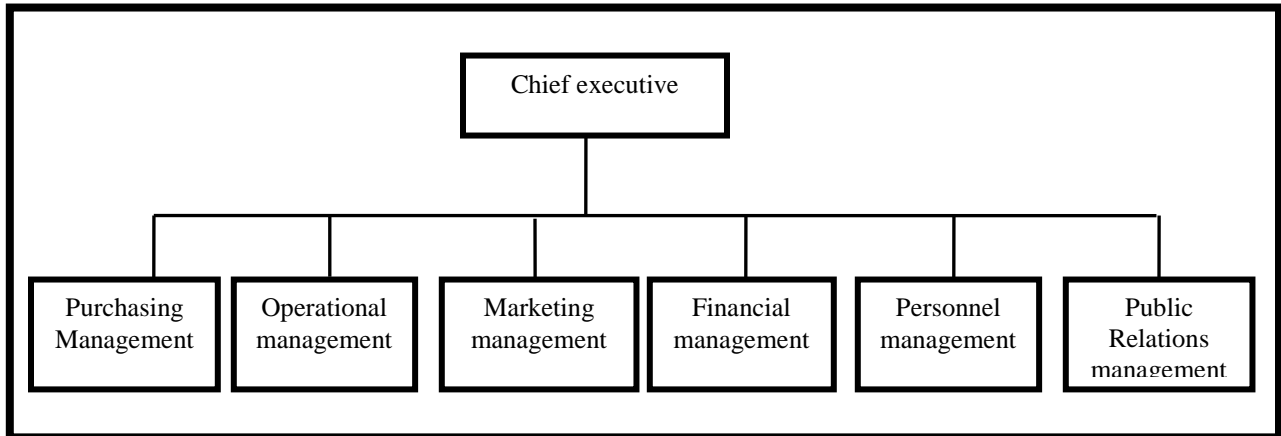
3.1.4 Organisational Classification according to Product

It is very important as a public relations practitioner to understand the organisation that you serve and the nature of business that the organisation deals with. As Skinner and Essen (1985: 184-85) suggest, the nature of the business a company is in, will affect its image and the support it gets from the public.

Product departmentalisation also referred to as market departmentalisation is the process whereby an organisation groups its activities according to its different products or services. In a public relations consultant firm, divisions could be responsible for product promotion, special events, conferences, financial public relations, crisis communication and so on (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28-29).This is clearly illustrated below in diagram 2. This therefore insinuates that the organisational classification according to product or services also plays a big role in the success of a public relations practitioner's role in marketing the corporate image of the organisations he/she serves. The practitioner must know in which classification the organisations he/she serves falls.

Diagram 2: An organisational classification according to product public relations consulting firm (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28-29).

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│  │          │ │  events  │ │promotion │ │          │ │communica-│ │ public   ││
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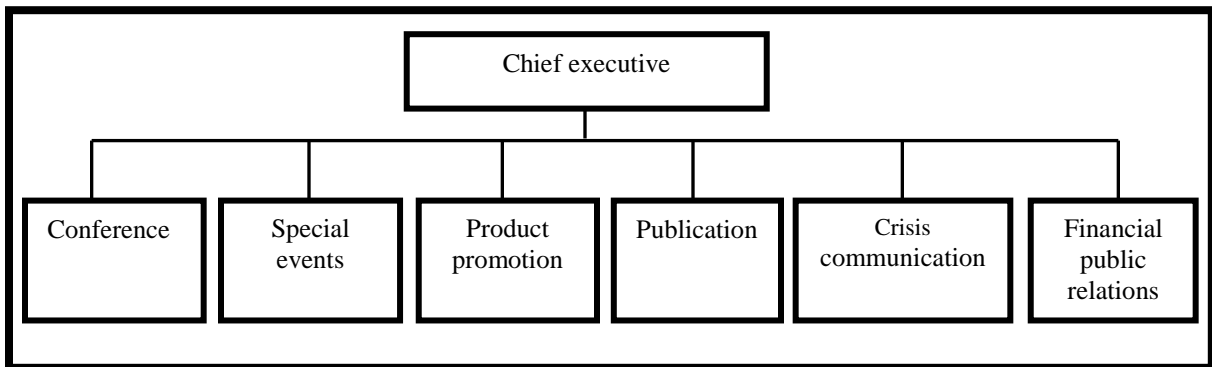
3.1.5 Organisational Classification according to Geographical Location

This classification groups all those activities which are conducted in a specific region where business is done, where an organisation focuses on the needs of specific customers or groups of customers, departmentalisation according to customers occurs (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28-29).

3.1.6 Where to locate Public Relations Department within an Organisation?

As a public relations practitioner, it is of great importance to know the structure of the organisation you are working for and to know at which level the organisation your department operates. Knowing the structure of the organisation will enlighten so many things in your mind and will develop a better understanding of the organisation you work for. This in return will indicate the functions and responsibilities of your department and it will also contribute to your success as a PR practitioner in marketing the image of the organisation you serve.

According to Wilcox and Cameron, management experts state that staff functions in an organisation operate at various levels of influence and authority. At the lowest level, the staff function may be only *advisory*: line management has no obligation to take recommendations or even request them. They add that, when public relations is purely

advisory, it is often not effective (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 103).

What Wilcox and Cameron have expressed can be illustrated in diagram 3 below which shows the example of different positions that public relations can occupy in different organisations.

Diagram 3: Depicting three examples of corporate management organisation, showing the important position of public relations
(Wilcox and Cameron 2006: 106).
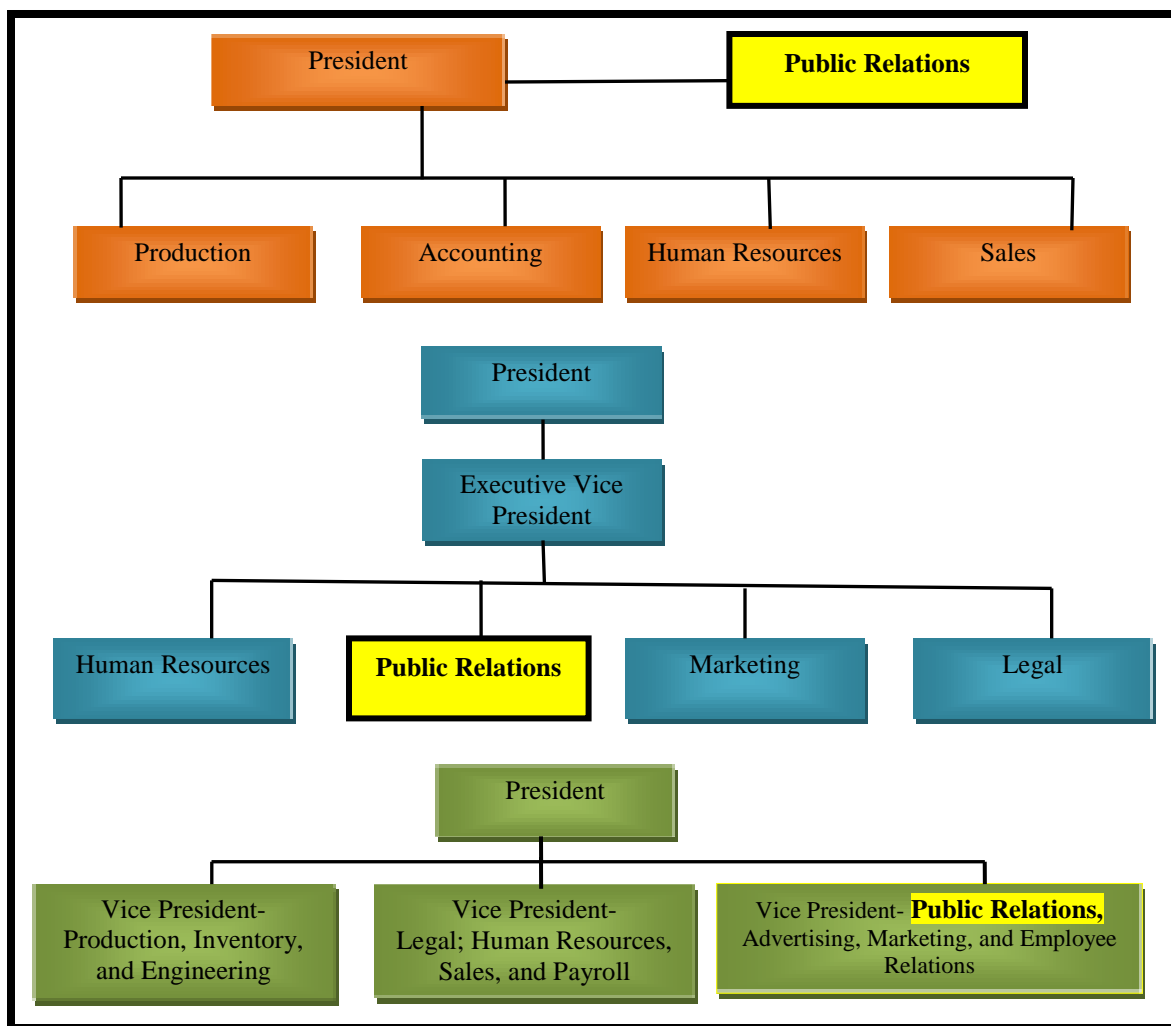
In a number of organisations public relations is placed as a sub-department of a major department such as marketing. The placement of any department or function in an organisational scheme suggests the following:

- The importance and value ascribed to the function or department;

- The relationship between the various departments, which has implications for co-ordination, communication and authority relationships;

- The relative importance of the department or function as viewed by top management, which has implications in terms of accessibility to top management, and impact of the function on strategic decisions and strategic formulation (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 28-29). All this is illustrated below in diagram 4.

Diagram 4: Public relations as a sub-department of marketing
>   (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 29).
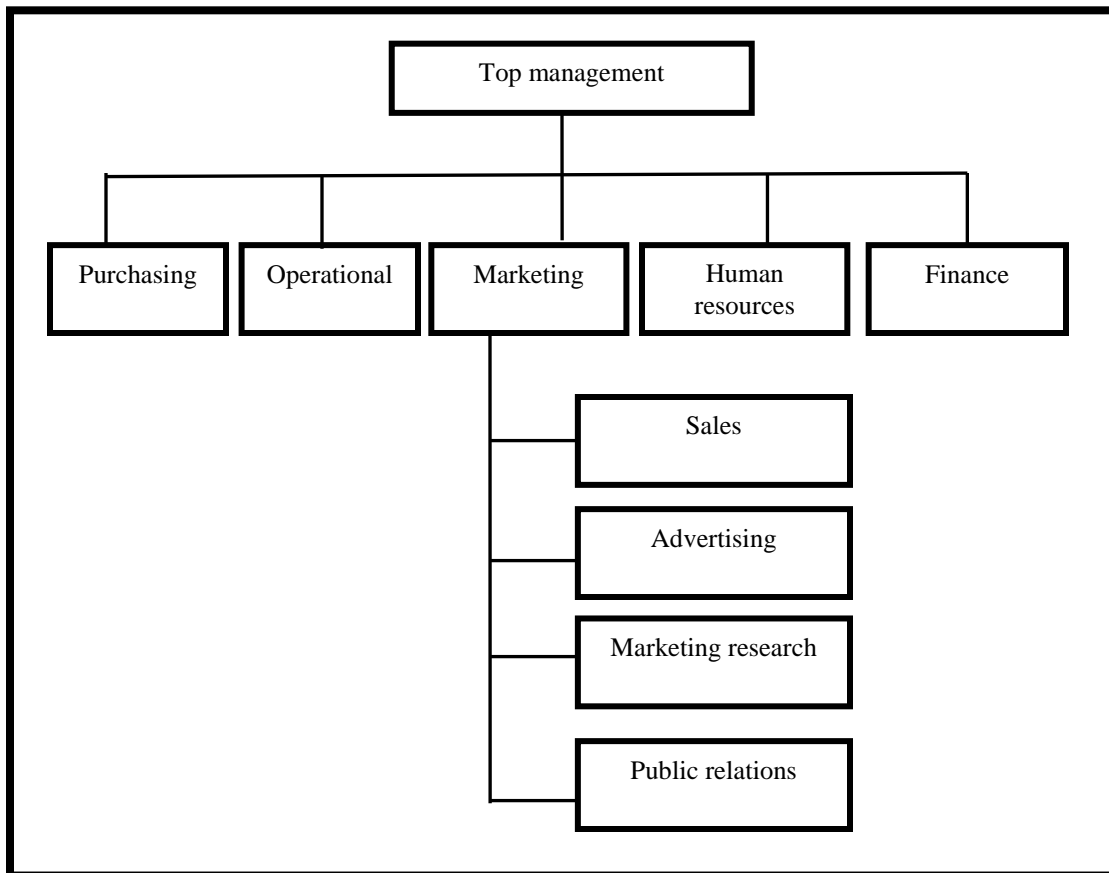
3.1.7 Public Relations and Practitioners Nominations within Organisations

It should be pointed out that the department in charge of public relations in an organisation goes by many names and that most often it is not called "public relations".

In large corporations, the term *corporate communications or communications* outnumbers *public relations* by almost four to one (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 99).

Other names used for public relations departments in the corporate world include *corporate relations, investor relations, public affairs, marketing communication public and community relations, and external affairs* (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 99).

The head executive of public relations or similarly named departments usually has one of the three titles: manager, director or vice president. A vice president of Corporate Communications may have direct responsibility for the advertising and marketing communications. (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 101).

3.1.8 The Size of the Business

The size of the business (e.g. conglomerate or backyard operation) can also be considered as one aspect that can affect a public relations practitioner success while marketing the corporate image of his/her organisation. Within the business world, the size of organisations should not mislead many in believing that if the organisation is big it means that everything it does will work to its benefit.

Being the largest is not always an advantage. Sometimes being the second largest is better…. or being small and being able to give personal service may be even better. Therefore, Skinner and Essen suggest that, for each type of business the advantage or disadvantage of size must be measured (Skinner and Essen, 1985: 184-185).

As a public relations practitioner it is therefore also advisable that you measure the advantages and disadvantages of the size of the organisation you work for before marketing its image to the public based on the fact that the size of the organisation might affect you either positively or negatively while executing your tasks.

3.1.9 Type of Management and Personality of Sales Staff

As Skinner and Essen (1985: 184-186) put forward, good management is the lifeblood of a company. The reputation of directors and other senior personnel for stability, skill and dynamism play an important part in creating a favourable image. It is very important for managers and employees of organisations to work together through each other in order to build, maintain and enhance the image of the organisation they serve.

The impression employees make on the public is a major image builder. The junior staffs, such as the receptionists, salespersons and messengers frequently have the greatest interaction with the outside world. The receptionist is one of the front line staff of the company (Skinner and Essen, 1985: 184-186).

As a public relations practitioner, you need to seek and inquire that there is a two way communication flow between the management and employees within the organisation before you start thinking of marketing the image of the organisation to the public. If the management and the employees' image portrayed to the public do not reflect a positive or good image of the organisation, it will practically be impossible for the public relations practitioner to market the image of the organisation successfully.

3.2 CORPORATE IMAGE MARKETING

An organisation has its public or target audience. This audience can comprise clients, customers, stake holders, employees who act and react upon what they have heard, seen, and learned about the organisation.

This audience develop attitudes toward the organisation and perceive it to have certain characteristics, some of which they admire and appreciate at the same time as some negative characteristics of the organisation are strongly opposed.
In reality two different people can look at the same thing and see it differently and gather different perceptions about what they have seen. According to Marconi (1996: 3),

people's perceptions are based on what they know or think they know. Based on these perceptions, people buy, sell, vote, travel, invest and make pretty much of every major or minor decision that governs their lives and affects the lives of those around them.

According to Smit and Cronje (2002: 312), perception can be defined as "the process in which individuals arrange and interpret sensory impressions in order to make sense of their environment". They further state that the same situation can be perceived in completely different ways by two separate groups and that these differences in perception depend on who is doing the perceiving, the object being perceived, and the context in which perception occurs.

Most likely, the image of an organisation affects people's selection or rejection of its products and services. To project a favourable image, as Easton suggests, management sponsors costly advertising and publicity campaigns, stockholder relations programs, charitable giving, changes in product packaging and display, etc., hoping to attain corporate objectives such as greater sales volume, greater market share, improved brand loyalty, or others (Easton, 1966: 168).

In his book entitled *Creating corporate reputations,* (Dowling, 2001: viii) says, "the major drives of good images and reputations are inside the organisation namely, its vision, strategy and formal policies".

(Dowling, 2001: 18) adds that the image of things (countries, industries, companies and brands) resides in the heads of people. They are not a fixed attribute of an organisation.

What Dowling suggests should be queried since what has been said on Page: 44 is only half of the story. Vision, strategy and policies are not guarantee of good corporate image. An organisation can have the best vision, strategy and policies but, if the organisation does not execute and 'live' that through an appropriate strong 'culture' that serves as motivator and orientation framework, nothing will happen.

Marketing image is not something impossible. As Marconi (1996: 3) puts forward, before marketing an image you must have one. If your image that people take away is based on their perception of you and their perception is based upon what they know of you, it is important that you manage and control that flow of information about you to the greatest degree possible. But most important is that there is information, that you create as stream of information to raise awareness.

Going in accord with what Marconi said, (James and Wiechmann, 1999: 22) on their side stress that, continuity building has been essential because image building is a slow and cumulative process. If the process is interrupted, the cumulative gain of many years tends to evaporate very, very quickly.

Though it should be noted that the idea of marketing only arrived in the UK by way of Procter and Gamble in the late 1950s and was originally focused very much on brands however, in the last twenty years companies have begun to see the potential of marketing themselves, of communicating what they do and how they do it (Ind, 1992: 17).

On the other side, Smythe et al. suggest that, marketing, human resources and corporate communication departments must accept that they are all part of one process communicating the organisation's reputation. They have no other function except to make the organisation acceptable and useful to employees, customers and society at large. (Smythe et al., 1992: 7-8)

Sherman, cited in Rayner on his side argues that, if image is the immediate external perception of an organisation, it could be argued that reputation is the historic and cultural dimension of that image, a stakeholder community's 'social memory' of the sum total of a company and its activities (Rayner, 2003: 2).

Meanwhile, James and Wiechmann (1999: 27) pointed out that, a company's image is a composite of all its actions, not only of corporate advertising. How a company communicates is very much a part of how it is perceived. In effect, all corporate

behaviour constitutes "media" which transmit "message".

These different points of view therefore draw attention to the existing confusion in people's mind as what the terms corporate identity, corporate image, reputation and corporate super brand are. Despite the fact that these terms are similarly and interchangeably used by people to mean the same thing, they are not always the same and do not have the same meaning. To confuse this furthermore, some consultancies use terms like corporate identity, corporate image and corporate communication as if they are simply variants of the concept (Ind, 1992: 19).

According to Schultz et al., the concept of identity emerged simultaneously along two relatively distinct paths, one known as corporate identity and the other as organisational identity. The roots of corporate identity are primarily found in consultancy practice and field of marketing, whereas organisational identity traces its heritage within the field of organisational studies (Schultz et al., 2000: 12).

Corporate identity is the term most commonly used to define the programme of communication and change that a company undertakes in conjunction with an external consultancy. An organisation's identity is its sense of self much like our own individual sense of identity. It is unique. Identity is formed by an organisation's history, its beliefs and philosophy, the nature of its technology, its ownership, its people, the personality of its leaders, its ethical and cultural values and its strategies (Ind, 1992: 20-21).

Dowling (2001: 19) defines corporate identity as the symbols and nomenclature an organisation uses to identify itself to people (such as the corporate name, logo, advertising slogan, livery, etc.

These definitions concord with the one provided by many writers and researchers suggesting that the concept of corporate identity refers to how an organisation expresses and differentiates itself in relation to its stakeholders (Alvesson 1990, Olins 1995, Van Riel and Balmer 1997 cited in Schultz (2000: 13).

Reputation is a collection of perceptions and beliefs, both past and present, which reside in the consciousness of an organisation's stakeholders, its customers, suppliers, business partners, employees, investors, communities, regulators, governments, pressure groups, non-governmental organisations and the public at large (Rayner, 2003: 1).

Dowling (2001: 19) suggests on the one hand that reputation or corporate reputation is the attributed values (such as authenticity, honesty, responsibility and integrity) evoked from the person's corporate image. On the other hand, he defines corporate super brand as the trust, confidence, and support that flow from the person's corporate reputation.

Corporate image is essentially the organisation's reputation, the collective total of perceptions of an organisation's target public. Corporate image is how an organisation's audiences (the public, staff, city financiers, customers ...) perceive its corporate identity (Marketing Business, Feb. 1994: 5 quoted in Varey, 2002: 195).

Ind (1992: 21) on the other side suggests that corporate image is in the eye of the receiver. It is simply the picture that an audience has of an organisation through the accumulation of all received messages.

In addition, Dowling (2001: 19) says corporate image is global evaluation (comprised of a set of beliefs and feelings) a person has about an organisation.

Identity and image have always been linked by many researchers but, though similar, these two concepts are quite different. According to linguist de Saussure 'the words are defined, not in relation to what they are believed to represent in the world, but how they affect each other in the use'. Based on this logic as a method of theoretical development, the key concepts of identity and image can be discriminated by focussing on their theoretical interdependence (Schultz 2000: 13-15).

Diagram 5 below clearly shows the difference between corporate reputation, corporate identity and corporate image.

Diagram 5: Corporate Identity Image and Reputation (Dowling, 2001: 20)

Corporate
identity
symbols

Corporate Identity

Other identity
features

Recognize the company

recall

enhance

Corporate image

Appropriate values
roles & behavior
for this organisation

Respect & esteem
for the organisation

Corporate reputation

Super brand:　　Trust　　　Confidence　　Support
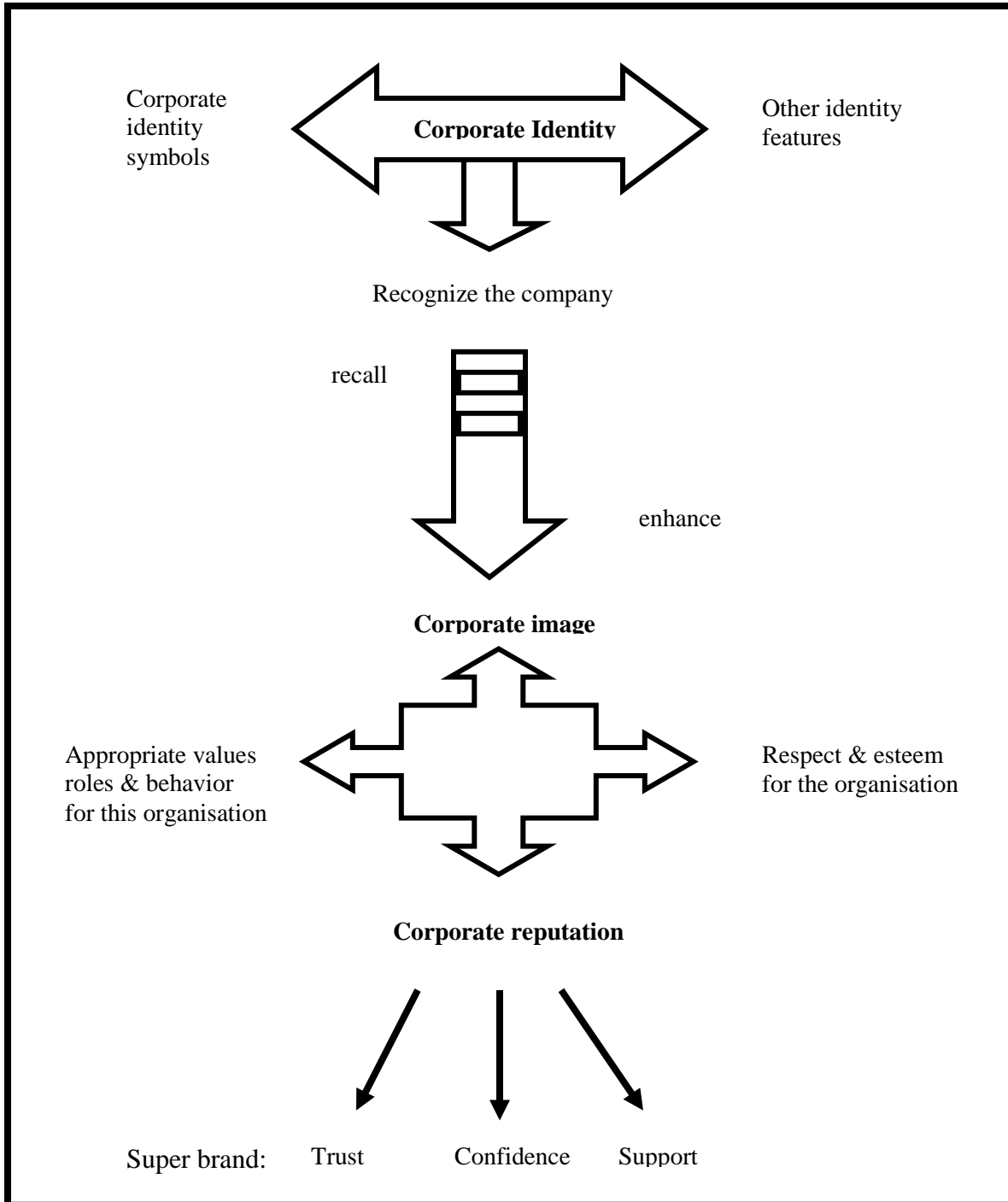
This diagram borrowed from Dowling shows that, a good corporate identity can have two possible effects on corporate image. First, people can make correct association between the company and its identity symbols. Then, hopefully these identity symbols help people recall their image of company which may include mental picture and or sensory feelings about it. However, much of this may be the result of role learning. Some corporate identity symbols may also automatically enhance the organisation's image (Dowling, 2001: 20).

The above definition of corporate image suggests that, this construct has two components: a 'logical (cognitive belief) component and an emotional (feeling) component. Both of these are necessary and both are usually experienced simultaneously in the person's mind. They fit together to form an overall corporate image (Dowling, 2001: 20-21).

Dowling suggests that if some beliefs and feelings about a company (i.e. its image) fit with a person's values about the appropriate corporate behaviour, then the individual will form a good reputation of that company. He additionally insists that it should also be indicated that in effect, a good corporate reputation represents a tight 'fit' between the image of the company and the individual's free standing value system (Dowling, 2001: 20).

According to Ind (2001: 19), "… creating the right image is a never-ending and all encompassing task. It is not simply about the creation of the corporate logo, it is a commitment to a corporate life style.

The corporate image is based on the collective impressions of many people on the firm. These impressions are derived partly from an individual's personal contacts with the firm, partly from hearsay, partly from mass communication media and partly from psychological predispositions not controlled by the firm. Corporate image studies typically explore the unique characteristics of the subject firms: the colour of the president's hair, the shine on his shoes, the cut of his clothes, his manner of speech at

public and stakeholders' meetings, the behaviour and appearance of the firm's sales representatives, the decoration of its plants and offices, the styling and design of its products and packaging, the themes of its advertising and publicity and thousands of other minute details are signals perceived by observers (Easton, 1996: 168).

At this stage, it is very important to incorporate the marketing concept in the literature review based on the fact that marketing and public relations activities sometimes complementarily work in harmony. Therefore, it is very important at this stage of the literature review to indicate that PR can learn from marketing if one looks at the actions of marketing in general.

With regard to the success of public relations practitioners in marketing corporate image, James and Wiechmann suggest six ways to success that could also be used by public relations practitioners. They propose this by saying that companies have different problems and needs, and perceive the market place and the world through different eyes. In the creation of almost very successful image campaign, however six basic guides are generally followed:

1. Perception is what counts; it is not necessarily the reality of a situation but what your target audience believes to be reality that creates corporate image.
2. Direction for an image campaign should be established at the top, usually the CEO. He or she is the one person who understands the company from all viewpoints, can personally reconcile conflicts between divisions and departments, can keep the campaign on track and can find the necessary budget to get the job done.
3. Self knowledge. You must know who you are before you can decide where you are going. What is your image? Do you need an image campaign at all? To be certain employ or make use of research before, during and after any image program.
4. Focus. Do you know who you are trying to reach? The better you understand your audience, the better you can influence their perceptions of your company.

5. Creativity. What will your campaign say to its target publics? What single specific appeal will best cut through the clutter and be remembered and acted on? Study the members of your audience; they are the only ones who can provide the answer.

6. Consistency. It goes hand in hand with creativity. The execution of your advertising, or the how, depends on the answers to who and what (James and Wiechmann, 1999: 25).

In addition to this, Lamb et al. (2004: 23); suggest that, marketing is not a one-night stand, it is a process. Marketing managers are responsible for a variety of activities that together represent the marketing process. They therefore suggest the marketing process which encompasses activities which include the following:

- Understanding the firm's business and mission and the role marketing plays in realizing that mission.
- Selecting the marketing objectives.
- Gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information about the firm's situation, including its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats in the environment.
- Developing a marketing strategy by deciding exactly which wants, and whose wants, the firm will try to satisfy (target market strategy), how the firm wants to be positioned relative to competing firms and by developing appropriate marketing activities (the marketing mix) to satisfy the needs of selected target markets. The marketing mix combines product, distribution, promotion, and pricing strategies in a way that creates exchanges that satisfy consumers' and firm's needs.
- Implementing the marketing strategy.
- Designing marketing performance measures.
- Periodically evaluating marketing efforts, and making changes if needed (Lamb et al., 2004: 23-24) also cited in McDaniel et al. (2007: 12).

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These processes therefore also contribute to the success of a public relations practitioner in marketing the corporate image of an organisation.

3.3 FORMATION OF CORPORATE IMAGE

In today's business world, it is a genuine need for companies to get better at managing images as intangible but valuable assets. Creating and managing effective images that truly connect is indeed a difficult process and it is not something that happens by accident, it takes conscious decisions to develop and guide an image successfully (Wertime, 2002: xiv-xv).

In its everyday existence a well established organisation desires to attain or build a corporate image in the eyes of its public. According to Dowling, the first step in improving a company's image is to profile the images people currently hold of the organisation (Dowling, 2001: 50).

Dowling (2001: 50) suggests that, "this then leads to be certain of whether it is aware of any awareness or image problem. When customers, potential employees and other people think about your industry do they recall your company name? Do they recognise your organisation's identity symbols (e.g. logo, corporate colours, etc.)? Can they recall (seeing) your advertising? Do they confuse your organisation with another?" Dowling insinuate that any negative answer to these questions signals an awareness problem.

The second step in improving corporate image is to identify the major factors that combine to influence how people perceive an organisation. In essence, these image drivers are the set of activities that influence every aspect of how a typical organisation communicates with both its internal and external stakeholders. Having identified these factors, it is possible to specify how they interact with each other to form the overall image a person holds of the organisation (Dowling, 2002: 51). What Dowling suggests can be clearly reflected in diagram 6 below.

Diagram 6: Creating Corporate Image (Dowling, 2001: 52)
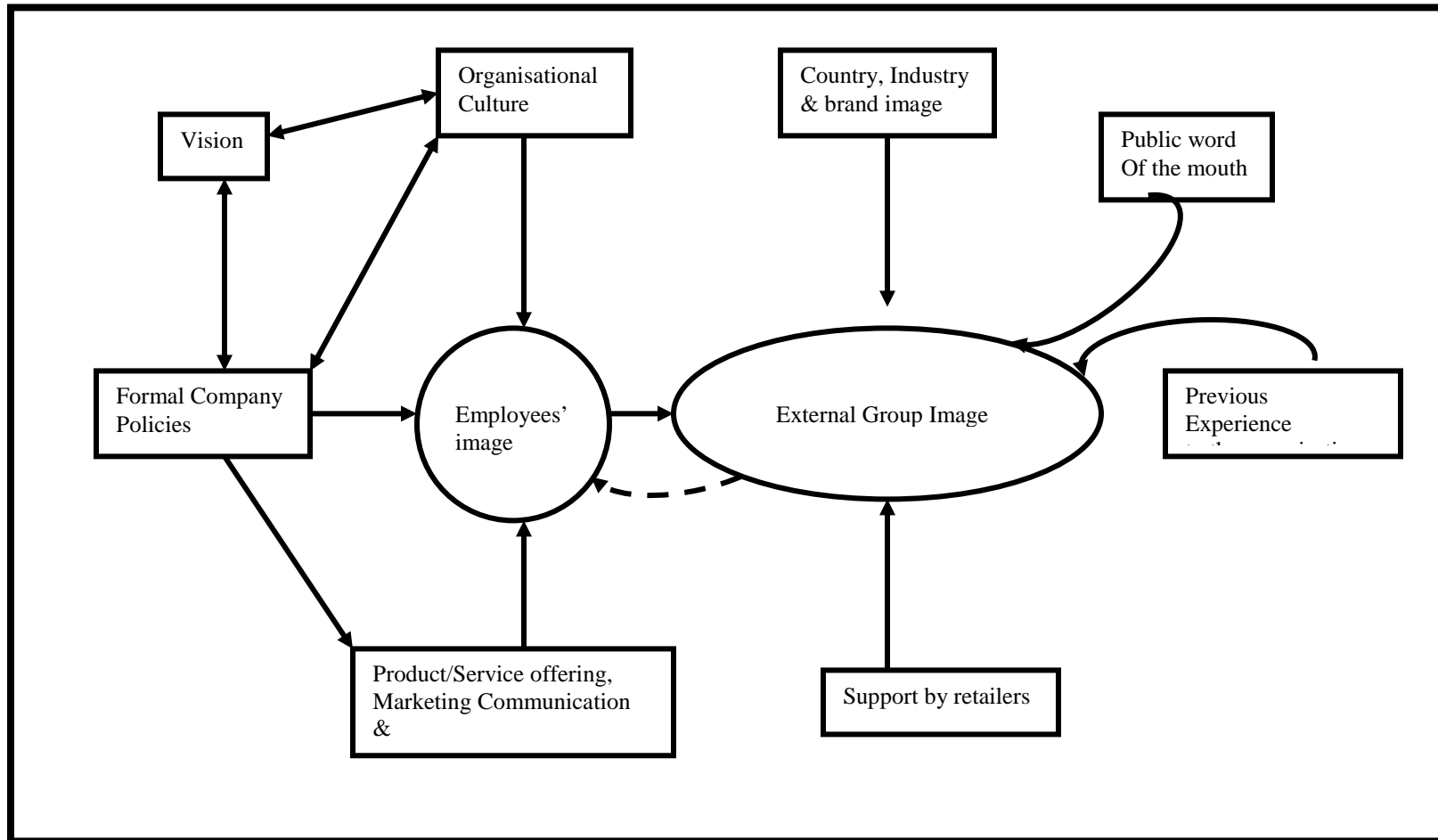
Differently to what Dowling suggests as steps in improving a company's image, Wertime insinuates that more companies today are realizing that the quality of the images they create has become the great determiner of their success. He additionally suggests that what is required from companies is not to spend their way into cut-through commercial images and communication but, a deep insight into the dynamics of images and how to exploit them (Wertime, 2002: xv).

3.4 FORMING EMPLOYEE'S CORPORATE IMAGES

There are factors that can influence the formation of the employees' image of their organisation. These factors are well illustrated below by Dowling in diagram 7 where darker letters and heavier arrows are used to indicate more significant factors in the figure. It should be noted that, in this diagram three new factors that have been added are not in diagram 6. These are the CEO leadership, professional values and competitors' activities. The upper left portion of diagram 7 suggests that the CEO leadership is an important determinant of the vision, formal policies, and organisational culture.

Diagram 7: Factors affecting employees' corporate Images (Dowling 2001: 55)
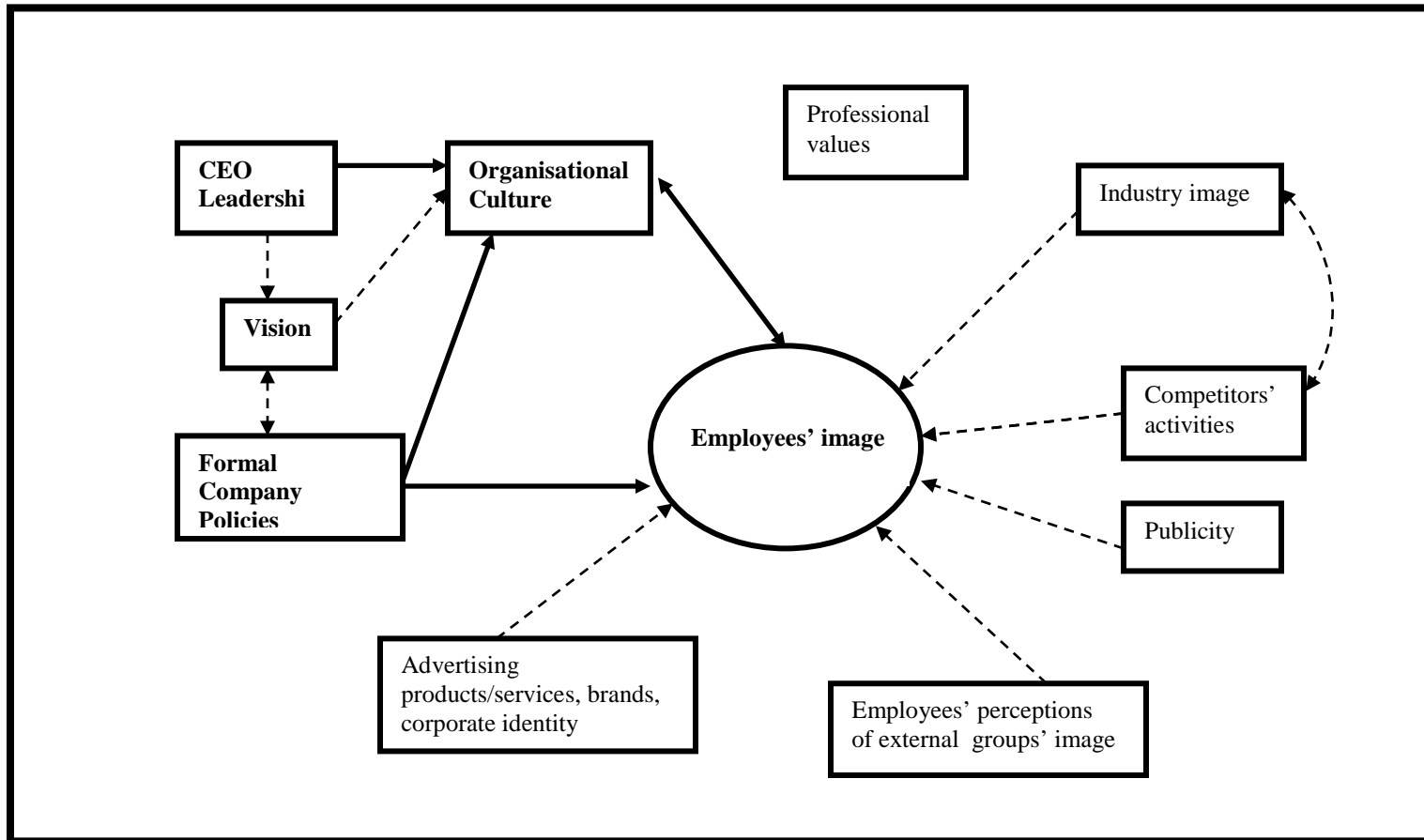
Black (1972: 8) on his side says, the corporate image of an organisation depends on the company's behaviour and financial performance, its marketing and policies, the quality of its products, the standard of its personnel relations and its design management. He also adds the suggestion that, the protection of a company's corporate image is the public relations expert's particular responsibility and he/she should also be the conscience of the organisation in every respect in which its activities impinge on public opinion or welfare.

3.5 A PRODUCT

For a better understanding of the idea of marketing corporate image, it is inevitable to have a brief look at the concept of product. According to Lamb et al. (2004: 292), a product may be defined as anything, both favourable and unfavourable, that a person receives in an exchange, normally for money. A product may be a tangible good like a pair of shoes, a service like hair cut, an idea like "don't litter", or any combination of these three. Packaging, style, colour, options, and size are some typical product features. Just as important are tangibles such as service, the seller's image, the manufacturer's reputation, and the way consumers believe others will view the product.

Stantion et al. (1992: 188-190) also came up with a very broad definition of the term product. They set a product as an umbrella term that includes tangible goods, services, places, persons and ideas. They define product in its broad sense as a set of tangible and intangible, attributes, including packaging, colour, price, quality and brand, plus the services and reputation of the sellers. This definition is slightly different from Lamb et al's definition in the sense that it is a very broad one and encompasses all categories of products. Thus, throughout this paper this broad meaning will be referred to every time we use the term product.

On the surface it seems a product is simply a marketing offering, whether tangible or intangible, that someone wants to purchase and consume. In line with this, one can then consider an organisation's corporate image as a product that can be consumed and marketed and hence can follow Lamb et al. suggested marketing process just as any other

product. It should also be noted that marketing is not an event, but a process.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has mainly been a discussion on marketing corporate image. Some influential barriers that impede the success of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve have been discussed. Throughout this chapter the researcher's selection of literature review is based on works which suggest that marketing the corporate image of an organisation has been impeded by both internal and external factors based on the perception gathering around the field of public relations and its practices.   The concepts of corporate image marketing, the formation of the corporate image of an organisation and that of the employee's image of the organisation have also been discussed.   In addition, the concept of product and marketing product process has also been discussed in depth throughout the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research framework. The research is mainly empirical with a focus on a case study analysis in that it seeks to draw conclusions based on the data collected by the use of structured questionnaires, applied within the context of the selected organisations.

The data to be gathered will come both from primary and secondary sources. Other forms of data that are primary in nature will derive from structured interviews by the use of questionnaires.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research takes a mixed methods approach / triangulation method, using both qualitative and quantitative data in this study. The investigation was qualitative in that it extracted in-depth statements (not numeric in nature). In the qualitative research paradigm, the study takes place in the natural setting which, in the present case, was the employees' workplace and where communication flows in a more or less natural way.

Though it should be acknowledged that the qualitative approach was most suitable for explaining the participant's perceptions in agreement with what some scholars have suggested. According to Wimmer and Dominick, qualitative research represents several methods of data collection which include focus groups, field observation, in-depth interviews and case studies (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000: 43).

Meanwhile Creswell says that the natural setting enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of participants (Creswell, 2003: 181)

Objectivity or impartiality is seen as a challenge in the qualitative method. In this study, the researcher addressed this by being totally detached from the process of answering questionnaires. This helped safeguard objectivity in that all respondents were not given further clarifications about the questions they had to answer.

Moreover, the quantitative method was scarcely used where applicable to obtain statistical information (i.e. information that is numeric in nature). The collection of data was achieved through structured questionnaire distributed to employees of some selected organisations.

Likewise the evaluation of the research methods as well as the limitations to the general validity needs to be elucidated. The fact that this study has been carried out in selected organisations restricts the internal validity of its findings since they represent the specific situation of the selected sample only. Therefore, one should be cautious by avoiding confusion that might result from over-generalising the findings since they might not be externally validly applicable to the general reality. Thus the findings need to be taken as a preliminary indication that only supports the situation in the entities studied.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

For the sake of convenience, this research was restricted to the city of Port Elizabeth. Moreover, it was based on case studies of a selected number of government and private organisations with a 5 year-old public relations department. As such, the study involved an extensive examination of observable facts.

More revealing information were extracted from the selected government and private organisations by the use of structured questionnaires to help us learn more about public relations strategies in public relations practitioner's efforts to market their organisations' image.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions motivated this research:

1 How close are public relations practitioners in their roles of marketing the corporate image of their organisations to what is postulated in the theory?

2 What influential variables affect the selected public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations?

3 How do the traditional roles of public relations officers correlate with the current situations in the three selected institutions?

4.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In assessing the efficiency of public relations practitioners in marketing the image of an organisation to the public, this research was based on two public relations models:

1 the two-way asymmetric model and,

2 the two-way symmetric model.

With the two-way asymmetric model, practitioners carefully plan what they communicate to the public to achieve a maximum change in attitude and behaviour.

The two-way asymmetric model is called so because the effects of the public relations are imbalanced in favour of the organisation. The organisation does not change as a result of public relations; it rather attempts to change public attitudes and behaviour (Grunig and Hunt, 1983: 21-23).

The two-way symmetric model in contrast, consists more of a dialogue than a monologue. If persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organisations management to change attitudes or behaviour as the organisation is likely to change the publics' attitudes or behaviour (Grunig and Hunt, 1983: 21-23).

The selection of these two theories match well the research topic which focuses on

management and communication issues that the public relations practitioner faces in his or her everyday routine.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

In the course of this study structured interviews by the use of questionnaires were used. Particular attention was given to safeguarding the data from the influence of bias.

4.7 E-MAIL SURVEY

The researcher made use of e-mail to distribute the questionnaire to prospective respondents. The questionnaire together with a covering letter was e-mailed to selected organisations' managers and public relations officers of the same organisations based in Port Elizabeth.

The decision to make use of e-mail was to gain advantages such as:

Speed: The questionnaire and covering letter were delivered to all recipients simultaneously and within a few seconds depending on the speed of the organisation's e-mail system;

Tracking: By making use of e-mail system features, the researcher could easily keep up-to-date tracks of which prospective respondents received the e-mail, who had opened it, and monitor who had responded by return mail; lastly

Convenience: Both the researcher and the respondent could benefit from the ease of using electronic aids to send, complete, reply and record the results of the questionnaire.

The data collection consisted of two phases:

PHASE ONE

A) PRIMARY DATA

This first phase involved structured interviews in the form of questionnaire which was administered to both private / parastatal and government organisations covering two categories of respondents. The first category consisted of the CEOs within the selected organisations. The second category comprised PR practitioners in the selected organisations.

Open-ended questions were used with the objective of allowing respondents to answer freely. Questions were posed in simple and unambiguous language. As Du Plooy, (2002: 144) suggests, mirror questions replicate the respondent's reply, either to obtain further information or confirm what has been said, and he also believes that open-ended questions allow respondents to answer the question in their own words and encourage respondents to express their opinions (Du Plooy 1997: 133). In addition, the open-ended questions were used to obtain unrestricted information in order to critically analyze the data collected.

Close-ended questions were also used based on the fact that they were quicker to respond to and generate specifically relevant responses. Since close-ended questions provided uniform responses that could be easily quantified, the formulation of view based on the responses was facilitated.

In formulating the questions, the researcher took the precaution of avoiding double barrel questions, loaded language, leading questions, incomplete questions and vague questions. Lengthy questions as well as ambiguous questions were also avoided. All this complies with Wimmer and Dominick's (1994: 138) suggestion that the questions should be worded in such a way that they ensure accurate transmission of the respondents' responses to researchers and that they should unambiguously communicate the desired information to the respondent. Moreover, the questions must be concise and easy to read and understand.

A sample of the questionnaire that was used can be viewed in Appendix 1.

PHASE TWO

B) SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data derived from the relevant literature, journals and the Internet as well as publications and government documents on public relations roles in marketing the image of an organisation.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

During the interviews, the data was recorded in a coded way and subsequently sorted, analyzed and then described. Frequencies were run and cross-tabulations done. It was very important for the researcher to be more careful while collecting the data in order to reduce possible bias. One of the ways of reducing bias and ensuring a successful assessment was the use of pilot testing.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical consideration should include the researcher's obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of respondents (Creswell, 2003: 201).

Respondents from the selected organisations were informed that their responses would be treated anonymously.

4.10 PILOT TEST

A questionnaire was constructed and a pilot test was conducted and distributed to one manager and one public relations officer.

4.11 RESULTS OF PILOT TEST

The results of the pilot test were as follows:

• A change in the flow and phrasing (wording) of some questions was made. This was necessitated by one respondent's comment that the questions did not flow well and that they were vague. The respondents felt that some questions were leading or negative; and

• A change in the physical design of the questionnaire was also made. The researcher was advised to remove the blocks design and just leave questions. The researcher was also advised to establish a graph and base the question on this to avoid confusion and facilitate the questionnaire visibility.

• Additionally, change in the number of answers options was revised. The respondents felt that they could have another answer than the options listed and requested that the researcher should include the option: **Any other (please specify**) was added where applicable in the questionnaire.

All of the above suggestions were included when the final questionnaire was drafted.

4.12 SAMPLING METHODS

The research sample for this study will consist of two categories of respondents from 2 government organisations and 1 from a private or parastatal organisation that were selected as follows:

(i)   One respondent from the CEOs / managers in each of the two selected government organisations,

(ii)   One more public relations respondent from each of the two selected government organisations,

(iii)   One CEO / manager respondent and a public relations practitioner from private or parastatal organisations.

Only CEOs and corporate / public relations practitioners are selected for the simple reason that they were the relevant and closely involved with the respective areas. The

researcher considered them as experts in their field.

Three government and private / parastatal organisations with a 5 year-old public relations department were selected in Port Elizabeth.

The sample was both purposive and a convenience sample. The researcher was firm and strict
in deciding upon the sample. This smaller sample helped focus the survey on a specific number of companies only. Each company had to have an office in Port Elizabeth. The corporations were selected on the basis of their location, and the number of years they have been having a public relations function or department. With all this in mind, the population group was defined as follows:

Three companies, namely, Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd., Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and Transnet National Ports Authority. These organisations are represented in the sample. A profile of each organisation is presented below. Age, gender and race have not been considered because they were deemed to be irrelevant to the study.

4.13 SELECTED ORGANISATIONS PROFILE

4.13.1 Transnet National Ports Authority

Transnet National Port Authority is one of the operating divisions of Transnet LTD, devoted to transparency, integrity and efficiency.

The new Transnet is made up of the following operating divisions:

- Transnet Freight Rail (formerly Spoornet – the freight rail division).
- Transnet Rail Engineering (formerly Transwerk - the rolling stock maintenance business).
- Transnet National Ports Authority (formerly the NPA - fulfils the landlord function for South Africa's port system).

- Transnet Port Terminals (formerly SAPO - managing port and cargo terminal operations in the nation's leading ports), and

- Transnet Pipelines (formerly Petronet - the fuel and gas pipeline business, pumps and manages the storage of petroleum and gas products through its network of high-pressure, long distance pipelines).

Transnet National Port Authority is a facilitator of trade and economic development through its landlord, marine and regulatory functions. It is a vital link in the transportation chain of exports and imports in South Africa. This, it does by upgrading the port system infrastructure, providing safe navigation facilities and management of the environment thus enabling its port system to be a success.

Transnet National Port Authority head office is located in Port Elizabeth and it manages the Port of Port Elizabeth.

Vision[2] Statement

Transnet National Port Authority is a focused freight transport company delivering integrated, efficient, safe, reliable and cost-effective services to promote economic growth in South Africa.

Mission[3] Statement

Transnet National Port Authority seeks to achieve this by increasing our market share, improving productivity and profitability, and by providing appropriate capacity to our customers ahead of demand.

Institutional Structure[4]
Diagram8: Institutional Structure of TRANSNET

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[2] http://www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net/NPA_corporate_business_profile.html
[3] http://www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net/NPA_corporate_business_profile.html
[4] http://www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net/NPA_corporate_business_profile.html
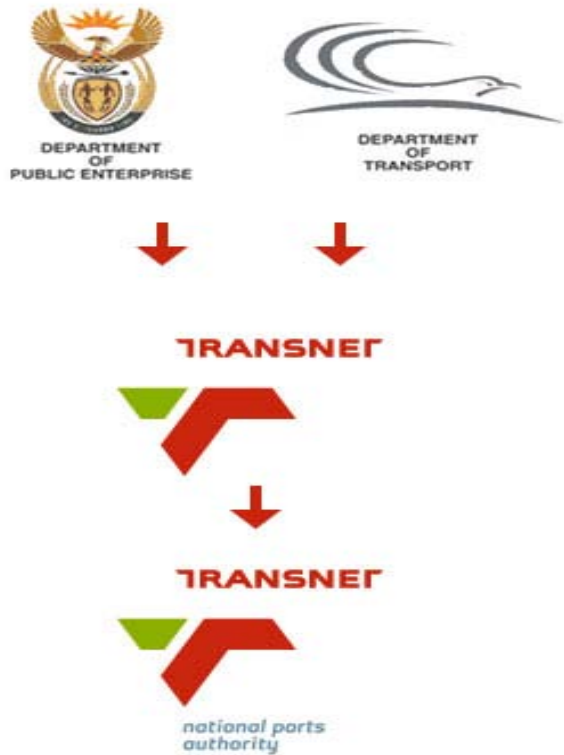
Area of Investment[5]

Transnet National Port Authority main target areas are:

- Investment in communities around the ports.

- Investment in previously disadvantaged communities.

- Programmes that engender development and,

- Programmes that foster empowerment and growth.

Focus Areas

Transnet National Port Authority key focus areas are:

➢ Education, Training and development

➢ Environmental management,

➢ Arts and culture and sports development.

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5 http://www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net/NPA_corporate_social_investment.html

Education, training and development

a) Marine awareness and development

b) Educational capacity enhancement programmes

- Mathematics, science and technology.
- Information technology.
- Teacher training and other educational upliftment programmes.

c) Infrastructure support

- Science laboratories.
- IT centres.
- Classrooms.
- Resource centres/libraries.

Environmental Management

a) Coastal zone management

b) Marine environment education, research and awareness

c) Marine culture resource management programmes geared towards conservation of cultural resources (e.g. Marine museums)

d) Programmes on pollution control and reduction as well as waste management

Arts and Culture

Communicating through the arts and supporting arts and culture development programmes.

- Sports Development.
- Support sports development programmes.
- Modus Operandi.

4.13.2 Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality is one of six Metropolitan (or "Category A") municipalities in South Africa. It is located on the shores of Algoa Bay, and comprises the city of Port Elizabeth, the nearby towns of Uitenhage and Despatch, and the surrounding rural area.

Vision statement

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality is driven by one vision: 'A globally competitive city that works together with the people'.

Intergovernmental Relations (IGR)

The Municipality values its relations with neighbouring municipalities and other municipalities in the country, which provide for the sharing of knowledge, experiences and joint planning initiatives. Agreements of friendship and co-operation were signed with Cacadu District Municipality and Nxuba Local Municipality on 17 November 2006.

Furthermore, the Municipality has enjoyed good working relations and support from SALGA, the Provincial Government, DPLG, National Treasury and other government departments and parastatals.

Diagram 9: Macro structure[6] of Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

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[6] **http://www.nelsonmandelabay.gov.za/Content.aspx?objID=10**

NELSON MANDELA BAY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Speaker — Chief Whip

Executive Mayor — Chief of Staff

Mayoral Committee

Municipal Manager

60 Ward Committees

Community

Chief Financial Officer

SUB-DIRECTORATE

1. Budget & Financial Accounting
2. Expenditure Management
3. Revenue Management & Customer Care
4. Treasury & Financial Support
5. Supply Chain Management

Chief Operating Officer

SUB-DIRECTORATE

1. IDP
2. Policy, Strategy & Monitoring
3. Communications
4. Internal Audit & Risk Management
5. Legal

Executive Directors

Directorate: Corporate Services	Directorate: Infrastructure & Development	Directorate: Electricity & Energy	Directorate: Environment & Health	Directorate: Economic Development & Recreational Services	Directorate: Housing & Land	Directorate: Safety & Security	Directorate: Special Programmes Unit
Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:	Sub-Directorate:
1. Human Resources Management 2. Administrative Services 3. ICT 4. Councillor Support & Public Participation	1. Water & Sanitation 2. Roads, Stormwater & Transportation 3. Land Planning & Development 4. Design & Implementation 5. Special Assignments & Strategic Operations	1. Technical 2. Distribution 3. Projects 4. Retail & Commercial Management	1. Environment & Health Services & Public Health Surveillance 2. Primary Health Care 3. Occupational Health 4. Waste Management 5. Parks & Environmental Management	1. Trade & Investment 2. Sector Development 3. Sports & Recreation 4. Libraries, Arts & Culture	1. Housing delivery 2. Social Development, Education & Administration 3. Development & Support	1. Security Services 2. Disaster Management 3. Traffic & Licencing 4. Fire & Emergency	1. MURP 2. HURP 3. EPWP

4.13.3 Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd

Goodyear South Africa was founded in October 1915. Today the Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings, with the headquarters in Port Elizabeth, and has a group of companies employing approximately 4 800 people.

Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd is situated in Uitenhage. It has

70

manufacturing facilities for tyres and engineered rubber products.

Vision statement

Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd vision[7] is to become a market-focused tyre company providing superior products and services to end-users and to its channel partners, leading to superior returns for its shareholders.

Value statement

For the better part of a century, Goodyear's corporate values[8] have been centred on the phrase, "Protect Our Good Name." Today, this is brought to life through developing culture in which a committed and competitive team of associates can excel.

Corporate Social Investment[9] (CSI)

As a proud corporate citizen of South Africa, Goodyear lives up to its value of operating as a socially responsible corporate citizen. Goodyear does not only contribute towards the economic transformation of the country by implementing its black economic empowerment initiatives, but also towards the social development of its people. Its CSI Policy focuses on the following areas:

- Sport development
- Community development
- Health and welfare
- Education

4.14 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the use of the qualitative research method in the assessment of the

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[7] http://www.goodyear.com/corporate/about/about_quickfacts.html

[8] http://www.goodyear.com/corporate/about/about_quickfacts.html

[9] http://eu.goodyear.com/za_en/sitewides/press/backgroundinformation/companyoverview/

practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image in a selection of organisations was justified. Different methods used are clearly stipulated. In conducting the empirical search there were procedures and rules which the researcher adhered to. The most important ones were based on selecting the sample, designing the questions and taking into consideration the ethical issues. Selecting organisations that could be relevant to this study was one of the important factors carefully handled when conducting this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In a move towards completing this investigation, this chapter will present the research findings. In addition to reporting the findings of the research project, the chapter will also interpret them.

This treatise makes an assessment of the practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image in selected organisations. This paper seeks to examine, the value judgment and best practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of an organisation. It also investigates factors that affect a public relations practitioner while playing his/her role in marketing the corporate image of his/her organisation to the public and those that affect the practice of public relations within organisations.

The findings presented in this treatise result from data collected by means of structured interviews and the use of questionnaires probing how far the practice of public relations goes in marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve compared to what theories suggest.

It is therefore assumed that most of what is going to be said in this chapter is based on raw data collected through the questionnaires which were distributed to respondents.

5.2 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

After the questionnaire had been prepared and administered, the data that were needed to fulfil the objectives of this research were collected. This chapter will present those data in

a summary form. The research instruments that helped to collect that information had already been identified and described in the chapter on research methodology.

In dealing with this section of our work on research findings, it should be pointed out that the issues of corporate image and public relations practice are very controversial and are growing rapidly in South Africa and in some cases can be sensitive. However, some companies have been so kind as to accept to disclose information of this nature by sharing them with us and we are very grateful to them for that.

Though such a disclosure may to some extent be limited, the information provided has the merit of reflecting awareness of a more positive public perception of companies that make an effort to be more truly transparent in collaborating and contributing to a better understanding of these issues.

5.3 THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONDENTS' COMPANIES

Appointments were set up with public relations officers and managers of three companies in Port Elizabeth (South Africa) namely Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and Transnet National Ports Authority who had dedicated their time and efforts to collaborating and contributing to the completion of this research.

These three companies were randomly selected from the telephone directory based on the fact that they had a 5 (or more) years old public relations department.

5.4 STRUCTURE OF THE FINDINGS REPORT

The first section of the findings report is entitled 'response rate'. It is followed by biographical information which mainly introduces the study findings as it briefly presents an important aspect of the raw data collected from respondents which consists of the respondents' personal identity information such as gender, age group, position in the

organisation, and a confirmation on whether the institution they serve has a public relations department or not.

The Biographical Information section is followed by another section entitled 'For organisation managers only'. It will consist of collected socio-cultural information from respondents with regard to the topic on an assessment of the practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image in selected organisations and the interpretation of these data.

Finally, the section entitled 'For public relation practitioners only' provides an analysis of the data collected under corporate communications especially based on a public relations practitioners' perspective.

5.5 RESPONSE RATE

Questionnaires were distributed to a selection of six respondents consisting of three organisational managers and three public relations officers. These respondents came from both government and private organisations with a five years existing public relations department, located in Port Elizabeth. At the end of the day, there was only a total of five respondents whose responses were received back. One manager of the organisation excused herself by saying that she had no time to fill the forms but, gave the go-ahead for the organisation's public relations responses to be used in this study. This response rate is reflected in Table 1.

Table 1 Response Rate

Total Questionnaires	Excused respondent	Total Responses Rate
6	1	5

5.6 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The research was conducted in Port Elizabeth (South Africa). The target group was randomly selected, it comprises a selection of three organisations namely Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and Transnet National Ports Authority. Questionnaires were distributed to respondents and collected from them via e-mail. Within each organisation, two questionnaires were distributed (one to the organisations' managers and the other one to public relations officers). A total number of 5 questionnaires were completed and received from the respondents. One manager of the organisations excused herself. The results from respondents are presented below.

5.6.1 Respondents' Genders

The statistical data collected shows the following major or noticeable trend. Out of the whole sample of respondents, there were three public relations respondents and among whom two were females and one male. On the side of organisations' managers, there was one female, one male. This information can be visualized in table 2 below.

Table 2: Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency
Male	2
Female	3
Total	5

The information in table 2 reflects relative gender balance in the sample in that there is no big difference between female and male representation within the group of respondents. However, additional biographical data from non-respondents could influence these figures by creating an equally balanced representation of both sexes. This result was not a

deliberate one but just work in favour of this research by providing responses from a more balanced and relevant group of respondents.

5.6.2 Respondents' Age groups

The research questionnaires were to be distributed to respondents falling in the following 5 different age groups: (i) below 20 years of age: 0/5, (ii) 20-29 years of age: 0/5, (iii) 30-39 years of age: 3/5, (iv) 40-49 years of age: 2/5, and (v) above 50 years: 0/5. Table 3 summarizes this information clearly.

Table 3: Respondents' age groups

	Age groups	Frequency
1	Below 20	0
2	20-29	0
3	30-39	3
4	40-49	2
5	50 & above	0
	Total	5

Table 3 reveals that the overwhelming majority of the respondents come from the middle age category. Of these, 3 respondents are aged between 30-39, and 2 of the respondents are aged between 40-45. What the results reveal is that the data in this study come from a more experienced age group of respondents that can lend a hand with more mature responses.

5.6.3 Respondents' Positions within the Organisation

Among the respondents, 2/5 were managers from selected organisations and 3/5 were

public relations practitioners from the selected organisations. This information is presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Respondents' positions within the organisation

Positions	Frequency
Organisations' managers	2
Organisations' public relations officers	3
Total	5

From table 4, it can be seen that 2 respondents were organisational managers/CEOs and 3 of the respondents were public relations practitioners. Although additional data from non-respondents could influence this figure by creating an equally balanced number of both organisations' managers and public relations represented respondents, no significance needs to be attached to this fact since it has no impact on the outcome of this study.

5.7 Respondents' Confirmation on whether the Institution Served Has a Public Relations Office

The statistical data collected shows that, out of the whole sample of respondents, 5/5 confirm that the institution they serve has a public relations department. This information is presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: Respondents' confirmation on whether the institution served has a PR office

Response	Frequency
Organisation has a public relations department	5
Total	5

The information in table 5 reveals that all respondents who took part in this study (i.e.

5/5) confirmed that the organisation they work for has indeed a public relations department. This selection was deliberately done by the researcher to make sure that she was dealing with a group of respondents closely involved and relevant to the respective areas of the study and who could contribute valuable information to the research.

5.8 FOR ORGANISATION MANAGERS ONLY

5.8.1 Respondents' view on the most appropriate department to make a public statement on organisational crisis.

The data on the respondents' answer to the question on which department within their organisations they believe is the most appropriate to make a public statement on organisational crisis shows that 1/2 said it is the communication department which is the most appropriate and 1/2 said the public relations department is the most appropriate to make a public statement on organisational crisis. This information is presented in table 6 below.

Table 6: Respondents' view the department believed to be the most appropriate to make a public statement on organisational crisis.

The most appropriate department to make a public statement on organisational crisis	Frequency
Communications department	1
Public relations department	1
Total	2

The information in table 6 disclosed or unveiled that the respondents who took part 2/2 differ in views on the question concerning which department within their organisations they believe is the most appropriate to make a public statement on organisational crisis. One respondent said it is the communications department which is the most appropriate to make a public statement on organisational crisis while the other one said the public

relations department is the most appropriate to make a public statement on organisational crisis. According to Wilcox and Cameron (2006: 99), "Other names used for public relations department in the corporate world include *corporate relations, investor relations, public affairs, marketing communication public and community relations, and external affairs*". In connection with the appellation adopted for the public relations department in the organisations they work for, the respondents are just using the adopted designation of this department in their institution but they are all referring to the public relations department. This information can be cross-tabulated with the information in table 7 below.

When referring to question 6 in which the same respondents were asked how public relations activities are defined within the organisation they serve, the first respondent said *communications department* while the other one said *corporate affairs department*. These respondents are talking about the same things regardless of difference in the terminology used. This again can be supported by Wilcox and Cameron's (2006: 99) remark that "It should be pointed out that 'Public Relations' in an organisation goes by many names. And most often it is not 'Public Relations'. In the large corporations the terms *corporate communications or communications* outnumber public relations by almost four to one".

The above-mentioned situation which has been confirmed by a revelation from the data collected that this is a challenge not only for the public but also for the organisation as a whole including the public relations practitioners and their practices. For as long as there is no agreement between the appellation selected by the organisation to designate 'public relations' and the perception that either the public or the public relations practitioners themselves have in mind, there will always be confusion and disagreement and this aspect will remain forever an unnecessarily created controversial issue.

5.8.2 Respondents' View on how Public Relations activities are defined within the organisation they serve.

The total number of respondents who answered the question on how public relations activities are defined within the organisation they serve was 2. One respondent equated this to a *communications department* while the other viewed public relations activities within his/her organisation as *corporate affairs department or office*. The other categories of responses (namely, *public relations department* and *corporate communications department*) had 0/2 frequency. This information is clearly shown in table 7 below.

Table 7: Respondents' answers to the question on how public relations activities are defined within the organisation they serve

Response	Frequency
Communications department	1
Corporate affairs department/office	1
Public relations department	0
Corporate communications department	0
Total	2

The two managers from whom the data was collected had different views when asked, "How are the public relations activities defined in their organisations?" The first respondent felt that public relations activities should be defined as a 'communications department' and the other respondent felt that in his/her organisation public relations activities are defined as corporate affairs office/department. Again based on what has been said previously under table 6, these managers are talking about the same thing which goes under different appellations depending on the term selected, approved, or agreed upon by the organisation.

5.8.3 The level of the organisation at which the Public Relations department is situated

To the Question on the level of the organisation at which the public relations department

is situated, the respondents' answers yielded the data below according to which none of the respondents (i.e. 0/2) said that the public relations department in the organisations they serve is located at the top management level. Both respondents (i.e. 2/2) said it is located at the middle management level and no respondent (i.e. 0/2) said it is at the operational management level of the organisation. This information is well illustrated in table 8 below.

*Table 8***:** ***The Respondents' answers to the question on the level of the organisation at which the public relations department is situated***

PR is situated at	Frequency
Top management level	0
Middle management level	2
Operational management level	0
Total	2

The information collected reveals that both respondents who took part in this survey agreed that the public relations department within the organisation they serve is situated at the middle management level of the organisation. This finding proves to be contrary to what Grunig et al. (1992: 395) advocate for in suggesting that, "Public relations must be placed high in the organisation hierarchy and that it must be practised strategically if it is to make the more effect and, thus, to be excellent").

In addition, Steyn and Puth also said "The best public relations person is impotent and wasted unless used and supported by the company. The way to do this is to bring public relations to the heights of management where public relations advice can be regularly and easily inserted into the development and evolution of the company's policies and practices……" (William E. Wall, president, Kansas Power and Light Company, cited in Simon (1984: 16).

The statistics of the finding resurrect queries to what Dozier and Grunig and Steyn and Puth suggest among which include among others questions such as:

- Can't public relations activities succeed if operating at other management levels of the organisation than the top management level?

- Should it be a must for an organisation to feel obligated to place public relations activities at the top management level?

- For public relations advice to be regularly and easily inserted into the development and evolution of the company's policies and practices does this department needs to be put at heights of management?

Contrary to what Dozier and Grunig and Steyn and Puth suggested, Wilcox and Cameron bring forward a very different idea according to which "management experts state that staff functions in an organisation operate at various levels of influence and authority. At the lowest level, the staff function may be only *advisory*: line management has no obligation to take recommendations or even request them. They additionally put forward that, when public relations is purely advisory, it is often not effective (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 103).

In support of what Wilcox and Cameron said the data depicting the reality shows that the public relations department can be situated at all management levels of organisation (depending on the organisation's size) not only at the top management level.

5.9 FOR ORGANISATION PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS ONLY

5.9.1 To whom the head of the Public Relations department reports

To the question querying to whom the head of the public relations department reports, the respondents' answers revealed that 0/3 of them said the head of the public relations department reports to the marketing manager, 0/3 of them said he/she does so to the human resources manager, 2/3 said to the manager/CEO and 1/3 said he/she reports to the communications director. This information is represented in table 9 below.

Table 9: The respondents' answers to the question to whom the head of the public relations department reports

Response	Frequency
To the marketing manager	0
To the human resources manager	0
To the manager/CEO	2
To the communications director	1
Total	3

With reference to the information recorded in the foregoing data, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents (2) revealed that the head of the public relations department within the organisation they work for reports to the organisation's manager/CEO and one respondent said the head of the public relations department reports to the communications director. This confirms that the structure of the organisation and the level where the public relations department is situated within the organisation will determine to whom the head of the public relations department reports.

This goes in accord with what some scholars within the field of corporate image have put forward. In fact Beard (1997: 15-16) comments that in a large organisation, the central or corporate department sets the standards for public relations and will have to take a broad overview of all activities. It may control directly the work of subsidiary or regional public relations officers. Alternatively, the officers will report to local general managers with a 'dotted line' to corporate public relations. Either way there has to be a coordinated approach to communicating to ensure that a consistent message about the organisation is presented. Beard also says, in corporate departments PR officers report to the senior managers of the organisation who are under pressure to produce results. In turn, this leads to pressure to perform for the public relations professionals.

The above-mentioned responses from the respondents corroborate what has been said by Beard and help to uncover an influential factor (misconception) that might affect the public relations in marketing the corporate image of an organisation. The fact that the head of the public relations department reports to the manager or any other office within the organisation should not mislead many into believing that it reduces the position and performance of the public relations officer. It should be understood that the public relations department choice of whom it should report to depends really on the structure of the organisation and the level at which the public relations department operates.

The responses discussed fulfil the second objective of this research, which is to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public.

5.9.2 The department under which respondents find themselves working within their organisation, as public relations practitioners

Among the public relations practitioners who responded to this question, 0/3 represents respondents who said as public relations practitioners they find themselves working under the human resources department. 0/3 respondents opted for the marketing department. 1/3 said she/he find her/himself working under CEO/manager and sometimes under the advertising department. 1/3 represents the respondent who confirmed not work under any other department than the public relations department and 1/3 represents the one who affirmed working under the communications department. The following information is clearly illustrated in table 10 below.

Table 10: Respondents' answers to the question on the department under which they find themselves working within their organisation, as public relations practitioners

Response	Frequency
Human resources department	0
Marketing department	0
CEO/manager but, some times under advertising department	1
Do not work under any other department than the public relations department	1
Communications department	1
Total	3

These data show that the respondents answered this question differently. The first respondent said as a public relations practitioner he/she finds him/herself working under the CEO/manager but, sometimes under the advertising department within the organisation. The second respondent said he/she does not work under any other department than the public relations department and the third respondent said he/she finds him/herself working under the communications department.

The afore-mentioned information collected is varied and contradicts Simon's (1984: 16) suggestion that 'public relations must directly report to top management because virtually all actions and activities of an organisation have public relations ramifications. Thus, the public relations executive can perform most effectively when he/she is in a position to provide input where top management decisions are being made'.

What Simon suggests should be queried for the fact that what he suggests might be valid only for public relations communication strategies decision, not other decisions of the organisation such as building extra offices for the company, etc.

In addition, Simon's suggestion should also be queried based on the fact that the current situation in the data proves the contrary of what he suggests in saying 'public relations must directly report to top management because virtually all actions and activities of an organisation have public relations ramifications…..'

Simon's suggestion has overlooked the fact that organisations are structured differently. In some organisations, you find that the role of the organisation's manager and that of the public relations are carried out by the same person while in others you come across a different structure. Simon's suggestion can therefore be seen as a misconceived over-generalisation of a particular situation.

Linking this situation to the success of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of the organisation he/she works for, this can be seen as one of the misconceptions that can lead the public relations practitioner into believing that they only have to report to the CEO or the organisation's manager about their daily duties regardless of the structure of the organisation they work for.

The above-mentioned information again responds to the second objective of this research which is to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public.

5.9.3 Respondents' views on the strategic role of the public relations practitioner

As far as the question on the strategic role of the public relations practitioner is concerned, the data collected shows that 1/3 respondents described him/herself as the go-between, the interpreter or the communication link between an organisation and the stake holders. 2/3 respondents define themselves as being the authority on both corporate communication and problem solution in their organisations. 0/3 respondents said he/she is able to r-monitor relevant environmental developments and anticipate their consequences for the organisation policies and strategies and is part of the strategy

formulation team that adapts the organisation to the future. 0/3 represent the view that the PR practitioner is the one who helps others in the organisation to solve their corporate communication problems and 0/3 represents the view that the PR practitioner is able to carry out the low-level mechanics of communication products that implements decisions made by others. The foregoing information is represented in table 11 below.

Table 11: Respondents' **views on the strategic role of the public relations practitioner**

Views on the strategic roles o a PR practitioner	Frequency
the go-between. interpreter or communication link between an organisation and the stake holders	1
the authority on both corporate communication and problem solution in an organisation	2
able to r-monitor relevant environmental development and anticipate their consequences for the organisation policies and strategies and being part of the strategy formulation team that adapts the organisation to the future	0
the one who helps others in the organisation to solve their corporate communication problems	0
able to carry out the low-level mechanics of communication products that implements decisions made by others	0
Total	3

The foregoing data shows that the respondents who took part in this study came up with different ways of defining the strategic role of a public relations practitioner. This confirms that strategic role of public relations cannot be uniformly defined by all corporate communication practitioners.

Though when critically looking at the two different ways that public relations practitioners have defined what they mean by the term strategic role, it can be clearly noticed that all of them have closely the same idea in mind.1/3 respondents defined the strategic role of public relations practitioner as 'being the go-between, the interpreter or the communication link between an organisation and the stake holders' and 2/3 defined it as 'being the authority on both corporate communication and problem solution in an

organisation'. These two ways of defining the strategic role of public relations practitioners share in common the idea of ' public relations practitioner being the liaison, the go-between or mediator' between the organisation and its stake holders or peoples whose actions affect the organisation and what they communicate in order to create mutual understanding between the two parties.

The above-mentioned ways of defining the strategic role of public relations practitioners on the basis of the current reality or situation of practitioners' experience in the respective organisations they work for goes in accord with Steyn and Puth's (2000: 17) way of defining the term strategic management role of corporate communication. They suggest that it can be defined as '… a process of thinking through the current mission of the organisation, and the current environmental conditions, and combining these elements by setting forth a guide for tomorrow's decisions and results'.

What Steyn and Puth meant when saying '… a process of **thinking through** the **current mission** of the organisation, and the **current environmental conditions**, and **combining these elements by setting forth a guide for tomorrow's decisions and results''** is what 2/3 respondents referred to as **being the authority on both corporate communication and problem solution in an organisation**' and all this simply means '**being the go-between, interpreter or communication link between an organisation and the stake holders'** as what 1/3 respondents suggests.

This finding answers one of the research objectives, namely objective 3, which is 'to uncover and solve misconceptions if any around the issue of what strategic role of public relations management means to public relations practitioners' and it also answer research objective 4 which is 'to establish the most significant changes required to the traditional roles (such as expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem-solving facilitators and the newly discovered role of strategist) of public relations practitioners if needed , in order to reflect the current and ideal situation of their role in South African organisations.

5.9.4 Respondents' answers to the question on the extent to which the PR practitioners are involved in top management decision making

The data collected shows that 1/3 respondents said they are involved in top management decision making everyday, 2/3 said they are involved in decision making only when there is an issue which needs their attention and 0/3 said they are involved in top management decision making rarely. This information is clearly shown in table 12.

Table 12: Respondents' answers to the question on the extent to which they are involved in top management decision making as PR practitioners

Extent of PR involvement in decision making	Frequency
Everyday	1
Only when there is an issue which needs their attention	2
Rarely	0
Total	3

These data show that the majority of respondents in the sample (i.e. 2/3) agreed on the fact that they are involved in top management level decision making only when there is an issue which needs their attention and only 1/3 respondents said he/she is involved in top management decision making everyday.

The involvement of public relations practitioners in top management decision making everyday puts the practitioner in a situation where he/she can understand better how the organisation operates through its vision and mission and helps such an organisation in being proactive than reactive when faced with a crisis. This situation also puts the practitioner in a better position of being able to market the corporate image or the logical (cognitive belief) component and an emotional (feeling) component of the organisation This goes in concurrence with Black's (1972: 8) suggestion that, the protection of the company's corporate image is the public relations expert's particular responsibility and it should also be the conscience of the organisation in every respect in which its activities impinge on public opinion or welfare.

The fact of not involving public relations practitioner in everyday activities of an organisation's decision making as the data revealed might endanger or jeopardize the practitioners' ability to successfully represent or market the organisation image to its public.

This question was deliberately asked in order to help the researcher get an overview on whether organisations need corporate communications practitioner's assistance everyday or they just wait to run for help from them only when there is a major crisis that needs their assistance. This question was also deliberately asked in order to uncover some influential factors that might affect the public relations practitioner in marketing the corporate image of an organisation.

These findings therefore fulfil research objective 2 which is 'to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public'.

5.9.5 Respondents' answers to the question on frequent attribution of their working efforts to other departments within their institution

To the question on whether the respondents do often find their working efforts attributed to other departments within the institution they work for, the responses yielded the following results. 2/3 respondents said they strongly agree that most of the time they find themselves in a situation that their working efforts are attributed to other departments within the institution they work for. 1/3 said he/she agrees with the statement, 0/3 disagrees and 0/3 respondents strongly disagrees. This information can be visualized in table 13 below.

Table 13: The Respondents' answers to the question on whether they do most of the time find themselves in a situation whereby their working efforts are attributed to other departments within the institution they work for.

PR working efforts are attributed to other departments	Frequency
Strongly agree	2
Agree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

These data show that most of the respondents strongly agree with the fact that most of the time they find themselves in a situation whereby their working efforts are attributed to other departments within the institution they work for and 1/3 said he/she agrees with the statement. These responses come from informed respondents familiar with the current working situation and who could both refer to their daily working experience and to other departments of the organisations they work for.

The current situation justifies Simon's (1984: 16) suggestion that 'public relations must directly report to top management because virtually all actions and activities of an organisation have public relations ramifications. Thus, the public relations executive can perform most effectively when he/she is in a position to provide input where top management decisions are being made'.

Instead of the public relations department working efforts to be attributed to other departments such as human resources, marketing and juridical departments (to name only few) who claim others' working efforts, these departments should rather find a way of working together by respecting and acknowledging each other's contribution and efforts in the activities and working efforts toward the success of the entire organisation.

The above argument based on the research findings concords with Smythe et al.'s (1992: 7-8) suggestion that, marketing, human resources and corporate communication departments must accept that they are all part of one process which is communicating the

organisation's reputation. They have no other function except to make the organisation acceptable and useful to employees, customers and society at a large. (Smythe et al.)

As Down and Adrian (2004: 60) suggest, motivation is fostered upon employees by clarifying what is to be done, how well they are doing and what can be done to improve performance. If this situation whereby the departments of an organisation fail to collaborate so as to reach the organisation's goals persists, and if each department's working efforts are attributed unjustly to another department of the organisation, the efforts of the entire organisation will be affected, let alone the success of public relations practitioner in marketing the corporate image of the organisation.

These findings answer two of the research objectives which are:
- to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public and,
- to examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth.

5.9.6 How the respondents define the concept of corporate image

The data collected reveal that out of the total number of three respondents who participated in this research, each one of them came up with quite a different way of defining the concept *corporate image* based on his/her own knowledge and experience within the corporate communication department. The first respondent (i.e. 1/3) defined the concept as 'a perception of what the organisation stands for in the mind of their various publics. In this respondent's view this notion is also strongly linked to *brand image* and *brand perception*. Public relations play a vital role in defining the corporate image of an organisation, providing credible statements on the organisation that are free of advertising or subjectivity'. The second respondent (i.e. another 1/3) on the other side defined the concept as 'achieving brand objectives' while the last of the three respondents (i.e. the last 1/3) defined the same concept as 'the reflection of the organisation's identity, culture and business ethics represented in many ways by the manner in which the

organisation engages its stakeholders including the nature of such relationships'.

This information can be visualized in table 14 below.

Table 14: Respondents' answer to the question on how the concept of corporate image is defined

Definitions of *corporate image*	Frequency
A perception of what the organisation stands for in the mind of their various publics. Also strongly linked with brand image and brand perception. Public relations play a vital role in defining the corporate image of an organisation, providing credible statements on the organisation that are free of advertising or subjectivity	1
Achieving brand objectives	1
The reflection of the organisation's identity, culture and business ethics represented in many ways by the manner in which the organisation engages its stakeholders including the nature of such relationships	1
Total	3

Though varying in the ideas they put forward, all these definitions share such similar key terms as brand image, brand perception, brand objectives, brand identity, culture and business ethics perceived and projected in the organisations public minds. These ideas concord with the definition provided in the Marketing Business of February (1994: 5) quoted in Varey (2002: 195) saying 'corporate image is essentially the organisation reputation, the collective total of perceptions of an organisation's target public. Corporate image is how an organisation's audiences (the public, staff, city financiers, customers….) perceive its corporate identity'.

The above idea is also supported by Ind's (1992: 21) suggestion that corporate image is in the eye of the receiver. It is simply the picture that an audience has of an organisation through the accumulation of all received messages.

In addition, Dowling (2001: 19) says corporate image is the global evaluation (comprised of set of beliefs and feelings) a person has about an organisation. This coincides with the ideas put forward by the three respondents who took part in this research.

The information gathered from the respondents meets the third research objective which is 'to uncover and solve misconceptions if any around the issue of what the strategic role of public relations management is to public relations practitioners'. It also meets the fifth research objective which is 'to come up with sound recommendations concerning the roles of public relations in marketing the corporate image of an organisation'.

5.9.7 The Respondents' view of the public relations practitioners' role within their organisations

According to the data collected, all the respondents unanimously agreed to the idea that the role of public relations practitioners is to create mutual understanding within and outside the organisations they work for. None of them (i.e. 0/3) confirmed any of the other three alternatives, namely, (i) to report on behalf of the organisation, (ii) to solve any organisational crisis and (iii) to be involved in organisational decision makings process. This information can be visualized in table 15 below.

Table 15: The Respondents' answer to the question on **their role within the organisation they work for**

PR Practitioner's role in the organisation	Frequency
To report on behalf of the organisation	0
To solve any organisational crisis	0
Being involved in organisational decision makings process	0
Creating mutual understanding within and outside the organisation	3
Total	3

The data collected reveals that there is agreement and consistency in respondents' answers in connection with their opinion on their role as public relations practitioners in the respective organisations they work for.

The information from the data collected goes in concurrence with what Lattimore et al. (2001: 58) put forward in the two-way symmetrical model which describes public relations efforts in terms of its research based definition as the use of communication in improving understanding with strategic publics. This model attempts to adjust the organisation to its environment as well as adjusting the environment to the organisation. Here, there is an expectation that with the public relations practitioners playing the technician and management roles, the organisation they work for will unfailingly achieve success. This model also coincides with the system approaches discussed earlier on.

Creating mutual understanding inside and outside the organisation is what is referred to as the Communication facilitator role, one of the traditional roles of public relations. This is also referred to as Communication liaison. Within this role, the public relations practitioner is concerned with the quality and quantity of information flow between management and the publics. Communication facilitators are boundary spanners who improve the quality of decisions that are related to policies, procedures, and actions of both stakeholders and organisations. This role can be linked to the public information and two-way symmetric models of corporate communication (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 15).

The data collected reveals that the current situation confirms the first research hypothesis according to which 'some public relations practitioners are not yet fulfilling their role of strategists within Port Elizabeth organisations'.

The above findings meet the fourth research objective which is 'to establish the most significant changes required to the traditional roles (such as expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem-solving facilitators and the newly discovered role of strategist) of public relations practitioners to reflect the current and ideal situation of their role in South African organisations'.

5.9.8 Respondents' Opinion on the Impact of different perceptions of their ability to promote their organisations' corporate image

The public relations practitioners from the three selected organisations were asked to give

their responses to a number of questions as well as their opinions in response to the following two statements:

a) that 'the public's perception of public relations as spin doctoring' impacted negatively their efforts in promoting the corporate image of their organisations, and

b) that 'top management's perception of public relations impacts their ability to promote the corporate image of their organisation'.

The data collected in response to the first statement revealed that 2/3 respondents agreed with the statement while only one of the respondents (i.e. 1/3) disagreed. The other extreme alternatives, namely (i) strongly agreed and (ii) strongly disagreed were rejected by all the respondents and scored both 0/3. This information is displayed in table 16 A below.

*Table 16 **A***: *The respondents' opinions on the statement that 'The public's perception of public relations as spin doctoring negatively impacted their ability to promote the corporate image of their organisations'.*

Response	Frequency
Agree	2
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The majority of respondents 2/3 agree that the statement is true. The findings agree with Marconi's (1996: 3) observation that in reality two different people can look at the something and see it differently and gather different perceptions about what they have seen. According to Marconi, people's perceptions are based on what they know or think they know. Based on these perceptions, people buy, sell, vote, travel, invest and make

pretty much of every major and minor decision that govern their lives and affects the lives of those around them.

In addition, the findings also confirm Dowling's comment that (2001: 18) 'the image of things (countries, industries, companies and brands) resides in the heads of people. They are not a fixed attribute of an organisation'.

The findings from the data meet the second research objective, which is 'to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public'.

These findings also confirm one of the research hypotheses, namely hypothesis number 3, which alleged that 'Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their role is perceived within organisations'.

The data collected in response to the second statement that 'Top management's perception of public relations impacts their ability to promote the corporate image of their organisation' revealed what is presented in Table 16 B.

Table 16 B: The respondents' opinions on the statement that 'Top management's perception of public relations impacts their ability to promote the corporate image of their organisation'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	0
Strongly agree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The data presented in table 16B above clearly shows that the majority of respondents (i.e. 2/3) strongly agreed with the fact that 'the structure of the organisation impacts their ability to promote the corporate image on their organisations' while 1/3 disagrees. The remaining two alternatives, namely 'agree' and 'strongly agreed' scored each 0/3. These findings go hand in hand with Steyn and Puth's (2000: 8) observation based on recent research which clearly indicates that virtually nobody at top management level, at least of all the CEO, disputes the necessity and importance of communication to the organisation. Public relations / corporate communications department finds itself in an unenviable and undesirable position simply because it has been unable to think, behave and perform strategically in the organisation. For a variety of reasons, the corporate communication function seems to have become an operational mode in many organisations. Instead of being an equal participant in determining the visionary and strategic direction of the organisation, and particularly in identifying and managing its strategic issues and stakeholders, corporate communication seems to be predominantly occupied with executing operational plan that are conceptualised and initiated by other management functions. Corporate communication seems to be an executioner of plans rather than an originator of strategies.

For success and achievement of good results as Black (1972: 15) insinuates, top management must be in favour of the public relations programme and must contribute to its success. He also says, if public relations is to be successful in its role in management, it must be organized in depth.

Meanwhile research also indicates that the type of organisation involved may be less significant in predicting the role of a public relations department than are the perceptions and expectations of its top management. In many organisations, top level management perceives the public relations department as fulfilling primarily a journalistic and technician function, in addition to being in charge of media relations and publicity. In large scale mechanical organisations of low complexity, there is also a tendency to think of public relations as only a support function of the marketing function (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 99).

The findings from the data collected answered the second, the fourth and the fifth

research objectives which are respectively:

- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public.
- To examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth, and
- To come up with sound recommendations concerning the roles of public relations in marketing the corporate image of an organisation.

These findings also support the allegation in research hypothesis number 3 according to which 'Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations'.

Table 16 C: The respondents' opinion on the statement that 'The structure of the organisation impacts their ability to promote the corporate image on their organisations'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	2
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The data collected that is presented in table 16 C above reveals that, the majority of respondents (i.e. 2/3) agreed with the statement that the size of the organisation impacts their ability to promote the corporate image on their organisation. 1/3 respondents disagreed with the statement. None of the respondents (i.e. 0/3) strongly agreed with the statement, neither did any strongly disagree with it.

These findings concord with what Lubbe and Puth (1994: 29) suggest that the number of major departments in an organisation is determined by the size and nature of the organisation. When an organisation is established, the number of major departments may be limited to marketing management, financial management and product, but as the organisation expands, departments of human resources and public relations may be included, either separately or as a single department. They additionally say that, the different departments may occupy different hierarchical levels and heads of each of them may lie at different managerial levels, which has implications for their authority and decision making responsibility.

The findings from the data collected meet the second and the fourth research objectives which are respectively:

- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public.
- To examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth.

These findings also concur with research hypotheses number two and three which were put forward at the beginning of this investigation, namely:

- The strategic role as identified in theory as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice, and
- Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations'.

Table 16 D: The respondents' response to the statement 'The size of the organisation impacts my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	1
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The data collected presented in table 16 D above reveal that the majority of respondents 2/3 disagree with the statement 'the level where public relations is situated within the organisation impacts my ability to promote the corporate image of my organisation'. 1/3 agreed with the statement, 0/3 strongly agreed with it and 0/3 strongly disagreed.

These findings concord with what Lubbe and Puth suggest, the number of major departments in an organisation is determined by the size and nature of the organisation. When an organisation is established, the number of major departments may be limited to marketing management, financial management and product, but as the organisation expands, departments for human resources and public relations may be included, either separately or as one department. They additionally say that, the different departments may occupy at different hierarchical levels and heads of each department may lie at different managerial levels, which has implications for their authority and decision making responsibility (Lubbe and Puth, 1994: 29).

The findings from the data collected answer research objectives two and four which are:
- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public.
- To examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public

relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth.

These findings also support hypotheses number two and three which were put forward at the outset of the research, namely:

- The strategic roles identified in theory such as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice, and
- Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations'.

Table 16 E: The respondents' response to the statement 'The level where public relations is situated within the organisation impacts my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	2
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The data collected presented in table 16 E above reveals that the majority of respondents (i.e. 2/3) disagreed with the statement 'The level where public relations is situated within the organisation impacts my ability to promote the corporate image of my organisation'. 1/3 respondents agreed with the statement; none of them (i.e. 0/3) neither strongly agreed nor strongly disagreed with the statement.

What the findings have revealed to a large extent reflected by the 2/3 ratio contradicts Lubbe and Puth's (1994: 29) presumption that '…different departments may occupy different hierarchical levels and heads of each department may lie at different managerial levels, which has implications for their authority and decision making responsibility'. Nevertheless, only 1/3 ratio of response based on the data collected depicting what the reality of the current situation reveals agreed with Lubbe and Puth.

The findings from the collected data answered research objective two which is 'to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public'.
These findings also concur with the second research hypothesis which postulates that 'the strategic roles identified in theory such as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice'.

Table 16 F: The respondent's response to the statement that Organisational perception about public relations, impacts their ability to promote the corporate image on their organisation'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	3
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The statistical data collected shows that all of the respondents (i.e. 3/3) agreed with the statement 'Organisational perception about public relations, impacts my ability to promote the corporate image of my organisation'. 1/3 respondents disagreed with the

statement whereas none of them (i.e. 0/3) neither strongly agreed nor strongly disagreed. Table 16 F above clearly illustrates this information.

With reference to the data, it can be said that most of respondent share the view that the organisational perception about public relations has an impact on their ability to promote the corporate image of their organisation. This finding goes in accord with Wilcox and Cameron's (2006: 99) observation that 'research also indicates that the type of organisation involved may be less significant in predicting the role of a public relations department than are the perceptions and expectations of its top management. In many organisations, top level management perceives as primarily a journalistic and technician function, media relations and publicity. In large scale mechanical organisations of low complexity, there is also a tendency to think of public relations as only a support function of the marketing function'. They additionally argue that such perceptions by top management severely limit the role of public relations department as well as its power to take part in management decision making. Instead, 'public relations' is relegated to being a tactical function, simply preparing messages without input on what should be communicated. In many cases, however, public relations personnel self-select technician role because they lack a knowledge base in research, environmental scanning, problem solving total communications strategy (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 99).

The findings from the data collected met research objective number two which is 'to uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public'.

These findings also validate research hypotheses number two and three which respectively postulate that:
- The strategic roles identified in theory such as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice, and
- Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations.

Table 16 G: Representing respondent's degree of appreciation in response to the statement that 'Public relations is appreciated and recognized in corporate environment'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	2
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The data collected revealed that 2/3 respondents agreed with the statement 'Public relations is appreciated and recognized in corporate environment'. 1/3 disagreed with the statement, and none of the respondents (i.e. 0/3) neither strongly agreed with the statement, nor did strongly disagree with it. The information is reflected in table 16 G above.

What the data revealed again concords with previous research findings as reported by Wilcox and Cameron (2006: 99) who say that

> 'Meanwhile research also indicates that the type of organisation involved may be less significant in predicting the role of a public relations department than are the perceptions and expectations of its top management. In many organisations, top level management perceives as primarily a journalistic and technician function, media relations and publicity. In large scale mechanical organisations of low complexity, there is also a tendency to think of public relations as only a support function of the marketing function'.

The findings from the data collected fulfilled research objectives number two and four which are respectively:

- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public' and,

- To establish the most significant changes required to the traditional roles (such as

expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem-solving facilitators and the newly discovered role of strategist) of public relations practitioners if needed, in order to reflect the current and ideal situation of their role in South African organisations.

These findings also confirm research hypotheses number two and three proposing that:

- The strategic roles identified in theory such as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realised in current practice, and
- Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations.

Table 16 H: The respondent's response to the statement 'Budget constraints impact my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation'.

Response	Frequency
Agree	3
Strongly agree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	3

The data collected revealed that 3/3 respondents agreed with the statement that budget constraints impact their ability to promote the corporate image on their organisation. None of the respondents (i.e. 0/3) opted for any other alternative by either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement or strongly agreeing with it. This information is reflected in table 16 H above.

The data reveal that all respondents of the three selected organisations agree on the fact

that their ability to promote or marketing the corporate image of their respective organisations suffered from the limited resources that the organisation allocates to their department activities. What the data reveal is corroborated by Steyn and Puth (2000: 7) who suggest that

> 'The budget allocation for corporate communication / public relations is totally inadequate for the important projects that need to be undertaken in the interest of the organisation'.

These responses fulfil research objectives one, two and five of this research which are:
- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public,
- To examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth and,
- To come up with sound recommendations concerning the roles of public relations in marketing the corporate image of an organisation.

These findings also validate research hypothesis number three which proposes that 'Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations'.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings our research report to an end by outlining the problems and limitations that were encountered during the research, summarizing its important phases, wrapping up by making general inferences, and providing a number of useful recommendations for future investigations.

6.2 PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

No major problems were encountered while conducting this research except those usually associated with the postal / e-mail survey method of data collection. The problems encountered were namely:

- Lack of co-operation by some of respondents from the selected organisations in order to return the completed questionnaire. A follow-up e-mail to those who did not reply provoked some reaction and resulted in a final response rate of five respondents.

- Some of the sections/chapters included in the study did not have any direct impact on the productivity measures included in the questionnaire. This problem was resolved by adjusting the total number of respondents to those specific sections in order to properly reflect the number of positive versus negative responses.

Due to the size of the selected organisations, the study was limited to Port Elisabeth in Eastern Cape region. Managers and corporate communications / public relations officers selected for the study came from three randomly selected organisations namely; Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Holdings (Pty) Ltd., Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and Transnet National Ports Authority. The group of respondents from the selected

organisations was thus sufficient to enable the researcher to draw valid conclusions regarding the problem stated.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

This study intended to correlate what has been theorized with current practice in the profession. As stated at the outset, the main problem that motivated this research was to find out how PR practitioners market the corporate image of their organisations as compared to what has been theorized and how the existing factors affect the success of these practitioners' endeavour. The researcher addressed these issues throughout this work in various chapters.

Contrary to most previous research papers on corporate image, the importance and contribution of this research was that it generated original data which helped highlight, correlate and utilize the existing theories in providing a real picture of PR practitioner's functions in marketing the corporate image of their respective current organisations.

In addition, this study contributed to a better understanding of the current situation facing PR practitioners in terms of the newly discovered strategic role.

The findings of this investigation set foundations for further research on the assessment and estimation of the practice of the public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of organisations.

The study objectives included:
- To examine and study analytically the performance and practice of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations in comparison with the theoretical models proposed by Steyn and Puth.
- To uncover influential variables affecting public relations practitioners' success in marketing the corporate image of their organisations to the public.

- To uncover and solve misconceptions if any around the issue of what the strategic role of public relations management is to public relations practitioners.

- To establish the most significant changes required to the traditional roles (such as expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem-solving facilitators and the newly discovered role of strategist) of public relations practitioners if needed, in order to reflect the current and ideal situation of their role in South African organisations.

- Finally, to come up with sound recommendations concerning the roles of public relations in marketing the corporate image of an organisation.

The study also aimed at examining, the value judgment and best practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image of an organisation and investigating factors that affect a public relations practitioner while playing his/her role in marketing the corporate image of his/her organisation to the public and those that affect the practice of public relations within organisations.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study on an assessment of the practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image in selected organisations has confirmed the predicted hypotheses of the study which were namely:

I) Some public relations practitioners are not yet manifesting their role of strategists within Port Elizabeth organisations.

II) The strategic roles identified in theory such as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and profession of public relations might not be realized in current practice.

III) Public relations practitioners' effectiveness in marketing the corporate image of their organisations is affected by the way their roles are perceived within organisations.

IV) Public relations practitioners' success in accomplishing their roles of marketing the corporate image of an organisation depends on four

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fundamental roles which are:

     i)   Communication technicians,

     ii)   Expert prescribers,

     iii) Communication facilitators, and

     iv) Problem-solving facilitators.

From the literature surveyed, previous research and the empirical study in this investigation, the following recommendations can be made so that further related investigations may bring new insights to this topic that, we acknowledge, the present study does not claim to have fully exhausted owing to time and space limitations.

A. Practice of public relations practitioners in marketing corporate image

Marketing corporate image is not an easy task to be attributed to public relations practitioners and expect them to change the situation in a day. As James and Wiechmann (1999: 22) stress, continuity building has been essential because image building is a slow and cumulative process. If the process is interrupted, the cumulative gain of many years tends to evaporate very, very quickly.

The entire organisational management team including public relations practitioners need to understand that there are a lot of aspects and factors that can affect the organisations image. For a public relations practitioner to be able to defend the organisation's image at his/her utmost capability and to market the organisation's image to the public, he/she needs to have a better understanding of the overall situation of the organisation. Therefore it can be recommended that public relations practitioners should not be blocked in the organisation to operate at the organisation level where they are not comfy and can not strategically assist the organisation to come out of the crises.

In addition, the organisational management team including public relations practitioners should not waste the talent of public relations practitioners in getting involved in professional disputes instead of working hand in hand so as to help the organisation reach

its goals and achieve its visions. Getting involved in sarcastic and cynical arguments such as whom or what department of the organisation should be operating at the top management level will not in any manner make them useful to the organisation.

The researcher is of the opinion that with technological advancement, environmental change and development there is a direct need for further analysis of emerging elements affecting public relations practitioners while marketing the corporate image of the organisations they serve than getting stuck in old endless and unproductive clashes existing in professional milieu.

B. Public relations traditional roles vis-à-vis strategic role

The researcher believes that public relations fundamental or traditional roles are the bedrock on which the new strategic role of public relations or corporate communications practitioners is based and from which it is extracted. Corporate communications practitioners should refrain from thinking that the strategist role should be totally divorced with the traditional roles or fundamental roles of public relations.

The data collected revealed that most public relations / corporate communication practitioners are still operating at the middle level of the organisation within the four traditional roles depending on the nature, the structure and the size of the organisation they serve. This fact does not totally prevent the researcher from believing that there is a very limited number of practitioners operating at the top management level within the strategic role.

As a matter of fact, public relations practitioners operating at the strategic level of the organisation should acknowledge that the strategic role derives from the traditional role and therefore both roles should not be divorced. As for the public relations / corporate communications practitioners operating at the traditional roles, they should not think that it is impossible for them to operate at the strategist role one day. Therefore, they should not also believe that operating as a strategist is more of a myth than an attainable dream.

Looking farther one can see that the public relations practitioner has a very responsible role to play within the organisation. According to Broom and Dozier (1997: 65), public relations practitioners are problem-solvers and advisors to senior management. They are responsible for broad programme results and therefore have under their jurisdiction the following three managerial roles:

- Expert prescriber – who operates as a consultant to define the problem, suggest options, and oversee implementation;
- Problem-solver process facilitator – partners with senior management to identify problems and solve problems; and
- Communication facilitator – the person on the periphery between the organisation and its environment who keeps two-way communication flowing.

From the statement above, it is apparent that Broom and Dozier advise that public relations managers should adopt all these roles when functioning in their organisations. Much will depend however, on the style of the practitioner, the expectations of senior management, the type of issues faced, the nature and size of the organisation and the structure of the organisation. The researcher strongly agrees with the above authors. The public relations department within organisations should be allowed to participate in decision making processes and should also be allowed to partake in top management decisions making within the strategist role. This will allow them to be able to defend the organisation in the eyes of the public and enable them to market successfully the corporate image of the organisations they serve.

C. Strategic role

Strategic role is not synonymous to top management level, neither should it be considered as a visa to climb to the managerial level of an organisation.

The data collected revealed that most public relations practitioners are familiar with what strategic role means but they are not yet manifesting their role of strategists within the

organisations they work for. On the other side, the strategic role has been identified in theory by many scholars as the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and the profession of public relations. The real and current situation based on revelation from the data collected tends to dissociate with the theory.

The researcher's recommendation is therefore that public relations can play the strategic role at all organisational levels. Depending on the size, the structure of the organisation and other factors, public relations practitioners should feel comfortable and confident in defending the image of their organisation rather than envying prestigiously to rise to top managerial positions or to get involved in top management decision making process. The managerial position can not make you become a good practitioner; it is through practice that one is recognised and become a good practitioner.

Secondly, the idea of public relations being seen or considered as the solution to the myth and allegory of success in the practice and the profession of public relations is a misleading idea since, it overlooks other important elements that encroach and affect the success of public relations practitioners (in marketing corporate image of organisations) and profession. As James and Wiechmann (1999: 27) again point out that a company's image is a composite of all its actions, not only of corporate advertising. How a company communicates is very much a part of how it is perceived. In effect, all corporate behaviour constitutes "media" which transmit "message".

Therefore, public relations practitioners need to be vigilant in bringing to light other existing and emerging aspects that obstruct, impede or encumber their success and profession than being involved in cliché and old disputes. As proverbs say, "Better live with the devil you know than the one you don't" and "Be careful with stagnant water". Emerging aspects that obstruct impede or encumber their success and profession can be more dangerous than the old known elements such as strategic role.

Lastly, for public relations practitioners to be able to assist the organisations they serve efficiently, they need to be informed and included in top management strategic decision

making regardless of whether they are operating at the organisation's low, middle or top management level. As a result, this will help them move from an operational role to the strategic management level.

6.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image is and will always be an interesting field to study. Global change brings with it plenty of new reasons for research to be undertaken in this field.

This study has provided an overview of the current situation of public relations practice and public relations success in marketing the corporate image of organisations. Future in-depth studies can be undertaken in the following fields:

- A descriptive study of the interconnection and interdependency of public relations practitioners' roles in organisations,
- Analysis of the role of the public relations practitioner in associating the corporate image of an organisation to its Identity,
- The study of organisations mystification of public relations practitioners strategic role,
- Assessment of the impact of corporate image in a multi-branding organisation,
- Description of the involvement of corporate image in the corporate branding process and,
- Problems of language skills in corporate communications: An assessment of the role of intercultural and international business communication and their impact on the corporate image of multinational multi-brand organisations.

6.6 CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, there are many factors and aspects affecting public relations practitioners while marketing the corporate image of their organisations. The perceptions of the practitioners interviewed in the three selected organisations in connection with the role of public relations in marketing the corporate image of their organisations were of great value and interest to this study.

However, it is a concern that there are emerging factors and aspects hindering and threatening public relations practitioners while marketing the image of the organisations they serve. These challenging emerging factors are being stifled within organisations. A lot has been said about old controversial issues such as the perception that people have of public relations, the strategic role being the solution around the myth and allegory of success in the practice and the profession of public relations. But too little has been done concerning other existing and emerging aspects that obstruct, impede or encumber their success and profession. The gap between public relations theories and the prevailing situation of this profession in South Africa raises many questions yet to be answered and issues that need to be researched.

APPENDIX 1

NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, MEDIA AND CULTURE

An Assessment of the Practice of Public Relations Practitioners in Marketing the Corporate Image in Selection of Organisations

BY

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Supervisor Bianca Wright

Co- supervisor: Mr. H S Fourie

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Adolphine C Lukusa. I am a second year Masters student in Media Studies specialising in Public Relations, conducting research on the practice of public relations practitioners in marketing the corporate image in a selection of organisations

The main aim of this study is to investigate how South African public relations practitioners market the corporate image of their organisations in comparison to theory.

It will take you about 30 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire. The information obtained from this questionnaire will not be used in any way which could identify you.

I thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Adolphine Cama

Please tick or fill the correct answer where necessary.

1. **Gender**:   Male   Female

2. **Age Group**:   below 20   20-29   30-39   40 - 49   50- above

3.   **Position within the organisation (please specify)**

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

4.   **Does the institution you serve have a public relations department?**

    Please tick the appropriate answer.

              Yes   No   Unsure

SECTION B FOR ORGANISATION MANAGERS ONLY

5.   **As a manager which department within your organisation do you believe is the most appropriate to make a public statement during an organisational crisis?**

    Please tick the appropriate answer

    A.   Legal
    B.   Marketing
    C.   Advertising
    D.   Public relations

E. Human Resources

F. Other (Please specify)………………………………………………………………….

6. For the purposes of this research, public relations activities within the organisation you serve are defined as:

Please tick the appropriate answer

A. Communication Department

B. Corporate affairs department

C. Public relations department

D. Corporate communications department

E. Other (please specify)………………………………………………………………….

7. At which level of the organisation is the public relations department situated?

Please tick the appropriate answer

A. Top management level

B. Middle management level

C. Operational management level

D. Other (Please specify)…………………………………………………………………...

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center; padding:10px;">

SECTION C FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS ONLY

</div>

8. To whom does the head of the public relations department report?

Please tick the appropriate answer

A. Marketing Manager

B. Human resources Manager

C. Manager / CEO

D. Other (please specify)…………………………………………………………

9. As a public relations practitioner do you find yourself working <u>under</u> the following departments within the institution?

Please tick the appropriate answer

A. Human resources department

B. Marketing

C. Advertisement

D. Other (Please specify)…………………………………………………………

10. What does the strategic role of public relations practitioners mean to you?

Please tick the correct answer

A. Being the go - between, interpreter or communication link between management and stake holders?

B. Being the authority on both corporate communication and problem solution in an organisation?

C. Being able to monitor relevant environmental development ant anticipate their consequences for the organisation policies and strategies and being part of the strategy formulation team that adapts the organisation to the future.

D. Being the one who helps others in the organisation to solve their corporate communication problems?

E. Being able to carry out the low- level mechanics of communication products that implements decisions made by others.

11. **To what extent are you involved in top management decision making?**

Please tick the appropriate answer

    A. Everyday

    B. Only when there is an issue which needs their attention

    C. Rarely

    D. Not at all

    E. Other (Please specify)…………………………………………………...…

12. **Do you most of the time find yourself in a situation that your working efforts are attributed to other departments within the institution you work for? This should be a statement below.**

Please tick the appropriate answer

    A. Strongly agree

    B. Agree

    C. Disagree

    D. Strongly disagree

13. How do you define the concept of corporate image?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

14. My role within the organisation I work for is:

Please tick the appropriate answer

    A. Report on behalf of the organisation.

B. Solve any organisational crisis.

C. Being involved in organisational decision makings process.

D. Creating mutual understanding within and outside the organisation.

E. Other (Please specify)………………………………………………………

15. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements

Please rate in the boxes next to the following options by using

numbers 1-4 carrying the following meanings: *1. Strongly agree*

2. Agree

3. Disagree

4. .Strongly disagree

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. Public perception of public relations as spin doctoring negatively impacts my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation.				
B. Top management's perception of public relations impacts my ability to promote the corporate image of my organisation.				
C. The structure of the organisation impacts my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation.				
D. The size of the organisation impacts my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation.				
E. The level where public relations is situated within the organisation impacts my				

ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation.				
F. Organisational perception about public relations, impacts my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation.				
G. Public relations as appreciated and recognized in corporate environment.				
H. Budget constraints my ability to promote the corporate image on my organisation.				

~ . ~ . ~ . ~ Thank You Very Much ~ . ~ . ~ . ~

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