

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**ANALYSING THE ROLE OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA
IN THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

By

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"To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge."

-Disraeli

The journey to the presentation of this dissertation has been a long and hard one, but rewarding in ways I could never have imagined. I started this process as a gift to myself, my own growth, after a 20 year career in the media industry in South Africa across mainstream daily newspapers, business-to-business media, specialist media, online media, media strategy, writing and training.

The fact that I am able to use this research process for further work online and offline in my industry of choice: business-to-business media, is a wonderful result of a conversation that was started with this research study and a narrative which, I hope, will continue to contribute towards training, research and excellence in business-to-business media in South Africa and, hopefully, further afield.

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You all made this journey a significant one that contributed exponentially to my personal growth and learning in my own craft – and will hopefully allow me to leave a legacy in my own industry.

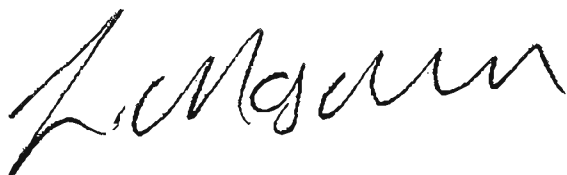
This work is dedicated to the memory of my dad, Admiral Andre Burgers, who died in August this year, just two weeks after his own book was published: 'The South African Flag Book: The History of South African Flags from Dias to Mandela' (Protea, 2008). Hamba kahle... you were our anchor.

DECLARATION

I Louise Marsland declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation/thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- (ii) This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand and analyse the facilitative role of specialist and niche business-to-business (trade) media in the emergence of communities of practice, part of the knowledge management discipline, using models from systems theory to assist in the qualitative research process. First, it was considered how to define communities of practice and business-to-business (B2B) media. How communities of practice (CoPs) emerge and why they are an important part of a management toolkit going forward in business, is described. Sharing knowledge emerged as the key to the creation of CoPs as well as being the core currency that business-to-business media trade in to service their stakeholders. How learning takes place through shared experience, narratives and storytelling emerged as essential to how knowledge is created. Soft systems methodology as the analytical lens through which to measure the data set was also investigated once it was decided to use a qualitative inductive approach to collating and analysing the data. A semi-structured interview schedule was employed and 17 research subjects interviewed. The respondents to this study were drawn from leading media houses in South Africa, including award-winning B2B publications, bar one from a US online think tank on new media. The impact of new media technologies/internet on communication and the distribution of information and engagement of communities in the CoP and B2B space, was a strong theme throughout this dissertation. The findings revealed that while communities of practice is not a widely used term in the networks that B2B media utilise to embed themselves in industries, it is true that some of the networks and associations they are close to and derive meaning from, do in fact contain characteristics common to CoPs and could be termed CoPs, even when formally unrecognised as such. What was a stronger theme emerging from the data was that B2B media could in fact benefit more from facilitating CoPs to aid information gathering and improve credibility within the industry sectors they serve. B2B media in South Africa, in particular, were regarded as immature and sometimes lacking in ethics and innovation, according to respondents. To improve their sustainability, several characteristics emerged from the research that B2B media should focus on as a 'model for sustainability': 1) Special interest/niche communities - to assist in building knowledge assets; 2) Sustainability - through a multi-media platform business model; 3) Values - for application to serve their industry sectors; 4) Educational role through the facilitation of networks such as CoPs; and, 5) Communication channels – utilised for deeper engagement with their communities in emergent new media models where their own stakeholders were influencing content. The value inherent in this dissertation lies in the original research undertaken into the B2B media industry in South Africa which has not been formally studied, particularly not from a knowledge management perspective. This study could also be of interest to knowledge management practitioners who are interested in the role specialist media can play in aiding CoPs with information for knowledge creation.

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CHAPTER 1

“A new organizational form is emerging in companies that run on knowledge: the community of practice. And for this expanding universe of companies, communities of practice promise to radically galvanize knowledge sharing, learning, and change.”

Etienne C. Wenger & William M. Snyder

Harvard Business Review on Teams that Succeed (2004)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Storytelling in networks as a tool for learning

Two decades ago, in the mid-1980s, journalists working for some of South Africa's largest media groups would gather daily at the infamous 'Liz' pub in Sauer Street, downtown Johannesburg, to swap war stories, tales of dodging bullets and tear gas, lucky escapes, political hegemony and a future democracy – while downing a drink or several. This was before South Africa's democracy, before labour reforms, before strong media lobby groups and of course, before email and the internet. All they had was each other to share experiences and knowledge with, share networks, build capacity and skills through their prior learning and subsequent narrative. As young journalists at *The Star* newspaper in the late-80s, it was incumbent on us to drag our mentors out the pub on many an occasion for some breaking news story. But it is the storytelling that sticks in my mind more from that time which taught us how to conduct ourselves in those politically uncertain times where media freedoms were being attacked.

During course work conducted for the subject of knowledge management for this degree, it became apparent how communities of practice (CoPs) informed emergent networks and communities. Communities of practice are informal structures which emerge in order for participants to share knowledge or problem solve. This is particularly the case within the new economy and is being facilitated by technological developments such as the internet, intranets, email, blogs (weblogs), vlogs (video logs) and other new media innovations in the researcher's field of work. Being a seasoned media commentator and editor within the business-to-business (B2B) publishing domain, most recently in online web-based media, the researcher has witnessed the rapid growth of online communities and knowledge sharing in the business-to-business media space. In particular, the researcher recognised, on the basis of existing definitions, that these communities have CoP properties that could be applied across the media sector in the creation of learning and building knowledge assets. However, it also became evident that CoPs were unrecognised and therefore underutilised in this industry sector, to the perceived detriment of both the media and the industry and that opportunities to build knowledge banks and resources for the industry were being missed. CoPs exist in this context, but they have not been recognised in the main as such. This is borne out by the low yield of an extensive literature survey on the role of B2B media in facilitating CoPs in general, and South Africa, in particular.

“Qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: people’s own written or spoken words and observations. This approach directs itself at settings and the individuals within those settings holistically; that is, the subject of the study, be it an organization or an individual, is not reduced to an isolated variable or to a hypothesis, but is viewed instead as part of a whole” (Guy et al, 1987).

The key concepts set-out in the above quote which are particularly of use for this study, are “descriptive data”, “settings”, “individuals”, “organisations”, “holistic”, and “part of a whole”, as they relate to the systems’ theoretical pursuit of answers to the problem statement and associated research questions discussed in previous sections. Soft systems methodology was considered as the theoretical lens through which to interpret the findings as it concerns itself with ‘soft information’, including perceptions and the patterns of relationships – in this instance between individuals and communities of practice within the business-to-business media specifically. A qualitative approach is best suited to understand the interrelated parts in the systems of communities of practice and how the parts relate to the whole and help sustain it.

The process of the study undertaken was not principally to generalise findings to an entire population of business-to-business media communities of practice. Rather, the researcher attempted to explore the natural patterns of interaction and organisation within the systems under investigation and try generate illuminating insights into the pursuit of creating knowledge assets and to enrich the findings using theoretical foundations within the domain of soft systems theory, to inform the research objectives.

1.5 Evaluating the research objectives of this research study

What we do know is that media disseminate information, in whatever form, be it electronic broadcast networks, print or over the internet. Some of that information keeps consumers of that media informed about daily news, some entertains, and some has a trade purpose – such as advertising. When it comes to business-to-business media, that information provided can facilitate a trade exchange between the suppliers and distributors of goods; document best practice – which is vital for communities of practice to plug in to; and most importantly, keeps all stakeholders in the system informed about industry developments and innovation, introducing the innovators in these fields to the broader industry sector – thereby also contributing to building and adding to knowledge. The emergence of the internet and online media across multiplatforms, including mobile, is not only a quantum leap forward for business-to-business publishers and a whole new publishing model for business, but also allows virtual communities

to operate across borders, organisational and country, broadening the knowledge sharing base. The world has become smaller, but for the community of practice, this is a catalyst to broaden reach in sharing knowledge and building capacity where organisations and problem situations span organisations in different country and global locations.

The supposition that media, in this context business-to-business media, are an overlooked crucial cog in the community of practice community is evaluated in this research study. Whether business-to-business media are disseminators of information that can add to knowledge and keep networks alive within industry sectors and across organisations, thereby facilitating the emergence of communities of practice and adding value, are key issues that will be addressed to inform the research objectives.

Following on the exhaustive literature study captured in Chapter two, Chapter three, sought to examine the approach and methods used to analyse the research data from this research study and the scientific paradigm that would be most appropriate for this study. The epistemology, the theory in approaching the knowledge generated, was decided as constructivism. In order to derive meaning from the research, the phenomenology of interpreting qualitative data was studied. Soft systems methodology was chosen as the analytical lens with which to interpret the data generated by interview methods and an inductive data analysis process. Various systems diagrams used to make sense of the data collected in the early analysis process to obtain a view of all aspects of the problem situation, were employed. What became clear at this juncture was that communities of practice literature does not delve much into the role that the media can play in informing the specialist knowledge that CoPs retain, i.e., through business-to-business media as one source or as facilitator. Conversely, B2B media, unfamiliar with the CoP construct, do not necessarily recognise their networking initiatives as facilitating or being a part of communities of practice, or their inherent value to the sustainability of the organisation. This created a challenging research environment.

In Chapter four, the data was categorised, analysed and coded from the research data gathered in this qualitative research study from semi-structured interviews of respondents in the media industry operating in South Africa, bar one respondent within the United States. Five final categories were identified and analysed: 1) Specialised/niche communities – ‘building knowledge assets’; 2) Sustainability – ‘bytes of change’; 3) Values – ‘we serve’; 4) Educational role – ‘the facilitators’; 5) Communication channels – ‘the new influentials’. Metaphor was also employed to surface hidden meanings and aid the map to an eventual model for B2B media to take forward to aid sustainability. Chapter five dealt with discussion of the research analysis, conclusions and recommendations: what this research meant for the business-to-business media industry; what the knowledge management construct of communities-of-practice means

for the business-to-business media industry and publishers, if anything; and what the outcome of the research is, i.e., has the researcher proved or disproved her theory; has the researcher contributed to the body of knowledge on the topic under discussion; and is there a viable model to be constructed from the research results in line with the title of this study? The process of soft systems methodology employed throughout this study – from the original proposal to the final recommendations and the testing of the conceptual model in the real world, using CATWOE, is unpacked.

The conclusion in the main was that B2B media can act as facilitators for CoPs and have in fact done so successfully, but generally do not recognise the terminology or have it as a stated plan. Media are more emergent in their day-to-day workings, but are recognising that as sustainability challenges increase with new media models and the increasing engagement of their stakeholders with global content, they need to raise the bar on their business game plan. The conclusions centre on the main findings: that while communities of practice is as yet not a widely recognised term, business-to-business media are in fact facilitating the establishment of CoPs. However, what emerged as crucial was how CoPs can aid B2B media sustainability in becoming suppliers of usable, specialist knowledge and aid in B2B media credibility and profile in the industries that they serve. The synergies between B2B media and CoPs were recognised and acknowledged as being important to the generation of information to build knowledge assets. Effective business-to-business media are a hub for the industry to receive information on products and services, as well as news and events, and also to interact with their peers on issues of common interest thereby sharing knowledge and creating new knowledge. The end result should build capacity within an industry. Communities of practice, in turn, build individual and organisational capacity through shared experiences of individuals, thereby creating knowledge and contributing towards the building of knowledge assets for the future and intellectual capital within an organisation.

Recommendations flowing from the above took into account the fact that business-to-business media sustainability is under threat due to rapid change in the overall media landscape globally. B2B media recognise that they have to embrace new communication channels in order to create new media platforms for future sustainability, looking beyond just revenue gathering, to problem solving within their own industries and building repositories for knowledge assets in the future, incorporating new media models to engage deeper with the communities they serve. Communities of practice need to revisit where they obtain information and knowledge to upskill individuals. Further study is recommended on the role of the media and communities of practice, in how media informs individuals within CoPs, how CoPs use the media for capacity building, particularly new media tools which facilitate interaction in virtual communities.

Findings of additional interest on the role of marketers and public relations practitioners were also surfaced. Marketers need to recognise the value that effective business-to-business media can add to their products and services, going beyond just advertising; and public relations practitioners need to recognise the important role they play in the quality and tone of the information distributed to B2B media. They can become partners in creating learning or adversaries - corrupting information flows with poor information. Further study is needed on how stakeholders, i.e., clients, advertisers, suppliers, interact with and regard business-to-business media in South Africa. It is also recommended that representations be made to educational institutions in South Africa which offer journalism qualifications to review the curriculum to include study on the business-to-business/trade media sector and highlight opportunities within this growing and dynamic sector. The end result was a business-to-business media conceptual model for sustainability (Figure 5-3). The conceptual model describes a set of logical actions in a system, which could be taken further into a 'map' or model towards a process, as has been interpreted by the researcher in this instance as a process which business-to-business media could follow to enhance their business sustainability within the industry sectors they serve. In summary, it is hoped that this dissertation will make a meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge within the business-to-business media sector in South Africa and further afield, as well as aid knowledge management practitioners in considering the media's contribution to specialised information gathering to create sustainable knowledge assets for future generations.

CHAPTER 2

“Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice.”

- Anton Chekhov

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is good-humoured disagreement over who actually coined the term ‘communities of practice’ with both Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave giving each other credit. This “intellectual generosity” described by Wenger (2005, p. xiii) is typical of the spirit of collaboration which underlies communities of practice which harness conversations, close connections, networks and participative sharing of knowledge and experiences to foster learning.

The rationale underlying the present chapter is to unpack what communities of practice are, how they came into being, how they evolve in the “New Economy”, which is alternatively also generally described as the “Knowledge Economy”, the “Digital Economy” or Connected Economy or the “Information Society” in various popular and academic literature. It is this “Information Society” characterised by information innovations in communication technologies that is blurring geographical boundaries in organisations and resulting in organisational structures that are independent of location and time, i.e., “virtual organisations” (Loebbeck & Wareham, 2003, p. 166-167).

Communities of practice are part of the new organisational discipline of Knowledge Management which today is described as a core business asset (Curley & Kivowitz, 2001) and no longer just a ‘buzz’ word or an academic construct. It is becoming mainstream in all companies which want to strengthen core competencies in order to meet the demands of the global marketplace. In their work on knowledge management, Curley and Kivowitz provide a practical guide (2001) to using knowledge management processes in the innovation of new products and services, grow the competency of an organisation’s skills base and increase efficiency of work processes. They indicate that as knowledge management spreads through mainstream industry, its definition is also expanded beyond the more technical aspects, such as “data mining, advanced search technology, and business intelligence. Concepts such as explicit and tacit knowledge, social networks, communities of practice, and virtual teams, have emerged as legitimate components of a knowledge management architecture” (2001, p. 4). In researching how to build organisational learning and transform it into organisational knowledge, Curley and Kivowitz accept that learning resides first and foremost in the individual. Apart from hiring trained people with the right skills, organisations also need to upskill and train existing and new employees. Managing this “time to talent” (2001, p. 58) is served in part by formal training programmes, but what is key and the

premise of this thesis, is the importance of informal learning networks, such as communities of practice. Curley and Kivowitz quote research that shows “people learn as much as 70 percent of what they need to know to do their jobs from interactions with colleagues” (2001, p. 59). Communities of practice are recognised as being part of networks to help increase individual competence, but they also serve as a place to “cultivate and expand the codified knowledge of the organisation” (2001, p. 59). It is this codification which takes community know-how and makes it reusable, growing knowledge, nurturing talent and building knowledge assets for the future sustainability of the organisation. Curley and Kivowitz call it “building organisational memory” (2001, p.59). It is this process which allows individuals and organisations to keep pace with the rapid pace of change by using new tools at their disposal, such as new media, to link teams and individuals within organisations and share knowledge across organisations. The various networks utilised by organisations in fact provide the context for the collaboration necessary for communities of practice to exist. Networks create valuable relationships for CoPs to plug into. A community of practice differs from a community, in that where both have common purpose at the root of their emergence, a CoP also has a purpose to its activities in problem solving or addressing a particular issue, building capacity through knowledge sharing. Communities, which also come in various forms in society and organisations, are also relevant to the existence of CoPs as are networks, in providing pre-existing relationships which CoPs can benefit from drawing down (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003).

2.1 How learning takes place and how meaning is made of knowledge

To begin, the theory of what learning is and how individuals learn must be considered briefly to contextualise CoPs as vehicles for learning. The learning organisation was a term first put forward by Senge (1990) and has been embraced by community of practice proponents ever since. Wenger (2005) presents his abstract that the theory of learning starts with an assumption that any engagement in social practice provides the fundamental process that we become who we are by what we learn. This interaction between individuals in various informal and social groupings forms the basis for Wenger’s theory that we learn and make meaning through shared experiences while pursuing shared enterprises, applying new skills learnt more effectively than in formal structures. It is these informal communities of practice which sustain this theory of learning and this informal learning which sustains communities of practice. Wenger explains further (2005, p. 3): “Our institutions, to the extent that they address issues of learning explicitly, are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning

and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities and that it is the result of teaching.” Wenger asks what if a different perspective was adopted for learning, placing “learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world?” Wenger believes that learning reflects “our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing” (2005, p. 3) and that it is human nature to self organise and form structures to learn in. Therefore, we need other individuals to learn effectively and make sense of the world. This social interaction and participation in various processes with groups of people or communities, shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we make meaning of what we do. Saint-Onge and Wallace describe how organisations that embrace knowledge management tools such as communities of practice are committed to “learning about learning” thereby creating new knowledge (2003, p. 131). They relate how organisations shifted from focusing on learning to try improve capabilities in the 1990s, to how an organisation applies what it has learned today to create knowledge-driven organisations or the “knowing organisation” (p. 132) which is able to “leverage actionable knowledge through creating meaning, innovating and making decisions” (p. 133). The point about learning in organisations is that experience needs to be tested continuously and relevant experience has to be transformed into knowledge which is available to the entire organisation (Ross et al in Senge, 1994).

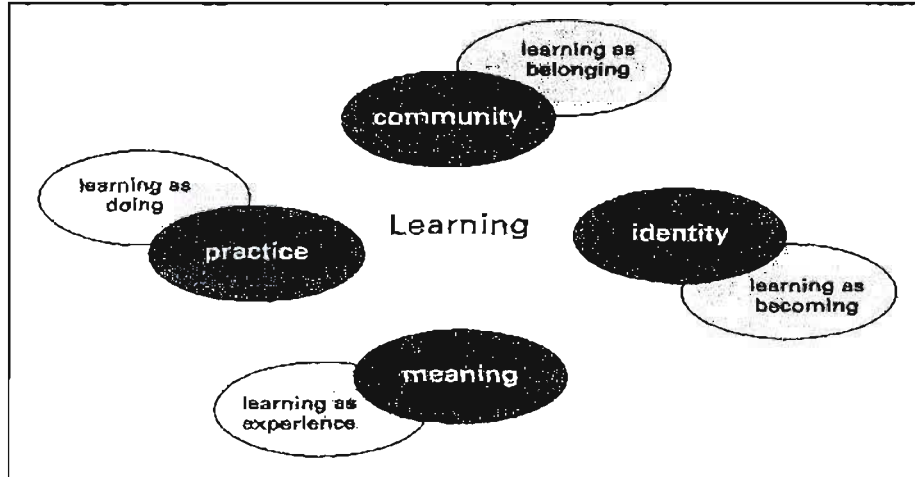


FIGURE 2-1: COMPONENTS OF A SOCIAL THEORY OF LEARNING: AN INITIAL INVENTORY (Wenger, 2005, p. 19)

Communities of practice, explains Wenger further in the context of his model above (Figure 2-1), are part of this broader conceptual framework of learning. The most important point Wenger makes here is that we need to rethink how we think about learning, adjusting what we know about knowing. The implications are broad for individuals, communities and organisations. At an individual level, in this context, learning means getting involved and making a meaningful

contribution to the practices of the communities they are involved with. Conversely, for communities, learning aids in the enrichment of their practice and, if successful, ensures a member legacy. Organisations benefit from the added value that communities of practice bring to structures, promoting learning, engaging with the organisation and creating knowledge for that organisation and thereby building capacity and ensuring value creation for the organisation. "... And, in spite of curriculum, discipline, and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative, turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice" (2005, p. 7-8), Wenger exhorts. The Chinese characters denoting learning mean 'to study' and 'to practice constantly', suggesting that learning is continuous self-improvement and personal mastery (Senge, 1994) and the roots of the English word for learning are similar, suggesting gaining experience over a lifetime of learning (Kleiner, in Senge, 1994). Senge in fact took learning from its unexciting "Cinderella" like status within management theory to its current elevated status as contributing to corporate performance and adding competitive advantage (Contu & Willmott, 2003, p. 283). The theory of situational learning has emerged recently as an alternative to organisations misusing communities of practices, for example, to promote the objectives of the organisation through dominant power relations. It challenges existing learning theories that Contu and Willmott claim have popularised Wenger and Lave's original thinking of learning, losing key insights in the process and giving organisations too much power over communities of practice. Contu and Willmott (2003) urge understanding of knowledge management beyond the individual's capacity and a recognition that learning is inextricably linked to the power relations within the organisation and whether knowledge is shared openly, hoarded or guarded, and how the organisation responds to structures such as CoPs where openness and a willingness to learn should be the only criteria without undue influence or interference by the organisation.

Reflection is key in the creation of knowledge. If knowledge consists of "pieces of information explicitly stored in the brain" (Wenger, 2005, p. 9), then it makes sense to package information in units as in a traditional classroom scenario. But, if it is believed that information stored in this way is only a small part of learning, and that knowing involves social interaction and active participation in communities, then a new method of learning must be found, he suggests. Saint-Onge and Wallace (2003) make the distinction first between explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit being articulated knowledge – words spoken, books read, reports, data, etc. Tacit knowledge lies in that which we know, founded in experience: intuition, beliefs, values, mindsets, assumptions. Converting those pieces of data/information into knowledge is a process with

emergent patterns of meaning. “Communities of practice are particularly effective at turning information into knowledge because they deal with information on the basis of experience. Tacit knowledge stems from someone’s experience. In a community, members give greater meaning to information by applying their tacit knowledge. That is why communities of practice are so effective at engendering learning” (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003, p. 66).

Research into modern knowledge management aims to produce methodologies and systems to deliver information to the right groups or individuals, say Studer and Stojanovic (2005), but radical change in information and business systems since the mid-1990s, informed by workplace mobility; speed of business transformation; peer-to-peer communication efficiencies; and the absolute explosion of information, has changed the way knowledge is handled and the places learning occurs. Multi-dimensional strategies are needed and indeed, Studer and Stojanovic say knowledge management has become a partial mediator between knowledge resources and knowledge workers. The crux is as follows according to Wenger: “Communities of practice are the prime context in which we can work out common sense through mutual engagement. Therefore, the concept of practice highlights the social and negotiated character of both the explicit and the tacit in our lives... the process of engaging in practice always involved the whole person, both acting and knowing at once” (2005, p. 47). Therefore, in the challenged organisation and communities struggling to adapt to new technologies and new challenges amongst a proliferation of information, communities of practice and business-to-business media are well placed to take advantage of the disconnect that has arisen between the theories and real-world application of knowledge.

2.2 How communities of practice originated, evolved and ended up as part of a new social theory of learning

Communities of practice have been around since medieval times when artisans formed networks to share experience and upskill novices entering the trade. We all belong to communities of practice without knowing they are named as such in our everyday lives - from the group of new mothers meeting with their newborns, to sports clubs, hobby enthusiasts and school clubs. The common thread is the fact that these communities are bound together by ritual, symbols, artifacts, practices, routines, conventions, history and narratives. Additional examples are chat rooms on the internet where people with a common interest meet up in cyberspace and chat online; offices where workers congregate in pause areas sharing work war stories and experiences; in

neighbourhoods where the youth gather to try make sense of their lives. So while this phenomenon is not new, thinkers such as Wenger, Lave and Snyder have transformed how we regard communities of practice, naming them and developing the concept as a tool for learning through interaction and reflection.

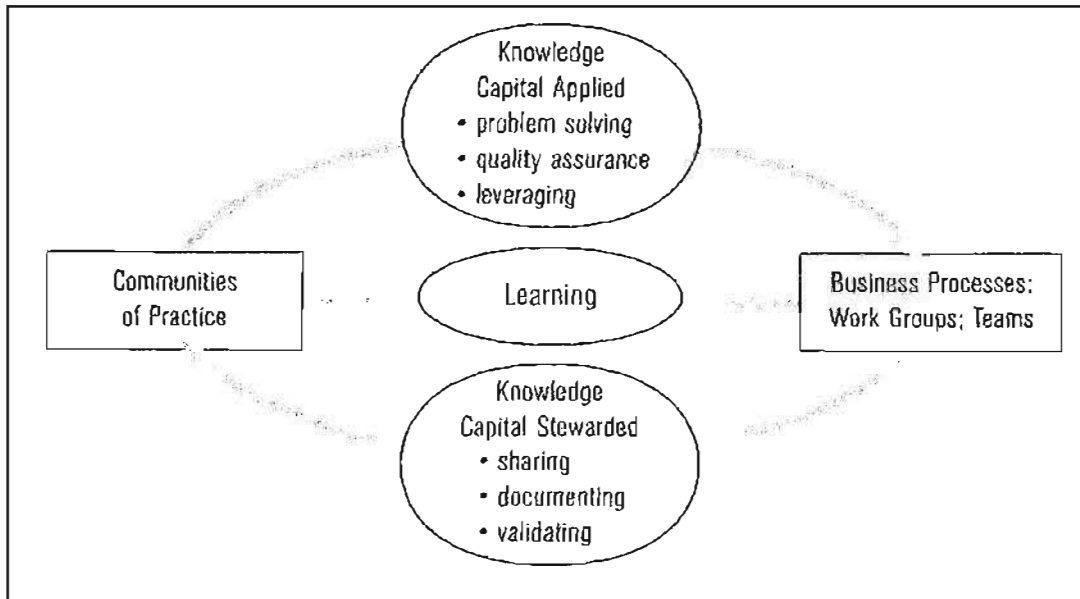


FIGURE 2-2: DIMENSIONS OF PRACTICE AS THE PROPERTY OF A COMMUNITY (Wenger, 2005, p. 73)

In the above model (Figure 2-2) Wenger uses a systemic diagram to define community and practice when associated, giving meaning to ‘community of practice’. Wenger claims that associating practice and community delivers a more tractable definition of the concept of practice, distinguishing it from less tractable terms like culture, activity, or structure; and that it defines a significant type of community: a ‘community of practice’. The three dimensions of communities of practice, as defined by Wenger are: mutual engagement; joint enterprise; a shared repertoire. He is at pains to point out that communities of practice emerge in larger contexts, some explicit and some implicit, each with its own repertoire of unique characteristics, but with a shared common purpose of the individuals which make up each CoP. This definition is shared by Hildreth and Kimble (2005) who go on to say that the common history shared by members of communities of practice who interact often and exchange knowledge and experience of similar issues, results in CoPs producing new ideas and innovation and are the drivers for new knowledge. Communities of practice are in fact seen as the new frontiers of knowledge. Communities can span companies, vendors and suppliers and the organisation and its customers,

creating new opportunities for mutual advantage (Curley & Kivowitz, 2001). In recent years, communities of practice have gained stature in the scientific community. According to Wenger, cited by Smith (2003), who with Lave, first introduced the term communities of practice in 1991, a CoP defines itself along three dimensions:

- i. What it is about: its joint enterprise as it is understood and continually renegotiated by the members of the community of practice.
- ii. How it functions – the mutual engagement that binds its members together as an informal social entity.
- iii. What capability it has produced – the shared repertoire of communicable resources, such as, routines, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, styles, jargon, process, and so on, that members have developed through interaction with each other and as a community of practice.

Lave and Wenger in fact regard a community of practice as “an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge” (1991, p. 98). Hildreth, Wright and Kimble (2000) take Wenger and Lave’s work further, defining the core features of a CoP thus: a sense of common purpose; an official group that evolved from a need but which is driven by the members themselves; a strong feeling of identity; having its own terminology (group specific acronyms and nicknames). Considering the above hallmarks, it becomes clear that the feeling of ‘belonging’, of forming cultural groupings to share knowledge, is an integral part of society. And, with strides in technology as an enabler, informal groupings or networks of individuals who share a common purpose or interest are emerging more rapidly to challenge formal organisational structures as generators of knowledge. This bodes well for the system of communities of practice in the future and it can be argued that the rise of the internet has given impetus to CoPs, as above. The benefits of communities emerging, as unpacked by Curley and Kivowitz (2001, p. 88-89) in particular, are as follows:

- i. They surface tacit knowledge, exchanging it and making it usable for members of the CoP and beyond.
- ii. Create ongoing channels for learning and knowledge sharing across organisational boundaries.
- iii. Provide networking opportunities.
- iv. Offer opportunities for mentoring and ongoing learning as part of skills transfer.
- v. Create proving grounds for benchmarking, testing, and exchanging best practices.

- vi. Provide opportunities for an ideas exchange, be it random, or through sparking off creativity and innovation.
- vii. Communities become the social infrastructure of ongoing knowledge and change in organisations.
- viii. Technology becomes an enabler of ongoing communication, linking and bringing cohesion to a community separated by time and space.

What Wenger, Lave, Snyder, Curley and Kivowitz, et al, describes often seems like common sense, so why aren't organisations embracing this new learning theory and sometimes, in fact seeming to work against it? Wenger asks us to consider that learning theories have been very practical in nature, informed by our own current social constructs: "We must also remember that our institutions are designs and that our designs are hostage to our understanding, perspectives, and theories. In this sense, our theories are very practical because they frame not just the ways we act, but also – and perhaps most importantly when design involves social systems – the ways we justify our actions to ourselves and to each other. In an institutional context it is difficult to act without justifying your actions in the discourse of the institution" (2005, p.10-11).

What we know by now, is that the conversation in organisations is evolving. Communities of practice are increasingly, however, according to the literature at hand, transforming learning where they exist. New media tools are also facilitating the process leading to a shift in the timbre of the conversation in organisations. That change is being driven by the individual who has encountered such learning within the confines of communities of practice as personally transformative, explains Wenger (2005). Coming back to Wenger, this time with Snyder, who gives a persuasive view of communities of practice:

"In brief, they're groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise – engineers engaged in deep-water drilling, for example, consultants who specialise in strategic marketing, or frontline managers in charge of check processing at a large commercial bank. Some communities of practice meet regularly – for lunch on Thursdays, say. Others are connected primarily by email networks. A community of practice may or may not have an explicit agenda on a given week, and even if it does, it may not follow the agenda closely. Inevitably, however, people in communities of practice share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems. Because its primary 'output' –

knowledge – is intangible, the community of practice might sound like another ‘soft’ management fad. But that’s not the case” (2004, p. 124).

2.3 How business-to-business media form part of the knowledge economy and foster learning

Media in this context must not be confused with ‘rich media’ which describes communication tools such as the telephone, email, fax, and video conferencing, which are the ‘medium’ through which CoPs communicate (Schenkel, 2004). The main currency of a news media company is information. It is what they supply to their readers, listeners, and viewers. Media companies are disseminators of general knowledge, news, advertising and entertainment for mainstream media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Business-to-business media on the flipside, while disseminating all of the above, specialise in industry specific news for organisations which are part of their relevant industry ‘community’ or sector. This gives B2B media a vital role in the knowledge economy, however, because they are not always seen as important as mainstream media organisations, they are sometimes overlooked. In South Africa, for example, the industry remains immature in development and technology uptake still. This results in an overlooked role in contributing to learning and knowledge generation, upskilling individuals and organisations. It is these ‘poorer’ cousins of the media world that this study will focus on, investigating their role and responsibility in their industry sectors and linkages to CoPs.

Business-to-business (B2B) publishing is defined officially as the following by the Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa (MPASA, 2006): “To understand the needs of a particular market so well that you are able to produce compelling editorial content presented in an enticing, accessible and affordable format so that enough clearly identifiable readers consume the publication to attract advertisers to communicate with them”. Basic criteria of excellence for business-to-business media, in this case print media, are given as such: publishing success, editorial content, layout and design, client/advertising involvement in the publication and reader value. The issue of whether this definition goes far enough will be explored in the research study. This definition of business-to-business media can also be interpreted as excluding the broader context of the environment that B2B media operates in, across other media platforms, incorporating multi-platform models. Colloquial definitions given by American business editors highlight the unsung heroes of the specialist trade press in uncovering information specific to the industries they cover, the in-depth and specialist information they provide readers, providing

matchless links within their industries or business fields, acting as catalysts for change in their industries, and indeed, making a difference in the industries they cover (Freedman & Roll, 2006).

2.3.1 Co-ordinating new knowledge structures

New kinds of structures are needed to co-ordinate knowledge, “or none of these new globalised processes – in production, marketing, sales, human resources, and many other realms – will work very well,” Curley and Kivowitz point out (2001, p. 14). They touch briefly on one of the tools to use to aid organisations in knowledge management and that is business-to-business websites with e-commerce capabilities which enable truly global market exchange while breaking down traditional organisational structures. The same can be said of B2B media online, whose currency is information and which often provide the platforms for global conversations to take place without boundaries, using tools such as ‘blogging’ (online weblogs), podcasts (voice online), vlogs (video logs), webinars (web seminars) and the broadcast and dissemination of information globally on best practice, case studies, breaking news, technical data, and other information that can be used by specific industry sectors. Technological developments have provided the means for pushing the limits of communities of practice, Wenger says, transforming innovations in areas such as transportation, telecommunication, and networking, automation and organisational techniques, systematic record keeping and access to information (2005). It is this access to information that Wenger brings up that is the key to one of the most important objectives of business-to-business media: the dissemination of information to their stakeholders – the industries that they serve, including their readers and advertisers.

Internationally business-to-business media sectors are among the most robust in the world, with significant spend on research and strong B2B titles which have credibility and strong lobby groups within their industries which foster best practice and set benchmarking standards in their industries. In the United States where the industry is measured, unlike in South Africa, the business-to-business industry is optimistic about growth, although print spending was up only 1.7% in 2004, but web-based B2B publishing was booming (Callahan, 2005). In fact B2B growth was compared to a “rocket ship” at the annual American Business Media’s (ABM) getogether in 2005. Globally the print side of B2B still dominates in most industries, particularly the more technical sectors where readers would not traditionally be online, and as such are seriously affected during economic downturns as the cost of paper and distribution services, as well as their reliance on advertising spend, makes them vulnerable to perturbations in the economy or the

industry sectors they serve. What was key out of this meeting of the ABM in Spring of 2005, according to Callahan, was that B2B media publishers were securing revenue from elsewhere, such as trade shows and rich data (selling information to subscribers), meaning that print did not dominate as it once did. Callahan reported that offline B2B media companies had begun to adapt, listening to their clients and giving marketers what they wanted, evolving in the Internet era. A surge in merger-and-acquisition activity in B2B media in the US was the result of several factors: private equity funds were showing interest in investing in the B2B sector now that better times have arrived; and there was an increased willingness in this sector for banks to loan money as the financial institutions believed that the B2B media sector in the US had stabilised and that “its niche model is in sync with what advertisers want” (2005, p. 24).

The trend in the business-to-business media sector, as reflected in the vibrant United States industry, is for B2B media companies to go for multiplatform advertising deals to up revenue and build sustainability. What this means is that apart from their industry-specific magazines, they are also tying in trade shows, custom marketing, consumer publishing, as well as going interactive to take advantage of a broader revenue model and interact with readers across many different media platforms. In the case of one publishing house which used this multiplatform strategy, Hanley-Wood, it worked. It boosted its revenue from one advertiser, Daimler-Chrysler’s Dodge Trucks from spending \$200 000 a year to \$3 million a year with the publishing group in not always strictly-B2B advertising only, reports Jill Andresky Fraser (2003). Many trade media have tried this strategy with major advertisers, but failed due to the fact that B2B media do not traditionally provide the volume returns that advertisers expect, being smaller, niched titles with free distribution or much smaller circulations and that the crossover for large consumer advertisers is harder. Paul Mackler, as quoted by Fraser, explained that there were very different demographics across industry lines (2003, p. 32): “You might try to convince a consumer advertiser that, regardless of the industry, all your readers are going to buy cereal, but the fact is, they’re reading your magazines for professional tools and strategies, not 'breakfast shopping' tips.” One of the factors that Hanley-Wood had going for it to change the traditional advertising model, was its multiplatform marketing and advertising strategy that could attract advertising spend across all their media channels, providing their advertisers with more than one opportunity to reach readers. What Hanley-Wood also had, was research, thanks to regular readership polls and they could document clearly the affinity between their construction professionals who interacted with them across their collection of multimedia properties.

It is this kind of interaction that enables a B2B publisher to reach out and interact with his advertisers – who are also his readers – cementing relationships and providing better service – while boosting profits in their B2B division enormously. Key for the advertiser, Dodge, in this arrangement, apart from creative advertising deals and a roadshow to showcase their product, was that they were also involved in industry conferences and closer interaction with the readers of the B2B titles, thereby giving them closer contact with the industry through the B2B publisher. How opportune if this close interaction could continue through even closer co-operation through a mechanism such as an organisation-wide or industry-specific community of practice? The importance of integrated marketing communications strategies for business was highlighted by Thomas Harris quoted by Michelle Fellman, (1999, p. 16) who emphasised that business cannot only rely on advertising for much longer and should be implementing “a custom mix of advertising and promotion and direct marketing and marketing public relations”. This point was driven home by Robert L. Krakoff, also quoted by Fellman (1999, p. 16) who explained that the business-to-business market was a big attraction for advertisers due to the free distribution model where “we pick our customers, they don’t pick us”. He also made another important point that the B2B publishers which strive for excellence, tended to regard their publishing universe as an integrated marketing concept, from the magazines to trade shows and to conferences, to provide their advertisers with the best solution and reach all their readers. This is significant when regarded in the context of B2B media being at the heart of the industry they serve.

New marketing solutions are needed to reach customers. There are four trends which challenged successful business-to-business professionals in the 1990s and indeed, continue to do so this decade, which required alternative and creative marketing solutions to reach their customers, according to Mike Walsh (1990, p. 4):

- i. Increased media costs would have a direct and impactful effect on media strategy.
- ii. There was an increased trend towards targeted marketing which would influence media selection for advertising and marketing solutions.
- iii. The consumer cycle of “awareness to purchase” appeared to be growing longer.
- iv. Business-to-business media planning was finally becoming more aware of opportunities and more targeted.

Walsh’s main point was that media planners who place the advertising and the clients who go direct with their advertising, must develop relationships with the media who serve their markets, and get more involved with their clients, their products and know their business. The concept of

partnerships was emphasised for the future as business-to-business was a more opportunistic environment and media planners and their clients needed to move away from being merely strategic resources, to becoming partners with customers and the media they needed to target with their advertising and marketing strategies. This again highlights the role of business-to-business media in the business-to-business sectors they report on, as an integral part of the value chain in the dispersal of information, marketing and advertising. Walsh emphasised that media vehicles must redefine their roles to become fully fledged partners in the marketing process in business-to-business sectors. It is these partnerships which could show significant impact if evolved into forums in which to problem solve, share best practice, build knowledge assets for their business sectors. Burton St John (1998), writing about the role of the public relations practitioner in community-building, also focuses on the media's role, as the two are often intertwined, explaining that the recent public journalism movement among media in the United States, which started in the newspaper industry, demonstrates an attempt by media groups to be more than "information dispensers" (1998, p. 34-40), instead becoming part of the dialogue within communities, facilitating discussion and helping bring about consensus and further decision-making. This so-called public journalism movement in the United States has identified the need for ongoing conversations within communities and the opportunity the media have for facilitating such dialogue. St John points out that communication theorists such as John Dewey have written that "printed communication alone is but a precursor to community-building around an issue or event" (St John, 1998, p. 34-40).

2.3.2 Changing rules of engagement

One thing is clear, the internet has changed the rules of engagement for business-to-business media and business-to-business marketers, forever. It is a whole new landscape out there and the future is also rooted in cyberspace. Moveo, an integrated branding company, reports (2006) that historically, marketers could rely solely on the trade or business-to-business press or tradeshows to showcase their products and services. Leads from both sources have diminished over time with the internet throwing up new complexity as well as opportunity for marketers. Moveo advises business-to-business marketers to learn how to take advantage of the internet, learning how to leverage emerging media, new online tools and strategies effectively and with understanding in order to reach their intended target audiences. They recommend that B2B marketers must move beyond only evaluating the traditional media consumption habits of so-called target audiences who were also evolving as were online media as cyber-tools had speeded up the adoption of new

advertising models with varying creative capabilities which meant that media strategies had to be re-evaluated on a more regular basis in order for B2B marketers to meet their customers and prospects on their terms.

Business-to-business media, which are at the core of business-to-business sectors and the main conduits of critical information flows, as well as connectors between expert sellers and buyers in their industries, are well positioned to take an active step in facilitating communities of practice. The benefits arising could be enormous and impact positively on business-to-business media sustainability, as well as knowledge sharing and problem solving within their client organisations, including addressing industry-wide issues. The impact could be immensely positive. As marketers and advertisers are faced with a proliferation of media options and less cents in their budgets, targeted delivery of advertising and information is what counts, as well as quality over quantity in generating advertising leads. Business-to-business media's extensive research capabilities allow companies to pre-select audiences, generate specialised offerings for a targeted market and allow advertisers to be selective about marketing their products (Deeken, 2002). An exhaustive literature study yielded little reference to communities of practice in business-to-business media in South Africa, or indeed further afield in other markets, despite the fact that business-to-business media are primed to be involved in industry-wide CoPs, and are in fact involved in many forums, events and other industry initiatives, putting businesses and their customers together in a multitude of ways. This research study investigates the hallmarks of communication between B2B media and their stakeholders, to: firstly, to establish whether there are communities of practice operating within business-to-business media systems; and secondly, to document the hallmarks of business-to-business communication, highlighting the core characteristics of interaction to find out whether there are hallmarks to facilitate communities of practice, and indeed, whether communities of practice can aid business-to-business media in their process of operations and sustainability, and conversely, contribute to the business sector they are servicing.

2.4 The relationship between business-to-business media and communities of practice

Thus, the impact of new media on how communication has changed, particularly within organisations and business and the media has to be taken into account as well in the context of this study. With CoPs, the exchange of information has been facilitated by the internet and people are adapting to gathering in virtual spaces and embracing new ways of engaging in joint

enterprises. This has implications for all in the industry value chain as the exchange of information is facilitated by technology. An important point of relevance for B2B media is the one made by Wenger with McDermott and Snyder (2002, pp. 220-221), on knowledge where well known corporate brands in the United States and Europe are involving suppliers and distributors in CoPs to strengthen relationships and innovate: "Knowledge is increasingly an issue for relationships with suppliers at one end and with distributors and retailers at the other. As firms outsource processes, inter-organisational communities of practice help to maintain internal expertise while strengthening relationships with outsourcing partners. We have seen that the Tech Clubs at Daimler-Chrysler invite suppliers to their meetings. On the downstream side, Hallmark is organizing communities of practice among its retailers and Clarica is doing the same for the independent agents who sell its insurance precuts." Indeed, what could be the crux of this study for B2B media, is that they found that manufacturers, suppliers and distributors in common industry sectors form natural clusters which provide impetus and nurture the growth of inter-organisational communities of practice. And beyond the transactional efficiency of reducing transaction costs through internet-networked supplier chains or negotiating leverage over pricing issues, Wenger et al (2002) have highlighted the potential for significant knowledge exchange amongst organisations and their suppliers. This extended knowledge system of communities of practice which includes other organisational partners has far reaching implications for business-to-business media whose stakeholders include the organisation, the suppliers, industry bodies, customers and other partners within a specific niche sector. Business-to-business media have an important role to play in the dissemination of knowledge here.

2.4.1 The actual role of the media in informing communities of practice

What is not covered by much of the community of practice literature reviewed is where information to feed that knowledge is sourced, and what impact, if any, media have. Individual knowledge and capacity building is implied and accepted as key to the establishment of a CoP. What is not answered adequately in CoP literature at hand is where the individual and the CoP collective source their specialist information from for learning once formal study is completed, apart from each other where experience comes into play. If an organisation relied only on the skill and knowledge of its people at any given time without outside input, there would be limited upskilling and growth. The point about communities of practice is to share knowledge gained through experience, as well as best practice. Comparing your own knowledge set and best practice with those of competitor organisations globally is key, as is being informed on latest

innovations in your industry sector. This is where business-to-business media specifically comes in. Business-to-business media which practice excellence and are truly networked into the sectors they serve will by definition have an important role to play in informing individuals and thereby, the collective within communities of practice. However, what if business-to-business media don't recognise this and are not recognised for their potential role in facilitating CoPs that span organisations in industry? What if they are one of the core building blocks? If businesses begin to organise their suppliers and their markets as communities, as Wenger et al would like to see as having an impact on business sustainability and profitability, then an important cog such as business-to-business media should not be left out of the equation. This is particularly applicable when CoPs span organisations to include other interested parties for problem solving, knowledge sharing, capacity building and so on.

It is the complexity of markets and learning systems in the knowledge economy that have sparked this trend toward communities that are not confined to the boundary of a single organisation, state Wenger et al. (2002). The rapid development of the internet and online media tools have resulted in business-to-business media taking a more competent role in serving the industry sectors they publish in? Would they not be an important cog in emergent CoPs across organisations? Indeed, as Wenger et al point out (2002, p. 220), "these communities help weave broader value webs created by relationships and exchanges both within and beyond the boundaries of the firm... this extended knowledge system includes suppliers, distributors, customers, and a variety of other partners and communities outside the firm." Surely B2B media would be involved in this system? These are questions that this research study will attempt to provide answers for.

2.4.2 The partnership approach to learning

This need to learn across organisational boundaries is spawning new partnerships. Wenger et al explain (2002): "Organisations increasingly have to be ready to join forces with competitors to take advantage of market opportunities that require complex knowledge. Mergers, joint ventures and alliances that intend to provide access to new capabilities for participating firms depend on trust between practitioners on all sides as well as high levels of 'absorptive capacity' – the ability to make use of what you learn – within each firm" (2002, pp. 222-223). This means that internal capacity as well as trust capability with colleagues across firms depend often on relevant communities of practice. Wenger et al focus on "looser learning partnerships" (2002, p. 223), including inter-organisational consortia, relationships with universities, professional associations

and the learning networks of firms that collaborate on shared problems”. They don’t mention media here, but these collaborations are similar to those made by business-to-business media serving a particular industry sector. As Harris, quoted by Freedman and Roll (2006, p. 12) indicates: “...the ‘trades’ have always provided irreplaceable links within their industries or business fields.” The role of effective business-to-business media goes even further. They can act as lobbyists and pressure groups in spurring debate and highlighting contentious issues. Harris again: “Today, trade publications make waves in the business world with greater frequency than before” (Freedman & Roll, 2006, p. 12). Business-to-business media in South Africa have many characteristics that could be attractors to emergent CoPs. These characteristics include (Freedman & Roll, 2006):

- i. B2B media serve their specific industry sectors through continually sharing, disseminating and creating information to educate and upskill stakeholders which includes peer networks, industry bodies, i.e., professional associations.
- ii. Communities of practice that arise are drawn to the media, which acts as the attractor for information residing there; and/or the facilitator as the industry hub which connects like-minded individuals engaged in joint enterprise.
- iii. The common subject matter of the industry sector binds stakeholders in these industry communities together, bringing them together to interact at various forums, sometimes transacting and sometimes imparting knowledge or sharing information.
- iv. There is collaboration between all the stakeholders in a B2B media system on industry initiatives, policy, process and continued development; as well as shared routines.
- v. Terminology and social constructs are found in industry specific terminology and practice. The proliferation of interactive channels for communication in new media: Skype, real time voice chat, blogs, vlogs VoiP (voice over internet protocol), and so on, have also spawned a new language: ‘cyberspeak’, which binds these communities.
- vi. B2B media also rely on interaction with industry experts and peer networks which may include CoPs to access intellectual capacity to build knowledge in their industries through their various media touchpoints.
- vii. B2B media, if effective, are the hub of an industry around which key events in the community revolve, and are also the facilitators for such initiatives.

2.5 Cultivating communities of practice

Today's economy runs on knowledge and most organisations recognise this fact and work hard at growing and protecting this now vital and recognised business asset. Explain Wenger and Snyder (2004, p. 124): "They [organisations] use cross-functional teams, customer- or product-focused business units, and work groups – to name just a few organisational forms – to capture and spread ideas and know-how. In many cases, these ways of organizing are very effective, and no one would argue for their demise. But a new organisational form is emerging and that promises to complement existing structures and radically galvanize knowledge sharing, learning, and change. It's called the community of practice." But if communities of practice are so effective, why aren't more organisations or industry structures deploying them? Why aren't more individuals rising up to initiate CoPs? Wenger and Snyder (2004, p. 126) say there are three reasons for this:

- i. It is a stated fact in CoP literature that communities of practice have effectively been identified in centuries past. The crux here, is that they have only entered the business lexicon in the past decade.
- ii. Because CoPs are so new to business process, only a few innovative companies have so far identified their benefits and have taken steps to facilitate or nurture communities of practice.
- iii. The third reason is the most important of all: management's lack of authority over CoPs. It is not always a simple matter of starting up a CoP and integrating it into an organisation or existing industry structures. "The organic, spontaneous, and informal nature of communities of practice makes them resistant to supervision and interference."

So what are the right ingredients to cultivate a CoP? First off it is important to acknowledge that managers and existing company structures cannot mandate CoPs. Innovative leaders and managers in an organisation will bring the right people together and provide the right infrastructure in order to nurture them. This doesn't ensure the success of CoPs or their survival, of course. But what most companies have a problem with is the autonomy of a CoP and the fact that its value and success cannot be measured in traditional ways. So what is the 'right' infrastructure? And how does one then measure how successful a CoP is in adding value to an organisation or industry sector in business? First, it must be recognised that there is no single blueprint for a CoP – they are as diverse as the individuals within those organisations and as diverse as the organisations within any given business sector and as diverse as the reasons for the

establishment of communities of practice. Examples of some of the reasons for their establishment are as follows, as can be established from the literature review to date:

- i. Employees with functional expertise may create communities of practice as a way of networking with their peers.
- ii. People may form CoPs as a way of dealing with strategy changes within an organisation.
- iii. CoPs have been formed specifically to problem solve specific challenges within an organisation.
- iv. Peer linked CoPs may be established to deal with issues within a specific industry.

As Wenger and Snyder explain further (2004, p. 127): “A community of practice can exist entirely within a business unit or stretch across divisional boundaries.” Wenger takes this further (Wenger et al, 2002, p. 220) creating communities in an extended knowledge system by acknowledging that the complexity of markets and learning systems in the knowledge economy “have sparked a trend toward communities that are not confined to the boundary of a single organisation”. It is these communities that seek to add value by weaving broader webs created and maintained by relationships and engagement within and outside of the boundaries of the organisation, often aided by that other web, the worldwide web and internet based tools such as email and blogging, it can be argued. To understand really what CoPs are, it is necessary to look at them in comparison with other organisational structures:

	What's the Purpose?	Who Belongs?	What Holds It Together?	How Long Does It Last?
Community of Practice	To develop members' capabilities; to build and exchange knowledge	Members who select themselves	Passion, commitment, and identification with the group's expertise	As long as there is interest in maintaining the group
Formal Work Group	To deliver a product or service	Everyone who reports to the group's manager	Job requirements and common goals	Until the next reorganization
Project Team	To accomplish a specified task	Employees assigned by senior management	The project's milestones and goals	Until the project has been completed
Informal Network	To collect and pass on business information	Friends and business acquaintances	Mutual needs	As long as people have a reason to connect

TABLE 2-1: A SNAPSHOT COMPARISON (Wenger & Snyder, 2004, p. 128)

customers want, thereby identifying that the increasing demands of customers for integrated solutions in the supply chain; and for companies to create value for customers and suppliers in a global market where barriers for entry are higher than ever, thereby forcing co-operation in the creation of innovation. One of the most important points made by Wenger and Snyder (2004) is that communities of practice should not be created in a vacuum. They recognise that informal networks of people already exist who are capable, have the skills set as well as the drive and passion to develop an organisation's core competencies. The challenge is to identify such groups and encourage them to evolve communities of practice – without being overly interfering or imposing too many structures, strictures or boundaries. Communities of practice are emergent.

Wenger and Snyder explain that at global companies such as AMS and the World Bank, senior management stepped in to sponsor communities of practice. Support teams were also created to assist with the following: community development; annual talk shops for the communities to network; knowledge fairs, library services; technical and technology support. Another interesting development these communities spawned was the appointment of knowledge managers at both AMS and the World Bank who supported community leaders:

“At both AMS and the World Bank, communities of practice have brought together people and ideas, and they have spread knowledge throughout the companies’ global operations. They have made demonstrable and significant contributions to the organisations’ goals. These two cases show how different styles of formal commitment to communities of practice by senior managers can be very effective when aligned with the organisation’s culture,” Wenger and Snyder explain (2004, p. 137).

Wenger et al recognised that in the supply chain, knowledge is increasingly an issue. In their focus on communities in business-to-business clusters, they describe relationships between suppliers, distributors and retailers where they are relevant to fostering the development of CoPs, as key to maintaining internal expertise while building on relationships with outsourced partners. Some companies now invite suppliers to their meetings. Hallmark, for example, organises communities of practice with its retailers. What is a key point here of relevance to B2B media is that manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors in common industry sectors “form natural clusters that provide fertile soil for the growth of inter-organisational communities of practice” (2002, p. 220-221). Different industries have organised various systems and processes to communicate with each other, developing purchasing networks, online networks, e-commerce systems, and other processes that impact on costs, quality, availability and give negotiating leverage to

participants in those communities. It is, however, not just on the transacting side where these communities are flourishing according to Wenger et al (2002), but also in the exchange of knowledge. Toyota, for example, has invested in a knowledge-sharing network among suppliers. Toyota began with a supplier association to build relationships among all suppliers, followed by, lastly, volunteer study groups to create strong multilateral ties with suppliers which work in specific areas of interest. "This system has created strong norms of reciprocity among Toyota suppliers and has resulted in remarkable improvements in performance and productivity" (p. 221).

Where communities span firms, spawning inter-organisational partnerships, the competitive model of business is changing. Organisations are actually collaborating with competitors to take advantage of market opportunities that require complex knowledge, Wenger et al have found, as they are also building partnerships with civil society:

"What we are learning in businesses about organizing for learning and knowledge has important implications for the evolution of markets and for the challenges and opportunities associated with governance in society and the world... Firms that understand how to translate the power of communities into successful knowledge organisations will be the architects of tomorrow – not only because they will be more successful in the marketplace, but also because they will serve as a learning laboratory for exploring how to design the world as a learning system" (Wenger et al, 2002, p. 232).

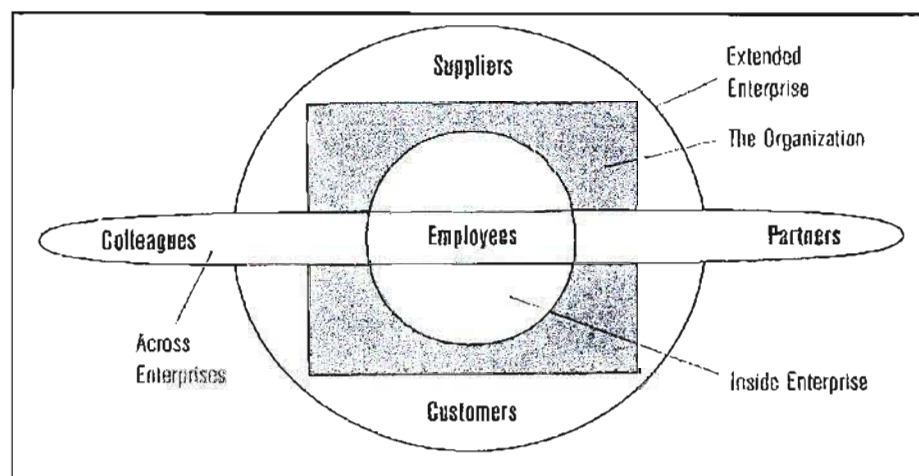


FIGURE 2-3: COMMUNITIES IN AN EXTENDED KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 220)

Communities of practice matter as is demonstrated by the model above (Figure 2-3) because they are new tools for the learning organisation and if applied in business, can lead to business sustainability, economic growth and the capacity building of individuals. Which creative person would not want to know more? Which innovative organisation would not want to cultivate them?

2.6 The bottom line of communities of practice

Curley and Kivowitz believe dynamic knowledge management can lead to business profitability. They cite Xerox's Project Eureka as an example of systematic knowledge creation towards business profitability:

"Anthropologist Julian Orr studied the behaviour of Xerox repair representatives. He noted that the reps frequently met together to have coffee or lunch. At these social meetings, they asked questions about work, discussed changes in work processes or in the machines they repaired, and shared problem-solving approaches that worked. These social encounters, and the sharing of what worked and what did not, clearly nurtured and developed the skills of individual repair representatives. Some reps emerged as 'master problem-solvers', well-known throughout Xerox for their competency. To leverage the learning that was taking place within these local communities of repair representatives, Xerox launched Project Eureka" (2001, p. 60 – 61).

Eureka is now a shared database of tips and best practices which is reviewed by experienced repair technicians and product specialists. The Xerox technician's use of these tips and best practices on Project Eureka have saved Xerox an estimated \$100 million to date, as researched by John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid and reported back in Harvard Business Review (Curley & Kivowitz, 2001). In order to measure the value of CoPs, nontraditional methods have to be used, according to Wenger and Snyder (2004). They believe that while leaders recognise the benefit of developing people's capabilities, they have difficulty understanding the value that communities of practice can add to an organisation. Reasons put forward by Wenger and Snyder are that the outcomes generated by CoPs are more intangible, with the benefits occurring long term or becoming obvious only later in the improvement of other work processes. 'Storytelling', interestingly enough is one way that leaders can experience the value of CoPs. Wenger and Snyder explain further:

"The best way for an executive to assess the value of a community of practice is by listening to members' stories which can clarify the complex relationships among

activities, knowledge, and performance... the solution to the conundrum of valuing communities of practice is to gather anecdotal evidence systematically. You can't just collect certain stories, perhaps the most compelling ones, because isolated events can be unrepresentative. A systematic effort captures the diversity and range of activities that communities are involved in."

2.7 Building sustainable communities of practice

Stuckey and Smith (in Hildreth & Kimble, 2004) found that building a successful CoP was more about the focus and energy of the individuals involved, the personal contact between members and development of social capital. Technology was found to play an important role in combining different communication platforms to connect members. A community of practice can be part of many constellations. But, because communities of practice are voluntary, with members attracted by a sense of common purpose and passion, they need that drive and energy to sustain them. Wenger et al ask the question of how does one design for "aliveness" (2002, p. 50). They came up with seven principles for cultivation communities of practice:

- i. Design for evolution.
- ii. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives.
- iii. Invite different levels of participation.
- iv. Develop both public and private community spaces.
- v. Focus on value.
- vi. Combine familiarity and excitement.
- vii. Create a rhythm for the community.

From Stuckey and Smith (2004), can be added: CoPs need clear focus; members' passion and experience; defined roles for members; recognised value in the CoP equals growth for members; respond to opportunities and challenges as they arise; investment of time and energy by members' commitment and maintenance of high standards of work and participation. It is the dynamic nature of communities that is key to their evolution. There is a constant flow of information and an exchange of ideas, an ebb and a flow like the tides, as new members join and interact with the existing community. Wenger et al put it in the learning context: "Community design is much more like life-long learning than traditional organisation design" (2002, p. 53). Successful communities open a dialogue to ensure all perspectives are met, encouraging conversations at different levels of participation. Instead of trying to force membership of interest groups on the

sidelines, they build bridges for ongoing interaction, even on a minimal or more private scale, so as to involve all stakeholders. The heart of the community remains the core relationship among the members of the community. Feedback is as important to sustain the process of this informal community and that is why relationships in a CoP are so important (Saint-Onge & Wallace, Stuckey & Smith, Wenger et al).

2.7.1 Delivering value

Value is the key to why communities of practice thrive: they deliver value to the organisation which is made up of the teams on which the community of practice members serve within the organisation or industry sector in the business context, as well as delivering value to the community members themselves who upskill, learn, and share knowledge within the community of practice, creating knowledge assets for the future within the organisation, as well as the industry sector they operate in.

The value set changes with each community, timelines and with new members, but Wenger et al (2002) pinpoint the core values as defined by the maturity of the community of practice. For example, early on, the immediate needs of the community will be focused on, current problems dealt with; and then, as the community becomes more mature and expands, creating a systematic body of knowledge that can be added to, easily accessed, shared and built on, becomes the core focus. All interactions, from the one-on-one meetings, to chats over email, to informal discussions to exchange information about a tool, supplier, approach or database, are part of the interactions. The value, however, may not be apparent immediately. An idea thrown out into a discussion may only be seen to be valuable once someone reports back on the impact of implementation – so it is important to track the trajectory of ideas and suggestions shared. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the organic nature of communities of practice means that emergence must be allowed to occur and that the outcome cannot be predetermined. What needs to be acknowledged are attributes not all that common in today's organisations: passion, excitement, relationships, talk shops, volunteers to take ideas forward, allowance for emergence.

2.7.2 Overcoming perceived and tangible barriers

Fontaine and Millen report that those who have worked with CoPs in the past believe that they increase the level and flow of knowledge within an organisation. What has been a struggle, has

been to convince the leadership in organisations of the value of communities of practice. So measurement has become a key attribute, particularly since sharing knowledge is often an intangible value of which the benefits are more long term than immediate. Fontaine and Millen set themselves this challenge and compiled an analysis of measurable community benefits. They have also found that other tools within an organisation, such as the Human Resource departments which use job satisfaction surveys to track learning and development, as well as the cost of training, staff retention, can be a partial measurement of the success of communities of practice within an organisation. Communities of practice have been reported as influencing one or more of the following:

Ability to Execute Corporate Strategy	Job Satisfaction
Ability to Foresee Emerging Market, Product, Technology Capabilities and Opportunities	Learning and Development
Authority and Reputation with Customers and Partners	Learning Curve
Collaboration	New Biz Development
Coordination and Synergy	New Customers
Cost of Training	New Revenue from New Business, Product, Service or Market
Customer Loyalty Stickiness	Partnering Success
Customer Responsiveness	Problem Solving Ability
Customer Satisfaction	Productivity or Time Savings
Customer Service, Support and Acquisition Costs	Professional Reputation or Identity
Customer Turnover	Project Success
Employee Retention	Quality of Advice
Empowerment	Risk Management
Higher Sales per Customer	Supplier Relationship Costs
Idea Creation	Supplier Relationships
Identification and Access to Experts and Knowledge	Time-to-Market
Innovation	Trust Between Employees

TABLE 2-2: BENEFITS SUPPLIED BY COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (Fontaine & Millen, 2004, p. 5)

The table above (Table 2-2) provides measureable outcomes for CoPs within organisations and supplier networks, all stakeholders in the system. In order to assess the level of community benefit as a whole after evaluating the benefits supplied by CoPs in the table above, Fontaine and Millen went further and evaluated the most important sub-benefits within the list of community benefits they surveyed. These included benefits to the individual, community, and organisation. Building capacity was an important outcome, as was the personal productivity of members of CoPs, followed by increased job satisfaction, personal reputation and a sense of belonging for the individual. Knowledge sharing and collaboration featured very high as a community benefit, with the organisation being seen to benefit from operational efficiencies.

Type of Benefit	Impact of Community <i>It has improved or increased the following</i>	% Agree
Individual Benefits <i>What does participating in the community do for individuals?</i>	Skills and Know How	65%
	Personal Productivity	58%
	Job Satisfaction	52%
	Personal Reputation	50%
	Sense of Belonging	46%
Community Benefits <i>How does collective participation benefit others?</i>	Knowledge Sharing, Expertise and Resources	81%
	Collaboration	73%
	Consensus and Problem Solving	57%
	Community Reputation and Legitimacy	56%
	Trust Between Members	50%
Organization Benefits <i>How does participating in a community increase organizational efficiency, better serve customers/partners, and provide insights for the future of the firm?</i>	Operational Efficiency	57%
	Cost Savings	51%
	Level of Service or Sales	46%
	Speed of Service or Product	42%
	Employee Retention	24%

TABLE 2-3: INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND ORGANISATION BENEFITS (Fontaine & Millen, 2004, p. 6)

What was interesting in their survey, was that they asked respondents to share their stories of participating in CoPs. This storytelling is one of the most important attributes of measuring the success of communities of practice. Fontaine and Millen (2004, p. 9) urge as well, that managers must follow up on such anecdotal evidence, after which other more tangible benefits can be assessed, such as, time saved; increased revenue and cost savings: “It has been our experience, however, that even if only a fraction of the benefits reported in the serious anecdotes is considered, there is still enormous payback for community investments.” Their recommendation is to link reported community benefits and impact to the expectations of senior management in an organisation in terms of a pre-existing knowledge management strategy, expected outcomes, and in line with the current business strategy.

Fontaine, with Lesser (2004, p. 14) also looked at overcoming knowledge barriers with communities of practice. They found four common barriers in their work in knowledge-based organisations that prevented the emergence of communities of practice: “awareness, access, application and perception”. This all ties in with internal communication within an organisation amongst internal stakeholders, to align them to the brand vision of the whole organisation. If internally, employees aren’t living the external brand values of a company, valuable communication input internally is at risk. These so-called “roadblocks” (p. 15) within an organisation are not always immediately apparent, but factors such as physical boundaries - geographical location, for example; different cultures where the organisation operates across

different regions of the world; and poorly functioning intranets which means people with common purpose who want to share ideas often don't know how to find each other as they all operate in their own silos. The larger the organisation, the harder the challenge, but developments in technology such as intranets (internal closed corporate internet networks) and video conferencing and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) applications such as Skype, greatly aid communication in this regard. The challenge is finding and connecting with like-minded people who want to share ideas.

Lesser and Fontaine (2004) have compiled general guidelines that they have pulled together from their research, including providing a "central place" (p. 21), even if it is a virtual space online for participants to gather and search out those with common purpose. Additional resources such as compiling a directory of all participants in a CoP with key skills and interests, as well as entering and evaluating all knowledge and idea submissions and exchanges in a central repository of information to keep the knowledge bank current and share that knowledge with other participants. Lesser and Fontaine advise such repositories can be anything from shared file systems on computer to company-wide intranet sites. Marketing the benefits of a CoP internally is also important to get buy-in from corporate leadership and some companies even run awards for these knowledge officers. One of the most important guidelines cited by Lesser and Fontein is the environment where communities of practice gather: "Foster an environment where practitioners feel comfortable to test ideas without fear of ridicule or misappropriation" (p. 22). Sharing knowledge across CoPs and the subject of inter-community dynamics has been neglected in CoP literature to date, according to Hislop (2004), who attempts to reinforce the current consensus in knowledge management literature that human, cultural and social factors are so important in shaping the "character" of knowledge processes (p. 43) which all influence the trust factor, which in the end is all important: no altruism > no trust < no knowledge sharing.

2.8 Dissolving CoPs – how communities of practice vanish or perish

However, communities of practice are vulnerable because of the very nature of their success: their emergent nature that eschews formal organisational structures. So they often lack the budgets and legitimacy of recognised business processes that are already integrated into the business. There are various reasons why communities of practice fail. To look at the reasons for their failure, it is important to consider the reason they start up in the first place: the passion for an issue, common purpose, and so on. That passion and interest needs to be sustained by the

individuals who are members of a CoP, be it within an organisation or beyond. Wenger et al (2002) found that many natural communities never grow beyond a network of friends because they remain exactly that, a network, or possibly without enough participants to form a true CoP. They say some international communities have been found to run out of steam after their initial launch because they don't have enough energy to sustain themselves. The key is that communities of practice need that constant interaction to keep them alive, unlike teams and other organisational structures which are legislated within a business or industry and driven by rules and protocol. This is why Wenger et al believe that the design of a community of practice is so important, where considerate interaction and an exchange of ideas can take place. So while communities of practice are emergent and informal in their process within an organisation, interaction can still be planned to invoke aliveness, i.e., such as the place that the CoPs meet.

There are other factors that continually challenge communities of practice, such as organisational changes, technology advances, core business, new entrants to a market, influencing the design and construct of a CoP. Wenger and Snyder (2004) believe that in order for communities of practice to reach their full potential, they need to be integrated into the organisation or formal business structures and supported. So while management interference is rejected on the one hand, Wenger and Snyder also encourage management to intervene when communities of practice run up against obstacles. But isn't this a contradiction? Will this then not formalise and blur the lines for CoPs and formal organised structures? Shouldn't they be allowed to die a natural death or evolve - surely that is what evolution is all about? Purists might think so. Being slightly more sobering and practical in their views, Hildreth and Kimble (2004) raise some concerns about the tangibility of CoPs, by noting that whilst CoPs are perceived to increase the flow and level of organisational knowledge, senior management may be harder to convince. They drive the point home by observing that: "the intangible nature of 'sharing knowledge' is often difficult if not impossible to quantify" (2004, p.4), which, incidentally is one of the drivers of this dissertation. Wenger et al (2002) reiterate that management support is critical in the development stage of CoPs, but it is important that the leadership in an organisation understand that CoPs need to develop at their own pace.

2.8.1 Lifespan and limitations

The downside is, that, like all living entities, communities of practice also have a lifespan and limitations. Wenger et al (2002) caution that CoPs can hoard knowledge instead of sharing it;

limit innovation instead of acting as a catalyst, and hold others hostage to their expertise without sharing ideas. Like any society, communities of practice are vulnerable to the polarised and prejudiced views of society and restrictions and regulations imposed by unjust governments. While communities of practice literature often lists the best practice CoPs at leading brands, making CoPs sound like the panacea to all the ills of an organisation and a mechanism for problem solving like no other, it is important not to view the concept through rose tinted glasses and realistically accept that they can create problems as well as solve them. Communities of practice can become obstacles to learning as organisations can throw up barriers to hamper the emergence of CoPs. “Community disorders” as Wenger et al term them (2002, p. 140), can occur across single communities, constellations of communities and when organisations are the problem:

- i. With single organisations, issues of trust, passion, incompatible principles, jealousies, competitive sets and missing qualities can lead to failure or demise of a CoP. Wenger et al, list imperialism, narcissism, marginality, factionalism, cliques, egalitarianism, dependence, stratification, disconnectedness, localism, competence that excludes, amnesia, dogmatism and mediocrity as common community of practice disorders. Many, are however, not fatal, but one cannot benefit from the positive aspect of communities without acknowledging the negative side. “Successful communities acknowledge their weaknesses and leverage this awareness to spur their growth and reaffirm their long-term vitality” (2002, p. 150).
- ii. Communities of practice do not exist in isolation and with constellations of communities, where many form inside, outside and across organisations, there are specific problems common to these: stickiness where knowledge transfer is slow; leakiness where knowledge is transferred outside the organisation faster than within; and managing boundaries. Wenger et al remind us (2002, p. 154): “Many forms of connection can enhance boundary activities: shared projects that are at the intersections of multiple domains, people who can act as ‘knowledge brokers’ or translators because they have membership in multiple communities, boundary objects that can accommodate similar interpretations across practices... Crossing boundaries requires building trust not only inside communities but also through sustained boundary interactions.”
- iii. With organisations, the issues are more serious and more immediate as organisations can hinder the development of communities of practice in their totality, hobbling the theory and constricting learning, not only within that organisation, but within the

whole sector it and its employees operates in – ultimately impacting on innovation in that business sector. Wenger et al, describe organisations as “irrational, counterproductive, political, and rampant with suspicion and conflicts” (2002, p. 154). Many organisations are designed to focus on accountability for short-term results and the profit imperative. There are two kinds of disorders to watch out for, say Wenger et al: “perennial organisational dysfunctions that communities face; and specific organisational problems such as rigidity or increased structural complexity. Communities of practice can actually magnify these problems as they are by their very nature, opposite to such problem organisations” (2002, p. 154).

On the positive side the very uncontrollable nature of communities of practice make it more likely that they will continually question the status quo, and in robust communities, will have members continually highlighting potential problems and rigidity (Wenger et al): “The value of the personal investment and sense of ownership that comes with forming a community around a significant domain will usually outweigh risks such as fragmentation, rigidity, or unruly complexity” (2002, p. 159).

2.8.2 Where did that community go?

Gongla with Rizzuto (2004), investigate the patterns of a dying CoP and the different paths they travel in the transition to death. From being the building blocks in learning organisations within the knowledge economy grappling with change, there is no doubt as to the value of CoPs in the modern organisation and progressive industry sectors which adopt this learning model. However, CoPs can also behave as single cell organisms like amoebas: dividing and reforming, vanishing and dying. If organisations are reliant on CoPs for the development of knowledge, then it is important to know what interventions to make when CoPs flounder and stumble. Gongla and Rizzuto emphasize that some CoPs die of natural causes as their lifespan ends, but accidental death or the unexpected demise of a CoP can be traumatic for an organisation and the participants in a CoP and this is what needs to be studied in order to stage an intervention at the critical time. They observed 25 CoPs that had vanished over a six year period to come to their conclusions. It is these disappeared communities that require attention for the future evolution of the species CoP. Gongla and Rizzuto tracked four main paths to disappearance:

- i. Drifting into obscurity.
- ii. Reinventing themselves.

- iii. Mergers with other communities.
- iv. Being subsumed into organisations as business units.

Communities drift into obscurity often when core members or the drivers in the community leave. There can also be a gradual diaspora of community members, weakening the community and it just disappears gradually. Communities redefine themselves after an internal identity crisis or pressures from outside of the community, usually from within the organisation which may have changed strategy. This usually happens when there has been a change in the environment such as a new area of business emerging within the organisation which influences the existing community of practice. When members start asking (Gongla & Rizzuto, 2004, p. 298): “Who are we? What is this community about? What is our common identity?”; members can in this instance refocus and build a new community, one which takes into account the new direction of the organisation. Communities can also go “underground” (p. 298) pretending to disperse in an instance where the organisation pays too much or too little attention, but continuing to operate albeit under a new identity. Gongla and Rizzuto also found that mergers were a typical way for communities to vanish. Mergers happened for various reasons, for example, when communities found common ground and individuals joined both communities, cross-pollinating knowledge and learning and complementing both communities to the point where cohesion was sought. Another type of merger was where one community mentored another, possibly a more specialised community and then subsumed it. In the last pattern of disappeared communities, Gongla and Rizzuto discovered a community that had mutated into being an organisational unit or a project, discarding its true nature and form as a community of practice. This often occurred, they found, when the organisation dominated. In addressing the question on disappearing communities, Gongla and Rizzuto also see it as part of their natural evolution that communities are not expected to live forever. However, they recognise that the death of communities of practice is sometimes a complex issue and found three common attractors to their demise: “Organisational change; knowledge domain change; community leadership change” (p. 301). When a CoP is embedded in an organisation, changes within the organisation will deeply influence the CoP. As regards the knowledge domain, knowledge expands, refreshes, changes and this influences the CoP, which may keep pace, become obsolete or reinvent itself. The same buffers influence a CoP as regards its leadership which is the beating heart of the CoP – if the leadership changes or dynamic leaders move on, a lack of leadership can also signal the end of a CoP and it can struggle with sustainability. To assist communities of practice in transition, Gongla and Rizzuto came up with a four step plan: “investigate; decide; plan; and implement” (p. 304). The importance of this cannot

be over-emphasised since CoPs contribute value to an organisation and build knowledge assets for the organisation or industry they operate in and across – losing that to a sudden demise could be catastrophic for the learning process and the individuals involved and some intervention and debriefing process needs to occur as part of the legitimate process of a CoP.

2.9 Summary and conclusion

So far it is clear that communities of practice offer intrinsic value to organisations and the industry sectors those organisations operate in. They are the “new frontiers” of knowledge as described in depth by Wenger and Snyder (2004). This reconfirms the importance and contribution of this study which shows that business-to-business media have an important role to play as an important cog in the community of practice. Communities of practice are currently emerging in companies that thrive on knowledge, companies that can be described as learning organisations, but what is clear, is that any and all organisations and industry sectors would benefit from initiatives to cultivate and nurture communities of practice. Wenger and Snyder say the term may feel unfamiliar now, but that in a few years from now, the terminology will be as common in discussions about the organisation and business processes as business units and teams are today. They have a role to play as a central part of any company’s success and the first step for managers and leaders is to understand what communities of practice are and how they work. The second step, emphasise Wenger and Snyder (2004, p. 138) is that communities of practice “are the hidden fountainhead of knowledge development and therefore the key to the challenge of the knowledge economy”. Powerful sentiments indeed, but what needs to be appreciated is that the paradox of their informal emergence does require some input from management to develop and integrate them into the organisation so that their full power can be leveraged, without interference or constraint. Wenger and Snyder (2004, pp. 139-142) describe Communities in Action as having the following characteristics:

- i. Driving strategy.
- ii. Start up new lines of business.
- iii. Problem solving.
- iv. Benchmark and transfer best practices.
- v. Upskill and transfer professional skills.
- vi. Assist organisations in recruiting and retaining talent.

Wenger explains it well (2005, p. 132): “We travel to the four corners of the world but we hardly know our neighbours; we coordinate our work in huge organisations, but we find it difficult to know whom to trust; we have instant access to a worldwide web of connected computers, but we long for ways to sort out what to pay attention to and what to ignore in order to maintain a sense of coherence and personal trajectory... my point is rather that changing the scope of our engagement is not so much expanding its range as it is a series of trade-offs between forms of complexity.” Wenger advises that we recognise communities of practice as part of our social life: important places of negotiation, learning, meaning, and identity. A community of practice is a “living context” (2005, p. 214) that gives new members access to competence and experiential learning as members swap narratives. It is a participative form of engagement that creates the right environment for the “acquisition of knowledge (2005, p. 214). A core outcome Wenger explains, is that a well-functioning community of practice can provide the right environment and context for participants to explore radically new insights in an atmosphere of acceptance and encouragement. “A history of mutual engagement around a joint enterprise is an ideal context for this kind of lead-edge learning, which requires a strong bond of communal competence along with a deep respect for the particularity of experience. When these conditions are in place, communities of practice are a privileged locus for the creation of knowledge.” (Wenger, 2005, p. 214). The conclusion that can be drawn is that communities of practice have the following characteristics, as outlined by various researchers, including Wenger, with Snyder and also with McDermott; Hislop (2004); Fontein with Millen, and also with Lesser; and Lave:

- i. A community of practice is a body of common knowledge which exchanges ideas, shares knowledge, problem solves and shares experiences.
- ii. A community of practice is made up of people who share a common purpose or interest, bringing together people with passionate views or interests.
- iii. A community of practice has a sense of shared identity and over time, produces capability in the form of a shared repertoire of community resources, such as artifacts, routines, jargon, styles, processes and responsiveness.
- iv. Within a community of practice there are some common or overlapping values.
- v. Communities of practice are characterised by diversity of opinion and within the CoP context foster innovation as divergent ideas challenge the status quo (Justesen, 2004).
- vi. Communities of practice exist within organisations and can span organisations, as well as interact with other CoPs, including competitors or industry related CoPs.

- vii. The interaction between individuals of passion who share a common purpose produces a bank of knowledge that can be used to build knowledge assets for an organisation as well as an industry sector, thus adding value.

So how does this apply to the business-to-business media sector? What contribution can the media make in this regard? This is a difficult question to answer with this literature study chapter as there is almost no mention of the media in reference to the body of work on communities of practice. What we do know is the following: the media disseminate information, in whatever form, be it electronic broadcast networks, print or over the internet. Some of that information keeps consumers of that media informed about daily news, some entertains, and some has a trade purpose – such as advertising. When it comes to business-to-business media, that information provided can facilitate a trade exchange between the suppliers and distributors of goods; document best practice – which is vital for communities of practice to plug in to; and most importantly, keeps all stakeholders in the system informed about industry developments and innovation, introducing the innovators in these fields to the broader industry sector – thereby also contributing to building and adding to networks. The emergence of the internet and online media across multiplatforms, including mobile, is not only a quantum leap forward for business-to-business publishers and a whole new model for business, but also allows virtual communities to operate across borders, organisational and country, broadening the knowledge sharing base. The world has become smaller, but for the community of practice, this is a catalyst. The supposition that media, in this context business-to-business media, are an overlooked crucial cog in the community of practice community is evaluated in this research study.

The key here is the networking, facilitation and information provider role that business-to-business media play, which if proved, would mean that this important media sector is not only a crucial cog in sustaining a community of practice, but conversely - applying the same intervention of the CoP onto business-to-business media, could reveal a synergistic relationship where the CoP could in fact assist in sustaining business-to-business media. The literature is scant, so the qualitative research study results are key. In the following chapter, qualitative data analysis will be unpacked, as well as how to use soft systems methodology as the lens through which to evaluate the data.

CHAPTER 3

“Progress in almost every field of science depends on the contributions made by systematic research; thus research is often viewed as the cornerstone of scientific progress.”

Geoffrey Marczyk, David DeMatteo & David Festinger
Essentials of Research Design and Methodology (2005)

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to research, analyse, interpret and understand communities of practice and how they can be facilitated or informed by business-to-business media using qualitative research methods, with soft systems serving as the theoretical basis for analytical and interpretive processes. The stated intention is to come up with models to document the linkages between business-to-business media, communities of practice, and how each influences the others' emergence – as is the case with CoPs; and future sustainability – as in the case of B2B media.

The previous literature review chapter identified what is known and not known about the research topic, providing a solid base as to why the research topic is important. This chapter on the research methodology will look at the approach and methods used to analyse the learnings and surface new ideas generated from the research study.

3.1 The 'what' and the 'how' of research methodology

Research methodology is the what and the how: what theoretical perspective is being used to approach the data and how the data is analysed. Capra (1996, p. 5), quoting Thomas Kuhn, defines a scientific paradigm as: "a constellation of achievements, concepts, values, techniques, etc, shared by a scientific community, and used by that community to define legitimate problems and solutions. Changes of paradigm occur in discontinuous, revolutionary breaks called paradigm shifts".

Checkland (cited by Stacey, 2003), moved from a paradigm of goal seeking and optimisation in hard systems thinking, the positivist philosophy, to a paradigm of learning and the development of relationships, a phenomenological and interpretivist one, in which social reality is constructed and re-constructed in a social process in which meanings are negotiated. The applicability of this theoretical stance to the research study is immediately evident: the strength of a qualitative study within the context of qualitative design is intrinsically linked to a carefully conceived and crafted research study design, execution and data analysis. However, one of the strongest signs of its strengths is its continued use in real-life 'field' situations (i.e. as yielded through case studies or interviews), as is evident from multiple scientific sources (Guy et al., 1989; Yin, 2002).

The main objective of this study is not principally to generalise findings to communities of practice or the role the media, in this instance, business-to-business media, can play. Rather, the researchers' objectives were to explore the natural patterns of interaction and organisation within the systems under investigation, namely business-to-business media and communities of practice; and generate illuminating insights into, and investigate their workings in the pursuit of creating knowledge assets and to enrich the findings using theoretical foundations within the domain of soft systems theory, while investigating how these systems of interest arise and how sustainable B2B media communities of practice are within the frame of this study.

Hence, the researcher did not attempt to exercise control associated with statistical research survey designs. In view of the above, a field study research design and specifically, an interpretative research design is proposed for the purposes of this study. As Sierhuis and Clancey (1997) indicate: knowledge cannot be separated from people and situations. The theoretical and research constructs employed are as follows set out step-by-step in the model below (Figure 3-1), (adapted from Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005):

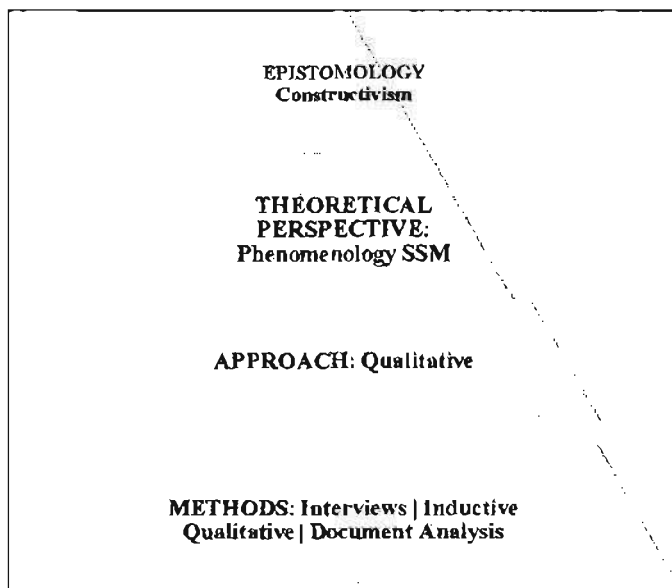


FIGURE 3-1: THE UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHIES OF RESEARCH (adapted from Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005)

3.2 Epistemology

The word epistemology is derived from Greek and means 'knowledge' and 'explanation', in short: the study of knowledge. Qualitative and quantitative research approaches have long

philosophical roots - theoretical perspectives, which are the philosophy behind the research methodologies which provide the context for the research process, as explained by Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005, quoting Crotty 1998) who clarified that the theoretical perspectives are informed by epistemology which is rooted in three overarching research constructs: objectivism, subjectivism and constructivism. These research constructs assist the researcher in understanding the nature of knowledge and the best way to approach that knowledge.

Objectivism, from a more positivist theoretical perspective points to the objective truth and the quantitative research paradigm fits in here. Subjectivism, from the postmodernism theoretical perspective points to qualitative research as it points to many interpretations of events, not one truth. Constructivism sits in-between both objectivism and subjectivism, putting forward the perspective that the “objective world (is) mediated by an individual’s conceptual lens or framework” (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005, p. 116) and both qualitative and quantitative research has a place in the constructionist paradigm. Epistemology provides a helpful framework in which to decide on which research study analysis and research methods to employ when planning research. The epistemological tradition of constructivism, that there is “a knowable world” (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005), but one that we can only ever have an imperfect understanding of as our knowledge is mediated by our experience and current perspectives. Constructivism is a link between context and information gathered and it is the researcher which mediates through their understanding of the context and data gathered. The meanings constructed by the researcher and the research subjects must be reflected on through each particular context and the methods selected should attempt to derive that meaning from all representative stakeholders, including the researcher.

The constructivist approach has a direct bearing on the type of knowledge produced from research approached in this manner. Silverman (2004, p. 95) points out that constructionism draws on the “shared properties of commonsense knowledge” and that it is not just the data shared which are focused on, but the process as well to attain that knowledge shared. This is very similar to how communities of practice build knowledge – through shared experience and where the process of learning and interaction is as important as the knowledge shared. It is key to also note here that constructionists interpret the meaning in what is being said as related to the experiences and people being studied, not just what is verbalised in, for example, an interview process. Silverman does alert the researcher to criticisms of “narrowness” (2004, p. 97) in the constructivist approach, warning that interviews could be trapped in the reality only of the

interview framework itself, rather than addressing any other reality. Silverman highlights two responses to this criticism: one explanation is that the content is specialised and can only be found out by the participants in an interview process; and two, that research subjects are affected by the subject under discussion, who the interviewer is, and the context of the interview. Constructionists concede that there could be some justification for this charge, but assert that both “how” and “what” questions (Silverman, 2004, p. 98) need to be reported on when data are assessed, in order to show the “dynamic interrelatedness of the ‘whats’ and the ‘hows’” (Silverman, quoting Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 98). To summarise, this approach means that “we construct meaning from a world that is actually there”, as postulated by Kayrooz & Trevitt (2005, p. 324) who go on to say that “the aim of research in constructivism is to understand and reconstruct the views of people so that they can form more sophisticated understandings of events and become more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions.”

3.3 Theoretical perspective

3.3.1 Phenomenology

In sketching out phenomenology Giorgi (1985) quotes Husserl (1970) as describing the guiding theme as one of “back to the ‘things themselves’”, meaning to revert to the everyday reality of people in actual situations in their normal worlds, experiencing various phenomena, the “appearances of things” or “things as they appear in our experience”:

“Basically, phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity. The structure of these forms of experience typically involves what Husserl called “intentionality”, that is, the directedness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that it is a consciousness of or about something. According to classical Husserlian phenomenology, our experience is directed toward - represents or “intends” - things only through particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, etc. These make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are distinct from the things they present or mean” (Woodruff Smith. 2003, p. 1).

The phenomenological approach in data analysis must recognise and attempt to describe the: “intrinsically intensive relation of the person to some subject matter” (Aanstoos, 1985, p. 90).

Phenomenology contains four important steps which concur with the essence of deriving meaning in qualitative research, (Giorgi, 1985, p. 10) namely: 1) Reading a whole description to make sense in general of a whole statement; 2) Once the sense of the “whole” has been understood, the research starts again at the beginning and goes through the whole text again in order to discriminate “meaning units” in the phenomena being researched; 3) Those meaning units are then worked through in order to surface the insight in them; 4) These “transformed meaning units” are then synthesised “into a consistent statement” according to the subject’s experience. The key is that the phenomenological approach “tries to make genuine discoveries concerning what is important about learning” (Giorgi, 1985, p. 13). What differentiates the phenomenological approach, Giorgi puts forward, is “the fact that a disciplined spontaneity is allowed to function whereby one first discovers the relevant meaning unit, or its category and only later, based upon a subsequent analysis, explicates its actual full import” (1985, p. 14). This is the context that differentiates qualitative from quantitative research in this approach: qualitative is rooted in discovery and quantitative in verification of statistical data and facts. The researcher’s perspective is important here, as is the full context of the data being analysed – not just one word or sentence, but often the whole of the paragraph, including hidden, less obvious meanings. Reflection, a key systems thinking construct, is also key here to elucidate hidden meaning.

So, if epistemology is the study of knowledge and how we know what we know, then phenomenology “is the study of our experience – how we experience”, Woodruff Smith (2003, p. 5) has a meaningful perspective: “from an epistemological standpoint, all these ranges of theory about mind begin with how we observe and reason about and seek to explain phenomena we encounter in the world. And that is where phenomenology begins. Moreover, how we understand each piece of theory, including theory about mind, is central to the theory of intentionality, as it were, the semantics of thought and experience in general. And that is the heart of phenomenology” (Woodruff Smith, 2003, p. 6).

3.3.2 Soft systems methodology

Using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) to research this phenomenon is one system of inquiry. One of the modern systems theory ‘fathers’, Peter Checkland (Stacey, 2003), described SSM as more of a process of comparing reality to a set of conceptual models, and less as a step-by-step research process. As Stacey sets out (2003, p. 189-191): “Checkland proposed that systems were

the mental constructs of observers, in effect bringing back Kant's idealist view of the regulative, 'as if' nature of systems." SSM was a reflection of this view of the notion of systems being related to the process of inquiry, meaning and intention, explains Stacey. Checkland and Scholes advocated an interpretive approach to systems, according to Stacey. This means that "the subjective aspects of decision making are brought into consideration and a number of different systems models are developed to make explicit the implications of different viewpoints so that the consequences of alternative course of possible action can be compared". It is this "paradigm of learning" as defined by Stacey, which leads to the understanding of the maintaining and development of relationships. It is this process of relationships and the meaning attached to a group of individuals engaged in dialogue that is key to defining communities of practice in the context of this research study.

The key phases of SSM are as follows, according to Stacey (2003, p. 189-191):

"An initial phase of analysis that should not be pursued in systems terms, but should build up what Checkland calls a 'rich picture' of the problem situation. This is to avoid jumping too rapidly to conclusions about representing the situation in systemic terms. In the next phase, a number of systems are drawn from the 'rich picture'. These are systems regarded as relevant to improving the problem situation and each system represents a particular viewpoint because it is not obvious which system design is appropriate to the particular problem situation. The third phase is the construction of a number of system models. These models are not blueprints for the design of an objective system but conceptual models contributing to a debate about change."

The above was used as a conceptual basis for the research study and interpretative process. SSM is the interpretive lens as well as the modeling lens. One informs the other as the researcher moves from the theoretical perspective to the research approach and methods of data interpretation and analysis.

Having traversed through the most prominent literature on CoPs, it is opportune at this juncture to make some observations about them in the light of the hallmarks of Soft Systems Methodology. Wenger's explanation of the duality of boundary relations (2005) is typical of the behaviour of soft systems. Wenger explains that participation in communities of practice is often determined by artifacts and culture, nuances and jargon rather than obvious boundaries which group people together. And even where there are clear boundaries, participation and reification of CoPs can

also stretch across boundaries, whether within organisations or outside of organisations. We can also participate in multiple communities of practice all at once, explains Wenger. The “boundary objects” (Wenger, 2005, p. 105) which CoPs organise interconnections around are similar to the rules of participation in a system, where a system of interest is created with problems and issues that have a common cause. Systems can span organisations and sectors, it is common interest or a common problem that unites those in a system. As with CoPs, continuity within a soft system and extending to other systems is brought about by the connections that individuals or organisations that are part of a system, have with one another. Wenger goes on to say that as communities of practice differentiate themselves and also interlock with each other, “they constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections, and encounters” (2005, p. 118), much in the same way that soft systems do. But because communities of practice define themselves through engagement in practice, says Wenger, they are quintessentially informal, much like the emergence of soft systems. Hard systems methodology on the other hand, prefers boundaries and rules of engagement. This is particularly helpful to the researcher, as Fortune et al. explain, that when first moving into a situation in the role of analyst, the researcher’s immediate task is to understand all the information gathered in order to make sense of it. With systems theory, diagrams and modeling is an effective tool to assist the researcher. Importantly, there are no boundaries in these first, pre-analysis systems diagrams, as all aspects need to be covered and they emerge as diagramming increases understanding and/or surfaces all issues and ideas. In fact the researcher must avoid thinking in systems terms to allow for emergence. While communities of practice may prefer to view themselves as outside of a bounded system, such as an organisation, the fact remains that overall, they are very much a part of the system they serve in the end with knowledge, or else there would be no need for them.

Systems thinking prompts a holistic view of a complex situation, where all parts are considered and where the observer is also the participant. Some systems are bounded, some are not, but it is the ‘Weltanschauung’ or world view of Soft Systems Methodology in which the systemic nature of systems in qualitative research is unpacked, rather than the reductionist or systematic approach of a Hard System, which makes it a suitable analytical lens through which to measure the research gathered in this study. The boundary-less diagrams and models of the pre-analysis stage of soft systems are particularly appropriate for the emergent communities of practice systems. In fact, Lane (1999, p. 7) quotes an unnamed British politician as describing systems thinking as “joined-up thinking”.

Stacey (2003) relates how Jay Forrester developed the approach to understanding human systems where decision making was linked to feedback. The lessons from systems thinking are clear: how the system is presented influences the behaviour and feedback of those involved or connected to the system; the relationship between people can create unplanned for outcomes due to the negative and positive feedback loops; and thinking holistically of a system – the whole - rather than in parts will make people behave differently and think differently.

This is the crux of systems thinking and the learning organisation as proposed by Peter Senge, one of the foremost systems thinkers (1990). Senge's five disciplines identify what is required for a true learning organisation: systems thinking – to encourage people to think about the system as a whole with all interrelated perspectives and connectiveness engaging with positive and negative feedback loops in what Senge terms a strategic choice; personal mastery – individuals within an organisation's commitment to lifelong learning and improvement, much as the champions of CoPs do; mental models – organisations need to consistency and constantly challenge the mental models ingrained not only in the collective of the organisation, but in the individuals that make up that organisation; building a shared vision – Senge's fourth discipline centres around the precept that a shared vision contributes to inspiring people to learn; and lastly, team learning – which is very appropriate for communities of practice, which draw on similar principles to share knowledge and build learning within communities of practice. Here Senge postulates that team learning fosters a conversation of collaboration and co-operation that generates common meaning, leading to learning within an organisation.

Lane in turn uses words such as “tools of thought”, “framework”, “holistic way”, “caring approach” (1999, p. 8) to describe how his students have experienced systems thinking. One of the key perspectives on systems thinking is that it enables one to explore all viewpoints, thereby adding value to the ideas and perspectives of others which is a far more emotionally intelligent way of dealing with conflict, negotiation or any problem situations. To illustrate his point, Lane draws on other ways of thinking in which our western society and education have trained us in, such as logical thinking and causal thinking which fit into the reductionist paradigm. “Logical thinking is a way of linking ideas or statements together... causal thinking is a way of linking activities or events together... thinking about chains of causes and consequences or multiple causes... is an important feature of systems thinking.”

Systems thinking is characterised by feedback and it is these continuous loops which allow us to consider all components or parts of a problem and system, giving us a holistic view, dealing “with wholes rather than parts” (1999, p. 14). Lane puts forward that logic alone is not enough to deal with complex problems. Causal thinking tends only to look at cause and effect. Systems thinking looks at the patterns, connections, relationships, multiple views and perspectives to try achieve a balanced and holistic view of a problem, mess or issue. The use of diagrams and models are important in systems thinking to unpack the issue in a graphic way, showing all connectedness, the identification of boundaries and generate a new, rich way of looking at a system to surface all thinking around it. Systems theory provides a common process to a cycle of activity which leads from the initial question or problem situation to a thought process to action.

Most problem situations are complex with varying perspectives and this is where the theory behind soft systems methodology was developed by Peter Checkland, as narrated by Fortune et al. (2002). Checkland’s methodology included a seven step process which follows the stages of the problem situation through analysis, root definitions to conceptual model, abstract world vs real world comparisons, followed by reflection, recommendations and then the implementation of changes. With qualitative research, models that examine the relationships between entities are usually used. Fortune et al. (2002, p. 52) reflects that most systems strategies involve: “some sort of analysis of the situation; some sort of diagnosis, some sort of modeling; some form of prescription, in the sense of a course of action for moving forward”. Most of the problem situations or “messes” as they are termed in systems theory, show complexity, so the models, particularly those in the initial stages of analysis need to be qualitative to increase understanding of the system involved in the problem statement, an intervention, outcomes and negotiating shared views of situations. In this study, CATWOE was also employed to test the root definition and resultant conceptual model. CATWOE represents the customers of the system; the actors; the transformation of input into outputs, the worldview, owners of the system, and the environmental constraints in this system.

3.4 Approach: qualitative research

The motivation for the use of a qualitative research methodology in this study is encapsulated in the following quote:

“Qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: people’s own written or spoken words and observations. This approach directs

itself at settings and the individuals within those settings holistically; that is, the subject of the study, be it an organisation or an individual, is not reduced to an isolated variable or to a hypothesis, but is viewed instead as part of a whole” (Guy et al., 1987, p. 256).

The key concepts set-out in the above quote which are particularly poignant for this study, are “descriptive data”; “settings”; “individuals”; “organisations”; “holistic”; and “part of a whole”, as they relate to the systems’ theoretical pursuit of answers to the problem statement and associated research questions discussed in previous sections.

Seeking to answer “what kind” (quality) of systems that communities of practice and business-to-business media interact in and how they function in the pursuit of knowledge asset creation, rather than “how much” (quantity), is the central thrust of this study. A further motivation for the use of a qualitative methodology derives from an application of soft systems methodology, which concerns itself with ‘soft information’, including perceptions and the patterns of relationship between individuals and communities of practice and the business-to-business media specifically. A qualitative approach is best suited to understand the interrelated parts in the systems of communities of practice and how the parts relate to the whole and help sustain it.

Transforming raw data into coherent research that provides new knowledge on a topic means a researcher has to engage in active, critical and constant analytical processes through all phases of the research undertaken in a qualitative study. In qualitative research, the research database can be made up of interview transcripts from open-ended, focused questions in a semi-structured interview schedule as was the case in this research study and, as Thorne (2000) points out, can include multi-media sources such as photography, video interviews and focus groups, surveys, lay autobiographical accounts and so on. The key here is that these methods of collecting data are not restricted to qualitative data – rather that it is not quantitative or statistical in form:

“Qualitative researchers are often more concerned about uncovering knowledge about how people think and feel about the circumstances in which they find themselves than they are in making judgments about whether those thoughts and feelings are valid”. And qualitative studies rely “on inductive reasoning processes to interpret and structure the meanings that can be derived from data” (Thorne, 2000, p. 68).

In general, inductive reasoning uses the data gathered in a qualitative study to generate ideas, whereas “deductive reasoning” (Thorne, 2000, p. 68) begins with the idea and then uses the data

interview is much more work in terms of preparation and the level of analysis and interpretation required.

The common elements, according to Gillham (2005), is that the questions needed to be open-ended, meaning that the interviewee was not led in a specific direction, but allowed to follow their patterns of thoughts and ideas, based on their own experiences. Preparation in advance of the research interview process is as important (Gillman, 2005; Silverman, 2004) as research is a process of discovery and not about demonstrating what the researcher believes. Silverman suggests to researchers that they ask three questions of themselves before proceeding with the semi-structured interview method (2004, p. 113): “What status do you attach to your data? Is your analytic position appropriate to your practical concerns? Do interview data really help in addressing your research topic?”

Despite tension between positivists and constructionists on whether interviews are “straightforward reports on another reality or whether they merely report upon, or express their own structures” (Silverman, 2005, p. 111), interviews offer a rich source of data and the semi-structured interview process allows for the research subject’s own interpretation of the issue they are being asked to give feedback and comment on, as well as admits contamination from the researcher’s own involvement in being present and posing the questions and interpreting the data. The point is that there is no right or wrong answer, it is the new ideas and new insights that are generated that are important for the process of qualitative research and this information can be back-checked in various measurement forms and peer review as set out elsewhere in this chapter. The context of the research data being engaged with is as key as the actual data surfaced. The conversational tone gives the researcher insight into the experiences of the research subjects, as well as the subject being interviewed.

3.5.1.2 Selection of research respondents

This researcher’s process of a semi-structured interview schedule involved research into the categories of respondents to be approached to participate, the definition of those categories, the collection of the relevant lists of names, a selection process, compilation of contact details, the emailing and phoning of interview requests and the setting up of the interview dates with each respondent. Approximately 35 individuals were approached from the media and business-to-business media industry in South Africa, including academics, and 22 commitments for

interviews made. Seventeen of those commitments were honoured by the research respondents and formed the basis for the research data in this research study.

Respondents were selected by identifying those leading business-to-business media owners, publishers or editors in South Africa's media industry; as well as media commentators recognised by their peers as thought leaders in their field. The interviewees fell into the following categories:

- i. Those media houses listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange with business-to-business publishing interests.
- ii. Those business-to-business publishers which had excelled in the annual industry business-to-business publishing awards (The Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa PICA Awards) for the previous four years (2003 to 2006).
- iii. Industry organisations representing the interests of business-to-business publishers, both online and in print, and both locally and abroad.
- iv. South African media commentators recognised by their peers in the industry, through recommendations to this researcher, across general media and the academic fraternity. Recommendations came from fellow interviewees as well as the relevant industry organisations mentioned above.

In this qualitative study, this was as close as possible to the total universe of business-to-business media experts in South Africa. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the respondents had to have an understanding of media; business-to-business media; be recognised by their peers in the industry as having an understanding of the media landscape; and be in a leadership role within the media organisations chosen in the above categories of media owners. Against the background of the above respondents identified, it is important to note again, that the purpose of this research study is to help create a body of knowledge to benchmark business-to-business media practices in South Africa, of which there is scant research, as well as in the analysis and modeling of the facilitative role of business-to-business media in the emergence of communities of practice.

3.5.1.3 Process followed

- i. **Draft interview schedule in accordance with research objectives as follows:**

- Are CoPs facilitated by business-to-business media? How CoPs emerge with this media paradigm as an attractor and how they function, with specific emphasis on:
 - unique characteristics and dynamics of B2B media;
 - the role of information technology and the internet in fostering patterns and characteristics in B2B media and CoPs; and
 - principle systems' features of both.
- How knowledge assets are generated through business-to-business media: How do B2B media create knowledge assets, with specific emphasis on the uniqueness of knowledge being created (i.e., sector specific, industry specific, category specific). Soft Systems Methodology will be used as the analytical lens through which to interpret the data.
- Business-to-business media community-of-practice sustainability: What collaborative structures, processes, roles and incentives do we need to support the renewal and application of knowledge, with specific emphasis on:
 - the role of systemic linkages in knowledge generating capacity;
 - where knowledge resides and how it is renewed;
 - what kind of knowledge is required to move forward; and
 - measures to track progress and support ongoing learnings.

ii. Piloting of draft interview schedule

Following administration of the pilot questionnaire to three respondents, the following shortcomings were identified:

- The existing set of questions proved to be too long for the from the perspective of respondents. Gillham (2005) showed that when interview processes are too lengthy, respondents lose focus and become bored, leading to a drop in the quality of data.
- Based on the experience gained during the piloting process, a number of previously separate questions were combined and reworked, as it was evident they yielded the same responses.
- A concern was the lack of knowledge about one of the core subject matters, namely communities of practice. After the pilot process the researcher developed a brief contextual document provided to

respondents prior to the interview process. In developing this briefing document, the researcher was mindful of not providing answers or priming subjects. This was purely for purposes of enlightenment as to the research themes and theory.

- The piloting process included amendments and input by the study supervisor.

iii. **Administration of finalised interview schedule**

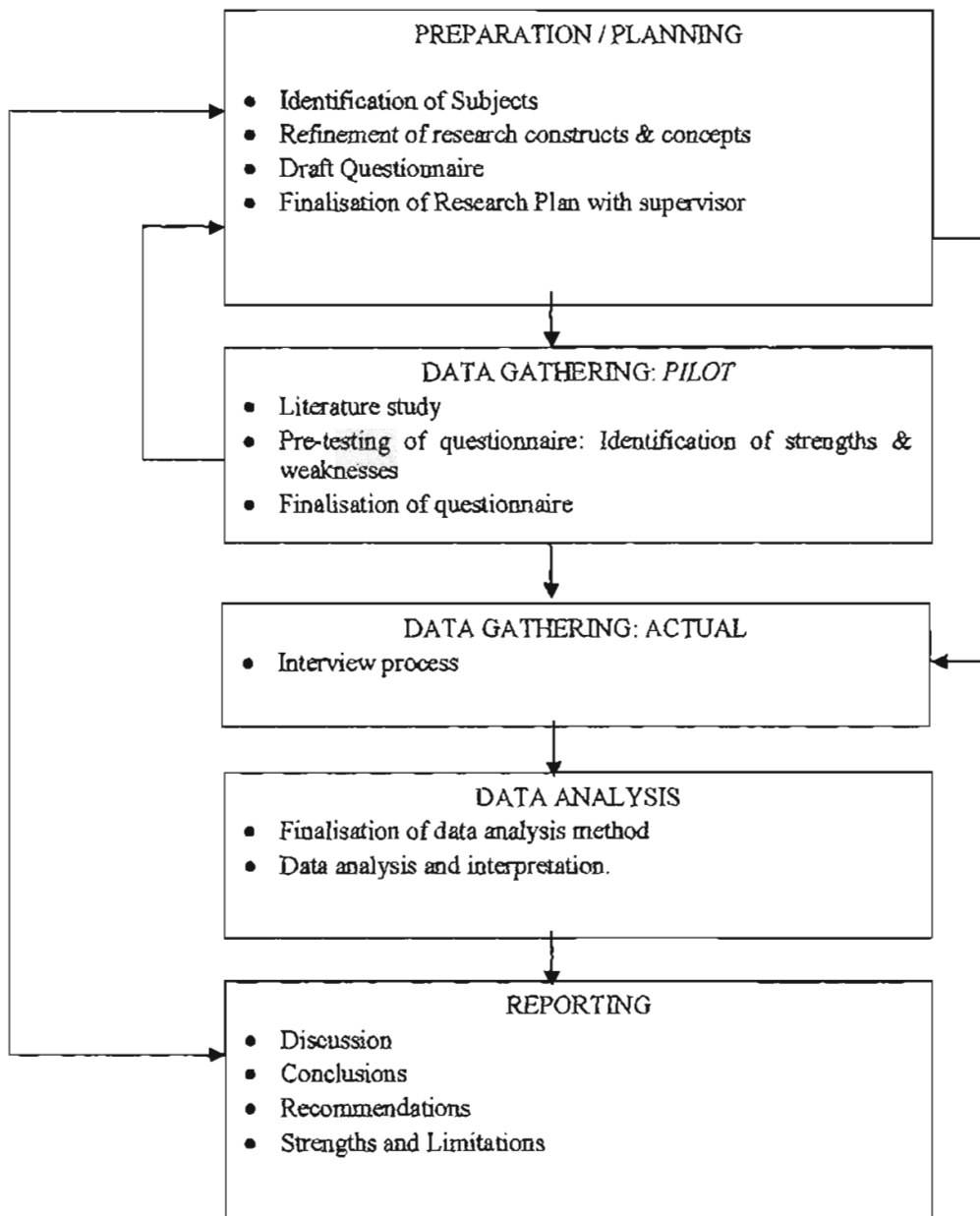
The conduct of the actual main interviews for the research proposal occurred in several stages. Gillham lays down a process (2005, p.76) which include preparation, first contact, building rapport, the core interview, and the “closure” phase. In the preparation phase, email and telephonic requests were made for interviews by the researcher, followed by the emailing of the context brief, the research questions and research consent form. The researcher interviewed the majority of the subjects at their own offices; two at the researcher’s own offices, two telephonically who were based in Cape Town, and one over email (the sole international respondent). The researcher stuck with the questions as attached for example and did not deviate from the core subject matter once initial pleasantries were completed. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour to a minimum of 40 minutes and a maximum of 90 minutes. The researcher used a laptop to transcribe the interviews verbatim as the respondents were speaking.

Each respondent signed the consent form, each, bar one, were happy to be quoted by name, only one wanted to be quoted in their personal capacity and not professional capacity. The researcher thanked each respondent personally during the interview and again afterwards by email and offered each research subject the opportunity to see the completed research. The researcher also undertook to distribute the key research findings through various conference presentations, articles in relevant business-to-business media, and through the researcher’s blogsite to ensure that the conversation continues after this research project is completed.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the direct research process, the following annexures are attached at the end of the dissertation document: the final research questionnaire (Annexure 3-1); the briefing document to research respondents (Annexure 3-2); and the respondent consent form (Annexure 3-3).

To aid the researcher further, the research process was outlined below to ensure comprehensive planning and preparation for the study at hand (Figure 3-2).

FIGURE 3-2: THE RESEARCH PROCESS



3.5.2 Data analysis

The process for a general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis starts with condensing the extensive raw text data – gathered from interviews in this study - into summaries; establishing obvious and transparent linkages between the research objectives and the summarised findings from the research data; and finally, to develop or derive a model or theory from the research study data, as explained by Thomas (2003, p. 1): “The inductive approach reflects frequently reported patterns used in qualitative data analysis. The general inductive approach provides a convenient and efficient way of analysing qualitative data for many research purposes.” The purpose of the inductive approach in qualitative data analysis is to allow for the emergence of themes in the research, informed by specific characteristics identified from ‘meaning units’ in the raw text. Thomas puts forward that this is to prevent the restraints which may occur when using more structured methodologies, where contamination can occur when key themes are obscured due to preconceptions in data collection and analysis in a more deductive approach.

3.5.2.1 Coding: themes and characteristics

Thomas provides a framework in which the researcher analysed data within the inductive approach (2003, p.2). Gillham (2005) advises that there are no hard and fast rules with categorical analysis. The question the researcher needs to keep top of mind is (p.140): “how can I analyse the data to make the best presentational and interpretive sense of my material?” As Thomas (2003) advises, inductive coding began with thorough, multiple readings of text, data cleaning to ensure all meanings were clear, i.e., the researcher removed half sentences, researcher comments, questions and unrelated sentences. The researcher, when identifying meaning units considered the multiple meanings. As the process of analysis continued, a general summary memo of each category, including sub-categories, was written up and linkages noted. Towards the end of the process, continuous revision and reflection took place to ensure all contradictory points of view and insights were identified. Systems mapping was employed with each interview to ensure all perspectives were considered and all themes surfaced.

The main process of analysis and outcome of inductive research is the development of the emergent categories into a model, theory or framework that summarises the raw data and sets out the key themes and processes. The following process was followed (drawing on Thomas, 2003; Gillham, 2005), by the researcher as outlined below (Figure 3-3):

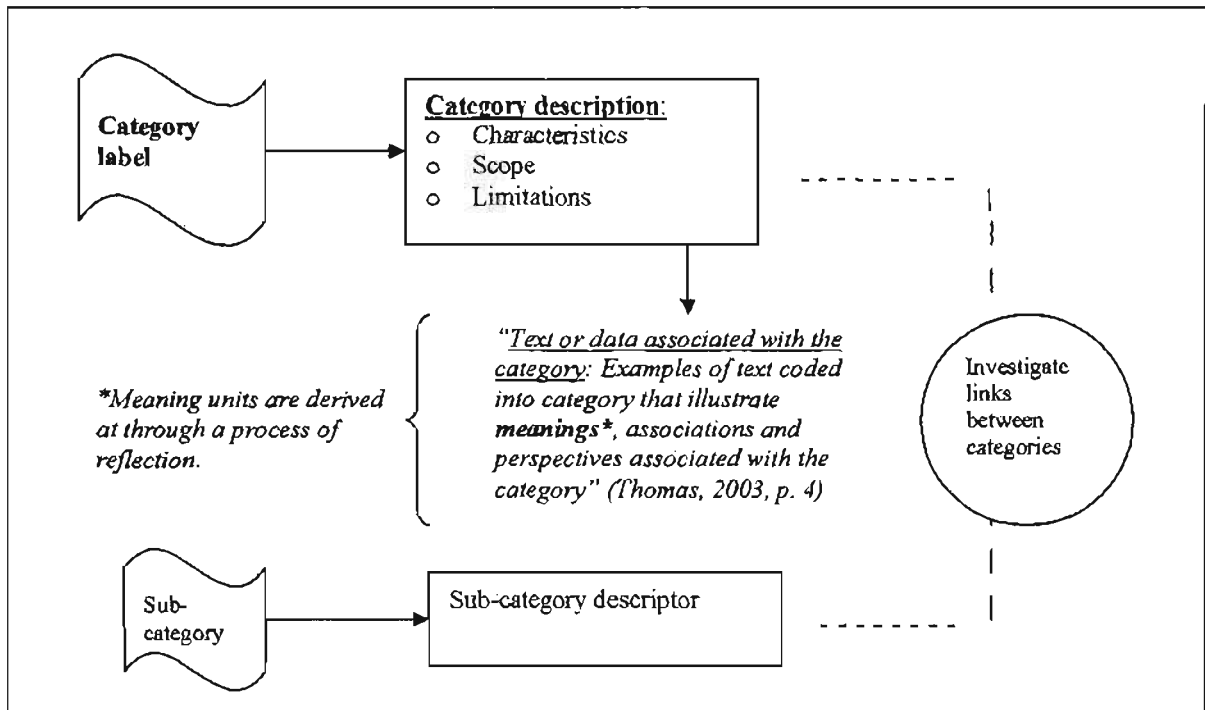


FIGURE 3-3: PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT OF CATEGORIES IN AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH IN QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (drawn from Thomas, 2003, p. 4)

Labeling a category, albeit with a short phrase or word, surfaces inherent meanings. The category descriptor includes, by way of example, text or data associated with that category to illustrate the “meanings, associations and perspectives associated with the category” (Thomas, 2003, p. 4). Of the many categories, some will have sub-categories and the researcher has to take care to investigate linkages between the various categories to show relationships and commonality of meaning (Thomas, 2003). Gillham (2005) advises that the forming of categories starts from the analysis of the first transcript of an interview “but the reality and robust character of these categories only become apparent as you move from one transcript to another” (2005, p. 137).

The end result is the development of a model, theory or framework which can include various types of hierarchical or boundary-less models. For the purposes of this study, soft systems

modeling is used, as is set out in the next chapter (Chapter 4) where the research is unpacked, and in the final conclusions (Chapter 5) a model was developed.

- i. **Meaning units/themes:** Meaning units are the identification of the themes in the research, the implicit and implied meaning embedded in the text in the context of the study and the researcher's worldview, including the hidden subtleties that may not be obvious in the construction of a sentence or phrase, but when considered as a whole, the meaning becomes clear. Giorgi (1985, p. 15) describes meaning units thus: "They exist only in relation to the attitude and set of the researcher... What stands out depends very much upon the researcher's perspective." In order to appear as objective as possible, the researcher put aside own assumptions and observed the text through an impartial and analytical lens as much as is possible with qualitative research.
- ii. **Characteristic descriptors:** In order to break down the themes into manageable meaning units, it was necessary to label each category that was surfaced and provide a descriptor, including key characteristics, scope and limitations. The categories were informed generally by the research objectives set out at the beginning of the research study, and from specific characteristics and themes surfaced by the research, which were highlighted by multiple readings of the text.
- iii. **Bracketing:** Bracketing already took place at the interview, where the researcher tried not to influence the subjects with her own assumptions. It has to be recognised of course that the research questions in themselves, while semi-structured and open-ended, still point the research subject to the subject under discussion as the context of the study is important. Aanstoos explains (1985, p, 90): "To understand the subject's world, one must first arrive at it by a suspension, or bracketing, of all presumptive constructs about it."

3.5.2.2 Data Collection

The proposed unit of analyses for the research study were business-to-business media organisations which were seen to facilitate communities of practice and knowledge generation. The data-gathering process comprised the following: personal interviews with the publishers and/or managers/editors of the identified business-to-business media, using a semi-structured interview schedule which sought to answer the research questions / themes set-out in the research study. Perceptions and observations of research subjects were documented in great detail.

3.5.2.3 Data analysis path

A qualitative, interpretive, phenomenological analysis of data was embraced, using soft systems as the lens to make sense of the data. The detailed analysis was based on the information imparted by the research subjects, all recognised leaders in their fields of business-to-business media, communication and new media (the internet, and so on).

Thomas (2003) entreats the researcher to observe some of the underlying assumptions in the use of an inductive approach: 1) since data analysis is determined both by the obvious (deductive), such as the research objectives; as well as through the raw data to be discovered through multiple readings and interpretations (inductive), it is assumed that the findings are based on the researcher's interpretation of the problem situation being researched and the setting out of those research objectives and findings from the raw data analysis. 2) The primary mode of analysis, as Thomas sets it out, is the emergence of the categories from that raw data which are used to inform a model, theory or framework that encapsulates the key themes and processes judged by the researcher to be the most significant. 3) The researcher's role of both that of an observer and participant is obvious as it is the researcher who codes the data from significant meaning units into themes and categories to come up with findings, meaning that it is inevitable that the researcher's own assumptions, experience and knowledge are brought to bear. This means that the researcher who is also data analyst must be cognisant as to what is important and less important in the data. 4) The result is that various researchers may produce findings which differ on the same data set. 5) Independent measurement is then key and Thomas (2003) sets out a range of techniques that the researcher can employ to provide independent verification of the data analysis against the findings by the researcher, i.e., independent verification of the research, or feedback from the participants or users of the research. Gillham (2005) puts forward that a competent second eye be employed to appraise the content and the highlighting of categories and themes. In this research study additional competent eyes were also employed: a research psychologist (as per research construct), in addition to detailed instruction from the supervising lecturer (overall supervisor and as per specialist knowledge management content).

3.5.3 Analytical lens

A framework based on systems thinking is useful in assisting in understanding the organisation or community as a system, Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005) declare: "The systems framework assumes

the whole is considered greater than the sum of the parts, and each part can only be understood in the context of the whole” (2005, p. 299). Soft systems methodology maps the existing system and its context so that constraints can be identified and capacity for change evaluated. Soft Systems tools have been chosen to observe and analyse the data from all perspectives. As Stacey tells us (2003), interaction in systems thinking produces emergence at another level, producing a system, either real or a mental construct. It is these emergent characteristics of each system or problem situation under discussion that the models described below, surfaced in this research study.

- i. **Diagrams representing situations:** The first step in modeling in systems are rich pictures and spray diagrams - also known as mind maps, which are useful in the pre-analysis stage of research. Rich pictures are quintessentially summaries, often hand drawn and without words, to make sense of complex situations or issues. Also known as “situation summaries” (Fortune et al. 2002, p. 18), rich pictures contribute to surfacing – both objective and subjective influencers and ideas in the problem situation – such as: the relationships, influences, networks, interconnections, triggers, impacts, process, characteristics, ideas, questions, relevance, notions, viewpoints, prejudices, humanity. It is not the researcher’s own interpretation of the situation, as all aspects need to be noted, but the researcher is involved as a participant regardless. Spray diagrams rely on the thinking process, the thoughts triggered, and reflection to influence construction and increase understanding of the process or issue under evaluation. This was the initial issue grappled with in informing the title of this research study – where do communities of practice get their knowledge? Do the media in the sector this researcher operates in, business-to-business media, have a role to play? If so, what is that role in the context of this study?

The rich picture below (Figure 3-4) attempts to find out what the problem situation is in the context of this study: how CoPs are informed, where they get their information, how they transfer it into knowledge; and how B2B media integrate into the system with its multiplatform offerings of information and services. The relationship between CoPs and B2B media in the process of this research study is key.

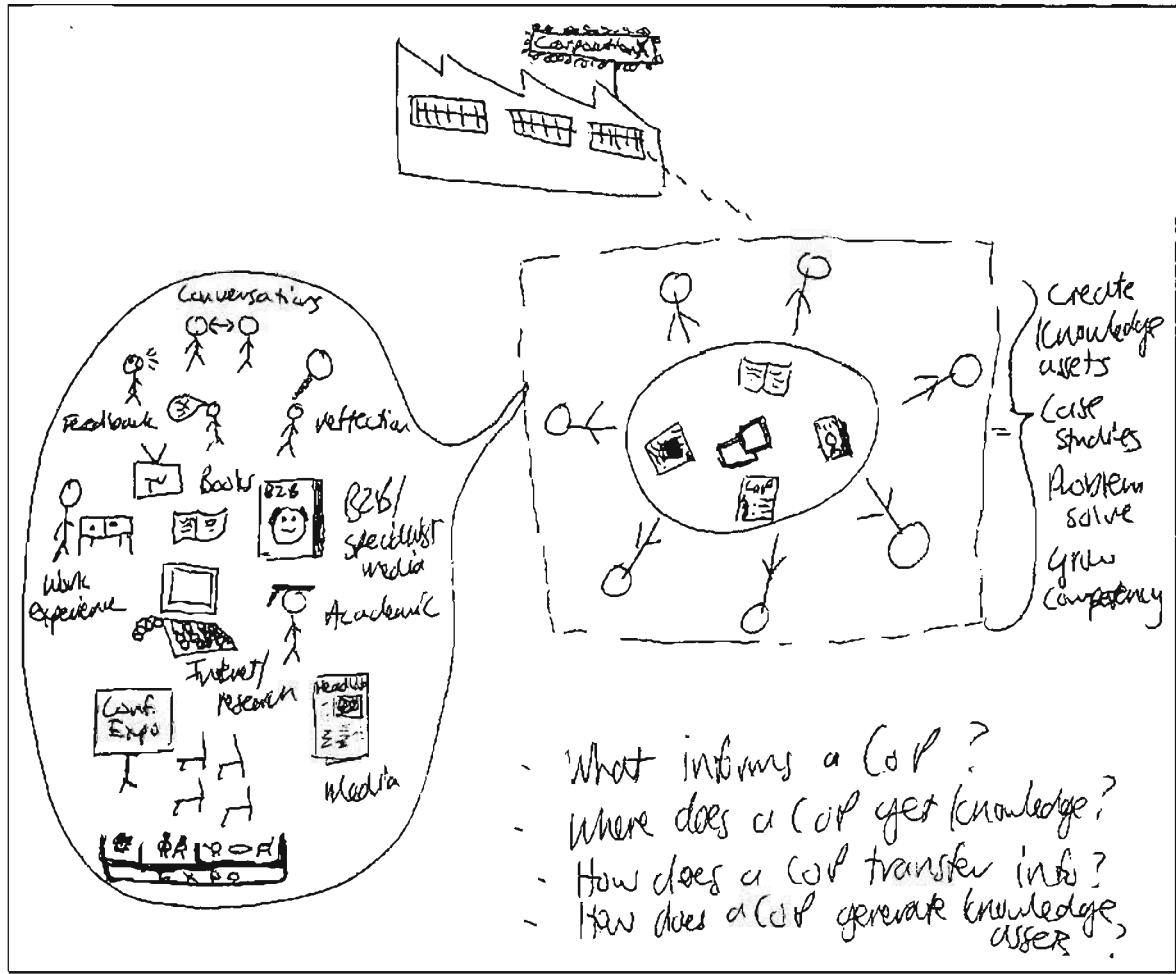


FIGURE 3-4: RICH PICTURE OF THE PROBLEM SITUATION – HOW DO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE RECEIVE INFORMATION THAT CONTRIBUTES TO SHARED EXPERIENCES, BUILDS KNOWLEDGE AND FOSTERS LEARNING?

Before the research process started with the first interviews, the questions had to be tested. A spray diagram assisted with that. The spray diagram below (Figure 3-5) sets out clearly how CoPs integrate with the aspects of an organisation.

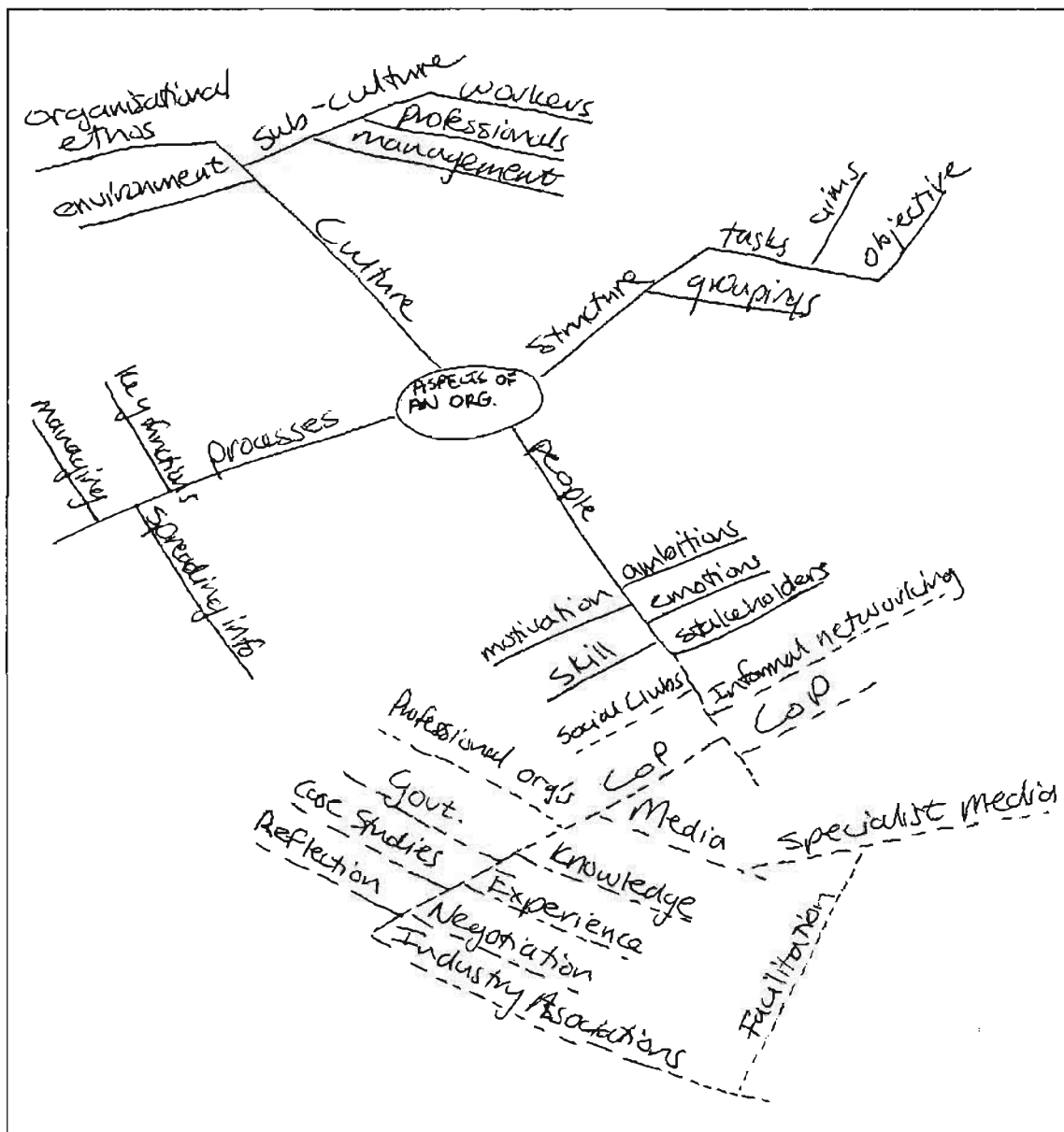


FIGURE 3-5: SPRAY DIAGRAM – SOME ASPECTS OF AN ORGANISATION (Drawn from Fortune et al. 2002, p. 18) JUXTAPOSED WITH ASPECTS OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS (SPECIALIST) MEDIA

These diagrams are dynamic and serve as “data stores” (Fortune et al. 2002, p. 21) to aid the analyst further and can be added to as further thoughts, ideas or connections occur. The most important outcome that the analyst must take away with them is to recognise the different viewpoints and deal with differing perspectives. The ultimate aim is to have a holistic view of the problem situation from all perspectives and taking into account all viewpoints.

- ii. **Diagrams representing systems:** An essential skill in understanding situations is diagramming, as explained by Fortune et al. (2002, p. 25): “In analysing complex situations, drawing diagrams is a valuable way of clarifying thinking and of conveying our thoughts to other people. Diagrams can capture and represent interconnectedness in a way that is usually impossible in linear text.” In this context, Systems Maps, Influence Diagrams, Multiple-cause Diagrams and Sign Graphs inform various situations, giving a snapshot of influences, processes and structures. Systems maps, serve to clarify a problem situation early on in analysis, to indicate the structural elements for further diagramming later on in the research, to experiment with boundaries, communicate the nature of the basic structure of the system under discussion, and focus on the system of interest, in this case, business-to-business media and their influence on the emergence or workings of communities of practice. A systems map can lead to an influence diagram which will present an overview of the various groupings, connections and influence on the system under review, presenting a broader view. In all systems modeling it is key to reflect constantly on the aim of each diagram and whether they contribute to your understanding of the problem situation. In this study, systems maps were employed in the analysis of each interview and a tree diagram was used in the summary of themes and the characteristics thereof.

3.6 Limitations, strengths of qualitative methodology

The semi-structured interview schedule can be a lengthy process, from the face-to-face interviews to transcription, analysis and the writing up as well as the skill that needed to be acquired to become proficient at analysing this type of qualitative methodology process. The researcher’s role is both that of an observer and participant in interpretive research such as qualitative when using a general inductive method. Thomas (2003, p. 4) points out that the same set of data can offer up different results to different researchers as a result: “The trustworthiness of findings can be assessed by a range of techniques such as (a) independent replication of the research; (b) comparison with findings from previous research; (c) triangulation within a project; (d) feedback from participants in the research; (e) feedback from users of the research findings. The researcher has to selfmonitor so as not to jump to conclusions, setting aside own assumptions and putting themselves in the shoes of the research subject, rather than their own. This is the essence of

phenomenological study. As Guy et al (1987, p. 282) emphasise, all social research takes place within a social environment context, therefore “it is intensely and inherently ethical”. An interesting aside from Guy et al. (1987, p. 278) deals with the fact that in analysing qualitative data, “field research is a calculated strategy to give up precise, quantified rigor in exchange for grounded insights that, at their best, sparkle with meaning”. So while qualitative research may not have the pat scientific formula’s to analyse data as can be found in quantitative data analysis, this is not a liability, but a strength, Guy et al (1987) say: “It is a measure of what priorities we have set and what assumptions we have made in charting a particular research course.” However, the delimitation of the study was to shine the spotlight on business-to-business media and how they operate within the context of knowledge management and whether they recognise and acknowledge communities of practice.

Whatever the results yield, the fact remains that this is one of the first studies in South Africa into the business-to-business media sector and certainly, as has been ascertained, the first study to be done from a knowledge management perspective using communities of practice as the participatory lens through which the sector has been evaluated locally. This research study will be significant in providing some insight into this under-researched industry sector in South Africa, namely that of business-to-business media.

3.7 Key points and conclusions

Following on the exhaustive literature study captured in chapter two, this chapter, chapter three, sought to examine the approach and methods used to analyse the research data from this research study and the scientific paradigm that would be most appropriate for this study. Research methodology deals with what theoretical perspective is being used to approach the data and how that data is analysed. The epistemology, the theory in approaching the knowledge generated, was decided as constructivism. In order to derive meaning from the research, the phenomenology of interpreting qualitative data was studied. Soft systems methodology was chosen as the analytical lens with which to interpret the data generated by interview methods and an inductive data analysis process. Various systems diagrams used to make sense of the data collected in the early analysis process were investigated. Diagrams and modeling is an essential tool in making sense of a situation and obtaining a view of all aspects of any problem situation.

Communities of practice literature does not delve much into how CoPs are informed, or the role that the media can play, i.e., through business-to-business media as one source or as a facilitator. Conversely, B2B media, unfamiliar with the CoP construct, do not necessarily recognise their networking initiatives as facilitating or being a part of communities of practice, or their inherent value to the sustainability of the organisation. This created a challenging research environment. It is these paradoxes which were thrown up by the research which will be unpacked in the next chapter, chapter four, where the data is categorised and analysed. Conclusions will be drawn as to the meaning of this research and the implications for the study in chapter five.

CHAPTER 4

“Journalism with results is the currency of business-to-business publications.”

- Robert Freedman

Journalism that Matters:

How business-to-business editors change the industries they cover (2006)

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH ANALYSIS

There is a well-known metaphor in which five blind people are standing around an elephant trying to describe it, each one is touching a part of the animal, but they can't work out what it is as they can't see the whole, so all they describe is parts of it: hairy, rough, long, and so on. There is no "Weltanschauung" – no holistic overview or worldview. They don't get the big picture because they don't see the totality of the elephant, they are constrained by describing only the part they know by touch. This is common to organisations which don't share knowledge and therefore don't see the whole picture. The core point about a community of practice is that learning achieved by one member of the group can create knowledge in the entire group as shared experiences and conversations take place. The very nature of the semi-structured interview schedule for this research project generated new knowledge in the business-to-business media system, as questions prompted a new way of looking at the industry – from a knowledge management perspective using communities of practice – and contributed to learning.

4.1 Research approach for the presentation of data

Chapter three dealt with the theoretical, phenomenological approach and methods used to analyse the research data generated in this research study and the scientific paradigm that would be most appropriate for the data to be presented. Soft systems methodology was chosen as the analytical lens with which to interpret the data generated by interview methods through an inductive data analysis process. This chapter contains the presentation of the data gathered for the purpose of this study. The data was coded in the content analysis process and placed into five final categories. The development of categories in the inductive approach is described as an art by some researchers. Mayring (2001) offers an additional process for the procedure of inductive category development below (Figure 4-1) with specific steps that bring the researcher back to the original research objective and includes checks for reliability and clear feedback loops. Feedback loops are of course also at the core of systems thinking and this researcher added to the qualitative analysis process and inductive category development models (Thomas, 2003; Mayring, 2001) by also employing systems modeling and mapping in the presentation of results analysis process.

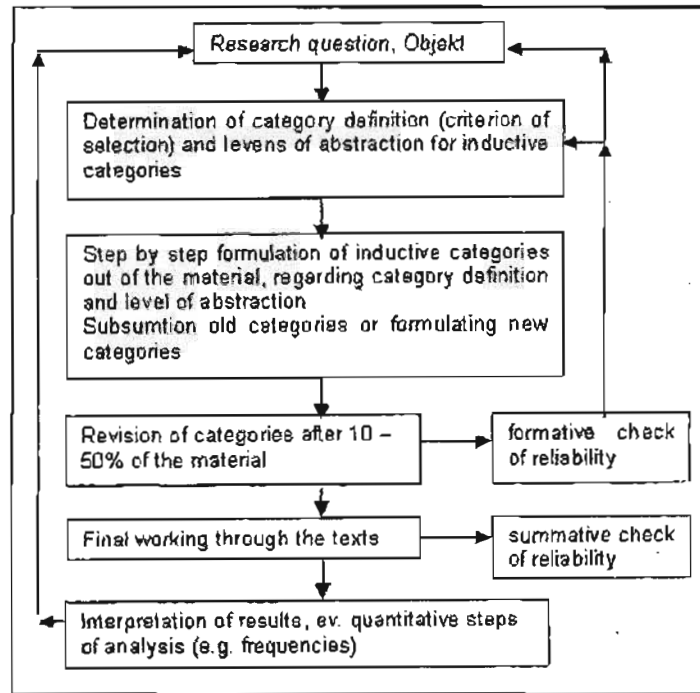


FIGURE 4-1: STEP MODEL OF INDUCTIVE CATEGORY DEVELOPMENT (sic). (Mayring, 2001)

Data analysis in qualitative research is described as “complex” and “mysterious” by researchers in the field (Bernard & Ryan, 2003, p. 1-2, Thorne, 2000): “At the heart of qualitative data analysis is the task of discovering themes. By themes, we mean abstract, often fuzzy, constructs which investigators identify before, during, and after data collection.” Themes emerge through the laborious sifting through of data texts, reflection and coding, using the theoretical techniques identified by the researcher, as well as logic, common sense, professional definitions and the researcher’s own experience. Living with the data is necessary to surface all themes. Techniques drawn from the epistemological and disciplinary boundaries as advocated for use by Bernard & Ryan (2003, p. 2) are: 1) word analysis through searching for word repetitions, key-indigenous terms or jargon which would indicate specialised knowledge and keywords in a specific context, and/or of specific relevance to the study at hand; 2) the meticulous reading and analysis of sections of relevant text, including much reflection, to surface hidden meanings, unsaid intimations, allusions, all the while keeping in mind the original research objectives and specific experience of the research subjects as well as that of the researcher; 3) analysis of specific linguistic features such as metaphors, transitions, connectors, which may have significant relevance to the study; 4) manipulation of texts through highlighting or the physical circling or cutting out and sorting of the text.

This process of living with the data, the deconstruction, manipulation and highlighting of texts ensures that relevant themes are surfaced to ensure a comprehensive list of categories.

Based on the analysis of the research input from the 17 subjects and the literature review, it was clear to the researcher that very little research existed within the business-to-business trade publishing environment in South Africa, and that the market was not as evolved as the media B2B industry in developed countries. This called for a unique perspective within the South African context. To obtain this unique perspective, the researcher also considered (through the semi-structured interview process, followed by analysis of the data gathered) what business-to-business media were in a general context as accepted widely by the profession, both locally and globally; what was best practice in a global context; and what the unique challenges were in the South African context. The researcher also considered whether communities of practice were seen as relevant by the respondents to the business-to-business industry; whether they understood what communities of practice were; and if they were involved in or facilitated communities of practice within their own media organisations.

The respondents for this qualitative study addressed these issues within the context of the semi-structured interview process of face-to-face or telephonic interviews and one email interview conducted by the researcher. The list of questions is attached (see Annexure 3-1). The respondents were chosen for their professional and leadership status within the South African business-to-business media industry, i.e. consistently award-winning B2B publishers/editors, recognised media commentators, new media (internet) experts and business media heads within listed media companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. A total of 17 interviews were conducted, including one international new media specialist of a global new media online think-tank (via email). All are members of regulatory and professional industry bodies with audited circulation/readership/subscriber certification. All research interviews were conducted towards the end of 2006 in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa, at the respondents' place of work over a three month period. All respondents but one agreed to be quoted by name and job title in this study. The list of respondents is attached (Annexure 4-1). The majority have requested an overview of the results on completion and acceptance of this study to inform their publishing teams.

4.2 Research themes which emerged from analysis

The obvious, immediate themes identified in the raw data at the start from the interview respondents were: business-to-business media; communities of practice; knowledge; learning; the internet; community. These themes surfaced due to many of the same terms or words being contained in the interview brief (Annexure 3-2) and the research questions and the respondents naturally referred to the terms when answering the questions during the semi-structured interview process. On cleaning up the text and rereading it, highlighting and identifying codes, many more themes were identified, some more obvious, some interpretive and some hidden in metaphor. A total of 31 categories were

identified from the interview subjects' transcribed and cleaned interview texts and a descriptor was written for each of the categories identified from the coded interview texts. Systems maps were utilised to group initial themes (Annexure 4-2). The researcher kept detailed notes ("memos") during the coding process to capture new thoughts of relevance and connections. Gibbs and Taylor (2005) advocate that memo's be used for the researcher to note down thoughts and ideas during the process of inductive coding about the themes surfaced. It is important to note that no matter how many times copy is reread and how many diagrams and tables are drawn and in some instances, discarded, that no element of the process of qualitative analysis is lost in the inductive research approach – it all contributes to a greater understanding of the research data. This is why Bernard and Ryan (2003, p. 8) advocate that the researcher should live with the data: "By living with the data, investigators can eventually perform the intelocular percussio test – which is where you wait for patterns to hit you between the eyes."

While this may not seem a very scientific way to some scientists, the authors, quoting Dey (1993), insist there is still no substitute for intuition when searching for themes to code in texts. This falls into the same paradigm as inductive study where the researcher's own experience has relevance in the final analysis of the research data. The experience of this researcher includes 20 years of consistent work within the media sector in South Africa as a journalist, editor, publisher and media commentator, specialising in business-to-business media in the last decade and online media since 2000. Attached annexures contain samples of raw text interviews pre-coding and cleaned interview texts with coding (Annexure 4-3; 4-4).

In coding, the process for interpreting the text for themes, ideas and categories, the researcher employed various coloured highlighter pens to go over the text, making notes in the margins and drawing a systems map for each interview subject to record the key themes. Further notes were made after further reflection.

All 31 categories that emerged from the initial themes were then recorded according to the frequency they came up in the research data, on a graph to provide a macro-overview, as below (Figure 4-2).

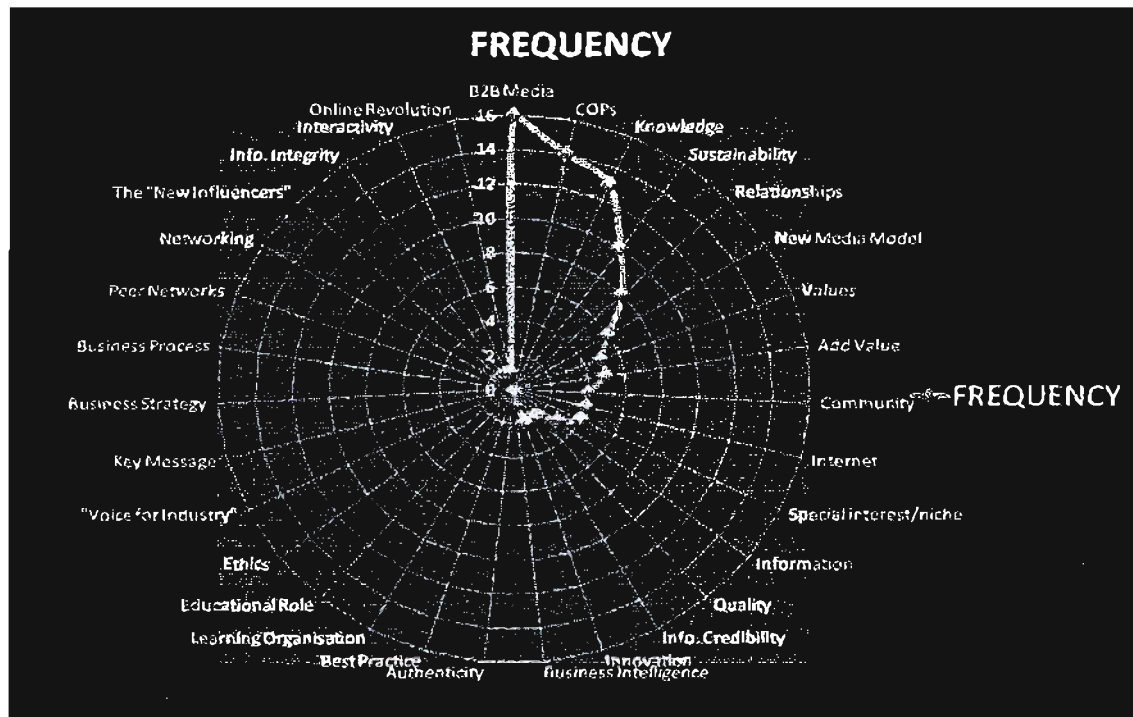


FIGURE 4-2: FREQUENCY GRAPH TO DEMONSTRATE MACRO-OVERVIEW OF CATEGORIES AT THE START OF THE INDUCTIVE CODING PROCESS

The interviews were coded further in an all-encompassing table to present a micro-overview of the 31 categories during the inductive coding process, with the headings: 1) Raw text; 2) Descriptive Coding; 3) Emergent Categories; 4) What was coded/Memo's (Annexure 4-5). Gibbs & Taylor (2005) indicate that coding data enables easier handling of the data and identifies patterns of interaction. They assert that codes can be based on "themes, topics, ideas, concepts, terms, phrases, keywords". Themes are identified and given category names, with further coding illuminating specific themes in the research to be described in the final categories by the researcher in analyzing the phenomena. To begin, the research questions are considered as well as the research study objectives. Multiple readings of the text occur as data are sorted. Reducing the 31 emergent categories to a few specific themes that rose from the text to be labeled as final categories was a laborious process of cross-checking against the relevant raw text, descriptive coding and coding notes, systems maps and cleaned text. The outcome was that of the total 31 categories, a couple of which were discarded and the rest subsumed into the eventual five dominant themes identified through the process of critical analysis and reflection, to become the final categories, were:

- i. Special Interest/Niche.
- ii. Sustainability.

- iii. Values.
- iv. Educational Role.
- v. Communication Channels.

The final five categories relate to how the respondents view business-to-business media; the relationship between business-to-business media and the subject of this research study: communities of practice; and future sustainability of the business-to-business media sector, particularly in relation to the influence of communities of practice and the provision of usable knowledge.

During the first filter of the 31 categories, those with similar characteristics were subsumed into others (See Annexure 4-5: 'Memo's'), for example: Knowledge became part of the principles in the Educational Role of business-to-business media; Communities part of Special Interest and Niche categories to form one concurrent theme; Interactivity and Internet were merged, along with New Media Models as they became indicators of another broader encompassing theme: that of new Communication Channels in the media industry, as well as new communication channels used by individuals to seek knowledge, whether they be readers of business-to-business media or members of communities of practice, or indeed any knowledge worker or citizen. The fact that the terms 'business-to-business media' and 'communities of practice' were highlighted by all respondents did not mean they would become categories of their own, as it was logical that they would be mentioned by all respondents as they were contained in the questionnaire as the subject of this study. Deconstructing the meaning attached to both terms in the initial category breakdown led to a broader theme emerging: that of the importance of Special Interest or Niche Communities, with characteristics common to both B2B media and CoPs. Lesser categories which had characteristics covered by other categories fell away, i.e., Quality, Information and Business Intelligence.

The five final categories are discussed in detail below. Metaphor was used to describe each category as well with the view to coming up with a model in the final outcome of the research after presentation, analysis and discussion of the results. Bernard and Ryan (2007) address metaphors and analogies in identifying themes in qualitative data analysis in the search for patterns in text. The use of metaphor by respondents is a cultural phenomena with meanings inherent to the context of the study and metaphor can therefore be used to observe surface phenomena.

4.2.1 Special Interest Communities/Niche category: 'Building Knowledge Assets'

Special Interest Communities is the category definition that arose out of the initial, exploratory special interest/niche community, business-to-business and communities of practice categories. Both Business-to-business and communities of practice are special interest communities in some form, with

business-to-business media operating within specific industry sectors in any economy globally, providing special interest news and information from within an industry sector for that specific industry or trade sector as per the data culled from respondent interviews and the literature review undertaken for this study. Communities of practice within organisations or groups of people which have a common interest on a specific subject and interact regularly in order to share knowledge on the subject they are passionate about or want to learn more or problem solve (Wenger, 2002).

Original categories identified which were indicators of the building blocks of Special Interest/Niche Communities were incorporated into this category too, namely Peer Networks and Community. Respondents put forward that business-to-business media were vital links in any industry system of interest, creating networking opportunities. For any business operating within an industry sector, B2B media should become an essential part of its marketing portfolio. As a respondent qualified (respondent Manson): “B2B media are the ‘umbrella link’ to niched communities...” Another respondent agreed (respondent Van Niekerk): “(We) need niche, specialist media to present it (information) in a way that the market wants to be communicated to. That is a core competency.”

Communities of practice can come into play in the B2B media system through knowledge. B2B media disseminate expert information and essential information to an industry, which will include communities of practice, either within organisations or spanning organisations. In turn, B2B media could source expert information to create usable knowledge from communities of practice, respondents speculate, while pointing out that for this to occur on a broader scale, there needs to be a mindset change among B2B media:

“B2B media need to change their mindset in order to facilitate CoPs. They need to change their mind in the way that their core business is published as medium. They need to become suppliers of usable knowledge to their market. And once they actually have made that mindset change, then they will find the concepts of CoPs more appealing, and natural.” (Respondent Moerdyk).

There was no doubt expressed by any respondents’ interviewed for this study regarding the fact that CoPs were indeed useful to B2B media. Several respondents were emphatic that B2B media could not be effective without embracing knowledge management constructs such as communities of practice. “A community of practice is in the DNA of a B2B media company...” (respondent Smith); “CoPs would include everyone involved and working in a chosen industry and who has the wellbeing of that industry at heart” (respondent Van Schalkwyk), by which she indicated that B2B media would definitely be part of a CoP system and B2B media needed CoPs to be part of its media system. Respondent Smith was emphatic: “Where B2B media are effective, they become the indispensable components to that CoP system.” Respondents felt that there was a clear symbiotic linkage between

the information and knowledge disseminated by special interest publications such as B2B media to the special interest communities they served, and the specialist information required by communities of practice to generate specialised knowledge, key learnings and knowledge assets for future generations. Respondent Smith again: “A community that organises itself without the B2B media will have certain self-interest, passionate people... B2B media really takes that passion and magnifies it many times because it is/or should be, passionate about the community...”; or, respondent Manson again: “B2B media are a platform for CoPs.”

Relationships were key, respondents felt. B2B media were regarded as niche/specialist communities with specific special interest content for specific industries, with their own language, tone, context, which facilitate special interest forums/groups with a common purpose, leveraging multi-channels to serve the community. Community of practice researchers Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98) put forward more than a decade ago that a community of practice was “an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge”. Hildreth, Wright and Kimble (2000) took Wenger and Lave’s work further, defining the core features of a CoP thus: a sense of common purpose; an official group that evolved from a need but which is driven by the members themselves; a strong feeling of identity; having its own terminology (group specific acronyms and nicknames).

B2B media are regarded by respondents as influential, embedded in the industry, acting as hubs for the industry, tracking trends, providing access to industry services and products and information, according to the respondents to this study. “There’s a whole element of belonging. (B2B media) is about relationships” (respondent Wertheim-Aymes). That unique purpose, voice in the industry, defines B2B media as specialist and respondents Garner and Patrick had this to say: “We try to be oracles in each industry.”

The thread of sustainability in the face of extreme change in the media industry globally due to technological innovation in recent years runs throughout the respondents’ interviews and communities of practice are seen as a strong vehicle or another channel for B2B media to leverage their publications within their industries, connecting with key stakeholders and aiding in the development of knowledge in their industries – with the end goal of skills upliftment and ultimately, economic upliftment. Communities of practice are seen as users of B2B media in sourcing specialist information. The two concepts: B2B media and CoPs are seen as intertwined by respondents as part of the same system with the same goal in certain instances. One of the best descriptions of how important CoPs are to organisations - and any industry would fall into this definition as well - comes from the originators of the CoP discipline, Wenger and Snyder (2004): “A new organisational form is emerging in companies that run on knowledge: the community of practice. And for this expanding

universe of companies, communities of practice promise to radically galvanise knowledge sharing, learning, and change.”

As far as embedding themselves in an industry goes, one respondent believes it is a very hallmark of a B2B media system to involve the industry it serves every step of the way (respondent Regasek): “The sense of ownership is an important driver and motivator... we start with an idea and then polish and shape that idea with the industry through our relationships with the industry and proper consultation – our ability to listen. It’s not difficult to be smart when you have the entire industry thinking for you.” Respondent Moerdyk sees B2B media evolving, “becoming knowledge based”. He is not alone in his belief that B2B media contribute to the economy by creating vital knowledge assets: “Business-to-business media is a fancy name for good old trade media. Its purpose is actually to facilitate trade,” says respondent Regasek, who goes on: “B2B media engages by putting buyers and sellers together and facilitating the trade... acts as an information conduit... we hold the industry together...” Another respondent who sites her publication’s establishment of a community of practice to develop local filmmakers, believes B2B media are in fact often facilitators of CoPs due to the special interest nature of the information exchange (respondent Van Schalkwyk): “Definitely, B2B media would qualify as being facilitators of CoPs... we’ve really facilitated entry into the world for local film companies and we definitely do it. I think B2B (media) has to do it to succeed.” She also ties this to the sustainability of the industry in the future, urging publishers to capitalise on their specialist nature: “We certainly do facilitate CoPs... We’ve come to realise that you can’t rely on print advertising alone, or just electronic, you have to create other networking opportunities which are face to face, like workshops or seminars.”

There are pitfalls too, as respondents indicated, with a B2B media industry in South Africa where this study was primarily set, being seen as immature still, lacking in resources, fragmented and lagging in technological innovation. This is where sustainability comes in.

4.2.2 Sustainability category: ‘Bytes of Change’

Online competency and integrity in publishing in the business-to-business sector (i.e., credibility and ethics) was by far a key predictor of future B2B media sustainability. Respondents felt that building a solid brand on sound values assisted in sustainability even when revenue was derived solely from advertisers, leaving publishers vulnerable to coercion and even blackmail advertising. The initial category of Sustainability remained a key category, incorporating another important category of New Media Models as an influence of sustainability with many of the same variables highlighted by respondents. Lesser categories of a Voice for industry and Business Process and Strategy were also

collapsed into this category which deals with the ‘Bytes of Change’ sweeping through the media industry with the growth of the internet globally as a medium. This evolution in the media landscape globally has changed how consumers digest information and require knowledge, according to respondent Buckland, who says the media have moved from a one-to-many static one-way media model, to a “one-to-one direct broadcast model” with direct feedback from readers/users who have also become suppliers of content. Another respondent believes the media need to embrace the new media models in order to meet demands for targeted/niched information (respondent McClure): “The media has the opportunity to be the hub for the formation and maintenance of CoPs, if they embrace the qualities of citizen journalism and social media...”. The internet has in fact given any publisher, no matter how big or small, global player advantage, which is an opportunity for business-to-business media which possess specialist information that is highly sought after by specific groups/communities of people. Respondent Smith believes that B2B media “can leverage many channels to serve the community”. Combining different mediums in delivering the key message also ensures maximum reach for publishers, which is a core responsibility respondents say, as respondent Regasek attests: “The role and purpose of the media – independent media – is to facilitate free circulation of ideas and act as the voice of a certain industry, to give people platforms.”

The words “we care” and “we serve” appear often in the raw text data gathered as respondents speak with passion about their industries that they “serve”. Respondent Van Schalkwyk qualifies: “I think if you really care about your industry, you are so linked to their viability, if they can’t make a living, it will affect you.” The same goes for the sustainability of B2B media which do not maintain relationships within the sectors they serve, respondent Schalkwyk again: “We are motivated by that (knowledge) exchange because we are building up loyalty and we have their interests at heart... We see ourselves as a voice for (our) industry...”.

The respondents put forward that B2B media was far more dependent on communities of practice for future sustainability than CoPs were dependent on B2B media (respondent Van Niekerk). This was in reference to the challenges B2B media faced with sustainability and poor reputation and an inordinate dependence on advertising revenue. Many respondents were of the firm belief, however, that B2B media could, should and did in some cases, play an important role in the economies of their industry sectors. Respondent Regasek was direct: “B2B media play a really critical role in the economy as trade facilitators.” The multi-platform media model is the key to reduce dependence on advertisers, respondents to this study indicated, i.e., through running events, sponsorship; as well as a thought leadership strategy to ensure loyalty among the reader and advertiser base. “The reality is that advertisers control this business at the moment” (respondents Garner & Patrick). A multi-platform model with a strong online component would aid transparency and the free flow of information in the industry, a competency which is seen as a precursor to sustainability, by respondents.

In fact, bringing it back to values, value for readers and clients, and best practice was important to respondents as an integral step in business-to-business media sustainability in the face of the 'Bytes of Change' sweeping through the industry.

4.2.3 Values category: 'We Serve...'

Values should be at the core of a business-to-business media business due to the delicate balance between reader and advertiser interests and revenue generation for sustainability, respondents noted. The reliance of B2B publishers on advertising solely, in many instances, for revenue generation puts advertisers in an unholy position of power to dictate content. It takes firm principles and a value-driven business to withstand the pressure at times, respondents indicated. Values were a strong theme raised by respondents who highlighted the responsibility of the media in disseminating credible independent information: "Advertiser funded information could erode B2B media sustainability. Already there are lots of questions asked around the authenticity and impartiality around it..." (respondent Berkman). This lack of authenticity, whether it be perception or reality, is a threat to the sustainability of B2B media – the fact that credibility is key is a continuous theme in the respondents' data. The concept of altruism is often foreign to business which is in the business of making a profit, yet it is alluded to in this study by respondents when talking about their passion for their industries and how they serve them. Despite the taint of advertiser pandering in editorial process in business-to-business publishing - the legitimacy of the role of this media, the respect top B2B publications and editors garner, as well as the concept of 'giving back' to the industry that is being served, was highlighted by respondents.

In maintaining values, it was seen as important for B2B publishers to understand what their core business was and all the agenda's of the various stakeholders involved in the value chain, as respondent Smith pointed out: "You have to try understand what buyers and sellers need to buy and what they need to sell. That is where integrity comes in: to understand when you're being spun, to not say that or write it... The integrity also comes in when you're trying to run that fine line between advertorial (paid for content) and editorial (news/opinion)." Respondents felt that the poor credibility perception that business-to-business media have is due to a blurring of the boundaries between advertising, public relations and editorial content and the concept of "free ads masquerading as editorial" was a common perception in this market that Scher and others raised. For respondent Buckland it was a non-negotiable point: "Credibility in the media world is everything and in the B2B (media) world... (there is) high demand for honesty and accuracy and integrity." That integrity has to be part of the business, the same integrity that is assumed when a community of practice evolves, respondent Smith in turn advocates: "You can't legislate honesty. The embryo of a community of

practice is driven by passion for a service. It becomes almost a self-fulfilling prophecy.” That credibility of information was part of the values of a B2B publishing house as it was expected that niche publishers be embedded in their industry, producing credible, expert content that garnered respect, producing quality publications. Values that B2B publishers should aspire to were mentioned by all and included: authenticity, trust, ethics, integrity, independence, responsibility, passion, altruism, honesty, credibility, visionary, innovative and respect. A last word from respondent Regasek on this category: “Understand who you are and act that way.”

4.2.4 Educational Role category: ‘The Facilitators’

Knowledge as a category pointed to the role business-to-business media have in educating and upskilling the industries in which they operate in, as did the lesser categories of Add Value, Innovation, Best Practice and Learning Organisation, which all pointed to the Educational Role category in this instance, as raised by one respondent in the study. It was felt the encompassing theme of this educational role which was seen by the respondents to be facilitated by B2B media as one of its key roles in industry, was pertinent as the overall title of this category. Respondents view business-to-business media as conduits for information sharing to create knowledge in industries, as well as fostering learning by providing feedback; providing a creative environment to facilitate ideas freely; and as a platform for debate. Providing expert, specialist knowledge into industry was key in building the knowledge base in an industry and filling training gaps, thereby satisfying the quest for knowledge and expertise in industry sectors. Respondents felt that B2B media, as an independent contextualiser of information was key to creating knowledge and generating new skills in industry in order to keep up with global competitiveness and industry trends. “The ideal is to create knowledge and generate meaning,” respondents Garner and Patrick explained in their interview. Respondent Von Solms felt strongly that “knowledge needs to be usable” and respondent Regasek added to that, saying: “Business-to-business media are definitely building the knowledge base.” That exchange of knowledge was key to the reason for the existence of business-to-business media which had as a core responsibility to grow knowledge and skills in their respective industries as respondents, including Van Schalkwyk, motivated: “(The) exchange is motivated by the fact that to make a living, you have to have that exchange of knowledge. If you are not prepared to exchange knowledge within and amongst yourselves, it will limit your enterprise.” Respondents Garner and Patrick, also weigh in on that score: “Knowledge is applied, it adds value to your business.” Respondent Smith explains further that as media owners, business-to-business publishers and editors are continually searching for that expertise to add value to their publications, and therefore their industries... “it’s a quest for knowledge and expertise”. He goes further: “What you could argue, is that there is a fair amount of knowledge sharing taking place between vendors and clients, but not independent and not

contextualised... so the media's role is fundamentally important if the end user is going to get real knowledge.”

Of course, not all business-to-business media owners acknowledge this responsibility to educate the industries they serve. It was recognised by respondents that the poor reputation business-to-business media have is tied to revenue generation only and poor skills within the industry. Respondent Moerdyk even goes onto say that business-to-business media generate knowledge “most often unconsciously”. It is this educational and skills value add that is central to the specialist nature of these niched industry publications and which affects their sustainability in the long term. Respondent Regasek sums it up: “Understand who you are and act that way. We want to give best value to our stakeholders. B2B media has its rules and its purpose and should be measured according to its purpose.”

On innovation, respondents are clear that as new technologies accelerate innovation in the media world, they need to be embraced to reach the ‘prosumers’ of today, the consumers who are proactive and often have more information at their fingertips than the brands and services that are trying to reach them to sell to them. Business-to-business media are excellent conduits of information, contextualising knowledge and polishing ideas in the marketplace, respondents remonstrated. An emergent theme was that respondents felt that the role of communities-of-practice was also to shape ideas for industry in partnership with business-to-business media. Respondents Moerdyk and Regasek both look to online innovation in the media world to assist in circulating ideas: “Ideas are facilitated with great difficulty” (Moerdyk); “The internet is a natural environment for free circulation of ideas” (Regasek). The need for best practice in business in terms of ideas, information, knowledge was increasing and respondents felt this should be a serious concern of business-to-business publishers in meeting these needs. Said respondent Manson: “...(the) need for business information, best practice, etc, is increasing”. In some cases, however, a mindset change was required in order for media companies to think of themselves as contributing to the “learning organisation” and embracing communities-of-practice. Respondent Moerdyk again: “B2B media has to have a considerably huge case content”, and “All modern big brand businesses are learning organisations.”

In concluding this category, respondent Von Solms, whose agricultural B2B publication in the South African Dairy industry facilitates study groups for farmers online and in real time, including mentoring by putting emerging farmers, many the beneficiaries in land restitution, with established farmers: “Our educational role is absolutely vital.”

4.2.5 Communication Channels category: 'The New Influentials'

Communication Channels was the name given to the category that emerged from the themes of Relationships, the Internet/Online Revolution, Peer Networks, Networking, and the 'New Influencers'. It refers to the channels through which information is disseminated for knowledge uptake and education and sustainability. The various channels form part of the characteristics profile of the specialist nature of a business-to-business media firm, i.e., peer networks; value-driven relationships with stakeholders. It incorporates the key new differentiator of successful brands: that of tapping into the "New Influentials" (respondent McClure) - those consumers and users of content online who are also influencing purchase decisions.

An emergent theme in this study was that respondents thought communities of practice were platforms for business-to-business media to facilitate relationships. Trust and integrity was seen as a key component in the relationships between business-to-business media and its stakeholders, which were sometimes seen as superficial and revenue based only, and often tense when purely transactional in nature. Business-to-business media were urged to recognise the value in their stakeholders. Respondent Buckland described the relationship between B2B media and their stakeholders thus: "business relationships built on a need to create knowledge, generate business intelligence...". Respondent Moerdyk elaborates on the oft mentioned tension: "Unfortunately relationships are superficial and tenuous as people involved in B2B media will kow-tow to advertisers and will do anything for them..." On a positive note, respondent Van Schalkwyk motivates further: "We are motivated by that (knowledge) exchange because we are building up loyalty and we have their interests at heart."

The value inherent in the relationships with B2B media stakeholders indicates a rationale for the promotion of the value of CoPs in the industry. Business-to-business media are viewed as connectors, facilitators, conduits of information, relationships, creating energy in an industry and assisting in the transfer of knowledge. Respondent Berkman delves deeper into the facilitation of vital networks in the industry by B2B media through their relationship building: "A peer network provides that 'hub', that connection with their peers." This networking, relationship-building, engagement with industry and key clients and their peers lies in the value of personal contact as well as the multi-platform facilitation of the transfer of knowledge. "Many publishers will be moving to creating networking opportunities... It's becoming an increasingly important part of any B2B market portfolio in the future" (respondent Manson).

Respondents spoke of the need to connect with global peers, as well as keep up with global trends and how technology aided in the facilitation of such. A strong theme in this research study was how the

internet has changed the traditional media model and that publishers which embraced new media technologies were likely to be those that were sustainable in the future and able to better reach all their stakeholders and source information more effectively and efficiently, including connecting with new consumers who were also content providers as evidenced by the social networking trend which exploded globally online in 2006. This allowed the free facilitation of ideas, the rise of the citizen journalist or blogger, new information hubs online forming around communities of interest – an open communication model, as respondent McClure explains: “Today a new trend is emerging: the ‘new influencer’ or blogger/journalist.” It is here in particular where communities of practice, B2B media and the social media revolution becomes more relevant, as technology innovation aids information flows and knowledge transfer. The key differentiating factor is interactivity: “That is where you get communities together to discuss issues, (a) real sharing of knowledge” (McClure). Respondent Hogg (puts it bluntly thus: “Online is the greatest thing to happen to media ever... since the invention of the printing press.” A congruent theme was how the internet empowers users, creating communities, delivering an immediate message and new business opportunities. There was also a transparency of information flow among the new culture of the blog and citizen journalist. Respondent Hogg again: “...the internet is breaking down those rules. It’s cool to tell the truth”, and “The web is the great ‘disintermediator’, bringing people together, but from an education point of view, it is the greatest thing that has ever happened.” Respondent Regasek believes the internet was born for knowledge exchange: “The web is adding a completely new dimension... The internet adds dimension to any community to allow people to interact and talk to each other. This is the most critical dimension.” The inherent meaning here for this study and communities of practice is: “The internet business-to-business media are playing the critical role as real facilitators and catalysts.” The multi-platform media model incorporating print publications, online, and a broadcast model, was the most effective and “best media model”, according to respondent Regasek, in reaching every sector of a market. Respondents agreed that new skills were needed in the B2B industry to take advantage of the new communication channels that had emerged, including the internet, peer networks and communities of practice.

4.3 Conclusions

Online media forms a bridge of sorts between traditional, mainstream media and the growing online communities. If online, B2B media embrace the best attributes of both – the citizen journalists or ‘new influentials’ and the principles of the print centuries-old media’s ‘fourth estate’, the communities that it holds sway over will be very powerful indeed for business to leverage in the various industry sectors for the benefit of a country’s economy.

In chapter four, the research data gathered in this qualitative research study from semi-structured interviews of respondents in the media industry operating in South Africa, bar one respondent within the United States, was coded. Five final categories were identified in this inductive process and analysed: Specialised/Niche Communities; Sustainability; Values; Educational Role; Communication Channels. Chapter Five will focus on what this research means for the business-to-business media industry; what the knowledge management construct of communities-of-practice means for the business-to-business media industry and publishers, if anything; and what the outcome of the research is, i.e., has the researcher proved or disproved her theory; has the researcher contributed to the body of knowledge on the topic under discussion; and is there a viable model to be constructed from the research results in line with the subject of this study and the research objectives which will be discussed in detail under conclusions, discussions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

“Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification.”

- Martin H. Fischer

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The narrative theme that began at the start of this study with the identification of the 'problem situation' in the research proposal, to the rich picture which surfaced the research objectives (Figure 3-4, p. 70), to the real-world 'stories' told in the qualitative research process by respondents - which included semi-structured interviews - and the sifting through and living with the data by the researcher, to the process of reaching conclusions, recommendations and a conceptual model for the industry under discussion, the emergent story has been a rich one and a continuous conversation. The process of this research study has already yielded results for the business-to-business media industry in South Africa as this researcher acted on some of the findings discussed in this chapter as part of the process and volunteered to become a founder of an editor's chapter for local B2B media editors in South Africa, by the international Trade, Association and Business Publications International (TABPI). The informal launch of TABPI South Africa in February 2008 (Bizcommunity.com, 2008) has drawn strong positive response to date from local editors, as is discussed in the author's personal reflections at the end of this chapter which discusses the process to drawing down conclusions from the data and making recommendations, while pulling the whole into a conceptual model for potential sustainability for the B2B media industry.

5.1 Discussion of raw data

In the previous chapter, chapter four, the raw data in this research study was analysed from 17 semi-structured interviews in the qualitative data analysis process. Five key categories were identified in this inductive process and analysed: 1) Specialised/Niche Communities - 'Building Knowledge Assets'; 2) Sustainability - 'Bytes of Change'; 3) Values - 'We Serve'; 4) Educational Role - 'The Facilitators'; 5) Communication Channels - 'The New Influentials'. Metaphor was used in an additional description of the categories to encourage reflection on the process and the emergence of a model to describe the relationship between communities of practice and business-to-business media, which could act as a roadmap for the sustainability of B2B media companies in the future. The data analysis will be discussed in this chapter and conclusions drawn as to the findings, juxtaposed against the research objectives of this study. Appropriate recommendations will be made in the final outcome. The purpose of this study was to research, analyse, interpret and understand communities of practice and how business-to-business media could be an important part of the process of the emergence of communities of practice, as well as potentially generating knowledge to inform CoPs. The role of CoPs in the creation of knowledge assets in the business-to-business media industry was also considered. Whether business-to-business media can recognise and harness CoPs and other networks

to create knowledge assets and address sustainability issues in their industry, was a core question. Qualitative research interviews were used to gather data for the study, with soft systems methodology serving as a theoretical basis for analytical and interpretive processes. The literature review outlined in chapter two and problem statement in the original proposal for this study, informed the research questions, refined through an iterative process. These questions covered three distinct but interrelated themes and will be addressed in conjunction with the research analysis findings. The problem statement acknowledged that communities of practice were unrecognised and poorly understood in the business-to-business media sector in South Africa and the potential for B2B media to utilise this knowledge management construct to harness CoPs for the positive influence on their businesses and the industries they operate in, was unknown. It was the researcher's contention that opportunities to create knowledge assets and resources for the industry were being missed as a result. The associated objective was to make recommendations based on the study and models to be conceptualised, as well as the associated identifying systemic features of CoPs, enriched for the benefit of business-to-business media in general for their continued sustainability, growth and transformation. Elements that were considered were the role and responsibility of the media to society, in particular B2B media that operate in the business context specifically, and potentially have an impact on the economy, having the potential to fuel business growth in the industry sectors each business-to-business media operates in/serves; as well as technology as an enabler; and a multi-media strategy for B2B media, i.e., not just relying on one medium, such as print or online, but instead working with their industries across a multitude of platforms available, whether events or other mediums facilitated by technological innovation such as user-generated content online (blogs) or communities of practice. In summary, the research questions and objective of this study, together addressed:

- i. Emergence: whether CoPs were facilitated by business-to-business media and how CoPs indeed emerged within this media paradigm if that was the case, with specific emphasis on the characteristics and dynamics of B2B media, the role of technology and the internet in fostering patterns of interaction between B2B media and CoPs, and the principle systems features of both.
- ii. Knowledge generation: the second objective, as to how knowledge was generated through B2B media, also considered the unique features of the knowledge being addressed.
- iii. Sustainability: thirdly, the sustainability of B2B media and CoPs was considered with specific emphasis on the collaborative structures, processes, roles and incentives needed to support the renewal and application of knowledge. Specific emphasis was placed on knowledge generation, how it is used and renewed, and measures to support ongoing learning.

If B2B media facilitate CoPs, do CoPs create or contribute to the creation of knowledge assets that may be used for B2B media sustainability and the industry they serve, conversely also aiding the

sustainability of CoPs? It is the contention of this researcher that B2B media have a critical role to play in the creation and sharing of knowledge – also with CoPs. Knowledge is a core business asset in today's information-rich times and an essential driver in any business strategy. A business definition of knowledge clarifies the relationship amongst data, information, and knowledge, providing a foundation for effective knowledge management as put forward by Curley and Kivowitz (2001). We are said to be living in a 'knowledge economy' or knowledge-based economy' (Drucker, 1968) in which the management and use of knowledge produces economic benefits. This is the key reason business-to-business media are published in industry sectors: to share knowledge between businesses, to businesses, by businesses and for businesses (Freedman & Roll, 2006). In fact, knowledge management is a key factor today in companies becoming innovation leaders, contributing to client success and the professional development of internal teams such as CoPs (Andreu, 2003). CoPs have been identified and documented in organisations, primarily in research, and there is no doubt that organisations, by virtue of the fact that there is an existing community, provide the catalyst for many CoPs. However, an important fact to note is that communities can span organisations, engaging with all stakeholders to create opportunities for everyone's advantage: trade partners, suppliers, customers, vendors, partners and so on (Curley & Kivowitz, 2001). The categories that emerged in the research analysis process, in conjunction with the literature review which informed the key constructs, were key in reaching the findings outlined in the discussions to follow in this chapter and addressing the research objectives (as mentioned above) contained within this study. This is in fact the map of the process - using systems theory and some modelling - to creating an eventual model for business-to-business media sustainability, incorporating communities of practice. The synergistic relationship between communities of practice and all media is a cohesive and continuous theme and one which needs to be explored further and built on in further studies. The issue of how CoPs are informed and how the media interact with stakeholders (clients, advertisers and loyal readers) and whether CoPs are a unique way to build loyal communities, share information, create knowledge and capacity building across a broad skills set, is one worthy of further study in this researcher's opinion.

5.2 Synergistic systems of interest

Before discussing how each category relates to the study at hand, it is important to note the systems features of the two key themes of this study: communities of practice and business-to-business media. If one takes into account how CoPs and B2B media 'fit' into organisations and industry (Spray Diagram, Figure 3-5, p. 71), connections and relationships between the two become more obvious, particularly when attributes are cross-referenced across models and tables with the findings of this research study and available literature. Due to the fact that there was so little research available on business-to-business media in the context of knowledge creation and no research on the B2B media

sector in South Africa, it was imperative that the research findings be tested. Comparisons are made in the table below (Table 5-1) between the findings and what existed as reference in the field of research using various tools and models to surface as many hidden meanings as possible.

CORE CHARACTERISTICS	COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COPS)*	BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MEDIA (B2B)**
DOMAIN: <i>definition of area of shared inquiry, common purpose or interest</i>	Body of common knowledge/practice: Bound by common interest and brought together to share learning and improve knowledge, problem solve, share resources.	Specialist media bound by common subject/industry: Bound by common industry and vocation, established as a revenue generation business, with the primary aim of informing and educating its stakeholders, contributing to creation of knowledge.
COMMUNITY: <i>defined by artifacts, jargon, relationships (element of 'belonging')</i>	Sense of shared identity: Informed by the organisation (formal) and the learning of individuals (informal). Place where situational learning occurs among the members. Relationships are key to success to create a climate of trust to enable capacity building and innovation. Clear artifacts and jargon are present.	Business community joined by specialist interest/skills ('Special Interest/Niche Communities') : Informed by organisations wanting to promote services, advertisers (formal) and peer networks such as CoPs (informal) and professional bodies (formal). Business-to-business media have their own artifacts, jargon peculiar to their industry and each industry they operate in will also define itself by its particular terminology and ritual of business culture.
PRACTICE: <i>the body of knowledge, methods, stories, cases, tools, documents</i>	Knowledge generation: Knowledge is the currency they generate; they need information to exist. Members share stories, history, skills, resources, experience, capacity.	Knowledge focus ('Sustainability') : Focused on communicating between buyers and sellers of sophisticated business solutions. Information is the currency they trade in, enabling knowledge to be generated.
STRATEGIC: <i>context, legitimacy</i>	Organisation/community hub: Organisational efficiencies are increased, creating cost savings, collaboration, consensus and problem solving, level of service or sales, skills and know-how.	Industry hub ('Communication Channels') : Facilitates trade and builds businesses through providing thought leadership and specialist information, advertises services to industry, information on tenders, new services, threats, opportunities and generic business information to improve skills & knowledge within industry.
VALUE: <i>meaning units for community, organisation, industry</i>	Common or overlapping values: Personal development of individuals, professional identity, increases organisational capabilities, innovation, strategy, knowledge capacity building, business synergies	Common purpose ('Values') : Develop industry by providing information they can use to build capacity, increase business revenue, business growth, empower and upskill individuals, while retaining content excellence, integrity and ethics in publishing.
CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS: <i>activities, relevance, structural, resources, attitude</i>	Knowledge generation: Knowledge creation Knowledge sharing Knowledge use (Saint-Onge et al. 2003)	Knowledge generation ('Educational Role') : To upskill stakeholders To create knowledge assets in the industry Aid business success with relevant information.

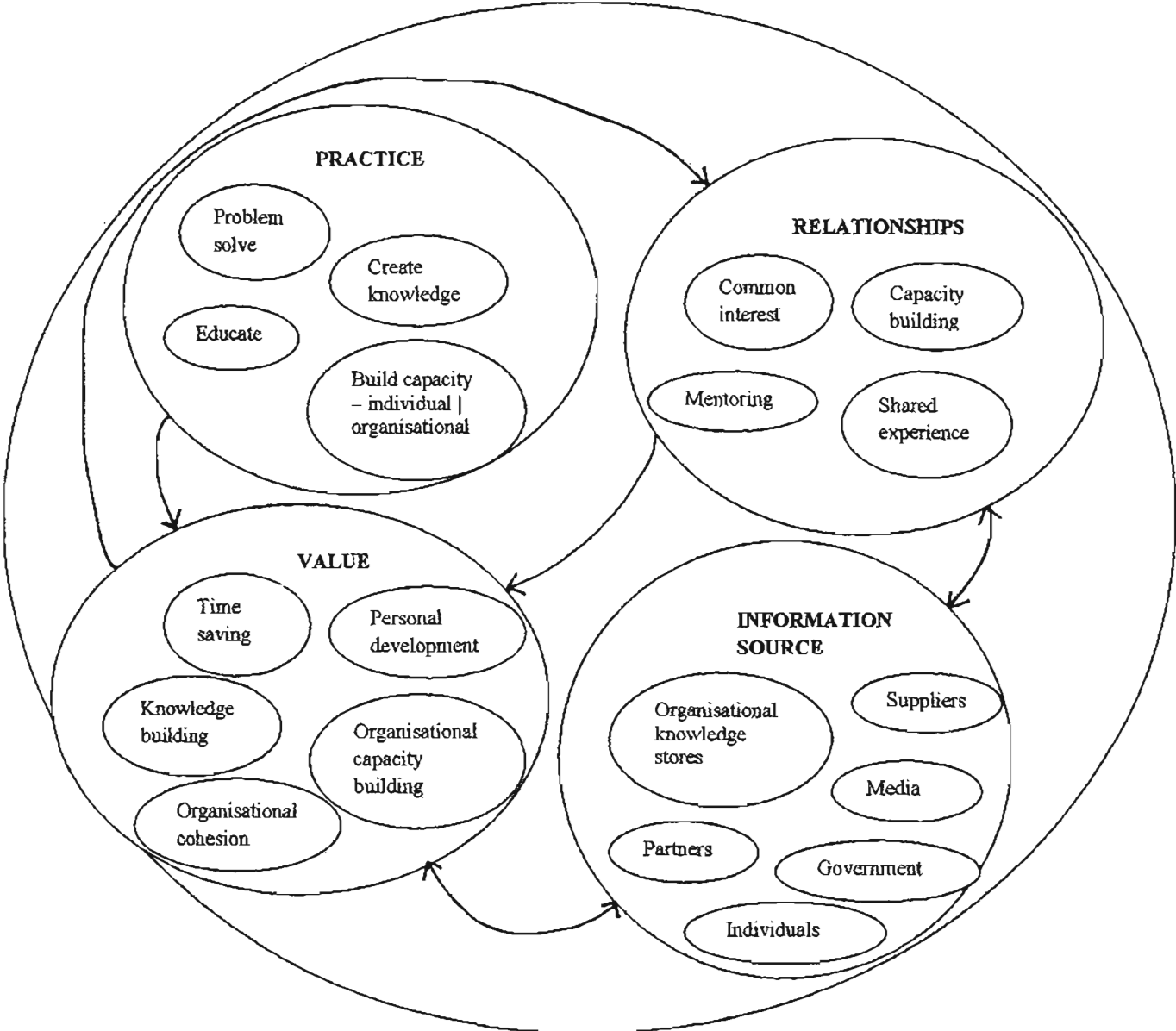
* CoP core competencies drawn from Fontaine & Millen (2004); Hislop (2004); Saint-Onge & Wallace (2003); Wenger (2002).

**B2B core competencies and characteristics surfaced from this research study's respondents.

TABLE 5-1: CORE CHARACTERISTICS COMPARISON BETWEEN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MEDIA

From the comparison table above (Table 5-1), it can be noted that the components of a CoP system of interest contain individuals armed with specialist knowledge or a common purpose; who meet to share knowledge and build capacity, solve problems, address issues, innovate, plan. Communities of practice are defined by the usable knowledge they create, while business-to-business media are defined by the quality of information they generate in order to contribute to knowledge in the marketplace they serve, which includes organisations with CoPs and CoPs which span organisations. How B2B media integrate their services with the industry they operate in is a key definer of success, in terms of revenue and credibility, according to respondents to this study. This information collated and disseminated by B2B media across multimedia platforms is key in informing individuals and organisations and creating knowledge which can be used to problem solve and create solutions and key learning.

FIGURE 5-1: SYSTEMS MAP OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE WITH FEEDBACK LOOPS INDICATING INFLUENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS



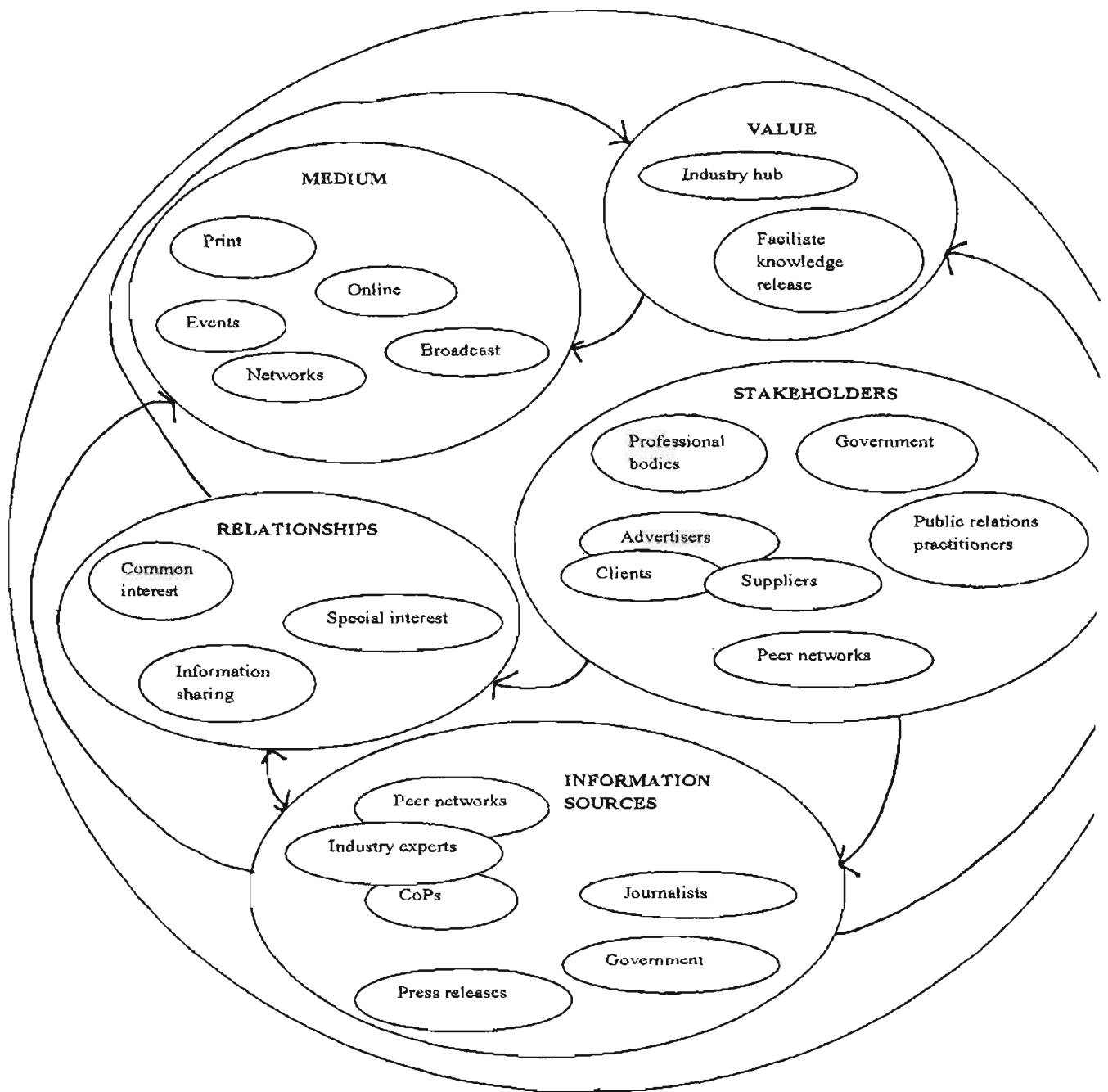


FIGURE 5-2: SYSTEMS MAP OF B2B MEDIA WITH FEEDBACK LOOPS INDICATING INFLUENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

As per the earlier comparison table (Table 5-1) and the figures above (Figures 5-1 & 5-2) the core characteristics and the principle systems features of both communities of practice and B2B media are aligned with the categories surfaced in the final research recommendations and have many similar characteristics. Based on the research findings of this study and the literature review, as well as taking cognisance of the researchers' own world experience in this industry, it is proffered that the business-to-business media system consists of the following: individuals informed by the specialist information generated by B2B media; peer networks; industry associations and professional bodies; advertisers;

and individuals with specialist industry knowledge which in turn inform B2B media. The influence that a B2B media system can exert on a CoP is significant in informing individuals and organisations of specialist information and a platform in which to debate their views to assist with learning, according to respondents to this study. Within each system, there are clear linkages between the relationships within the system and behavior of the system, including feedback loops to indicate continuous learning (Senge, 1994).

5.3 The research categories which emerged during analysis

The process in this chapter has been to analyse the research holistically, evaluating the relationship between communities of practice and business-to-business media and relating the title of this study and the research objectives to the research findings surfaced during the study constantly and consistently. The categories identified during qualitative data analysis are key to informing the process.

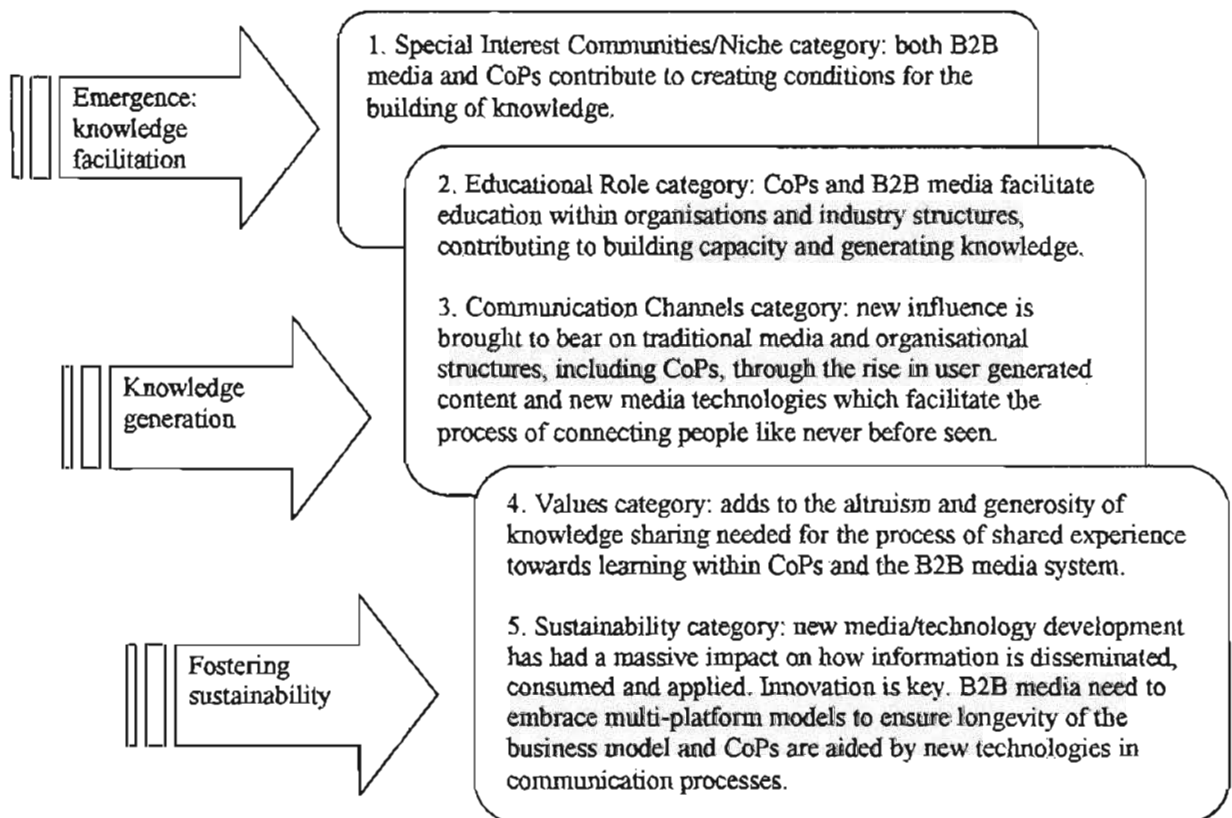


FIGURE 5-3: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES VIS A VIZ CATEGORIES SURFACED DURING RESEARCH ANALYSIS

As the figure above refers (Figure 5-3), when juxtaposing the categories that emerged from the research analysis process with the key research objectives, it becomes clearer how the research

contributes to the eventual findings. The research objectives of this study are a mirror through which the research categories are reflected and measured.

5.3.1 Emergence: knowledge facilitation

i. Special Interest Communities/Niche category: 'Building Knowledge Assets'

In creating knowledge, communities of practice need to draw on members' own expertise and key learning, as well as from other general sources within their organisations and sectors they are operating in, be it their industry or social grouping. Conversely, business-to-business media draw on the expertise of members of the communities they serve to provide information to their readers, thereby informing their special interest trade communities, as part of the process to build knowledge and upskill their industries: this is "operational business intelligence" as cited by two of the respondents to this study (respondents Garner & Patrick). The end goal is skills upliftment and ultimately, economic upliftment in their industries, in an ideal economy.

It is a lofty goal, but one in which special interest, community-based media, like business-to-business media are poised to seize as an opportunity. Communities of practice in turn need new information and specialist information which they can turn into usable knowledge, feeding back into their organisations, profession, industry. Snyder (1997, p. 1) puts forward that the common interest binding communities of practice is a shared interest in learning: "Their focus on learning, competence, and performance bridges the gap between organisational learning and strategy topics and generates new insights for theory and practice." Communities of practice share learnings, while business-to-business media at the most basic competency facilitate the distribution of information to aid learning within the industry they operate in. The research shows synergies between business-to-business media and communities of practice, as B2B media are potentially a professional vehicle for CoPs to obtain some of the information from, in which to inform individuals in their professional capacity and to share knowledge with peers in an industry sector. The synergistic relationship between B2B media and professional networks such as peer networks, professional bodies and communities of practice becomes clearer. All of the above contribute directly or indirectly to building knowledge assets in their economic/industry sectors.

The aspect of community is key to both, as is specialist knowledge and the outcome of both is to generate learning. The question that follows then, is: do B2B media have a role to play in the emergence of CoPs? The respondents to this study are in no doubt as to this process, as respondent Smith asserts: "B2B media are the glue for many of these CoPs", and, "where B2B media are effective, they become indispensable components to that CoP system." The very specialist nature of

both CoPs and B2B media, in focusing on a niche area of specialty or interest is something both systems have in common and when the interest is aligned, there is definitive benefit to both, respondents believe. CoP literature on the whole does not address the specific elements of how individuals are informed in communities of practice. The literature at hand focuses more on the outcome of the knowledge shared and the emergence of CoPs and the importance of the experience shared by individuals with CoPs. It is here where I hope to make a contribution to the body of knowledge on CoPs – and B2B media in my own country of residence: South Africa, and potentially on the continent of Africa as my own media reaches into additional countries in Africa, through this research study focusing on an element of the media, in this case B2B media, and their relationships with CoPs in the field of knowledge management today.

Respondents believe that communities of practice have an intrinsic value to business-to-business publishers and industry. The relationship is seen as a synergistic one, with professional B2B media contributing to building knowledge in their industries. B2B media draw down expert knowledge and address quality issues by collaborating with industry and upskilling within that industry, acting as *information conduits to accessing and building up knowledge assets*. There are many layers of interaction within an industry and CoPs are recognised as an important part of any industry sector by the respondents. A certain amount of altruism is required, however, as asserted by respondents, as B2B publishers need to balance self-interest with the needs of the industry they serve. CoPs are regarded by respondents as assisting in the leveraging of networks to benefit B2B publishers in terms of revenue attraction and sustainability. There is a strong sustainability rationale for B2B media to interact with CoPs, which was a strong theme throughout the 17 interviews: “A CoP has monetary value to B2B media as well as credibility value” (respondent Smith). Some interviewees did not understand the formal nature of the term: communities of practice, but were in no doubt as to what it represented or how powerful CoPs are for the B2B media sector if harnessed correctly: “CoPs are the glue, the binding that pulls it all together” (respondent Wertheim-Aymes). As Saint-Onge and Wallace (2003) indicate, CoPs have a variety of knowledge bases that they access information from, including shared experience, databases, through conversations, collaborations, professional bodies and external resources. The ultimate goal of both is to enable knowledge.

5.3.2 Knowledge assets generation

i. Educational Role: ‘The Facilitators’

Education is the category which featured strongly in all respondent interviews as the benchmark which defines excellent B2B publications which have a measureable impact on the specialist communities/industry they serve. It is a value proposition that is the core attribute of CoPs: to share

learning, experience, problem solve and create usable knowledge for the organisation/community that spans the organisation – and hopefully, knowledge assets for future generations.

Feedback loops are key in a learning organisation and a key component of the language of systems thinking (Senge, 1994). Business-to-business media have the opportunity through their specialist nature and engagement with the community to move beyond the traditional one-dimensional media push through of information which occurred in traditional media before the advent of the internet. The internet provides a multi-dimensional information feedback loop, where the users of the content disseminated by the media, interact with that content, posting comments, taking part in polls and also adding to that content, providing their own views through blogs and social media sites (YouTube, MySpace). This is called User Generated Content. With technology innovation and development available to anyone with a computer and internet connection, information flows have to be multi-dimensional in nature to provide all the necessary feedback loops to create new information for knowledge sharing and feedback to add to the educational experience.

It is this authoritative, trend-rich information in which the intrinsic value rests for business-to-business publishers. Consterdine (2002) describes business-to-business magazines as a vital investment in a report into business-to-business magazines in the UK. They are a core marketing investment for any company in any industry sector in an economy in order to promote their products or services to business and are vital in reaching decision-makers in the value chain with key information to educate and upskill:

“Most significant purchasing decisions involve decision makers in more than one job function. The more complex decisions usually involve a substantial team and a series of stages. Marketing campaigns need to reach all these types of decision maker. The information that decision makers need varies from one job function to another. Each person has both broad industry-wide and narrow job-specific information requirements. B2B magazines have shown that they can meet all these needs. The business press serving any sector contains something important for every reader, whatever his or her role, discipline or seniority”
Consterdine (2002).

Respondents highlighted the educational role of B2B media strongly, as a core reason for their existence: “(The) ideal is to create knowledge and generate meaning” (respondents Garner & Patrick). Respondent Van Schalkwyk goes further, saying that your enterprise will be limited without that vital knowledge exchange, which is actually the motivator for the commercial exchange, i.e., advertising or sponsorship revenue for B2B publishers. “(The) exchange is motivated by the fact that to make a

living, you have to have that exchange of knowledge. If you are not prepared to exchange knowledge within and amongst yourselves, it will limit your enterprise.”

B2B media are definitely building the knowledge base in their industries – that educational role is accepted as a given (respondent Regasek), but the media owner is also looking for expertise to add value to their offering (respondent Smith): “it’s a quest for knowledge and expertise”. This is where the knowledge that resides within a CoP is key and where the synergies between B2B media and CoPs become more apparent. Interpretation of the raw text in turn highlighted the core competencies inherent in a business-to-business media organisation:

- Providing operational business intelligence.
- Thought leadership.
- Business relevance.
- Facilitate networks, i.e., communities of practice.
- Facilitate trade.
- Make information usable knowledge.
- Provide an industry hub.
- Strong relationships with industry.
- Passionate about industry.
- Build knowledge base in industry.
- Foster learning in industry sector.
- Specialist knowledge of industry.

The educational role of CoPs is clear: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge use (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003, p. 92), contributing “expertise, encouraging innovation, providing collaborative tools, harvesting knowledge, creating knowledge repositories”. This capacity building within organisations of individual personal and professional development is at the heart of a CoP, which are primarily identified in academic literature as facilitating a valuable role in the encouragement of learning and innovation in organisations (Robertson, Scarbrough & Swan, 2002). That defining feature of a CoP - of emergence from within and outside of organisations in teams and from individuals sharing a common purpose - creates knowledge flows that lead positively to learning and innovation. Of course communities of practice are not the ‘Holy Grail’ of learning in organisations and there are limits and constraints, as individuals within a CoP may lack commitment and cultural differences within organisations and communities may hinder change (Gordon-Till, 2003). There are similar constraints in B2B media – many are not as effective as they could be, lacking skills and focusing on revenue as a primary objective, not their communities, say respondents (Berkman, Moerdyk, Smith).

Learning and performance in the business world is required these days at a speed equal to the change occurring in the marketplace around the individual and organisation (Greenes, 2006, p. 19): This “leading on the edge” requires: “1) increased self-awareness; 2) adaptive leaders; 3) fast learning processes; 4) leveraging global know-how through communities of practice, and passion.” The

knowledge worker of today needs a full suite of skills to keep up. While Greenes (2006) points out that the jury is still out on the overall effectiveness of CoPs in organisations, positive change has been seen in performance results and individual self-awareness in CoPs which have developed a strong identity and passion is strong for the profession or practice involved. In one of the few specific references to business-to-business communities and their needs, McDermott, Snyder and Wenger (2002), observe how knowledge is increasing as an issue in the supply chain for suppliers, distributors and retailers. The strengthening of relationships is key in this context and CoPs that span organisations and include suppliers are becoming more apparent. "Beyond transactional efficiency, however, is the potential for significant knowledge exchange" (2002, p. 221). It is therefore the educational role which B2B media act as facilitators in, that is so key.

ii. **Communication Channels: 'The New Influentials'**

Communities of practice exert influence on specialist communities, i.e., business-to-business media; and in turn, business-to-business media have the opportunity to inform communities of practice. The channels used are key to success. In a CoP, individuals share experiences, using narrative to share their stories – thereby providing case studies, using conversation to increase learning. In cases where CoPs span organisations and countries, technology is being used very effectively to increase cohesion in such communities. Respondents put forward that for B2B media, communities of practice are another communications channel with their stakeholders, communities, industry. A way to push information out and a way to collect specialist information by engaging – and in some instances – facilitating communities of practice. A shortcoming is that in South Africa, the B2B media industry is still relatively immature in innovation and creating alternative platforms to market (respondent Smith). Often a mindset change is required to embrace alternative business theories, or even to recognise that one resides in an economy driven by knowledge today. As respondent Moerdyk indicates: "B2B media need to change their mindset in order to facilitate CoPs. They need to change their mind in the way that their core business is published as medium." B2B media are at risk if they continue to rely solely on advertiser revenue, that much is accepted (respondent Van Schalkwyk): "We've come to realize that you can't rely on print advertising alone, or just electronic media, you have to create other networking opportunities which are face-to-face, like workshops or seminars...". And of course, most importantly, "B2B media are a platform for CoPs" (respondent Manson). This indicates that CoPs are able to utilise B2B media in collecting specialised information for their knowledge exchange. And on the flip side, B2B media can access that intrinsic knowledge residing within CoPs – if they accept collaboration within the industries they operate in as key to their survival and growth.

The biggest influence, however, being exerted on CoPs and B2B media both, are from connected individuals using the world wide web as personal platforms with which to voice opinions, track opinion, create influence and reach a global audience never before. Yet it is not just about technology as an enabler for extended CoP and B2B media systems, but about the quality of the relationships enabled by new communication channels and the value embedded in those relationships. Having your users interact with you more closely and actually inform content is valuable in a specialised community (respondent Buckland): “Business relationships built on a need to create knowledge generate business intelligence.” Conversely, B2B media are motivated by those relationships, as respondent Van Schalkwyk emphasises: “We are motivated by that (knowledge) exchange because we are building up loyalty and we have their interests at heart.” The opportunities to plug into or facilitate informal or formal networks is essential for B2B media (respondent Manson): “Many publishers will be moving to creating networking opportunities... It’s becoming an increasingly important part of any B2B market portfolio in the future.” The internet has of course changed the traditional communication model, enabling users of content (readers, listeners, viewers) to also engage with that content and participate in the creation of it. Ideas are facilitated freely on the global stage, not just confined to one community (respondent McClure): “Today a new trend is emerging: the ‘new influencer’ or blogger/journalist.” Seasoned media commentators believe that online is the biggest development in the media sector since the invention of the printing press (respondent Hogg); “The internet is born for knowledge exchange” (respondent Regasek). With the internet, B2B media are able to embrace a multiplatform model, as are all media, including broadcast capabilities, seminars online, using user generated content, running polls, providing an immediacy of content, including access to global resources. In fact, respondents opined that those B2B media which had strong online platforms were leading their industries and showing B2B media a transparent, honest and accountable way of doing business, encouraging the free flow of ideas and creating knowledge repositories (respondent Regasek): “The internet B2B media are playing the critical role as real facilitators and catalysts (in their industries).”

Kimball and Ladd (2004, p. 205) write about the excitement that online has generated with the potential for global community projects seemingly boundless: “The good news is there are ways of making such long-distance learning work. Facilitation is the key. The fact is that leading a group of individuals in an online community requires all the finesse and skill of facilitating a workshop or classroom experience in person.” The downside is an overload of information, they say. The most important aspect in utilising technology as an enabler for any community exchange of information, whether it is within a CoP or B2B media online community base, is that the human element and skill is the most important factor in shaping the IT infrastructure – software and technology interface – for

competitive advantage (Sung-Kwan, 2001). It is through these new communication channels that B2B media can exert influence within their communities like never before.

5.3.3 Fostering sustainability

i. Values: 'We Serve'

It is a generally accepted principle in media that the media have a role in society as the gatekeepers of democracy, providing readers with independent, contextualized, credible information. With this role comes immense responsibility and media that embrace and take seriously this role, maintain high editorial ethics. This is particularly important in B2B media where the dependence on advertising revenue for financial sustainability can mean that publishers who do not stand firm on ethical and editorial boundaries can be, and are often, influenced by advertisers, one respondent proffered, with "advertises masquerading as editorial" (respondent Scher). For an international perspective from the head of editorial of the largest independent publisher of specialised news and information for professionals in business and government in the United States, Greg McCaffery is emphatic on its role: "I see firsthand the vital role that trade journalists play on a daily basis. The energy and integrity of these professionals is making business, the nonprofit sector, and government more efficient and more accountable for their actions. It's gratifying to know that so many improvements to our institutions stem from the fine work of the editors and reporters working in the trade press." (Freedman & Roll, 2006). In a book on the American trade press, the head of the American Society of Business Publication Editors, Roy Harris, asserts in the forward of the book, that business-to-business publications have become a vital part of journalism, despite often being seen as merely press release repositories by the mainstream media. In the same forward, the head of the Missouri School of Journalism, Don Ranly, agrees that the perception of the trade press is that it is "nothing more than a public-relations instrument for the industry that it serves". This perception was very hard to change, even among objective journalists in the mainstream media, Ranly said. This researcher experienced the same bias during this study when the heads of two of South Africa's top journalism schools declined an invitation to participate in the research, saying specifically that it was not their field. This bias extends to the fact that many journalism academic institutions do not teach courses on business-to-business journalism or highlight it as a potential career path for journalism students. TABPI president, Paul Heney, in a discussion at a South African Magazine Publishers Association (MPASA) conference (2007), said B2B journalists were often agents of change in their industries, because as specialists in their communities, they were armed with the necessary knowledge to challenge the status quo, bringing in the view of expert individuals and making a tangible difference with their reporting in their sectors. "By its nature, the trade press flies under the radar screen of the general public," according to Freedman (2006). The formula for successful and ethical editorial reporting is

solid reporting and the publicity it generates which acts as a catalyst for industry change. This includes feedback loops of mainstream media picking up stories which break in the trade media, lobby groups, organisations registering input, and so on. This is “journalism with results”, Freedman writes. Another important role is an exchange of best practices in their industry (Roll, 2006).

These admirable sentiments are only possible when B2B publications act with ethics and editorial/publishing consistency of excellence and have sound values. This study surfaced the inherent values that the respondents internalized and feel strongly should be part of the ‘DNA’ of a business-to-business media company, embraced by publishers:

“visionary, responsible, purpose-filled, principled, altruistic, ethical, honest, integrity, quality, ideas driven, innovative, educate, inform, passion, respect, and having the wellbeing of their industry at heart.”

“It is about being a leader in your field with an unassailable position of integrity” and “credibility in the media world is everything” (respondent Buckland). Respondent Smith put forward that this was similar for CoPs: “You can’t legislate honesty. The embryo of a community of practice is driven by passion for a service.” Communities of practice are in fact closely interwoven with the accountability of an organisation (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003). In fact, one of the key components of a learning organisation is trust, particularly at the top (Curley & Kivowitz, 2001). This includes regular discussion and highlighting of a company’s values internally. Where communities of practice, for example, embrace different cultures in different organisations, particularly for those CoPs spanning continents, values become very important in mitigating cultural diversity and reaching common understanding (Wenger et al, 2002).

For B2B media to recognise the value in facilitating CoPs with stakeholders, a measure of altruism is required, as the ultimate responsibility of B2B media is to the industry that they obtain information from and provide services to, including usable knowledge, thereby facilitating trade (respondent Regasek). Another respondent, Moerdyk, adds to the debate: “B2B media need to change their mindset in order to facilitate CoPs. They need to change their mind in the way that their core business is published as medium. They need to become suppliers of usable knowledge to their market. And once they actually have made that mindset change, then they will find the concepts of CoPs more appealing, and natural.” That value, the philosophy of serving something greater than yourself or your business is a theme that respondents highlighted in the ideal B2B media world, and recognised as an attribute of a CoP (respondent Van Schalkwyk): “CoPs would include everyone involved and working in a chosen industry and who has the wellbeing of that industry at heart.” The strong theme through this category was that B2B media “serve” their industries and stakeholders.

ii. **Sustainability: 'Bytes of Change'**

The disruption of traditional media models globally with the advent of the internet and lately the threat and opportunity inherent in the rise of citizen journalism (the internet gives every citizen a voice online with as much publishing might as any media owner), has impacted on every media sector, including business-to-business publishing, which is particularly seen as lacking in innovation in South Africa. "All business-to-business publications will go to the internet and become (online) newsletters," said one respondent (respondent Farquhar), while qualifying that it was a natural progression for the dissemination of business information in the future where immediacy of delivery was required. The impact of this new era of information and eBusiness ('Bytes of Change'), has changed traditional managerial paradigms and new business models are being sought (Loebbecki & Wareham, 2003). It is no different in the media sector where B2B publishers in particular have the opportunity to translate their specialised and niche community and knowledge of that community to online communities which promote and acquire knowledge at a far more rapid rate. Change and keeping up with innovation is vital to any industry, but particularly one with such an integral role in industry such as the dissemination of information, knowledge assets and the creation of vital peer networks: "Many publishers will be moving to creating networking opportunities... It's becoming an increasingly important part of any B2B market portfolio in the future" (respondent Manson). As printing and paper costs rise globally it makes sense for B2B publishers to consider a web option, in any event, where the costs are a lot less, yet many more people can be reached as a result of there being no restrictions on how many pages of content or how many issues of an electronic newsletter can be disseminated, unlike a magazine, where every page has a cost attached.

Respondent Regasek is in no doubt as to the *raison d'être* for business-to-business/trade media: "When it comes to B2B media, none of the stakeholders care about editorial excellence. It is not the currency they buy and it is not the currency they trade with. They care about one thing only: business relevance. In essence they are there to trade. This is the common purpose of joint interest. Content is often the value add." A sobering thought, but one which the majority of respondents do not agree with. They tie the ethics of publishing and credibility of the product/brand with excellent content. Reputation and quality are vital to sustainability, asserts respondent Scher. In an industry where the evolution to the internet of consumers of information, particularly in the case of specialist communities, the lack of control over the process and the speed at which the online environment is evolving, has led to skills shortages and a move away from traditional advertising spend to these new online platforms which reach more for less. It makes sense then for an industry under threat to revert to the basics of business: ethics, values, service to customers. This stems from the hereditary poor reputation that B2B media have in South Africa in particular, where their dependence on advertisers and advertising revenue has led to publishers being influenced by corporate interests, a fact reflected

in the lack of editorial independence in the past in some publications in some industries. A fact that all respondents used as a point of departure: “The single biggest risk to B2B media is their terrible and total dependence on their advertisers,” respondent Regasek elaborated. Respondent Smith is of the opinion that B2B media should have a long term view: “B2B media should arrange themselves by almost creating a loss leader approach, creating opportunities rather than a short term approach.” Facilitating communities of practice can therefore provide impetus to the sustainability of B2B media as it gives the publisher/editor access to specialist knowledge, professional networks, organisations which could be potential partners, sponsors or advertisers, the opportunity to share specialist knowledge with the industries they serve, keep up with innovation, and diversify the platforms to reach current and potential stakeholders in the B2B media system. B2B media should in fact build and sustain business relationships to create knowledge and generate business intelligence for their publishing products (respondent Buckland), thereby empowering everyone to run a profitable business (respondent Von Solms).

5.4 Conclusions following on the analysis of the research

At the start of this research study the objectives were clear: to research linkages between business-to-business media and communities of practice in a qualitative research study, while analysing the characteristics and behaviour of B2B media and CoPs within their respective systems, in terms of the emergence of knowledge; the generation of knowledge assets and the unique qualities of that knowledge; and the sustainability of both systems in applying the knowledge generated and ongoing learning. In the achievement of this goal, 17 qualitative interviews were done and analysed. Respondents to this study describe the ideal business-to-business media system as specialised and unique. Business-to-business media have access to thought leaders in industry, facilitate trade, inform, educate, entertain, sell products/services, generate leads, serve as a marketing platform, and in general, act as catalysts in business in their industries. Respondents have indicated clear linkages with communities of practice in the business-to-business media system: “There’s a lot of information around... (The) background or foundation that people build knowledge on in the future is being eroded – B2B media can play a role. People don’t have that broad build up of knowledge any longer, everything is instant” (respondent Von Solms). Another respondent states clearly (Scher): “I would see it as a core of their (B2B media) business to facilitate CoPs”; and “B2B media are the glue for many of these CoPs” (respondent Smith). Smith also refers several times to the fact that CoPs are in the “DNA” of a B2B media system: “A CoP is in the DNA of a B2B media company... so if a B2B media company is true to itself, CoPs will flourish.” Therein lies the conundrum: business-to-business media in South Africa have also been described as having low credibility, a lack of ethics/principles, bowing to the pressure of ‘blackmail’ advertising, immature, lacking in ambition and generally found

wanting: “Unfortunately, relationships (in B2B media) are superficial and tenuous as people involved in B2B media will kow-tow to advertisers and will do anything for them...” (respondent Moerdyk); “Advertiser funded information could erode B2B media sustainability. Already there are lots of questions asked around the authenticity and impartiality around it (B2B media)...” (respondent Berkman); while another respondent (respondent Manson) thinks B2B media need more “backbone”. That “unassailable position of integrity” (described by respondent Buckland) is the key. It is also the reason why new media models are so critical for sustainability as the internet has added to the communication channels available to media, but also, most importantly, opened up industries to daily, instant, global information that everyone can access, leading to greater transparency and quality in the B2B media industries and the marketplaces they serve. What there is no doubt about is the role B2B media play in the economy. Respondent Regasek again: “B2B media play a really critical role in the economy as trade facilitators.”

An unexpected result of the research findings has been the importance of the role of the public relations practitioner in business-to-business media, both negatively – in creating some of the problems in the industry sector as to the questionable integrity of some information; as well as positively – in being part of the future development of the sector through targeted partnerships and well-timed interventions. It has been suggested that public relations practitioners who often provide access to key clients could play a more substantial role in the provision of market intelligence, acting as a partner to the B2B editor, not just a supplier. Subjects interviewed for this research study and introduced to CoPs for the first time wanted to know more, wanted references to take the theory further for their own businesses. As Wenger (2004, p. 125) states, “Communities of practice can drive strategy, generate new lines of business, solve problems, promote the spread of best practices, develop people’s professional skills, and help companies recruit and retain talent.” CoPs are of course not the panacea of all organisational ills, but if B2B media can get more involved in their industries through existing networks, as well as the facilitation of CoPs, their business and credibility will improve. CoPs of course could increase their access to information, as well as assisting in solving industry issues by becoming involved with B2B media CoPs, assisting with knowledge provision and relationship building.

An unintended consequence of this study has been the realisation that the benefit of facilitating or informing a CoP and thereby plugging into strong industry networks and specialist knowledge, is far more advantageous to B2B media than in the reverse. Where respondents in the film and agricultural industries in South Africa noted specific communities of practice that they had assisted in facilitating – the benefits of that industry interaction was described as continuing long after the CoPs had disbanded or been replaced by a formal industry structure or body, of which those respondent’s B2B

media were still closely involved and were in fact lauded for their leadership role in the industries they serve (respondents Van Schalkwyk, Von Solms).

Communities of practice have already matured and recognised the value of using media, such as the internet (Kimball & Ladd in Hildreth & Kimble, 2004), intranets (Vaast in Hildreth & Kimble, 2004) and even television in sustaining and broadening the skills base of broad-based CoPs spread out over a large geographical area, in some cases, spanning continents. Kimball & Ladd (2004) describe how a large teachers' organisation in the United States joined with public television to produce training videos for distribution to teachers on new maths teaching methods and ideas, incorporating online forums for debate and discussion of the ideas and peer feedback in its CoP. In South Africa effective business-to-business media have recognised the value of industry networks and have become the true hub of an industry, according to respondents to this study: Bizcommunity.com in the marketing, media and advertising field (respondent Moerdyk); ITWeb (respondent Regasek); *The Dairy Mail* (respondent Von Solms); *Screen Africa* in the film industry in South Africa (respondent Van Schalkwyk); and Technews publishing (respondent Smith), to name a few that stand out in the South African B2B media industry. Respondents Van Schalkwyk and Von Solms in particular noted that the informal industry groups they had been part of facilitating were recognisable as communities of practice and had benefited their industries greatly, although at the time they had not necessarily named as such (as the term communities of practice is not widely recognised in the South African media context). In the case of *Screen Africa* it led to the establishment of a platform for emergent filmmakers to showcase their talent globally; and mentoring and training programmes for emerging, formerly disadvantaged farmers in the case of *The Dairy Mail*. *The Dairy Mail* programme included online and offline study groups for remote areas in conjunction with learning material published in the print publication. All respondents to this study were of the opinion that greater involvement in their industries, through CoPs, peer networks, professional bodies – and to be seen to be making a tangible contribution, instead of just taking advertisers' money – could only benefit the longevity and sustainability of B2B media. Those B2B media which are recognised as being successful by the respondents, were recognised as such not just from a revenue base, but the measure to which their industry considered them a specialised 'hub' within the industry around which knowledge was created and where business was influenced and growth created. After the process of this research study it is my conclusion that, in confirming existing literature, the research objectives were met in terms of the following research insight generated:

OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH INSIGHT	NEW INSIGHTS GENERATED
<p>i. Emergence: knowledge facilitation</p> <p><i>Category: Special interest/niche communities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Business-to-business media are specialist professional communities serving specific industry sectors with “operational business intelligence” to facilitate trade. o Both business-to-business media and communities of practice recognise the role they play in aiding learning across organisations and industry, including suppliers and distributors and other partners in their systems of interest. Relationships between business-to-business media and communities of practice are seen as synergistic in nature, with both systems potentially benefiting from the interaction. o Business-to-business media’s core responsibility and aim is to facilitate trade in the industries they operate in, while providing news, information, case studies and thought leadership (relevant, specialist business information) information on the subject they publish on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Technology and the internet has become a cost-effective value add to many print publications and a way for publishers to interact more closely with their stakeholder base. o Effective business-to-business media recognise that a core responsibility is education and skills-upliftment. Effective business-to-business media recognise that a core responsibility is education and skills-upliftment.
<p>ii. Knowledge assets generation</p> <p><i>Categories: Educational role; Communications channels</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Effective business-to-business media are a hub for the industry to receive information on products and services, as well as news and events, and also to interact with their peers on issues of common interest thereby sharing knowledge and creating new knowledge. The end result should build capacity within an industry. o Communities of practice build individual and organisational capacity through shared experiences of individuals, thereby creating knowledge and contributing towards the building of knowledge assets for the future and intellectual capital within an organisation. o Technology has also become an enabler for communities of practice that span industries and continents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Communities of practice can access the specialist information and knowledge generated by effective B2B media to inform individuals in its system. o Business-to-business media in turn can access the intellectual capacity and specialist knowledge residing within communities of practice to enhance its own sustainability and effectiveness.
<p>iii. Fostering sustainability</p> <p><i>Categories: Values; Sustainability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Business-to-business media can no longer only rely on the passive medium of print to get their message across. o Business-to-business media enterprise is limited without a vital exchange of knowledge taking place, including shared experience and interaction with peer networks and professional bodies. o Communities of practice are ineffective and fail if they are too organized and if individuals do not participate. o Narrative / storytelling is a powerful communications tool to share experience and create learning. o Specialisation is key for business-to-business media as content increases across multi-media platforms and advertising messages bombard individuals all day long. Business-to-business media can be effective in cutting through the clutter to deliver essential and relevant information to their stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o While business-to-business media recognise, and in a few cases have indeed facilitated, communities of practice, they are as yet unfamiliar with the terminology or the key attributes of a CoP. o Business-to-business media sustainability is under threat due to rapid changes in the overall media landscape globally. They recognise that they have to embrace new communications channels in order to create new media platforms for future sustainability. o Business-to-business media sustainability is at risk if they continue to rely solely on advertiser revenue.

TABLE 5-2: CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM RESEARCH ANALYSIS

As the table above refers (Table 5-2), existing literature on the emergence and facilitation of knowledge and the sustainability of B2B media and CoPs was confirmed, while generating new insights which would feed into a potential sustainability model for the B2B media sector, as well as generating recommendations.

5.5 Sustainability model for business-to-business media

Conceptual models are used to represent a root definition of a purposeful activity system as described by Checkland as part of soft systems methodology (Lane, 1999). The conceptual model describes a set of logical actions in a system, which could be taken further into a 'map' or model towards a process, as has been interpreted by the researcher in this instance as a process which business-to-business media could follow. At the stage of developing the model, there is an absence of the implication of the activity on the 'real world', so in essence, until the model is acted on, it remains conceptual and a theory. In this case it is this researcher's theory of the sequence of activities in a defined system which B2B media could undertake to improve sustainability. The elements of the conceptual model involve a large circle that represents the purposeful activity, words describing separate actions, and arrows linking the action to denote sequence, as well as impact. It is important that the root definition of the system represented be contained in the title of the purposeful activity system. One way to test the conceptual model against real-world activity is to test it using other measures, such as performance, other systems models or theory, for example, CATWOE. The various stages of soft systems methodology (Fortune et al, 2002) were employed as a concurrent theme in this study – from surfacing the original problem situation which led to the title of this study and informed the research objectives from the themes that emerged, to the categories that emerged in the research analysis which in turn led to a conceptual model. The conceptual model was then road tested in the real world using CATWOE and recommendations made in the final analysis in this chapter on desirable changes envisaged for the two interconnected systems which formed the core of this study: communities of practice and B2B media. Before understanding the conceptual model, it is essential to understand the journey to the model. The learning process on that journey is as important as the model, which was not an essential end result to this study, as the key learnings surfaced on any research journey are valid, whether there is a result or not. The credibility and knowledge generated in the research process and analysis is the result. A model at this stage takes the conversation further in the industry under discussion. It is important to note here that there are no easy answers or rules to problem solving 'messes' that emerge in soft systems analysis. The richness of the data and enquiry generated by reflecting on a problem situation is as useful as any result generated. It is the process which is key to understanding a problem situation within soft systems methodology.

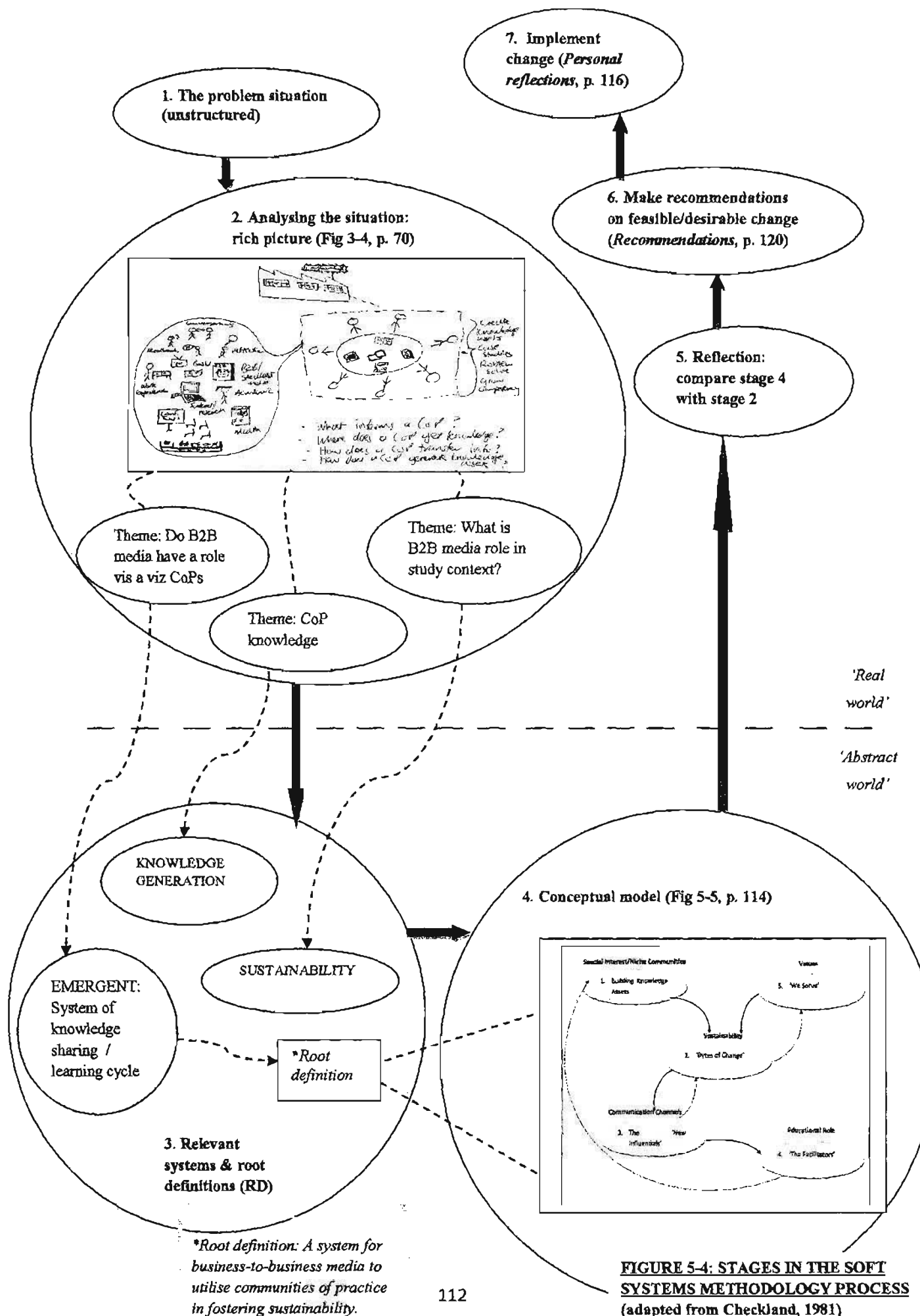


FIGURE 5-4: STAGES IN THE SOFT SYSTEMS METHODOLOGY PROCESS (adapted from Checkland, 1981)

The soft systems approach employed through this research study from proposal to title to conclusions, conceptual model and final recommendations is outlined in the model above (Figure 5-4) adapted from Checkland (1981). As the model above refers with its various stages 1 – 7 (Figure 5-4), the process that began with the original proposal for this study, identified the problem situation at hand (1) to inform the title of this study and asked: Where do communities of practice get their knowledge? Do the media in the sector this researcher operates in, business-to-business media, have a role to play? If so, what is that role in the context of this study? Analysis of this problem statement was contained in a rich picture (2) to assess how CoPs gained information/knowledge and the role played by B2B media. This rich picture (Figure 3-4, p 70) was later highlighted in the research methodology chapter of this study as to the process employed by the researcher. The rich picture was essential in identifying key categories of the problem situation (3) which in turn informed the research objectives at the heart of this study, providing a root definition of the situation on the path towards a conceptual model (4) to ‘a system for business-to-business media to utilise communities of practice in fostering sustainability’. This stage of the process resides in what is referred to in soft systems methodology as the ‘abstract world’. In order to enter the ‘real world’ and apply the theory of the model and process developed, it is necessary to reflect and test the theory (5). Once the researcher is satisfied with that process, recommendations can be made on envisaged change (6) and change implemented (7). The root definition described above, which influences the conceptual model, needs to describe a system which could initiate constructive change or yield ideas for systemic change. CATWOE is one of the tools useful in testing the root definition and resultant conceptual model. CATWOE can be broken down as follows as it applies to this particular model:

C – Customers of the system: in the B2B media system they are the stakeholders: including advertisers, readers, partners, professional bodies and CoPs. They contribute to and benefit from B2B media when the system works efficiently to the mutual benefit of all involved.
A – Actors: in this case the publishers and editors responsible for directing the activities of the system and liaising with all stakeholders and setting the agenda of the system.
T – Transformation of input into outputs: the B2B media system sifts through information from its networks and stakeholders, and transforms it into usable knowledge for its stakeholders.
W – Worldview (<i>weltanschauung</i>): this system encourages reflection and new thinking about a fairly traditional media system. It takes into account all the stakeholders involved and new thinking about learning, i.e., through communities of practice, providing an alternate view of B2B media as special interest communities interacting with all potential stakeholders to create knowledge and build capacity for sustainability. This is the process which the model attempts to highlight and provide a roadmap for.
O – Owners of the system: those who have the power currently. They may be the same as the Actors, however, in the current B2B media business model, they are not. In most cases, the ‘owners’ of this system are the advertisers who hold the power as the ‘actors’ are solely dependent on them for revenue.
E – Environmental constraints in this system as born out by this research study include a lack of innovative thinking, budgetary constraints, new technology impacting on delivery and information flows, i.e., customers are utilising new communication channels, the economic health of each industry sector B2B media are situated in influences sustainability, whether their role is defined well and understood, and whether business is conducted along ethical lines (values).

TABLE 5-3: CATWOE AS APPLIED TO THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL IN THIS STUDY

5.6 Recommendations following on the conclusions drawn in this research study

Wenger and Snyder (2004) describe communities of practice as the new frontier in radical knowledge sharing, learning and change, sharing knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems. This new concept is relatively young, this phenomena in the management of knowledge having being labeled as such in 1991 by Wenger (with Lave). In this, the loosely-termed 'knowledge economy', CoPs are a vital component in creating knowledge assets, this researcher believes. Limited studies of this nature have been done on B2B media and new media which are becoming benchmarking, globally competitive, fairly recently launched (last five years) new media systems that have been inordinately successful in the current South African media paradigm by financial, readership, subscriber and media types of measures. B2B media have, in the online environment, led the way in South Africa in ensuring greater transparency and thereby raising standards. That said, since there has been in fact no public research done into the B2B media sector before this study, being at the forefront of research into the business-to-business media industry with this study in South Africa, has generated measured interest. From interest leads conversation. From conversation narratives are shared. It is hoped to take this conversation further into an industry-wide debate that will generate many narratives and a platform to share experiences in a non-threatening or judgmental manner.

It is this researcher's contention that business-to-business media are a pivotal part of growing business in the facilitation of CoPs. Herein lies its relevance and contribution. B2B Media are one more enabler to creating communities of practice and helping them survive. One more cog in the informal network, providing information, acting as facilitators. The converse is also true – getting involved in communities of practice in the industry sectors they serve can grow and sustain B2B media. B2B media with multi-media platforms are even more effective in reaching all their stakeholders and brand touchpoints.

The recommendations emanating from this research study analysis as outlined in the table below (Table 5-5) and conclusions (Table 5-2, p. 110) are categorised with the research objectives in order to demonstrate a clear link between the objectives of the study and the findings. The recommendations surfaced by this study must be read in conjunction with the entire research study process to get to this point and the data surfaced during the research and analysis.

OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>i. Emergence: knowledge facilitation</p> <p><i>Category: Special interest/niche communities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business-to-business media need to incorporate a multi-platform new media model into their planning to take advantage of the full suite of technology innovation available to access information, facilitate and distribute knowledge, engaging with the communities they serve more effectively, using new online tools. • Communities of practice need to revisit where they obtain information and knowledge to upskill individuals and how they can facilitate the process. Further study is needed on the role of the media and communities of practice and how they engage with their respective communities.
<p>ii. Knowledge assets generation</p> <p><i>Categories: Educational role; Communications channels</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities of practice need to observe how knowledge is distributed effectively for the greater good of the individual, organisations, suppliers and other partners within industry in order to engage fully with partners such as the media. • B2B media need to recognise that they do indeed, have a contribution to make to knowledge, and a responsibility to do so. • B2B media need to embrace new media innovation in order to communicate with their increasingly 'wired' and techno-literate stakeholders.
<p>iii. Fostering sustainability</p> <p><i>Categories: Values; Sustainability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoPs could come to regard B2B media as an important partner in a CoP in sharing information and distributing shared experience to build knowledge through case studies, opinion, and so on. • Business-to-business publishers need to look beyond revenue imperatives to the sustainability of their own industries and the contribution they can make in that regard, i.e., through facilitating CoPs, liaising with peer networks, supporting professional bodies in their industry, helping problem solve, creating learning opportunities and building repositories for knowledge assets in the future. • Business-to-business media need to find ways of becoming more innovative in their approach to clients and less insular and protective of their stake in an industry. Their overall contribution to the economy of a sector/even economy of a country, should be as high a priority as generating profit for their own pockets. This needs to be a transparent goal as it contributes to the credibility of B2B media within an industry and with stakeholders. • All stakeholders within the business-to-business media system need to recognise that values in business dealings are not an idealistic future goal, but a non-negotiable in building sustainable businesses, in today's transparent, more socially aware and environmentally conscious world. • Marketers need to recognise the value that effective business-to-business media can add to their products and services, going beyond just advertising. • Public relations practitioners need to recognise the important role they play in the quality and tone of the information distributed to B2B media. They can become partners or adversaries, corrupting information flows with poor information.

TABLE 5-5: RECOMMENDATIONS RESULTING FROM THE RESEARCH STUDY AND ANALYSIS

It is hoped that the recommendations listed in the table above (Table 5-5) will contribute to the body of knowledge in the South African business-to-business media industry and aid with planning to engage with new media platforms for growth and sustainability.

5.7 Strengths and limitations of study

What was particularly pertinent to this study for this researcher, was to approach qualitative research as different from the craft of journalism (Silverman, 2001). Silverman (2001, p. 300) explains that journalists tend to uncover what has been “hidden” or “concealed”. Whereas in qualitative research, all findings are considered relevant, even the most “unremarkable” which is often of the most interest to the researcher. In this qualitative research study, soft systems methodology was chosen as the analytical lens with which to interpret the data generated by the semi-structured interview research method and an inductive data analysis process. First up, in evaluating the essential components of the research design and methodology, threats to the validity of the study had to be considered (Marczyk et al, 2005). Issues of statistical validity on using quantitative versus qualitative methodology; the variability of respondent participation leading to variability in results; and, the reliability of the method used to evaluate the research as it would have an influence the outcome of the research. On the flipside, the strength of a research study which has a sound basis of research analysis and credible methodology is that a contribution is made to the body of knowledge in a specific scientific field of research; it adds to the quality of the research in a particular field or study area; allows other researchers to take the findings of the study further or add to it; and ultimately should have an impact on the way we live or work (Marczyk et al, 2005).

The positives inherent in qualitative methodology using a semi-structured interview process are (Gillham, 2005; Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005): the balance between the process of the interview and the emergence of the narrative from the subject being interviewed; the opportunity for the researcher to hone in on key respondents to inform the study; a relationship is built between the interviewer and interviewee; that the process of analysis begins to emerge from the routine of setting up the interview, the interview itself and the information that emerges; and an additional strength is that the in-depth interview enables the open-ended exploration of topics and further inquiry to be potentially surfaced. Qualitative research also addresses the shortcomings in quantitative research, adding the dimension of really “knowing” the research intimately (qualitative, descriptive), to just “knowing about” (quantitative, statistics) the issue under study (Guy et al, 1987, p. 256). On the whole, qualitative research is grounded in the belief that a far more indepth understanding is achieved than in quantitative (Guy et al, 1987; Silverman, 2001).

On the negative side, the limitation of using this process to achieve results involves an investment of time by the researcher in the administration of the interview schedule, the actual interviews, transcription of the interviews and resultant analysis and writing: this involved and often lengthy process includes the initial development of the study focus and interview questions which need to be

workshopped and refined prior to the study commencing; the researcher needs to be highly disciplined and have a good understanding of the research objectives in order to not let their own world-view interfere with the research process; the fact that a level of skill or indepth preparation and practice is actually required to conduct research in this manner; and, that this qualitative research process can lead to extensive texts of information requiring analysis (Gillham, 2005; Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005). In fact, a limitation of qualitative research is that the researcher has to continually justify this approach and do extensive searches for scientific paradigms to justify this approach, as the quantitative scientific paradigm is often considered more scientific in the research field and qualitative a lesser science (Silverman, 2001).

The strength of such a limitation is that social scientists are immersing themselves more in the field of qualitative research study and excellent texts are increasing that elevate the qualitative research paradigm to increasing relevance and heights, using issues of fuzziness and inconsistency to delve for deeper meanings in the research, approaching it from all angles to really know the research material. This challenge has greatly added to the body of knowledge on research methodology. Silverman (2001) cautions that polarities between both scientific camps is of no value to the total scientific paradigm of research, encouraging “not thinking” (2001, p. 40): “The implication I draw is that doing ‘qualitative’ research should offer no protection from the rigorous, critical standards that should be applied to any enterprise concerned to sort ‘fact’ from ‘fancy’. Ultimately, soundly based knowledge should be the common aim of all social science.” To add checks and balances, this research study analysis process was independently rated by an independent researcher with a PhD qualification and a post graduate qualification in research. There was parity across categories between the researcher’s categories and those of the independent reviewer, with the exception of the following: feelings vs values. The above was resolved through further discussion of the researcher’s own world experience in conjunction with the findings surfaced, the academic construct and a realignment of some of the categories, particularly the values category.

The academic theory on CoPs is all there, but a real disbenefit to this study was the lack of research into the B2B media sector in South Africa. On the one hand the research surfaced in this study will therefore make a unique contribution, but it would have added value to be able to measure the findings in this study with comparable analysis of this sector.

In the final analysis of the research conclusions and recommendations, it is proposed that:

- i. Further study is needed on how stakeholders, i.e., clients, advertisers, suppliers, interact with and regard business-to-business media in South Africa, for example, marketers (clients/advertisers/readers) do not currently regard B2B media necessarily as partners, but

rather see them as service providers. A similar qualitative study with marketers could yield interesting results.

- ii. Whether CoPs actually work in the B2B media sector. Further study and analysis of actual B2B media CoPs active in the current industry could yield interesting results which could add greatly to this study which has raised questions and provided research into an under-researched arena, as well as from a unique angle: that of knowledge management with communities of practice.
- iii. Further study into how media contribute to knowledge in the knowledge management paradigm, particularly from a new media perspective could yield interesting results in the future as this is a sector which is undergoing radical change and innovation due to the rise of the internet.

5.8 Personal reflection and future directions

The conversation that was started with this research project continues today at a higher volume due in a small part to the momentum this study created in the industry. In a small, fragmented and marginalised industry such as business-to-business publishing in South Africa, any platform or impetus to promote the industry, such as this research study and the resultant discussion and interaction that took place during the process of inquiry, has the possibility to create change, this researcher has discovered. This researcher has discussed and debated the progress and process of this research study in various industry forums over the past two years, providing updates to the industry when called upon to do so. It got the attention of the Trade, Association and Business Publications International (TABPI) headquartered in the United States which has appointed this researcher a joint co-ordinator in forming a working group for a South African Editors' Chapter of TABPI, launching February 2008 (Annexure 5-1). This researcher also created a business-to-business media group on leading global social networking platform, Facebook, in order to start a dialogue about the process of this research into this industry and provide a platform to discuss the findings when appropriate. It has since been transformed into the TABPI SA Facebook community (Annexure 5-2). The researcher's independent blog (web log) is also ready to launch early-2009 to continue the narrative on the business-to-business industry in South Africa and distribute the key learnings and findings of this study when appropriate in an 'open source' (free) manner (Annexure 5-3). What was clear, was that irrespective of the outcome of this study, the most important point was that in starting a conversation, information was shared and knowledge created. The power of that process has created key learnings for this researcher over the past two years, created a dialogue in the industry and informed the study further.

If there is one hallmark of the process of inductive data analysis, it is that it is thorough in getting to the heart of a matter. The rich data generated in these, the first formal research interviews within the B2B media industry in South Africa, has created a storm of chatter and requests for the data to be shared for the benefit of the industry – no matter the eventual outcome of the project. It is the process that matters most. In a research-starved and often disregarded industry such as the B2B media industry – while still being relatively youthful in the South African media landscape – the passion and regard the respondents have for their craft has inspired this researcher to disseminate the process and outcome of the study in an open source manner (free). This will be done on the internet through a blog set up especially to continue the dialogue, as well as other more formal channels such as local and international B2B media web forums and websites already established and those set up for the express purpose of promoting the efforts of TABPI South Africa, which this researcher is a part of. Requests have also come from the interview respondents to feedback the study results direct in closed sessions to their teams, as well as in open presentations to the industry, marketers and communications specialists, as well as to the international business-to-business association based in the United States of America: TABPI, to which this researcher has been invited to address in Kansas, USA in July 2008. This researcher has been instrumental in launching a chapter of TABPI in South Africa to assist B2B editors and is in the process of launching a B2B media blog online to continue the conversation and share the process and findings of this research study in an ‘open source’ manner online. It is hoped that the researcher’s blog will grow to be a true B2B media community of practice online, but that emergence will be up to the community that chooses to engage with the information.

Additional questions as to the current deconstruction of the media landscape with the evolution of new media tools and the upsurge in social media applications also emerged in the research process. Issues arose that have nothing to do with this research dissertation, but have impact for the business-to-business publishing industry in South Africa. These findings have been workshopped separately with the industry in various forums already and will continue to do so to add to the conversation on excellence within the business-to-business industry, for example, in forums with: the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA); the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC); PR-Net peer group for public relations professionals in Johannesburg and Cape Town; as well as at conferences on media relations, marketing and communications excellence. The Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa (MPASA) has requested that an executive summary of these research findings be added to their new website as a resource. Various articles will also be disseminated through business-to-business publications in the media industry in South Africa and internationally through TABPI, the global organisation for business-to-business publishers, as well as through the researcher’s own media, Bizcommunity.com which reaches 85 000 subscribers across Africa on a weekly basis, with 250 000 unique users of the website per month. The researcher’s 22 year career in

the industry and position as a leading editor and media commentator has been greatly added to and informed by the intensive learning experience that was the journey for this study.

Further outreach is needed to mainstream media organisations to ensure that the business-to-business media sector in South Africa is supported fully by relevant and regulatory industry bodies. It is hoped that the establishment of a South African Editor's Chapter of TABPI will go some way in addressing reputational, support and research issues currently highlighted in the industry locally. It is also recommended that representations be made to educational institutions in South Africa which offer journalism qualifications to review the curriculum to include study on the business-to-business/trade media sector and highlight opportunities within this growing and dynamic sector. This researcher has volunteered for the 'training portfolio' on the working committee of TABPI SA and will also be preparing a series of lectures and training courses for various industry and journalism institutions to 'spread the word' and uplift the profile of the industry in South Africa specifically in the short term and it is envisaged, Africa, in the longer term.

It would be hoped that B2B media in South Africa, in particular, would consider the results of this study and add to the narrative.

ends.

ANNEXURE 3-1: THE FINAL RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE TO INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

LOUISE MARSLAND

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M Com: Strategy & Organisational Dynamics (2003 – 2006)

University of KwaZulu Natal: Leadership Centre

ANALYSING AND MODELLING THE FACILITATIVE ROLE OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MEDIA IN THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.

QUESTIONS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

A. Defining business-to-business media:

1. What do you understand by business-to-business (B2B) / trade & technical media?
2. What do you think the core B2B media characteristics are?
3. Who are the stakeholders in a B2B media system? What value do they add?
4. How do B2B media engage with their stakeholders? Where do you fit in the spectrum?
5. How has information technology and the development of the internet impacted on the B2B media sector?
6. What does the Internet enable B2B media to do differently?
7. If CoPs are defined as “*informal relationships bound together by common practice*”, which share knowledge, create ongoing channels for learning across organizational boundaries, provide networking opportunities, create their own artifacts and spread best practice’... would some B2B media qualify as being facilitators of such currently?
8. What do you understand by CoPs? Whom do they include / who is excluded?

B. The generation of knowledge assets:

9. Describe relationships in B2B media. What motivates the exchange?
10. How is the environment created to facilitate ideas freely?
11. Are there emergent patterns of interaction? (artefacts, culture, values).
12. What are the hallmarks of communication exchange between B2B media and stakeholders?

C. Business-to-business media community of practice sustainability:

13. What is considered to be knowledge?
14. Do B2B media generate knowledge? How is that knowledge shared?
15. Does B2B media foster learning?
16. What are the factors that could erode B2B media sustainability?
17. How do you see B2B media evolving?
18. Are CoPs of value to B2B media?
19. Can you identify any B2B media CoPs within your own organization?
20. How can B2B media facilitate CoPs?

D. Open-ended questions that have a bearing on all themes:

21. Are there other issues to enrich this study?
22. How do you feel about the B2B media industry in SA? Is it supported by industry structures and adequate research?

ends

ANNEXURE 3-2: THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT TO RESEARCH RESPONDENTS PRIOR TO INTERVIEW

DRAFT BRIEF FOR INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Study title

Analysing and modelling the facilitative role of business-to-business media in the emergence of communities of practice.

Context

In terms of the objectives of this study, it is proposed to research, understand and to clarify how CoPs emerge; how they function, how they generate knowledge (including the 'types', including 'hard' knowledge and 'soft' or tacit knowledge); and how they can be facilitated in the right conditions in the South African context. In essence this is an exercise in 'reverse engineering' to determine how CoPs 'work' and to demystify how knowledge emerges. A further objective of the study will be to make recommendations on how to foster their sustainability for the benefit of the researcher's industry sector (business-to-business media) as a whole.

Short Overview

Communities of practice are the new frontiers of knowledge. Communities can span companies, vendors and suppliers and the organization and its customers, creating new opportunities for mutual advantage (Curley & Kivowitz, 2001).

Lave and Wenger (1991) regard a community of practice as "an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge" (1991:98).

Hildreth, Wright and Kimble (2000) take Wenger and Lave's work further, defining the core features of a CoP thus: a sense of common purpose; an official group that evolved from a need but which is driven by the members themselves; a strong feeling of identity; having its own terminology (group specific acronyms and nicknames).

The benefits of communities emerging, as identified by various literature sources, drawing on Curley and Kivowitz in particular, at this early stage of the literature review, are as follows:

- i. They bring forward tacit, previously unexpressed knowledge, expressing it and making it widely usable.
- ii. Create ongoing channels for learning across organisational boundaries, such as divisions, functions (accounting, marketing, sales, purchasing), and regions.
- iii. Provide broader reaching networking opportunities.
- iv. Offer opportunities for mentoring and ongoing learning.
- v. Create proving grounds for testing, verifying, and spreading newly coined best practices.
- vi. Provide more opportunities for serendipity to occur – fortuitous, random encounters of ideas and people that can lead to unanticipated creativity and innovation.
- vii. Communities are the social infrastructure of ongoing knowledge and change.
- viii. Technology as an enabler of ongoing communication is very valuable in helping to maintain the cohesiveness of the community over time and space. Communities, like teams, need contact to rekindle the social links.

“A new organizational form is emerging in companies that run on knowledge: the community of practice. And for this expanding universe of companies, communities of practice promise to radically galvanize knowledge sharing, learning, and change.”

**Etienne C. Wenger and William M. Snyder
Harvard Business Review (on Teams That Succeed), 2004**

ANNEXURE 3-3: THE RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER: Louise Marsland, Student no: 203513974
PO Box 232, Olivedale, 2158, South Africa
Cell: 0832636848; email: editor@bizcommunity.com

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study which will take place from 23 October 2006 to 24 November 2006. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

The purposes of this project are:

1. To fulfill the course requirement for my Masters in Commerce: Strategy and Organisational Dynamics, Leadership Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal (formerly Natal University); headed up by Professor Rob Taylor; Programme Director Shamim Bodhanya; Supervisor Robert Magotsi.
2. To gain insight and experience in the topic of Knowledge Management: specifically Communities of Practice as relating to my work in the Business-to-Business Media Sector in South Africa. The topic of my research study is: ANALYSING AND MODELLING THE FACILITATIVE ROLE OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MEDIA IN THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.

This Consent Form serves to outline your rights in this research study which is using qualitative research to investigate the above research topic. The resultant data will be analysed according to proven qualitative research methods, including soft systems.

You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time at my address details as above.

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of my Masters, I will use the information from this study to write articles in various academic journals and business publications, as well as online blogs. The results may, after further study, also be used in a book.

CONDITIONS

I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:

1. Your name or your company name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written study report, without your express permission.

2. If you grant permission for audio taping, no audio tapes will be used for any purpose other than to do this study, and will not be played for any reason other than to do this study. At your discretion, these tapes will either be erased or returned to you.
 3. Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice, and the information collected and records and reports written will be deleted.
 4. No confidential company information is required for the purposes of this study - your experience as a leading figure in this industry is important for the purposes of this study.
 5. If you would like a copy of my research results please let me know.
 6. Your comments will be transcribed accurately and analysed in accordance with accepted and proven research methodology and within the ethical constraints of the research domain and in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University of KwaZulu Natal.
-

■ Do you grant permission to be quoted directly? Yes _____ No _____

■ Do you grant permission to be audiotaped? Yes _____ No _____

I agree to the terms:

Respondent _____ **Date** _____

I agree to the terms:

Researcher _____ **Date** _____

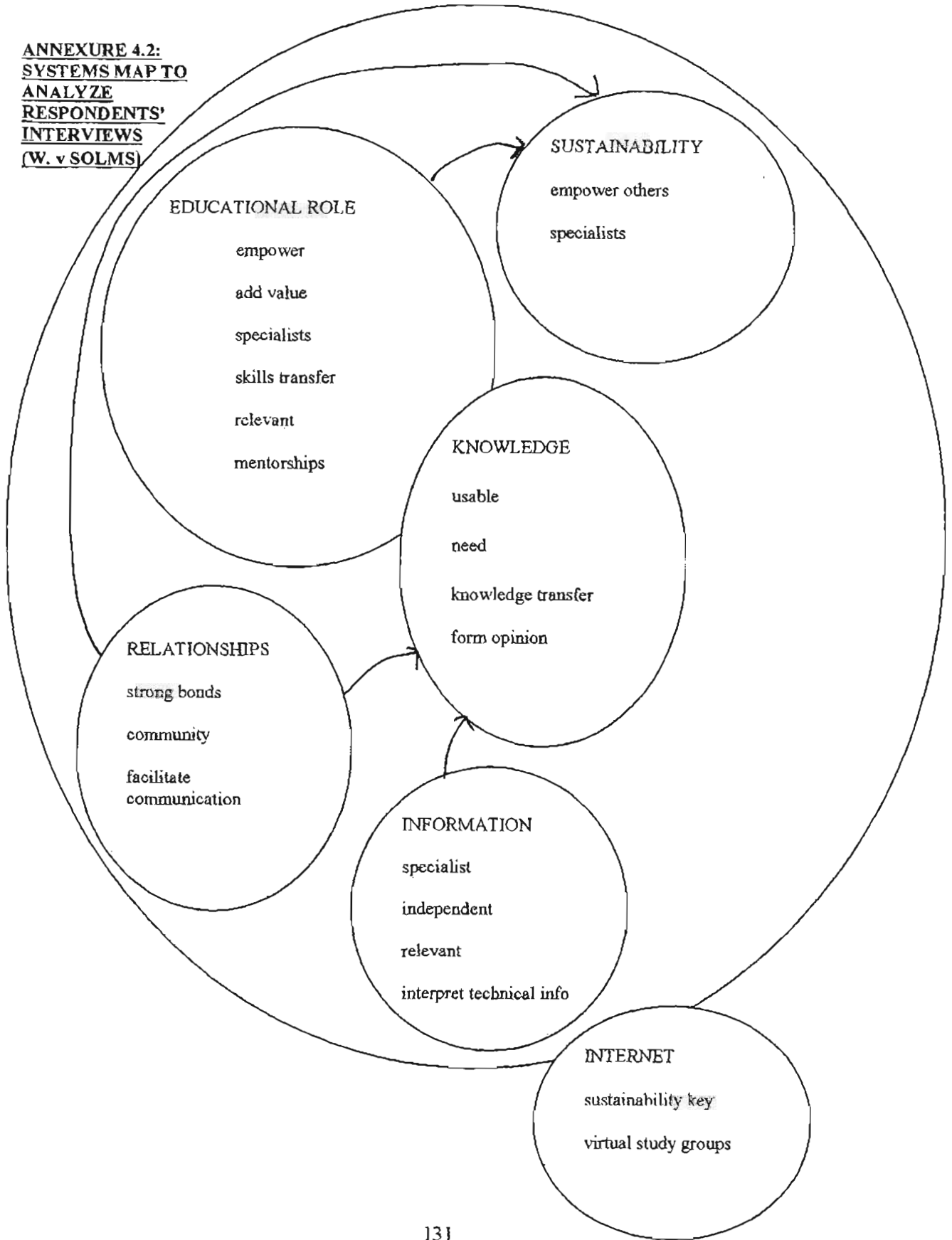
ANNEXURE 4-1: LIST OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INTERVIEWS:

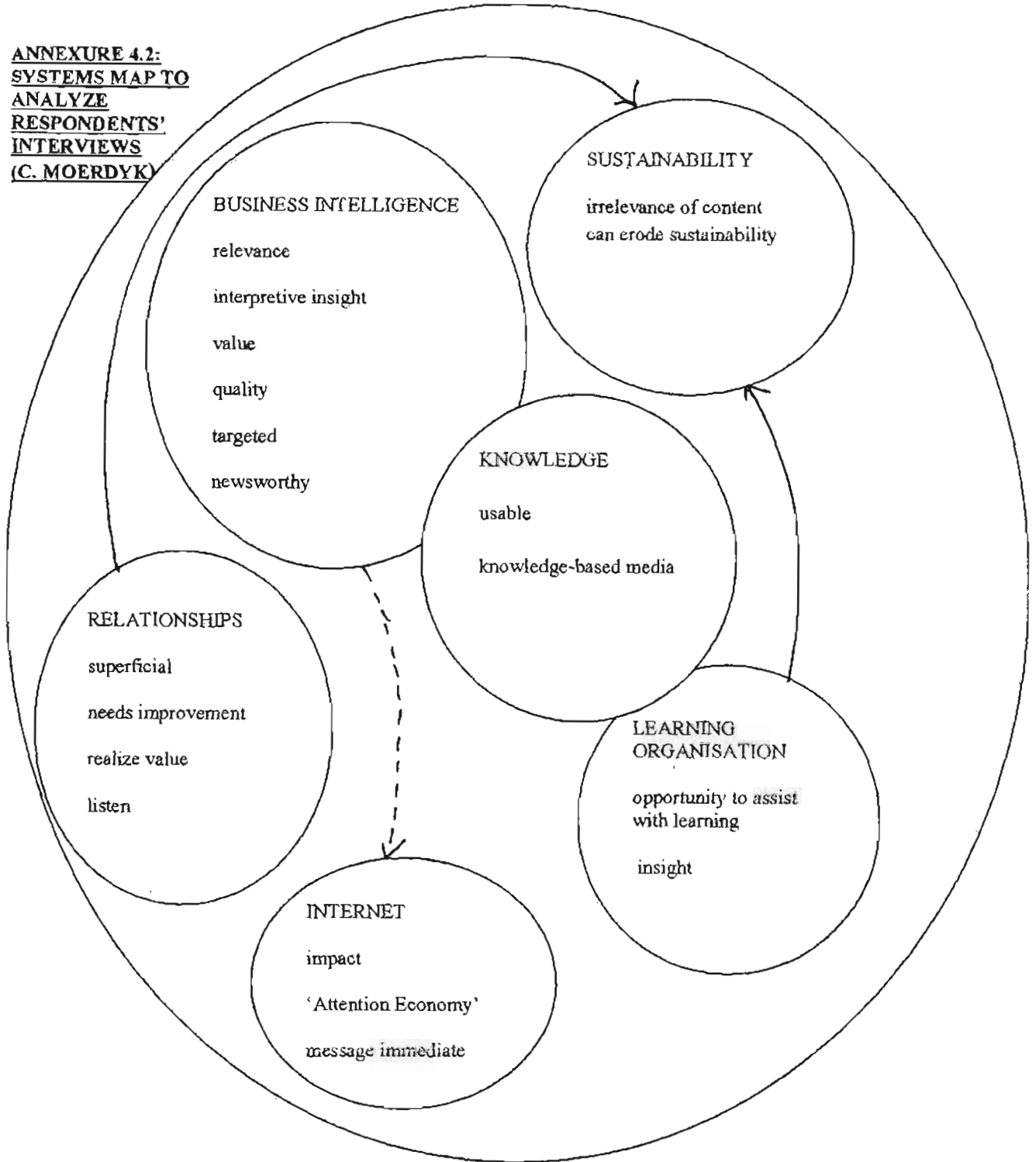
RESEARCH SUBJECTS	CREDENTIALS	COMMENT
JSE LISTED MEDIA COMPANIES WITH B2B/NICHE MEDIA INTERESTS	The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) is the stock market of South Africa.	
Gisele Wertheim-Aymes	<i>MD: Johnnic Trade Publishing division</i> Johncom (now Avusa) is one of South Africa's top media groups, and publishes a significant number of B2B titles.	Wertheim-Aymes agreed to be quoted in the study, but only in her personal capacity
Alec Hogg	<i>CEO of Moneyweb portal</i> Moneyweb is South Africa's leading financial online media.	Hogg agreed to be quoted in the study.
Ryk van Niekerk	<i>Editor: Gauteng Business newspaper</i> Naspers, one of South Africa's top media groups publishes a significant number of business and niche community titles.	Van Niekerk agreed to be quoted in the study.
John Farquhar	<i>Editor: AdVantage magazine</i> Primedia Publishing, part of the Primedia Group publishes a number of B2B titles.	Farquhar agreed to be quoted in the study.
B2B PICA AWARD WINNERS AND LEADING B2B PUBLISHERS	The PICA Awards are the annual awards for publishing excellence, awarded by the Magazine Publishers Association of SA (MPASA) annually	
Willemien von Solms	<i>Editor: The Dairy Mail, AgriConnect</i> 2005 & 2006 Best Business-to-Business Magazine.	Von Solms agreed to be quoted in the study.
Angela van Schalkwyk	<i>Publisher: Screen Africa, Sun Circle Publishers</i> 2004 Best Business-to-Business Magazine winner.	Van Schalkwyk agreed to be quoted in the study.
Gerald Garner & Nell Patrick	<i>Directors: Brooke Patrick Publications</i> 2003: Best Business-to-Business Magazine: African Mining.	Garner & Patrick agreed to be quoted in the study.
Jovan Regasek	<i>CEO: ITWeb.co.za</i> ITWeb is South Africa's leading B2B media for the information technology industry across multi-media platforms, ie, website, ezines, magazines, newspaper, events, TV.	Regasek agreed to be quoted in the study.

Darren Smith	<i>MD: Technews Publishers</i> Technews is a leading B2B publisher of media in the technical space, ie, magazines, ezines, events – one of the few that have an integrated media strategy: print, web, ezines, events.	Smith agreed to be quoted in the study.
Herman Manson	<i>Publisher: Media Toolbox online</i> <i>Publisher: B&AND magazine</i> Respected online and B2B media specialist.	Manson agreed to be quoted in the study.
MEDIA ACADEMICS & MEDIA COMMENTATORS	Academics from journalism and media studies universities and technicians in South Africa and recognized media commentators.	
Marlon Scher	<i>Media trainer & specialist journalist</i>	Scher agreed to be quoted in the study.
Chris Moerdyk	<i>Media Commentator & trainer & journalist</i>	Moerdyk agreed to be quoted in the study.
RELEVANT INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS	Regulatory and professional bodies	
Elizabeth Shorten	<i>Chairperson 2005/6: Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa (MPASA)</i> <i>MD: 3S Publications</i> 3S is a B2B publisher in the technical industries.	Shorten did not want to be quoted by name.
Jen McClure	<i>Executive Director: Society for New Communication Research (SNCR)</i> SNCR is a global, nonprofit think tank dedicated to the advanced study of new communications tools, technologies and emerging modes of communication & their effect on traditional media, professional communications, business & society: http://www.snrcr.org .	McClure agreed to be quoted in the study.
Mathew Buckland	<i>Chairperson: Online Publishers' Association of South Africa (OPA)</i> <i>Publisher: Mail & Guardian Online</i> The Mail & Guardian are pioneers in online media and the use of social media tools in South Africa.	Buckland agreed to be quoted in the study.
Brian Berkman	<i>Founder director: PR-Net</i> PR-Net is a peer network for public relations professionals in South Africa.	Berkman agreed to be quoted in the study.

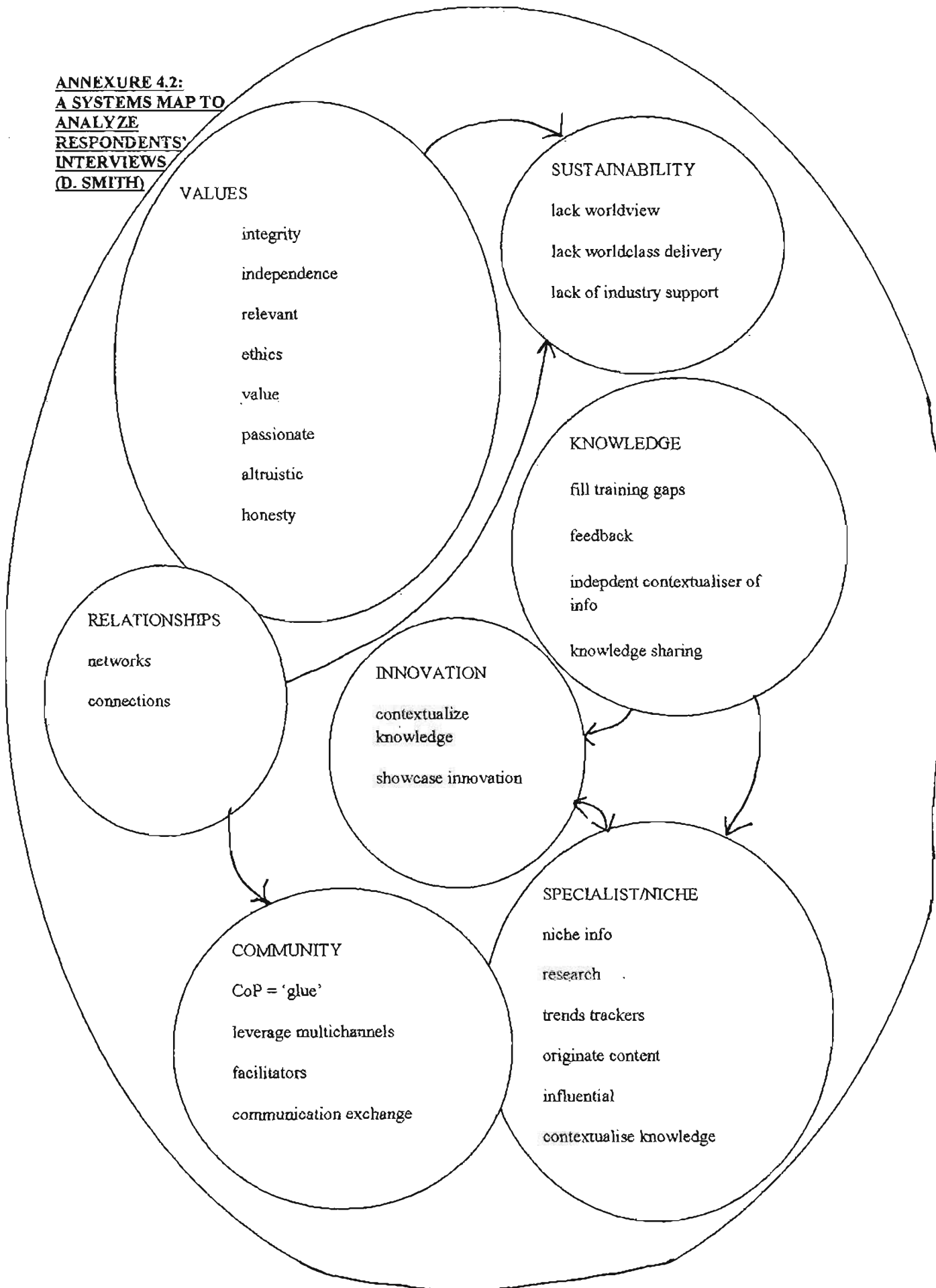
ANNEXURE 4.2:
SYSTEMS MAP TO
ANALYZE
RESPONDENTS'
INTERVIEWS
(W. v SOLMS)



ANNEXURE 4.2:
SYSTEMS MAP TO
ANALYZE
RESPONDENTS'
INTERVIEWS
(C. MOERDYK)



**ANNEXURE 4.2:
A SYSTEMS MAP TO
ANALYZE
RESPONDENTS'
INTERVIEWS
(D. SMITH)**



ANNEXURE 4-3: SAMPLE RAW TEXT INTERVIEWS PRE-CODING (C. MOERDYK)

CHRIS MOERDYK INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

A. Defining business-to-business media:

1. What do you understand by business-to-business (B2B) / trade & technical media?

B2B media are literally what they say they are: media dealing directly with business and although most of content has everything to do with the eventual consumer, but b2b media is media aimed directly at business, not necessarily from business, but to business.

2. What do you think the core B2B media characteristics are?

The core b2b characteristics are is that there are media who are interpreting what they think business wants to talk to media about. Not always the case. Core characteristics should be getting across what business needs to get from business.

3. Who are the stakeholders in a B2B media system? What value do they add?

There are a number of stakeholders: 1) the audience itself, which is business; 2) the media owners – big media company to someone working out of a garage on their own; 3) an absolutely vital one, the public relations community, simply from the point of view, is if you look at any B2B medium of any size, there have been stats bandied around as to 65% of their content coming from PR industry (even for mainstream business publications, such as Business Day). Often sources within organizations giving tip-offs... probably 80% of content is from outside of the medium, tip-offs, press releases, rather than journalists going out and discovering stories themselves. So value they add (PR community) is potentially enormous. Not as enormous as it could be due to vested interests. All of them add significant value, by consuming medium, audience are adding value, but PR community, by tipping them off, not just consumers of content, by providers of content as well. So those are the 3 stakeholders as I see them.

4. How do B2B media engage with their stakeholders? Where do you fit in the spectrum?

They will engage through their medium, should be engaging through marketing avenues as well, but they don't. B2B media historically in SA are marketing bereft, very few have an understanding of what marketing is about or have an interest in marketing their own title, not only to stakeholders, they engage

through their medium by providing content, but also to treat those supplying them with content with the disdain they deserve, ie, the PR community and b2b media have a very strange and superficial relationship. If they really sat down and saw what they could do for each other, it would improve (things), as the quality of b2b is not great.

5. How has information technology and the development of the internet impacted on the B2B media sector?

IT has impacted enormously on b2b media sector from the point of view of reducing costs. Advent of email purely and faxes, for a start, and also computerized systems people use these days, desktop publishing and that kind of thing, has cut overheads, reduce number of people needed to provide content, its had an enormous impact on publishing, all publishing, particularly b2b. The internet hasn't impacted yet as much as it should have. Still tip of iceberg, certainly some websites that are phenomenally successful, ie, Bizcommunity.com, but still only scratching surface of potential impact they could have on it. All boils down to our dear friends at Telkom and ISPs making it very difficult for SA's to access the internet. Majority of b2b consumers consume b2b at office as that's where they have a fast enough connection. Silly as they are working and don't really have the time at work. IT has had a massive impact. Internet still had limited impact.

Where the technology and the internet are going to impact the most on b2b is the fact that according to Harvard University, we have moved out of the information economy and into the attention economy. Essentially what they mean by that is that there is so much info out there in info highway, that there is too much to absorb properly. This includes the business consumer. Consumer is apparently exposed to 10 000 commercial messages daily. So Harvard are saying that you need to have the attention of the consumer before trying to reach them with your messages. This is where technology is impacting on b2b media sector, as you have the absolute attention of the consumer there.

6. What does the Internet enable B2B media to do differently?

Allows for absolute immediacy. Encapsulates whole principle of attention economy. Email has complete attention of the consumer against TV, radio and so on. And so does a website – the beauty of a website is that there is just so much you can put on a screen. That's the beauty of the website, you are limited to one screen at a time and the fewer messages on the screen at any one time the better, so they are not all competing with one another.

7. If CoPs are defined as “*informal relationships bound together by common practice*”, which *share knowledge, create ongoing channels for learning across organizational boundaries, provide networking opportunities, create their own artifacts and spread best practice*’... would some B2B media qualify as being facilitators of such currently?

Only just, and some of them without realizing they are facilitators of such. Very much toe in the water stuff: at present many b2b media are just messengers. A lot of them seem to be resisting the entire concept of facilitating CoPs. Mainly because they haven't thought about it, haven't understood CoPs or understand how CoPs can benefit them. They are still mostly people who have what I call a news-based mentality: media owners with news based mentality are purely interested in news value, sensationalist or not. What they haven't considered yet, is that the consumer, particularly the b2b consumer is more and more expecting news they can use, rather than news that is just news. That will be the big differentiator between consumer and b2b consumer. Yes, we want to know what the Palestinians and Israelis are up to, that there is a problem in Darfur, but what b2b consumers want is info they can apply for their business and for own personal career to get ahead. Where one would have the ordinary consumer would out of their ordinary TV, Radio etc, demand 95% entertainment and 5% education, a b2b consumer is the other way round. It's wanting 95% 'how does that help me with my business', ie, Coke changing its brand strategy – It's WHY is it doing it and what are the lessons in there for everyone else. Literally b2b info has to have a considerably huge case content. This is why b2b media are not qualifying as facilitators of CoPs. But they could quite easily do so. Sunday Times Business Times is still based on news, but now launched “My Own Business” to entrepreneurs – should be applying that whole principle to Business Times as well. They are giving case histories, advice to people starting in business. Should be doing the same thing with big business. All modern big brand businesses are learning organizations. BMW, when I worked there, declared itself a learning organization. All of us, from Chairman to Tea Lady had to spend 3 weeks a year learning something. But had to spend the rest of the year reading. There is a huge opportunity for b2b media. But until such time as they stop being news oriented or advertorial – just insidious, shouldn't be there at all,. No benefits whatsoever (advertorial).

8. **What do you understand by CoPs? Whom do they include / who is excluded?**

CoPs, first time I came across them, I thought to myself, there's nothing like our marketing industry in general coming up with terms that have been in use for a long time. Depends what CoP you are talking about. If you looked at CoPs, ie, media supplying plumbing industry, temptation would be to talk about people who are plumbers, trade union, etc. But it can go beyond that, as in plumbing being a business, it has much in common with a lot of other business. Expand CoP then. Be careful about defining a CoP too widely, talk about a core CoP. Example of

CoP and how it can expand beyond anything else, ie, I have given a series of talks, as a Chartered Marketer as well, to the Chartered Accountants. No one would think of putting accountants in a marketing CoP, for example. But I got huge turnouts. The question is simple, the following: because marketing is becoming such an expensive endeavour, accounts say to themselves, they can't just sit there and accept marketing budgets, we have to understand what these people are doing and understand marketing ROI. Specialists such as Prof Roger Sinclair are working on changing marketing speak into boardroom speak. Suddenly a CoP in terms of marketing has stretched to include accountants, ie, sending Journal of Marketing content to accountancy journal to accountants. Suddenly they are acting as facilitators. So they should include: despite specialization, more and more CoPs are beginning to include more and more. Who should be excluded.

B. The generation of knowledge assets:

9. Describe relationships in B2B media. What motivates the exchange?

Relationships in b2b media are very superficial. Goes back to news-worthy info, rather than use-worthy information. If I was running a b2b media, I would have in my office just a sign: 'how can my readers use this?' Unfortunately relationships are superficial and tenuous as people involved in b2b media will know to advertisers and will do anything for them, giving those discounts, free advertorial, run around them fawning, as this is where the money comes from. Coming back to the PR community., also their own worst enemy - fundamental of marketing is not what they want to say, but what consumer wants to hear – PR community gives b2b media what they want to say, not what the b2b media community of readers want to hear. B2b media editors should be able to turn away PR and reject editorial for advertising on the basis that that is not what our readers want to hear.

Tenuous, stormy and fractured, historically.

10. How is the environment created to facilitate ideas freely?

With great difficulty. I think that one of the problems is that when people have workshops and conferences and pull together advertisers, PR people, you have workshop of self-interest, where people are looking at what you can get out of it. Not done on democratic principles. Democracy in business is bad news. What it needs, and we come back to those facilitators, what one has, is one has visionaries and if you have a visionary who are heading up these b2b media sectors, you go out there and learn from your consumers. What you got to work out then is what they want to hear. This basic fundamental keeps coming up in business communication. If you ask people what they want to hear, they would have said

they want to hear what you're doing with the money, but they don't. You need a visionary to tell people what they want to hear, it, R20 domination only [CHURCH FEEDINGSCHEME EXAMPLE]

11. Are there emergent patterns of interaction? (artefacts, culture, values).

I'm not sure there are any real conscious patterns of interaction. I still think people are obsessed with news value not user-value. Quite difficult to find one, I couldn't think of an example, it's an indictment of an industry. Like going to Adam and Eve and asking them about the textile industry when they are still wearing fig leaves.

12. What are the hallmarks of communication exchange between B2B media and stakeholders?

Superficiality and concentrating on news value, and not looking at becoming something else. How do you try explain to an editor and publishing that they are not editing and publishing a journal, but should be involved in facilitating CoPs. The kind of mindset change that is required, ie, Alec Hogg, produces Moneyweb and he sees it as a medium. I said to him: 'you're becoming a big media owner.' He said he didn't want to become a media owner, he wanted to be a content factory. Innovative thinking. To be a good content provider, you can't be seen as a 'medium' as then you're seen as competition by other media owners who do not then want to use your content. Difficult to get a publisher to sit down as say: we're not publishing a magazine. Going to be made a lot easier when all publishing going onto the internet. I think Bizcommunity has gone a long way a long that route already. There is business to be made in facilitating CoPs and it must not be confused with formal industry associations. The point is that one must be looking at facilitating CoPs and how one can look at making profit from it. Demands a mindset change.

C. Business-to-business media community of practice sustainability:

13. What is considered to be knowledge?

Given the fact that we are now in the Attention Economy, it is anything I can use. I think it has to be that. In this day and age, there is far too much info about for human beings to store knowledge they will never use.

14. Do B2B media generate knowledge? How is that knowledge shared?

B2b media generate knowledge most often unconsciously. News is not knowledge. Information is not knowledge. Knowledge is something you can use and retain. I think most of b2b media publish discarded

information, not usable. Generate knowledge by default. Share knowledge only through their publishing medium.

15. Does B2B media foster learning?

No. I think that they should be fostering learning, as the more intellectual their consumers, the more they become relevant.

16. What are the factors that could erode B2B media sustainability?

Irrelevance of content.

17. How do you see B2B media evolving?

I see media b2b media evolving, becoming knowledge based more than info based. Usable info.

18. Are CoPs of value to B2B media? I

Immensely as long as people understand what they want. A Cop requires a visionary to be the catalyst.

19. Can you identify any B2B media CoPs within your own organization?

N/A

20. How can B2B media facilitate CoPs? What do they need to do differently?

Change their mindset. Change mind away that core business is publishing a medium. They need to become suppliers of usable knowledge to their market. And once they actually have made that mindset change, then they will find the concepts of CoP more appealing, and natural.

D. Open-ended questions that have a bearing on all themes:

21. Are there other issues to enrich this study? (Do b2b media in current form contribute to economy)

Yes, basically through being a business, but could contribute a heck of a lot more, if they would just think extrovertly rather than so introvertly. This pursuit of turnover of revenue is littered with mines. I believe that the internet becomes more accessible, the internet will separate the wheat from the chaff in terms of b2b media publishing. There will be a natural weeding out.

22. How do you feel about the B2B media industry in SA? Is it supported by industry structures and adequate research?

Supported by industry structures and supported largely by all the wrong reasons. Research: absolutely not.
ends

ANNEXURE 4-3: SAMPLE RAW TEXT INTERVIEWS PRE-CODING (D. SMITH)

DARREN SMITH INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

A. Defining business-to-business media:

1. What do you understand by business-to-business (B2B) / trade & technical media?

B2B trade and technical media stands alone as distinct from consumer media. It's focused on communicating between buyers and sellers of sophisticated business solutions. In my mind, that sums it all up: they are distinct from consumer media and are focused on business media; they are a channel, a conduit for filtering and contextualizing info between businesses – one wanting to sell and one wanting to buy.

2. What do you think the core B2B media characteristics are?

Are or should be? There is a difference! The core b2b media characteristics should be independence, integrity, knowledge of the industry, understanding of media and marketing and sales and business and finance. They should be businesses and behave like businesses and understand what the businesses are trying to sell and what the businesses that by are selling. They need to

They have to communicate the marketing spin in a way so that there is value for the end market. You have to try understand what buyers and sellers need to buy and what they need to sell. That is where integrity comes in – to understand when you're being spun, to not say that or write it. The integrity also comes in when you're trying to run that fine line between advertorial and editorial. The integrity part is NB as there is this constant tension between communicating, educating which are edit issues and advertising which is a sales issue. Where there is a commercial intent, there is a tension between educating and selling. If you lack integrity, the reader/buyer of your media will be unaware of the purpose.

They are lacking in independence in B2B media in SA. Lack of journo skills and when you in the trade and technical area it requires certain amount of sophistication and training and knowledge. Unless journo's have background in sector they are reporting on, there will be a lack of knowledge. Also, comes down to publishes and editors not wanting to pay for the resources.

3. Who are the stakeholders in a B2B media system? What value do they add?

Stakeholders are covered by Curley/Kivowitz quote: vendors on supply chain, media players: publishes, event orgs, research companies, recruitment companies and really, the conduit of this info then each one

of those stakeholders will have a different role. In terms of value that they add: divide into 3 basic areas of supply chain: pure supply side; media ; end users using media services to consume content supplied by the suppliers, then the roles are well defined.

Suppliers: supply expertise, experts in their niche areas

Media: plays a number of services – its primary one is as an independent contextualiser of info. Taking vendor message and positioning it in the market. That independence is that ability to contextualise that info. That's why many b2b publishers can get away with regurgitating PR, as they contextualize well. Lack of commitment to independent journalism means they haven't been able to be as world class as possible. Publishers have got away with lack of origination themselves. Not ideal, but symptomatic of SA media market to a certain extent.

End users: active consumers of the media. Essentially inform the media of issues they are grappling with. A good media player will ensure that that becomes a component of their contextualizing filter. A simple analogy is if a vendor can sell, they will. The duty of the media is to pose the right questions to ask of the end user of the supplier. That's the essence of it. Pose the right Q that the end user has to ask of the supplier so that they won't be led up the garden path. If the vendor cannot answer, he will be found wanting. There needs to be communication back to the media player, without which they don't know how to pose the right questions. B2B is failing as they are not soliciting end use feedback as they should.

4. How do B2B media engage with their stakeholders? Where do you fit in the spectrum?

The supply chain... to all intents and purposes... if you define media as comprising print, online below the line (events), research, recruitment... there is a differentiating factor, when you are a major media company with consumer media interests as well, the sheer weight of numbers means that b2b return on sweat and numbers is not there, therefore less investment.... The ugly stepsister. Being a good b2b media player, means being a niche player. TV tends to be consumer focused, billboards, cinema etc. B2B tends to be professional, engaging, focused, niche...

Two major areas of engagement: where revenue comes from and audience the revenue wants to get to. In terms of how we engage with where revenue comes from... with difficulty, because there are too many stakeholders in the decision-making process to release the revenue, media planner, ad agency, PR company, purse string holder - the supplier themselves. Supplier uses all this to bring sophistication to their marketing strategy, but often it is not their own, pushed on them by the multi-nationals in a region outside of South Africa. Budgets are US-based. The net effect of that is that no one will make a decision. Similarly, most of the vendors are servicing small to medium to large organizations, whilst they themselves are small organizations. Their marketing strategies are in the hands of sales people then, not marketing specialists.

They then outsource marketing expertise to the so-called experts, who are clearly NOT experts in b2b media, because the numbers aren't there. Why would 5000 professionals resonate when you can have 500 000 consumers? They don't understand the niche titles, they don't understand b2b. How do b2b media engage with end users? Poorly! That means research (agrees with Curley & Kivowitz last sentence on Context Brief) – so why aren't we communicating with them more effectively and engaging with them enough? We are using technology to better communicate with them through ezines, blogs, RSS feeds and to a certain extent events, but we do not know this animal. The consumer media have researched the demographics of their markets extensively, but the agencies and the media players who are receptive to what the consumer media want to sell, providing justification for their rate cards. There is a certain 'resting on your laurels', justifying that you get to certain numbers as they're audited, but no understanding of those numbers... who they are. A media owner should be central repository for the following info: size of market, market growth trends and technology trends and by and large what they report on should be what the vendors are wanting to achieve, not what end users are willing to spend. There may be a gross mismatch between the expectations of vendors selling their wares and end-users buying the same. What does that tell you? That research should be fundamental to the success of b2b media owners and it will define successful media players in the future. Research has been poor. Why do I think it will? Globalisation! We are under research, so the expectation for quality numbers is there.

5. How has information technology and the development of the internet impacted on the B2B media sector?

Fundamental to the development of the b2b media sector. Not proved to be death of print b2b, but transformed b2b media and provided a new conduit for those that understand how to use the media. The internet has highlighted the integrity of info, the incredible quality and contextualisers of publishers of info, by virtue of the fact that they have info with integrity, everyone is a publisher, qualities highlighted (integrity et al) above should underpin a quality media player, then if everyone is a publisher as internet has leveled the playing field, then most do not meet the grade. The real, credible media players stick out like a sore thumb in a mass of mediocrity. It has certainly changed the way info is distributed, changed role of editor, but human factor will never go away. Can collect info from anywhere, but needs to have a credible sounding board in an editor and that is what b2b media does.

6. What does the Internet enable B2B media to do differently?

Just about everything! WE collect, process info differently. We contextualise info on a broader landscape than ever before. We measure ourselves against the best in the business globally. We can track social trends on how consumes can make decisions by access to consumer technology, ie, blogging, messaging,

mobile, etc and those social challenges are affecting us as adults in our decision making process in business – ordinarily would never have come near business and we are questioning their impact on the supply chain. For example: messaging. Two or three years ago, we would have said that email was the most critical tool in our business, but messaging and collaboration is becoming even more important. Skype is informing the consumer space, but businesses confronted with VOIP are questioning why pay for that when Skype is free... social trends that are rebelling against the status quo and closed and propriety systems. And they fundamentally change the way people think about value. Technology is changing the world and it means that we as media players need to be more sophisticated as to how we respond as business. We can't just dismiss them.

7. *If CoPs are defined as “informal relationships bound together by common practice”, which share knowledge, create ongoing channels for learning across organizational boundaries, provide networking opportunities, create their own artifacts and spread best practice’... would some B2B media qualify as being facilitators of such currently?*

Unquestionably! Reason being that b2b media are the glue for many of these CoPs. Without effective CoPs, they will arrange themselves anyway, evolve without media. Where b2b media are effective, they become indispensable components of that CoP system. That is seen more logically in the consumer world where Nike will communicate with customers, but it has to use media to get to those consumers. But in b2b, the b2b media player is a much more holistic player in the CoP than in the community space. The vendor and end-user will have much more of an affinity with B2b media player. Benefits to effective b2b media:

Credibility, independence, revenue. If you are cynical, you will say revenue first. But not true, b2b media should arrange themselves by almost creating a loss leader approach, creating opportunities rather than a short term approach. Cited recruitment portal established to assist with skills gap in their technical space. Enhanced credibility in being seen to do something for community it serves. As we serve the efficiently, appropriate, effectively the revenues will come. Why? Because people need additional value and are prepared to pay for it. Very different from creating a solution looking for a problem to solve. As many channels as there are, b2b media can leverage many channels to serve the community. Does not need to not have a revenue component to it. And the community can thrive on any below the line medium. B2b is important and can facilitate that because it has the will. It is why b2b is good at what it does as vendors and end-users can't see the wood for the trees, b2b media can see the whole community and that's why it can contextualise information and see the needs of many, either vertical or across a broader landscape. The media can expose that, put them in touch with the right people. A community that organizes itself without

the b2b media will have a certain self interest, passionate people B2B media really takes that passion and magnifies it many times, because it is / or should be/ passionate about the community.

An end user business doesn't necessarily feel passionate about one community it is involved in. It needs to understand other business functions. What you will find, at the centre of all of those other functions, is, hopefully, a good b2b player.

8. What do you understand by CoPs? Whom do they include / who is excluded?

In my mind it's the same thing as saying the community is comprised of service providers and consumers of those services. That is not to say they are consumers, end users that use services rendered by service providers. It includes everyone in the supply chain that adds value to the provision of that service: vendors, distribution partners, integrators, installers, value added resellers, consultants. Excluded: consumers (in a b2b system).

B. The generation of knowledge assets:

9. Describe relationships in B2B media. What motivates the exchange?

Relationships comprise vendors and their partners and their marketing and service communication providers on the selling side. On the buying side, end users of those services. What motivates that exchange? They are different. Businesses selling, want to position themselves, communicate their differentiating strengths and sell. Publications or media want revenue, and the communication of info from seller to buyer. Without which, they cannot survive, so they don't have a revenue stream. That is a moving goalpost, as to promote themselves and differentiate themselves, they cannot do what everyone else does. That puts pressure on media company to do something quite different which creates a strain on resources. There's this continual tension between the requirement for value on the one hand... driving promotional profile at least cost and expecting media players to be innovative and create profile through innovation at cost. There are other components to it, because the seller who have tasked sales oriented people to drive marketing strategy, they tend to rely on PR companies to provide insight into that sales and marketing strategy. So what motivates a media player to engage in that strategy with these companies ie, PR. The media owner is looking for expertise – quest for knowledge and expertise. What motivates us to engage with them on a marketing level is revenue for our platform to reach buyers This is what media around the world face: challenge to communicate commercial and educational message. It's not a message that's changed, it's been there for 50 years, but media today, with product placement in movies, sponsored online content... so is what you are watching, consuming, reading legitimate if the advertising

message is not obvious? The printed world still seems to have more trust and we have the gravitas to protect the printed word. The written word still has this power to compel and it needs integrity and independence.

10. How is the environment created to facilitate ideas freely?

Short answer to that is: you can't legislate honesty. The embryo of a community of practice is driven by passion for a service. It becomes almost a self fulfilling prophecy... in many ways they are like the organisms of life, nature is a perfect metaphor to a CoP. There is no law or principle to tell which one will be a success or not. Only the community players will determine that.

11. Are there emergent patterns of interaction? (artefacts, culture, values).

Certainly in the markets that we play a role in, that those communities of practice are culturally diverse. Some are electronic and virtual. There is a different school that is built on face-to-face relationships is not found in the virtual world... smaller interconnected networks. If you had to look at a b2b sector, an effective b2b media player would have to understand and be conversant with all the patterns of interaction. An effective b2b player needs to understand and be using them all and understand diff layers and diff dynamics.

12. What are the hallmarks of communication exchange between B2B media and stakeholders?

By and large it's driven by the b2b media player. It's poor generally. On the vendor side, on the selling side of the b2b equation, marketing can be seen as a grudge purchase by sales people who are busy. Even if the communication is one that adds value... by and large, they don't want to hear from us, those barriers come down the more integrity, visibility, sophistication, independence you have. Which are not the traditional trends of b2b media companies: they are invisible and small by and large. Where they are part of global national media companies, they tend to be somewhat unprofessional. Then you look at service providers to those companies – the PR companies don't want to hear from us if it means more work from them, not more revenue from them. Can also pose the question: what does the internet enable PR companies to do: communicate too all media simultaneously their clients press releases. What do we want... expertise, credibility, exclusivity... means PR company has to do some work to understand the media company! They need to not write for their paymasters, but for this audience: b2b. Need for PR companies to educate their clients and job is left up to the b2b media players. If PR companies did what they were supposed to, it would become eminently publishable material as

their vendor – their client – is the expert. That communication exchange is one of continual education to people who should know better: marketing and communications experts. They should be expert at what they do and they are not.

C. Business-to-business media community of practice sustainability:

13. What is considered to be knowledge?

In the b2b media sense, there are 2 components to knowledge. One emanates from the area of expertise, typically the vendor or the seller. And the other, is information of value to end users so that they can pose the right questions to ask of the experts selling to them. That is considered to be knowledge. We want to tap into that expertise so that the end-user can ask the right questions.

14. Do B2B media generate knowledge? How is that knowledge shared?

Unquestionably! Do they do enough? No! How do they generate knowledge? They originate content, they have opinions and they research their markets. They don't do enough origination. They lack the resources to have opinions and they do little research.

15. Does B2B media foster learning?

Should do! Has the style of that learning changed? Unquestionably! So much of that info that would have been published or communicated can now be found on the internet. So it's the style of knowledge sharing and opinion making that has changed, so the nature of learning has changed. They don't do enough of it. Why? They don't do enough research and they don't do enough events – face to face with end user community. What you could argue, is that there is a fair amount of knowledge sharing taking place between vendors and clients, but not independent and not contextualized... so the media's role is fundamentally NB if the end user is going to get real knowledge.

16. What are the factors that could erode B2B media sustainability?

In this country, they will become more like their international counterparts which comprise print, online, events, research and recruitment services all under the banner of one media player. In SA today, many of those components are independent and unrelated companies that strategically align with each other. Which companies are doing it right in the b2b space? IT Web; Technews. We are a member of MPASA – we see all the winners of the publications in the b2b sector and I do not believe there is one company that is doing it properly. IT Web is probably the only one, Technews is just out of the starting blocks on that.

ANNEXURE 4-3: SAMPLE RAW TEXT INTERVIEWS PRE-CODING (W. v SOLMS)

WILEMIEN VON SOLMS INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

A. Defining business-to-business media:

1. **What do you understand by business-to-business (B2B) / trade & technical media?**

One business communicating with another business to make another business viable. If we can keep dairy farmers on the farms, in business, then we will also stay in business.

2. **What do you think the core B2B media characteristics are?**

Transfer of technology and information, critical that farmers keep up with new developments and adjust their technical skills accordingly. But do pitch at top or entry-level farmers. Started specific supplement for entry level farmers, keep up with knowledge and technical level. Any article we write, anyone should be able to understand it, even

Our educational role absolutely vital. Just informing them on political, economic, financial role. Empower farmer to farm successfully, more knowledge about certain things, more empowered to make decision at right time.

3. **Who are the stakeholders in a B2B media system? What value do they add?**

For me personally, the advertisers, the research facilities, organizational structures, the journalists, the decision makers in the dairy industry all add value to the system. Everyone needs to function optimally to make the whole thing work. In our particular industry, NB advertisers are input suppliers – play an NB role in mag in educating farmers as they can't make good living if farmers aren't making a business. Much of our advertising comes in form of advertorials – our advertisers do better with advertorial – appropriate – than with straight brand advertising. Advertisers should not run the magazine, we do have control, but we are a close knit industry – apply to other niche industries. They ID needs they want to put across to farmers and we ID needs of both as we are putting two together. We have a very good marketing division and if we find an advertiser's ad is not good and he's not getting the right response, we will provide advice to make it work for him. You don't lose your independence if you respect his services and try help him to be a better advertiser.

4. **How do B2B media engage with their stakeholders? Where do you fit in the spectrum?**

Where it comes to knowledge and research in industry we contact them to do features for us, speak to specialists who provide us with information and we rewrite into digestible format for reader. Advertisers will arrange seminars and symposiums which we strive to attend to keep up and report on developments. Try have a good relationship with all stakeholders in industry. We, in this mag, we don't form opinions, we try put everyone's standpoint across and allow reader to make up own mind with info at hand. There is a very fine line between b2b and corporate magazine. We tend to have to juggle distinction a bit, as we are also writing for MPOs (milk producers) and have to put their views across as well.

5. How has information technology and the development of the internet impacted on the B2B media sector?

In our industry, starting to have an impact and all of our farmers have access to internet – any crop farmer will as they do research on internet, do research. We don't have an interactive website, publish our mag on web, but planning in new year to install a search tool to access. Can't isolate the two, not in b2b.

Inevitable part of

Dairy Mail Africa into Africa sent out online and through advertisers active in Africa. Need internet for reliable distribution.

6. What does the Internet enable B2B media to do differently?

Enabled it to offer immediate information, something new, out immediately, don't wait for print date.

Relevance key. If you are working in a community internet-wise, there is better communication between internet and its readers.

7. If CoPs are defined as “*informal relationships bound together by common practice*”, which *share knowledge, create ongoing channels for learning across organizational boundaries, provide networking opportunities, create their own artifacts and spread best practice*’... would some B2B media qualify as being facilitators of such currently?

Happening in our industry, particularly through new farming entrants and the only way they will learn is through mentorship. We also have study groups where farmers in areas compare their finances, feeding regimes, marketing strategies and learn from each other – principles of co-operatives as that is only way you will make it in the new economy. The MPO are investigating setting up virtual study groups where these communities will come via the conduit of The Dairy Mail and study and learn through this mechanism. NO research, no formal structures you can go to for information for centralized research, stats and data – they no longer exist. We tried to keep it up, funded by farmers through levies. We need to do research on what it involves.

8. **What do you understand by CoPs? Whom do they include / who is excluded?**

B. The generation of knowledge assets:

9. **Describe relationships in B2B media. What motivates the exchange?**

To empower everyone to run a profitable business. WE want everyone to do well, can't exclude one stakeholder from that. We have a passion for farming and whatever magazines we are launching, we have that passion for the industry and we want to make it work. The magazines role – agriculture tends to be a very negative environment – our role is to create positive vibes. Opportunity. Make the most of what you've got. Always a good slant on a bad news story.

10. **How is the environment created to facilitate ideas freely?**

We are trying, through the mag to create a basis for people, medium through which to put their ideas in an unbiased way. We try and give info and have people make up their own minds.

11. **Are there emergent patterns of interaction? (artefacts, culture, values).**

People value the info we give them. Archive our publications for information. Reader survey research and 95% of farmers said they read the entire book and keep it. They also read the ads as part of editorial for information. Strict ad policy – no ad placed on right hand page, whereas most magazines do that. The readers are the most important.

12. **What are the hallmarks of communication exchange between B2B media and stakeholders?**

C. Business-to-business media community of practice sustainability:

13. **What is considered to be knowledge?**

Technical knowledge: how to run business, how to milk a cow, how to doctor a cow. Then there is management issues, manage people, how to manage your farm. Also NB for farmers to get a global view – how to manage your farm, even if you are farming in Belville in the Cape, you are a global business. There's knowledge that the readers want to know and want to read, and vital info that they need to be made aware of.

14. Do B2B media generate knowledge? How is that knowledge shared?

15. Does B2B media foster learning?

Lies in some way in which we present our articles: how to, case studied, tell stories... connect people. NB criteria that every article must have a practical hint and application that a farmer can take and apply on his farm. Knowledge needs to be usable. The MPO has a Dairy Institute for Dairy Technology and they go out and train farmers and farmworkers and we publish their events and follow up with articles. If we ID a need through communication with our readers, we give them feedback and they adjust courses accordingly. We deal with people who want to learn more and want to be more efficient.

16. What are the factors that could erode B2B media sustainability?

If you are not very connected to your reader or loyal to your reader, you could lose him, as the information is available on the web. Need strong bonds with readers. Have to build a relationship with your readership and continue working at it. What you can do as b2b , you can filter all that info for your readers so that they don't have to work through all the info to get to what they want.

17. How do you see B2B media evolving?

There's a lot of info around, but not in depth knowledge anymore. Background or foundation that people build knowledge on in the future is being eroded – b2b media can play a role. People don't have that broad build up of knowledge any longer, everything is instant. We're not just in this to make money... we care... it's very easy to publish a cheap mag and make a quick buck. We want to print and communicate and report from within the industry, not just about the industry.

18. Are CoPs of value to B2B media?

I think so, as it sort of defines your market and your readership. I personally don't think you can go too wide. You are covering too wide an area. You can't give in-depth knowledge or technology or technology transfer – you can't go into detail. We are focused on one single them. Simple. Straightforward.

19. Can you identify any B2B media CoPs within your own organization?

20. How can B2B media facilitate CoPs?

If you are in an industry where you can ID a gap, launch a mag or website to facilitate communication or a link between various stakeholders. Many people too busy protecting their own little kingdom, they could work together with others.

D. Open-ended questions that have a bearing on all themes:

21. Are there other issues to enrich this study?

22. How do you feel about the B2B media industry in SA? Is it supported by industry structures and adequate research?

I can't find a lot of research. A lot of work to be done to make people aware of B2B.

Ends

ANNEXURE 4.4: SAMPLE CLEANED INTERVIEWS WITH CODING (C. MOERDYK)

✓ **Support Map:** :: **Characteristics** 1. Business Intelligence 2. Sustainability 3. Trend 4. Knowledge 5. Learning Organisation 6. Relationship
 ✓ **PR QUOTE**
 ✓ **Cap/Karniy quotes**
 ✓ **B2B Media vs Cap/Karniy quotes**
 ✓ **Stakeholder**

B2B media are literally what they say they are: media dealing directly with business and although most of the content has everything to do with the eventual consumer. B2B media is media aimed ⁱⁿ directly at business, not necessarily from business, but to business.

The core B2B media characteristics are that there are media who are interpreting what they think the business wants to talk to media about. It's not always the case. Core characteristics should be getting across what business needs to get from business.

Stakeholders

There are a number of stakeholders: 1) the audience itself, which is business; 2) the media owners - big media company to someone working out of a garage on their own, 3) an absolutely vital one, the public relations community. simply from the point of view, is if you look at any B2B medium of any size, there have been stats bandied around as to 65% of their content coming from the PR industry (even for mainstream business publications) Often sources within organizations giving tip-offs... probably 80% of content is from outside of the medium, tip-offs, press releases, rather than journalists going out and discovering stories themselves. So the value they add (the PR community) is potentially enormous. Not as enormous as it could be due to vested interests. All of them add significant value, by consuming the medium, the audience are adding value, but the PR community, by tipping them off, are not just consumers of content, but providers of content as well. So those are the three stakeholders as I see them.

AL Stakeholder QUOTE

They will engage with their stakeholders through their medium. They should be engaging through marketing avenues as well, but they don't. B2B media historically in South Africa are marketing bereft, very few have an understanding of what marketing is about or have an interest in marketing their own title, not only to stakeholders, they engage through their medium by providing content, but also to treat those supplying them with content with the disdain they deserve, ie, the PR community and B2B media have a very strange and superficial relationship. If they really sat down and saw what they could do for each other, it would improve (things), as the quality of b2b is not great.

IT has impacted enormously on the b2b media sector from the point of view of reducing costs. Advent of email purely and faxes, for a start, and also computerized systems people use these days - desktop publishing and that kind of thing, has cut overheads, reduced number of people

for P.B. ... showing ... knowledge

ANNEXURE 4-4: SAMPLE CLEANED INTERVIEWS WITH CODING (D. SMITH)

V System Map: Themes/Category Areas

** B2B def / descriptions*
** Col QUOTE*

1. Substantive
2. Relationship
3. Value
4. Learning
5. Transparency
6. Specialist / niche
7. Innovation

B2B Media def:

Quote:

B2B trade and technical media stands alone as distinct from consumer media. It's focused on communicating between buyers and sellers of sophisticated business solutions. In my mind, that sums it all up: they are distinct from consumer media and are focused on business media. They are a channel: a conduit for filtering and contextualizing info between businesses - one wanting to sell and one wanting to buy.

Learning
Channel for info
Contextualizing info

B2B Media characteristics:

Quote:

Therefore B2B media characteristics should be independence, integrity, knowledge of the industry, understanding of media and marketing and sales and business and finance. They should be businesses and behave like businesses and understand what the businesses are trying to sell and what the businesses that buy are selling.

Embedded in their industry

They have to communicate the marketing spin in a way so that there is value for the end market. You have to try understand what buyers and sellers need to buy and what they need to sell. That is where integrity comes in - to understand when you're being spun, to not say that or write it. The integrity also comes in when you're trying to run that fine line between advertorial and editorial. The integrity part is NB as there is this constant tension between communicating, educating which are editorial issues and advertising which is a sales issue. Where there is a commercial intent, there is a tension between educating and selling. If you lack integrity, the reader/buyer of your media will be unaware of the purpose.

Value

They are lacking in independence in B2B media in SA. There is a lack of journalism skills and when you are in the trade and technical area it requires a certain amount of sophistication and training and knowledge. Unless journalists have background in the sector they are reporting on, there will be a lack of knowledge. Also, it comes down to publishers and editors not wanting to pay for the resources.

Subject knowledge

Stakeholders are: vendors on supply chain, media players: publishers, event organisers, research companies, recruitment companies. Each one of those stakeholders will have a different role. In terms of value that they add, divide into three basic areas of supply chain - pure supply side: media; end users using media services to consume content supplied by the suppliers, then the roles are well defined.

Roles defined

1. Suppliers: supply expertise, experts in their niche areas

ANNEXURE 4-4: SAMPLE CLEANED INTERVIEWS WITH CODING (W. VON SOLMS)

✓ *System map: Categories*
 ✓ *Sustainability quote*
 ✓ *Knowledge quote*
 ✓ *B2B Media QUOTE!*

1. Educational role
2. Sustainability
3. Knowledge
4. Not clear
5. Technical
6. Relationships

Editor: Dairy Mail
225
240

(B2B media is) one business communicating with another business to make another business viable. If we can keep dairy farmers on the farms, for example, in business, then we (as The Dairy Mail) will also stay in business.

(Core B2B media characteristics include) the transfer of technology and information - it is critical that farmers keep up with new developments and adjust their technical skills accordingly. But we do pitch at top or entry-level farmers - we started a specific supplement for entry level farmers to keep them up with knowledge and technical. Any article we write, anyone should be able to understand it. Our educational role is absolutely vital. We empower the farmer to farm successfully.

Code

Sustainability
Transfer of Skills
to the employees
= Knowledge

Stakeholders are the advertisers, the research facilities, organizational structures, the journalists, the decision makers in the industry all add value to the system. Everyone needs to function optimally to make the whole thing work. In our particular industry, important advertisers are input suppliers - play an NB role in mag in educating farmers as they can't make good living if farmers aren't making a business. Much of our advertising comes in form of advertorials - our advertisers do better with advertorial - appropriate - than with straight brand advertising. Advertisers should not run the magazine, we do have control, but we are a close knit industry - apply to other niche industries. They ID needs they want to put across to farmers and we ID needs of both as we are putting two together. We have a very good marketing division and if we find an advertiser's ad is not good and he's not getting the right response, we will provide advice to make it work for him. You don't lose your independence if you respect his services and try help him to be a better advertiser

add value

Not a product

Where it comes to knowledge and research in industry we contact them to do features for us, speak to specialists who provide us with information and we rewrite into digestible format for the reader. Advertisers will arrange seminars and symposiums which we strive to attend to keep up and report on developments. Try have a good relationship with all stakeholders in industry. We, in this mag, we don't form opinions, we try put everyone's standpoint across and allow reader to make up own mind with info at hand. There is a very fine line between b2b and corporate

Board
Industry
Product
1/10

ANNEXURE 4-5: TABLE TO DEMONSTRATE MICRO-OVERVIEW OF 31 CATEGORIES DURING THE INDUCTIVE CODING PROCESS

31 CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED & DESCRIBED, WITH MEMO'S

RAW TEXT	ANALYTICAL CODING	DESCRIPTIVE CODING	MEMO'S
<p><i>"A CoP is the DNA of a B2B media company... so if a B2B media company is true to itself, CoPs will flourish!" [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"...operational business intelligence." [NP/GG]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media are the 'umbrella link' to niched communities... creating networking opportunities... (is) becoming an increasingly important part of any B2B market portfolio." [HM]</i></p> <p><i>"Need niche, specialist media to present it (information) in a way that the market wants to be communicated to. That is a core competency." [RvN]</i></p> <p><i>"I would see it as a core of their (B2B media) business to facilitate CoPs." [MS]</i></p> <p><i>"There's a lot of info around... (The) background or foundation that people build knowledge on in the future is being eroded – B2B media can play a role. People don't have that broad build up of knowledge any longer, everything is instant." [WS]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B is an industry with massive opportunities."</i></p> <p><i>"I see B2B media evolving, becoming knowledge based..." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media contribute to the economy." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"Definite jargon... have to understand the lingo, value and culture." [AvS]</i></p> <p><i>"Business-to-business media is a fancy name for good old trade media. Its purpose is actually to facilitate trade." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media engages by putting buyers and sellers together and facilitating the trade... acts as an information conduit... we hold the industry together..." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"When it comes to B2B media, none of the stakeholders care about editorial excellence. It is not the currency they buy and it is not the currency they trade with. They care about one thing only: business relevance. In essence they are there to trade. This is the common purpose or joint interest. Content is often the value add." [JR]</i></p>	<p>B2B media are specialised, unique.</p> <p>Access thought leaders.</p> <p>Low credibility</p> <p>'Blackmail advertising'</p> <p>Advertorial</p> <p>Lack of ethics/principles</p> <p>Facilitate trade</p> <p>Inform</p> <p>Educate</p> <p>Entertain</p> <p>Sell products/services</p> <p>Serve as a marketing platform</p> <p>Generate leads</p> <p>Purpose: create a market</p> <p>Value lies in the transaction</p> <p>Catalysts in business</p> <p>Business relevance is key</p> <p>Understand readers/target market</p> <p>Fine balance</p> <p>Please advertisers/maintain ethics</p> <p>Relationships often tense: accountable to advertisers & readers</p> <p>Multimedia channels</p> <p>New media models to take advantage of</p> <p>Immature</p> <p>Lack ambition</p> <p>Found wanting</p>	<p>Business-to-business media (16)</p>	<p>Special interest communities with credible content: content communication</p> <p>B2B media "holds the industry together..." (But how do they do that? Industry hub... By connecting suppliers and buyers. The currency is KNOWLEDGE. That is the key!! <u>The core of this thesis</u>)</p> <p>Lovely quote: "A CoP is the DNA of a B2B media company..."</p> <p>(Analytical coding is the next step to refine themes emerging from the text into less than 8 categories by "pawing" through the text, etc – see additional qualitative data papers for further reading).</p> <p>Key words: credibility, ethics/principles, inform, educate, ethics</p> <p>(Lots of core competencies surfaced).</p>

<p><i>"B2B media play a really critical role in the economy as trade facilitators." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B trade and technical media stands alone as distinct from consumer media. It's focused on communicating between buyers and sellers of sophisticated business solutions." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media are the glue for many of these CoPs." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"The B2B media player is a much more holistic player in the CoP than in the community space. The vendor and end-user will have much more of an affinity with the B2B media player." [DS]</i></p>			
<p><i>"A CoP is in the DNA of a B2B media company..." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"(CoPs) are the glue, the binding, that pulls it all together..." [GWA]</i></p> <p><i>"Ideas are facilitated through discussions and forums specifically." [NP/GG]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media are a platform for CoPs..." [HM]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media is more dependent on CoPs than CoPs are dependent on B2B media." [RvN]</i></p> <p><i>"Media is a very specific culture. It is a different language, (with) own jargon." [MS]</i></p> <p><i>"A CoP requires a visionary to be the catalyst." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media need to change their mindset in order to facilitate CoPs. They need to change their mind in the way that their core business is published as medium. They need to become suppliers of usable knowledge to their market. And once they actually have made that mindset change, then they will find the concepts of CoPs more appealing, and natural." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, definitely B2B media would qualify as being facilitators of CoPs... we've really facilitated entry into the world for local film companies and we definitely do it. I think B2B (media) has to do it to succeed." [AvS]</i></p> <p><i>"CoPs would include everyone involved and working in a chosen industry and who has the wellbeing of that industry at heart." [AvS]</i></p> <p><i>"We've come to realize that you can't rely on print advertising alone, or just electronic, you have to create other networking opportunities which are face to face, like workshops or seminars... we certainly do facilitate CoPs." [AvS]</i></p> <p><i>"The sense of ownership is an important driver</i></p>	<p>Respondents believe that CoPs have an intrinsic value to B2B publishers and industry.</p> <p>The relationship is seen as a synergistic one, with professional B2B media contributing to building knowledge in their industries</p> <p>Draw down expert knowledge and address quality issues by collaborating with industry and up skilling.</p> <p>Team & stakeholder co-operation</p> <p>Layers of interaction with industry</p> <p>Extensive networks leveraged</p> <p>Networking events: informal – facilitate ideas / formal: networking events</p> <p>Altruism required</p> <p>CoPs can aid sustainability</p>	<p>Communities of Practice (14)</p>	<p>Beliefs? The value of the CoP construct to a B2B media company's sustainability; as well as the value of a professional B2B media company contributing to the knowledge of CoP participants.</p> <p>("The Facilitators")</p> <p>Excellent CoP quotes: (CoPs) are the glue, the binding that pulls it all together... "Media are a platform for CoPs..."</p> <p>Altruism = VALUES Quality is key.</p> <p>(There is a strong sustainability rationale for CoPs – not formal understanding of the term, but definitely of the construct!)</p> <p>Key words: visionary, wellbeing of industry, ability to listen, quality, altruism, passion.</p>

<p><i>and motivator... we start with an idea and then polish and shape that idea with the industry through our relationships with the industry and proper consultation – our ability to listen. It's not difficult to be smart when you have the entire industry thinking for you." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media are the glue for many of these CoPs." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"Where B2B media are effective, they become indispensable components to that CoP system." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"A community that organizes itself without the B2B media will have a certain self-interest, passionate people... B2B media really takes that passion and magnifies it many times because it is/or should be/ passionate about the community." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"A CoP has monetary value to B2B media as well as credibility value." [DS]</i></p>			
<p><i>"Knowledge is applied, it adds value to your business." [NP/GG]</i></p> <p><i>"(The) ideal is to create knowledge and generate meaning." [NP/GG]</i></p> <p><i>"Knowledge needs to be usable." [WS]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media generates knowledge most often unconsciously." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"(The) exchange is motivated by the fact that to make a living, you have to have that exchange of knowledge. If you are not prepared to exchange knowledge within and amongst yourselves, it will limit your enterprise." [A+S]</i></p> <p><i>"Knowledge exchange on the internet is a free exchange of information." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media are definitely building the knowledge base." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"The media owner is looking for expertise... it's a quest for knowledge and expertise." [DS]</i></p> <p><i>"What you could argue, is that there is a fair amount of knowledge sharing taking place between vendors and clients, but not independent and not contextualised... so the media's role is fundamentally important if the end user is going to get real knowledge." [DS]</i></p>	<p>B2B media are conduits for information sharing to create knowledge in industries</p> <p>B2B media foster learning</p> <p>Provide feedback</p> <p>B2B media create knowledge</p> <p>B2B media provide a creative environment to facilitate ideas freely</p> <p>Expert, specialist knowledge is key</p> <p>Participation: debate</p> <p>Knowledge of industry</p> <p>Building knowledge base</p> <p>Feedback is key</p> <p>Fill training gaps</p> <p>Independent contextualiser of information</p> <p>Feedback loops</p> <p>Satisfy quest for knowledge & expertise</p>	<p>Knowledge (13)</p>	<p>Educational role / knowledge facilitation</p> <p>(Ref: Senge's feedback loops – maybe use as part of process in constructing model?)</p> <p>Key terms: B2B media foster learning / knowledge of industry</p>
<p><i>"To empower everyone to run a profitable business." [WS]</i></p> <p><i>"Your reputation and quality is vital to sustainability." [MS]</i></p>	<p>Disruption of traditional media</p> <p>Lack of innovation in B2B media</p> <p>Move of ad spend away from traditional media</p> <p>Evolution to web: lack of control over</p>	<p>Sustainability (10)</p>	<p>Online competency and integrity in publishing (credibility and ethics) was by far a key predictor of future B2B media</p>

<p><i>"I think if you really care about your industry, you are so linked to their viability, if they can't make a living, it will affect you." [AvS]</i></p> <p><i>"The single biggest risk to B2B media is their terrible and total dependence on their advertisers." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media play a really critical role in the economy as trade facilitators." [JR]</i></p> <p><i>"B2B media should arrange themselves by almost creating a loss leader approach, creating opportunities rather than a short term approach." [DS]</i></p>	<p>business process</p> <p>Biggest threat: lack of skills</p> <p>Reputation & ethics vital</p> <p>Online competency</p> <p>Threatened by poor ethics & corporate interests</p> <p>Dependence on advertisers affecting sustainability</p> <p>Unsophisticated industry in SA – lack worldview</p> <p>Lack of support from industry structures</p> <p>Industry structures create blockages in system</p>		<p>sustainability.</p> <p>Building a solid brand assists in sustainability even when revenue is solely derived from advertisers</p> <p>Multi platform model is key to reduce dependence on advertisers, ie, events, sponsorship; as well as a thought leadership strategy to ensure loyalty among reader and advertiser base</p> <p>Key words: innovation / reputation & ethics / lack worldview / threatened by poor ethics & corporate interests / unsophisticated industry in SA</p>
<p><i>"Business relationships built on a need to create knowledge, generate business intelligence..." [MB]</i></p> <p><i>"We care..." [WS]</i></p> <p><i>"Unfortunately relationships (in B2B media) are superficial and tenuous as people involved in B2B media will kow-tow to advertisers and will do anything for them..." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"The PR community gives B2B media what they want to say, not what... the readers want to hear." [CM]</i></p> <p><i>"We are motivated by that (knowledge) exchange because we are building up loyalty and we have their interests at heart." [AvS]</i></p>	<p>CoPs are platforms for facilitating relationships</p> <p>Trust is key</p> <p>Feedback & communication</p> <p>Integrity</p> <p>B2B media: superficial relationships with stakeholders, need to recognize value in their stakeholders</p> <p>Listen to your readers!</p> <p>Partnering</p> <p>Transactional exchange</p> <p>Care about industry</p> <p>Relationships often tense</p> <p>Critical relationships between media and advertisers.</p>	<p>Relationships (8)</p>	<p>The value inherent in the relationships with B2B media stakeholders indicates a rationale for the promotion of the value of CoPs in the industry.</p> <p>Key terms: trust / integrity / care / relationships / networks</p>
<p><i>"One-to-one direct' broadcast model..." [MB]</i></p> <p><i>"Many publishers will be moving to creating networking opportunities... It's becoming an increasingly important part of any B2B market portfolio in the future." [HM]</i></p> <p><i>"The media has the opportunity to be the hub for the formation and maintenance of CoPs, if they embrace the qualities of citizen journalism and social media..." [JMC]</i></p> <p><i>"As costs go up, it will drive more and more B2B publishers to the web." [JF]</i></p> <p><i>"The role and purpose of the media – independent media – is to facilitate free circulation of ideas and act as the voice of a certain industry, to give people platforms." [JR]</i></p>	<p>An evolution in the media landscape globally and how consumers digest information and require knowledge needs innovation from B2B publishers</p> <p>Global player advantage</p> <p>Audience participation in content</p> <p>More value for readers</p> <p>Content is king</p>	<p>New Media Model (6)</p> <p>"Bytes of change"</p>	<p>Future Innovation</p> <p>(Points to sustainability)</p> <p>Key term: value for readers from online model</p>

<p>"B2B media can leverage many channels to serve the community." [DS]</p>			
<p>"You have to try understand what buyers and sellers need to buy and what they need to sell. That is where integrity comes in: to understand when you're being spun, to not say that or write it. The integrity also comes in when you're trying to run that fine line between advertorial and editorial." [DS]</p> <p>"You can't legislate honesty. The embryo of a community of practice is driven by passion for a service. It becomes almost a self-fulfilling prophecy... in many ways they are like the organisms of life, nature is a perfect metaphor for a CoP." [DS]</p> <p>"It is also about being a leader in your field with an unassailable position of integrity." [MB]</p>	<p>Advertiser pandering taints editorial value 'Giving back' Legitimacy Respect Don't be corrupted by corporate interests Authenticity Trust Ethics Integrity Independence Industry knowledge Business relevance Value for all stakeholders Responsibility Passionate Altruistic Honesty Credible</p>	<p>Values (5)</p>	<p>Values are key – list values, reference importance of integrity and ethics in business/media</p>
<p>"B2B publishers have to put more value back into their products." [JF]</p> <p>"Understand who you are and act that way. We want to give best value to our stakeholders. B2B media has its rules and its purpose and should be measured according to its purpose. The purpose is definitely not editorial excellence, but that should be strived for." [JR]</p> <p>"We bring patches of value." [DS]</p>	<p>B2B media provide feedback loops to all stakeholders & forums for critical debate Transactional value Authoritative opinion Keeps industry abreast of trends Intrinsic value</p>	<p>Add Value (5)</p>	<p>Business value</p> <p>Understand role of business, part B2B media play</p>
<p>"There's a whole element of belonging (B2B media) is about relationships." [GWA]</p> <p>"CoP is the glue..." [DS]</p> <p>"B2B media can leverage many channels to serve the community." [DS]</p>	<p>Niche/specialist community with specific special interest content for specific industries. Own language, tone, context (similar to CoP artifacts). Gather in special interest forums/groups: common purpose (ala CoPs characteristics). Symbiotic relationships with all stakeholders Culture of credibility is key Leverage multi-channels to serve community Facilitators</p>	<p>Community (4)</p>	<p>"Element of belonging" - Comes back to culture of credibility = key</p>
<p>"...the internet is breaking down those rules. It's cool to tell the truth." [AH]</p> <p>"The web is the great 'disintermediator', bringing people together, but from an educational point of view, it is the greatest thing that has every happened." [AH]</p> <p>"The internet is born for knowledge exchange." [JR]</p>	<p>Internet empowers users, creates communities Honesty is key online Online empowers readers/users From 'information economy' to 'attention economy' Message immediate New business opportunities New skills needed Broadens business scope</p>	<p>Internet (4)</p>	<p>The internet as a communication channel enables the facilitation of ideas and broader debate and communication</p> <p>Part of new communication channels/new media models</p>

<p>"The web is adding a completely new dimension.. The internet adds dimension to any community to allow people to interact and talk to each other. This is the most critical dimension." [JR]</p> <p>"We get to every sector of the market. The multi-platform model is the best model." [JR]</p> <p>"The internet B2B media are playing the critical role as real facilitators and catalysts." [JR]</p>	<p>New dimension Communicate with communities effectively Another media platform/communication channel Free exchange of information Circulation of ideas</p>		
<p>"We try to be oracles in each industry..." [NP/GG]</p>	<p>Specialised/niche communities 'Sense of belonging' Embedded in industry Common interest 'Serve' the community Trends trackers Originate content Influential</p>	<p>Special interest/Niche (4)</p>	<p>B2B media community characteristics: similar to special interest of CoPs. (Collapse COMMUNITIES into this category)</p>
<p>"Ideas are facilitated through discussions and forums specifically." [NP/GG]</p>	<p>Industry specific insight of good quality Market research Targeted/relevant Legitimacy Unpack technical knowledge Conduit for information Facilitate trade Build knowledge base</p>	<p>Information (3)</p>	<p>Quality, quality, quality!!</p>
<p>"It will always be about the quality of the editorial." [JF]</p>	<p>Quality control Excellence of content Ethics</p>	<p>Quality (2)</p>	
<p>"Credibility in the media world is everything and in the B2B world... (there is) high demand for honesty and accuracy and integrity." [MB]</p>	<p>Credible, expert content (information) from publishers who should be embedded in the industry, demanding respect and producing professional, quality publications Ethics lacking Values are key Pleasing advertisers is a 'burden' Currency is 'business relevance' Critical role in economy as 'trade facilitators'</p>	<p>Credibility of Information (2)</p>	<p>Values</p>
<p>"Ideas are facilitated with great difficulty." [CM]</p> <p>"The internet is a natural environment for free circulation of ideas." [JR]</p>	<p>New technologies are accelerating innovation in the media world, ie, social networking sites; consumers becoming 'prosumers' and content creators themselves Patterns of interaction Ideas: polished in the market CoPs: shape ideas with industry Contextualise knowledge Showcase innovation</p>	<p>Innovation (2)</p>	<p>As an innovative business, or assisting others to be innovative. B2B media need to be both.</p>
<p>"...if you have visionaries who are heading up these B2B media sectors, you go out there and learn from you consumers." [CM]</p>	<p>Quality of information/content can be achieved through industry collaboration, ie, partnerships, networks, partnering, events and</p>	<p>Business Intelligence (1)</p>	<p>Points to quality of information/content: credibility!</p>

	CoPs. Relevance/interpretive/insight/quality of information		
<i>"Advertiser funded information could erode B2B media sustainability. Already there are lots of questions asked around the authenticity and impartiality around it..." [BB]</i>	Delivery of the message Lack of authenticity is a threat to sustainability Credibility is key	Authenticity (1)	Comes back to values again
<i>"Quest for insight.... [HM] "...need for business information, best practice, etc, is increasing." [HM]</i>	Credibility of information targeted, niche Professional linkages Global view Brand trust Thought leadership.	Best Practice (1)	
<i>"B2B info has to have a considerably huge case content." [CM] "All modern big brand businesses are learning organisations." [CM]</i>	B2B media have opportunities to assist organisations with learning through insight and case study content Learning organisation mindset required	Learning Organisation (1)	An outcome of a learning organisation could be the facilitation of CoPs
<i>"Our educational role is absolutely vital." [WS]</i>	Empower community Add value Specialist Transfer of skills Study groups/mentoring	Educational Role (1)	Create knowledge
<i>"Free ads masquerading as editorial..." [MS]</i>	The poor credibility perception B2B media have is due to a blurring of the boundaries between advertising, PR and editorial/insight	Ethics (1)	Values
<i>"I think a little more backbone from B2B media wouldn't go amiss actually." [HM] "We see ourselves as a voice for (our) industry." [AvS]</i>	Global reach Networking platform Partner in industry Knowledge exchange with industry	"Voice for industry" (1)	Points to sustainability
<i>"All B2B publications will go to the internet and become newsletters." [JF]</i>	The medium is the message, therefore if the medium of delivery changes, sustainability is affected and the message is influence.	Key Message (1)	Message and medium intertwined? New media models... Ref. Senge again
<i>"The reality is that advertisers control this business at the moment." [NP & GG]</i>	B2B publishers dependent on ad revenue for survival - unethical advertisers blackmail publishers for editorial support	Business Strategy (1)	Ethics/values: new media models/future sustainability options
<i>Need agility in the market... [GWA]</i>	Business processes	Business Process (1)	Structure of business/sustainability
<i>"A peer network provides that 'hub', that connection with their peers." [BB]</i>	Connectors, create energy in industry Assist in transfer of knowledge	Peer networks (1)	Read with CoPs
<i>"Many publishers will be moving to creating networking opportunities... It's becoming an increasingly important part of any B2B market"</i>	Value in personal contact. Global opportunities. Engagement. Relationship building.	Networking (1)	Read with CoPs... new communication channel

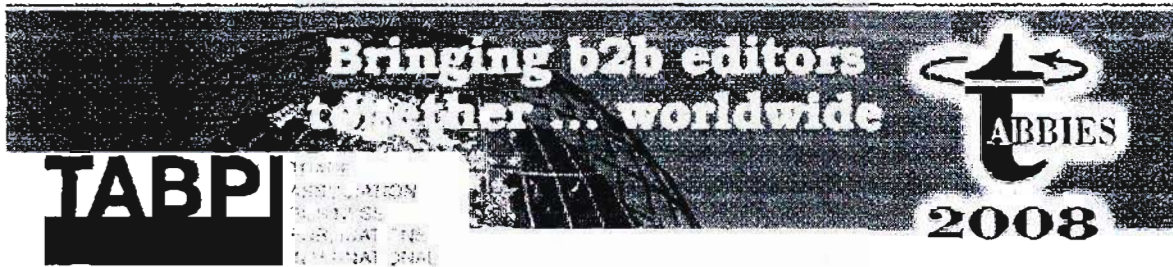
<i>portfolio in the future." [HM]</i>	Informal networks facilitated by B2B media		
<i>"Today a new trend is emerging: the 'new influencer' or blogger/journalist" [JMC]</i>	Internet changed traditional media model. Facilitate ideas freely. Citizen journalism challenge. Community participation. Information hubs online. Open communication model. CoPs + social media = value & community	The "New Influencers" (1)	Outside of model perhaps? But no less significant for the future... Use as metaphor?
<i>"Credibility in the media world is everything... high demand for honesty and accuracy and integrity." [MB]</i> <i>"It is also about being a leader in your field with an unassailable position of integrity." [MB]</i>	New commodity in business Honesty key online Media integrity crucial to sustainability	Information Integrity (1)	
<i>"Interactivity is key... key differentiating factor is interactivity here... That is where you get communities together to discuss issues, real sharing of knowledge." [RvN]</i>	Real sharing of knowledge	Interactivity (1)	
<i>"Online is the greatest thing to happen to media ever, since the invention of the printing press." [AH]</i>	Growth of the medium of online Changing media models New dynamics in business New boundaries in business	Online Revolution (1)	

ADDITIONAL MEMO'S:

Values and Core Competencies also surfaced during research: LIST | Use of metaphor strong, respondents using nature as a metaphor to describe a CoP system and alluding to CoPs being in the 'DNA' of a B2B media system... Use Senge's feedback loops in process of reaching a model. Possibly incorporate a multiple cause diagram? Scenario Planning exercise?...

ANNEXURE 5-1: OFFICIAL TABPI GLOBALLY DISTRIBUTED PRESS RELEASE ON THIS RESEARCHER'S APPOINTMENT AS JOINT-COORDINATOR TABPI EDITOR'S CHAPTER SOUTH AFRICA

From: Paul J. Heney, TABPI [mailto:TabpiAwards@replycentral.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2008 3:25 PM
To: louise@bizcommunity.com
Subject: TABPI spins off new b2b editorial group



TABPI SPINS OFF NEW B2B EDITORIAL GROUP IN SOUTH AFRICA

CLEVELAND - The international business-to-business media organization, TABPI, is funding the creation of a new b2b media professionals group in South Africa, which will serve as the organization's first chapter outside of the United States. TABPI South Africa will operate independently out of a base in Johannesburg and is being set up by joint co-ordinators, Louise Marsland of Bizcommunity.com and Natalia Thomson of Now Media.

Based in Cleveland, the Trade, Association and Business Publications International (TABPI), is a worldwide organization dedicated to bringing together editors working for English-language publications worldwide, and encouraging a common dedication to editorial ethics and excellence.

Paul Heney, TABPI President, explains, "One of the main long-range goals of TABPI has been to foster groups that promote b2b journalistic integrity in different countries. This new organization that Natalia and Louise are spearheading will be a great new resource for the growing b2b industry in South Africa and throughout the continent. Both of them care deeply about the b2b industry and are hoping to give something back."

The role of the TABPI South Africa will be:

- To raise the professionalism of b2b editors in South Africa.
- To facilitate relevant training opportunities.
- To provide a networking platform for b2b editors in South Africa.
- To provide pertinent research for the b2b industry.
- To raise the profile of the b2b media sector in South Africa.
- To liaise with current industry and regulatory online and publication structures for the greater good of the industry.

Based in Cleveland, Trade, Association and Business Publications International (TABPI; www.tabpi.org) is a worldwide organization dedicated to bringing together editors working for English-language publications worldwide, and encouraging a common dedication to editorial ethics and excellence.

TABPI's editorial and design awards program, the Tabbies, is open to English language B2B publications in more than 40 countries. Its Young Leaders Scholarship program makes editorial training possible for selected b2b editors each year. TABPI also sponsors an annual Magazine Critique Service and provides a free b2b forum at tabpi.bizcommunity.com/ave.

Contact: Paul J. Heney, President, TABPI, 440-238-7880, FAX: 440- 238-7606, or pheney@tabpi.org.

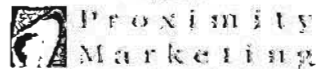
Research

Natalia Thomson explains: "We see this new group as a think-tank for b2b editors in South Africa and are hoping to host quarterly breakfasts with speakers, hold training workshops and conduct research. Less formal, more frequent networking functions are also planned."

Adds Louise Marsland, "Business-to-business media is a sector which needs attention. It is an important contributor to the economy when done right and with credibility. Online has changed the media paradigm completely and b2b media can specifically harness online innovation and industry peer networks for future sustainability. We also plan to raise the profile of the b2b industry amongst media training institutions, advertising agencies, the general media sector, public relations professionals and marketers across a wide spectrum of industry throughout Africa."

There has been little to no research and upliftment of the trade/business-to-business media sector in South Africa in recent times and both Marsland and Thompson have set benchmarks with their research into this vital media sector in the past two years for the completion of their respective Masters degrees. In addition, Thompson was a recipient of the TABPI Young Leaders scholarship and Marsland has spent 20 years in the media sector in South Africa, focusing on b2b media in the past 13 years.

Bizcommunity.com will provide TABPI South Africa with a free press office, which will be set up shortly, along with a Facebook group page. For more information, or to make sure you are on the new group's database, please email: nataliat@nowmedia.co.za, or editor@bizcommunity.com.



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10800 Pearl Rd., Suite B4 | Cleveland, OH 44136

ANNEXURE 5-2 (a): TABPI SA FACEBOOK PAGE & URL

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=4726528701>

<p>Business-to-Business Media</p> <p>Global</p> <p>Information edit</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Group Info</p> <p>Name: Business-to-Business Media Type: Business • Employment & Work</p> <p>Description: Business-to-business media / Trade publications are an integral part of developing the industries they serve, thereby contributing to the economy of a country in the long term. Building sustainable B2B publications and becoming knowledge assets and building intellectual capital in your industry is easier in today's networked world as editors and publishers leverage the loyal communities that are the mainstay of successful B2B media brands.</p> <p>Contact Info Email: louise@bizcommunity.com City: Johannesburg, South Africa</p> <p>Recent News edit</p> <p>BUILDING SUSTAINABLE B2B MEDIA</p> <p>Recent research undertaken into the B2B media sector by the creator of this group - a B2B editor in Africa - for the completion of a Masters in Commerce (M Com) at the University of Kwazulu Natal's Leadership Centre, South Africa, it became apparent how the knowledge management construct of communities of practice (CoPs) informed emergent networks and communities.</p> <p>This is particularly the case within the new economy and is being facilitated by technological developments such as the internet, intranets, email, blogs, vlogs, social networking sites such as Facebook and other new media innovations in the researcher's field of work. The researcher has witnessed the rapid growth of online communities and knowledge sharing in the business-to-business media space. In particular, the researcher recognizes, on the basis of existing definitions, that these communities have CoP properties that could be applied across the media sector in the creation of knowledge assets.</p> <p>However, it is evident that CoPs are unrecognised and therefore underutilised in this industry sector, to the detriment of both the media and industry and that opportunities to build knowledge banks and resources for industry are being missed.</p> <p>It is this focus which informed research into CoPs and linkages with B2B media and the role of B2B media in facilitating CoPs in general, and in South Africa - in particular in building sustainable B2B media brands for the future. Posted by: Louise Marland</p> <p>Photos No one has uploaded any photos. Add Photos.</p> <p>Videos No one has uploaded any videos. Add Videos.</p> <p>Posted Items Displaying 2 of 3 posted items. See All</p>	 <p>TABPI ASSOCIATION SOUTH AFRICA BUILDING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MEDIA</p> <p>View Discussion Board Message All Members Edit Group Edit Members Edit Group Officers Invite People to Join Create Related Event Leave Group</p> <p>Officers edit</p> <p>Louise Marland Joint Co-ordinator TABPI SA [remove] Natalia Thomson Joint Co-ordinator TABPI SA Paul J. Henry (Cleveland, OH) President: TABPI (USA)</p> <p>Related Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">TABPI Organizations - Professional OrganizationsWeb 2.0 (Entrepreneurs) Internet & Technology - General270anners Common Interest - Current EventsZoopy Internet & Technology - WebsitesSix Degrees Of Separation - The ExperimentJust for Fun - Facebook Classics <p>Group Type edit This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.</p> <p>Admins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Louise Marland (creator)
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Post a link:	<input type="text" value="http://"/>	<input type="button" value="Post"/>
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TABPI launches B2B editors' chapter for SA

<http://www.bizcommunity.com/Ar...>

CLEVELAND, US: International business-to-business media organisation TABPI is funding the creation of a new B2B media professionals group in South Africa, which will serve as the organisation's first chapter outside of the US. ...

This is awesome!

Posted by You [Add a comment](#)



Global Tabbie B2B awards launches new online category

<http://www.bizcommunity.com/Ar...>

CLEVELAND: The 2008 Tabbies Call for Entries is now available at the TABPI website, www.tabpi.org and features an all-new category, the Online Feature. ...

Tabbie call for entries now open.

Posted by You [Add a comment](#)

Discussion Board

Displaying 3 discussion topics.

[Start New Topic](#)

PRISA Media Measurement Workshop, 29 Aug 2007, Johannesburg, South Africa

2 posts by 1 person. Updated on Sep 1, 2007 at 8:18 AM.

PR-Net Talk, 5 Sept 2007, Victory Theatre, Johannesburg

2 posts by 1 person. Updated on Aug 26, 2007 at 4:45 AM.

Increasing the relevance of B2B media

1 post by 1 person. Updated on Aug 22, 2007 at 11:14 PM.

Members

[edit](#)

This group has 38 members.

[See All](#)



Martin Miller



Sathya Prasad .K



Samantha Dornay
Crous



Paul J. Hervey



Louise Mansland



Tony Vaughan

The Wall

Found 4 wall posts.

[Write Something](#) [See All](#)



Louise Mansland wrote

at 7:45pm

This group is now the Facebook page of TABPI South Africa Editor's Chapter.

[Delete](#)



Louise Mansland wrote

at 11:54pm on December 28th, 2007

Wishing all the loyal members of this B2B group happy holidays and a successful 2008!

Thanks for supporting this group - promise we'll be more active in the New Year, there's been a host of exciting developments in the past 3 months...

A lot of time was taken up on the industry circulation fraud debate, which, as a 2007 MPASA Pica Committee member and journalist reporting on the story, took up some serious time. There's got to be a lot of credibility building by the MPASA in the new year, that's for sure!

There are also exciting developments in the new year in the B2B media space - of particular relevance for editors and publishers in this industry. Watch this space, we're going to take this debate offline into real time too - with international support!

I'll also have finished my Masters dissertation for my M Com: Strategy & Organisational Dynamics on 'Analysing and Modelling the Facilitative Role of Business-to-business Media in the Emergence of Communities of Practice.'

[Delete](#)



Peter Van Der Schyff wrote
at 2:15pm on October 13th, 2007

Is there anyone out there who can tell me where I can contact Melanie Bernard-Fryer? Preferably her cell number and e-mail address.

[Message](#) - [Report](#) - [Delete](#)



Louise Marsland wrote
at 9:10am on August 23rd, 2007

Let's start a conversation...

[Delete](#)

ANNEXURE 5-2 (b): BIZCOMMUNITY.COM PRESS OFFICE DRAFT FOR TABPI SA (URL PENDING ON www.bizcommunity.com)



Home | About Us | Contact Us | Press Office | BizCom Africa

News

Press office release headline

Magnus es, domine, et laudabile valde: magna virtus tua, et sapientiae tuae non est numerus. et laudare te vult homo, et quia ordo creaturas tuas, et homo circumferens instillationes suas, circumferens testimonium peccati sui, et testimonium, quia superis resistis. *Psalmus 145*

Press office release headline

Donec requiescam in te, oq mihi, domine, orem, et intelligere, utrum sit prius invocare te an laudare te, et scire te prius sit an invocare te, sed quis te invocat nesciens te? aliquid enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens. *Psalmus 138*

Press office release headline

de fecisti et in quibus me fecisti, capium? an quia sine te non esset quidquam est, et in quidquam est capiat te? quoniam facere et ego sum, quid peto, ut venias in me, quoniam essem, nisi esses in me? non enim ego sum in inferis. *Psalmus 139*

Press office release headline

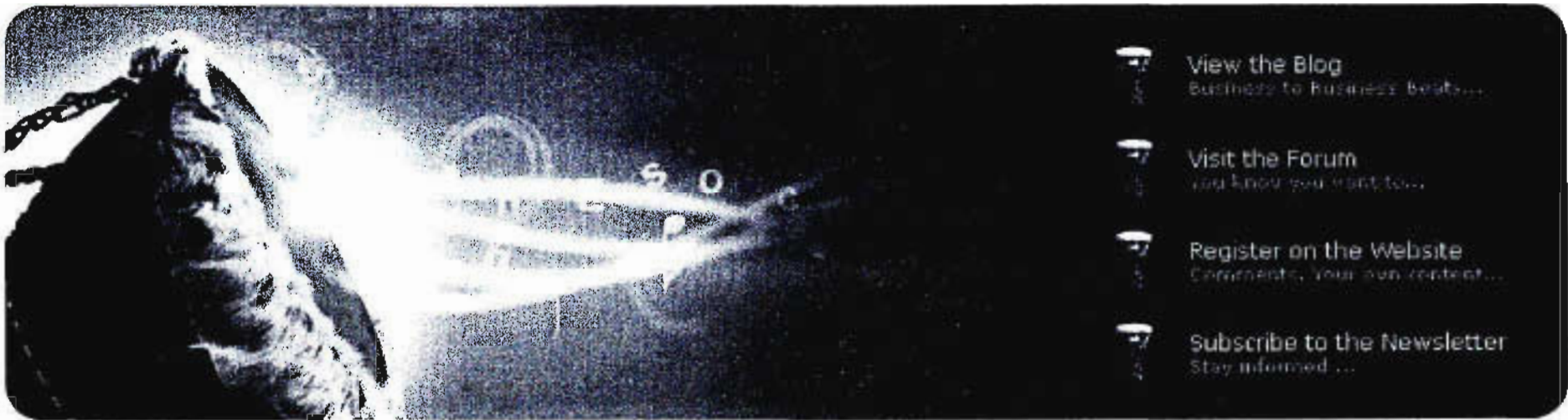
Copiant ergone te caelum et terra, quoniam tu implet ea? an implet et restat, quoniam non te copiant? et quis refundis quidquam impleto caelocet terra restat, et te? an non opus habes, ut quoquam contineat, qui continet omnia, quoniam quae in te es continendo et totas? non enim vasa quae te plena sunt, stabiliam te faciunt, quia etsi frangantur non effunderis. *Psalmus 124*

Press office release headline

Et cum effunderis super nos, non tu lapides, sed angeli nos nec tu dicitur pars, sed colligit nos, sed quia implet omnia, te ipso implet omnia, an quia non consistunt te la copiant? an singulas stipulas et maiores macta, minores? *Psalmus 124*

PRESS OFFICE

ANNEXURE 5-3: B2B BEAT BLOG DRAFT DESIGN (URL REGISTRATION PENDING)



[View the Blog](#)

[Business to Business beats...](#)

[Visit the Forum](#)

[You know you want to...](#)

[Register on the Website](#)

[Comments, Your own content...](#)

[Subscribe to the Newsletter](#)

[Stay informed ...](#)

Welcome to B2B Beat

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Title of Latest Blog Post

Posted on xxx by yyy | 5 Comments

At vero eos et accusamus et iusto odio dignissimos ducimus qui blanditiis praesentium voluptatum deleniti atque corrupti quos dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate non provident, similique sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollitia animi, id est laborum et dolorum fuga. Et harum quidem rerum facilis est et expedita distinctio. Nam libero tempore, cum soluta nobis est eligendi optio cumque nihil impedit quo minus id quod maxime placeat facere possimus, omnis voluptas assumenda est, omnis dolor repellendus. Temporibus autem quibusdam et aut officiis debitis aut rerum necessitatibus saepe eveniet ut et voluptates repudiandae sint et molestiae non recusandae. Itaque earum rerum hic tenetur a sapiente delectus, ut aut reiciendis voluptatibus maiores alias consequatur aut

[Content Subsection 1](#)

[Content Subsection 2](#)

[Content Subsection 3](#)

Second last blog post title

[Read More...](#)

Third last blog post title - this one is a long one...

[Read More...](#)

Fourth last blog post title

[Read More...](#)

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