A strategic sequential, integrated, sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationship (SISOSR) model for building stakeholder partnerships: a corporate communication perspective

by

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I declare that ***A strategic sequential, integrated, sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationship (SISOSR) model for building stakeholder partnerships: a corporate communication perspective*** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

November 2012

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ABSTRACT

A dominant focus on organisational stakeholders is currently evident in both the literature and in practice since it is argued that the success of organisations is predominantly dependent on stakeholders' perception of the organisation. This stakeholder emphasis is evident in the inclusion of a chapter on governing stakeholder relations in the King III report and the development of various stakeholder standards in South Africa, including corporate social investment, corporate governance, corporate citizenship, corporate sustainability and the triple bottom line. Despite the recognition of the importance and necessity of building and maintaining stakeholder relations in the literature, there is a dearth of research on how to actually *build* these relationships. The aim of this study was to address this shortcoming by proposing a generic, integrated approach to sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationship (OSR) building with strategic stakeholders whereby strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance, which are often studied independently, would be integrated in order to constitute a new unified model. This model will promote a sustainable OSR-building process for organisation-stakeholder partnership (OSP) development.

The following three building blocks for such a model were proposed: a strategic communication foundation that promotes the integration of specific corporate communication functions that is practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective as the basis for effective OSR building; a theoretical foundation, which is an integration of Freeman's stakeholder concept (1984) from a normative, relational viewpoint, Ferguson's relational paradigm for public relations (1984) and Ledingham's (2003) theory of relationship management, encapsulated by Grunig's (1984) excellence theory, of which the proposed OSR-building model would be a pragmatic representation; and a conceptualisation of the OSR-building model where the actual phases of the OSR-building process would be proposed to provide step-by-step guidance for OSR building. This model promotes a partnership approach with strategic stakeholders, which is based on the proposition of an OSR development continuum, which implies that an OSR could grow in intensity over time, from a foundational OSR, mutually-beneficial OSR, sustainable OSR, to ultimate organisational-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs).

This model was built from a corporate communication perspective, and subsequently highlighted the contribution of corporate communication in the organisation as an OSR-

building function to ensure organisational effectiveness. This study provided an exploratory literature review to constitute a conceptual framework for OSR-building of which the principles of the framework would be further explored and measured in leading listed South African organisations, by means of a quantitative web-based survey and qualitative one-on-one interviews to compose an OSR-building model that provides guidance on the process of OSR building on the basis of insights from theory and practice.

Keywords:

OPSOMMING

Ingevolge die argument dat die sukses van organisasies hoofsaaklik afhanklik is van die persepsies wat belangegroepe oor organisasies het, word 'n dominante fokus tans op organisatoriese belangegroepe in die literatuur en praktyk geplaas. Die fokus op belangegroepe is sigbaar in die insluiting van 'n hoofstuk oor die bou van belangegroepverhoudings in die King III verslag asook die ontwikkeling van verskeie belangegroepstandaarde in Suid Afrika, wat korporatiewe sosiale verantwoordelikheid, korporatiewe burgerskap, korporatiewe volhoubaarheid en drievoudige eindresultaat insluit. Ten spyte daarvan dat die belangrikheid en noodsaaklikheid van die bou en behoud van belangegroepverhoudings erken word in die literatuur, is daar 'n tekort aan navorsing oor hoe om die verhoudings te bou. Die studie poog om dié tekortkoming aan te spreek deur middel van 'n generiese, geïntegreerde benadering vir volhoubare organisatoriese-belangegroepvershoudings (OBV) met strategiese belangegroepe voor te stel, waar strategiese belangegroep identifikasie, OBV ontwikkeling en OBV instandhouding, aspekte wat dikwels afsonderlik bestudeer word, geintegreer word in 'n nuwe, verenigde model. Hierdie model sal 'n volhoubare OBV verbouiingsproses voorstel vir die ontwikkeling van organisatoriese-belangegroepvennootskappe.

Drie boustene word vir die model voorgestel naamlik; 'n strategiese kommunkasie fondasie wat die integrasie van spesifieke korporatiewe kommunikasie funksies vanuit 'n twee-rigting simmetriese kommunikasie perspektief as basis vir die effektiewe bou van OBV insluit; 'n teoretiese fondasie wat 'n integrasie van Freeman (1984) se belangegroepkonsep van 'n normatiewe, verhoudingsstandpunt, Ferguson (1984) se verhoudingsparadigma vir openbare skakelwerk en Ledingham (2003) se verhoudingsbestuursteorie insluit, omhul deur Grunig (1984) se uitnemendheidsteorie, waarvan die voorgestelde OBV model 'n praktiese voorstelling sal wees; en 'n konseptualisering van OBV-verbouing wat die fases van die OBV proses sal stipuleer om stap-vir-stap riglyne vir die bou van OBV voor te stel. 'n Vennootskapsbenadering met strategiese belangegroepe word voorgestel deur die model, wat gebaseer is op die proposisie van 'n OBV ontwikkelingskontinuum, wat impliseer dat 'n OBV oor tyd in intensiteit kan groei van 'n basiese OBV, wedersydse voordelige OBV, volhoubare OBV tot 'n uiteindelike organisatoriese-belangegroepvennootskap.

Die model is gebou uit 'n korporatiewe kommunikasiestandpunt, wat gevolglik die bydrae van korporatiewe kommunikasie in die organisasie as 'n OBV-verbouingsfunksie om organisatoriese effektiwiteit te verseker, beklemtoon. Die studie bied 'n verkennende literatuurstudie om 'n konseptuele raamwerk vir OBV-verbouing daar te stel, waarvan die beginsels van die raamwerk verder verken en gemeet is in gelysde Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies deur middel van 'n kwantitatiewe web-gebaseerde opname en een-tot-een onderhoude om 'n OBV-verbouingsmodel te ontwikkel wat riglyne vir die proses van OBV-verbouing bied, gebaseer op beide teoretiese en praktiese insigte.

Sleutelwoorde:

korporatiewe kommunikasie; strategiese kommunikasie; twee-rigting simmetriesekommunkasie; organisatoriese belangegroep verhoudingsbou; organisatoriese belangegroep vennootskappe; strategiese belangegroepe; strategiese belangegroep identifikasie; organisatoriese-belangegroep verhoudingsbou ontwikkeling; organisatoriese-belangegroep instandhouding; belangegroep konsep; uitnemendheidsteorie

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

> Corporate communication is a "… vocabulary of concepts and sets of techniques to facilitate understanding and management of communication between the organization and stakeholder" (Cornelissen 2005:23).

1.1   INTRODUCTION

According to Heath (2008:13), organisations should rely on the goodwill of stakeholders for survival, while Maak (2007:329) contends that "stakeholders expect organisations to take a more active role and thus acknowledge their co-responsibility vis-à-vis the pressing problems". To further emphasise the importance of organisation-stakeholder relationships (OSRs), Ulmer, Sellnow and Seeger (2007:35) and Valackiene (2010:101) state that *partnerships* with strategic stakeholders should be built in order to maximise organisational performance. Various authors also highlight the significance of OSRs and corporate communication. For example, Luoma-aho and Paloviita (2010:49) maintain that stakeholder relations are the essence of corporate communication, while Thiessen and Ingenhof (2011:11) posit that stakeholder relationships can serve as a resource in any difficult corporate communication situation and that the function of OSR building should be fulfilled by corporate communication professionals. According to Goodwin (2003:9), OSRs should be proactively built with strategic stakeholders to achieve the long-term objective of creating value for both the organisation and stakeholder.

Despite the above realisation of the importance of OSRs, limited research has been conducted to focus on describing the actual process of OSR building. The primary objective of this study is therefore to propose a proactive, integrated, sequential model for building OSRs with strategic stakeholders. This model will be developed from a corporate communications perspective to highlight as a secondary objective that the core contribution of corporate communication to achieve organisational effectiveness is through OSR building which, in essence, requires corporate communication to be practised strategically.

This chapter provides an overview of and the rationale for the study in order to explain the context of the study; define the key concepts in the literature; discuss the research problem, subproblems and research questions; provide a brief overview of the

methodology; and concludes with the chapter layout which will be aligned to the subproblems and research questions identified in order to collectively address the research problem.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This section deals with the background, objectives and relevance of the topic and its relationship with the discipline of communication. Other research in the field will also be outlined.

1.2.1 Background to the study

Various theorists recognise the necessity of OSRs for successful corporate communication (Grunig & Repper 1992; Marra 1992; Heath 1997; Ulmer 2001; Fearn-Banks 2007; Alpaslan, Green & Mitroff 2009; Rensburg & Cant 2009; Swart 2010). Grunig and Repper (1992:96), for instance, emphasise the importance of building stakeholder relations in various communication situations and highlight the fact that issues managers can only start protecting their organisations once relationships with stakeholders have been proactively built and maintained. Similarly, Bridges and Nelson (2000:111) argue that stakeholders that have been part of constructive, continuing relationships that were established prior to conflict situations will be more receptive to the organisation's position and standing and will accept changes as reliable, and be more willing to negotiate a mutually beneficial resolution. Although the significance of OSRs are acknowledged, in the literature there is a lack of research indicating how to actually *build* these relationships (Bridges & Nelson 2000:106; Broom, Casey & Ritchey 2000:6; Ulmer 2001:607; Kim 2007:167).

According to Noland and Phillips (2010:39), many studies focus on the "attributes of the organisations or the attributes of the stakeholders rather than on the *attributes of the relationship* between organizations and stakeholders [own emphasis]". This can be ascribed to the core focus of the corporate communication and public relations discipline to measure, analyse and influence public opinion, which overshadows stakeholder relationship building (Broom et al 2000:5). According to the literature, future developments of the stakeholder theory should acknowledge that there is a lack of models to manage stakeholder relationships more efficiently (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & De Colle 2010:117), which for the purpose of this study, begins with the way in which these stakeholder relationships are *built*.

In a master's dissertation, entitled "Integrated crisis communication framework for strategic crisis communication with the media: a case study on a financial services provider", Swart (2010) addresses the lack of strategic crisis communication processes by proposing an integrated communication (IC) approach to crisis communication and management. This study builds on one of the key findings of Swart's (2010) study which emphasises the need for a *broader* function that ensures *sustainable* stakeholder relationship building through *two-way symmetrical communication* to serve as foundation to manage a crisis more effectively (Swart 2010:193). Although Swart's (2010) study focuses specifically on crisis communication, it recognises the need for proper stakeholder relations to achieve organisational objectives and also emphasises that fact that corporate communication's contribution at strategic level is through stakeholder relationship building. This is in line with Goodwin's (2003:9) argument that a communicator's strategic role in the organisation is to build and nurture stakeholder relationships to enable the organisation to achieve its organisational objectives. Against this background, the aim of this study is to propose a holistic, integrated approach for OSR building which is based on a corporate communication perspective to contribute to organisational effectiveness.

In line with the above contextualisation, the objectives of the study will be outlined in the next section.

1.2.2 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is threefold:

- Firstly, the lack of existing models on how to *build* an OSR will be explored by integrating existing fragmented approaches evident in the literature focusing on stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance as three separate processes to constitute a conceptual framework that describes the OSR-building process.
- Secondly, the principles of this conceptual framework will be measured and explored against the stakeholder relationship building and management strategies in practice to constitute an OSR-building model that is grounded on both theory and practice.
- Thirdly, since the proposed model will be built from a corporate communications perspective, both the theoretical and empirical exploration will endeavour to emphasise the importance of corporate communication to achieve organisational effectiveness through OSR building. This will underscore the significance of practising corporate

communication strategically and the need for corporate communication to contribute to the strategic management of the organisation. Both of these factors are often overlooked.

To achieve these objectives, an *integrated* approach to OSR building from a corporate communications perspective will be proposed in an attempt to describe the OSR-building process more adequately. It will be argued that in order to build an OSR, strategic stakeholders should first be defined and identified and, once the OSR has been built with these identified stakeholders, it should be maintained and nurtured to grow in intensity to ultimately evolve into an organisational-stakeholder partnership (OSP). Although this model will focus on *strategic* stakeholders in particular, the model will be generic in the sense that it will be possible to apply it to build an OSR with any strategic stakeholder group. To increase the implementability of this model, the principles will be measured and explored in practice to reflect contemporary OSR practices of leading South African organisations that could be regarded as experts in OSR building.

1.2.3 Relevance of the study and relation to the discipline of communication

This study flows from a strategic corporate communication perspective in which OSR building is often highlighted as the core function of this discipline (Argenti & Forman 2002:4; Cornelissen 2005:21; Valackiene 2010:100). However, despite the recognition of this discipline as a strategic stakeholder relationship-building function, as emphasised earlier, there is a lack of research on how these proposed stakeholder relationships should be built and sustained. Hence the proposed OSR-building model will not only address the dearth of models describing the OSR-building process, but also contribute to increasing the corporate communication discipline's worth as a strategic function through OSR building to contribute to organisational effectiveness.

Contemporary examples of the need for sufficient OSR building are also highlighted in the recent inclusion of chapter 8 on governing stakeholder relations in the King III Report, which listed South African organisations are supposed to apply (King III Report 2009). Steyn and Niemann (2010:116) identified the following stakeholder standards in the South African context: corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, corporate citizenship, sustainability and triple bottom line. Hence it is argued that adequate OSRs are essential for organisations to ensure successful compliance with these standards,

which therefore underscores the need for an approach that adequately describes the OSR-building process.

1.2.4 Other research in the field

The Nexus database (2011) indicates that no other research is currently being conducted and has not been completed on the topic of this study. The following research dissertations are currently being conducted on stakeholder relations (the years of commencement of these studies are indicated in brackets): "The strategic management of the communication relationship between a NGO and its stakeholders" (Janse van Rensburg 2003) and "A communication model for financial sustainability of stakeholder relations" (Thomson 2008). A dissertation that was recently completed on stakeholder relations and management is "Public relations marketing: a framework for stakeholder management in life healthcare group of hospitals – eastern region" (Van Oudenhove de St Gèry 2010).

Although not listed on the Nexus database, a study recently completed entitled "A strategic communication approach to managing stakeholder relationships according to the King Report on Governance" (Meintjes 2012), is the most relevant to this study. Meintjes's (2012) study focused specifically on stakeholder relationship management, where the King report was utilised as premise to develop a positioning framework and guidelines for stakeholder relationship management. Although this study will also refer to the King report and other stakeholder concepts highlighted in Meintjes's (2012) research, the King III report will only be highlighted as a contemporary example of the current emphasis on stakeholder relations and management. In this context, the literature on OSRs from a corporate communication's perspective will instead form the premise of this study. Furthermore, this study also differs in that it addresses the *process* of OSR building from an integrated viewpoint, where stakeholder relationship management will only be considered as one phase of a new proposed OSR model.

The key concepts underlying this study will be addressed in the next section.

1.3   LITERATURE REVIEW: EXPLORING THE KEY CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY

Since this study focuses specifically on OSRs with strategic stakeholders, a detailed description on the term "stakeholder" will be provided in order to formulate a unique definition of *strategic* stakeholders, followed by a discussion on defining an OSR.

Secondly, corporate communication as a strategic OSR-building function will be contextualised. Lastly, the building blocks of the proposed OSR-building model that will be developed in this study will be briefly discussed.

1.3.1 Describing the stakeholder

Prior to formulating a definition and identifying the unique characteristics of a *strategic* stakeholder, various issues pertaining to defining and identifying stakeholders have to be explored. It is also necessary to differentiate between stakeholders, publics and constituents in order to contextualise the background for a definition of a strategic stakeholder.

It is evident in the literature, and specifically recognised by Koschman (2009:4), that most research on stakeholders focuses either on defining a stakeholder (Broom et al 2000:4–7; Kaler 2002:92; Vos & Achterkamp 2006; Greenwood 2007:320; Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2010:1–3; Freeman et al 2010) or developing stakeholder identification strategies (Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997; Ballejos & Montagna 2008; Boesso & Kumar 2008:65; Johansson 2008; Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2010:1–4). Although the focus of this study is on developing an OSR-building model, some of these arguments and perspectives on defining a stakeholder have to be explored in order to define a strategic stakeholder. This, in turn, will serve as foundation for developing a method for strategic stakeholder identification. In order to properly identify stakeholders, the term has to be first defined, because "any stakeholder definition has direct consequences for stakeholder identification" (Koschmann 2009:4).

According to Freeman et al (2010:31) and Freeman (2010:31), the word "stakeholder" was first utilised in management literature in 1963 at the Stanford Research Institute to generalise the concept of "stockholder" as the only group to which the organisation should react. This gave rise to the definition of stakeholder as those groups that are essential for organisational survival. Based on this notion, Edward Freeman (1984) developed the stakeholder concept as a mutually influential approach to strategic management in which he (1984:46) broadly defined a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's objectives". This definition has been widely criticised, the most prominent criticism being that it is too broad, which implies that a stakeholder could actually include anyone (Mitchell et al 1997:854; Kochan & Rubenstein 2000:369; Vos & Achterkamp 2006:163; Boesso & Kumar 2008:64; Fassin

2009:115; Koschmann 2009:3; De Bussy & Kelly 2010:292; Mainardes, Alves & Raposo 2011:229;237). However, the fact remains that it did provide a valuable starting point in the search for a more specific and focused definition on whether to follow a *broad* or *narrow* view of an organisation's stakeholder universe.

Freeman's (1984) definition is probably the broadest perspective because the basis of the word "stake" in this definition could both be "unindirectional or bidirectional" and does not highlight a reciprocal influence (Mitchell et al 1997:856). Moreover, according to Boesso and Kumar (2008:5), this broad perspective is centred on organisational interests where organisational managers may require an extensive list of stakeholders to assess diverse stakeholder claims and interests, with the core focus of ensuring organisational survival and wellbeing. By contrast, the narrow perspective regards stakeholders as "voluntary or involuntary risk-bearers" (Mitchell et al 1997:856) and defines them in terms of their significance to the organisation's monetary interests (Boesso & Kumar 2008:51). The broad view of stakeholders is therefore based on the notion that an organisation can be affected by stakeholders, while the narrow view tends to define stakeholders in terms of their direct relevance to the organisation's economic interests. Put differently, the narrow view includes stakeholder groups that are essential for organisational survival, while the broad view includes any stakeholder group that can affect or be affected by the organisation (Greenwood 2007:320–321). Although the narrow viewpoint is becoming more specific in defining stakeholders, it is still focused on achieving one-way organisational interests. None of these viewpoints actually highlights the significance of mutually beneficial relationship building in addressing common interests.

Another point of focus when exploring the stakeholder concept is the meaning of the word "stake". Cornelissen (2000:61) defines it as an "interest or a share in an undertaking" that differs in extremity, ranging from an interest in an organisational activity to a claim on the ownership of the organisation. Studies focusing on the meaning of stake stimulated a debate on whether stakeholders fulfil the role of claimants or influencers (Mitchell et al 1997:859; Kaler 2002:92; Koschmann 2009:5; Fassin 2009:116). *Claimant* definitions regard stakeholders as entities for which the organisation is responsible, which could range from people who fulfil the role of contract holders, investment holders, risk carriers to someone who only has legitimate interests (Kaler 2002:92). By contrast, definitions that regard stakeholders as *influencers*, highlight the supporting role that stakeholders play in achieving the organisation's objectives, thereby implying that the organisation is

dependent on stakeholders for its survival and the recognition of the impact that stakeholders have on the organisation (Kaler 2002:92). According to Koschman (2009:6), this claimant versus influencer perspective differentiates stakeholders "based on either their legitimate claim to some sort of moral or financial obligation on behalf of an organization, or their ability to influence an organization in some meaningful way, regardless of any owed duty or responsibility".

In building a definition and identifying the characteristics of a strategic stakeholder, a distinction will also be made between a stakeholder, public and constituent in the next subsection.

1.3.1.1   *Differentiating between stakeholders, publics and constituents*

The terms "stakeholder", "publics" and even "constituents" are often used interchangeably. A constituent is defined as identifying areas in the organisational environment that are essential for organisational survival, and it is argued that corporate communication professionals "can begin to identify strategic constituencies by identifying stakeholder categories and then by segmenting members of those categories into active and passive publics" (Grunig & Huang 2000:31-32). According to Grunig and Repper (1998:125), individuals in a specific stakeholder category are regarded as passive. Only when these individuals become aware and active, can they be regarded as publics. It is evident from Grunig's (1997) situational theory of publics, that publics are segmented on the basis of their views of a specific situation and successive behaviour – *not on the desire of the organisation to build relationships with them* (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002:324). From these perspectives it is evident that publics are much more specific, with constituents being the broadest category. Besides the fact that the key focus of this study is OSRs, whereby it is argued that mutually beneficial relationships should be built with strategic stakeholders, publics mobilise themselves around certain situations and can therefore only be managed *reactively.*   This study supports Maak's (2007:330) call for a *proactive* approach to enable the organisation to balance diverse stakeholder needs, and Chinyio and Olomolaiye's (2010:5) perspective that "a proactive approach is needed in dealing with stakeholders as opposed to being reactive". Since constituents are too broad and active publics can only be managed reactively, thereby excluding relationship building, *stakeholders* will be used as the preferred term to refer to groups that are essential for organisational survival with which the organisation must proactively build mutually beneficial relationships.

The sections to follow will endeavour to formulate a definition of a *strategic* stakeholder as the focus of this study, which could simultaneously start to address the need for a more specific description of a stakeholder, which is the most prominent shortcoming of Freeman's stakeholder concept, as mentioned earlier.

1.3.1.2 Defining a strategic stakeholder

According to Barringer and Harrison (2000:376), a common misconception about the stakeholder concept is that all stakeholders are equal, which they argue is not the case – organisations should determine who are the most important stakeholders of focus. Podnar and Jancic (2006:302) conducted research precisely for this reason, namely to determine an organisation's most important stakeholders, which revealed several stakeholder categories, of which the most significant is an organisation's "essential" stakeholders or "inevitable exchange" stakeholders. These stakeholders have the most powerful relationship in an organisation and are essential for organisational survival (Podnar & Jancic 2006:302). To further emphasise the need to identify and build relationships with the organisation's most important and powerful stakeholders, Grunig and Huang (2000:30) state that the effectiveness of corporate communication lies in the communicator's ability to build relationships with strategic stakeholders to ensure organisational survival. Steyn and Niemann (2010:107) argue that organisations have to consider and adapt to *strategic* stakeholder needs in order to sustain a positive reputation, be regarded as trustworthy and a good corporate citizen.

The various characteristics of a strategic stakeholder will be explored in order to formulate a unique definition of a *strategic* stakeholder.

- **The key characteristics of a strategic stakeholder**

The first characteristic of a strategic stakeholder that will be highlighted is that strategic stakeholders hold a *high degree of stakeholder salience*. As a starting point in their development of a theory of stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS), Mitchell et al (1997:855–862) reviewed 27 definitions of the term "stakeholder" and concluded that *power, legitimacy* and *urgency* are the dominant attributes. For the purpose of this study, these will be regarded as the characteristics of a strategic stakeholder. Each of these characteristics and their interdependent relationship are briefly described in table 1.1 (Mitchell et al 1997:865–870).

Table 1.1: Power, legitimacy and urgency of strategic stakeholders

Attribute	Description
Power	An entity in a relationship has power to the extent that access to a specific variable can be obtained to enforce its will in the relationship. It is also argued that power is transient – it can be obtained and lost.
Legitimacy	The notion of legitimacy refers to whether the actions of an entity are socially acceptable, desirable and proper in relation to a certain constructed system of norms, values and beliefs.
Urgency	Urgency is based on *time sensitivity* (ie when the stakeholder finds the time it took an organisation to attend to a claim or relationship unacceptable); and *criticality* (the degree of importance of the claim to the stakeholder).
Interdependent relationship between power, legitimacy and urgency	It is argued that there is latent power in stakeholder relationships; power is only triggered by conditions that are manifested in legitimacy and urgency. Power therefore gains authority through legitimacy and is exercised through urgency. Legitimacy, which is also regarded as a variable, obtains rights through power and a voice through urgency. When urgency is combined with legitimacy and power, mutual recognition and action between the organisation and stakeholders is established.

According to the TSIS, managers play a key role in determining whether a stakeholder holds power, legitimacy and/or urgency, and subsequently, whether a stakeholder possesses a high, medium or low level of stakeholder salience, which can be defined as the "degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims" (Mitchell et al 1997:878). Should organisational managers perceive the presence of all three attributes, those stakeholders are regarded as *definite* stakeholders and have a high degree of stakeholder salience. Furthermore, this study supports the viewpoint that the management of the organisation decides what degree of salience stakeholders have, and management will thus also be responsible for identifying strategic stakeholders. According to Moss and Warnaby (1998:136), in order for corporate communication to fulfil its role efficiently in building mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders, communication managers must participate in the organisation's strategic planning and manage corporate communication programmes strategically. Similarly, for the purpose of this study, it is argued that corporate communication professionals should play a vital role in selecting the organisation's strategic stakeholders and should advise and assist top management on the identification of strategic stakeholders.

Moss and Warnaby (1998:13) maintain that strategic stakeholders "are those groups that may limit the autonomy of the organisation in pursuing and realising its strategic goals". Strategic stakeholders are those groups "… without whose support the organization will cease to exist" (Freeman et al 2010:31). This implies that the organisation cannot achieve its objectives properly without strategic stakeholders. This characteristic is also underlined in Maharaj's (2008:116) description of the "strategic stakeholder theory", which defines

strategic stakeholders as those groups that ensure the future existence of the organisation. Therefore the second characteristic of a strategic stakeholder is that these stakeholder groups are *essential for organisational survival*. In line with this perspective, the third characteristic holds that strategic stakeholders are those groups that *will always be present and relevant over time*, and are, in this sense in their capacity as strategic stakeholders established and constant. The fourth characteristic of strategic stakeholders is that a degree of *reciprocity* is always evident between the organisation and strategic stakeholders. Reciprocity, a concept developed by Aldrich (1975; 1979) as a key determinant of an OSR, is a prominent element in the excellence theory which is built on the notion that both the organisation and strategic stakeholder can achieve their objectives more successfully through compromise (Grunig & White 1992:46). Reciprocity is required since strategic stakeholders' interests coincide with the organisation (Grunig & Repper 1992:126) and strategic stakeholders bring the necessary competencies required to realise organisational objectives (Cohen 2003:108). This study holds that mutually beneficial OSRs should be managed so that the interests of the organisation and strategic stakeholders are balanced (Rensburg & Cant 2009:51), which is achieved by a reciprocal mindset to obtain mutual benefit.

Based on the above discussion, for the purpose of this study, the key characteristics of strategic stakeholders are that these stakeholder groups, which may be internal and/or external to the organisation, have a high degree of stakeholder salience; are essential for organisational survival; are present and relevant over time; and that a degree of reciprocity is always present between the strategic stakeholders and the organisation.

- **A definition for a strategic stakeholder**

Based on the above exploration of the key characteristics of a strategic stakeholder, a strategic stakeholder for the purpose of this study will be defined as those *internal and/or external organisational groups that have a continuous high degree of stakeholder salience with which the organisation shares a reciprocal interest that should be nurtured through proactive, mutually beneficial relationship building to ensure organisational survival.* This definition, however, requires the following considerations:

- Freeman (2010:25) proposed various stakeholders in the suggested "stakeholder view of the firm", which takes into consideration all internal and external

stakeholders "that can affect, or are affected by, the accomplishment of the organisation's purpose", and includes governments; local community organisations; owners; consumer advocates; customers; competitors; media; employees; special interest groups (SIGs); environmentalists; and suppliers. Since this study will propose a *generic, holistic approach to OSRs that is not industry focused*, specific strategic stakeholders cannot be identified from these stakeholder groups since the situation will vary for each organisation, depending on the industry and the organisation's business activities. However, in an effort to provide an example of a strategic stakeholder that will apply to all organisations, employees and customers are identified, since these stakeholder groups have a mutually dependent relationship with the organisation. Employees are the lifeblood of the organisation and ensure the effective functioning of the organisation and the achievement of organisational objectives. Employees, in turn, are also dependent on the organisation for remuneration. Furthermore, the organisation is dependent on customers to utilise products and/or services to ensure the future existence of the organisation, while customers can rely on the organisation for the provision of this particular service and/or product.

▪ Both internal and external stakeholders may be strategic. This reflects Freeman's (2010:26) call for integrated approaches to manage multiple internal and external stakeholder groups.

▪ Since this definition proposes that strategic stakeholders are the most important stakeholders it suggests that organisations will only have a few strategic stakeholders.

In conclusion, it should be noted that although future research could explore specific strategic stakeholders and suggest customised OSR-building steps and/or also highlight how to balance diverse stakeholder needs (thereby including secondary stakeholders and/or active publics), this study will serve as a starting point to highlight the essential generic elements required to build sustainable OSRs with strategic stakeholders. Arguably this could be applied to help organisations to address "the challenge of weaving a web of sustainable relationships … and engaging a multitude of stakeholders in a dialogue to create resonance, trust and ultimately, stakeholder social capital" (Maak 2007:330).

1.3.2 Defining organisation-stakeholder relationships (OSRs)

OSRs originated from Ferguson's (1984) proposition of a relational perspective for the practice of public relations in order to highlight, inter alia, the significance of the relationship for both the organisation and stakeholder. Dyer and Singh (1998:662) and later Rensburg and Cant (2009:59) also acknowledged the benefits of OSRs and stipulated that it contributes, among others, to knowledge sharing, complementary resources and/or capabilities and effective governance. The subsections below will focus on drawing a correlation between interpersonal relationships and OSRs and highlighting the characteristics of an OSR in order to formulate a unique definition of the concept.

1.3.2.1 Interpersonal relationships versus OSRs

According to Svendson (1998:66), the process of relationship building in an organisational context is similar to developing sustainable interpersonal relationships, which is affirmed by Hon and Grunig (1999:14), who state that concepts and research in interpersonal communication literature can be applied to maintain symmetrical OSRs. Bruning, Castle and Schrepfer (2004:437), however, argue that not all elements of interpersonal relationships are applicable to OSRs, but studying OSRs necessitates investigation and integration of concepts derived from other disciplines such as interpersonal communication (Ledingham & Bruning 1998:58; Ledingham & Bruning 1999:159; Bruning 2002:41; Jo, Hon & Brunner 2004:15). Interpersonal relationships, which refer to a relationship between two individuals through face-to-face communication (Rhee 2007:104), prosper when there is a balance in the relationship, both parties are committed to and invest time in the relationship and when both parties trust the other to act as a representative of the relationship (Ledingham & Bruning 1998:58).

The applicability of interpersonal relationship elements to OSRs is widely accepted (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling 1992:65; Ledingham & Bruning 1998:58; Broom et al 2000:7; Grunig & Huang 2000:36; Ledingham 2000:44). For example, Knapp (1984:30) recognised the importance of mutuality between relational partners; Ballinger (1991) applied Millar and Rogers's (1987) interpersonal relational elements of intimacy, trust and control to public-organisation relationships; and Parks (1997:352) underlined the importance of commitment, interdependence and ongoing interaction in the relational life cycle. Recently, Du Plooy-Ciliers (2011) explored the role of communication between intimate partners to establish relational quality where certain principles such as, relational expectations, the

complex nature of relationships, commitment between relational partners, constructive communication and conflict management, flexible relational rules and compatibility can be applied to an organisational context. Stafford and Canary (1991) developed five elements of successful romantic relationships, which include positivity, openness, assurances, networking and shared tasks. Hon and Grunig (1999:14) argue that these elements suggest several strategies that organisations can apply to maintain relationships with strategic stakeholders. The applicability of each of these elements to interpersonal relationships in comparison with OSRs is outlined in table 1.2, which illustrates the interconnectedness between interpersonal relationships and OSRs (Stafford & Canary 1991:231; Grunig & Grunig 1992:315; Parks 1997:355; Hon & Grunig 1999:14-15; Grunig & Huang 2000:36-37). It should be noted, however, that these elements are not the only dimensions in which interconnectedness can be displayed.

Table 1.1: Comparison of interpersonal relationship and OSR elements

Dimension	Interpersonal relationship context	OSR context
Positivity	Attempts to make the relationship enjoyable for both parties	To be unconditionally constructive in the relationship-building process
Openness	Direct conversation about the relationship and self-disclosure, as well as thoughts and feelings among the parties involved	This dimension is closely related to ethics and holds that disclosure of facts will often lead to more sustainable OSRs. It also implies that the organisation and stakeholder(s) consult one another in decision making.
Assurances	Reassurances of love and commitment	Reassurances of legitimacy
Networking (no relationship exists in a vacuum)	Having common friends	Building networks with similar groups as their strategic stakeholders
Shared tasks	Accepting joint responsibility for household tasks	Mutually beneficial goal attainment between the organisation and strategic stakeholders

The above discussion indicates that an OSR is based on interpersonal communication literature and that various overlaps exist. Although it could be concluded that the development of an OSR is similar to relationship building between individuals (Svendsen 1998:66), which implies that various interpersonal relationship concepts will be applied to describe the OSR-building process, the remainder of this study will be based on and focus on the concept of OSR.

1.3.2.2 Characteristics of an OSR

For the purpose of this study, the following characteristics of OSRs have been derived from the literature to serve as a foundation for the formulation of a unique definition of an OSR:

- *Openness and commitment.* Participants in the OSR should understand the significance of engaging in the relationship and be committed to achieving the relational objectives. To this end, significant facts on which the relationship depends should be disclosed. This implies that relational parties should consult one another in decision making (Grunig & Grunig 1992:315), and the organisation should display openness about its business practices and related issues (Bruning & Galloway 2003:316) and share future strategies with strategic stakeholders (Ledingham 2008:245). Furthermore, each OSR participant has to be continuously reminded of the other participant's commitment to the relationship, since the participants could compare the benefits of other relational partners and find these more appealing if they are not constantly reassured (Bruning & Galloway 2003:317).

- *It takes time and evolves in intensity.* This implies that an OSR is a process (Wood 1995:42) and involves various phases as it grows in intensity. Svendsen (1998:42) argues that OSRs are continuous and evolving, and Broom et al (2000:17) further contend that although relationships can be defined at any time, relationships are the dynamic outcomes of exchanges and reciprocity that become apparent as the relationships continue to develop and evolve.

- *Dynamic.* Relationships evolve in response to processes between relational parties that require constant attention and adjustment (Wood 1995:42). This is emphasised by Svendsen (1998:42), Ledingham (2003:195), Hung (2005:21b) and Grunig's (2006:167) perspective that a relationship is always in a state of flux.

- *Continuous interaction.* Both parties have to continuously provide information and resolve possible conflict in order to strengthen and ensure the future existence of the OSR. Parks (1997:353) highlights the fact that, in conjunction with the development of an OSR, the intensity and richness of interaction between participants will increase. For the purpose of this study, continuous interaction will be achieved through the practice of two-way communication, more specifically *two-way symmetrical communication*, since two-way communication represents an interactive communication process in which the role of sender and receiver is interchangeable (Kiousis 2002:367). Two-way

symmetrical communication will be discussed in more detail in section 1.3.4.1 and chapter 2 respectively.

- *Mutuality.* Ledingham (2003:190) proposed a theory for relationship management which holds that "effectively managing organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organisations and publics". This theory specifically emphasises the importance of *shared meaning* between the organisation and strategic stakeholders which is achieved through *two-way symmetrical communication* and could, over time, result in *mutual benefit* for both parties. Various authors also emphasise the significance of *mutuality*: Svendsen (1998:42) posits that OSRs are mutually defined; Broom et al (2000:17) maintain that OSRs represent mutual adaption; Ledingham (2001:292) argues that stakeholders expect mutuality when interacting with the organisation, which should be demonstrated through organisational behaviour; and Rensburg and Cant (2009:57) state specifically that successful OSRs are characterised by mutual benefit, which implies that corporate communication professionals employ two-way symmetrical communication to align the interests of the organisation with strategic stakeholders, value stakeholders' opinion in decision making and manage the power balance in the OSR.

- *Multidimensional.* It is argued that OSRs have different dimensions, namely professional, personal and community which implies that OSRs are *multidimensional* (Broom et al 2000:17; Ledingham 2001:290 Bruning & Galloway 2003:310; Jo, Hon & Brunner 2004:16). This entails that an organisation's involvement in and support of the community in which it operates can create loyalty towards an organisation among strategic stakeholders when they are aware of the organisation's involvement in that community (Ledingham & Bruning 1998:63; Jo et al 2004:16). According to Bruning and Galloway (2002:311), the multidimensionality of an OSR emphasises that strategic stakeholders expect organisations to fulfil personal, professional and community relationship needs.

- *Transactional.* This implies that both the organisation and the strategic stakeholder(s) send and receive information (Thomlison 2000:182); each relational participant contributes towards *shared meaning*. According to Halal (2001:39), information sharing or knowledge pooling between stakeholders and the organisation increases trust and commitment in the relationship.

- *Goal-oriented.* OSRs have to be managed around common interests and shared goals over time (Ledingham 2003:195).

- *Dependent on the degree to which strategic stakeholders' expectations are met.* The continuation of an OSR relies on ongoing interactions between the organisation and strategic stakeholders (Ledingham 2003:195).

- *Influenced by the organisation's history and reciprocity.* This implies that the general perception of the organisation held by both internal and external organisational stakeholders has to be positive (Ledingham 2003:195). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, as a key characteristic of strategic stakeholders, reciprocity has to be evident where both the organisation and strategic stakeholder need to compromise in order to achieve relational objectives – both need to give up some of what they want to obtain what they want.

Based on the insights obtained from these characteristics, an OSR for the purpose of this study is defined as *the result of the management of common interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) over time in order to achieve mutually beneficial goals through a high degree of reciprocity and continuous two-way symmetrical communication.*

1.3.3 Corporate communication as strategic OSR-building function

According to Cornelissen (2005:21), corporate communication is concerned with the organisation as a whole in relation to the central task of how the organisation is presented to its stakeholders. Valackiene (2010:100) emphasises that corporate communication includes a variety of strategic functions which necessitate a "total stakeholder perspective", whereby all communication activities should be aligned with OSRs. From these perspectives it is evident that stakeholder relations are a core function of corporate communication, which is also underscored in definitions of strategic communication. For example, Verwey (2003:2) states that "strategic communication requires the ability to process complex inter-relationships at all organisational levels, both internally and externally". It is argued for the purpose of this study that corporate communication is an umbrella term for all internal and external strategic communication with the core function of building and maintaining OSRs to contribute to organisational effectiveness. This perspective will be explained in more detail in chapter 2. It should also be noted, for the purpose of this study, that the terms "corporate communication professionals" and "senior corporate communication professionals" will be used to refer to the practitioners and managers of corporate communication respectively.

1.3.4 The three building blocks of the proposed OSR-building model

This section provides a brief overview on the three building blocks that will be developed for this study in order to establish an OSR-building model that describes the OSR-building process. The three building blocks are the strategic communication foundation, the theoretical foundation and a conceptualisation of OSR building. Figure 1.1 provides a graphic representation of these building blocks where the essence of each building block is outlined.

> - Two-way symmetrical communication
> - Essential corporate communication functions for OSR building:
> - Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research
> - Issues management
> - Reputation management
> - Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge

> - Stakeholder concept (Freeman 1984)
> - Relational paradigm of public relations (Ferguson 1984)
> - Excellence theory (Grunig 1984)
> - Relationship management theory (Ledingham 2003)

Building block 1:
Strategic communication foundation

Building block 2:
Theoretical foundation

Building block 3:
Conceptualisation of OSR building

> - An integrated approach towards OSR building:
> - **Phase 1:** strategic stakeholder identification
> - **Subphase:** OSR antecedents
> - **Phase 2:** OSR development
> - **Subphase:** stakeholder engagement
> - **Phase3:** OSR maintenance
> - OSR development continuum:
> - Foundational OSR → Sustainable OSR → Mutually beneficial OSR →

Figure 1.1: The three building blocks of an OSR-building model

It should be noted that the numbering of these building blocks, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, is not necessarily indicative of the level of importance of each. Each of these building blocks will equally form a critical component of the proposed OSR-building model. Building blocks 1 and 2 are interlinked and will collectively serve as the grounding of building block

3. Furthermore, the numbering of these building blocks is also not necessarily indicative of their order. Although it will be proposed that building block 3 can only be established on the foundation of building blocks 1 and 2, it will be highlighted in chapter 5, which deals with the actual process of OSR building, that building block 2 should be in place prior to the establishment of building block 1. The numbering of these building blocks was therefore predominantly included to ensure a logical flow of the literature in the chapters to follow. A brief overview of each of the three building blocks as represented in figure 1.1 will be provided in the sections to follow. However, the integration of these building blocks to constitute the proposed OSR model and process of OSR building will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

1.3.4.1   *Building block 1: strategic communication foundation*

The strategic communication foundation building block constitutes the foundational prerequisites that are essential for a successful OSR-building process, and includes the practice of two-way symmetrical communication and the integration of key corporate communication functions. This section will first focus on discussing the relevance of two-way symmetrical communication for the proposed OSR-building model. This will be followed by a brief overview of the proposed corporate communication functions, which include research through environmental scanning and evaluation research, issues management, reputation management and knowledge transfer enabled by a culture of knowledge.

- **Two-way symmetrical communication**

The literature indicates that two-way symmetrical communication is characterised by a consideration of stakeholder interests when making organisational decisions; responsive communication and timeous feedback; collaboration and negotiation; interdependency; message consistency; openness; truthfulness and fundamentality; mutual understanding and shared vision; and collaborative problem solving (Grunig & White 1992:39; Hung 2003a:34; Bishop 2006:217-221; Burchell & Cook 2006:212; Grunig 2006:156). This study supports Johansen and Nielsen's (2011:206) perspective that "… traditional unidirectional means of stakeholder communication must be replaced or replenished by two-way communication", which implies that two-way symmetrical communication will represent an interactive communication process concerned with establishing a balanced dialogue *between the organisation and strategic stakeholders* in order to stimulate transparency

and sincerity with a view to building mutually beneficial OSRs (Lubbe 1994:9). "Two-way", for the purpose of this study, means communication between the organisation and strategic stakeholders and is not representative of one-to-one, one-to-many and even many-to-many communication notions. According to Farquhar and Rowley (2006:162), these notions were predominantly established through the relationship-marketing paradigm to improve communication relationships with individuals by means of online social networks. Two-way communication is different from one-way communication which represents a communication process involving one-directional communication flow that does not allow feedback, usually aimed at convincing stakeholders of organisational ideas (Kiousis 2002:366; Lubbe 1994:8).

Furthermore, according to Grunig et al (2002:548), corporate communication can only contribute towards organisational effectiveness by practising two-way symmetrical communication to build and maintain OSRs. In support of this statement, it is argued that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical perspective to ensure sustainable OSR building. Two-way symmetrical communication therefore provides fundamental grounding for the successful implementation of the proposed OSR-building model.

- **Key corporate communication functions essential for OSR building**

A brief overview and the contribution of each of the proposed corporate communication functions as highlighted earlier to the proposed process of OSR building are highlighted in table 1.3 and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Table 1.2: Corporate communication functions essential for OSR building

Corporate communication function	Overview	Contribution to OSR-building process
Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research	Bruning (2002:45) argues that mutually beneficial OSRs can only be built, which is the purpose of the proposed model, if the communication needs of relational parties are met, which is made possible by *research*. In this study, research, which is also a key element of two-way symmetrical communication, is divided into *environmental scanning* and *evaluation research* (Dozier & Repper 1992:186).	Both environmental scanning and evaluation research will arguably be relevant throughout the OSR-building process. *Evaluation research* is accepted in this study as a two-pronged approach where it should, firstly, be applied during the strategic stakeholder identification phase of the model to determine these strategic stakeholders' needs and expectations. Secondly, evaluation research also becomes relevant during OSR maintenance to determine whether these relational needs and expectations are being met to sustain the OSR and thus to ensure that the OSR grows in intensity to an eventual OSP. *Environmental scanning* should be applied as a continuous process throughout the OSR-building process to detect issues of concern that could harm the OSR-building process.
Issues management	Heath (1997:6) specifically states that issues management will ensure a healthy organisational directive to external stakeholders and facilitate a participatory organisational culture.	It will be proposed that issues management should be conducted throughout the OSR-building process. Issues that have been identified through environmental scanning, which could range from active publics, potential crises and/or conflict resolution between relational parties, should be managed and resolved to avoid damaging the OSR-building process.
Reputation management	A positive organisational reputation *(thereby implying the general perception held by all internal and external stakeholders)* can strengthen relationships and build trust (Thiessen & Ingenhoff 2010:9).	From this perspective it will be argued that a positive organisational reputation is a prerequisite for adequate OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders, and that corporate communication professionals should also manage the reputation of the organisation throughout the OSR-building process.
Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge	Knowledge sharing occurs on the foundation of an internal organisational culture that allows employees to create, share and utilise knowledge (Ribiére & Sitar 2010:36).	Knowledge sharing will be proposed as an element to build sustainable OSRs. It will be argued that knowledge sharing between a strategic stakeholder and the organisation will only occur once a mutually beneficial OSR has been established.

1.3.4.2   Building block 2: the theoretical foundation

Existing relationship-building theories will be explored to serve as the grounding for an OSR-building model, since models are regarded as theories in action (Ledingham 2003:190). Various relational theories from interpersonal communication, sociology, psychology, socio-psychology, organisation sociology and marketing literature will be explored, followed by an investigation of 13 existing developmental or staged relationship-building models. This investigation will serve as the basis for and background to the theoretical foundation of this study, and will culminate in an integration of and justification for Freeman's (1984) stakeholder concept, Ferguson's (1984) relational paradigm and Ledingham's (2003) theory of relationship management, encapsulated in the principles of the excellence theory (Grunig 1984).

The next section will focus on the third building block of the model, namely the *conceptualisation of OSR building*, which in essence, will constitute the actual phases and subphases of the proposed OSR-building model and the pragmatic representation of the theoretical foundation.

1.3.4.3   Building block 3: conceptualisation of OSR building

The third building block of the proposed OSR-building model constitutes the actual OSR-building process and will specifically focus on developing the key phases of the proposed model. Literature on stakeholder identification, guidelines on the development of an OSR and the maintenance of OSR are often explored independently, and this study will uniquely integrate these concepts into one model in an attempt to address the lack of existing OSR models describing the OSR-building process. Strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance will serve as the key phases of the proposed model and the essence of each phase will be briefly discussed in the sections to follow. These phases will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4.

- **Phase 1: strategic stakeholder identification**

Against the proposed definition of a strategic stakeholder, it is necessary to provide a method for identifying strategic stakeholders as the first phase of the proposed OSR-building model. To establish a specific strategic stakeholder identification methodology, various stakeholder categorisation and mapping techniques will be explored as well as the

following stakeholder identification theories: the situational theory of publics (Grunig 1983); communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) theory (Koschman 2009); cost-benefit analysis (Grunig & Huang 2000); and the theory of stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS) (Mitchell et al 1997).

- **Phase 2: OSR development**

Based on existing literature, the following factors will be considered in this phase: OSR antecedents; OSR elements; the unique proposition of an OSR development continuum consisting of four OSR types; and stakeholder engagement as an OSR outcome.

- *OSR antecedents.* It is evident from the literature that prior to the development of an OSR, various *OSR antecedents* existed (Kim 2007:170; Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:7), which are essentially those conditions on which an OSR depends. According to the literature, the following four OSR antecedents are prevalent: trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequence and expectations (Hon & Grunig 1999:12; Greenwood & Van Buren 2010:429; Kim & Radar 2010:62) which will be explored to serve as a subphase preceding *OSR development* for the proposed OSR-building model.

- *OSR elements.* On the basis of the characteristics of an OSR discussed earlier, the following elements of an OSR will be explored for the purpose of this study which, in essence, constitute phase 2 of the model, namely trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment and mutual understanding (Stafford & Canary 1991:224; Grunig & Huang 2000:29; Hung 2003a:12). These elements will be discussed in chapter 4.

- *OSR development continuum.* Studying the elements of an OSR also necessitates an investigation into existing OSR types. Since the proposed OSR-building model will provide a partnership approach to OSRs, an *OSR development continuum* that will highlight four unique OSR types will be proposed. It will be argued that an OSR could grow in intensity over time from a *foundational OSR* to a *mutually beneficial OSR* to a *sustainable OSR,* and ultimately to an *OSP*. This OSR development continuum is in line with an OSR characteristic mentioned earlier, namely that a relationship is a process and evolves in intensity over time. The relationship can

also be defined at different points in the OSR development process (hence the proposition of four OSR types across the OSR development continuum, whereby a foundational OSR will be presented as a basic OSR and OSP as an advanced OSR). This OSR development continuum will also be aligned with the phases of the proposed OSR-building model and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

- *Stakeholder engagement as an OSR outcome.* Various theorists argue that once an OSR has been established, certain *OSR outcomes* will exist, which may include control mutuality, trust, satisfaction and commitment (Hon & Grunig 1999:3; Grunig & Huang 2000:42; Jonker & Foster 2002:191). Since these outcomes will be accepted as OSR elements for the purpose of this study, *stakeholder engagement* will uniquely be explored as an OSR outcome and a subphase after OSR development, whereby the organisation starts to engage stakeholders in its business activities (Lawrence 2002:72; Noland & Phillips 2010:40). Stakeholder engagement will be regarded as a more advanced OSR activity which requires an OSR to be in place to ensure stakeholder engagement because the process of stakeholder engagement is a strategy to strengthen the foundational OSR into a mutually beneficial OSR.

- **Phase 3: OSR maintenance**

The OSR development continuum proposes that once a foundational OSR has been established, it should be nurtured to grow in intensity to evolve into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and ultimately an OSP. This perspective is sometimes contradicted in the literature, as many theorists argue that an OSR is dynamic and in continuous flux (Hung 2003a:2; Rensburg & Cant 2009:58) and cannot be maintained. However, for the purpose of this study, maintenance encapsulates the nurturing of an OSR. This is in line with Stafford and Canary's (1991:220) perspective that a continuous relationship requires maintenance – especially when a staged, process approach is proposed for OSR building. This phase of the model will explore certain theories of OSR maintenance and various OSR maintenance strategies to develop an OSR maintenance strategy to ensure that a mutually beneficial OSR may evolve into a sustainable OSR and ultimately an OSP. As mentioned previously, *evaluation research* should also be conducted during this stage to determine whether relational needs are being met. Possible *symmetrical conflict resolution strategies* (which also forms part of issues management) could also be considered as part of OSR maintenance.

- **Organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSP)**

Based on the OSR development continuum, an OSP will be regarded as the ultimate relational state between an organisation and strategic stakeholder. Existing literature on *collaborative problem solving* (Halal 2001:30), *stewardship* (Kelly 1998; Ledingham 2003:192) and *two-way engagement* will be explored as key concepts underlining OSP, which will be discussed in chapter 4.

1.4 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the subsections to follow, the proposed research problem, sub problems and questions will be formulated.

1.4.1 The research problem

Against the preceding theoretical background, the following problem statement can be formulated:

To explore the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process and to address the need to develop and test a new model that offers a strategic, integrated approach for sustainable OSRs in order to build OSPs as a function of corporate communication to contribute towards organisational effectiveness.

The following sub problems are relevant in addressing the primary research problem:

1.4.2 The sub problems

Subproblem 1: To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practiced strategically.

Subproblem 2: To explore the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship building theories and models.

Subproblem 3: To determine whether existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach to OSR building.

Subproblem 4: To determine what elements constitute an OSR.

Subproblem 5: To determine the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR building process.

Subproblem 6: To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice.

In order to address the subproblems, the following research questions need to be answered:

1.4.3 The research questions

Research question 1: Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practiced strategically?

Research question 2: What is the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship-building theories and models?

Research question 3: Do existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach to OSR building?

Research question 4: What elements constitute an OSR?

Research question 5: What are the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process?

Research question 6: Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice?

As highlighted above, a key element of this study is to measure and explore the concepts derived from the literature in practice. Hence an overview of the research methodology that will be utilised to test the conceptual framework among leading listed South African organisations to constitute an OSR-building model is provided in the next section.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is built from an interpretative paradigm and is *explorative* in the sense that the existing literature on OSR building will be analysed from an innovative, integrated standpoint. This correlates with Babbie's (2007:89) description of explorative research as a method that is essential when the researcher aims to address a phenomenon from a *different angle in order to obtain new insights.* Although explorative research has the disadvantage that it rarely provides satisfactory answers to research questions, it will provide indications and answers that can be further investigated.

Triangulation is applied as the selected research design, which can be defined as a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches in order to eliminate the weaknesses of the two approaches (Van Wyk 2010:91). This is specifically relevant in the context of this study in which a quantitative web-based survey will be conducted to measure the principles of the conceptual framework developed from the literature among

several leading listed South African organisations, because it was not possible to determine this by means of a qualitative study only. Hence the qualitative one-on-one interviews will further explore the detail of the proposed OSR-building model, and more specifically, the process of OSR building and the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function, in addition to the quantitative study.

The aim of the empirical investigation is to ascertain the views of and obtain inputs from organisations that can be regarded as experts in OSR building on the proposed conceptual framework and to integrate key learnings from practice to develop an OSR-building model based on theory and practice. These organisations are leading listed South African organisations that are required to apply the principles of the King III Report, including the principles on how to govern stakeholder relations. The population of this study therefore comprises leading South African organisations listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), based on the *Financial Mail* Top Companies SA Giants for 2011 (SA Giants 2011:29-46) comprising 200 South African organisations. Nonprobability sampling methods, by means of convenient and purposive sampling, will be applied to obtain the sampling frame and sample for this study. To this end, senior communication professionals in these selected organisations will be approached. Subsequently, the respondents who answered the web-based survey will be considered for the qualitative one-on-one interviews, based on the premise that prior knowledge of this study will be a prerequisite for participating in the one-on-one interviews.

The data collection methods, reliability and validity and/or trustworthiness as well as the data analysis methods of both the quantitative and qualitative part of this study are summarised in table 1.4.

Table 1.3: A summary of the quantitative and qualitative research methods

	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Data collection method	Web-based, self-administred survey, designed through the SurveyMonkey design package	One-on-one interviews
Questionnaire and interview guide	• The questionnaire will be compiled according to the identified phases of the proposed conceptual framework for OSR building. • Statement-based questions by means of a Likert scale will be utilised.	The interview guide will be structured according to the model's proposed phases, with an additional category focusing on exploring corporate communication as an OSR-building function. The conceptualisation of an OSR-building model category will also focus on the actual OSR-building process.
Measures that will be employed to ensure the *reliability and validity* of the web-based survey and *trustworthiness* of the one-on-one interviews	• An expert panel comprising academics who are experts in the field of stakeholder relations and a statistical consultant will be selected to evaluate the questionnaire. • Pilot tests will also be conducted to ensure that the questions are interpreted correctly. • A Cronbach alpha coefficient will be determined and item analysis will be conducted for each questionnaire construct.	• Pilot tests will be conducted. • Interview recordings will be retained. • The interviews will be guided by an extensive literature review and the interview guide will be compiled according to categories and subcategories of the literature. • The interviews will be guided by the results of the web-based survey.
Data analysis	Various descriptive and inferential data analysis techniques will be applied guided by the response rate.	The interviews will be recorded, transcribed and analysed according to a combination of Marshall and Rossman's data analysis steps and Creswell's analytical spiral.

Besides the aim of the empirical research to measure and explore the conceptual framework among senior communication professionals in leading organisations, this study will also endeavour to highlight the relevance of corporate communication to ensure organisational effectiveness through OSR building.

A demarcation of the study is explained in the following section.

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

Table 1.5 highlights the key focus of each chapter to address the research problem of providing a new model that describes the OSR-building process.

Table 1.4: Demarcation of study

Chapter	Focus	Overview of chapter	Research subproblem(s) and question(s)
Chapter 2		• The importance of corporate communication as an OSR-building function will be emphasised. • The proposed strategic communication foundation that constitutes *building block 1* will be discussed.	*Subproblem:* To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically *Research question:* Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?
Chapter 3	Literature review	Various relational theories and development models will be discussed to serve as basis for the proposed theoretical foundation that will comprise *building block 2* of the proposed model.	*Subproblem:* To explore the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship-building theories and models *Subproblem:* To determine whether existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach towards OSR building *Research question:* What is the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship-building theories and models? *Research question:* Do existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach towards OSR building?
Chapter 4		• The proposed phases of the OSR model, OSR elements and the OSR development continuum will be discussed. • This chapter deals with *building block 3*, namely the conceptualisation of OSR building.	*Subproblem:* To determine what elements constitute an OSR *Subproblem:* To determine the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process *Research question:* What elements constitute an OSR? *Research question:* What are the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process?
Chapter 5	Conceptual framework for an OSR-building model	The process and phases of the proposed OSR-building model will be outlined to constitute a conceptual framework that will be measured and explored in practice to develop an OSR-building model.	This chapter will focus specifically on the research problem to address the lack of research on how to build, by providing a conceptual framework that can be tested in practice to constitute an OSR model that describes the process of OSR building.

Chapter	Focus	Overview of chapter	Research subproblem(s) and question(s)
Chapter 6	Methods to explore and measure the conceptual framework in practice to constitute an OSR-building model	The methodology that will be used to measure and explore the conceptual framework for OSR building will be discussed.	This chapter will provide an overview of the methods required to address the following subproblems and research questions: *Subproblem:* To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process toward OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice *Subproblem:* To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically *Research question:* Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process towards OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice? *Research question:* Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?
Chapter 7	Integrating insights from practice and presenting the proposed OSR- building model	The findings obtained from the web-based survey and one-on-one interviews will be reported, analysed and interpreted.	The following subproblems and research questions will be explored in *practice*: *Subproblem:* To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process toward OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice *Subproblem:* To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically *Research question:* Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process towards OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice? *Research question:* Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?

Chapter	Focus	Overview of chapter	Research subproblem(s) and question(s)
Chapter 8	Summary of OSR-building model based on theory and practice	A summary of the study will be provided and the contributions and limitations as well as recommendations for future research will be addressed.	The aim of this chapter is to address the main research problem, namely *to explore the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process and to address the need to develop and test a model that offers a strategic, integrated approach for sustainable OSRs in order to build OSPs as a function of corporate communication to contribute towards organisational effectiveness.*

1.7   SUMMARY

The chapter provided the background to and rationale for the study, endeavoured to indicate the lack of research on how to build an OSR and argued that existing and fragmented research approaches exist for OSR building. Hence an integrated model for OSR building with strategic stakeholders was proposed, which signifies a movement away from viewing stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance as separate processes. The model contains the following three core building blocks: a *strategic communication foundation* in which various essential corporate communication functions and the practice of two-way symmetrical communication were proposed for successful OSR building and to emphasise as a secondary objective that corporate communication's worth in achieving organisational effectiveness lies in OSR building; a *theoretical foundation,* which is an integration of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder concept, Ferguson's (1984) relational paradigm, Ledingham's (2003) theory of relationship management and Grunig's (1984) excellence theory to serve as the foundation for the proposed model; and *a conceptualisation for OSR building* to highlight the actual phases and subphases of the proposed model.

The next chapter will focus on contextualising corporate communication as a strategic OSR-building function and highlight various key corporate communication functions which should arguably be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, to ensure successful OSR building. Chapter 2 therefore essentially constitutes the first building block of the new proposed model, namely a *strategic communication foundation*.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AS A STRATEGIC OSR-BUILDING FUNCTION

> "Corporate communication has arisen as a strategic management function and is equipped with the relevant concepts and tools for gaining acceptance of the organization and its operations with important stakeholder groups" (Cornelissen 2005:57).

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The success of organisations today largely depends on how stakeholders perceive the organisation. This perception is based on various elements such as the turbulent external organisational environment; the pressure on organisations to report on the social an environmental impacts of their organisational activities; the prevalence of public activism and globalisation; the increasing emergence of organisational issues and crises; and the need for organisations to be regarded as good corporate citizens through ethical and socially responsible behaviour (Jonker & Foster 2002:188; Burchell & Cook 2006:210; Steyn & Niemann 2010:106; Valackiene 2010:101; Goodman 2006:199; Malmelin 2007:298; Cornelissen, Van Bekkum & Van Ruler 2006:114). According to Malmelin (2007:298), this dominant focus on the perceptions of stakeholders has provided "added impetus and importance to the role of corporate communication" because stakeholder relations are the heartbeat of corporate communication (Luoma-aho & Paloviita 2010:49). This emphasises the significance of practising corporate communication strategically. An organisational environment that demands transparency calls for a communication approach that facilitates *dialogue* (Bishop 2006:217) and an approach that builds understanding and mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig & Grunig 1992:289) – qualities that are underscored by *two-way symmetrical communication*.

Against this background, this chapter will focus on addressing the following research subproblem and research question, as outlined in chapter 1:

Subproblem	Research question
To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically.	Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?

This chapter will contextualise the first building block of the proposed OSR model, namely the *strategic communication foundation*. Firstly, an overview will be provided of strategic communication to initiate the discussion on corporate communication, which for the purpose of this study will be accepted as the preferred term for all strategic communication practised by the organisation with the core purpose of building OSRs. Secondly, the practice of two-way symmetrical communication and various corporate communication functions will be proposed as prerequisites for successful OSR building. Thirdly, reference will be made to the inclusion of chapter 8 on governing stakeholder relations in the King III Report and concepts to measure stakeholder standards in South Africa will be highlighted to serve as contemporary examples of the strong emphasis on stakeholders. In conclusion, a graphic representation will be provided of the strategic communication foundation to elucidate how these elements should be integrated in the proposed OSR-building model.

2.2   STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The ambiguity or undefined status of communication as described by Kristensen (2010:138) has been characteristic of the communication discipline for decades which, alongside a myriad of other reasons, influenced the power of communicators in practice. The worth of communication at strategic level has widely been supported in the literature (Grunig 1992; Caywood 1997; Grunig et al 2002; Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2002; Argenti & Forman 2002; Steyn 2003; Jo 2003:12; Cornelissen 2005; Steyn & Niemann 2010) and communicators' strategic role in practice is currently becoming more prominent. This can be ascribed to the increased emphasis on managing stakeholder perceptions, and in the context of this study, OSR building. This viewpoint correlates with existing definitions of strategic communication and related concepts in which communication with stakeholders is usually pertinent: communication, more specifically public relations, "makes organizations more effective by *developing relations with stakeholders* in the internal and external environment … public relations must be practised strategically before it contributes to organizational effectiveness" (Grunig & Repper 1992:118); strategic communication "provides focus and direction for an organisation's communication, *building relationships with strategic stakeholders*" (Steyn 2003:179); strategic communication

"begins when communication practitioners can identify potential *problems in relationships with the organization's stakeholders*" (Plowman 2005:132); "the 'strategic' prefix accentuates that communication … is to be perceived as not only a set of supporting communication tactics, but as strategically intended, planned, and purposeful mechanisms aimed at *changing the attitudes or actions of a specific target group*s and with a potential value and mandate in relation to the communicating organization as such and in relation to its surroundings" (Kristensen 2010:137) [own emphasis]. According to Goodman and Hirsch (2010:32), the leadership capabilities of communication are evident in key functions such as building trust with various internal and external stakeholders and promoting greater transparency and disclosure as the cornerstones of a positive organisational reputation – all of which are key factors in building sustainable OSRs. Based on these definitions and statements it can be argued that communication becomes relevant at strategic level in the organisation because of the communicators' ability to interact with strategic stakeholders and to build relationships with them. Communication makes organisations more effective by *building relationships with strategic stakeholders* (Grunig & Huang 2000:30).

Another key concept highlighted in the literature on strategic communication is the significance of being *proactive* or *to plan.* According to Grunig and Repper (1992:119), strategy relates to setting a guideline for tomorrow's decisions and results, while Plowman (2006:132) argues that when communicators contribute to the strategic management of the organisation it elevates the communication practice from its typical role of reacting to events to a more *proactive, anticipating* role. Kuchi (2006:219) maintains that strategic communication requires a proactive approach to assist organisations to adapt to changes in the environment, while Kristensen (2010:137) avers that the term "strategic" implies that communication is a planned and focused process to change attitudes. Proactivity is a vital factor in guiding this study for it will be argued that OSR building is a process that should be planned for – it is not a reactive endeavour. This perspective correlates with the differentiation between stakeholders, constituents and publics provided in chapter 1 where the emphasis on stakeholders was justified because it allows, inter alia, proactive OSR building.

It is also necessary to identify a collective term when referring to strategic communication practised by the organisation. There are various interchangeable terms for communication as practised by the organisation, the most predominant of which are business

communication, management communication, organisational communication, corporate communication, public relations, integrated communication and marketing communication/integrated marketing communication (Reinsch 1991:306; Shelby 1993:242; Cornelissen 2005:34; Angelopulo & Schoonraad 2006:12-17). Although the purpose of this study is not to scrutinise communication terminology, it is still necessary to briefly distinguish between these concepts in order to propose an umbrella term for all *strategic communication* from which OSR building can be contextualised. Table 2.1 summarises the definitions of each of these terms, the origin and key focus areas as well as the communication orientation, thereby elucidating whether the communication is aimed at internal or external organisational stakeholders, or both (Reinsch 1991:308; Lubbe 1994:6; Scott Poole, Putnam & Seibold 1997:127; Rubin 1996:7; Harris 1997:90; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:103; Cornelissen 2005:21,32,183; Niemann 2005:30; Angelopulo & Schoonraad 2006:12-17):

Table 2.1: Differentiation between various communication terms

Term	Definition	Origin	Key focus areas	Communication orientation
Business communication	This is the professional discipline of writing, communicating and presenting in an organisational environment to achieve specific organisational objectives. It refers to communication *within* the organisation.	• Business writing • Technical communi-cation	• Written communication. • Achieving business objectives to maximise profit and/or shareholder wealth	Internal communication restricted to interpersonal communication situations
Management communication	This refers to the communication between managers and employees which is restricted to small groups. This communication occurs *within* the organisation to affect the decisions of management.	• Rhetoric • Manage-ment studies	• Improving the oral and presentation skills of management • Influencing management decision making	
Organisational communication	This is concerned with the communication of organisations in a holistic sense; thus communication between these organisations and its environments as well as communication	• Sociology • Psychology • Management studies • Information systems • Speech communicati on	• Communication focused on affecting the organisational structure • All communication within the organisation and	Internal and external communication

Term	Definition	Origin	Key focus areas	Communication orientation
	within the organisation. It is also defined as communication employed to affect the structure of the organisation.		with other organisations	
Public relations	It is a management function focused on establishing and maintaining mutual communication lines between an organisation and its stakeholders.	• Journalism • Publicity • Communication studies	• Obtaining favourable publicity. • Building and maintaining OSR. • Evaluating public attitudes and behaviour.	
Corporate communication	This is a management function focused on building favourable, mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its strategic stakeholders.	• Business studies • Stakeholder studies	To build sustainable relationships with strategic organisational stakeholders	
Integrated communication (IC)	The strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish sustainable stakeholder relationships	• Stakeholder studies • Integrated marketing communication literature	Two-way, interactive communication focused on establishing mutual benefits	
Marketing communication/ Integrated marketing communication (IMC)	Marketing communication, more commonly known today as IMC, is the process of managing all communication sources relating to a certain product or service to influence a customer's buying behaviour favourably towards that product and/or service.	• Marketing • Advertising	• Building brand relationships between the organisation and the customer • Obtaining and maintaining customer loyalty	External communication

From the above definitions it is evident that only public relations, corporate communication and integrated communication are truly focused on building relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Although both integrated communication and corporate

communication is regarded as an umbrella term for all internal and external strategic communication, integrated communication is seen as limited for the purpose of this study because it is deemed to be a function that includes "multiple deployment of elements of the corporate communication arsenal" (Kitchen & Schultz 2001:103) which implies that corporate communication is a broader, all encompassing concept. Furthermore, corporate communication and public relations are terms that are often used synonymously, especially when referring to public relations *management* (Grunig 1992); corporate communication is also sometimes regarded as the evolution of public relations (Van Riel 1995; Cornelissen et al 2006:115); or conversely, that it includes public relations (Goodman 2006:197). Since this study follows a strong stakeholder-centric approach, *corporate communication* will be used as the preferred term when referring to all internal and external strategic communication practised by the organisation, because "the stakeholder concept takes centre stage within corporate communication…" (Cornelissen 2006:24). This implies that the organisation should view its surrounding environment in terms of its various strategic stakeholders on which its very survival depends.

2.2.1   Corporate communication as an umbrella term for strategic communication

Argenti and Foreman (2002:4) and Goodman (2006:197) define corporate communication as an organisation's voice and the way in which the organisation is projected to all stakeholders. It is an all-encompassing term that includes various elements such as corporate reputation, corporate advertising and advocacy, employee communication, investor relations, media relations and crisis communication. Corporate communication is also often referred to as "communication management". In order to specifically emphasise stakeholder centricity in existing corporate communication definitions, Cornelissen (2006:22-23) maintains that corporate communication can be characterised as follows: a function that regards communication as a *strategic* and *planned* set of actions that aligns the communication strategy with the overall corporate strategy; a managerial framework to manage all organisational communication to enable the organisation to build a favourable reputation and *sustainable relationships with strategic stakeholders*; and a "vocabulary of concepts and sets of techniques *to facilitate an understanding and management of communication between the organisation and its stakeholders*" [own emphasis]. Valackiene (2010:99) concurs by arguing that corporate communication is a strategic function that addresses contemporary challenges such as the necessity to create confidence between internal and external organisational stakeholders.

For the purpose of this study, corporate communication is defined as *an umbrella term for all internal and external strategic communication with the core purpose of building and maintaining sustainable OSR with strategic stakeholders to contribute to organisational success.* However, it will be argued that this definition and perspective require the following prerequisites to make it realistic: Firstly, it will be argued that corporate communication should be practised from a *two-way symmetrical communication* perspective to allow sustainable OSR building. Secondly, issues management, reputation management, research through environmental scanning and evaluation research and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge will be proposed as essential corporate communication functions that have to be implemented to ensure successful OSR building. These two prerequisites collectively constitute the strategic communication foundation, which is the first building block of the proposed OSR model.

2.2.1.1   *Two-way symmetrical communication*

This section will first provide an overview of the asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews in order to initiate the discussion on the four models of public relations, namely the press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication models. This discussion will be followed by an exploration of the key characteristics of the two-way symmetrical communication model, which is the model that was selected for this study from which corporate communication should be practised to ensure sustainable OSR building. This section will conclude with a discussion of the existing critique on the two-way symmetrical communication model.

- **The asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews**

There are various definitions of worldviews in literature (Du Plooy 2001:26; Suppe 1997; Kearney 1984:10). However, the two definitions that will be used in this study are that of "worldview", that is, how individuals think about and describe the field of corporate communication (Grunig & White 1992:31), and more specifically, the "attitudes, views, beliefs or mindset of any individual or group of people" (Steyn 2003:57) towards corporate communication.

Furthermore, corporate communication can either be practised from an asymmetrical or a symmetrical worldview. The *asymmetrical worldview* provides communication that is focused on changing the behaviour of stakeholders without any compromises on the part

of the organisation (Grunig & White 1992:39). By contrast, the *symmetrical worldview* implies that organisations are able to achieve their objectives through compromise which provides communication that facilitates cooperation, negotiation and long-term effectiveness (Grunig & White 1992:39). This study holds that a *symmetrical* worldview for corporate communication should be established to enable two-way communication and feedback in an effort to build mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and strategic stakeholders. Both parties therefore have an interest in the relationship and compromise and negotiation are evident to ensure *sustainable* OSRs, and ultimately, organisation-stakeholder *partnerships.* This perspective is based on Bishop's (2006:216) view that besides allowing negotiation and mutual adaption, symmetrical communication also simulates *relationship-building* principles. To further elaborate on symmetrical corporate communication, Grunig and Grunig (1992:312) associate the following key themes with symmetrical communication, which serve as the core characteristics of this approach. These themes and related key principles are explained in table 2.2 (Grunig & Grunig 1992:312-318).

Table 2.2: Key themes of symmetrical communication

Theme	Principles
Interdependence and relationships	• Interdependence is managed by building sustainable stakeholder relationships, and since it is the task of corporate communication professionals to build stakeholder relations, corporate communication professionals contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation by managing interdependence in the organisation. • Interdependence, which produces relationships, emphasises the need for corporate communication.
Conflict, struggle and shared mission	• Relationships that are developed can help the organisation to manage conflict. • The incentive to collaborate can be encouraged through a shared vision of an issue or problem.
Openness, trust and understanding	• Trust is essential in managing conflict. • Openness implies that relational partners must consult one another in decision making and resolving problems. • Mutual understanding needs to be established between relational partners to ensure a more productive working relationship.
Negotiation and collaboration	• Two-way symmetrical communication is a process of collaboration, which implies that relational parties should believe that a mutually acceptable solution needs to be established. • Negotiation similarly refers to a process whereby relational parties should engage in a give-and-take interaction to achieve a mutually beneficial solution.
Process strategies	• Organisations must develop structured systems, processes and rules for two-way symmetrical communication, which implies that a relationship should be continuously nurtured.
Mediated two-way symmetrical communication	• Organisations should provide information that will fulfil stakeholder needs. • The organisation should adopt a "sense-making" approach that corporate communication professionals can utilise to develop symmetrical information – this implies that corporate communication professionals need to conduct research to determine the information needs of stakeholders. This encapsulates the essence of two-way communication.

- **The four models of public relations**

The four models of public relations (Grunig 1984) arose from the above worldviews and are an extension of the one-way and two-way communication variables (Grunig 2006:156) used to define the typical methods in which public relations is practised. These are the press agentry, the public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models (Grunig & Grunig 1992:287-289). The press agentry, public information and two-way asymmetrical models are all characteristic of the asymmetrical worldview, whereas the two-way symmetrical model symbolises the symmetrical worldview (Grunig & White 1992:39). These models will be briefly defined in table 2.3 (Grunig & White 1992:39-40; Grunig & Grunig 1992:288-289; Waters & Lemanski 2011:154), followed by a detailed discussion on the two-way symmetrical communication model, which is the model that was selected for the purpose of this study. Table 2.3 will also refer to the associated worldview and whether these models are regarded as being characteristic of the technical communication role or a managerial, more strategic role (Lubbe 1994:8-9):

Table 2.3: The four models of public relations

Worldview	Model	Description	Communication role
Asymmetrical	**Press agentry**	This is a one-way communication model aimed at convincing publics of a specific idea through any method possible. It is also regarded as the one-way dissemination of information predominantly through the media.	Technician
	Public information	This is the one-way dissemination of accurate messages – it is based on the principle that public relations are responsible for providing audiences with accurate information.	Technician
	Two-way asymmetrical	The concept of *research* is introduced as a means to develop messages to persuade audiences to behave according to the desires of the organisation. *Feedback* from the public is used, but also as a method to meet the persuasion goals of the organisation.	Technician and management (strategic)
Symmetrical	**Two-way symmetrical**	A communication model that is focused on establishing a balanced dialogue between the organisation and its audiences, to encourage a transparent, sincere and mutually-beneficial relationship.	Technician and management (strategic)

- **Exploring the key characteristics of the two-way symmetrical communication model**

The symmetrical worldview and the subsequent two-way symmetrical model of communication arose from Ferguson's (1984) proposition of a relational paradigm for the practice of public relations. This approach is deemed to move away from manipulation and focuses on building, maintaining and enhancing relationships between the organisation and its environment (Ehling 1992:632). Similarly, Ledingham and Bruning (1998:56) and Grunig and Huang (2000:23) argue that the relational paradigm of public relations maintains that the focus of the field of study should not be on the organisation, stakeholders or the communication process, but rather on the *relationships* between the organisation and its stakeholders. This relational paradigm emphasises the essence of this study in that it is argued that corporate communication is regarded as the strategic function that establishes mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and stakeholders to ensure the organisation's future success (Ledingham 2003:181). Moreover, it is argued that if OSRs are the focal point of corporate communication, a need for OSR-building strategies will become significant (Bruning & Galloway 2003:309).

The two-way symmetrical model of communication implies that the organisation uses *research* and *dialogue* to manage conflict situations, to create understanding and to build relationships with stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt 1992:39). Dialogue is critical for organisations to operate in the current business environment which is characterised by active publics and demands for openness (Bishop 2006:217). The terms "dialogue" and "two-way communication" are often used interchangeably. According to Svendsen (1998:106-107), dialogue focuses on the establishment of a *joint vision*, while Burchell and Cook (2006:212) highlight the fact that dialogue facilitates *mutual understanding* and trust between participants. Dialogue is a multifaceted concept, and when studied in detail, unique characteristics that distinguish dialogue from two-way communication may emerge. However, the aim of this study is not to dissect these differences, but instead to support the perspective that dialogue is "ongoing two-way communication" (Hung 2003a:34) between the organisation and stakeholders; it resembles genuine or true two-way symmetrical communication (Crane & Livesey 2003:47); and it is the purposeful usage of two-way communication to promote mutually beneficial relationships (Johansen & Nielsen 2011:209). Hence for the purpose of this study, two-way communication will be the preferred term for achieving mutual agreement, to facilitate feedback, and most importantly, to create shared meaning between the organisation and its strategic stakeholders.

The two-way symmetrical model of communication emphasises the fact that organisations and stakeholders should move away from controlling others' behaviour and ideas; and that communication should be used to "adjust their own ideas and behaviour to those of others" (Grunig 2006:156). The relevance of two-way communication for the purpose of this study, as argued earlier, is that corporate communication improves the effectiveness of an organisation through the utilisation of two-way symmetrical communication to develop and maintain sustainable OSR with strategic stakeholders (Grunig et al 2002:548). Waters and Lemanksi (2011:154) accordingly argue that corporate communication professionals should practise two-way symmetrical communication if they aspire to building sustainable relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders. Furthermore, in an attempt to determine whether two-way symmetrical communication constitutes more ethical communication, Huang (2004:333) found that two-way symmetrical communication is ethical by nature and that it does contribute to more effective communication with organisational stakeholders. It is thus clear that corporate communication's effectiveness

becomes relevant when *two-way symmetrical* communication is practised in order to build OSRs with strategic stakeholders (Rensburg & Cant 2009:52).

Bishop (2006:217-221) developed the following 10 principles for authentic communication, which is regarded as a "cultivation strategy for symmetrical communication", and could be accepted as principles that encapsulate two-way symmetrical communication. The first principle, *being clear*, highlights the importance of taking the receiver of the message into consideration and packaging the message in such a way that the receiver understands it. Secondly, the principle of *relevancy* is emphasised, which implies that the communication takes the interests of those involved into consideration – the information therefore relates to the receiver's individual situation. The third principle, *timely*, highlights the fact that information needs to be shared as soon as it becomes available and that there is enough time for input and feedback prior to decision making. The fourth principle of *consistency* is added, implying that communication and action should be in harmony, which resembles reliability and trust. The next principle, *truthfulness*, also emphasises the need for accurate and factually sound communication. Alongside the principle of truthfulness lies the principle of *fundamentality,* which focuses on the need to disclose core issues. According to Bishop (2006:219), avoiding communicating about core issues is similar to being misleading. Another extension of the truthfulness principle is *comprehensiveness*, which refers to communicating in as much detail as possible to avoid deception and to ensure true understanding. The eighth principle is *accessibility*, which emphasises that all information and/or sources should be readily available – which is crucial to stimulate two-way communication. The ninth principle, *caring*, implies showing respect, concern and consideration for everyone involved in the communication. The tenth principle, *responsiveness and feedback*, emphasises the importance of the organisation giving timeous feedback to stakeholders, and the organisation's need for feedback from stakeholders. Although philosophical at times, it is argued that these principles highlight the contributions of and necessity for two-way symmetrical communication in building sustainable OSRs.

According to De Beer (2011a;c), the two-way symmetrical communication model also resembles the *stakeholder inclusive approach* evident in management literature, to include stakeholders in organisational decision making. This implies that "… organisations have increasingly become aware of the need for an 'inclusive' and 'balanced' stakeholder management approach that involves actively communicating with and being involved with

all stakeholder groups on which the organisation is dependent …" (Cornelissen 2005:27). A *stakeholder inclusive approach* as a key element of sustainability is also followed in the King III Report on Governance for South Africa. The purpose of this report is to instil practices to ensure that listed South African organisations are at the forefront of international governance standards (King III Report 2009). To follow a stakeholder inclusive approach, the report holds that "the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders are considered when deciding in the best interests of the company" (King III Report 2009).

Based on the discussion above and the key themes of symmetrical communication outlined in table 2.2, two-way symmetrical communication includes the following characteristics for the purpose of this study: a consideration of stakeholder interests when making organisational decisions; responsive communication and timeous feedback; collaboration and negotiation; interdependency; message consistency; openness, truthfulness and fundamentality; mutual understanding and a shared vision; and collaborative problem solving. Although the literature indicates that *research* is also a vital component of two-way symmetrical communication, it will not be specifically included as a characteristic of two-way symmetrical communication, since research by means of environmental scanning and evaluation research will be discussed separately as a corporate communication function for successful OSR building, and will thus be promoted in the proposed OSR-building model.

In line with these characteristics, two-way symmetrical communication is defined for the purpose of this study as *an open and interactive communication process built on a mutual consideration of interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) to encourage sustainable, mutually beneficial OSR development.*

- **Critique against the two-way symmetrical communication model**

The main critique against the two-way symmetrical communication model is that its practicality is questionable or that it is regarded as normative or idealistic. It thus describes how corporate communication *should* be practised and not how it *is* practised (Grunig et al 2002:310; Bishop 2006:216; Laskin 2009:45; Kelly, Laskin & Rosenstein 2010:183). Grunig's excellence study (Grunig 1984; Grunig & Grunig 1992), however, proved the exact opposite. Research conducted at more than 300 organisations indicated that symmetrical communication is a key factor for excellent public relations (Grunig 1992a:2).

Because the excellence theory is built on the premise that for an organisation to be successful it must behave in ways that will both solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders, Grunig (2006:159) argues that to make this a reality, stakeholders need to be identified through environmental scanning and organisations should communicate *symmetrically* to these stakeholders to establish sustainable stakeholder relationships. Another point of critique is the belief that symmetrical communication is only applicable to certain situations (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot & Mitrook 1997:31-32). Echoing this sentiment, Kelly et al (2010:183) argue that this can be ascribed to the "imbalance of power" between organisations and their stakeholders. However, as argued earlier, owing to the strong emphasis on stakeholder relations that is currently evident, two-way symmetrical communication models are more relevant than ever before as two-way symmetrical communication will assist the organisation to build mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, thereby erasing the "imbalance of power".

In conclusion, Grunig (2006:168) more recently stated the following: "I now believe that the concept of relationship cultivation strategies is the heir to the models of public relations and the two-way symmetrical model in particular." Although this perspective does propose a need for a succession strategy for the models of public relations, it emphasises the foundational role that two-way symmetrical communication plays in OSR building. Hence a key argument of this study is supported in that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective to ensure a sustainable OSR-building process.

2.2.1.2   *Essential corporate communication functions for OSR building*

It was argued that four vital corporate communication functions need to be integrated into the proposed OSR-building model. These include research through environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge. The purpose of this section is to briefly define each of these functions and to highlight their relevance and necessity in OSR. An individual model on how each of these functions should be implemented will not be provided, since it is argued that these functions should already be in place in the organisation as part of the overall corporate communication function. Consequently, this discussion highlights how these functions, implemented as part of the overall corporate communication function, can aid or relate to the proposed OSR-building model.

- **Research: Combining environmental scanning and evaluation research**

In order to build mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, the communication needs of stakeholders have to be fulfilled, which is made possible by *research* (Bruning 2002:45). Research, as a key element of two-way symmetrical communication, as mentioned earlier, can be divided into the following two key categories (Dozier & Repper 1992:186; Macnamara 2003:330): firstly, research focused on detecting problems and assessing the status quo, namely *environmental scanning*; and secondly, research aimed at evaluating the planning, implementation and effect of corporate communication strategies, namely *evaluation research*. For the purpose of this study, both environmental scanning and evaluation research will be addressed and will be collectively emphasised as a core function of corporate communication as part of the proposed OSR model.

Sung (2007:176) defines environmental scanning as a "methodology for coping with external, competitive, social, economic and technical issues that may be difficult to observe or diagnose but that cannot be ignored and will not go away …". Environmental scanning is therefore open and explorative, and the strategic function of scanning lies in the *early detection of emerging problems* and determining the sum of known issues in the environment (Dozier & Repper 1992:187). Sung (2007:177) highlights the following methods for early issues identification, which is the core strategic purpose of environmental scanning: qualitative research on activists and personal meetings, discussion group monitoring, media content analysis and integrating principles of Grunig's situational theory of publics, a theory focused on segmenting publics on the basis of their perceptions of a specific situation and successive behaviour (Grunig et al 2002:324).

For the purpose of this study, *environmental scanning* can be employed as a continuous activity throughout the OSR-building process to detect issues of concern and the possible emergence of subsequent active publics that could damage OSR at any time in the OSR-building process. It is argued that the issues detected through the process of environmental scanning should be proactively resolved through the process of *issues management*, which is also considered a key corporate communication function essential for sustainable OSR building.

Bruning (2002:45) argues that organisations should ensure that both the *communication needs* (continuously supplying stakeholders with information) and *relational communication needs* (reminding stakeholders of their importance in the relationship) are

being met. Moreover, as highlighted in chapter 1, OSRs are multidimensional, which implies that strategic stakeholders will have various personal, community and professional needs that have to be satisfied. It is evident from these perspectives and the definition of evaluation research provided earlier, that *evaluation research* is predominantly concerned with assessing the success of activities. However, for the purpose of this study it will be proposed that in addition to applying evaluation research as a measure of evaluating the quality of the OSR quality, such research will also be suggested as an activity to initially determine the strategic stakeholders' relational needs and expectations to enable the organisation to effectively evaluate whether these needs and expectations are in fact met. The role of *evaluation research* in OSR building in this study therefore manifests as a two-pronged approach. Firstly, it is conducted to determine strategic stakeholders' needs and relational expectations as part of the stakeholder identification phase of the model; and secondly, it will be applied as a measure of relational quality as part of OSR maintenance to determine whether these identified strategic stakeholder needs and expectations are being met to ensure a sustainable OSR-building process to establish an ultimate OSP.

Macnamara (2003:330-331) contends that various methodologies and sources for research exist. These include, inter alia, secondary research data, which are available on websites and in journals, articles etc; feedback from meetings and informal discussions; advisory or consultant groups; social media, online chat rooms and blogs; interviews, focus groups and surveys with key individuals from the target audience under investigation; response mechanisms such as toll-free phone lines, competitions etc; media content analysis; and ethnographic research.

- **Issues management**

Issues management is defined as a process that manages impending issues and their potential to interfere with the operations of the organisation, while keeping the need of the organisation to orchestrate its interests with its stakeholders in mind (Heath 1997:5; Kitchen 1997:26; Wang 2011:2). Furthermore, according to Ewing (1997:173), it is a "… management process whose goal is to help preserve markets, reduce risk, create opportunities, and manage image as an organizational asset for the benefit of both the organization and its primary stakeholders". Most importantly, Heath (1997:6) argues that to establish harmonious stakeholder relationships in a complex business environment, issues management can help to foster an outside directive for all organisational efforts and to establish a participatory organisational culture.

Hung (2003b:25) contends that an organisation "… conducting environmental scanning and issues management in their strategic planning process will help them identify more specifically the publics involved, and the issues that have great impact now or in the future." Similarly, Wang (2011:2) states that the value of issue management lies in proactive strategic planning.

It is also evident in the literature that issues management may help organisations to avoid organisational crises. According to Jaques (2010:474) and Wang (2011:3), there are four areas in which issues management can contribute to crisis prevention, if it is applied as a preventive measure: the early detection of the underlying systematic causes of the potential crisis; the establishment of effective warning signal detection mechanisms; the identification of stakeholders and obtaining their viewpoints; and stimulating continuous learning and unlearning. Ewing (1997:186) specifically states that "… an increasing number of CEOs discover that crisis management does not cut it, but that issues management offers a better way to steer through the shoals of potential crises". Based on this perspective, it could be argued that although one cannot ignore the fact that some issues may unexpectedly and immediately evolve into a crisis, which would require reactive crisis management, the aim of this study is to highlight the relevance of issues management in the OSR-building process in an effort to, among others, avoid organisational crises.

Furthermore, Kochan and Rubinstein (2000:378) argue that a successful stakeholder-centric organisation requires effective conflict resolution, which characterises successful issues management, through continuous communication and coordination. Based on this perspective, to ensure the endurance of the OSR, it is essential to have effective conflict resolution strategies in place as part of issues management in an effort to avoid possible conflict between relational parties Plowman, ReVelle, Meirovich, Pien, Stemple, Sheng and Fay (1995:237) define conflict as "any situation in which two or more parties perceive a divergence of interest". Plowman et al (1995) developed several conflict resolution strategies which have been adopted by Hon and Grunig (1999:16–17) and are grouped into the following three categories: integrative, distributive and dual concern. *Integrative strategies* are symmetrical because both relational parties collectively seek solutions to problems through open and mutual decision making and represent the establishment of mutually beneficial solutions. *Disruptive strategies* are asymmetrical because one party will benefit at the cost of the other party, which represents a win-lose, self-gain strategy. *Dual*

concern strategies focus on balancing the interests of the organisation with those of the stakeholders, which may range from a mixed-motive to a collaborative approach. Since dual concern strategies may also be asymmetrical because the organisation's interests may be placed above those of the stakeholders, and disruptive strategies are by nature asymmetrical, *integrative strategies* are applicable to this study. The reason for this is that the study suggests that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical perspective which will serve as the basis for the proposed OSR model. The various integrative conflict resolution strategies are cooperating, being unconditionally constructive and saying win-win or no deal (Hon & Grunig 1999:17; Hung 2003b:29-30). *Cooperating* implies that both the organisation and strategic stakeholders work collectively to reconcile interests and build towards a mutually beneficial OSR. *Being unconditionally constructive* represents a strategy whereby the organisation acts in the best interests of the OSR, even if the decision has a negative impact on the organisation or if the stakeholders do not respond. S*aying win-win or no deal*, focuses on achieving true mutuality – if a mutually beneficial solution cannot be established, then the organisation and stakeholders must "agree to disagree – no deal" (Hon & Grunig 1999:17). It is argued that such a "no deal" strategy is still symmetrical because it suggests the possibility of a mutually beneficial solution being achieved in future (Hon & Grunig 1999:17).

In conclusion, the relevancy of issues management for OSR building for the purpose of this study is that it serves as *a proactive, continuous process to manage and resolve issues of concern, which could include the formation of active publics, conflict between relational parties and potential crises, which are detected through environmental scanning, to ensure the continuance of the OSR-building process.*

- **Reputation management**

According to Argenti and Forman (2002:68), reputation comprises the identity, thereby the visual manifestations of the organisation; the overall coherence of the images or perceptions that all stakeholders have about the organisation; and the alignment of the organisation's identity to the images or perceptions held by organisational stakeholders. Since reputation management will only serve as one of the corporate communication functions of the strategic communication foundation building block of the overall OSR-building model and the purpose is not to analyse the concept of reputation, Alsop's (2004:10) basic definition of an organisational reputation, as the aggregate of the

perceptions individuals have of the organisation over time, will be accepted for the purpose of this study.

To specifically highlight the role of corporate communication professionals and the prominence of stakeholders in the process of reputation management, Romenti (2010:306) argues that corporate communication plays a crucial role in developing an organisation's reputation by listening to stakeholder expectations, addressing these concerns with planned strategies and establishing sustainable relationships with strategic stakeholders.

According to Romenti (2010:310), "the cultivation of relationships is considered the basis for building a strong and consistent reputation". This emphasises the need for sustainable OSRs, because such relationships can help to build a positive organisational reputation. Although this perspective is not disregarded, Thiessen and Ingenhoff's (2010:9) perception that reputation management is the aggregate of individual perceptions of an *organisation's past performance and future outlook* and that reputation management is regarded as *"relational capital"* that strengthens relationships and builds trust; it is the organisation's "reservoir of goodwill" will be supported for the purpose of this study. From this perspective it can be argued that an organisation's reputation plays both an initial and ongoing role in the process of OSR building with strategic stakeholders.

Hence the relevance of reputation management for an OSR-building model is that besides managing the organisational reputation as an ongoing process, it will be argued for the purpose of this study that the organisational reputation, which *refers to the general perception held by all internal and external stakeholders about the organisation*, should be positive and serve as a starting point for building OSRs with *strategic* stakeholders specifically. This perspective is built on the argument that strategic stakeholders would probably not build relationships with an organisation that has a negative or damaged reputation because of organisational negligence. This is also in line with one of the characteristics of an OSR mentioned in chapter 1, where it was stated that an OSR is influenced by the organisation's *history* and reciprocity. A general positive organisational reputation can undoubtedly serve as relational capital to strengthen the OSR with *strategic* stakeholders.

- **Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge**

To contextualise the perspective from which knowledge sharing will be addressed in this study, it is necessary to distinguish between three key components of the knowledge management process, namely a technical, communication and a human or organisational component (Barker 2011:105–106). The *technical* component refers to the three-phase process of data gathering, mining and knowledge construction; the *communication* component is centred on knowledge creation and sharing; and the *human or organisational* component focuses on the management of four unified elements, namely procedures employed to connect individuals and groups, formal and informal settings for interaction, organisational practices and the context of these interactions. The *communication* component refers to the transfer of knowledge between the organisation and strategic stakeholders and will be applied in the context of this study to contribute to *sustainable* OSR building.

Knowledge sharing relates to knowledge transfer. However, the difference is that knowledge sharing occurs at individual level and knowledge transfer at group level, that is, at organisational, interorganisational and team level (Ribière & Sitar 2010:38). Some theorists, however, recognise the inclusion of knowledge transfer at individual level (Argote & Ingram 2008:136). Since new knowledge always begins at individual level (Nonaka 1991:97) and this study is concerned with knowledge distribution between the organisation and strategic stakeholders, *knowledge sharing* will be used as the preferred term. It should, however, be noted that knowledge sharing can only occur if a *culture of knowledge is integrated in the organisation* – that is, a culture that "… enables and motivates people to create, share and utilise knowledge" (Ribière & Sitar 2010:36). This correlates with Van der Walt's (2002:63) perspective that "communities of practice" in the organisation should be established to encourage and support employees to share information.

Based on this discussion, knowledge sharing through two-way symmetrical communication in the context of this study occurs once a foundational OSR has been built and it therefore plays a role in building towards mutually beneficial and sustainable OSRs and ultimately OSPs (in support of the proposed OSR development continuum). The reason for the proposition that knowledge sharing will only occur once a foundational OSR is in place, is that individuals will only share knowledge when reciprocity, a good reputation, altruism and, most importantly, *trust,* have already been established (Ribière & Sitar 2010:38). Besides highlighting the fact that knowledge will be shared when an OSR is established,

this perspective is also in line with the argument put forward earlier that a positive organisational reputation (thereby the general perception of the organisation among all internal and external stakeholders) serves as a vital prerequisite for OSR building. To further emphasise the relevance of knowledge sharing in order to establish ultimate OSPs as proposed by the OSR-building model, it is necessary to point out that it promotes cooperation as a strategic method of creating *shared* value for the organisation and stakeholders; and secondly, it implies that stakeholders are recognised "as *partners* who create both economic and social value through *collaborative* problem solving" [own emphasis] (Halal 2001:28).

2.3 THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS STAKEHOLDER CENTRICITY IN ORGANISATIONS

Cornelissen et al (2006:114) argue that all organisations' survival depends on how organisations are viewed by organisational stakeholders. This section will emphasise the increasing movement towards this stakeholder centricity in organisations, and the "added impetus" towards the corporate communication practice, as mentioned by Malmelin (2007:298), will therefore be highlighted. This section will also provide contemporary examples of the current emphasis on stakeholders, and hence substantiate the need for effective OSR-building practices.

Various approaches towards a more stakeholder-centric or stakeholder relationship focus are evident in communication literature. Examples of this include Grunig's (1984) excellence study, Ledingham and Bruning's (2000) approach to PR as relationship management, and probably the most prominent, the movement from the customer-centric focus of integrated marketing communication (IMC) to a more stakeholder focus of integrated communication (IC) (Grondstedt 2000:8; Niemann 2005:77; Grunig et al 2002:270). According to Cornelissen et al (2006:114), the increasing emergence of identity and reputation management models could also be the result of a stronger stakeholder emphasis in organisations.

The reasons for an increasing focus on stakeholders vary from the need for two-way as opposed to one-way communication processes (Hartley & Pickton 1999:101); the need to build profitable relationships with stakeholders (Gronstedt 2000:8); the demand for greater transparency and disclosure (Goodman 2003:199; Valackiene 2010:101); the fact that it will help the organisation to adapt to changes more effectively (Kuchi 2006:219); and the

realisation that relationships provide a method to evaluate short- and long-term contributions of corporate communication programmes and overall organisational effectiveness (Grunig 2006:166). According to Steyn and Niemann (2010:106), this stakeholder movement can be ascribed to the current business environment that is characterised by organisations that are increasingly regulated by the expectations of stakeholders and society for good corporate governance and acceptable behaviour. It is therefore inevitable for organisations to adapt to stakeholder and societal expectations. This makes Capozzi's (2005:291) view that "an organization's key to survival in a competitive marketplace is attracting and retaining support from key constituencies" a reality.

De Beer (2011a) accordingly argues that the age of the "responsible communicator" is currently evident, which reflects the principles of "responsible leadership" (De Beer 2011b). Karp (2003:16) defines responsible leadership as having a responsibility to all stakeholders, accepting accountability for business decisions and being transparent and accountable in all areas of business. According to Maak (2007:334), responsible leadership is "the art and ability involved in building, cultivating and sustaining trustful relationships to different stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization … to achieve a meaningful, commonly shared business vision". To concur with this statement, responsible leadership in a South African context implies responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency (King III Report 2009). A responsible communicator should therefore display these qualities in all communication with internal and external stakeholders in order to build *sustainable* OSRs.

To serve as contemporary, practical examples of the emphasis on OSRs, and hence, the importance and relevance of corporate communication for organisational effectiveness, the section to follow will discuss the principles of the King III Report to govern stakeholder relations and concepts employed to measure stakeholder standards in the South African context. It is important to note that although these principles and concepts will not form part of the proposed model, it is included to provide alignment between theory and practice and could also serve as a benchmark to determine the relevancy and pragmatic contribution, thereby the implementability, of the proposed model.

2.3.1 The King III Report: a contemporary example of the importance of OSR in South Africa

The King III Report, released on 1 September 2009, included for the first time a chapter to provide guidelines on how to govern stakeholder relationships, which all listed South African organisations on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) are supposed to apply (King III Report 2009). From a pragmatic perspective, the addition of this chapter to the report illustrates the increasing emphasis being placed on the importance of reputation management, stakeholder relationship building, and hence the overall corporate communication function of organisations (De Beer 2011b). To further illustrate the significance of OSR specifically, the principles contained in this chapter, which constitute chapter 8 of the report, are summarised and explained in table 2.4 (King III Report 2009; De Beer 2011b):

Table 2.4: Stakeholder relationship principles contained in the King III Report, chapter 8

Principles	Interpretation
Principle 8.1: The board should appreciate that stakeholders' perceptions affect a company's reputation.	The importance of stakeholder perceptions is recognised for organisational survival – hence the relevance of reputation management presented in this study is highlighted.
Principle 8.2: The board should delegate to management to proactively deal with stakeholder relations.	This highlights the importance of building OSRs proactively – this is not a reactive effort but a long-term continuous process.
Principle 8.3: The board should strive to achieve the appropriate balance between its various stakeholder groupings, in the best interest of the company.	This principle highlights a strong self-centredness approach on the part of the organisation. By contrast, this study proposes that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical perspective, which emphasises reciprocity and compromise between the organisation and strategic stakeholder.
Principle 8.4: Companies should ensure the equitable treatment of shareholders.	This principle highlights the fact that shareholders who hold similar shares should be treated fairly.
Principle 8.5: Transparent and effective communication with stakeholders is essential for building and maintaining their trust and confidence.	This principle underscores the vital elements of two-way symmetrical communication which encourage transparent, sincere and mutually beneficial relationships.
Principle 8.6: The board should ensure that disputes are resolved as effectively, efficiently and expeditiously as possible.	This principle could imply that the organisation should attend to stakeholder concerns and problems and ensure satisfactory resolution of the problems to avoid damage to the OSR-building process. Hence the relevance of environmental scanning and subsequent issues management, as proposed by this study, is evident.

These principles underline the importance of OSRs and hence the relevance of corporate communication as a strategic function, since "governing stakeholder relations will be the mantra for corporate communication" De Beer (2011b).

2.3.2 Concepts to measure stakeholder standards in the South African context

In line with the King III principles, the following concepts serve as vital stakeholder standards in the South African context (Steyn & Niemann 2010:116): corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, good corporate citizenship, corporate sustainability and the triple bottom line. Furthermore, these are also elements that would apply to the vocabulary of the "responsible communicator", as mentioned earlier. However, these concepts will not be included in the proposed model, but instead will be regarded as elements that will be established as a result of sufficient OSRs which may be achieved through the proposed model. Each of these concepts will be briefly defined in an effort to highlight the fact that OSRs are at the centre of achieving these concepts.

2.3.2.1 *Corporate social responsibility*

Cook (2010:72) defines corporate social responsibility as "the need for business to operate with greater mindfulness of both its societal impact and its responsibility to a broader stakeholder group". Steyn and Niemann (2010:116) contend that organisations have to behave in a socially responsible manner towards the environment, stakeholders and larger society in order to meet stakeholder and societal expectations and standards. Cook (2010:72) further argues that this growing tendency of the awareness of the relationship between the organisation, environment and society requires organisations to balance various stakeholder interests when making important business decisions. It is therefore evident that sustainable OSRs and two-way symmetrical communication with strategic stakeholders are required to act in the best interest of both the organisation and stakeholders.

2.3.2.2 *Corporate governance*

Corporate governance implies taking responsibility for the actions and policies of the organisation, having respect for the dignity and interests of stakeholders and treating stakeholders with similar interests fairly (Philips 2006:34-35). Commenting on corporate governance from a stakeholder perspective, Spitzeck and Hansen (2010:379) contend that stakeholders are at the centre of organisational survival. Steyn and Niemann's (2010:117) definition of corporate governance from a broader perspective also highlights the informal and formal relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders and the impact of the organisation on society.

2.3.2.3   Corporate citizenship

Walters and Chadwick (2009:51) maintain that corporate citizenship resembles the "stakeholder inclusive approach" or, for the purpose of this study, the two-way communication model as discussed earlier, and can be defined as "specific activities undertaken by an organisation to meet social demands in a responsible manner". According to Steyn and Niemann (2010:117), good corporate citizenship is the degree to which organisations comply with the various responsibilities and expectations enforced by stakeholders and society.

2.3.2.4   Corporate sustainability

Corporate sustainability refers to fulfilling both internal and external stakeholder needs without compromising the organisation's capacity to meet future stakeholders' needs (Dyllick & Hockerts 2002:131). According to Asif, Searcy, Zutshi and Ahmad (2011:354), corporate sustainability is a collective term that includes economic, environmental and societal issues that have an impact on the organisation's business decisions. Signitzer and Prexl (2006:2) maintain that the concept of corporate sustainability contributes to overall sustainable development, which outlines the focus areas of performance, and the vision and societal objectives of an organisation, and further argues that corporate sustainability should be regarded as an all-inclusive term to include among others, corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, corporate social performance and triple bottom line.

2.3.2.5   Triple bottom line

Triple bottom line "is an approach to decision making that captures the whole set of values, ethics, societal expectations, issues and processes that organisations must address in order to minimise any harm resulting from their activities ..." (Steyn & Niemann 2010:117). From a traditional viewpoint, organisations only had to report on financial or economic matters, which constitute a single bottom line approach (Steyn & Niemann (2010:117). Owing to the increasing movement towards corporate governance, a triple bottom line approach was introduced, which includes maintaining a balance between environmental, societal and economic elements to achieve corporate sustainability (Granados & Gámez 2010:467).

Based on the above definitions of these interrelated concepts it is argued that OSR building should be at the centre of these concepts and should either form part of achieving the essence of these concepts or have to be in place in order to achieve them.

2.4 THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOUNDATION FOR AN OSR-BUILDING MODEL

The purpose of this section is to provide a graphic representation of the first building block of the proposed model, namely the *strategic communication foundation*. This will also be done at the end of each chapter to follow in order to build towards a conceptual framework that can be measured and explored in practice to constitute an OSR-building model. The strategic communication foundation in figure 2.1 is illustrated across the three dominant phases of the proposed model (which will be addressed in the next chapter) in order to achieve an OSP.
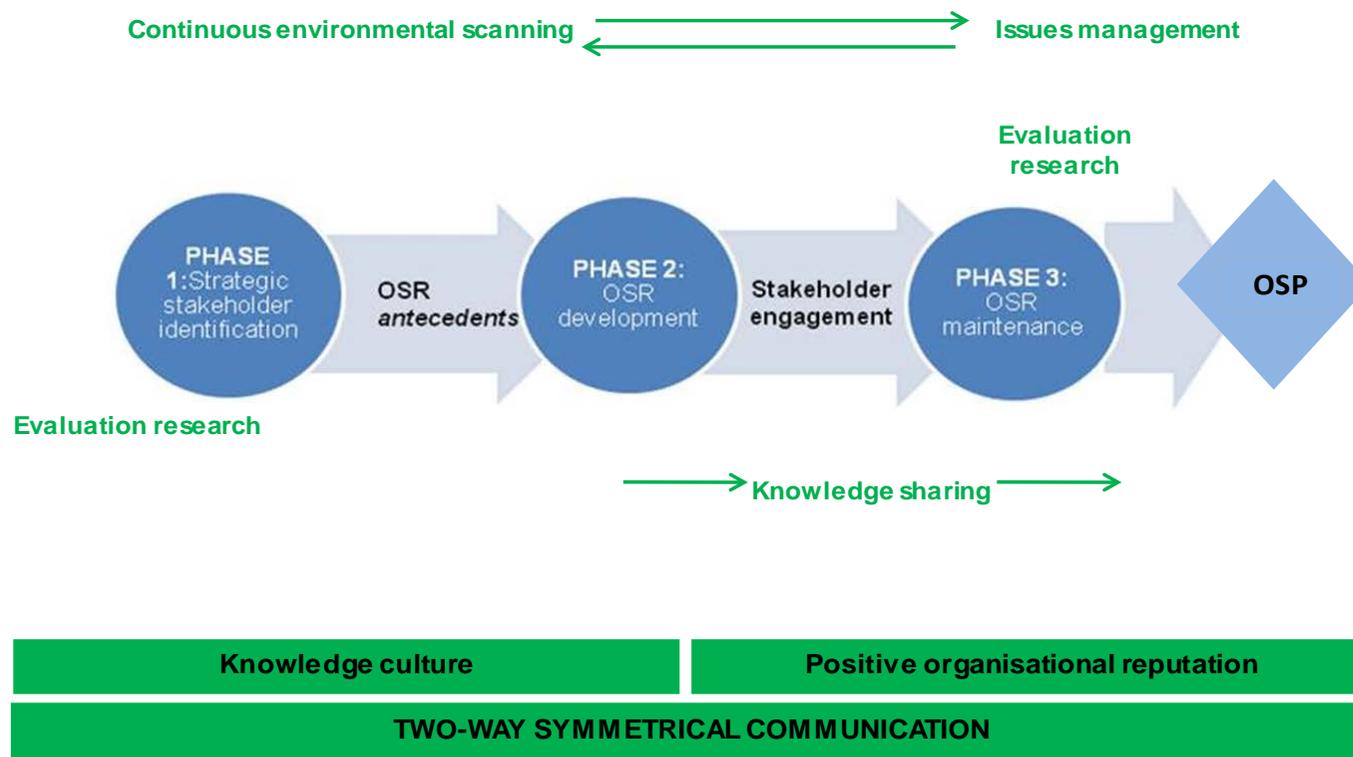
Figure 2.1: Building block 1: strategic communication foundation

Corporate communication was defined as *an umbrella term for all internal and external strategic communication with the core purpose of building and maintaining sustainable OSR with strategic stakeholders to contribute to organisational success.* It was argued that to make this definition realistic, the following two prerequisites are required:

- **Two-way symmetrical communication**

It was argued that corporate communication should be practised from a *two-way symmetrical communication perspective*. As indicated in figure 2.1, two-way symmetrical communication is positioned as an essential foundation for OSR building and hence, to realise the proposed OSR development continuum, thereby the development from a foundational OSR, mutually beneficial OSR, sustainable OSR to an ultimate OSP.

- **Essential corporate communication functions for OSR building**

It was proposed that various corporate communication functions should be integrated to ensure a sustainable OSR-building process, which includes research through environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge. Figure 2.1 indicates that a *knowledge culture* to enable *knowledge sharing* between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) after a foundational OSR has been built, and a *positive organisational reputation* (which refers to the general perception of all internal and external stakeholders regarding the organisation) are deemed to be vital prerequisites for OSR building with strategic stakeholders. *Environmental scanning* should occur as a continuous process throughout the OSR-building process to detect issues of concern and to avoid the formation of active publics that could harm the OSR-building process. *Issues management* should be employed to proactively resolve these issues, and this may involve the emergence of active publics, potential crises and conflict resolution between relational parties, that have been identified through environmental scanning throughout the OSR-building process. *Evaluation research* was presented for the purpose of this study as a two-pronged approach which should firstly, as illustrated in figure 2.1, be conducted during the strategic stakeholder phase of the proposed model to determine the relational needs and expectations of strategic stakeholders. Secondly, evaluation research should form part of the OSR maintenance phase to determine whether these relational needs and expectations are being met as a measure of OSR quality. As mentioned earlier and evident in figure 2.1, *knowledge sharing* between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) should only be eminent after a foundational OSR has been built, because it

was argued that stakeholders will only share knowledge when trust, reciprocity and altruism have been established.

2.5   SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to address the first building block of the OSR-building model by contextualising an OSR against the background of strategic communication literature, in which *corporate communication* was identified as an umbrella term for all internal and external strategic communication. It was emphasised that because of the current movement towards stakeholder centricity in organisations, for which there are a myriad of reasons, corporate communication's role at strategic level in the organisation should be recognised and validated because of the central role that corporate communication professionals play in developing and maintaining OSRs.

The specific objective of this chapter was to develop a *strategic communication foundation* as the first building block of the proposed OSR model. Based on the definition formulated for corporate communication from a stakeholder perspective, two prerequisites were identified to make the definition realistic, namely practising corporate communication from the two-way symmetrical communication perspective and integrating four key corporate communication functions, namely research through environmental scanning and evaluation research, issues management, reputation management and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge. To draw a correlation between the theory and practice and to serve as contemporary examples of the emphasis of stakeholders in organisations, chapter 8 of the King III Report (2009), which focuses on governing stakeholder relations and concepts utilised to measure stakeholder standards in South Africa, were also discussed. Lastly, a graphic representation was provided to indicate how the concepts of the proposed strategic communication foundation should be interpreted for an OSR-building model.

Chapter 3 will present the second building block of the proposed OSR-building model, namely *the theoretical foundation* whereby various existing stakeholder and relationship building models and theories will be explored.

CHAPTER 3: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF EXISTING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING THEORIES AND MODELS

> "Theories are the academic foundation of every discipline; they are important because they are the means by which we codify and organize what we know … theories allow the transformation of information into knowledge" (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:16).

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an overview on the first building block of the proposed OSR model, namely a strategic communication foundation, which emphasised the practice for corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective and the integration of essential corporate communication functions that are arguably required for a successful OSR-building process. This chapter focuses on the second building block of the proposed OSR-building model, the *theoretical foundation*, which aims to explore existing relationship building theories and models, practised in various disciplines from both an interpersonal and organisational perspective, to serve as the theoretical underpinning of an integrated approach towards OSR building proposed in the previous chapters.

This chapter will address the following subproblems and research questions:

Subproblem	Research question
To explore the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship-building theories and models.	What is the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship-building theories and models?
To determine whether existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach towards OSR building.	Do existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach towards OSR building?

This chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, it focuses on providing a background analysis of existing relationship-building theories and models in which the key principles of the most prominent theories and models will be summarised. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the selected theoretical foundation for the purpose of this study which is an integration of the stakeholder concept (Freeman 1984), the relational paradigm (Ferguson 1984), the excellence theory (Grunig 1984) and relationship management theory (Ledingham 2003) to provide a theoretical grounding for the proposed OSR-building model. The chapter will conclude with a graphical representation of the theoretical foundation.

3.2 BACKGROUND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING THEORIES AND MODELS

This section will first focus on summarising the most prominent relationship-building theories evident in interpersonal communication, sociology, psychology, sociopsychology, organisation sociology and marketing literature, followed by an analysis of existing relationship-building models. The reason for focusing on both theories and models is that "theory serves as an explanation, whereas a model illustrates the interrelationships among the parts of the modeled process" (Ledingham 2003:190). Models may thus be regarded as theories in action (Ledingham 2003:186), or theories that are connected to action (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:18). From this perspective it is envisaged that the proposed OSR-building model will be a pragmatic representation of the selected theoretical foundation.

3.2.1 An overview of existing relationship-building theories

A theory is any "organised set of concepts, explanations, and principles of some aspect of human experience" that arrange and synthesise existing knowledge and highlight significant relationships (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:16). A theory is also referred to as a map to discover the unknown (Griffin 2000:4) or to better understand (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:17) certain phenomena. It is often associated with the so-called "puzzle solving idea" (Natasia & Rakow 2009:3), which relates to Stacks, Hill and Hickson's (1991:283) idea of communication architects who understand the "theoretical concept underlying all buildings" and that all theorists are puzzle solvers (Cragan & Shields 1998:4).

The most prominent theories associated with relationship building derived from diverse disciplines include, among others, symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934); social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley 1959); relational perception theory (Laing 1969); social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor 1973); the resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978); relational dialectical theory (Baxter 1988); stewardship theory of management (Donaldson & Davis 1989); and the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt 1994). Although the relational dialectical theory will also be considered for OSR maintenance, and the resource dependency and social exchange theories for OSR antecedents in chapter 4, these theories will also be regarded as theories associated with relationship *building*. The social exchange theory will also highlight the same principles as the interdependency theory discussed earlier for OSR maintenance, since the latter is a derivative of the social exchange theory (Dindia & Canary 1993:167).

This section therefore provides a background analysis in order to summarise the principles of the eight prominent relationship-building theories listed above. Table 3.1 highlights various theorists' perspectives on these theories (Knapp 1984:44; Grunig et al 1992:80; Wood 1995:36-37;50-51;233-6; Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson 1997; Baxter & Montgomery 1997:325–326; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Thomlison 2000:184–188; Broom, Casey & Ritchey 2000:12; Hendrick 2004:36–37; Hung 2005b:2–8; Littlejohn & Foss 2005:82-3;194–195; Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:4; Hillman, Withers & Collins 2009), which are categorised according to the key thrusts; relevance to OSR with reference to where the principles of the theories resemble the cornerstones of this study; and critique.

Table 3.1: An overview of existing relationship-building theories

Theory and discipline	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
Symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934) Sociology	(1) Individuals establish shared meaning over time through the process of symbolically interacting with others. (2) Meaning is established through verbal and nonverbal interaction. (3) Through action and response, meaning is assigned to words and actions, which in turn establish meaning in certain events.	This theory emphasises that individuals collectively construct and share meaning.	This theory is too focused on *individuals* in relationships and how meaning is constructed as opposed to the relationship-building process and its maintenance.
Social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley 1959) Interpersonal communication Psychology Sociology	(1) Social relationships involve the exchange of resources, which can be positive (rewards) or negative (costs). (2) People tend to establish relationships which will provide maximum rewards. (3) Relationships will be maintained for as long as the rewards exceed the costs. If the costs exceed the rewards, the relationship will be terminated. (4) Relationships can be compared to an economic transaction – rewards need to be maximised and costs minimised.	The theory explains why and when relationships begin and are maintained and terminated, which resembles an integrated approach to OSR building.	The theory holds that individuals will engage in relationships only to obtain rewards and will terminate the relationship if these rewards become substandard or more profitable awards are available elsewhere. A collective, mutually beneficial approach to OSR building is not supported.
Relational perception theory (Laing 1969) Interpersonal communication	(1) Relational parties continuously influence one another through their interactions. (2) These interactions draw from three different perspectives, namely, the *direct perspective* (the thoughts of relational parties); the *meta-perspective* (the perception that one relational party has of the thoughts of the other relational party); and the *meta-meta perspective* (what one relational party thinks the other party perceives what he/she is thinking about); (3) A high coherence between these perspectives results in a better understanding between these individuals.	This theory highlights the fact that both relational parties should contribute to defining the nature of the relationship and that *shared meaning* should be established.	Although this theory addresses the required collectivity proposed by this study, it still lacks an explanation of the process of relationship building – that is, elements of a relationship and how it is constructed.
Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor 1973) Sociopsychology	(1) Like the social exchange theory, this theory holds that relational partners still aim to maximise the rewards and minimise the costs of a relationship, but relational partners will disclose information about themselves on the acceptable cost-rewards ratio.	The basic tenets of this theory indicate that a relationship evolves in intensity over time which resembles the proposed OSR development continuum	The contribution of this theory is it indicates a staged, process approach to relationship development. However, the main focus is still that relational partners will only disclose information, and the relationship will

Theory and discipline	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	(2) Relational parties not only assess the current rewards and costs of a relationship, but use the information to predict the future rewards and costs of the relationship. (3) The relationship becomes stronger as more personal information is shared between relational partners. (4) The theory has two important tenets. Firstly, the process of relationship development is an orderly, four-stage process, and secondly, an assessment of costs and rewards will be conducted throughout the relationship. (5) A basic relationship consists of the following four stages: orientation (impersonal communication); exploratory affective exchange (movement to a deeper level of self-disclosure); affective exchange (for as long as the rewards outweigh the costs, relational partners will engage in a deeper, evaluative level of disclosure; and stable exchange (represents a high level of engagement to the degree that relational partners can predict one another's behaviour). (6) Altman and Taylor later revised the social penetration theory to provide a more complex explanation of relationship development, in which a relationship is presented as cycles of stability and change.	proposed by this study.	continue to develop if the rewards of the relationship outweigh the costs. This study holds that strategic stakeholders and the organisation should have shared end goals.
Resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978) Organisation sociology	(1) Relationships will develop according to the organisation's need for specific resources which will allow it to further develop and achieve goals. (2) This theory is often applied to interorganisational relationship literature, which implies that relationships involve exchanging resources between organisations. (3) To obtain resources, organisations must interact with organisations and other parties, collectively known as the social environment surrounding the organisation in order to manage these resources (4) The more dependent an organisation is on a resource offered by a party from the social environment, the more control this party has over the	Although centred on resource provision, this theory recognises the interdependency between the organisation and strategic stakeholders and the importance of organisations interacting with their surrounding environment which is vital to building OSRs.	The theory is more centred on the resources that can be provided as opposed to a collective working relationship between the organisation and stakeholders. It presents a network of interdependencies for resources between organisations in which actions, which are largely asymmetrical, to manage these interdependencies and control are applied.

Theory and discipline	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	organisation's goals and mission. (5) Organisations try to minimise this control exerted by external parties through various asymmetrical practices such as manipulation and limiting information on their activities. (6) Various suggestions to ensure optimal organisational efficiency include diversification, thereby expanding the range of dependencies; avoiding focusing too much power on executive positions; and the symmetrical practices of environmental scanning and acting on information.		
Relational dialectical theory (Baxter 1988) Interpersonal communication	(1) This theory holds that individuals spiral between communicative behaviours – relational parties act and react as the relationship spirals forward, reforming reality. (2) Dialectical tensions must continually be addressed to ensure that the relationship is sustained. (3) This theory is concerned with *process* (ongoing dynamics that affect the relationship development) and *contradiction* (interdependency and interaction between intimacy features). (4) The three key contradictions that relational partners have to manage include *autonomy and connection*, *novelty and predictability* and *openness and closedness*. (5)Dialectics are ongoing relational processes. (6) Dialectics are contradictions that stimulate tension which initiates action and change, thereby ensuring relationship development. (7) The opposing needs of each dialectic coexist in a harmonising tension that allows collaboration.	This theory provides a holistic view of the whole relationship process.	This theory is too focused on the tensions that should be managed between relational parties to sustain the relationship, as opposed to the elements and process of OSR building.
Stewardship theory (Donaldson & Davis 1989) Psychology Sociology	(1) Managers are not inspired by individual goals, but act as stewards in the best interests of their principles. (2) A steward is of opinion that his or her own goals are aligned to those of the organisation. (3) A steward's interests will not depart from the organisation's interests. (4) Even if the interests of the steward and organisation are not aligned, the interests of the	A steward who improves the performance of the organisation indirectly also satisfies stakeholder needs as most stakeholder groups have interests that are served by increasing organisational wealth. In that sense, both the organisation and	This theory does not stipulate that the steward acts in the best interest of stakeholders; instead it highlights the fact that the achievement of organisational goals may simultaneously result in the achievement of stakeholder goals, should their goals be aligned. This theory can only be applied to this study if the organisational

Theory and discipline	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	organisation will take precedence. (5) Cooperation is key. (6) The behaviour of steward is collective and centred on the organisation in order to achieve organisational goals. (7) The steward's utility is maximised when organisational goals are met.	stakeholder needs are satisfied which, may help to strengthen OSRs.	goals, which the steward aspires to achieve, are to act in the best interests of strategic stakeholders. This theory lacks the promotion of *mutuality*; both the organisation and strategic stakeholder should work collectively to achieve shared objectives; it should not be a one-way effort in which the organisational goals that should be achieved happen to be similar to the stakeholder needs. The concept of stewardship is supported, but mutual stewardship should be experienced, as will be proposed in chapter 4.
Commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt 1994) Marketing	(1) A true marketing organisation's existence is ensured by norms of sharing and commitment based on trust. (2) The success of relationship marketing is due to the promotion of cooperative behaviours created by commitment and trust. (3) This theory focuses on the *key mediating variable (KMV)* model of relationship marketing that promotes one relational party's level of *commitment* (a relational party regard a relationship as so important that maximum efforts will be made to maintain the relationship) and *trust* (one party has confidence in another party's reliability and integrity). (4) Relationship commitment and trust are key constructs of the theory which are presented as interceding variables between five antecedents (relationship termination costs, relationship benefits, shared values, communication and opportunistic behaviour) and five outcomes (acquiescence, propensity to leave, cooperation, functional conflict and decision-making uncertainty).	(1) The theory recognises the importance of *mutuality* to create and sustain a relationship; and it highlights the importance of mutual commitment and shared values which are based on trust, a key element of an OSR. (2) The theory also recognises that a relationship has important antecedents and outcomes, which resembles the integrated nature of this study.	Some of the concepts proposed, which relate to relationship termination costs and competition, are too marketing oriented. Although this theory starts to resemble an integrated approach, it focuses too strongly on trust and commitment as opposed to the actual relationship-building process.

Table 3.1 indicates that most of these theories are concerned with the perspective that relationships are built on desired resources – hence an organisation will only establish a relationship with a stakeholder if desired resources can be provided, and vice versa. The relationship will be terminated if more beneficial alternatives become available elsewhere. Although this perspective is not disregarded, and is especially applicable in the initial phases of a relationship, this study holds that OSR building with strategic stakeholders needs to move beyond mutual resource provision to a collective working relationship to achieve mutually desired end goals in order to build an OSP. A theoretical foundation that supports this mutuality to build an OSP is therefore required.

3.2.2 An overview of existing relationship-building models

Based on Wood's (1995:41) argument that a model enhances understanding, stimulates the development of new ideas and emphasises significant elements and the interconnectedness between these elements, the proposed OSR-building model will in essence represent the theoretical foundation in action and illustrate the integrated approach towards OSR building.

A myriad of relationship building models, both from an interpersonal and organisational communication perspective, is evident in literature which can be divided into several categories including, among others, dialectical models, meta-perspective models, communication behaviour models and developmental, process or staged models (Thomlison 2000; Honeycutt & Bryan 2011:177–203). Leichty and Springston (1993:334) argue that stakeholder relationship models should ideally be developmental, demonstrating a sequence of relational stages. Furthermore, according to Thomlison (2000:200), interpersonal relationship models that highlight the progressive stages of relationship development are most applicable to an organisational-stakeholder relationship context. Based on these perspectives, the focus of this study is on *developmental or staged* models specifically because these models resemble the proposed integrated process approach towards OSR building. Developmental models have also received criticism. According to Honeycutt and Bryan (2011:184), for example, theorists have either argued that the stages of developmental models are too difficult to identify or missed altogether or are too subjectively defined. Despite this critique, the proposed OSR-building model will follow the phased approach that characterises a developmental model, because it is argued that a foundational OSR will build in intensity over time to reach a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP (OSR development continuum).

Moreover, stakeholders first need to be identified before the OSR can be developed and maintained, which resembles interdependency and interconnectedness between the phases of the OSR.

A summary of 13 prominent relationship development models is provided in table 3.2, in which the key thrusts will be provided with specific reference to the proposed phases or stages of these models; relevance towards OSR building to determine whether an integrated approach is evident; and a critique of each model (Levinger 1979: 523–541; Broom et al 1997; 2000:3–22; Svendsen 1998:42–47; 62–70; Grunig & Huang 2000:23–53; Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss & Ragsdale 2000:117–136; Thomlison 2000:188-192; Ledingham 2000:44–45; Cohen 2003:106-127; Johnson & Selnes 2004; Preble 2005; Hung 2007: 443–476; Honeycutt & Bryan 2011:184–186). The proposed OSR-building model *will only draw from and not utilise* the principles of these existing models, since it is envisaged that the OSR-building model will be a pragmatic representation of the selected theoretical foundation (which will be discussed in section 3.3), and therefore a unique contribution of the study.

Table 3.2: An overview of existing developmental relationship-building models

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
Relationship stage model (ABCDE model) (Levinger 1980; 1983)	(1) The ABCDE model is a revision of Levinger's (1974) earlier three-stage awareness model of *unilateral awareness*, *bilateral awareness* and *mutual awareness* to a five-stage model of long-term relationships which includes the following: • Initial ***a**ttraction*. This is stimulated by the rewards that the relational party can offer • ***B**uilding* a relationship. The principles of the RELATE model are utilised in this stage which holds that a *progressing relationship* occurs when rewards exceed the costs and a *deteriorating relationship* occurs when the costs of the relationship exceed the rewards. Relational partners are willing to spend more time and learn from each other as long as the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs. • ***C**ontinuation*. This is regarded as the middle phase, and is characterised by various dyadic adjustments; from a continuing growth of satisfying interdependence, to an affable coexistence to a strong level of intimacy, to mutual tolerance. • ***D**eterioration.* In this stage, there is a strong decline in intimacy in the relationship. • ***E**nding.* The relationship ends through separation.	The recognition of initial attraction prior to the development of a relationship, which corresponds to the proposed OSR antecedents of this study. Furthermore the stages of "building a relationship" and "continuation" do highlight the fact that a relationship grows in intensity over time, which is in support of the proposed OSR development continuum of this study.	More elaboration is required on the process involved in building a relationship. For the purpose of this study, a relationship is not merely driven by relational awards. Although not disregarded, the model also represents a definite end state which does not correspond to the continuous development of the foundational OSR to achieve an ultimate OSP.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
Additive scale model (King & Christensen 1983)	(1) This model, also known as the relationship events scale, proposes the following six stages of relational growth: • confession by relational parties on mutual attraction • the recognition of a social network that relational parties are a couple • participants' increased emotional investment • projection of future commitment of the relationship and maximum interdependence • Coordination of activities to address mutual interests • commitment to the exclusiveness of the relationship	The model highlights the development of a relationship to reach an absolute level of commitment – similar to the ongoing progression of a foundational OSR to achieve an ultimate OSP (OSR development continuum).	A lack of relationship building elements is evident.
Stimulus-value role (SVR) model (Murstein 1987)	(1) Individuals who come into contact with one another are in the stimulus (s) stage in which relational parties predominantly evaluate one another on the basis of physical qualities. The value (v) stage occurs when relational parties share opinions on a variety of topics. In the final stage, role compatibility (r), relational parties evaluate their roles that have developed in relation to the other. Relational parties may, for example, perceive themselves as co-equal decision makers or supporters.	The only value of this model applicable to OSR is that it highlights the fact that a relationship grows in intensity as it progresses from one stage to the next.	The model's stages are not an adequate framework to thoroughly explain the relationship-building process.
The staircase model of interaction stages (Knapp & Vangelisti 1992)	(1) This model is an extension of Knapp's (1978; 1984) original interpersonal interaction stages paradigm. (2) The model proposes a sequential movement from one stage to the next, but there may also be movement within stages and forward and backward movement between stages.	Although the model reaches a relationship termination stage, it indicates that relationships progress and intensify over time. The model presents a sequential movement of relationship development.	This model is not applicable to this study because a model that supports ongoing OSR intensification to achieve an OSP is required.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	(3) The following interaction stages are presented: • *Initiating.* This is the first contact between relational parties. • *Experimenting.* Basic information is exchanged between relational parties. • *Intensifying.* More specific information is shared and conversation becomes more informal. • *Bonding.* A formal contract such as a business partnership or any other form of unity binds the relationship. • *Differentiating.* This involves the establishment of more separate identities and less cooperative endeavours. • *Circumscribing.* Communication is only centred on certain topics with less depth. • *Stagnation.* Tension in the relationship becomes evident. • *Avoiding.* Relational parties avoid contact with one another. • *Terminating.* One or both parties end the relationship.		
The Long-Arnold partnership life cycle (Long & Arnold 1995)	(1) The model was specifically developed for interorganisational partnerships that are fostered with specific goals in mind. 92) The model consists of three phases that constitute the partnership life cycle, namely initiation, execution and closure, and three categories of success factors in each of the three phases, namely people, goals and capacity building. (3) Phases of the partnership life cycle	This model resembles the key phases of the proposed OSR- building model. The initiation phase corresponds to the strategic stakeholder identification phase; the execution phase to the OSR development phase; and closure or renewal to OSR maintenance.	Although the model proposes the possibility of renewal of the partnership, the model is too project specific and not focused on establishing a mutually beneficial OSP to achieve shared goals.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	are as follows: • *Initiation*. This entails the identification of stakeholders who can bring the required competencies to the relationship. • *Execution*. Goals identified in the initiation phase are implemented. Two-way communication is essential to ensure successful execution. • *Closure/renewal*. As part of the relationship-building process, success and credit are shared; results are measured to determine whether goals have been met; and capacity building is conducted if it is decided that the partnership should continue. (4) The categories of success factors are intertwined with the phases of the partnership life cycle: *people* are responsible for establishing relationships between the various stakeholders involved in the partnership; *goals* are the driving force behind a partnership; and *capacity building* focuses on building the required platform to ensure that partnership goals are achieved.		
Three-stage model of organisation-public relationships (Broom et al 1997; Grunig & Huang 2000)	(1) Based on the systems theory, and Ballinger's (1991) nine indices for measuring relationships, this model incorporates antecedents and consequences to explain the concept of relationships – it highlights relationships as both the result of and precursors of other changes. (2) Broom et al's original model proposes three sequential stages of *antecedents*, *concept* and	The value of this model, especially Grunig and Huang's revised version, highlights the fact that organisation-public relationships have antecedents and desired outcomes. Although maintenance strategies are presented as the second stage of the model, which does not correspond to the phases of the proposed OSR-building model, various symmetrical strategies are highlighted which can be utilised in the OSR maintenance phase.	The model does not highlight elements of OSR building. It is predominantly centred on the conditions that will stimulate OSR development and the outcomes of such an OSR. The situational antecedents proposed are not sufficient to explain the actual OSR development process. It merely highlights the rationale for OSR development.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	consequences. (3) Antecedents are regarded as those factors that stimulate relationship development at the "concept" stage, and the consequences are the outcomes that can establish, maintain or amend goal states both internal and external to the organisation. (4) The following antecedents and consequences have been identified: • *antecedents*: social and cultural norms; collective perceptions and expectations; needs and resources; perceptions of uncertain environment; and legal or voluntary necessity • *consequences*: goal achievement; dependency/loss of autonomy; and routine and institutionalised behaviour (5) Grunig and Huang expanded this model and used the excellence theory to conceptualise these antecedents and consequences. The revised stages include situational antecedents, maintenance strategies and relationship outcomes. Measurement strategies are also proposed for each stage of the model: • *Situational antecedents.* Single publics and single organisations are expanded to multiple publics and multiple organisations that have behavioural consequences for one another. The measurement strategy proposed is *environmental scanning* that should be utilised to identify *strategic* publics. • *Maintenance strategies.* The model proposes various symmetrical and		

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	asymmetrical strategies to maintain a relationship. The measurement strategy proposed at this stage of the model is *continuous monitoring of management and publics*. • *Relationship outcomes*. Control mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction, relational commitment and goal attainment are proposed as relationship outcomes in which various *co-orientational measures* of management and publics are proposed as measurement strategy.		
Corporate stakeholder relations model (Svendson 1998)	(1) The model is based on the systems theory and is built on the notion that organisations are passively or actively engaged in stakeholder relationships. (2) Corporate-stakeholder relationships develop continuously, are mutually defined and are directed by implicit and explicit contracts that specify relational parties' expectations of the relationship. (3) The key elements of the model include the following: • *Contracting framework* o Organisations are regarded as a nexus of contracts, which can either be implicit or explicit. Explicit contracts are enforceable by law, while implicit contracts are self-enforced or regarded a relational contract. o Implicit contracts exist when both parties will benefit from a long-term relationship. These contracts rely on the reputation of the organisation. o Corporate-stakeholder relationships are reciprocally and	Although predominantly profit driven, this model recognises the value of a mutually beneficial OSR evident from implicit contracts.	This model is in line with claimant stakeholder definitions and the instrumental stakeholder perspective, which is largely focused on the connection between stakeholder management and corporate performance. Similarly to the theories addressed in the previous section that were resource oriented, this model is largely profit driven and does not provide a framework for OSP development. Furthermore, OSR-building elements are not highlighted in this model and an integrated approach to OSR building is not evident.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	mutually defined in this framework. Organisations do not manage their stakeholder relationships; instead, the expectations of the relationship and how to sustain the relationship are managed. o A strategy must take account of stakeholder interests and values, reflect the organisation's values and highlight the main stakeholders who are essential for organisational success. o A stakeholder audit should be conducted to determine the success of corporate performance in terms of intellectual, environmental, social and financial capital. A stakeholder audit will assist the organisation to measure the degree that stakeholder relationships contribute to the success of the organisation.		
FOSTER framework (Svendsen 1998)	(1) FOSTER is an acronym that represents the following six stages in creating collaborative relationships: **F** = establishing a solid **foundation** for relationship building. An organisation's mission, values and ethical principles provide employers with the required foundation to advance existing relationships and to establish new mutually beneficial relationships. **O** = **organisational alignment**. This involves aligning internal structures in order to remove any obstructions or strengthen mechanisms. **S** = **strategy development**. Organisations have to assess their existing stakeholder network of stakeholder relationships and conduct	The model highlights the importance of generating trust between the organisation and stakeholders to establish mutually beneficial relationships or, in this case, collaborative partnerships. The "foundation" stage also resembles the strategic communication foundation, which constitutes the first building block of the proposed OSR-building model. The model recognises that sustainable relationships are built on continuous two-way communication between relational partners.	Although the model emphasises various key concepts of the proposed OSR model and elaborates on the process of OSR building, besides building trust, it does not provide substantial information on the elements of an OSR (thus what constitutes an OSR).

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	environmental scanning to detect any areas that require improvement and to highlight future needs. Information on potential stakeholder partners has to be gathered and a strategy needs to be compiled to foster relationships. **T** = process of building *trust*. This involves a time-consuming process to ensure the sustainability of collaborative partnerships. **E** = **evaluation**. The process of evaluation is essential to determine the satisfaction of relational partners with the relationship. **R** = **repetition.** One has to recognise that the process of relationship building is continuous. To ensure relationship growth, relational partners must continually obtain feedback from one another.		
Professional relationship management model (Dimmick et al 2000)	(1) The model was specifically developed for a patient-health care provider relationship. (2) Two sets of antecedents are proposed for each actor in the health care provider-patient relationship. (3) Antecedent conditions can be measured at the current state and the desired state. (4) Antecedents can also be categorised at the individual, institutional and professional level for health care providers and individual level for patients. (5) The relationship between providers and patients develops from interaction that is set by antecedent conditions, which is achieved through communication linkages. (6) The quality of the communication	The model allows an assessment on how to move an organisation towards a *symmetrical* OSR though a process of benchmarking the state of communication linkages and OSR quality at different stages of the relationship. This will ensure that any boundaries that may impede the OSR- building process can be addressed and resolved to ensure the continued progression of the OSR.	Although the model promotes continuous progression, it does not promote definite OSR stages. Antecedent conditions and communication linkages are not the only constructs of an OSR. The model lacks emphasis on how communication linkages are developed which would have been more applicable to the OSR-building process presented by the OSR-building model.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	linkage can be measured against the degree of symmetry, the intensity, the content, the frequency and the duration and whether there is a positive or negative attitude towards the linkage. (7) The consequences of the relationship cause changes in goal states and behaviour. (8) When the consequences of the relationship are experienced, the quality of the relationship can be measured against the level of reciprocity, trust, openness, credibility, mutual legitimacy and understanding. (6) These consequences feed back to the original antecedents and to a certain degree, reshape the antecedent conditions that guide the interaction and development of the relationship over time. (7) The model allows the continuous measurement of the strength and quality of the relationship.		
The model of the coming together of organisation-public relationships (Ledingham 2000)	(1) This model is based on an interpersonal relationship model that presents two submodels of the so-called "coming together" and "coming apart" of an organisation-public relationship that collectively constitutes ten phases. Only the "coming together" submodel will be addressed since the focus of this study is specifically on relationship building. (2) The following key phases are presented: • *The introductory phase.* Factual information is exchanged between the public and organisation, which is regarded as the basis for building a relationship.	Although this model lacks detail, it highlights the fact that two-way communication is key in achieving loyalty and commitment from the public and that mutually beneficial goal fulfilment is essential to reach the final phase of the relationship-building process. It is evident that a high degree of mutuality between the organisation and public should be established to ensure a sustainable relationship. Furthermore, OSR elements, namely trust, openness and commitment are also emphasised in this model.	The model lacks detail on the process involved in achieving these phases, and although this is in line with the key arguments of this study, the essence of each phase is merely emphasised.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	• *The exploration phase*. Both the public and organisation reveal expectations and explore the possible opportunity of mutually beneficial goal fulfilment. • *The escalating phase*. Both the organisation and public display an understanding of one another's perspectives and needs. When these needs are in harmony, the relationship will progress to the next stage. • *The assimilating phase*. This stage is characterised by a high level of agreement on diverse issues. The organisation's viewpoint is supported by publics and the values of the organisation and public members are interwoven. A high degree of open communication between the organisation and publics is evident. • *The fidelity phase*. Loyalty towards the organisation is evident and the organisation is committed to fulfilling the mutual interests of the public. This phase is characterised by mutual trust, openness and commitment.		
Relationship management model (Hung 2002)	(1) This model focuses on relationship management and is based on the four stages of a relationship, namely *relationship antecedents, maintenance strategies and relationship outcomes.* (2) The model incorporates both exchange theory and dialectical perspectives. (3) Each stage of the relationship is affected by the previous stage of the	This model emphasises that a relationship has *antecedents* and the strategy that is employed to *develop* a relationship results in different relational *outcomes* (relationship types). This model, like the strategic communication foundation discussed earlier, highlights the fact that various factors such as relational qualities of each	This model emphasises that when a public and the organisation's objectives are not in congruence, asymmetrical strategies may be employed to build a relationship. By contrast, this study holds that strategic stakeholders need to be identified and a level of mutually beneficial goal achievement needs to be established with these stakeholders. To ensure optimal efficiency, both strategic stakeholders and

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	model, which highlights the fact that a relationship is an ongoing process. (4) The model demonstrates that different relationship cultivation strategies create different relationship outcomes. (5) An organisation's relationship with publics commences once the organisation has realised its interdependence with units in the external environment. (6) The organisation's drive to survive in the institutional environment influences the type of relationship that will be established with publics. (7) Other factors that may influence relationship development are the *relational qualities* of the previous stage, the *achievement of organisational goals* and the *reputation of the organisation*. (8) Sometimes the expectations of publics may contradict the organisation's management objectives which will guide the relationship cultivation strategy (which can either be asymmetrical or symmetrical) that will be employed to build a relationship. (9) The relationship cultivation strategy has an effect on the type of relationship. (10) Symmetrical relationship cultivation strategies include openness, positivity, legitimacy, networking, sharing tasks, keeping promises, cooperation, being unconditionally constructive and win-win or no deal. Asymmetrical strategies include distributive negotiation, avoiding, compromising, contending and	stage, organisational goals and the reputation of the organisation may influence the relationship-building process. In line with the OSR development continuum of this study, the model also displays relationship development on a similar continuum of extreme asymmetry to a high degree of symmetry.	the organisation need to work collectively to achieve shared goals. The model emphasises that the starting point of a relationship is the organisation's realisation of its interdependence with the units in the environment, whereas this study emphasises that organisations have to identify strategic stakeholders and develop a mutually beneficial OSR with these identified stakeholders.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	accommodating. (11) The type of relationship that may develop, as discussed previously, includes exploitive, manipulative, symbiotic, contractual, convenantal and mutual (one-sided and mutual) relationships. These relationships range on a continuum of concern for self-interest (exploitive) to concern for others' interests (communal).		
Customer portfolio lifetime value (CPLV) model (Johnson & Selnes 2004)	(1) The model is based on an *exchange relationship framework* in which a reciprocal relationship between an organisation and the customer is established. Both the supplier and customer participate equally and value is created as an outcome of both the customer and organisation's capabilities and strategies. (2) This model proposes the evolvement of the following three relationships as the relationship grows in intensity: • *From strangers to acquaintances.* This represents a pre-awareness phase towards a trial period where a minimum level of awareness is established between the customer and organisation after the first transaction. • *From acquaintances to friends.* Once the customer realises that the organisation has a unique offering, trust between these relational parties has to be established to ensure the development of a friendship. This stage of the relationship also requires a high level of information exchange. • *From friends to partners.* This level	Despite being marketing and sales oriented, this model resembles the foundational OSR proposed by this study in which a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship, established by trust and commitment, between the organisation and strategic stakeholder, is required to ensure that the relationship evolves in intensity. The relationship moves beyond satisfying individual needs towards collectively working towards mutually desired end goals. This model also indicates that the relationship is preceded by relational antecedents.	This model, like the previous models discussed, lacks detail on the elements of a relationship. Trust and commitment are not the only elements that are necessary to establish an OSR and an ultimate OSP.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	of the relationship is characterised by cooperation and coordination. Based on Morgan and Hunt's commitment-trust theory highlighted earlier, it is argued that the longevity of the relationship is not only dependent on trust but also on two-way relationship *commitment*. Over time, the relationship will evolve through ongoing commitment and adaptation and the organisation and customer will become mutually dependent.		
Comprehensive stakeholder management process model (Preble 2005)	(1) This model addresses the lack of stakeholder management process models that are able to facilitate the practice of stakeholder management. (2) This model proposes proactive stakeholder management techniques to ensure the optimal functioning of the organisation. (3) The model provides a step-by-step approach to ensure the successful integration of the stakeholder management process into the organisation's overall business processes. (4) The following steps are proposed: • *Step 1: stakeholder identification.* This is the identification of all stakeholders in which the organisation has an interest and categorising stakeholders as primary, public or secondary stakeholders. • *Step 2: general nature of stakeholder claims and power implications.* The aim is to determine what expectations,	This model proposes various factors that are applicable to the OSR-building model: • Steps 1 to 4 serve as a thorough "stakeholder identification" phase, which highlights the importance of identifying salient and thus strategic stakeholders. • Step 5 proposes *symmetrical, two-way communication* processes to address strategic stakeholder's claims, which can be regarded as a strategy for OSR building. • Step 6 focuses on the process of *continuous* evaluation which corresponds to the environmental scanning and evaluation research activities that form part of the strategic communication foundation of the OSR-building model.	This model supports the key arguments of this study and resembles the three prominent phases of the proposed OSR-building model. Despite proposing a two-way communicative approach to address stakeholder claims, further elaboration is required on the actual OSR-building process. This model therefore merely serves as a framework for an OSR-building model.

Model	Key thrusts	Relevance to OSR building	Critique
	needs and/or demands stakeholders may have on the organisation, which gives the organisation an indication of what level of power various stakeholder groups have on the organisation. • *Step 3: determine performance gap.* Open communication can be utilised to assess stakeholders' expectations, wants and/or needs on various issues in relation to the organisation's reaction to these issues. • *Step 4: prioritise stakeholder demands.* This step focuses on identifying salient stakeholders, thereby identifying the strategic importance of stakeholders and the level of management involvement that is required. • *Step 5: develop organisational responses.* Once stakeholders have been identified, strategies to address stakeholders' claims can be developed. Dialogue and engagement are recommended as a key strategy for strategic stakeholders. Collaboration of partnering for managing organisation-stakeholder relationships is suggested to ensure mutual control in order to address uncertainty. • *Step 6: monitoring and control.* A strategic control process should be integrated throughout the stakeholder management process, not only during the completion phase. It is continually necessary to assess performance.		

Although some of these models do recognise the progressive development of a relationship, the above summary indicates that most of these models lack elaboration on the detailed process of OSR building and the actual elements that constitute an OSR. Furthermore, these models are predominantly focused on organisational *publics* with subsequent reactive relationship-building approaches, predominantly driven by happenings in the external organisational environment, as opposed to a proactive OSR-building approach focusing on strategic stakeholders.

This again emphasises the research problem of this study, namely to explore the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process and to address the need to develop and test a new model that offers a strategic, integrated approach for sustainable OSR in order to build OSPs as a function of corporate communication to contribute towards organisational effectiveness. This proposed new OSR-building model will therefore differ from these existing OSR models in the sense that a *proactive* approach with *strategic* stakeholders will be promoted; existing corporate communication functions will be highlighted as a basis for effective OSR building and subsequently emphasise the relevance of corporate communication, practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, as an OSR-building function; it will provide more effective step-by-step guidelines on how an OSR is built through the integration of strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance and two subphases, namely OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement, into a unified model, whereby the actual elements of an OSR will be clearly highlighted in the OSR development phase which will be aligned with the proposed OSR development continuum; and it will specifically promote sustainable OSR building to achieve an OSP. These phases and subphases of the proposed OSR-building model and the OSR development continuum will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

3.3   THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF AN OSR-BUILDING MODEL

The theoretical foundation of the proposed OSR-building model is the second building block and comprises the stakeholder concept (Freeman 1984) and Ferguson's (1984) proposition of a relational paradigm to public relations which are both regarded as the origin of theory development in OSRs. Furthermore, to illustrate the principles of this study, the excellence theory (Grunig 1984) and the relationship management theory (Ledingham 2003)

which are both considered outcomes of the stakeholder concept and relational paradigm, will also be integrated to this building block. As argued earlier, models are theories in action, and the proposed OSR-building model will become a pragmatic representation of this theoretical foundation. Each of these theories will be discussed, followed by a graphic representation of the theoretical foundation.

3.3.1 The stakeholder concept

This section will focus on defining and describing the stakeholder concept; elaborate on Donaldson and Preston's (1995) three stakeholder paradigms with specific reference to the normative paradigm; discuss the relational perspective of the stakeholder concept; review existing critique and suggestions for future development of the stakeholder concept; and conclude with a discussion of the relevance of the stakeholder concept to OSRs.

3.3.1.1 Describing the stakeholder concept

Although the stakeholder concept is predominantly referred to as the "stakeholder theory" in existing literature (Donalson & Preston 1995; Kochan & Rubenstein 2000; Friedman & Miles 2002; Antonacopoulou & Méric 2005; Pesqueux & Damak-Ayadi 2005; Steurer 2006; Rensburg, Rensburg, De Beer & Coetzee 2008; Agle, Donalson, Freeman, Jensen, Mitchell & Wood 2008; Luoma-aho & Paloviita 2010; Johansen & Nielsen 2011), Freeman (1994:413) and Freeman et al (2010:63) specifically state that "there is no such thing as the stakeholder theory", it is a "…framework, a set of ideas from which a number of theories can be derived." Fassin (2009:116) also emphasises that the stakeholder concept has potential for theory development, while Mainardes, Alves and Raposo (2011:237) argue that it requires a proper theoretical body of work. Based on these arguments, *the stakeholder concept* will be used as the preferred term and will be considered as a collection of ideas that places the focus on the maximisation of value for stakeholders (Freeman et al 2010:28) that is aligned with the organisation's strategy to ensure the fulfilment of mutually beneficial objectives for both the organisation and stakeholder.

Freeman (1984) was the first researcher to introduce the importance of other stakeholder groups, besides customers and employees (Mainardes et al 2011:231). This wider stakeholder outlook contradicted Friedman's (1962) profit-driven stockholder analysis

which underscored the fact that business success is dependent on the maximisation of profits, which places the core focus on the stockholders of the organisation (Freeman et al 2010:11). By contrast, the stakeholder concept emphasises that business success is achieved through the creation of supportive communities which is established through sustainable relationship building with several stakeholder groups (Freeman et al 2010:11). This notion was emphasised in Freeman's (1984) introduction of the book *Strategic management: a stakeholder approach*, which was written in the scenario of increasing awareness of the significance of business to society. This approach to strategic management highlighted the following, inter alia: the organisation must take the consequences of all actions on others and the organisation into consideration, which is possible through having a thorough understanding of stakeholder behaviour, values, history and the societal context; the process of stakeholder relationships needs to be understood in terms of three levels of analysis, namely the organisation as a whole, the process or standard operating processes and the daily transactions of the organisation which can be utilised to develop strategic planning processes that consider stakeholder interests; and stakeholder interests have to be balanced over time (Freeman et al 2010:60). In addition to these principles, the stakeholder concept also proposes the following (Mainardes et al 2011:229; Luoma-aho & Vos 2011:315; Freeman et al 2010:28; Pesquex & Damak-Ayadi 2005:8): It highlights the necessity of establishing a connection between the various stakes of stakeholders; the organisation will maintain relationships with stakeholders in which a mutual influence of objectives is evident; it focuses on the relationships with stakeholders to a achieve mutual results for both the organisation and stakeholders; it places the emphasis on mapping the organisational landscape and serves as a guideline to balance and address diverse stakeholder needs; and it is concerned with management decision making.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that the stakeholder concept predominantly draws from the following four different spheres of organisational management research (Fassin 2009:113; Freeman et al 2010:40; Freeman 2010:33–41; Mainardes et al 2011:237): strategic organisational planning, systems theory, corporate social responsibility and organisational theory. The contribution of *strategic organisational planning* literature emphasises the fact that successful strategies require the integration of all stakeholder interests; the stakeholder concept draws from the *systems theory* in that organisations are regarded as open systems that continuously interact with various stakeholders, which necessitates the development of cooperative strategies; the connection with *corporate*

social responsibility focuses on establishing sustainable relationships that are built on trust and the maintenance of a positive reputation; and *organisation theory* contributes the notion that diverse stakeholders continuously interact with the organisation and a distinction is made between primary and secondary stakeholders.

According to Freeman et al (2010:24; 29), "… business is fully situated in the realm of humanity", which implies that a *stakeholder mindset* in the organisation is essential to ensure organisational survival. Organisations should therefore move away from having a profit outlook to an increased focus on value creation for stakeholders, which means that the emphasis should be on establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Johansen & Nielsen 2011:3).

3.3.1.2   *Donaldson and Preston's three stakeholder paradigms*

The three stakeholder paradigms have widely been recognised in the literature (Mainardes et al 2011:232; Amaeshi 2010:14-16; Freeman et al 2010; Agle et al 2008:163; Fassin 2009:113; De Bussy & Kelly 2010:291; Preble 2005:408; 411). Donaldson and Preston (1995) aimed to investigate various issues and implications associated with the stakeholder concept in terms of descriptive precision, instrumental power and normative validity in management literature (Donaldson & Preston 1995:65; 66). These paradigms were built on the perspective that the stakeholder concept has diverse extensions and should not be regarded as a one-dimensional approach (Mainardes et al 2011:232). Ameashi (2010:17) argues that although the instrumental, descriptive and normative paradigms are mutually supportive, the fundamental basis of the stakeholder concept is inherently *normative*. The key thrusts of each of these paradigms will be discussed with specific focus on the normative paradigm because it recognises that the stakeholder concept "... should focus on the creation of value, decision-making processes and relationships with real individuals" (Mainardes et al 2011:234). This is in line with the arguments of this study.

- **Instrumental paradigm**

The instrumental paradigm places a high regard on the connection between the management of stakeholders and the performance of the organisation, and thus the achievement of organisational objectives (Donaldson & Preston 1995:71; 77). Studies conducted in this paradigm emphasise that organisations that adhere to stakeholder needs

and demands will achieve the financial objectives of the organisation more effectively than competitors (Donaldson & Preston 1995:71; Mainardes et al 2011:234). According to Crane and Livesey (2003:43), this approach is characterised by one-way communication and persuasion and an uneven balance of power. Ameashi (2010:16) concurs by asserting that although this approach places high regard on stakeholder needs, it does not "give voice to stakeholders".

Donaldson and Preston (1995:78) also maintain that there is no empirical evidence that stakeholder management will result in the maximisation of an organisation's financial performance. It can also be inferred from this discussion that the instrumental paradigm is asymmetrical in that the organisation only addresses stakeholder needs to achieve organisational self-interests.

- **Descriptive paradigm**

This paradigm is focused on describing organisational characteristics in relation to stakeholders and explains the chronological development of the stakeholder concept (Donaldson & Preston 1995:70; Mainardes et al 2011:235). According to De Bussy and Kelly (2010:291), this paradigm seeks to explain the organisation's behaviour towards stakeholders. It is also concerned with establishing key stakeholders of focus (Amaeshi 2010:15), which gave rise to studies on stakeholder identification such as Mitchell et al's (1997) TSIS theory discussed earlier (Mainardes et al 2011:235).

Although this paradigm contributed to establishing the notion of identifying key stakeholders (hence strategic stakeholders for the purpose of this study), it is still regarded as an analytical approach to attain performance objectives (Mainardes et al 2011:231) and does not offer definitive epistemological justification for the stakeholder concept (Donaldson & Preston 1995:76).

- **Normative paradigm**

According to Donaldson and Preston (1995:74), the stakeholder concept is essentially normative from which both the instrumental and descriptive paradigms flow (Donaldson & Preston 1995:74). The normative paradigm implies that organisations with high moral standards will simultaneously place value on true stakeholder engagement, characterised

by qualities such as trust, fairness and dialogue (Amaeshi 2010:16). According to Mainardes et al (2011:233) and Agle et al (2008:163), the normative paradigm forms the foundation of the stakeholder concept and is oriented towards establishing a relationship between the organisation and stakeholders in an ethical and morally acceptable framework, thereby moving away from economic interests. Theorists have developed various normative cores for the stakeholder concept based on the proponents of business ethics, namely Kantian capitalism (Evan & Freeman 1993; Bowie 1994), personal contracts (Freeman & Gilbert 1988); feminist theory (Wicks, Gilbert & Freeman 1994) fair contracts (Freeman 1994); and justice (Phillips 1997). In addition to these cores, Freeman et al (2010:214-222) add critical theory (Reed 1999); convergent stakeholder "theory" (Jones & Wicks 1999); libertarian stakeholder "theory" (Freeman & Philips 2002); community (Hartman 1996; Argandona 1998); and integrative social contracts theory (Donaldson & Dunfee 1994). The principles of each of these normative cores are briefly summarised in table 3.3 to encapsulate the essence of the normative paradigm (Freeman 1994:414; Freeman et al 2010:214–222; Mainardes et al 2011:233).

Table 3.3: Normative cores of the stakeholder concept

Normative core	Key principles
Kantian capitalism	• The management of an organisation has a fiduciary responsibility towards stakeholders, and has to ensure that stakeholder interests are balanced. • A stakeholder approach that focuses on the wellbeing of stakeholders is the best way to achieve financial objectives. • All stakeholders are regarded as investors and entitled to the same considerations as shareholders.
Personal contracts	• Moral persuasion is essential in this approach. • Managers should embrace the stakeholder concept as it fosters a sense of authenticity and cooperation. • This approach places human beings and the individual rights at the centre of economic activity. • The organisation is regarded as a vehicle through which stakeholders pursue individual goals. The organisation should be managed in such a way that it allows stakeholders to pursue their goals in cooperation with other stakeholders.
Feminist theory	• Stakeholders are regarded as a web of interconnected relationships that shapes stakeholders' understanding of the organisation. • Management have to ensure that this web of relationships is maintained to ensure success for the organisation and value for the stakeholders. • This approach moves away from economic theory as basis to the concept of interrelatedness of stakeholders to achieve organisational success.
Fair contracts	• This approach highlights the principles of entry and exit and includes governance, externalities, contracting costs, agency and limited immortality. • This approach specifically highlights the fact that the stakeholder concept is a collection of ideas to address the purpose of the organisation and the responsibilities of the organisation towards stakeholders.
Justice	• The stakeholder concept is regarded as a cooperative 'scheme" in which participants have obligations to others through the acceptance and receipt of the benefits of the scheme.
Critical theory	• The following normative claims that developed from three different stakes are highlighted: legitimacy, morality and ethics. • Emphasis is placed on the stakeholders of the organisation to engage in discourse and become involved in the management of the organisation through stakeholder cooperation.
Convergent stakeholder theory	• This approach highlights the equal importance of instrumental and normative cores to ensure value creation over time, and instead of applying these cores individually, they should be applied collectively.
Libertarian stakeholder theory	• The following five principles embrace the movement from the stakeholder concept to the libertarian stakeholder "theory": stakeholder cooperation, stakeholder responsibility, complexity caused by diverse stakeholder motivations and values, continuous creation of value and emergent competition.
Community	• This approach highlights the "common good" and the organisation's responsibility towards stakeholders. • The organisation is regarded as a community of individuals, each with rights and responsibilities. It highlights the way in which individuals can work collectively to increase the benefits for all.
Integrative social contracts theory	• This approach emphasises the moralities associated with economic life; various implicit and explicit norms govern economic activity.

Based on the summary in table 3.3 it can be argued that the normative paradigm of the stakeholder concept corresponds with practising corporate communication from a two-way

symmetrical perspective to build towards OSP, as proposed in this study. The main reason is that this paradigm places human qualities in high regard in economic activity and integrates the notion that a *collective* working relationship between the organisation and stakeholders, developed in a framework of *fairness, honesty and trust*, will create more value for the organisation over time as opposed to pursuing instrumental and thus profit-driven objectives.

Freeman et al (2010:95) also identified several key themes that relate the stakeholder theory to strategic management, which includes, among others, economic justification of the stakeholder approach; the influence of the stakeholder concept on the strategic management process; the application of the stakeholder concept to corporate governance and organisational strategies; and the influence of the stakeholder concept on the relational view. Since this study focuses on OSR building, the application of the stakeholder concept to a relational view of strategic management will specifically be explored and discussed in the following section.

3.3.1.3   *The stakeholder concept from a relational view of strategic management*

The relational view of strategic management is an important theme in the stakeholder concept, as it "… brings to the forefront of our attention the relational nature of organizational life" (Antonacopoulou & Méric 2005:30) and it is regarded as the original intention of the stakeholder concept: envisioning the organisation and its stakeholders in two-way relationships (Freeman et al 2010:109). Various theorists have associated the stakeholder concept with the relational view of strategic management (Lavie 2006; Friedman & Miles 2002; Barringer & Harrison 2000; Dyer & Nobeoka 2000; Kochan & Rubenstein 2000; Dyer & Singh 1998; Kanter 1994; Lorange, Roos & Bronn 1992; Mills & Chen 1996; Dill 1975). Dyer and Singh (1998) investigated the significance of relationships between organisations to contribute to a competitive advantage and identified four possible determinants of relational rents. These are defined as a "profit" generated from a collective working relationship, for competitive advantage, namely relation- specific assets; knowledge-sharing routines; complementary resources and capabilities; and effective governance (Dyer & Singh 1998:662-670). They argued that the greater the relational parties' investment in *relation specific assets*, the greater the potential will be for relational rents; *knowledge-sharing routines* between organisations are essential to establish a competitive advantage, which emphasises the fact that organisational learning cannot occur in isolation; organisations in a collaborative working relationship can provide

complementary resources and capabilities that cannot be achieved if relational partners work in isolation; and an *effective governance* structure that minimises transaction costs is essential to the success of a collaborative working relationship. Another example of applying the stakeholder concept to the relational view in strategic management is Kochan and Rubenstein's (2000) study to determine the differences between a profit-driven shareholder organisation and a stakeholder-centric organisation in which several relational associations with the stakeholder-oriented organisation are highlighted. For example, they also contend that the establishment of trust is highlighted as a key element of an OSR, and it is argued that stakeholders must be involved in the decision-making processes of the organisation, which indicates the cooperative nature of the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders (Kochan & Rubenstein 2000:383). Accordingly, Barringer and Harrison (2000:367) state that interorganisational relationships create value through, inter alia, the *combination* of *resources and knowledge sharing*; Dyer and Nobeoka (2000:364) argue that *cooperative knowledge sharing* through networking is essential to establish a competitive advantage; and Friedman and Miles (2002:5) concur that an OSR results in an elaboration of ideas, interests and institutional support.

It is evident from these perspectives that the application of the stakeholder concept to the relational view of strategic management emphasises that an OSR that focuses on achieving mutually beneficial objectives is more advantageous than pursuing goals driven by self-interest.

3.3.1.4 *Critique on and future developments of the stakeholder concept*

The dominant themes evident in reviewing the existing critique on the stakeholder concept are, inter alia, either centred on the argument that the stakeholder concept is vague (Fassin 2009:115; Antonacopoulou & Méric 2005:22; Podnar & Jancic 2006:298;), which refers to the broad definition of a stakeholder as mentioned previously, or the lack of theoretical grounding (Mainardes et al 2011:237; Luoma-aho & Paloviita 2010:51; Fassin 2009:115; Agle et al 2008:182; Steurer 2006:56). Antonacopoulou and Méric (2005:22), for example, contend that "stakeholder" is a "fuzzy concept", while Fassin (2009:117) argues that "those that can affect a firm are not always the same as those who can be affected by it". Furthermore, Steurer (2006:56) emphasises the fact that "... stakeholder theories need to be as advanced as the theoretical developments they try to comprehend", and Luoma-aho and Paloviita (2010:51) specifically state that the stakeholder "theory" lacks vital theory-building characteristics. These criticisms have to an extent been addressed in this

study in the formulation of a definition and key characteristics of *strategic* stakeholders proposed earlier, thereby moving away from the broad, all-inclusive connotation of the term "stakeholder", and accepting the stakeholder concept as a collection of ideas that has potential for theory development but not a theory per se.

Commenting on the future developments of the stakeholder concept, Freeman et al (2010:6) argue that the following four central ideas are required to further develop the stakeholder concept: getting "the stakeholder theory off the ground", which includes the separation fallacy, integration thesis, responsibility principle and open question argument (Freeman 1994:412; Agle et al 2008:163; Freeman et al 2010:6–7):

- *Separation fallacy.* The separation fallacy is built on the notion that it is not practical to separate questions of ethics from questions of business. It is argued that it should be termed the *integrative revolution* to indicate how the normative part of business, that is, ethics, should be integrated with other elements of business.
- *Integration thesis.* The integration thesis encapsulates the ideas that business cannot be separated from ethics, and vice versa, and human beings will always be a central topic when talking about business and ethics. This specifically makes the relational view of the stakeholder concept relevant.
- *Responsibility principle.* It is argued that taking responsibility for actions is the connection between the continuum of business, on the one hand, and ethics, on the other.
- *Open question argument.* The following open questions are highlighted by this argument: If this decision is made, for whom will value be created? Who will benefit from this decision? Whose rights are permitted and whose values are supported by this decision? It is argued that the open question format invalidates the separation fallacy, since these questions are predominantly open for business decisions and that a theory that provides answers to the open question format should be developed.

Agle et al (2008:166) further argue that that the stakeholder concept "is not about markets and how they work. It is not a theory about the firm. Rather it is a very simple idea about how people create value for each other." From this perspective it could be argued that the relational view of the stakeholder concept becomes relevant and should be the foundation for future developments of the stakeholder concept into a theory. The organisation and

stakeholders need to establish a mutually beneficial OSR in order to achieve shared objectives.

3.3.1.5 *The contributions of the stakeholder concept to OSR*

Based on a critical analysis of the stakeholder concept from a normative paradigm and relational perspective, it is argued that it contributes the following to the theoretical foundation of this study:

- It places the emphasis on having a stakeholder mindset, thereby not only including numerous stakeholder groups and the ability to balance diverse stakeholder needs, but also adopting a proactive approach to OSR building.

- The success of the organisation is based on collaboration between the organisation and strategic stakeholders.

- It underscores the fact that an OSR should be based on ethical principles and that mutual benefits for both the organisation and stakeholders should be considered, thereby making the practice of corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective relevant.

- It places the emphasis on management decision making which will contribute to raising the corporate communication function to the desired strategic level, since stakeholder relationship building is a key function of corporate communication.

In conjunction with the stakeholder concept, Ferguson's relational paradigm forms the basis of the theoretical foundation, which will be addressed in the next section.

3.3.2 Ferguson's relational paradigm for public relations

Ferguson's proposition of a relational paradigm for public relations has widely been considered and recognised as the foundation for symmetrical communication practices and theories on relationship building (Grunig et al 1992:83; Ledingham & Bruning 1998:56; Grunig & Huang 2000:23; Ledingham & Bruning 2000; Hon & Brunner 2001:228; Ledingham 2001:287–288; Ledingham 2003:181; Bruning & Galloway 2003:310; Bruning et al 2004:435–436; Hung 2007:443; Ki & Hon 2007a:1). The principle of Ferguson's (1984) paradigm is that the *relationship* between the organisation and publics should be the unit of analysis as opposed to focusing on the organisation and its publics as distinct

entities (Toth 2000:205), which should be the starting point for the development of a theory of public relations.

Ferguson (1984:16) predicted that the following benefits could be derived from having a relational focus: the significance of the relationship for both the organisation and the stakeholder can be properly understood; a relationship-centric model focuses on the relationship as the prime issue, not the relational parties; it provides the potential for methodological development since most approaches are focused on the relational parties as opposed to the relationship; it provides a foundation for future research development; it provides the basis for the exploration into various research fields; and it legitimises the field of public relations. Furthermore, regarding the relational paradigm focus, Ferguson (1984:17) argued that the first step in developing theory is to categorise public relationships, which Grunig et al (1992:83) regard as methods to define and measure the quality of an organisation's relationships with strategic publics: dynamic versus static; open versus closed; the level of satisfaction that both the organisation and publics experience with the relationship; distribution of power in the relationship; and the mutuality of understanding and consensus. Ferguson (1984:18) further maintained that a theory of public relationships should include the following: *organisation-level variables* such as organisational structure and objectives, boundary-spanning roles, size of the organisation, technology, the type of management structure, leadership styles, climate and culture, intraorganisational communication attributes and environmental variables; *public variables* in which a definition of a public should be provided; *communication variables* which include one- or two-way communication directions; and the degree of symmetry versus asymmetry.

The relational paradigm for public relations can be regarded as the starting point of theory building in an OSR context, which is underscored by Hung's (2007:445–448) evolutionary review of studies on OSR, which include the following: the relational dimensions of OSRs (Ballinger 1991); the antecedents and consequences of OSRs (Broom et al 1997); the indicators for evaluating relationships (Huang 1997); the dimensions of OSRs (Bruning & Ledingham 1999); OSR measurement strategies (Hon & Grunig 1999); methods for evaluating relationships in the antecedent, cultivation and outcome stages of a relationship (Grunig & Huang 2000); the conceptualisation of OSRs in terms of interpersonal communication (Toth 2000) a cross-cultural, multi-item scale for measuring OSRs (Huang 2001); the influence of relationship on organisational reputation (Grunig & Hung 2002) and

the role of structural and personal commitment in OSRs (Bruning & Galloway 2003). Although Ferguson's paradigm is only a collection of ideas and propositions for further theory development, it can in fact also be regarded as the starting point and basis, together with the stakeholder concept, for the development of an OSR-building model.

The excellence theory and relationship management theory are both regarded as outcomes of the stakeholder concept (from a relational view) for the purpose of this study. Each of these theories will be discussed in the sections below.

3.3.3 The excellence theory

This section will first describe the excellence theory with specific focus on explaining the excellence concept and its origin, followed by a discussion of the twofold contribution of the excellence theory to this study, namely the *strategic contribution*, thereby raising corporate communication to the desired strategic level, and the *pragmatic contribution,* which implies that the excellence theory provides the necessary guidelines for the implementation of the proposed OSR-building model. This section will conclude with a revision of the critique on the excellence theory and future developments.

3.3.3.1 Describing the excellence theory

Prior to explaining the excellence theory, it is worth mentioning that the theory was specifically applied to *public relations*. However, since the field of public relations is broadly defined as the "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics" (Grunig & Hunt 1984:6), which allows the interchangeable use of communication terms (Grunig 1992a:4–5), the term "corporate communication" will be utilised when referring to public relations to explain this theory because it was the preferred term proposed for the purpose of this study in order to support a wider stakeholder focus (see chapter 2).

The term "excellence" followed from Peters and Waterman's (1982) book, *In search for excellence*, to explore organisational best practices (Grunig & Grunig 2008:328). The excellence theory developed by Grunig (1984) is an umbrella term for an integrated collection of middle-range theories that were utilised in a study at the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation to explain the value of corporate communication to an organisation and to identify the specific characteristics of

corporate communication that contribute to organisational effectiveness (Grunig & Grunig 2008:327). These "middle-range theories" included the following studies (Grunig & Grunig 2008:329): a research programme on the roles of corporate communication (Dozier 1984); applied operations research and management science applied in corporate communication (Ehling 1984); the conceptualisation of the role of corporate communication in management (White & Dozier 1992); research on organisational structures and environments (Grunig 1992b); power in corporate communication (Grunig 1992c); and activism (Grunig 1992a). These theories were integrated into a general theory of corporate communication, which Grunig (1992a:27) regarded as a *theory of communication management*. The word "excellence" is specifically defined as a set of corporate communication characteristics that contributes to *organisational effectiveness*, which is accomplished when *mutually beneficial objectives*, which have been identified for both the organisation and stakeholders, are achieved (Grunig & Grunig 2008:328). An OSR, from an excellence perspective, focuses on the establishment of reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding between the organisation and stakeholders (Grunig et al 1992:83; Ledingham & Bruning 2000:29).

Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995:15) maintain that the essence of the excellence concept is encapsulated by three integrated spheres, as illustrated in figure 3.1.

Communication knowledge

Shared expectations

Participative organisational culture
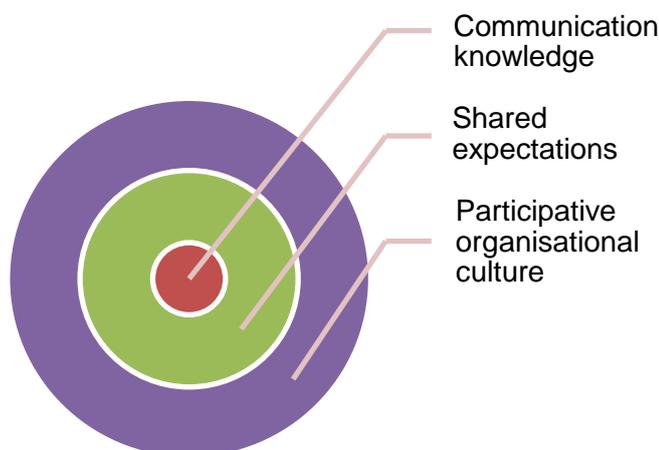
Figure 3.1: The integrated spheres of communication excellence

According to Dozier et al (1995:15), a senior corporate communication professional must be at the head of the corporate communication department with sufficient *communication knowledge*, practised from a two-way symmetrical perspective. The corporate

communication professional must have *shared expectations* with the dominant coalition of the organisation, which can be defined as a group of individuals who sets direction and organisational policy for the organisation (Dozier et al 1995:15; Grunig et al 2002:157) because excellence cannot be built in isolation. To ensure the achievement of a common goal, Grunig et al (2002:483) concur that a *participative organisational culture* that allows input and feedback and a collective working relationship is required.

Against this background, the two proposed contributions of the excellence theory to OSRs for the purpose of this study will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.3.2 *The contributions of the excellence theory to OSR*

To emphasise the *strategic contribution* of the excellence theory to this study, namely raising corporate communication as an OSR-building function to the desired strategic level, as contextualised in chapter 2, Toth (2007:ix–xi) and Grunig and Grunig (2008:329) maintain that the excellence theory is known today as a strategic management function, *because the excellence study established the participation of corporate communication in strategic management*. This is affirmed by Rensburg et al (2008:388), who state that "excellent corporate communication departments contribute to decisions made by executive management by providing them with information about the environment and the organisation, the organisation itself, and about the relationship between the organisation and its environment. Excellent corporate communication departments engage in environmental scanning, have access to senior management, and present information at an appropriate level of abstraction for different levels of management." According to Grunig et al (1992:86), excellence in corporate communication is specifically regarded as *a collection of practices that assist the organisation to build sustainable relationships with strategic stakeholders*. This statement specifically highlights the *pragmatic contribution* of the excellence theory to this study. Although the excellence theory is not an OSR-building theory per se, it illustrates the required context for OSR building and therefore serves as a toolkit for OSR building. Both these contributions will further be contextualised in the discussions to follow.

- **The strategic contribution**

According to Grunig and Grunig (2008:329–331), corporate communication can be practised from two different approaches, namely the *interpretative or symbolic approach*,

which emphasises the way in which corporate communication influences stakeholders' perception of the organisation through media relations; and the *strategic management approach,* which focuses on the participation of corporate communication professionals in strategic decision making which is specifically designed *to build an OSR* (Van den Bosch & Van Riel 1998:25). The strategic management approach provides a "normative model for an ethical, effective, and both organizationally and socially valued approach" that can be applied to the communication practice (Grunig & Grunig 2008:331). The strategic management approach originated from three different research focal points, namely the *stakeholder identification literature* such as the situational theory of publics; the *two-way symmetrical communication model*; and the *evaluation of communication programmes* (Grunig & Grunig 2008:332–333). Grunig and Grunig (2008:333) posit that the "excellence theory provides the means for unifying these concepts" and integrating other important concepts in the strategic management approach.

According to Grunig and Repper (1992:120), there are two main proponents of the strategic management approach of corporate communication: Firstly, corporate communication professionals have to be part of the strategic management of the overall organisation through *environmental scanning* and providing inputs to define the organisational mission and objectives, which provides direction from the *organisational level.* Secondly, corporate communication professionals should also manage *communication programmes* strategically – that is, corporate communication itself should be practised strategically, which is achieved through strategic stakeholder identification and the proactive resolution of issues by means of symmetrical communication programmes. This is emphasised in Grunig and Repper's (1992:124) model for the strategic management of corporate communication, which the researcher conceptualised in figure 3.2 below.
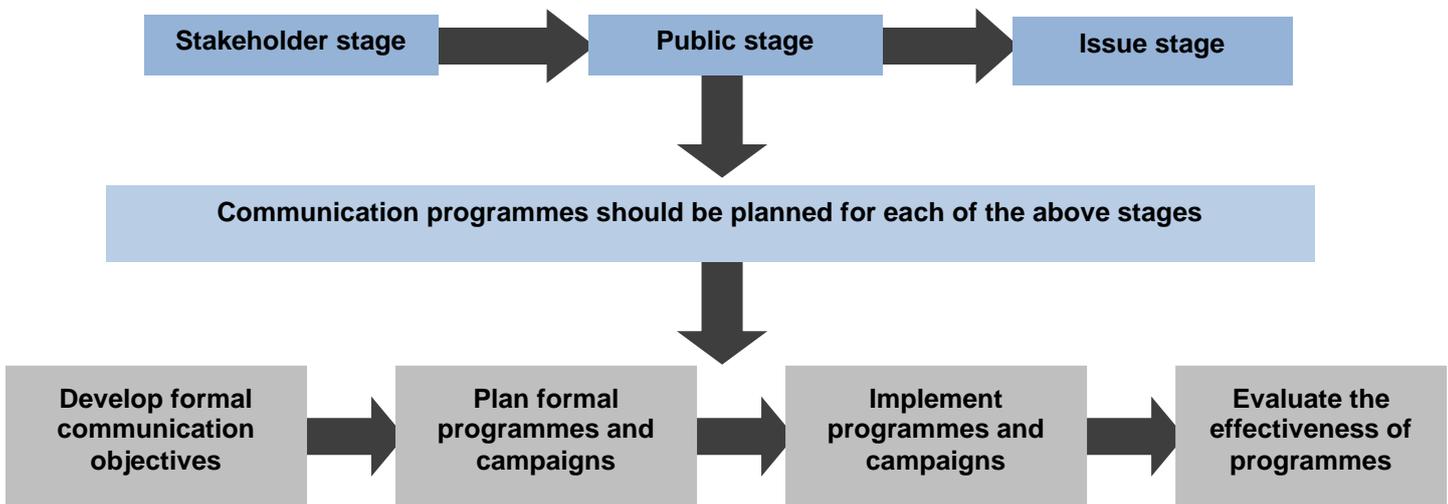
Figure 3.2: A model for the strategic management of corporate communication

The above figure underscores the following principles highlighted by Grunig and Repper (1992:124): At the *stakeholder stage*, a relationship is established with a stakeholder when the behaviour of that stakeholder has consequences for the organisation, and vice versa. Corporate communication professionals need to conduct research to identify these consequences and ongoing two-way communication between the organisation and stakeholder is practised to build a sustainable OSR. At the *public stage*, publics develop when stakeholders regard certain consequences as a problem and plans are implemented to address the problem. The *issue stage* occurs when publics create issues from the identified problem, and the corporate communication professional should resolve these issues by means of issues management. At each of these stages, formal communication objectives and accompanying communication programmes to address these objectives need to be developed, implemented and evaluated for the identified stakeholders and/or publics.

Regarding these two proponents, the following key thrusts underline the strategic management approach of corporate communication (Grunig & Grunig 2008:339):

▪ The corporate communication function assists the organisation to interact with stakeholders and the surrounding environment in order to achieve the mission of the organisation.

▪ Corporate communication professionals manage communication with top management and stakeholders to contribute to the organisation's decision-making processes.

- Corporate communication professionals manage communication between management and strategic stakeholders in order to *build sustainable relationships.*

- Corporate communication professionals can, to a degree, contribute to managing organisational behaviours.

- *Formative research* to identify strategic stakeholders and *evaluative research* to establish the effectiveness of communication programmes have to be conducted to ensure the successful execution of the corporate communication function at strategic level.

In line with the origins of the strategic management approach to corporate communication highlighted above, the OSR-building model proposes that corporate communication, as an OSR-building function, should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective; the first phase of the model is specifically focused on the identification of strategic stakeholders; and the evaluation of an OSR is considered in the OSR identification and maintenance phases of the proposed OSR-building model. Furthermore, the contribution of corporate communication to the overall strategic management of the organisation and practising corporate communication strategically are reiterated by the strategic communication foundation (building block 1) and phase 1 of the proposed OSR-building model: environmental scanning should be conducted throughout the OSR-building process, to detect issues of concern and should be proactively resolved by effective issues management. Furthermore, a methodology for strategic stakeholder identification was proposed and conducting evaluation research to detect these strategic stakeholders' relational needs and expectations as well as to evaluate, as part of OSR maintenance (phase 3 of the model), whether these strategic stakeholder needs and expectations are being met.

Based on the above discussion it is evident that building an OSR is both central to practising corporate communication strategically and for corporate communication to contribute to the strategic management of the organisation as a whole, since sustainable OSRs are essential to achieve the organisational mission which requires continuous research to identify stakeholder needs and detect issues of concern. It could be concluded that the excellence theory makes a strategic contribution to this study by raising corporate communication, as an *OSR-building function* specifically, to the desired strategic level of the organisation.

- **Pragmatic contribution**

This section specifically focuses on the characteristics of the excellence theory evident in the literature, which will be discussed against the three levels of the organisation, namely programme, departmental and organisational, to illustrate how communication excellence should be implemented in the organisation. Since it is argued that OSR building is central to the excellence theory, the proposition is thus that *an excellent communication function should be established to ensure the successful implementation and facilitation of the proposed OSR-building model.*

The characteristics of an excellent communication function should be aligned with the levels of the organisation, namely *programme*, *departmental* and *organisational* to indicate how corporate communication should be organised to contribute to organisational effectiveness (Grunig 1992:3–15; Grunig 2002:9): *The programme level* focuses on the management of individual programmes and emphasises that corporate communication programmes should be managed strategically (Grunig 1992a:3) through symmetrical communication strategies and strategic stakeholder identification, as highlighted earlier. *The departmental level* focuses on the various characteristics of an excellent communication function that should be applied in the corporate communication department to contribute to organisational effectiveness (Grunig 1992a:3). The *organisational level* emphasises the reasons why corporate communication departments that integrate the excellence communication function make the organisation more effective *as a whole* (Grunig 1992?:3). In addition to these levels, the characteristics of excellence communication can also be grouped into the following four categories (Grunig et al 2002:13–16; Grunig & Grunig 2008:335–338):

- *Empowerment of corporate communication.* This category correlates with the strategic contribution of the excellence theory explained earlier, and emphasises that corporate communication must be elevated to a strategic function to contribute to organisational effectiveness.
- *Communication roles.* Communication technicians are essential to execute day-to-day communication tasks. However, to ensure the successful implementation of the excellent communication function in the corporate communication department, the corporate communication professional must fulfil a managerial role.

- *Organisation of the corporate communication function and its relationship with other management functions.* This category highlights the fact that all corporate communication activities should be integrated under a single corporate communication unit.

- *Models of public relations.* The practice of the two-way symmetrical communication model is essential for the establishment of the excellence communication function in the corporate communication department.

Table 3.4 provides a discussion of the characteristics of an excellent communication function evident from existing literature that are applicable to this study according to the aforementioned organisational levels and categories as well as the relevance to an OSR (Dozier et al 1995:15; Grunig & Grunig 2008:335–338; Grunig et al 2002:13–16):

Table 3.4: The characteristics of an excellent communication function

Key: Programme level
Departmental level
Organisational level

Characteristic	Description	Relevance to OSR	Four categories
The senior corporate communication professional is involved with the strategic management process of the organisation, and communication programmes are developed for strategic stakeholders as part of this process.	Corporate communication contributes to strategic management through environmental scanning to detect issues of concern and identify stakeholders that may be affected by the consequences of or have an influence on the outcomes of business decisions.	Phase 1 of the proposed OSR-building model focuses on the identification of strategic stakeholders. As proposed by the strategic communication foundation, environmental scanning should be conducted throughout the OSR-building process to proactively detect issues of concern of the possible formation of reactive publics that could harm the OSR-building process. Furthermore, evaluation research will assist the organisation to identify strategic stakeholders' needs and also contribute to measuring the quality of relationships in the OSR maintenance phase. This study specifically proposes that corporate communication should be regarded as a strategic OSR-building function in order to contribute to organisational effectiveness.	Empowerment of corporate communication
The communication programmes organised by excellent departments to communicate with strategic stakeholders should be managed strategically.	Managing a corporate communication programme strategically implies that programmes should be based on research, measurable objectives should be implemented, varying techniques should be applied and the programme should be evaluated.		
The senior corporate communication professional is a member of the dominant coalition or has a direct reporting relationship with the dominant coalition.	The only way for corporate communication professionals to influence organisational decisions is when the senior corporate communication professional is part of the dominant coalition or has access to members of the dominant coalition.		
A strategic corporate communication professional should head the corporate communication unit.	Excellent corporate communication units must have a senior corporate communication professional to direct corporate communication programmes. If not, other members of the dominant coalition or an administrative manager who do not have proper corporate communication knowledge will guide the unit.	The proposed OSR-building model requires the expertise of senior corporate communication professionals who understand the two-way symmetrical communication model and specific corporate communication functions, and, most importantly, that support the OSR to achieve organisational objectives. Similarly, Freeman (2010:26) argues that managers are usually responsible for formulating, implementing and monitoring stakeholder strategies, and for the purpose of this study, it is argued that senior corporate communication professionals should fulfil this role.	Communication roles
The senior corporate communication professional must have the necessary knowledge for the corporate communication function to become a managerial function.	The corporate communication department must be staffed with corporate communication professionals with practical and academic knowledge of corporate communication.		

Characteristic	Description	Relevance to OSR	Four categories
Corporate communication should be an integrated communication function.	All corporate communication functions should be integrated into a single department that provides a central means to coordinate the programmes managed by different departments. This is essential to ensure the development of updated communication programmes for strategic stakeholders.	The proposed OSR-building model proposes the integration of diverse corporate communication activities, knowledge and skills. Since all of these elements are closely interlinked, the model should be managed as one collective entity to ensure sufficient OSR building and the avoidance of fragmented practices.	Organisation of the corporate communication function and its relationship with other management functions
Corporate communication should be a management function separated from other functions.	The corporate communication function should not be placed under another department with another purpose other than communication.		
The corporate communication department and dominant coalition share the worldview that the communication department should base its goals and activities on the two-way symmetrical communication model.	Excellent communication departments utilise the two-way symmetrical communication model that is based on research and applied to enhance stakeholder *participation*. The two-way symmetrical model produces sustainable, OSR relationships. Since the two-way symmetrical communication model employs ethical practices, the interests of the organisation and stakeholders can be balanced more effectively. Two-way symmetrical internal communication allows employee empowerment through participation in decision making. A collective working relationship is evident between managers and employees. A high degree of employee satisfaction, control mutuality commitment and trust is evident. To ensure the practice of symmetrical communication, a *participative* as opposed to an authoritarian culture is evident.	The OSR-building model is built on the premise that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective to ensure successful OSR building, and hence to establish an OSP. A participative organisational culture is synonymous with a knowledge culture to ensure knowledge sharing. It can also be argued that in order to establish OSPs with strategic stakeholders, which may include both internal and external stakeholders as per the definition provided for strategic stakeholders, a participative culture that allows a collective working relationship to achieve mutually beneficial objectives should first be established internally before it can be established outside the organisation This underscores the importance of integrating the excellent communication function in the corporate communication department to support the OSR-building model.	Models of public relations
Communication programmes developed for strategic stakeholders are built on two-way symmetrical communication strategies for building and maintaining stakeholder relationships.			
The senior corporate communication professional must have the knowledge to practise the two-way symmetrical model.			
The organisation should have a symmetrical system of internal communication.			

Based on the discussion in table 3.4, one can deduce that the successful implementation of the proposed OSR-building model will depend on the integration of the excellence communication function in the corporate communication department. In other words, the excellence communication function could help make the proposed OSR building more implementable, which encapsulates the proposed pragmatic contribution of the excellence theory to this study.

In conclusion, the excellence theory appears to make a valuable contribution to the proposed OSR-building model because it provides the required context for the implementation of the proposed OSR-building model (pragmatic contribution) and is able to elevate corporate communication as an OSR-building function to the desired strategic level (strategic contribution).

3.3.3.3 *Critique and future developments of the excellence theory*

The main critique against the excellence theory, as identified by Swart (2010:102), is predominantly centred on the utilisation of *two-way symmetrical communication*. As mentioned in chapter 2, the application of two-way symmetrical communication is not always achievable because it can sometimes affect the ethicality of communication (Cancel, Mitrook & Cameron 1999:173). Cameron, Cropp and Reber (2000:243) concur by stating that although it is the senior corporate communication professional's drive to instil two-way symmetrical communication, this is not always possible because of the complexity of this communication (Field & Molesworth 2006:392). Welch and Jackson (2007:187) also state that the implementation of two-way symmetrical communication is unrealistic, especially from an internal communication perspective and that it is not ideal for large organisations. Furthermore, according to Laskin (2009:42), the proposition in the excellence theory to increase the contribution of corporate communication to organisational effectiveness is not representative of the communication industry.

The value of corporate communication practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective as a strategic function is through OSR building, and since it is proposed that *corporate communication should be reinstitutionalised as a strategic function* (Yi 2005), the lack of strategy in corporate communication may be the reason for the problems associated with two-way symmetrical communication. Hence Grunig (2007) argues that future excellence research should be devoted to the evolution of corporate

communication to a strategic management function that can "… continually reinstitutionalise itself to adjust to changes in organisations, communication technologies and societal expectations" (Grunig & Grunig 2009:342). This is essential to improve two-way symmetrical communication practices, since two-way symmetrical communication is required for OSR building (Rensburg et al 2008:390), which in turn is the key to achieving organisational effectiveness.

Although this critique, which is associated with the excellence theory, especially two-way symmetrical communication, is not disregarded and may be applied to certain situations, it is argued that two-way symmetrical communication could be used to build sustainable OSR and should not be based on self-centred, one-way asymmetrical communication practices.

3.3.4 The relationship management theory

The relationship management theory (Ledingham 2003) was also specifically developed for public relations, and since this study is focused on a wider stakeholder context and not on active publics, as indicated in the previous section, the term "corporate communication" will be used.

The essence of the relationship management theory is that it helps to define the function of corporate communication, it provides a process for determining the contribution of corporate communication to achieve organisational goals and it emphasises that corporate communication should focus on establishing mutual understanding and benefits for both the organisation and stakeholders (Ledingham & Bruning 1998:56; Ledingham & Bruning 2000:56–57; Ledingham 2003:182). According to Ledingham (2001:286–287) and Ledingham (2003:182–183), the emergence of the relational perspective was prompted by the following four key developments:

- *Recognition of the central role of relationships in corporate communication.* This emphasises Ferguson's (1984) call for a focus on relationships as opposed to focusing on the organisation and publics as two separate entities.
- *Reconceptualising corporate communication as a management function.* The notion of *managing* OSRs introduced managerial concepts to the corporate communication practice.

- *Identification of OSR dimensions and types and the linkage of OSR to stakeholder attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behaviour and OSR measurement strategies.* More research focused on the exploration of the composition of OSRs.

- *The establishment of OSR models that accommodate OSR antecedents, process and consequences.* Various models of OSRs included antecedents, properties, consequences and maintenance and/or monitoring strategies.

Despite these developments in OSRs, Ledingham (2003) identified the need for a theory of relationship building in corporate communication, and on the basis of Littlejohn's (1983:13–14) criteria of a theory, Ledingham (2003:190) proposed the following theory of relationship management: the effective management of OSRs "around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit" for interacting organisations and stakeholders. Furthermore, the applicability of this theory to this study is encapsulated by Ledingham's (2003:192) statement that "relationship management specifies how to build toward *symmetry (managing OSRs around common interests and shared goals)* and when to apply the approach *(over time).* Moreover, the relationship management theory not only *predicts outcomes and the conditions* under which those occur …" [own emphasis], but also accommodates theories that only explain part of the relationship-building process. This theory specifically emphasises the key arguments in this study, in which it was proposed that an OSR evolves in intensity over time – hence the proposition of an OSR development continuum, and the necessity of practising corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective to realise mutually beneficial objectives of the organisation and strategic stakeholders. This study therefore reiterates Ledingham's perspective, but endeavours to provide an actual method for describing the OSR-building process over time through the development of a new OSR-building model from a corporate communication perspective.

Table 3.5 draws a correlation between the key tenets of the relationship management theory, as identified by Bruning et al (2004:442–443), and how these elements can be applied to the proposed OSR-building model.

Table 3.5: Applying the tenets of the relationship management theory to the proposed OSR-building model

Tenets of the relationship management theory	OSR-building model
A connection between OSR and outcomes such as enhanced satisfaction and a higher degree of loyalty is evident.	The OSR-building model will specifically propose *stakeholder engagement* as an OSR outcome after the OSR development phase.
Organisations and stakeholders have to determine common interests and shared goals.	The OSR-building model will highlight that once strategic stakeholders have been identified (which is already an indication of the existence of common interests), evaluation research should be conducted to determine the relational needs and expectations of strategic stakeholders. This study also indicates that a foundational OSR is established through, inter alia, the management of communication interests of strategic stakeholders and the organisation over time.
Methods in which interacting organisations and stakeholders can enhance mutual understanding and benefit should be identified.	Besides the proposition that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, which should arguably establish mutual understanding between the strategic stakeholder and organisation, this OSR model promotes the integration of research by means of environmental scanning and evaluation research to ensure, inter alia, continuous mutual understanding. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement will also be proposed as a method to strengthen the OSR, and hence a method to enhance mutual understanding and benefits.

From the above discussion it is evident that the relationship management theory makes an *affirmative contribution* to this study, since it confirms and reiterates the rationale for and argument behind the OSR-building model, especially the fact that a mutually beneficial OSR has to be established between the organisation and strategic stakeholder to allow the progression of a foundational OSR to an OSP (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4).

In the next section, the contribution of each theory and perspective will be summarised by means of a graphical illustration of the second building block of the OSR model, namely the theoretical foundation.

3.4   THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Figure 3.3 encapsulates the essence of each theory and perspective to this study.

The relationship management theory
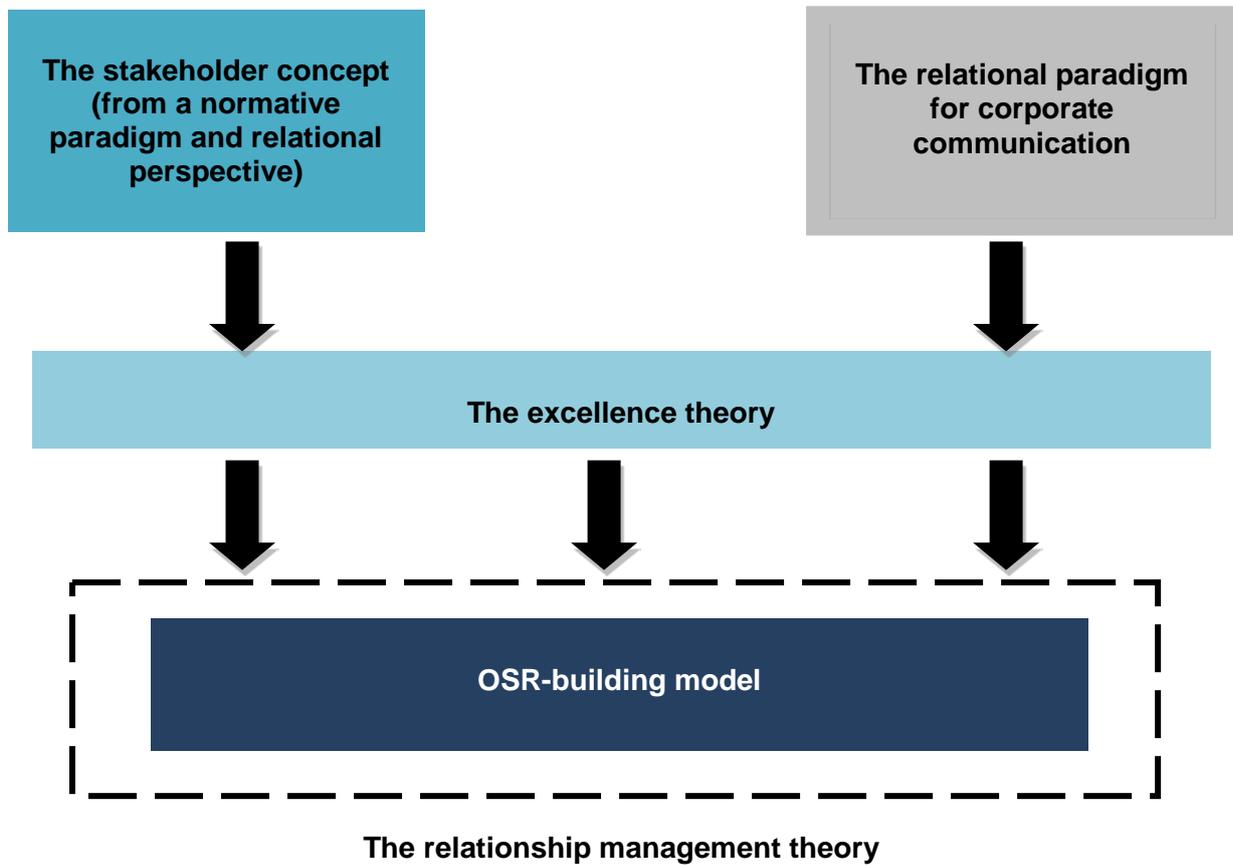
Figure 3.3: Building block 2: theoretical foundation

Figure 3.3 indicates that the OSR-building model will serve as the theoretical foundation in action. Firstly, the stakeholder concept, from a normative paradigm and relational perspective, and the relationship management paradigm serve as the origins for the development of the OSR model. This provides a wider stakeholder focus and places the emphasis on the relationship itself as opposed to studying the organisation and stakeholders as separate entities. The excellence theory also draws from the stakeholder concept and relational paradigm and is regarded as an outcome of these perspectives. The excellence theory provides a vital precondition for the development of an OSR-building model, since the integration of the excellence communication function in the corporate communication department must be evident to ensure the successful implementation of the OSR-building model. The relationship management theory, which is also regarded as an outcome of the stakeholder concept and relational management paradigm, makes an affirmative contribution to this study and encapsulates the principles of the proposed OSR-building model.

3.5   SUMMARY

This chapter focused on reviewing existing relationship-building theories and developmental models which provided a background analysis for the development of a theoretical foundation, the second building block of the proposed OSR model.

The background analysis indicated that most of the theories focused on the development of a relationship based on desired resources and did not support the formation of a collective working relationship between the organisation and stakeholders in order to attain mutually desired end goals. It was argued that the existing relationship developmental models do not elaborate on the process of relationship building and also do not explain in sufficient detail the phases and elements of a relationship – hence the need for an OSR-building model that adequately describes the OSR-building process.

A theoretical foundation was proposed as basis for the OSR-building model, which consisted of the stakeholder concept from a normative paradigm and relational perspective, the relational paradigm, the excellence theory and the relationship management theory. Although some of these theories were specifically developed for public relations, these theories were applied in the context of this study to the term introduced as corporate communication to align it with this study's stakeholder focus. It was indicated that the stakeholder concept from a normative paradigm and relational perspective made a fourfold contribution to this study. Firstly, it emphasised the need for a wider, stakeholder mindset in the organisation and promoted proactive OSR building. Secondly, it highlighted the fact that the success of the organisation depends on collaboration between the organisation and its strategic stakeholders. Thirdly, it emphasised that an OSR should be based on ethical principles, which make the practice of two-way symmetrical communication relevant. Lastly, it underscored the fact that management decision making should contribute to elevating the corporate communication function as the means for OSR building, to the desired strategic level. In conjunction with the stakeholder concept, the collection of ideas and propositions put forth by Ferguson's relational paradigm can be regarded as the starting point and foundation for the development of an OSR-building model.

It was proposed that the excellence theory made both a strategic and pragmatic contribution to this study. The strategic contribution to this study is evident in the elevation

of corporate communication, specifically as an *OSR-building function*, to the desired strategic level in the organisation. It therefore provided the necessary means to argue for the reinstitutionalisation of corporate communication function as a desired strategic function. The pragmatic contribution highlights the fact that the integration of the excellence communication function in the corporate communication department could contribute to the successful implementation of the proposed OSR-building model. Lastly, the discussion emphasised that the relationship management theory could make an affirmative contribution to this study because it supports the principles of the proposed OSR-building model.

The next chapter will focus on exploring the key phases of the proposed OSR-building model, namely strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance, which will collectively constitute the third building block of the model, namely a *conceptualisation of OSR building,* and in essence, will serve as the pragmatic representation of the theoretical foundation.

CHAPTER 4: EXPLORING THE KEY PHASES OF AN OSR-BUILDING MODEL

> A three-phased integrated approach to OSR provides guidance "... of how relationships between organizations and stakeholders develop, change and are maintained" (Bruning & Galloway 2003:311).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to address the scarcity of OSR-*building* models by proposing an integrated approach to OSR building, based on a three-phased, sequential process of strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance. This chapter focuses on the third building block of the proposed OSR-building model, namely *a conceptualisation of OSR building,* and will focus on defining and describing the proposed phases and subphases of the OSR-building model, and in essence, it will become a pragmatic representation of the theoretical foundation discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter, in conjunction with chapters 2 and 3, will be assimilated in chapter 5 to construct a conceptual framework that can be measured and explored in practice to constitute an OSR model that describes the OSR-building process.

This chapter will explore the literature in order to address the following subproblems and research questions as outlined in chapter 1.

Subproblems	Research questions
To determine what elements constitute an OSR	What elements constitute an OSR?
To determine the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process	What are the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process?

Firstly, the chapter will explore various existing OSR types to serve as an introduction to this study of the proposition of an *OSR development continuum*, which includes four unique OSR types namely a foundational OSR, a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an OSP. Secondly, each of the proposed phases of the model, which include, strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance, will be discussed in detail and the elements of an OSR will be explored. The chapter will conclude with a graphic representation of the third building block of the proposed OSR-building model, that is, a conceptualisation of OSR building.

4.2 EXPLORING EXISTING OSR TYPES: AN INTRODUCTION TO AN OSR DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

This section will focus on reviewing existing OSR types to build towards the proposition of an *OSR development continuum*, which is based on the premise that an OSR may evolve in intensity and strengthen over time. This continuum will propose the following four OSR types for the purpose of this study: a foundational OSR; a mutually beneficial OSR; a sustainable OSR; and an OSP. The rationale behind the proposition of an OSR development continuum is based on Hon and Grunig's (1999:10–11) perspective that if organisations communicate effectively with stakeholders, which for the purpose of this study would be through practising corporate communication from a *two-way symmetrical communication* perspective, this will result in a more productive OSR that has mutual value for both the organisation and stakeholder. This perspective implies that when an OSR has been established, it should be nurtured to grow stronger, and this is achieved through two-way symmetrical communication.

The discussion will first focus on briefly reviewing existing OSR types evident in the literature, followed by an elaboration on the proposed OSR development continuum where each OSR type proposed for this study will be defined.

4.2.1 Review of existing OSR types

Clarks and Mills (1993) developed two types of relationships, namely *exchange relationships* and *communal relationships*, based on the "rules and norms that govern the giving and receiving of benefits" (Clark & Mills 1993:684), which have widely been applied and extended in the literature (Levinger 1994:2; Hon & Grunig 1999:12,20; Grunig et al 2002:552; Hung 2005a; Hung 2007:456; Rensburg et al 2008:388). According to these authors, an *exchange* relationship occurs when one role player is willing to provide benefits to the other because it expects to receive benefits of similar value from the other. This is often evident in marketing relationships between organisations and customers. In *communal* relationships, both role players provide benefits to the other because they are concerned about the wellbeing of the other – even if nothing is provided in return. Grunig et al (2002:553) suggest that communal relationships with stakeholders such as employees, the media and the community are important because they add value to an organisation and society. Based on these two relationships, Hung (2007:456) developed a

further six OSR types, namely exploitive, manipulative, symbiotic, contractual, convenantal and mutual communal. Each of these OSR types is explained in table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Comparison of OSR types

OSR type	Definition
Exploitive relationship	One party takes advantage of the other when the other follows communal norms or when one party does not fulfil his or her duties in an exchange relationship.
Manipulative relationship	An organisation that knows what the stakeholders' wants and needs are, applies asymmetrical communication approaches to serve its own interests.
Symbiotic relationship	In this type of relationship, organisations are aware of their interdependence on the environment, and work together with stakeholders to reach a common interest in order to survive in the environment.
Contractual relationship	Here the parties decide what each other's responsibilities in the relationship are.
Convenantal relationship	Both parties commit to a common good through their open exchanges and the norm of reciprocity.
Mutual communal relationship	Both parties are concerned about the wellbeing of the other. Mutual communal relationships differ from convenantal relationships because they not only focus on open exchanges, but also on the psychological intention to protect the wellbeing of the other.

It is evident from the above table that this study's proposed approach to OSR building, resembles the convenantal and mutual communal relationships whereby the organisation and strategic stakeholder move away from self-centred practices, characterised by one-way asymmetrical communication, to a mutual concern for each other's interests driven by two-way symmetrical communication. This study therefore proposes that only when such an approach is implemented, will organisations be able to establish organisation-stakeholder *partnerships* with strategic stakeholders. Since this study is specifically concerned with the development of an OSR to describe the OSR-building process, four OSR types will be proposed across an OSR development continuum from the most basic OSR to the most desired, advanced relational state.

4.2.2 An OSR development continuum

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the OSR development continuum is to describe the evolution of an OSR in order to address the lack of existing OSR models to adequately describe the OSR-building process. The following four OSR types are developed for the purpose of this study to illustrate a sequential OSR development: a foundational OSR, a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an OSP. It should be noted that this proposed sequential development of an OSR can be regarded as *normative* since an OSR will not always develop in such linearity. However, the purpose of this study is to highlight

the conditions necessary for an ongoing OSR development process in order to establish an OSP as a measure to effectively describe the OSR-building process. Furthermore, although the term "continuum" in the context of this study does not necessarily imply the conventional meaning of the word, that is, representing the extreme *opposites* at each end (Yan & Curtin 2010:537), the ends of the proposed continuum will signify differences in terms of the strength of the OSR. Hence a foundational OSR will represent a basic OSR at one end of the continuum and an OSP will be regarded as the ultimate relational state at the other end. The key components of the OSR development continuum are as follows:

4.2.2.1 Time

Time, which was presented as a characteristic of an OSR in chapter 1, is regarded as a key component for the OSR development continuum and also for the OSR development process as a whole. In a study conducted to determine the influence of time on the coorientational variables of agreement, accuracy and congruency in OSR, Ledingham, Bruning and Wilson (1999) found that more time in an OSR provides more opportunities for interaction. It therefore promotes a better understanding of each other's perspectives which, in essence, strengthens the OSR (Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:7). Furthermore, the length of time in an OSR will influence the strategic stakeholders' loyalty to the OSR (Coombs 2000:88). In support of Hendricks's (2004:122) statement that "a successful relationship is built over time", the OSR development continuum proposes the sequential development of OSR from a foundational OSR, to a mutually beneficial OSR, to a sustainable OSR and to an ultimate OSP, which is regarded as the most desirable relational state.

4.2.2.2 Four OSR types to describe the OSR development process

The OSR development continuum describes the sequential development of four OSR types as follows:

- **Foundational OSR**

The foundational OSR refers to the most basic OSR and constitutes the characteristics and definition provided for an OSR in chapter 1 as follows: *the result of the management of common interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) over time, to achieve mutually beneficial goal achievement through a high degree of reciprocity and*

continuous two-way symmetrical communication. The various elements that constitute a foundational OSR will be addressed in section 4.3.2 in which phase 2 of the proposed model, OSR development, will be discussed. In essence, the mutually beneficial OSR, the sustainable OSR and organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs) are all regarded as foundational OSRs that have strengthened over time.

- **Mutually-beneficial OSR**

The mutually beneficial OSR is the next relational state of the proposed OSR development continuum and indicates acknowledgement of the fact that the organisation and strategic stakeholder are "inextricably tied together" which represents a collaborative orientation and a sense of mutual association (Kent & Taylor 2002:25). The mutual benefit for both the organisation and strategic stakeholder should be clear and a more advanced degree of reciprocity should be evident. The literature also indicates that mutually beneficial relationships are often associated with or used as synonyms for *win-win* strategies or relationships. According to Grunig and Huang (2000:40), a win-win strategy implies that "if the organisation and the stakeholder cannot find a solution that benefits both, they agree to disagree – no deal". Although win-win strategies endeavour to meet mutual objectives, they seem to be largely focused on meeting individual objectives, and the fact that one relational party is willing to do something for the other only in the interest of achieving its own relational objective. It is proposed that a mutually beneficial OSR also represents a "give-and-take" scenario, but at a more advanced level. Since a mutually beneficial OSR can only be achieved through the practice of *two-way symmetrical communication* (Bruning & Ledingham 2000:91), both the organisation and strategic stakeholder provide benefits for the other *because they are concerned about the wellbeing of the other* – even if nothing is given in return (Grunig et al 2002:553). Furthermore, according to Ledingham and Bruning (2000:88), building a mutually beneficial OSR elevates corporate communication to a strategic function because the development, enhancement and maintenance of mutually -beneficial OSRs are central to the achievement of organisational goals. It is put forward that a mutually beneficial OSR represents *an acknowledgement that both the organisation and strategic stakeholders are dependent on one another to achieve their relational objectives and to ensure survival.* This level of the OSR development continuum is arguably characterised by a *high degree of reciprocity, compromise and true concern on the part of the organisation and the stakeholder for the wellbeing of one another.*

- **Sustainable OSR**

The next level of the OSR development continuum is a sustainable OSR, where it is proposed that the organisation and strategic stakeholder should move beyond achieving mutual objectives to a focus on building towards an OSP, thereby shaping and guiding organisation-stakeholder interaction to build towards a long-term competitively advantaged OSR (Jagersma 2009:341; Rensburg & Cant 2009:52). In line with the sequential development of an OSR proposed by the OSR development continuum, Ledingham (2003:185) emphasise that in order to build a sustainable OSR, the mutuality that has been established between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s), should now further be developed and maintained. According to Rensburg and Cant (2009:52), a sustainable OSR also helps to facilitate innovation and progressive decision making.

Hence, it is argued that a sustainable OSR *represents a relational state in which the organisation and stakeholder act in the best interest of each other evident through shared meaning and decision making to achieve mutually beneficial objectives. Both the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) observe the benefit of cooperatively working towards attaining relational objectives*.

- **Organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSP)**

The next level of the OSR development continuum proposed is to establish an OSP. It should be noted that OSPs, for the purpose of this study, do not refer to the conventional collaborative partnerships or agreements between two organisations, but are regarded as the highest and most desired level of OSRs, in which the organisation and strategic stakeholders collectively work towards a common goal (Cohen 2003:109). In this study an OSP is seen as voluntary collaboration between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) characterised by mutually defined activities and decision-making processes to achieve relational objectives (Long & Arnold 1995:6). According to Goodijk (2003:237), an OSP should be regarded as a set of complex interactions between the organisation and strategic stakeholders to stimulate discussion and find solutions to problems, which requires the *proactive* involvement of strategic stakeholders in decision making. An OSP is further characterised by a mutually beneficial strategy of interaction, coordination and collaboration (Al-Khafaji, Oberhelman, Baum & Koch 2010:170), to reach a level where

both the organisation and stakeholder act in the best interest of the other, while achieving their relational objectives.

According to Romenti (2010:310), a proactive approach to corporate communication requires the organisation to move beyond listening to strategic stakeholders and addressing issues of concern – the objective should be to find *mutually beneficial solutions to create partnerships in which responsibility is shared with strategic stakeholders*. It is argued that at an OSP level, both the organisation and stakeholders are truly concerned about the wellbeing of the other, and although their relational objectives are different, it should be interconnected and both relational parties should work collectively towards achieving mutually beneficial objectives. Based on these arguments, an OSP can at this stage be defined *as a foundational OSR practised over a long period of time that results in the collaborative achievement of a mutually desired end goal.* This definition only highlights the essence of an OSP and will be further extended and revised on the basis of other stakeholder concepts and insights, which will be addressed in the sections to follow.

The above components that constitute the OSR development continuum can be graphically represented as follows:
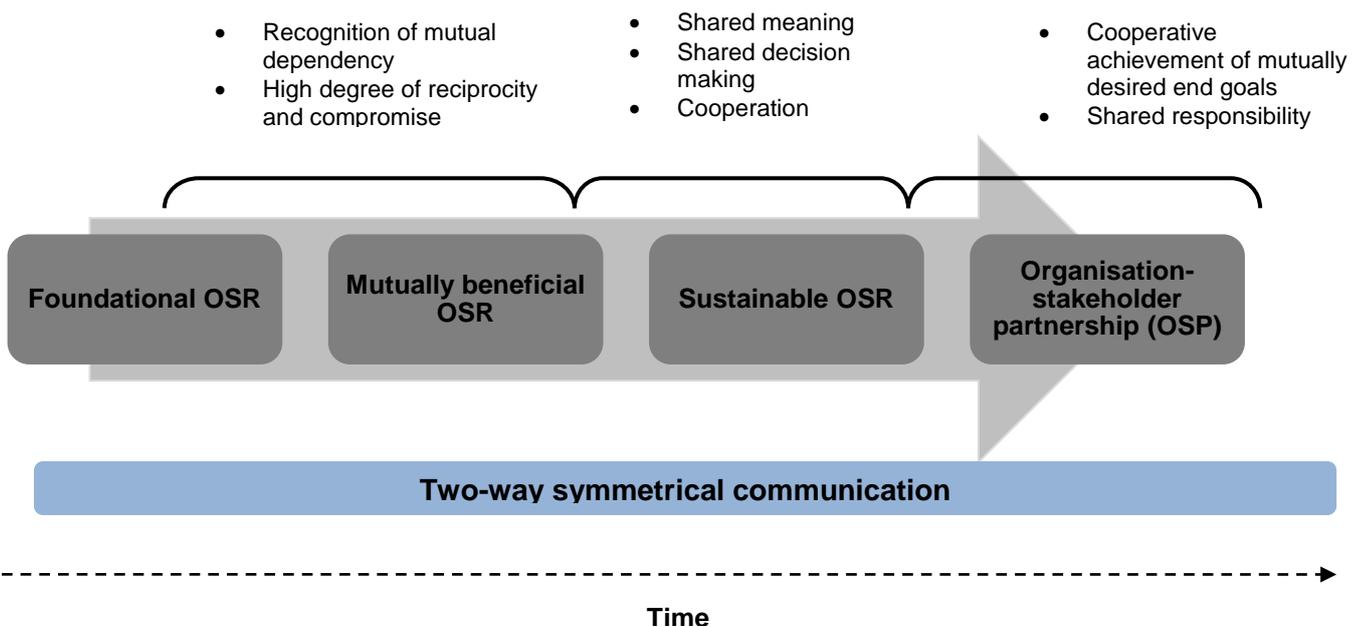
Figure 4.1: OSR developmental continuum

Figure 4.1 illustrates a key argument of this study, namely that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective to ensure a successful, sequential OSR development process, from a foundational OSR, to a mutually beneficial OSR, to a sustainable OSR and then to an ultimate OSP. Figure 4.1 also indicates that the movement from a foundational OSR to a mutually beneficial OSR is characterised by recognition of mutual dependency and a high degree of reciprocity and compromise between the strategic stakeholder(s) and organisation. Sustainable OSR is arguably characterised by the establishment of shared meaning, shared decision making and cooperation between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s). The ultimate relational state, an OSP, represents, inter alia, a shared responsibility between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) to realise mutually beneficial objectives. It should be noted that section 4.3 below and chapter 5 in this study will specifically indicate how these four OSR types can be aligned with the proposed phases of the OSR-building model.

4.3   THE PROPOSED PHASES OF AN OSR-BUILDING MODEL

Studies on stakeholders are usually based on the following three elements: stakeholder identification (Mitchell et al 1997; Kaler 2002; Koschmann 2009), stakeholder relationship building (Ledingham & Bruning 2000; Ulmer 2001; Hung 2007) and stakeholder relationship maintenance strategies (Grunig & Huang 2000; Hung 2007). The aim of this study is to propose an integrated approach to OSR building, thereby viewing stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance as one holistic, sequential process to address the lack of models that describe the OSR-building process (Bridges & Nelson 2000:106; Broom et al 2000:6; Ulmer 2001:607; Kim 2007:167) which could also address the need for models to manage OSRs more sufficiently (Freeman et al 2010:117). It should be noted that existing literature pertaining to OSR development (which will constitute phase 2 of the model) often refers to "OSR building". However, to avoid confusion, OSR building will be rephrased to *OSR development* since it is argued that all three proposed phases will collectively constitute an OSR-*building* model.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the sequential order of the proposed phases and thus an integrated approach to OSR building.
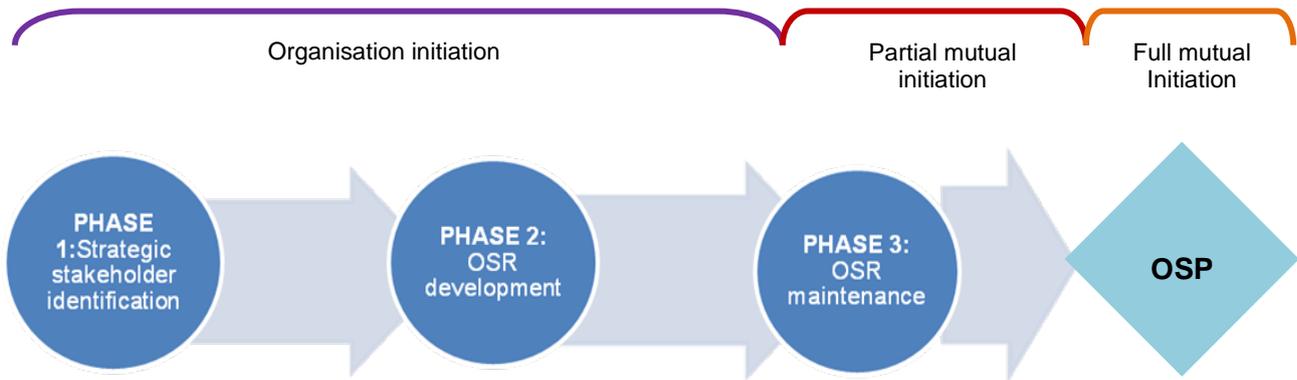
Figure 4.2: An integrated approach to OSR building

Figure 4.2 indicates that strategic stakeholders first have to be identified, an OSR should be developed with these identified strategic stakeholders, and lastly that the OSR should be maintained to ultimately eventually reach an OSP, which is supposed to be the most desirable relational state. Furthermore, it will also be proposed that phases 1 and 2 of the model will be initiated by the organisation; the relational actions in phase 3 will be initiated by the organisation, and to a lesser extent by the strategic stakeholder – hence partial mutual initiation; and at the OSP level, full mutual initiation will be evident from both the organisation and strategic stakeholder.

4.3.1 Phase 1: strategic stakeholder identification

Extensive focus has been placed on stakeholder identification in the literature (Grunig & Repper 1992; Mitchell et al 1997; Svendsen 1998:48; Grunig & Huang 2000:32; Kaler 2002; Huang 2003; Bryson 2004:335; Vos & Achterkamp 2006; Mark & Van Leuven 2007; Ballejos & Montagna 2008; Koschmann 2009; Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2010: 2–5; Bourne & Weaver 2010: 100–101; De Bussy & Kelly 2010; Frow & Payne 2011:227). Most research on stakeholder identification is centred on prioritising stakeholders through various categorisation and mapping techniques. Some researchers, however, argue that stakeholder identification should not be concerned with the importance the organisation attaches to stakeholders but should be focused instead on the stakeholders' level of concern about certain organisational issues (Koschmann 2009:11). The aim of this study is to present an integrated approach in which *strategic* stakeholder identification is proposed as the first phase of the OSR-building model. This section will first provide a brief overview of existing stakeholder classification and mapping techniques which are applied to prioritise stakeholders. This will be followed by an exploration of stakeholder identification

theories, in alignment with the key characteristics and definition of a strategic stakeholder as set out in chapter 1, in order to develop a methodology for *strategic* stakeholder identification.

4.3.1.1 *Stakeholder classification techniques*

According to Frow and Payne (2011:227), stakeholder identification entails classifying stakeholders into various groups of importance. Vos and Achterkamp (2006:161) argue that stakeholder identification is often deemed a problematic and a difficult process, which has resulted in the development of numerous classification techniques to prioritise an organisation's stakeholders. For the purpose of this study, the most prominent stakeholder classification techniques are summarised as follows:

- *Classification according to stakeholder type.* This predominantly includes primary versus secondary stakeholder classification (Svendsen 1998:48; Cornelissen 2005:62; Greenwood 2007:320; Johansson 2008:36; Koschman 2009:5). Primary stakeholders are defined as those stakeholders that are essential for organisational survival and optimal financial performance, while secondary stakeholders can influence or be influenced by the organisation, but are not essential for the survival of the organisation (Cornelissen 2005:62). Another example of classification according to stakeholder type is based on Mitchell et al's (1997) theory of stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS), which was discussed earlier, where stakeholders are classified according to seven stakeholder types, based on the presence or absence of power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell et al 1997:874). These stakeholder types include dormant, discretionary, demanding, dominant, dangerous, dependent, definite and nonstakeholders. Similar to the definition proposed for strategic stakeholders, which is the core focus of this study, Mitchell et al (1997:878) contend that an organisation should aspire to build long-term OSRs with definite stakeholders, because these stakeholders possess a high degree of stakeholder salience – hence the possession of power, legitimacy and urgency.

- *Classification according to organisational and/or project orientation.* This represents internal versus external stakeholder classification, which simply refers to stakeholders that are either based inside or outside the organisation or it may refer to stakeholders that are directly involved in a certain organisational project, (i.e. internal), or those that

are only affected by a project and are hence labelled as external stakeholders (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2010:3).

- *Contractual classification.* A further stakeholder classification is contractual versus community stakeholders which is a distinction between stakeholders with whom the organisation has a legal contract (thus contractual), or stakeholders whose relationships with the organisation are more diffused and who are thus referred to as community stakeholders (Cornelissen 2005:62).

4.3.1.2   *Stakeholder mapping techniques*

Stakeholder mapping techniques are also a focal point in stakeholder identification literature. According to Bryson (2004:338), the first step in stakeholder mapping is to classify stakeholders as highlighted above, whereby the highest priority stakeholders should be translated into a table or map (Bryson 2004:338). A stakeholder map is often illustrated by means of a two-by-two matrix, the dimensions of which may range from high, medium to low power; positive, neutral to negative support; high to low influence; high to low interest; or supportive to obstructive support (Bourne & Weaver 2010:102). Bryson (2004:338) and Bourne and Weaver (2010:100) identify the following mapping techniques, inter alia, to prioritise organisational stakeholders: an *influence-interest map* which determines the stakeholders' level of interest about change in comparison to the stakeholders' ability to resist change;   a *power-interest map,* which is based on the concept that a stakeholder that shows an interest in the organisation and is regarded as powerful should be considered an active stakeholder; and the *three-dimensional map of grouping of power, interest* and *attitude,* which is a mapping technique that deems the power of the stakeholder to influence the organisation, their interest in a specific project to classify them as passive or active stakeholders and their attitude towards a project which will measure stakeholders' level of support of or resistance towards a project.

The above discussion indicates that although these classification and mapping techniques provide a method for prioritising stakeholders, these techniques are project specific, lack guidelines on the actual method and process involved in how to identify a certain group of stakeholders and are predominantly focused on loosely classifying stakeholders on the basis of certain attributes and level of involvement. In line with this argument, Bourne and Weaver (2010:102) specifically developed the stakeholder circle methodology to address the need for a more logical, guided stakeholder classification and mapping technique. The

stakeholder circle methodology is defined as a stakeholder relationship management methodology that helps organisations identify and prioritise stakeholders and develop a subsequent engagement and communication plan to ensure optimal fulfilment of stakeholder objectives. This methodology comprises the following five steps: identify all stakeholders; prioritise them; display the current members of the stakeholder community; develop an engagement strategy and communication plan; and monitor the effectiveness of the communication (Bourne & Weaver 2010:102). It should also be noted that the stakeholder circle methodology is not concerned with identifying stakeholders in general, but is a pragmatic tool that is project specific and should be implemented in conjunction with a specific software program (Bourne & Weaver 2010:102).

It could be argued that the merit of the stakeholder circle methodology lies in the recognition of the need for a more descriptive method for stakeholder identification, thereby moving away from the conventional stakeholder classification and mapping techniques. Although the stakeholder circle methodology has been specifically developed to serve as a method for stakeholder classification and mapping (it thus relates to stakeholder identification as posited earlier), it also represents stakeholder engagement and the development of a communication plan which, for the purpose of this study, are factors that should not necessarily be associated with stakeholder identification. Furthermore, since the stakeholder circle methodology is project specific it lacks theoretical depth, which necessitates the exploration of existing stakeholder identification theories to develop a methodology for strategic stakeholder identification.

4.3.1.3   *Stakeholder identification theories*

The following theories, which are often associated with stakeholder identification in the literature, will be explored to help develop a strategic stakeholder identification methodology that will constitute phase 1 of the OSR-building model: the situational theory of publics (Grunig 1983); the communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) theory (Koschman 2009); cost-benefit analysis (Grunig 1983; Ehling 1992); and the theory of stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS) (Mitchell et al 1997).

- **The situational theory of publics**

This theory entails identifying active publics, and although this is not the focus of this study, as explained earlier, key insights applicable to stakeholder identification could be

obtained from this theory. Grunig (1983) developed the situational theory of publics to predict the varying responses of publics in public relations. The theory segments publics on the basis of their perceptions of certain issues and their successive behaviour, instead of the organisation's desire to have relationships with these publics (Grunig et al 2002:324). According to Grunig and Repper (1992:137), three key variables, namely problem recognition, constraint recognition and level of involvement are central to the theory and contribute to identifying publics. *Problem recognition* is built on the notion that people will search for information when a problem is recognised or vagueness is experienced, while *constraint recognition* indicates that people will not communicate about issues that cannot be resolved or be influenced (Grunig & Repper 1992:135). The *level of involvement* explains active and passive communication behaviour (Tkalac 2007:532) and refers to a person's cognitive perception of having a connection with a certain situation (Grunig & Repper 1992:136). Therefore, according to the situational theory of publics, publics will request more information when the level of involvement and problem recognition is high and constraint recognition is low (Tkalac 2007:532). Similarly, it is argued that these variables could be applied to identify strategic stakeholders where potential strategic stakeholders seek more information on an organisation's activities if stakeholders have a stake in that organisation, and subsequently communicate and become involved in organisational activities which will contribute to OSR building.

- **Communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) theory**

The CCO theory developed by Koschman (2009) differs from the above theory in that it does not attempt to categorise stakeholders on the basis of certain criteria identified by organisations, but instead highlights the fact that organisations are constructed as a result of their interactions and relationships with stakeholders (Koschman 2009:23). According to this perspective, organisations do not exist prior to stakeholder interactions, but are developed from these interactions. Koschman (2009:23) states that "stakeholder identification is more about how organisations co-construct dynamic identities with each other in relation to focal problems or issues through communication" (Koschman 2009:23). Koschman's argument that the organisation is defined by its relationships with stakeholders is relevant to this study, however; it is proposed that the organisation still has to identify its *strategic* stakeholders with whom a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP should be built. This emphasises the need for a methodology to identify strategic stakeholders.

- **Cost-benefit analysis**

Cost-benefit analysis is part of Grunig's excellence study and can be used to set priorities (Grunig & Huang 2000:32), which includes the identification of strategic stakeholders. Ehling (1992) applied the cost-benefit logic to highlight the value of public relations programmes. The principle behind this logic is that benefits are obtained when the organisation and stakeholders are favourably affected by a public relations programme, and by contrast, a cost is incurred whenever these parties are unfavourably affected (Ehling 1992:628). The compensating variation and cost-benefit analysis is applicable to stakeholder identification in particular. It indicates that the costs, that is, the time, effort and monetary value, an organisation devotes to a certain stakeholder group, need to be justified by the benefits obtained from the relationship between the organisation and stakeholder (Ehling 1992:629). It is argued that strategic stakeholders are those groups that are most beneficial to the organisation – that is, the benefits will exceed the cost if the organisation builds a relationship with these stakeholders. Although this is a monetary-oriented perspective, which tends to contradict the study's call for the establishment of shared meaning and mutual concern between the organisation and strategic stakeholders, cost-benefit analysis emphasises the fact that a relationship between the organisation and stakeholder can only be valuable when the benefits exceed the costs of the OSR.

- **Theory of stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS)**

The TSIS, as developed by Mitchell et al (1997), offers a framework for corporate communication professionals to determine which stakeholder groups are salient, that is, those groups with power, legitimacy and urgency. According to Vos and Achterkamp (2006:161), stakeholder identification is essentially concerned with determining which organisational stakeholders are salient. The theory is built on the following three key principles (Michell et al 1997:854): Firstly, various stakeholder classifications can be identified on the basis of the stakeholders' possession of one, two or all three attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency. Secondly, based on this identification typology, the theory recognises the uniqueness of the situation and managerial perception in prioritising stakeholders. Thirdly, the theory does not propose that one stakeholder group is more important than another, but that to achieve certain objectives, managers are likely to pay more attention to certain stakeholders.

Evident from the definition of strategic stakeholders formulated in chapter 1, for the purpose of this study, it can be argued that corporate communication professionals should determine whether stakeholders possess power, legitimacy and urgency, thus salience, as a measure for identifying strategic stakeholders.

The above stakeholder identification theories will be used to develop a stakeholder methodology for strategic stakeholder identification.

4.3.1.4   *A methodology for strategic stakeholder identification*

Based on the above exploration, elements of the situational theory of publics, cost-benefit analysis and TSIS are integrated to serve as strategic stakeholder identification criteria that will collectively constitute the methodology for strategic stakeholder identification. These criteria include stakeholder salience (which represents mutual power dependence, legitimacy and urgency); benefits that exceed costs; and a high level of involvement. Since this study proposes a partnership approach to an OSR, it can be argued that the organisation should apply these criteria to identify strategic stakeholders, and these strategic stakeholder(s), in turn, should experience these criteria. The applicability of these criteria to both the organisation and stakeholder is discussed in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: A methodology for strategic stakeholder identification

	Criteria	Organisation	Strategic stakeholder
Stakeholder salience	**Mutual power dependence**	Both the organisation and strategic stakeholder are dependent on each other to achieve relational objectives. In the strategic stakeholder identification phase of OSR building, the organisation relies on strategic stakeholders to ensure its future existence and stakeholders require the input of the organisation to achieve objectives. From this perspective, both the organisation and strategic stakeholder hold power.	
	Legitimacy	Strategic stakeholders' actions should be socially acceptable and in line with the organisation's values.	This ties in with the argument put forward in chapter 2, namely that a positive organisational reputation (thereby the general perception of all internal and external stakeholders of the organisation) is a prerequisite for an OSR with *strategic* stakeholders. A strategic stakeholder will be more likely to engage with an organisation that is legitimate and socially acceptable.
	Urgency	Corporate communication professionals should identify stakeholders with urgent claims, which are often characteristic of a strategic stakeholder.	Strategic stakeholders are more likely to engage with an organisation that recognises the urgency of the claim and attends to it timeously.
Benefit must exceed cost		The benefit of the potential OSR must exceed the time, effort and other costs to both the organisation and strategic stakeholder.	
High level of involvement		Both the organisation and strategic stakeholder must have a mutual interest, which ties in the argument put forward earlier, namely that a high degree of reciprocity should be evident.	

Table 4.2 indicates that strategic stakeholders should have stakeholder salience; the benefit of building a potential OSR with strategic stakeholders should outweigh the costs; and a high level of involvement needs to be evident. In support of Grunig and Huang's (2000:32) viewpoint that an organisation should "…separate strategic stakeholders from almost strategic stakeholders" it will be argued that strategic stakeholders should possess and similarly experience all the above criteria. Since it was argued in Chapter 1 that organisations will only have a few strategic stakeholders and that all identified strategic stakeholders should be managed with equal importance, only secondary stakeholder and/or active publics' needs should be prioritised.

4.3.2 Phase 2: OSR development

This section will first focus on exploring various OSR antecedents as a subphase preceding phase 2 of the model, followed by an elaboration of the elements that will constitute an OSR, which represents phase 2 of the OSR model. This section will conclude with a discussion of OSR outcomes as a subphase following phase 2 of the OSR-building model.

4.3.2.1 OSR antecedents

Various theorists explored the *antecedents* or *precursors* of OSR (Broom et al 2000:16; Ledingham 2003:195; Kim 2007:170; Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:7). Antecedents are those conditions on which an OSR depends (Dimmick et al 2000:131) and this is regarded as the first phase of a relationship that results in the development of an OSR (Kim 2007:170). According to Broom et al (2000:16), antecedents include opinions, motivations, needs and behaviours that are packaged as contingencies or causes in the development of an OSR. The antecedents of an OSR provide the motivation for stakeholders choosing to be associated with an organisation and what benefits stakeholders aspire to derive from the relationship, which also affect the quality of the OSR (Sevick Bortree 2011:44).

The literature indicates that two theories are predominantly associated with relationship antecedents, namely the *resource dependency theory* and the *social exchange theory* (Grunig & Huang 2000:35; Hung 2005a:395–396). According to the resource dependency theory, OSR is the result of an organisation's response to resources which lead to organisational growth and survival when organisational needs have been fulfilled (Broom et al 1997:91). The social exchange theory emphasises that OSRs comprise intentional transactions and mutual interests and returns (Broom et al 1997:91).

Various models of organisation-public relationships also highlighted the antecedents of a relationship. Grunig and Huang (2000:35) developed a model for organisation-public relationships and argued that antecedents are *situational* because publics will change as the situation changes. These situational antecedents acknowledge that organisations interact with multiple publics and organisations with varying interests and objectives, and these include the following: organisation affects public, public affects organisation, organisation-public coalition affects another organisation, organisation-public coalition affects another public, organisation affects an organisation-public coalition and multiple organisations affect multiple publics (Grunig & Huang 2000:34). Furthermore, Seltzer and Zhang (2011) developed a model for political organisation-public relationships and considered time, interpersonal trust and party identification or association as key antecedents in developing relationships in a political context. *Time,* as emphasised earlier, refers to the fact that relationships evolve over time and grow in intensity (Seltzer & Zhang 2011:28). *Interpersonal trust*, which Hendricks (2004:39) also recognises, is the expectation that both relational parties are motivated to take one each other's interests into

account, which links up with reciprocity and mutuality as defined earlier. Lastly, *party association* refers to a sense of attachment to and identification with a political party (Selzer & Zang 2011:28). In conjunction with these antecedents, *mutual consequence* (Hon & Grunig 1999:12) and *expectations* (Broom et al 2000:17; Kim & Radar 2010:62) can be added.

Furthermore, Hon and Grunig (1999:12) argue that organisations have a communication problem or opportunity to develop a communication programme when management's decisions have *consequences* for stakeholders or, in turn, when the behaviour of these stakeholders has consequences for the success of the implementation of organisational decisions. *Expectations*, which are influenced by perceptions, attitudes, feelings and knowledge of each other, highlight the fact that each relational party has certain expectations prior to the OSR, which may either be met or not met (Kim & Radar 2010:62). If the expectations are met, the OSR will endure, and could further evolve into an OSP, However, if the expectations are not fulfilled, the OSR will dissolve (Kim & Radar 2010:62).

The antecedents proposed by Grunig and Huang could not be accepted because this study focuses on building an OSR with strategic stakeholders, which can be proactively managed and are always present and relevant over time. Furthermore, these situational antecedents suggest that interaction between the public(s) and organisation(s) is already evident, while this study calls for more concrete antecedents that will stimulate the initial interaction between the organisation and strategic stakeholders. Furthermore, Seltzer and Zhang's (2011) proposition of *time* as an antecedent could not be accepted for this study, because, as indicated in figure 3.1, time is in fact applicable across the entire OSR-building model as it was suggested that an OSR grows in intensity over time. It will also be argued that since trust is developed over time (Rayman-Bacchus 2004:32), only a sense of *trust* can be experienced at this stage of the OSR-building model. Moreover, since this study is focused on an OSR and not on interpersonal relationships, interpersonal trust will be replaced with *trustworthiness*. Greenwood and Van Buren (2010:429) contend that organisational trustworthiness "… refers to a virtue or set of virtues held by the organisation, reflecting its worthiness to be trusted". Similarly, the organisation should also regard the strategic stakeholder as trustworthy in order to stimulate reciprocity and mutuality. Party association can also be replaced with *organisation-stakeholder association*, which implies that both the organisation and strategic stakeholder should be

able to resonate with one another. Mutual consequence can be accepted as an OSR antecedent, which is in line with the salience characteristic of strategic stakeholders. Lastly, expectations can also be regarded as an OSR antecedent and can be identified by means of evaluation research conducted during phase 1 of the model, as posited earlier.

For the purpose of this study, trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequence and expectations are accepted as OSR antecedents and constitute a subphase preceding phase 2, OSR development, of the proposed OSR-building model.

4.3.2.2   *OSR elements*

In line with the characteristics of an OSR discussed in chapter 1, this section will focus specifically on determining what constitutes an OSR through an exploration of various OSR elements, which will represent phase 2 of the model. It should be noted that, in the literature, OSR elements are also referred to as the dimensions, characteristics or qualities of an OSR (Aldrich 1979; Millar & Rogers 1987; Ballinger 1991; Stafford & Canary 1991; Hon & Grunig 1999; Jo 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:3; Rensburg et al 2008). However, for the purpose of this study, *OSR elements* will be used to refer to the actual components that make up an OSR.

According to Bruning and Ledingham (1999:159), an OSR exists once both the organisation and strategic stakeholder are aware that they have a mutual influence. Similarly, Hung (2005a:396) contends that OSRs arise when organisations and their strategic stakeholders are interdependent, which results in mutual consequences that have to be managed by the organisation. Once this recognition has been established, it is the task of the organisation to facilitate practices that will allow exchanges between the organisation and strategic stakeholders (Bruning & Ledingham 1999:159). The realisation of this mutual influence, interdependence and allowance of exchanges, according to Bruning and Ledingham (1999:159), is made possible by *two-way symmetrical communication* which "creates a sense of openness, trust and understanding between the organisation and strategic stakeholders, as well as a willingness to negotiate, collaborate and mediate solutions to issues of concern to both the organisation and strategic stakeholders." Accordingly, Bruning (2002:40) states that OSR implies a "give and take" situation which resembles two-way symmetrical communication.

Aldrich (1979) developed four elements of an OSR, namely formalisation, intensity, reciprocity and standarisation. *Formalisation* refers to the organisation's realisation of the relationship and corporate communication professionals assigned to manage the relationship; *intensity* refers to the degree of time and funding the organiation is willing to devote to the relationship; *reciprocity* refers to the organisation's devotion of resources to the relationship and there is mutual agreement on how interaction will take place; and *standarisation* refers to the degree that the relationship becomes fixed (Grunig et al 1992:83). Millar and Rogers (1987) also developed three distinct relational elements, namely *intimacy*, *trust* and *control,* which are regarded as the basic elements of interpersonal relationships which Ballinger (1991) utilised to develop a model of relational elements for public-organisation relationships. Ballinger (1991:39) added another three elements, namely *perceptions*, *communication behaviours* and *relational outcomes,* to arrive at nine elements of public-organisation relationships, namely dependence, frequency, knowledge, confidence, openness, reciprocity, power, dominance and functionality. These elements of this model are interdependently related to provide a holistic view of public-organisation relationships (Ballinger 1991:73). The elements of this model are summarised in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Ballinger's (1991) model of public-organisation relationships*

	Intimacy	Trust	Control
Perceptions	Dependence	Confidence	Power
Communication behaviours	Frequency	Openness	Dominance
Relational outcomes	Knowledge	Reciprocity	Functionality

* Derived from Ballinger (1991:54)

Various theorists have further extended the research on OSR elements and different, often overlapping, OSR elements have been developed over the years. Jo (2003:23) summarised these in order to develop a scale to measure an OSR. These elements highlight the central characteristics predominantly associated with an OSR and are indicated in table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Jo's summary of OSR elements*

Author	Relationship dimension
Ferguson (1984)	Dynamic vs static; open vs closed; mutual satisfaction; distribution of power; mutual understanding; and mutual agreement
Grunig et al (1992)	Reciprocity; trust; credibility; mutual legitimacy; openness; mutual satisfaction; and mutual understanding
Huang (1997)	Trust; control mutuality; relational commitment; and relational satisfaction
Ledingham & Burning (1998)	Openness; trust; involvement; investment; and commitment
Bruning & Ledingham (1999)	Professional relationship; personal relationship; and community relationship
Hon & Grunig (1999)	Trust; control mutuality; commitment; satisfaction; communal relationships; and exchange relationships
Grunig & Huang (2000)	Trust; control mutuality; commitment; and satisfaction
Huang (2001)	Trust; control mutuality; commitment; satisfaction; face; and favour
Kim (2001)	Trust; commitment; local and community involvement; and reputation

*Derived from Jo (2003:23)

As mentioned in chapter 1, the origins and development of these elements are presented in Stafford and Canary's (1991) studies on interpersonal relationships. They developed four salient elements for the maintenance of romantic relationships, namely control mutuality, relational commitment, liking and relational satisfaction. These elements have been widely accepted, extended and adapted in corporate communication literature (Hon & Grunig 1999:3; Grunig & Huang 2000:43; Huang 2001:65; Hung 2003a:11; Yang 2007:94; Rensburg et al 2008:388; Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:3). The element of liking proposed by Stafford and Canary (1991), however, was replaced with trust to make it more applicable to a corporate communication context (Hon & Grunig 1999:3). Grunig et al (1992:83), as highlighted in the above table, discovered (as part of the excellence study) that in determining what constitutes an effective organisation, mutual satisfaction, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy, openness and mutual understanding are the key elements of a successful OSR.

Based on the above exploration, the following statement can be used to identify the elements of an OSR: Since reciprocity and mutual legitimacy are closely related to control mutuality (Huang 2001:66), and openness is already promoted through the practice of two-way symmetrical communication (Bruning & Ledingham 1999:159) as the foundation of the proposed OSR-building model and as a prerequisite for the element of trust (Christensen & Langer 2008:7), in this study, *trust*, *control mutuality*, *relational satisfaction, relational commitment* and *mutual understanding* will be accepted as the elements of an OSR. Each of these elements will now be discussed.

- **Trust**

Trust is defined by Grunig and Grunig (1998:4) and Hon and Grunig (1999:3) as the extent to which both the organisation and stakeholder(s) display a willing vulnerability towards the other's behaviour and the level of confidence with which one relational party will take the other's interests into account when making key decisions. Trust allows an organisation to exist (Grunig & Huang 2000:29), and is widely accepted as the essential, if not the most important, element of successful OSR (Hon & Grunig 1999:3; Thomlison 2000:178; Huang 2001:66; Hung 2003a:10–11; Goodman 2003:200; Rayman-Bacchus 2004:21, 31; Jahansoozi 2006:943; Spicer 2007:27; Röttger & Voss 2008:168; Bentele & Seidenglanz 2008:56–58; Greenwood & Van Buren 2010:427; Goodman & Hirsch 2010:59–60).

Various studies have been conducted to determine what constitutes trust. According to Bentele and Seidenglanz (2008:57–58), trust between an organisation and stakeholder is built on *trustworthiness* (which is in line with this study's proposition of trustworthiness as an OSR antecedent, as mentioned earlier), and the authors further state that dialogue, transparent communication behaviour and the capacity to reflect and revise one's own behaviour all promote the development of trust. Rötteger and Voss (2008:168) posit that trust is constituted by mutual appreciation; concurrent pressure to act; perception of double contingency; addressability; freedom of each party to act; subsequent measures; the ability of the parties to learn; and subjective justification. Trust is constituted between an organisation and stakeholder on the rational prediction of outcomes compared with risk, emotion and the ethical obligation not to abuse trust (Greenwood & Van Buren 2010:427). In line with the arguments posited by this study, Grunig and Hon (1999:3) and Hung (2003a:10-11) maintain that trust in an organisational context is constructed by the level of dependability, competence and integrity. *Dependability* refers to the emotional bond related to trust which corresponds with faith and reliability. A feeling of mutual dependency has to be experienced by the organisation and strategic stakeholder, which highlights the perspective that objectives can only be achieved collectively. *Competence* refers to the capability of each relational party to perform duties successfully. According to Goodman and Hirsch (2010:37), trust requires a mutual sense of *integrity* from both the organisation and stakeholder, which implies that the relational parties' behaviours should be consistent with their claims or statements. Another concept that is closely related to trust is *transparency*. According to Jahansoozi (2006:943), the difference between trust and transparency is that only when a lack of trust is evident or when a state of distrust is

experienced, owing to, for example, an organisational crisis, does transparency become relevant. This implies that transparency is required to *rebuild* trust. Conversely, Goodman (2006:200) states that "to build trust, companies need to localize communications, be transparent and engage multiple stakeholders continuously …". Similarly, Bentele and Seidenglanz (2010:58) indicate that transparent communication behaviour is essential to build trust. Moreover, transparency and openness are often linked, and Christensen and Langer (2008:7) contend that openness leads to transparency. It can therefore be argued that openness between the organisation and strategic stakeholder, promoted by two-way symmetrical communication, leads to transparency, which in turn will constitute trust over time.

Based on the above discussion, trust can only be achieved through the practice of *two-way symmetrical communication* between the organisation and stakeholders (Hung 2001:67) – hence Svendsen's (1998:142) perspective of trust as "give and take" – both the organisation and stakeholder have the other's interests at heart and are "willing to both relinquish some of their independence and increase their level of interdependence" – is accepted for the purpose of this study.

- **Control mutuality**

According to Stafford and Canary (1991:224), control mutuality refers to the agreement between relational partners on who will be responsible for deciding on relational objectives and behavior - the issue is whether both partners agree that "one or both may rightfully influence the other". Various arguments in the literature relate to control mutuality. Hon and Grunig (1999:3) state that all successful OSRs require that organisations and stakeholders have a degree of control over one another to manage power imbalances in the relationship. Huang (2001:66) suggests that two-way symmetrical communication may produce control mutuality which will inspire relational parties to search for mutually beneficial solutions. Furthermore, according to Aldrich (1975;1979), control mutuality is closely related to reciprocity and even though power imbalances exist in an OSR, a quality relationship can still be created if both relational parties practise a degree of reciprocity (Huang 2001:66; Hung 2003a:12). Control mutuality also proposes mutual legitimacy (Bruning & Ledingham 1999:160) or Broom et al's (2000:12) proposition of legitimacy as a contingency for relationship establishment in an interorganisational context (Huang 2001:66). Legitimacy focuses on justification and agreement between the organisation and

stakeholders (Broom et al 2000:12). For the purpose of this study, it is posited that control mutuality highlights the fact that power imbalances will be experienced in an OSR, which can be managed through the practice of two-way symmetrical communication to reach a degree of "stability". This implies that both the organisation and strategic stakeholders agree to a *mutual influential* OSR.

- **Relational satisfaction**

According to Stafford and Canary (1991:225), relational satisfaction, from a social exchange perspective, is experienced once the rewards of the OSR are distributed fairly. In line with the cost-benefit analysis mentioned earlier, relationship satisfaction is experienced if the benefits of engaging in this relationship outweigh the costs (Hon & Grunig 1999:3). Although relational satisfaction is widely accepted as a measure to evaluate relationships (Stafford & Canary 1991; Grunig et al 1992; Hon & Grunig 1999; Hung 2003a), for the purpose of this study, it is accepted as a significant OSR *element* for two reasons. Firstly, the proposed OSR-building model promotes the development of an OSP, which implies that relational satisfaction should be experienced by the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) to ensure that the foundational OSR can grow and evolve into an ultimate OSP. Secondly, relational satisfaction as the "… reinforcement of positive expectations …" (Hon & Grunig 1999:3; Huang 2001:67) implies that the expectations that were proposed as a key OSR antecedent should be reinforced in the development phase of the OSR. This is echoed by Jo's (2003:26) argument that a key element associated with corporate communication is the establishment of satisfaction among strategic stakeholders to ensure that relational objectives are met and an OSP can be built, to ensure the continuance of the OSR, that is, the realisation of the proposed OSR development framework.

- **Relational commitment**

Relational commitment refers to the expectation that a relationship will continue (Parks 1997:354) or the degree to which a relational partner wishes to stay in a relationship (Hung 2003a:12). Meyer and Allen (1984:375) indicate that both affective and continuance commitment can be identified. *Affective* commitment is a sentimental affiliation towards an organisation, while *continuance* commitment is experienced when stakeholders "feel committed to their organisations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with

leaving". Grunig and Huang (2000:46) and Hung (2003a:12) argue that affective commitment represents the traditional tool utilised to measure relational commitment, which is evident in Mowday, Steers and Porter's (1979:226) conceptualisation of relational commitment as the stakeholder's acceptance and support of the organisation's objectives, the willingness to act on behalf of the organisation and a desire to maintain the OSR. Bruning and Galloway (2003:317) also explored the concept of relational commitment in OSRs and proposed that relational commitment is achieved in two ways. Firstly, each stakeholder's commitment to the relationship depends on the organisation's ability to continuously engage in activities that will increase the stakeholder's attraction towards the organisation. Secondly, relational commitment is affected by the alternatives that the stakeholder may consider. Relational commitment therefore not only focuses on the organisation's ability to present itself as an attractive relational partner, but also the organisation's awareness of the various competitors the stakeholder may consider (Bruning & Galloway 2003:317).

- **Mutual understanding**

According to Du Plessis (2006:197), mutual understanding implies that the message must be formulated "in such a way that the recipient understands it as closely as possible to the intended meaning." Bruning, DeMiglio and Embry (2006) conducted research to measure mutual benefit, which can range from mutual understanding to mutual legitimacy, mutual satisfaction and mutual consequence as explained earlier, as an outcome indicator of an OSR. It was discovered that organisations obtain a strategic advantage when mutual understanding has been established (Bruning et al 2006:38). Mutual understanding is also linked to the concept of *mutual dependence*, which implies that both relational parties have the same level of power in achieving relational objectives, and a reduced potential for exploitation is evident (Rusbult & Arriaga 1997:229). From an interpersonal communication perspective, Hendricks (2004:221) argues that when mutual understanding is achieved in a relationship, relational partners are balanced in their focus and a high degree of authenticity and validity is experienced. In an OSR context, mutual understanding is a key objective of the OSR, and it is argued that the higher the degree of mutual understanding, the more effective the OSR will be (Grunig & Grunig 1992:315). Similarly, in line with the definition of a mutually beneficial OSR formulated earlier, mutual understanding for the purpose of this study as an element of the OSR development phase should be established

between the organisation and strategic stakeholders in order to reach a level of *shared meaning* in the achievement of relational objectives.

Based on these discussions, it is argued that a foundational OSR is the result of trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment and mutual understanding between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) that should be nurtured to ensure the establishment of a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP.

4.3.2.3 *Stakeholder engagement as a possible OSR outcome*

Various theorists have explored *relational outcomes* in the OSR literature which represents desirable conditions that should be evident after an OSR has been built, and these predominantly include control mutuality, trust, satisfaction and commitment (Hon & Grunig 1999:3; Grunig & Huang 2000:42; Jonker & Foster 2002:191; Rensburg et al 2008:388; Seltzer & Mitrook 2009:3). Since these outcomes were accepted as *OSR elements* for the purpose of this study, it will alternatively explore *stakeholder engagement* as an OSR outcome to strengthen the OSR.

Lawrence (2002:72) defines stakeholder engagement as "a stance of mutual responsibility, information-sharing, open and respectful dialogue, and an ongoing commitment to joint problem solving", while according to Greenwood (2007:315), stakeholder engagement represents the organisation's endeavours to involve strategic stakeholders in decision making and to encourage participation in organisational activities. Noland and Phillips (2010:40) contend that the process of stakeholder engagement highlights the movement from merely interacting with stakeholders to a "… recognition and respect of common humanity and the ways in which the actions of each may affect the other". Most importantly, Romenti (2006:310) states that *two-way symmetrical communication* is essential for stakeholder engagement in order to find mutually beneficially solutions to problems, to create alliances and to share responsibility. It is clear from these definitions that stakeholder engagement represents advanced relational actions achieved through two-way symmetrical communication.

Sloan (2009:35) and Girard and Sobczak (2011:4) further suggest two dimensions of stakeholder engagement. Firstly, stakeholder engagement is evident through communication and environmental scanning focused on managing possible risks

associated with conflict of interests. Secondly, stakeholder engagement initiates collaboration and partnership building. This two-dimensional approach to stakeholder engagement is specifically relevant to this study for the following reasons: Firstly, it is proposed that once a foundational OSR has been built, stakeholder engagement may be experienced in the sense that the *organisation* is the key driver in building towards a mutually beneficial OSR, which is affirmed by Greenwood's (2007) definition of stakeholder engagement mentioned above. Proposing stakeholder engagement as an OSR outcome, implies that stakeholder engagement can only occur *after* the establishment of an OSR, because this engagement moves beyond the management of common interests to a higher level of intensity of stakeholder participation in decision making, problem solving and organisational activities. Secondly, once an OSP has been established, a second dimension of stakeholder engagement is proposed, namely *two-way* or *organisation-stakeholder engagement*, whereby *both* the organisation and strategic stakeholder facilitate engagement, and the art of thinking and solving problems collectively (Fossgard-Moser 2006:170) become a realisation.

4.3.3 Phase 3: OSR maintenance

For the purpose of this study, this section will explore the last phase of the proposed OSR-building model which will focus on defining OSR maintenance, exploring the theories associated with OSR maintenance and discussing OSR maintenance strategies.

4.3.3.1 Defining OSR maintenance

Extensive research has been conducted on OSR maintenance (Stafford & Canary 1991; Dindia & Canary 1993; Hon & Grunig 1999; Grunig & Huang 2000; Hon & Brunner 2001; Bruning & Ledingham 2000; Ki 2003; Jo 2003; Hung 2003a; Hung 2003b; Jo et al 2004; Hung 2004; Hung 2007; Daily, Hampel & Roberts 2010). To serve as an introduction to the discussion on OSR maintenance, it should be noted that various synonyms are also used for the term "OSR maintenance", the most predominant of which are *stakeholder management* and *stakeholder relationship management* (Johnson-Cramer, Berman & Post 2003:145). Boesso and Kumar (2008:65) define stakeholder management as the management of a diverse range of tasks, which include "identifying, assessing, prioritising, managing the relationship, communicating, negotiating and contracting" with various stakeholders with an influence on the organisation's economic interests. According Chinyio and Olomolaiye (2010:7–8), stakeholder management is related to stakeholder

relationship management and includes the principles of acknowledgement of stakeholder concerns, listening and communicating to stakeholders, the adoption of stakeholder processes, recognition of the interdependence between stakeholders, collaborative work and the acknowledgement of possible conflicts. From these definitions it is evident that stakeholder management is a wide-ranging process which, in essence, focuses on the management of stakeholder relationships. The preferred term for this study, however, is *OSR maintenance*, which constitutes phase 3 of the proposed OSR-building model.

OSR maintenance is the term used to keep relationships in a desired state (Hung 2003a:3) and it is either referred to as an acitivity "to keep a relationship in existence, to keep a relationship in a specified condition, to keep a relationship in a satisfactory condition or to keep a relationship in repair" (Dindia & Canary 1993:193). In an interpersonal relationship context, Hendricks (2004:120) also acknowledges the fact that different meanings can be attached to the term "relationship maintenance" It may refer to a relationship that continues; a relationship that not only continues but is stable; continuity; stability and satisfaction; or it may imply being in "a good working condition". A key characteristic of OSR maintenance that is evident from these perspectives is that a relationship is always in a state of flux – it is dynamic and continuously evolving (Hung 2003a:2-3; Grunig 2006:167; Rensburg & Cant 2009:58), which often forms the basis for the critique of the term "OSR maintenance". Hung (2003a:2-3) and Grunig (2006:167) argue that the term "maintenance" per se implies that a relationship does not evolve, and that OSR maintenance should in fact be replaced with the term "OSR cultivation*".*

Although this study does accept the argument that a relationship is dynamic and in a state of flux, the viewpoint of OSR maintenance in this study supports Hendricks's (2004) definition of relationship maintenance as "a relationship that not only continues, but is stable". It should be noted that the inclusion of the concept "stable" does not imply that an OSR is static and that no aspect of the relationship changes, but instead "… that the basic patterns of exchange in the relationship are established and accepted" (Dindia & Canary 1993:164). In this regard, a sense of stableness with a view to strengthening the OSR is experienced. OSR maintenance represents the "growth and nurturing of OSR" (Jo et al 2004:14) to ensure that a foundational OSR can grow into mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP. The definition of OSR maintenance in this study is encapsulated in Stafford and Canary's (1991:220) perspective that "… all ongoing

relationships require maintenance. It is implicit in developmental models that a necessary condition for escalating to a new stage is the maintenance of a previously defined stage", which in essence, is the phased, process approach presented by the proposed OSR-building model.

4.3.3.2   Theories associated with OSR maintenance

The two predominant theories associated with OSR maintenance are the interdependence theory and the relational dialectics theory (Dindia & Canary 1993:167; Wood 1995:233).

- **Interdependence theory**

The interdependence theory developed by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) is a derivative of the social exchange theory (Dindia & Canary 1993:167) and focuses on the notion that people will enter and remain in a relationship if they are adequately satisfied and when the rewards of the relationship exceed the costs (Dindia & Canary 1993:167). The interdependence theory holds that the comparison of relational benefits with available alternatives determines the level of satisfaction with the current relationship; in other words, one will stay in a relationship only for as long as the benefits of the current relationship exceed the proposed benefits of alternative relationships (Dindia & Canary 1993:167). Similarly, according to Hendricks (2004:40), the interdependence theory highlights the degree to which the organisation and strategic stakeholders are "reciprocally involved" in the OSR, which entails the following two levels: the *level of dependence* each relational party has on the OSR to meet objectives and the *mutuality of dependence*, that is, the similarity of both relational parties' dependence on the OSR. This perspective emphasises the fact that OSR maintenance requires a mutuality of dependence – both the organisation and strategic stakeholder should feel that the continuance of the OSR is required to meet relational objectives; both relational parties need to feel that the cost of the OSR exceeds the benefits, which was highlighted in the discussion of the social exchange theory earlier. It can also be argued that the relational satisfaction and relational commitment that were established as OSR elements should be experienced by both the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) to ensure successful OSR maintenance.

- **The relational dialectics theory**

The relational dialectics theory developed by Baxter (1988), which, according to Baxter and Montgomery (1997:326), should be viewed as a perspective instead of a theory, posits that relationships consist of opposing but interconnected forces, of which the most prominent include the tension between autonomy and connection, novelty and predictability and closedness and openness (Dindia & Canary 1993:168). It is argued that as relational parties move closer, a need to move apart arises, and as we move apart, a need to move closer again arises, which implies that a relationship is continuously in flux (Dindia & Canary 1993:168). Since the dialectical perspective holds that "relationships cannot be maintained in a stable state because they are constantly changing" (Dindia & Canary 1993:168), it tends to contradict the perspective of this study that a desirable relational state, and therefore a foundational OSR, should be maintained, that is, nurtured to ensure the realisation of the proposed OSR development continuum. However, according to Montgomery (1993:205), from a relational dialectics perspective, OSR maintenance is to "sustain a relationship through flux", which supports the definition of OSR maintenance in this study.

4.3.3.3   *OSR maintenance strategies*

As an introduction to the discussion on OSR maintenance strategies, Bruning and Ledingham's (2000:92) model for effective stakeholder relationship management, which is largely concerned with OSR maintenance and based on the assumption that OSRs have already been built, will be explored. The model proposes five sequential steps which include, scan, map, act, roll out and track (SMART) (Bruning & Ledingham 2000:92): The first step, *scan*, implies that the environment should be scanned to better understand the current status of the already developed OSR and an exploration of the current stakeholder knowledge and the communication patterns that exist in the OSR. The second step, *map*, focuses on the development of a strategic plan to package the mission of the organisation, OSR levels and circumstances together and to establish symbolic and behavioural relationship tactics. The third step, *act*, represents a pilot test to assess the preliminary effectiveness of the plan and to make adjustments where required. Once the third step has been completed, the revised strategic plan has to be *rolled out*. Lastly, the effectiveness of the strategy has to be *tracked*, which constitutes the final step of the model. This approach can be useful to the organisation because it will guide the corporate communication professional to develop a structured method to strengthen existing OSRs. However, it

seems to be more appropriate when a specific issue or problem has been detected in the first step of the model (scan) and less applicable to maintain an OSR as a strategy to strengthen the OSR.

The strategies proposed by Stafford and Canary (1991:233) for romantic partners, which are widely applied in corporate communication literature to maintain a symmetrical OSR (Hon & Grunig 1999; Ki 2003; Grunig & Huang 2000; Hung 2003a; Hung 2004; Hung 2007; Ki & Hon 2007b) are applicable to this study, and include openness, positivity, assurances of legitimacy, networking and sharing tasks, as well as Hon and Grunig's (1999:14) strategy of access as an OSR maintenance strategy. These strategies are summarised in table 3.5 (Hon & Grunig 1999:15; Bruning & Ledingham 1999:160; Hung 2003a:5; Hung 2004:3; Hendricks 2004:120; Ki & Hon 2007b:10).

Table 4.5: OSR maintenance strategies

OSR maintenance strategy	Description
Openness	It is argued that openness between the organisation and strategic stakeholder is an indication that relational parties are satisfied with and committed to the OSR. Since it was proposed that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, openness between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) should be evident (as openness was proposed as a characteristic of two-way communication) throughout the OSR-building process, including OSR maintenance, in order to strengthen OSRs.
Positivity	The concept of positivity refers to all the measures the organisation undertakes to make strategic stakeholders more satisfied in the relationship and includes being polite when communicating and avoiding criticism of the other party.
Assurances of legitimacy	Assurances of legitimacy focus on attempts made by relational parties to assure one another that actions taken and claims made are valid and that true commitment to maintain the OSR is evident.
Networking	Networking is a term used to refer to the "structure of ties between actors in a social system" (Ki & Hon 2007:10) and implies that organisations must make an effort to build networks or coalitions with the same social groups as their strategic stakeholders. Becoming more interactive with the strategic stakeholders' social system may help to strengthen the OSR to evolve into an OSP.
Sharing tasks	In interpersonal communication, sharing of tasks is evident in elements such as sharing household chores, while in an OSR, organisations and strategic stakeholders would similarly share tasks through, say, providing employment. Sharing tasks may strengthen the sense of mutuality in the OSR and inspire relational parties to work towards the achievement of shared objectives.
Access	An OSR built on two-way symmetrical communication, as promoted in this study, implies that both the strategic stakeholder and organisation will allow each other direct contact, which emphasises a direct reporting relationship between the organisation and strategic stakeholders as opposed to having a third party for reporting between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s).

In addition to these OSR maintenance strategies discussed in table 3.5, *evaluation research*, which was presented as a corporate communication function in the proposed strategic communication foundation (as part of building block 1 of the proposed OSR model) and possible *conflict resolution strategies* (which were presented as part of issues management as an essential corporate communication function in building block 1) also need to be considered as part of the OSR maintenance phase of the proposed OSR-building model.

- **Evaluation research**

As discussed in chapter 2, evaluation research is accepted for the purpose of this study as a two-pronged approach, whereby it was firstly applied in phase 1, strategic stakeholder identification, of the proposed model to identify strategic stakeholders' relational needs and expectations. The second part of evaluation research becomes relevant in OSR maintenance to determine whether these stakeholder needs and expectations are being met to enable the organisation to build towards an OSP.

- **Conflict resolution strategies**

Although it was argued that conflict resolution strategies form part of issues management as an essential corporate communication function of the strategic communication foundation for this study, thereby implying that conflict between relational partners may occur throughout the OSR-building process, it should also be mentioned that the integrative conflict resolution strategies, namely cooperating, being unconditionally constructive and saying "win-win or no deal" discussed in chapter 2 may also serve as an OSR maintenance strategy to ensure the endurance of the OSR and development of an OSP.

In the following section, the definition of OSP formulated earlier will be revisited and the concept of establishing a partnership between the organisation and strategic stakeholders will be further explored.

4.3.4 Organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs)

Based on the preceding discussions and insights gained in exploring the literature, the definition formulated for an OSP, which was presented as the ultimate relational state of the proposed OSR development continuum, can be expanded.

Firstly, Girard and Sobczak's (2011:3) perspective that stakeholder engagement is a *mutual process* is accepted. They argue that OSP allow organisations "to build bridges with their stakeholders in the pursuit of common goals, whereas the traditional stakeholder management techniques only allow for the fulfillment of stakeholders' needs and expectations" (Girard & Sobczak 2011:2). For the purpose of this study, a "mutual process" is evident in an OSP in that the second dimension of stakeholder engagement, namely two-way engagement, becomes evident when both the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) initiate engagement.

Secondly, *collaborative problem solving* is evident in an OSP, which Halal (2001:30) suggests as a key to a relationship between the organisation and stakeholders. As argued earlier, for the purpose of this study, it is proposed that a foundational OSR should be nurtured to grow and evolve into an OSP. Halal (2010:30) similarly suggests more advanced relational actions as the OSR progresses, and argues that over time, collaborative problem solving becomes evident in which the organisation and strategic stakeholders move beyond a mere discussion to "… deep listening with empathy, expressing hidden assumptions, focusing on common interests and searching for conceptual breakthroughs". At an OSP level, the organisation and strategic stakeholders will therefore reach absolute mutuality, in which the capabilities of the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) are combined and issues and problems are collectively resolved to establish mutual value and to realise a shared end goal.

Thirdly, it is proposed that *stewardship* will be experienced at an OSP level. Kelly (1998) conducted extensive research on stewardship and argued that it is the "missing step" in the communication process, while Ledingham (2003:192) emphasised the importance of stewardship for OSR in his theory of relationship management (Waters 2009:114). Hon and Grunig (1999:17) contend that stewardship recognises the value of relationships that were proactively built to assist the organisation in future endeavours. Stewardship comprises the following four symmetrical elements: reciprocity, responsibility, reporting

and relationship nurturing. *Reciprocity* implies that the organisation demonstrates its appreciation for supportive beliefs and behaviours and has a *responsibility* to act in a socially acceptable manner to these supportive stakeholders. *Reporting* implies that the organisation fulfils all the requirements of accountability, while *relationship nurturing* emphasises that the organisation accepts its responsibility towards supportive stakeholders and involves these stakeholders in all activities to ensure sufficient organisational functioning. Furthermore, the stewardship theory of management developed by Donaldson and Davis (1989), however, proposes that a steward acts in the best interests of the organisation (Davis et al 1997:25), and that stakeholder needs will only be achieved if the stakeholders have the same needs as the organisation. Stewardship in this sense is therefore more focused on achieving one-way organisational objectives. Cohen's (2003:120) perspective that it is a matter of being supportive of the *partnership* as opposed to acting on self-interests is supported in this study in order to underscore that fact that at an OSP level, *both the organisation and strategic stakeholder should be a steward of each other*. It can therefore be argued that the concept of stewardship is supported in this study, but it should be a *mutual* experience of responsibility, reporting and relationship nurturing between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s). It should also be noted that reciprocity will already be evident in a foundational OSR, as argued earlier, and will therefore not be presented as a unique quality of stewardship for the purpose of this study. Instead, it is posited that reciprocity at this level of the OSR building model is already evident.

Based on these arguments, the definition of an OSP formulated earlier can now be revised to read as follows: a *foundational OSR practised over a long period of time to reach the level of* **two-way engagement**, **characterised by a mutual experience of stewardship, where both the organisation and strategic stakeholders join in collaborative problem solving** *to achieve a mutually desired end goal.*

4.4   A CONCEPTUALISATION OF OSR BUILDING

Figure 4.3 is a graphic representation of the phases of the proposed OSR-building model which are aligned with the proposed OSR development continuum, which collectively constitutes the third building block of the OSR-building model.

Organisation initiation

Partial mutual initiation

Full mutual initiation

Two-way engagement

PHASE 1:Strategic stakeholder identification

OSR *antecedents*

PHASE 2: OSR development

Stakeholder engagement

PHASE 3: OSR maintenance

OSP

Time
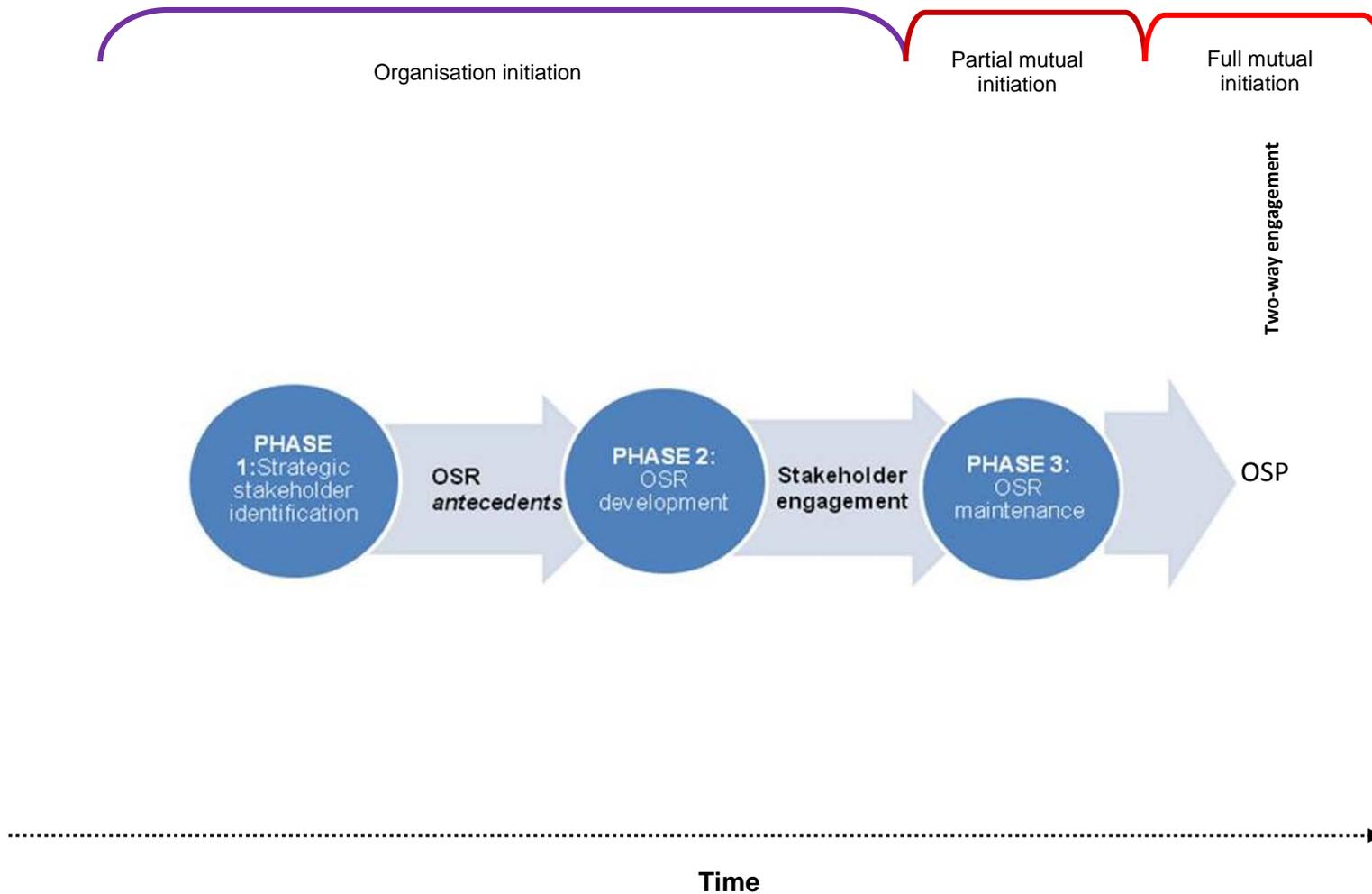
Figure 4.3: Building block 3: a conceptualisation of OSR building

Figure 4.3 illustrates the three predominant phases of the proposed OSR-building model, namely strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance and two subphases, namely OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement. The second dimension of stakeholder engagement, two-way engagement, is only experienced at an OSP level. As mentioned earlier, it is proposed that phases 1 and 2 of the OSR development process will be initiated by the organisation, phase 3 will be initiated by the organisation and to a lesser extent by the strategic stakeholder, and at an OSP level, full mutual initiation will be experienced in the sense that relational actions will be initiated by both the organisation and the strategic stakeholder.

Figure 4.3 also indicates how the foundational OSR evolves into mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP over time across the phases of the proposed model, which represents the OSR development continuum. The above representation indicates that a foundational OSR will be established in the OSR development phase and that a mutually beneficial OSR will be established as a result of stakeholder engagement and OSR maintenance. A mutually beneficial OSR that is maintained over time will result in a sustainable OSR and ultimately evolve into an OSP. This OSR development process presented by the OSR development continuum across the phases of the proposed OSR model will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

4.5   SUMMARY

This chapter explored the proposed phases of the OSR-building model and constituted the third building block of the model, namely a *conceptualisation of OSR building*.

The chapter started with a review of existing OSR types to introduce the proposed OSR development continuum in which four OSR types, which are unique to this study, were developed. The OSR development continuum proposed a sequential development process whereby a foundational OSR will evolve in intensity over time into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an eventual OSP.

Against this background, the three key phases of the proposed OSR-building model were defined. A methodology for strategic stakeholder identification, the first phase of the proposed OSR-building model, was presented, which highlighted that a high degree of stakeholder salience, relational benefits that outweigh costs and a high level of involvement should serve as the cornerstones of a method of strategic stakeholder

identification. It was argued that the second phase of the model, OSR development, is preceded by various OSR antecedents, namely trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequences and expectations. Phase 2 of the model was contextualised through an exploration of various OSR elements, which include trust, control mutuality, relationship satisfaction, relational commitment and mutual understanding. Stakeholder engagement was presented as an OSR outcome and a subphase preceding OSR maintenance and is a method to strengthen the OSR. It emerged from this discussion that phases 1 and 2 of the proposed OSR model are initiated by the organisation.

Access, openness, positivity, assurances of legitimacy, networking and sharing tasks were discussed as OSR maintenance strategies. The relevance of evaluation research and conflict resolution strategies to OSR maintenance, which were both presented as essential corporate communication functions as part of the strategic communication foundation of research and issues management respectively, were emphasised. It was also suggested that phase 3 of the OSR-building model shows signs of initiation on the part of both the organisation and the strategic stakeholder, which is possible evidence of partial mutual initiation.

Lastly, the definition formulated of an OSP was revised to include the concept of two-way engagement, collaborative problem solving and stewardship. This ultimate relational state of the proposed OSR-building model indicates full mutual initiation by both the organisation and strategic stakeholders(s).

The chapter concluded with a graphic representation of the third building block of the proposed OSR-building model, namely a conceptualisation of OSR building. This depiction specifically indicated how the OSR development continuum can be aligned with the phases of the OSR-building model, which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter to follow.

Chapter 5 will focus on integrating the three building blocks of the proposed OSR-building model, namely the strategic communication foundation, the theoretical foundation and the conceptualisation of OSR building, in order to devise a conceptual framework that can be measured and tested in practice. The purpose of this is to develop a strategic sequential,

integrated, sustainable OSR (SISOSR)-building model that adequately describes the OSR-building process. The next chapter will focus specifically on describing the proposed OSR-building process promoted by this conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS A SEQUENTIAL, INTEGRATED, SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP (SISOSR) MODEL: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

> "... surprisingly little effort has been made to construct a comprehensive stakeholder management process model that can facilitate the actual practice of stakeholder management within contemporary organizations" (Preble 2005:414).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters examined the OSR literature, and this culminated in the development of the following three building blocks for a proposed OSR-building model: a strategic communication foundation, theoretical foundation, and a conceptualisation of OSR building. This chapter focuses on integrating these building blocks to develop a conceptual framework that can be measured and explored in practice in an attempt to develop a strategic sequential, integrated, sustainable OSR (SISOSR) model that describes the OSR-building process. Furthermore, the specific aim of this chapter is to explain the OSR-building process promoted by the conceptual framework in order to address the research problem of *exploring the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process.*

The discussion will first explain the actual OSR-building process of the conceptual framework in order to specifically align the phases of the framework to the OSR development continuum. This will be followed by an elaboration on the key characteristics of the conceptual framework, and the chapter will conclude with a graphic representation of the conceptual framework.

5.2 AN EXPLANATION OF THE OSR-BUILDING PROCESS PRESENTED BY THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section focuses on the integration of the three building blocks to devise a conceptual framework describing the OSR-building process. The strategic communication foundation (building block 1) and the implementation of an excellence communication function in the corporate communication department (building block 2, theoretical foundation) will provide the basis for the conceptualisation of OSR building (building block 3). All three of these

building blocks, however, fulfil an equal important role in the proposed OSR-building model in effectively describing the OSR-building process. As indicated in chapter 1, although building blocks 1 and 2 are interlinked and collectively serve as a foundation for building block 3, it should be noted that for the purpose of discussing the process of OSR building proposed in this study, the establishment of an excellent communication function, which represents building block 2, will be discussed before the strategic communication foundation (building block 1). This is because the structure of the corporate communication department should first be in place (represented by building block 2) before one can elaborate on the essential corporate communication functions (represented by building block 1) that should be practised by the corporate communication department to ensure successful OSR development.

5.2.1 Building block 2: the establishment of an excellent communication function in the corporate communication department (theoretical foundation)

As mentioned in chapter 3, the theoretical foundation (building block 2) consists of the stakeholder concept, the relational paradigm, the excellence theory and the relationship management theory. In this chapter, it was argued that the implementation of an excellent communication function supports the principles of the stakeholder concept, the relationship management paradigm and relationship management theories because it allows the development of strategic communication programmes for various strategic stakeholders (the stakeholder concept); it focuses on the *relationship* between the organisation and stakeholders (the relationship management paradigm); and it proposes a two-way symmetrical communication process to allow the establishment of mutually beneficial OSR (the relationship management theory and stakeholder concept). Furthermore, the excellence theory specifically emphasises the need to practise corporate communication strategically and the way in which corporate communication can contribute to the overall strategic management of the organisation. Hence, it is posited that the implementation of an excellent communication function is not only a prerequisite for the proposed OSR-building model, but it also encapsulates the essence of the stakeholder concept (from a normative paradigm and relational perspective), relational paradigm and the relationship management theory.

Furthermore, it was argued that the integration of the excellent communication function in the corporate communication department requires taking action at organisational, departmental and programme levels, which will be briefly explained below.

5.2.1.1 Actions at programme level

In the literature discussed earlier, it was indicated that at progamme level the corporate senior corporate communication professional has to be involved in the strategic management process of the organisation since it is argued that corporate communication programmes for strategic stakeholders, which are identified through the utilisation of the strategic stakeholder methodology proposed by the first phase of the proposed OSR building model, should become part of this overall strategic management process. The strategic communication foundation also becomes applicable at this stage, since the relational needs and expectations of strategic stakeholders are identified through evaluation research. The communication programmes for these strategic stakeholders have to be managed strategically by means of continuous research, the implementation of measurable objectives and evaluation strategies to determine the effectiveness of these programmes in order to meet mutually desired objectives and build towards an OSP. Although the development of communication programmes was not a key focus of this study and therefore not elaborated in detail, it could be argued that the communication programmes for the identified strategic stakeholders should be devised after the relational needs and OSR antecedents have been identified. These communication programmes can be altered at any time during the OSR development process as new organisational issues are identified through environmental scanning and especially during stakeholder engagement.

5.2.1.2 Actions on departmental level

From the literature explored in the preceding chapters, it became evident that actions that should be taken into consideration at departmental level include the following: the excellent communication function requires the guidance of a senior corporate communication professional with the required corporate communication knowledge (practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective) and not by an administrative manager or another member of the dominant coalition to guide the department. Furthermore, the corporate communication department should be staffed with corporate communication professionals with solid academic and practical knowledge of the

field. The essential corporate communication functions proposed by this study should also be integrated into a single corporate communication department to ensure message consistency and alignment and the realisation of a successful OSR-building process. Corporate communication should also not function under the management of another department with a purpose other than communication. The two-way symmetrical communication model should prevail in the department to allow sustainable OSR building. It was also posited that two-way symmetrical communication will stimulate participation, mutuality and trust between management and employees in the organisation to contribute to establishing the required culture of knowledge proposed by the strategic communication foundation.

5.2.1.3 Actions at organisational level

The following actions were proposed at organisational level to establish an excellent communication function in the corporate communication department as highlighted in the literature review in the preceding chapters: It is advisable that the senior corporate communication professional should be one of the decision makers, hence the *dominant coalition* of the organisation, to ensure the efficiency of the department and to influence organisational decisions. It is vital that the dominant coalition and the senior corporate communication professional share a two-way symmetrical communication worldview to ensure sustainable OSR building. It is essential to instil symmetrical internal communication in the organisation, since a prosperous internal organisational climate that allows participative decision making and a collective working relationship is required internally in order to successfully promote mutually beneficial relationships externally.

It was subsequently argued that the establishment of an excellent communication function in the corporate communication department can provide the foundation and ideal conditions necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the proposed OSR-building model. This function can only be established if the organisation as a whole supports the two-way symmetrical communication perspective, thereby moving away from serving organisational self-interests to the achievement of mutually beneficial objectives shared by the organisation and strategic stakeholders.

The next section focuses on the strategic communication foundation, which is building block 1.

5.2.2 Building block 1: the strategic communication foundation

It can be argued that the proposed strategic communication foundation is practised at *organisational level* and specifically highlights corporate communication's contribution to the overall strategic management of the organisation. As indicated in the literature, the strategic communication foundation involves corporate communication practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective and that the following essential corporate communication functions are required to ensure a successful OSR-building process: reputation management; knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge; research through environmental scanning and evaluation research; and issues management. Besides the integration of the excellence communication function and the practice of corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical perspective, a positive organisational reputation and the establishment of a knowledge culture are essential corporate communication functions that also serve as prerequisites for successful OSR building. It was posited that to ensure the development of OSR, a *positive organisational reputation*, that is, all internal and external stakeholders' general perception of the organisation, should serve as a starting point for building OSR with strategic stakeholders specifically.

As indicated in the literature, the practice of two-way symmetrical communication can, inter alia, promote openness, honesty, trust, negotiation, collaboration and ethical communication in order to build and maintain a positive organisational reputation. Moreover, the establishment of a *knowledge culture* in the organisation to ensure *knowledge sharing* should also be facilitated by the excellent communication function, since symmetrical internal communication allows employee participation and a collective working relationship to promote knowledge sharing. The integrated spheres of communication excellence encapsulated the requirements for a knowledge culture, as emphasised in the literature. The senior corporate communication professional must first have the required knowledge to apply the two-way symmetrical communication model; and the dominant coalition must support the practice of two-way symmetrical communication to promote a participative organisational culture. However, it should be noted, that once a culture of knowledge has been established, knowledge sharing will only occur once an OSR has been built, because of the view that knowledge sharing will only occur once a

high level of trust, reciprocity and altruism have been established between the organisation and strategic stakeholders.

Furthermore, the literature indicated that corporate communication practitioners should conduct *evaluation research* as part of strategic stakeholder identification (phase 1 of the proposed OSR model) to determine these strategic stakeholders' relational needs. Evaluation research should also be conducted to determine whether these relational needs are being met as part of OSR maintenance (phase 3 of the proposed OSR model). Although evaluation research is relevant at organisational level, it is also relevant at programme level because strategic stakeholder needs are identified, which provide the basis for the communication programmes for each strategic stakeholder. *Environmental scanning* should be conducted throughout the OSR-building process to detect issues of concern that could harm the OSR development process. It was further proposed that *issues management* should also be employed as a continuous process, and the issues that have been identified by means of environmental scanning, which could include potential crises, the formation of active publics and/or conflict between relational parties, should be proactively managed and resolved.

Against the proposed prerequisites of an excellent communication function and strategic communication foundation, the actual OSR-building process is addressed in the third building block, the conceptualisation of OSR building, which occurs at both programme and departmental levels.

5.2.3 Building block 3: the conceptualisation of OSR building

The process of OSR building will be explained on the basis of the three proposed phases of OSR building, namely strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development, and OSR maintenance, as well as the two subphases of OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement. Each phase will be divided into smaller sections to indicate the subelements in each phase as outlined in the preceding chapters. The OSR development continuum will be aligned with these phases, to illustrate the development of a foundational OSR, to a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and ultimately an OSP, across the three phases of the proposed OSR-building model. As emphasised in the literature, the discussion will also stress the fact that phases 1 and 2 of the proposed OSR-building model are predominantly driven by *organisational initiation,* which implies that the

organisation is the initiator of the OSR. Phase 3 of the proposed model was characterised by *partial mutual initiation* in which both the organisation, and the strategic stakeholder, to a lesser extent, initiate relational actions. Only at OSP level full *mutual initiation* was proposed, whereby both the organisation and strategic stakeholder initiate relational actions.

5.2.3.1   Phase 1: Strategic stakeholder identification

In chapter 1 a strategic stakeholder was defined as those *internal and/or external organisational groups that have a continuous high degree of stakeholder salience with which the organisation shares a reciprocal interest that should be nurtured through proactive, mutually beneficial relationship building to ensure organisational survival.* It was further posited in chapter 3 that in conjunction with evaluation research, the organisation should employ a strategic stakeholder identification methodology to identify strategic stakeholders. This strategic stakeholder identification methodology is graphically depicted in figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Strategic stakeholder identification methodology

Figure 5.1 illustrates the actions that need to be taken in phase 1 of the model, which constitutes the strategic stakeholder methodology. Since it is argued that the organisation is the initiator at this stage of OSR building, corporate communication professionals should identify stakeholders that display a high degree of stakeholder salience, thereby having mutual power dependence, legitimacy and urgency; there should be a high level of involvement; and the costs of engaging in a potential OSR with these stakeholders should not exceed the benefits. Stakeholders that fulfil all these requirements should be regarded as strategic stakeholders. It was posited that these stakeholders should be managed with equal importance since it was suggested that an organisation will only have a few strategic stakeholders, and the secondary stakeholder and/or active publics' needs should be prioritised. The blue connecting line in the figure represents continuous evaluation research to obtain more information on these strategic stakeholders. As stated earlier, the evaluation research can also assist corporate communication professionals to develop communication programmes for each of these strategic stakeholders. Furthermore, it was proposed that both environmental scanning and issues management are conducted throughout the proposed OSR-building model to detect and proactively resolve issues of concern.

5.2.3.2 *Phase 2: OSR development*

As argued in the literature, OSR antecedents exist prior to the establishment of a foundational OSR and this is regarded as a subphase preceding OSR development. It was also argued that the foundational OSR, which is the most basic OSR type represented by the OSR development continuum, comprises various OSR elements. Phase 2 of the proposed OSR-building model is depicted in figure 5.2.
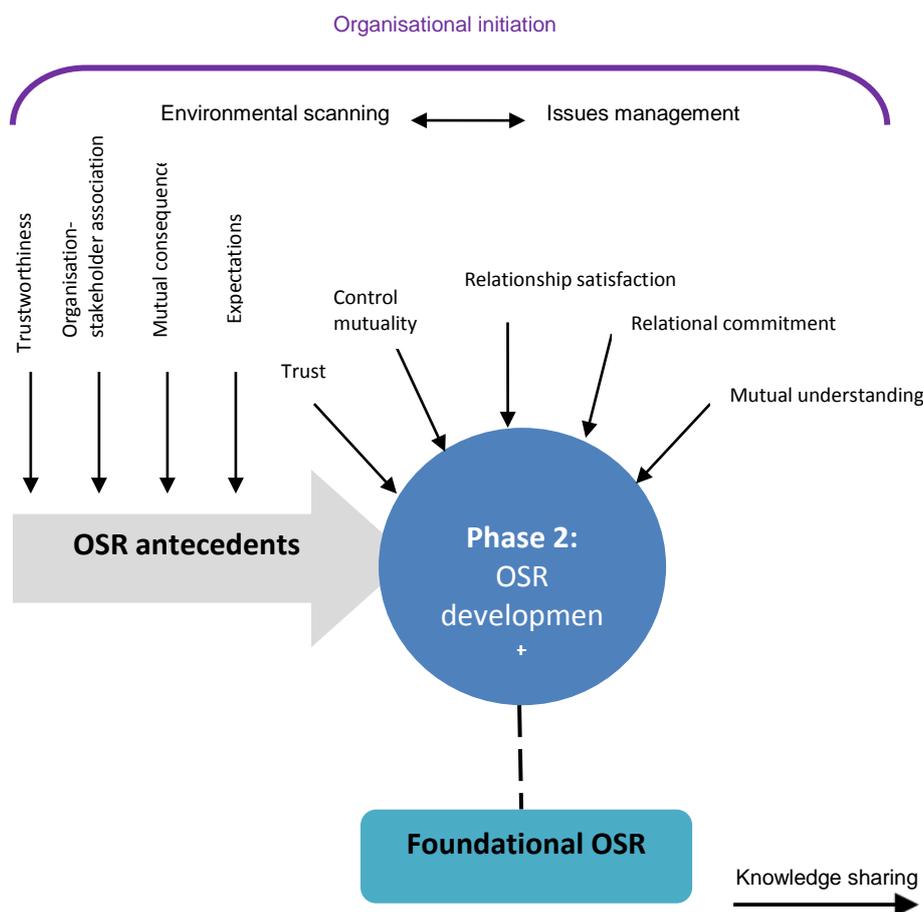
Figure 5.2: OSR antecedents and OSR development

- **OSR antecedents**

Figure 5.2 indicates that in conjunction with the establishment of an excellent communication function and strategic communication foundation, four OSR antecedents, which are regarded as the subphase preceding phase 2 of the model, are needed to stimulate the OSR development process. The four OSR antecedents selected for the purpose of this study, as discussed in chapter 4, are trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequence and expectations. The reasoning was that if strategic stakeholders are identified, the organisation should reflect its *worthiness* to be *trusted*. This was linked to the establishment of a positive organisational reputation that would become evident through open and honest communication through the practice of two-way symmetrical communication, which should be supported by the organisation's dominant coalition. To further stimulate OSR building, both the organisation and stakeholder should experience a sense of *association* with each other. Furthermore, it is indicated that the need for a communication programme becomes evident once the

organisation and stakeholders' actions have *consequences* for one another. The need to collectively work towards attaining mutually desired objectives will therefore be higher. Lastly, both the organisation and strategic stakeholders will have certain *expectations* prior to the relationship that can be identified by means of evaluation research, and if these expectations are not met throughout the OSR, the relationship will not endure.

- **OSR elements**

It was also indicated that continuous two-way symmetrical communication *practised over time* ensures the development of trust, control mutuality, relationship satisfaction, relational commitment and mutual understanding between the identified strategic stakeholders and the organisation. These are the elements of a foundational OSR as identified in the literature. *Trust*, which is deemed to be the most important OSR element, was defined in chapter 4, as *the extent to which both the organisation and stakeholders display a willingness of vulnerability towards the other's behaviour and the level of confidence that one relational party will take the other's interests into account when making key decisions.* It was argued that this confidence can be established by means of continuous two-way symmetrical communication between the organisation and stakeholders, which increases the relational parties' interdependence because mutually beneficial objectives will become evident. *Control mutuality* was defined as *the agreement between relational partners about who will be responsible for deciding on relational objectives and behaviour.* This is the *mindset between relational partners that one or both have the right to influence the other.* This mindset also becomes evident through continuous two-way symmetrical communication in the sense that possible power imbalances between the organisation and strategic stakeholders will be managed in order to achieve a level of "stability" where mutually beneficial objectives and solutions have been identified.

Furthermore, both the organisation and strategic stakeholders have to be *satisfied with the relationship*. According to the literature, *both the organisation and strategic stakeholder must experience satisfactory rewards from the relationship*. This implies that the expectations that both the strategic stakeholder and organisation had prior to the OSR have to be met to ensure the evolvement of the foundational OSR into a mutually beneficial OSR. Besides obtaining continuous feedback, environmental scanning and possible issues management that are conducted throughout the OSR-building process can

also assist the organisation to determine whether relational expectations are being met. To establish *relational commitment*, which was defined *as the desire of the relational partner to stay in a relationship*, the organisation has to integrate activities that will increase the stakeholder's attraction towards the organisation and provide solutions that will outweigh the competitors' solutions. When the benefits of the OSR outweigh the costs, the parties are most likely to stay committed to the relationship. Lastly, it is argued that the organisation and strategic stakeholders should have a balanced focus whereby a *mutual understanding* has to be established. The literature also highlighted this by indicating that mutual understanding is established when both relational parties act as the sender and receiver of messages, and continuous feedback is provided.

In a foundational OSR, the organisation and strategic stakeholders experience these OSR elements at a basic level. As the OSR evolves in intensity over time, the organisation and strategic stakeholder will experience these elements more intensely and at a more advanced level. In conclusion, a *foundational OSR* is the *result of the management of common interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) over time, to achieve mutually beneficial goals through a high degree of reciprocity and continuous two-way symmetrical communication.* Furthermore, it was proposed that on the basis of a foundational OSR, relational parties will start to *share knowledge,* which is also regarded as a method to strengthen the foundational OSR.

5.2.3.2   *Phase 3: OSR maintenance*

The argument was proffered that once a foundational OSR has been built, *stakeholder engagement* occurs as an OSR outcome. This is represented in figure 5.3 as a subphase preceding OSR maintenance. The application of stakeholder engagement and various OSR maintenance strategies, which also include evaluation research and conflict resolution strategies, will all help to ensure that the foundational OSR evolves into a mutually beneficial OSR and a sustainable OSR. The process that encapsulates phase 3 of the proposed OSR- building model is represented in figure 5.3.
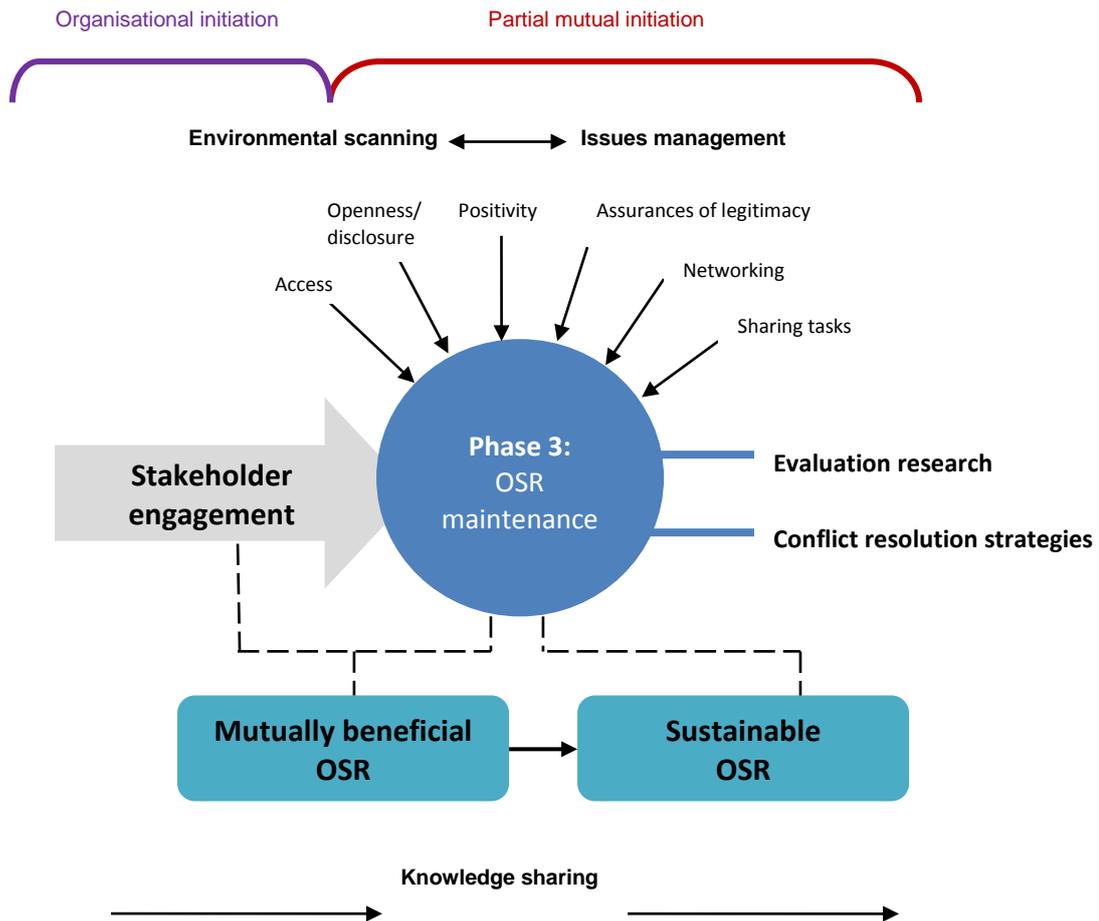
Figure 5.3: Stakeholder engagement and OSR maintenance

- **Stakeholder engagement**

In chapter 4, stakeholder engagement was explained as a two-dimensional approach for the purpose of this study. The first dimension of stakeholder engagement occurs when a foundational OSR (the outcome of an OSR) is implemented. This means that the strategic stakeholders participate in organisational decision making and problem solving. Continuous environmental scanning, as depicted in figure 5.3, should assist the organisation to detect possible risks associated with conflict of interests, which is essential when engaging stakeholders in organisational activities and decision making. The organisation therefore initiates this dimension of stakeholder engagement. The second dimension of stakeholder engagement, namely two-way engagement, will only be experienced at an OSP level. Since stakeholder engagement was proposed as an advanced relational activity it may help to strengthen the foundational OSR into a mutually

beneficial OSR. Further maintenance of the mutually beneficial OSR will lead to a sustainable OSR.

- **OSR maintenance strategies**

As discussed in chapter 4 and represented in figure 5.3, various maintenance strategies can be employed to ensure that a mutually beneficial OSR will grow into a sustainable OSR. These maintenance strategies include access, openness or disclosure, positivity, assurances of legitimacy, networking and sharing tasks. A direct reporting relationship should be established between the organisation and strategic stakeholders, whereby members of strategic stakeholder groups allow the corporate communication professional *access,* while the corporate communication professional in turn allows stakeholders access to the organisation. *Openness* should be promoted by two-way symmetrical communication and practised continuously to establish transparency (which was defined as openness practised over time) to embrace comprehensibility and strengthen the level of trust to build a sustainable OSR. The organisation should ensure that strategic stakeholders are completely satisfied with the relationship, which underscores the maintenance strategy of *positivity*. Evaluation research (as part of the strategic communication foundation, building block 1) and continuous two-way communication to obtain feedback and inputs from stakeholders will assist the organisation to measure the degree of positivity. *Legitimacy* should be used as a reaffirmative maintenance strategy because strategic stakeholders are by definition legitimate. Legitimacy as a maintenance strategy should therefore only be to reaffirm that the actions and claims made are indeed valid and that true commitment on the part of both relational parties is evident – hence the maintenance strategy is labelled *assurances of legitimacy*. To stimulate the movement towards sustainable OSR, the organisation should start interacting with the strategic stakeholders' social system, that is, *network*, in order to infiltrate the world of the strategic stakeholder. Most importantly, the organisation and stakeholders should *share tasks* to strengthen mutuality to work towards shared objectives. Knowledge sharing fostered by a knowledge culture also becomes relevant at this level.

Since it was argued that environmental scanning and issues management are promoted as essential corporate communications functions that should be conducted throughout the OSR-building process in order to detect issues of concern, it is assumed that various elements may hinder the OSR-building process. As part of the OSR maintenance phase to

ensure that sustainable OSR may further evolve into an OSP, *evaluation research* and *conflict resolution* strategies are proposed. As stated earlier, since OSRs are multidimensional, which implies that strategic stakeholders require organisations to fulfil personal, professional and community relationship needs, the organisation should determine whether these needs and expectations (presented as an OSR antecedent) have been met through evaluation research to ultimately strengthen into an OSP. As posited in the literature, this can be done by means of feedback, an advisory or consultant group, interviews, focus groups or surveys, social media, online chat rooms and blogs.

Furthermore, although conflict resolution strategies were discussed as part of issues management, thereby implying that these strategies can be used throughout the OSR-building process, it can also be regarded as an OSR maintenance strategy. Three symmetrical conflict resolution strategies were proposed in the literature, which means that both the organisation and stakeholders seek solutions to problems through open and mutual decision making to ensure the continuance of the OSR, that is, by cooperating, being unconditionally constructive and saying win-win or no deal. *Cooperating* implies that both the organisation and stakeholders work collectively to reconcile interests; *being unconditionally constructive* implies that the organisation acts in the best interests of the OSR, even if it is to the organisation's detriment; and *saying win-win or no deal* focuses on the determination to obtain mutually beneficial solutions to problems.

When these maintenance strategies are instilled, a fully fledged, mutually beneficial OSR will become evident and, over time, evolve into a sustainable OSR. The mutual dependence and reciprocity experienced at foundational OSR level, is maximised in a mutually beneficial OSR, whereby both the organisation and strategic stakeholders are fully aware of the dependence on one another in achieving the relational objectives. A sustainable OSR will specifically be characterised by shared meaning and decision making as well as a cooperative working relationship effected through these maintenance strategies. As indicated in figure 5.3, OSR maintenance is characterised by partial mutual initiation, in terms of which both the organisation and the strategic stakeholder, to a lesser extent, initiate relational actions.

5.2.3.3 *Organisational-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs)*

It was posited earlier that a sustainable OSR that is maintained over time will evolve into an OSP which is regarded as the ultimate relational state of the proposed OSR development continuum. An OSP is characterised by a cooperative working relationship to achieve mutually beneficial objectives and shared responsibility between the organisation and stakeholders. This most desired relational state is graphically represented in figure 5.4.
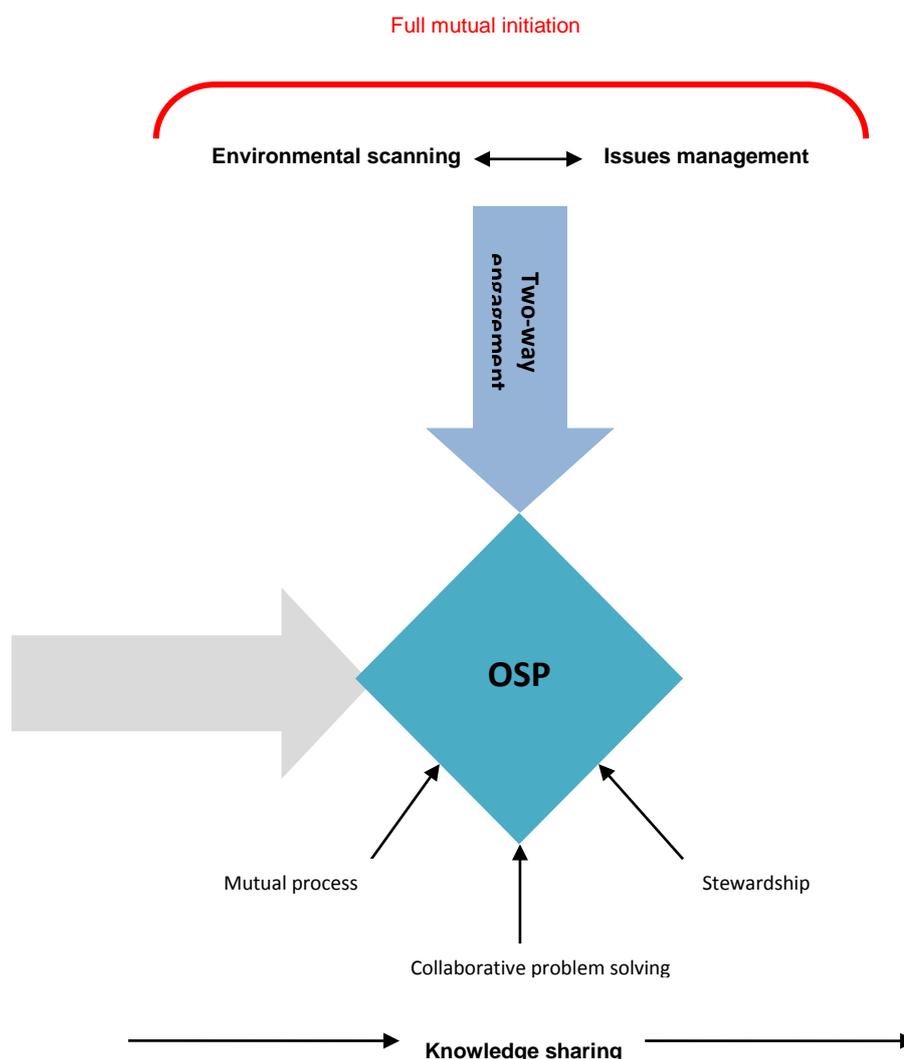
Figure 5.4: Organisational-stakeholder partnership (OSP)

As indicated in figure 5.4, an OSP is characterised by a mutual process, collaborative problem solving and stewardship. Accordingly, the organisation and stakeholder should work collectively towards achieving mutually desired objectives. In this process, the second dimension of stakeholder engagement, namely two-way engagement, becomes

evident, which implies that both the organisation and stakeholder facilitate engagement. Through continuous knowledge sharing, collaborative problem solving should become evident. The capabilities of the organisation and strategic stakeholders should then be combined to find mutually beneficial solutions to problems in order to achieve a shared goal. Stewardship should be experienced at OSP level, which implies that a mutual experience of responsibility, reporting and relationship nurturing should become evident. Both the strategic stakeholder and organisation should act as each other's steward – that is, both act in the best interests of the partnership, and hence, of each other.

Based on the above discussions, a set of unique characteristics has been developed for the proposed OSR-building model, which at this stage can only be referred to as a conceptual framework.

5.3   KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework is based on three key characteristics which will, after it has been measured and explored in practice, constitute the acronym of the proposed OSR-building model.

- **Sequential**

According to Saz-Carranza and Vernis (2006:417), a sequential process is characterised by linearity that is usually composed of emergence, evolution and possible dissolution steps. Similarly, the conceptual framework proposes a three-phase, process approach towards OSR building, in which one phase is dependent on the successful completion of the previous phase. This implies that strategic stakeholders should first be identified, and an OSR should then be developed and maintained so that it can evolve into an OSP.

- **Integrated**

"Integrated" in this study implies the combination of various concepts into one collective process. This study proposes that stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance (and OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement as subphases), which are normally studied independently, should be integrated into one OSR-building model. The rationale for this is that an OSR cannot be built if strategic stakeholders have not been identified, and an OSR that has been built needs to be maintained to ensure optimal organisational effectiveness. Hence, in this study stakeholder identification, OSR

development and OSR maintenance should be interrelated and studied as a collective whole to more adequately explain the elements and process of OSR building.

- **Sustainable**

The term "sustainable" is often associated with progress and prosperity (White 2009:387). In a study on triple bottom line sustainability, Smith and Sharicz (2011:74) define sustainable as "the result of the activities of the organization … that demonstrate the ability of the organization to maintain viable its business operation". This conceptual framework promotes a partnership approach towards OSR building with strategic stakeholders, in which the ideal conditions are presented to ensure that a foundational OSR will grow into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and ultimately an OSP, which encapsulates the OSR development continuum. The progressive nature of the OSR development continuum requires a sustainable OSR-building process to ensure OSP development. This study posits that a sustainable OSR-building process is achieved by practising corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective to attain mutually beneficial objectives among strategic stakeholders and the organisation. This indicates a true concern for one another's interests.

In addition to these characteristics, the conceptual framework is also the following:

- **Generic**

The term "generic" implies that that the same principles may be applied to different situations – that is, the principles are not specific or customised (Arif 2007:21). Although the conceptual framework promotes OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders specifically, it is generic in the sense that it does not focus on a specific strategic stakeholder group and the model can be applied to both internal and external strategic stakeholder groups. The rationale behind this approach is that some strategic stakeholder groups will be applicable to all organisations, for example, employees, but this will also differ according to the industry of the organisation. A need for a generic approach to address a variety of strategic stakeholders is therefore required. Furthermore, it is also generic in the sense that it may assist the organisation in any communication situation. It is therefore not developed to aid a specific communication activity. Lastly, the proposed model is also not specific to a certain industry – it is a set of generic principles that can be applied and customised for various industries.

- **Proactive**

Publics mobilise themselves around certain situations where the focus of the organisation is on managing a specific situation reactively as opposed to building relationships (Grunig et al 2002:324). As stated earlier, this study supports Chinyio and Olomolaiye's (2010:5) argument that a *proactive* approach is required to manage an organisation's stakeholders. The proposed model is not focused on active publics, since the purpose of engaging with these publics is short term and there is no need to build and maintain relationships with these groups. Instead, the conceptual framework provides guidelines on the process of building OSR with *strategic* stakeholders, that is, those stakeholders that will always be evident and relevant over time.

- **Strategic**

This study emphasised that the role of corporate communication as a strategic function in the organisation is becoming more prominent because of the current emphasis that is being placed on organisational stakeholders. OSR building is central to practising corporate communication strategically and for corporate communication to contribute to the overall strategic management of the organisation. As proposed earlier, the integration of the excellence function in the corporate communication department provides the necessary means to empower corporate communication as a strategic OSR-building function.

5.4 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR A SEQUENTIAL, INTEGRATED, SUSTAINABLE OSR-BUILDING PROCESS

Figure 5.5 is a graphic representation of the conceptual framework that can be measured and explored in practice to constitute a model for OSR building that sufficiently describes the OSR-building process.
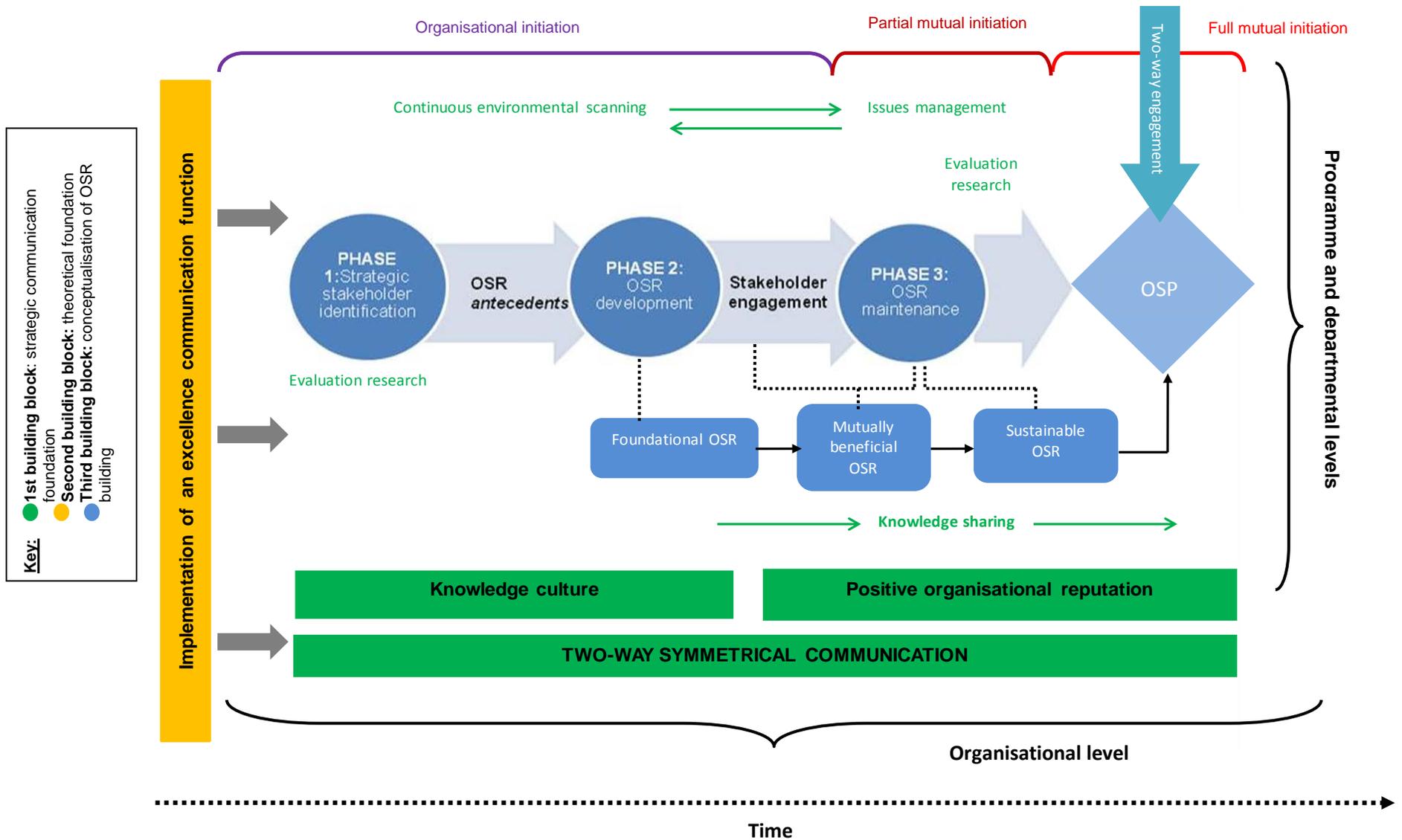
Figure 5.5: A conceptual framework for a sequential, integrated, sustainable OSR-building process

Based on the process and characteristics of the conceptual framework provided earlier, figure 5.5 should be interpreted as follows: Firstly, the second building block of the model, namely the theoretical foundation (represented by the yellow area) embodies the establishment of an excellent communication function in the corporate communication department (at programme, departmental and organisational levels) and is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the proposed OSR-building process. Secondly, the green portions and text of the model illustrate the first building block of the model, namely the strategic communication foundation, which should predominantly be executed at organisational level. The strategic communication foundation therefore provides a vital basis of the conceptual framework and emphasises how corporate communication contributes to the overall strategic management of the organisation to contribute to organisational effectiveness. Thirdly, the blue portions of the model illustrate the third building block of the model, namely the conceptualisation of OSR-building. This constitutes the essence of conceptual framework because it encapsulates the proposed phases and subphases of the OSR-building process, aligned with the OSR development continuum to illustrate the development of a foundational OSR to a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP. As illustrated, the actual OSR-building process occurs at the *departmental* and *programme levels* of the organisation. Furthermore, it should be noted that the proposed OSR-building process represented by the conceptual framework occurs *over time*.

5.5   SUMMARY

This chapter focused on integrating the proposed building blocks of an OSR-building model, namely the strategic communication foundation, the theoretical foundation and the conceptualisation of OSR building to constitute a conceptual framework that can be measured and explored in practice to constitute an OSR-building model. This chapter further focused on explaining the sequence of the OSR development process, which entails establishing an excellent communication function in the corporate communication department and implementing the corporate communication functions proposed by the strategic communication foundation before applying the sequential phases of the OSR-building process.

The next step of this study is to measure and explore the conceptual framework in practice by means of a quantitative survey that will be distributed among senior communication

professionals in listed South African organisations. The insights obtained from this survey as well as the detail and process of this conceptual framework will be further explored by means of qualitative one-on-one interviews. Based on these findings, possible additions and/or amendments will be made to this conceptual framework in order to devise an OSR-building model. The next chapter focuses on explaining the methodology applied to obtain these insights in practice.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> "Qualitative and quantitative research are not in opposition to one another. Rather, they can complement each other" (Thomas 2009:83).

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on presenting a conceptual framework for OSR building based on the insights obtained from existing OSR literature. To determine whether the principles of this conceptual framework can be accepted, amended and/or rejected, the framework needs to be tested in practice in order to develop an OSR model that adequately describes the OSR-building process. This chapter outlines the research methodology that will be used to test this conceptual framework to highlight the *need for a generic, strategic, integrated approach to sustainable OSRs from a corporate communication's perspective in order to contribute to organisational effectiveness*. In a communication context, Du Plooy (1996:30) describes methodology as the "principal ways in which communicologists act on their environment, that is, their methods for conducting research, by their experiments, social surveys, content analyses, field research or ethnography".

As mentioned earlier, the objectives of this study are threefold. Firstly, the literature on OSR has to be explored to determine the elements and process of OSR building to constitute a conceptual framework. Secondly, the principles of this conceptual framework have to be measured and explored against the stakeholder relationship building and the management strategies in practice. Thirdly, it is also necessary to highlight the value of corporate communication as an OSR-building function through a theoretical and pragmatic exploration. The second objective of this study requires a quantitative measurement of the principles of the conceptual framework as a starting point to provide guidelines for a further qualitative exploration of the details and process of the proposed conceptual framework's phases and the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function, the third objective of this study. The methodology required to achieve the second and third objectives of this study is aligned with the following subproblems and research questions of this study:

Subproblems	Research questions
To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process toward OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice.	Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process toward OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice?
To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically.	Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?

In order to address these subproblems and research questions, it is necessary to align the conceptual framework with the stakeholder relationship building and/or management strategies of organisations that have sufficient stakeholder practices in place. This will not only contribute towards affirming or rejecting the principles of the conceptual framework, but also to make the model more pragmatic through the integration of suggestions from senior corporate communication professionals with experience in stakeholder relations and management.

This chapter will first provide a methodological orientation in an attempt to elaborate on the explorative study that is built from an interpretative paradigm. Secondly, triangulation as selected research design will be discussed. Thirdly, the sampling design of this study will be discussed with reference to the sampling methods, unit of analysis, target population, sampling frame and realised sample of this study. Fourthly, the selected data collection methods of this study, namely, a self-administered web-based survey and one-on-one interviews, will be discussed. Lastly, the ethical considerations that have to be considered in testing the conceptual framework in practice will be elucidated.

6.2 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This section will provide an overview of the explorative nature of this study and interpretative research paradigm to serve as the basis for elaborating on triangulation as the selected research design.

6.2.1 Exploratory study

According to Du Plooy (1996:32), exploratory studies focus on developing "an initial, rough understanding of some phenomenon". Tustin (2010a:85) states that exploratory studies are unstructured in nature and are conducted to search for "insights into the general nature of the problem, the possible decision alternatives and relevant variables that need to be considered". Exploratory research usually does not have hypotheses that need to be

tested (Cargan 2007:188), but focuses instead on posing questions and generating problems (Du Plooy 1996:32; Robson 2003:59). It is more flexible (Mouton 2002:108; Robson 2003:59) and centred on finding new insights by assessing phenomena in a different manner (Robson 2003:59; Singh 2007:64) or in situations where there is little prior knowledge of a phenomenon (Van Wyk 2010:84). Despite the shortcomings of exploratory research in the sense that it seldom provides satisfactory answers to newly developed research problems and questions (Baker 1999:204) and that it is not useful for decision making (Singh 2007:64), Babbie (2007:88) identifies the following three purposes of exploratory research; to address the researcher's desire to acquire a better understanding of a specific phenomenon; to test the viability of an extensive research study; and/or to develop methods that can be employed in future studies. In line with these purposes, the aim of this study is to obtain a better understanding of the *process of OSR building* in order to develop a generic OSR model that can be used as a basis for future studies and can also be customised for specific stakeholder groups.

6.2.2 Interpretative research paradigm

The terms "paradigm", "approach" and "perspective" are used interchangeably in the literature when referring to interpretative, positivistic and critical research in the social sciences (Daymon & Holloway 2011:101–102; Keegan 2009:23; Bryman 2008a:13–14; Willis 2007:8; Deetz 2001:11; Denzin & Lincoln 2000b:19). To highlight the platform on which this study is built, Mouton's (2002:203) definition of a research paradigm as an established tradition practised in a specific discipline, which is further refined by Willis (2007:8) as a "… comprehensive belief system, worldview, or framework that guides research and practice in the field" will be accepted for the purpose of this study. Quantitative research is usually associated with the *positivist* paradigm, which implies an objectivistic stance to reality (Bryman 2008a:13), where scientific explanations are utilised to discover truths about the world (Willis 2007:12). A positivist believes that the world is outside the researcher, waiting to be discovered in order to expose universal laws and provide an objective outlook on the world (Daymon & Halloway 2011:101). Qualitative research is usually associated with the *critical* and *interpretative* paradigms (Willis 2007; Frick 2011). The *critical* paradigm, also known as critical theory, emphasises the need for criticising current beliefs to expose power or repressive relationships in society (Willis 2007:81). Researchers working from the critical paradigm view the world as unjust, and questions are posed to bring about change (Frick 2011).

The essence of the *interpretative* paradigm is encapsulated in the following statement (Daymon & Holloway 2011:102): "Interpretivists express an ontological belief in the existence of multiple realities and truths which are open to change because the social world, not having a separate existence from the individual, is socially constructed". This implies that the aim of the interpretive paradigm is to establish a distinct approach to the world and knowledge. In the interpretative paradigm, the researcher interprets the social world that determines social reality because the researcher and participants construct social reality (Daymon & Holloway 2011:102). Similarly, according to Frick (2011), the interpretative paradigm adopts an intersubjective stance in order to interpret realities. The *interpretative paradigm* is predominantly evident in this study since existing literature was explored and interpreted to establish a conceptual framework. This will further be interpreted by obtaining the participants' views on stakeholder relationship building and management in order to construct a final OSR-building model to contribute to organisational effectiveness. Triangulation, by combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, will be applied in this study, and the quantitative part of the study will be mainly used as a prephase to guide and further inform the qualitative research. This study is therefore not a fully fledged mixed method research strategy that aims to bridge the quantitative-qualitative divide, and hence the paradigm wars between qualitative and quantitative research. Instead, it is an approach in which mixing occurs *in* a research strategy (Bryman 2008a:15). Since this study is more explorative and built from an interpretative paradigm, triangulation will therefore occur within a predominantly qualitative research design. The research design will be discussed next.

6.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

This section focuses on the nature of both qualitative and quantitative research, followed by an explanation of the key differences between quantitative and qualitative research, to serve as an introduction to triangulation as selected research design.

6.3.1 Quantitative research

Du Plooy (1996:32) defines quantitative research as methodologies that "manipulate variables and attempt to control natural phenomena. They construct research questions or hypotheses and test them against the facts of 'reality'." According to Allen, Titsworth and Hunt (2009:3), quantitative researchers are essentially concerned with how an understanding about a specific phenomenon can be generalised to a larger population.

Similarly, Maree and Pietersen (2012:145) define quantitative research as "… a process that is systematic and objective in its ways of using numerical data from only a selected subgroup of a universe (or population) to generalise the findings to the universe that is being studied". In describing the quantitative research process, Van Wyk (2010:89) states that the aim of such studies is to generalise about a specific phenomenon, based on the findings obtained from a sample that is representative of that population. Here the findings may be statistically manipulated "to produce broadly representative data of the total population and forecasts of future events under different conditions" (Van Wyk 2010:89). Furthermore, quantitative research is specifically concerned with measurement and control (Du Plooy 2002:82; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim 2006:272), the quantification of constructs (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky 2007:49) and facts and objectivity (Durrheim & Painter 2006:132).

Some of the criticism associated with quantitative research is that the facts are often separated from the context of the research (Du Plooy 1996:33) and the researcher and respondent are alienated from each other (Du Plooy 2001:37). By contrast, qualitative research addresses these shortcomings because it allows the researcher to clarify vague questions and provides the platform for participants to supply detailed answers and to elaborate.

6.3.2 Qualitative research

According to Anderson (1987:384), qualitative research "emphasizes inductive, interpretative methods applied to the everyday world which is seen as subjective and socially created". The qualities of various communication phenomena are investigated where data tend to be continuous, with the emphasis on description and explanation as opposed to measurement and prediction (Fitch 1994:32). Qualitative research is a "… situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible" with a view to transforming the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2000b:3). It is characterised by multiple ways of knowing; there is no fixed method to study the world because each individual may experience the same event differently (Minichiello & Kottler 2010:16). According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:7–10), the characteristics of qualitative research, from a corporate and marketing communication perspective include the following: It embraces complexity and diversity; it generates meaning through cooperation; it is emergent and processual; it is holistic and

contextualised; and it allows the researcher to be relevant and reflexive. In addition to these characteristics, qualitative research may also be characterised by *inductive thinking* whereby the researcher observes phenomena and listens to inputs from participants to simplify findings that may explain the phenomena (Minichiello & Kottler 2010:18). The reasoning can also be circular, thereby continuously moving between data, analysis and literature.

According to Babbie (2007:250), qualitative researchers are often guilty of *researcher bias* since qualitative researchers usually have a preconceived notion about the phenomenon under investigation. Quantitative researchers frequently label qualitative research as imprecise and *subjective* (Bryman 2008b:391), which Daymon and Holloway (2011:10) actually regard as an important resource of qualitative research because it contributes to a high level of critical self-awareness which adds to the reliability and validity of the study. Qualitative research is also regarded as *difficult to replicate* (Bryman 2008b:391) because qualitative investigators are the central research instrument (Daymon & Holloway 2011:11). In support of qualitative research, Daymon and Holloway (2011:11) argue that qualitative researchers are not concerned with replicating studies but interested in specific research settings. Since the scope of qualitative research is limited, it raises questions about the *generalisability* of qualitative research (Bryman 2008b:392), which can be addressed by generalising the results to theory (Bryman 2004:284; Daymon & Holloway 2011:11). Lastly, Bryman (2008b:392) contends that the data analysis procedures followed by qualitative researchers are often vague.

To further highlight the differences between these two research designs, the next section will focus on comparing quantitative and qualitative research.

6.3.3 Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:155–156) and Fouché and De Vos (2007:102), qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that a less formalised structure is used, the scope is more undefined and a more philosophical approach is followed. The predominant differences between qualitative and quantitative research are summarised in table 6.1 (Daymon & Holloway 2011:13; Minchiello & Kottler 2010:18–20; Swart 2010:113; Allen et al 2009:3; Willis 2007:7; Babbie et al 2007:273; Fouché 2007:269; Fouché & De Vos 2007:102; Walt 2006:79; Du Plooy 2002: 82–84; Denzin & Lincoln 2000:8–10):

Table 6.1: The differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Analytical and *interpretative*	Predominantly *empirical* and *experimental*
Concerned with attaching *meaning* to phenomena	Focuses on *measuring* phenomena
Explicit and present values	A *value-free* stance is adopted
Focuses on answering '"*how* questions"	Focuses on answering "*what* questions"
Improvisation is key in which the research strategy is developed throughout the research process	*Structured, precise* and *consistent* methods are used as well as a step-by-step recipe for the research strategy
Research is bounded by *context*, that is, the participants' natural environment	Research is *context free*
A *close relationship* with research participants is evident	A *distant relationship* with participants is evident
Exploration of participants' *experiences* and life worlds	Search for *causal explanations* and *testing hypotheses*
Intersubjectivity is vital to obtain the trust of participants	Maximum control over extraneous factors
Contextualisation is key	*Generalisation* is key
Authenticity is the criterion to achieve excellence in scientific research	*Reliability* is the criterion to achieve excellence in scientific research
Thematic analysis is conducted	*Statistical analysis* is conducted

Since this study focuses on the process of OSR building, it is evident from the above discussion and comparison that a qualitative exploration of OSR-building processes to integrate expert knowledge to the proposed conceptual framework will be required to increase the pragmatic relevance. It should be noted that the original research strategy was to conduct qualitative, one-on-one interviews with senior corporate communication professionals in leading South African organisations. However, when the researcher contacted the identified organisations to request an interview, few of these senior corporate communication professionals were willing to grant an interview owing to the time consuming nature of one-on-one interviews and their responsibilities at executive level. Martins (2010:162) confirms this by stating that "... with interviews lasting from 30 to 60+ minutes it is sometimes difficult to obtain the cooperation of respondents". Since it was necessary to obtain inputs from *several* organisations to determine whether the principles of the proposed conceptual framework could be supported, a revised, two-phase research strategy was adopted. Firstly, a quantitative survey was conducted to briefly measure the principles of the conceptual framework in a variety of leading listed South-African organisations. Secondly, the trends obtained from this survey served as a guideline for the second phase of the research, namely the qualitative one-on-one interviews, in which the focus was to address the details of the proposed phases of the model and to obtain the participants' views on the process of OSR building. Integrating a quantitative phase into the research strategy enabled the researcher to measure the principles of the model in several organisations, which was not possible with the original research approach.

6.3.4 Triangulation: combining quantitative and qualitative research

Although an exploratory study is usually qualitative in the sense that it requires an in-depth investigation of certain phenomena (Van Wyk 2010:84; Singh 2007:64), Cooper and Schindler (2003:151), supported by Walt (2006:81), argue that exploratory studies can combine quantitative and qualitative research. According to De Vos (2007:361), the concept of triangulation, a term originally developed by Denzin (1978), "… is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in a particular data source, investigator and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators and methods". De Vos (2007:362), Mabry (2008:222) and Daymon and Holloway (2011:92) identify various methods of triangulation which include the following: *data triangulation,* which refers to the utilisation of various data sources, such as interviews and observational data; *investigator triangulation,* which refers to the involvement of more than one expert or observer in the research to establish intersubjective conformity; *theory triangulation,* which refers to the employment of multiple theories to interpret a data set; and *methodological triangulation,* which refers to the use of more than one method to study a specific phenomenon by combining qualitative and quantitative research and *triangulation by time,* focusing on repeat visits to the site to track patterns of events. For the purpose of this study, *methodological triangulation* was applied during data collection to specifically "maximise the strengths and to overcome the weaknesses of the two approaches" (Van Wyk 2010:91). As explained above, the quantitative survey would allow the researcher to measure the conceptual framework in various leading South African organisations, while the qualitative interviews would enable the researcher to address the findings of the survey and explore in detail the process of OSR and the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function.

Triangulation has the following advantages (De Vos 2007:362): The researcher is more confident about the results; opposing results may be uncovered through the utilisation of different research designs, which may help to enrich the explanation of the research problem; it may result in the integration of diverse theories to address a common problem; and triangulation can also fulfil the function of testing competing theories.

6.4 SAMPLING DESIGN

The next section focuses on the unit of analysis, population, sampling frame, sample and the sampling methods.

6.4.1 Unit of analysis

According to De Vos (2007:104), the unit of analysis becomes evident when the research problem is defined, since the researcher has already decided whether individuals, an event or organisations will be explored. According to Mouton (2002:47; 91) the unit of analysis is the "furniture of the social world" – it is the objects or entities to which the findings of the research apply or the elements on which summary descriptions are created (Babbie et al 2007:85). Various categories of unit of analysis are identified by Mouton (2002:91), namely individuals, organisations, institutions, collectives, social objects, social actions or events and interventions. Since this study focused on obtaining the insights of leading listed South African organisations to measure and explore the proposed conceptual framework, the unit of analysis for the purpose of this study was *organisations*.

6.4.2 Population, sampling frame and sample

The population is the "universe of units" (Bryman 2001:85) or "totality of units" (Daymon & Holloway 2011:209) from which the sample is drawn, and is defined as "… the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned" (Strydom 2007:194). The population is therefore the overall figure or phenomenon the researcher is interested in investigating (Thomas 2011:61) and is the entirety of sampling units relevant to the research problem (Maree & Pietersen 2012:147). For the purpose of this study, the population is leading South African organisations listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). The rationale for selecting these organisations was that listed South African organisations are expected to apply the principles of the King III Report (De Beer 2011a; King III Report 2009), which include the principles on governing stakeholder relations, as mentioned earlier. It was therefore assumed that these organisations would have sufficient stakeholder relations management strategies in place to enable the researcher to glean key insights to integrate into the proposed model. It should be noted, however, that owing to the worldwide trend of self-regulation, compliance with the King III Report is less stringent than with the King II Report (De Beer 2012). The King II Report used the principle of *"comply or explain",* which means that listed organisations had to either comply with the King II principles or explain why they could not comply (De Beer 2012). By contrast, the King III Report integrated a wider principle of *"apply or explain"* (King III Report 2009), where the principles of the report should either be applied or organisations have to explain why they were not applied (De Beer 2012). Nevertheless, compliance with the King III Report should still be a key

consideration for all listed South African organisations. To specifically obtain a population of *leading* listed South African organisations, the *Financial Mail* Top Companies SA Giants for 2011 (SA Giants 2011:29-46) was utilised, which is an index that ranks 200 South African organisations on the basis of their total assets (Same players dominate 2011:28).

Maree and Pietersen (2012:147) define the *sampling frame* as a "list of all the units in the population in which each unit is uniquely numbered or can be uniquely identified". Mouton (2002:135) refers to the sampling frame as the collection of cases from which the actual sample will be drawn, which serves as the basis for sampling. According to Babbie (2007:199), to ensure that the sample is representative of the population, the sampling frame should include a large number of members of the population. For the purpose of this study, the top 100 South African organisations from the SA Giants list comprised the sampling frame (see table 6.2).

Tustin (2010b:337) and Fouché and Delport (2007:82) state that a *sample* is a "subset of a population" or a "small representation of a whole". Since this study proposes that stakeholder relations should be driven by corporate communication professionals, the conceptual framework has to be measured and explored in public relations, corporate communication or communication professionals. To increase the likelihood that these corporate communication professionals would answer the survey, each of the 100 organisations from the *Financial Mail* 2011 SA Giants list of the sampling frame was contacted. When contacting these organisations, the following factors were identified which could influence the sample of this study:

- Since some organisations were not based in South Africa, they were excluded.
- Organisations that did not have in-house corporate communication departments, that is, they had external public relations/corporate communication agencies responsible for communication and stakeholder relations activities, were excluded. The reason for excluding such organisations was that the proposed model requires the practice of strategic corporate communication, which necessitates an in-house corporate communication drive. The researcher posited that the opinions of external corporate communication consultants would probably differ from those of in-house corporate communication professionals. Hence the views of external corporate communication

consultants on OSRs could be regarded as a separate study to be explored in future research.

- Although the model proposes that OSR-building is the task of corporate communication professionals, it became evident that these organisations were not necessarily structured as such. Besides corporate communication or public relations professionals, some organisations have separate stakeholder relations managers; others distinguish between internal and external communication managers; and some have corporate affairs managers responsible for building stakeholder relations. Since the focus of this study was on OSRs, the inputs of managers who occupy the highest position in all these respective departments had to be obtained, and they were collectively referred to as *"senior communication professionals"* as all these positions require key communication skills to build an OSR. This is also in line with the excellence study methodology in which the organisations that had multiple departments responsible for communication required interviews with the heads of all these units (Grunig et al 2002:33).

- Some of the listed holding companies requested that each of their organisations should be contacted individually. These holding companies included *The First Rand Group*, which comprises, First National Bank (FNB), Wesbank and Rand Merchant Bank and the *Altech Electronics Corporation*, which includes Altech, Altech Netstar and Powertech. Although these organisations were not listed on the JSE, they collectively represented the listed holding companies and were considered individually and included in the sample.

- Organisations that did not respond to the request to participate in the survey or were unwilling to participate were excluded.

Based on the above considerations, only the senior communication professionals of 53 organisations indicated their willingness to participate in the study, which comprised the *sample* of this study. The leading listed South African organisations comprising the sample of this study are indicated in table 6.2 (SA Giants 2011:29-36):

Table 6.2: SA Giants comprising the sampling frame and sample

Sampling frame	Sample
BHP Billiton Plc	Absa Group
British American Tobacco Plc	BHP Billiton Plc
Anglo American Plc	SABMiller Plc
SABMiller Plc	Standard Bank Group
Standard Bank Group	The Bidvest Group
Sasol	FirstRand:
Sanlam	• *First National Bank (FNB)*
MTN Group	• *Rand Merchant Bank (RMB)*
The Bidvest Group	• *Wesbank*
Sasol	Nedbank Group
Sanlam	Vodacom Group
MTN Group	Pick n Pay Stores
The Bidvest Group	Imperial Holdings
Absa Group	Gold Fields
Shoprite Holdings	Steinhoff International Holdings
FirstRand	Massmart Holdings
Nedbank Group	Old Mutual Plc
Vodacom Group	Barloworld
Mondi	Murray & Roberts Holdings
Pick n Pay stores	AngloGold Ashanti
Imperial Holdings	MTN Group
Compagnie Fin Richemont	Sasol
Gold Fields	Naspers
Steinhoff International Holdings	Kumba Iron Ore
Massmart Holdings	Woolworths Holdings
Anglo Platinum	Liberty Holdings
Sappi	Allied Electronics Corporation:
Old Mutual Plc	• *Altech*
Barloworld	• *Altech Netstar*
Telkom SA	• *Powertech*
The Spar Group	Nampak
Aveng	Pioneer Food Group
Murray & Roberts Holdings	Clicks Group
AngloGold Ashanti	JD Group
ArcelorMittal SA	Distell Group
Grindrod	AECI
Datatec	Reunert
Naspers	MMI Holdings
Impala Platinum Holdings	Life Healthcare Group Holdings
Kumba Iron Ore	Discovery Holdings
Woolworths Holdings	Eqstra Holdings
Liberty Holdings	Clover Industries
Netcare	Evraz Highveld Steel & Van
Allied Electronics Corporation	Adcock Ingrim Holdings
Tiger Brands	Growthpoint Properties
Nampak	Medi-clinic Corporation
Medi-Clinic Corporation	Santam
Blue Label Telecoms	Aspen Pharmacare Holdings
Oando Plc	Tongaat Hulett
Pioneer Food Group	Telkom SA
Wilson Bayly Holmes-Ovcon	The Spar Group
Santam	Aveng
Clicks Group	Sun International
JD Group	KAP International Holdings
Hosken Consilidated Invest	Oceana group
Remgro	
Distell Group	
Group Five	
Harmony Gold Mining Company	

Sampling frame	Sample
AECI	
African Rainbow Minerals	
Lonmin Plc	
Reunert	
MMI Holdings	
Aspen Pharmacare Holdings	
Super Group	
Mr Price Group	
Allied Technologies	
Tongaat Hulett	
Omnia Holdings	
Life Helathcare Group Holdings	
The Foschini Group	
Illovo Sugar	
Astral Foods	
Sun International	
AVI	
Afgri	
Discovery Holdings	
Stefanutti Stocks Holdings	
Assore	
Rainbow Chicken	
Eqstra Holdings	
Truworths International	
Pretoria Portland Cement	
Combined Motor Holdings	
Clover Industries	
Palabora Mining Company	
Hulamin	
Cashbuild	
Capital Shopping Centres Group	
Evraz Highveld Steel & Van	
Adcorp Holdings	
African Oxygen	
Avusa	
Basil Read Holdings	
Zurich Insurance Company SA	
Raubex Group	
Adcock Ingrim Holdings	
Growthpoint Properties	
Mvelaphanda Group	
Caxton CTP Publishers & Printers	
Business Connexion Group	
KAP International Holdings	
Oceana Group	

Only 36 members from the sample answered the questionnaire, which represents the *realised sample* of the study. Furthermore, all 36 respondents in the realised sample for the survey were also contacted for follow up one-on-one interviews, and only eight participants agreed to participate, which again justifies the adoption of the revised research approach caused by the time-consuming nature of one-on-one interviews. Only the realised sample respondents were approached to take part in the one-on-one interviews, because it was essential for the interview participants to have prior knowledge

(by completing the survey) of the research topic since the interviews focused on, inter alia, further exploring the trends identified in the survey results.

The next section investigates the sampling methods used in the study.

6.4.3 Sampling methods

Sampling methods can either be categorised as *probability* samples, which are utilised in quantitative research, or as *nonprobability* samples, which are generally used in explorative, qualitative research (Strydom & Delport 2007:327; Cargan 2007:242). Since a specific sampling procedure was applied in line with the exploratory nature and predominantly qualitative research approach, *nonprobability sampling methods* were used in this study. However, it should be noted, that the results of the survey would only be applicable to the realised sample and it would not be possible to generalise the results to the population of this study, because each organisation in the population did not have an equal chance of being selected (Tustin 2010b:344). Furthermore, the rationale behind the sampling procedure was to *purposively* obtain a sample of *leading* listed organisations that were *willing* to participate in the study to obtain insights from stakeholder relationship and management experts in order to essentially determine whether the proposed principles of the conceptual framework could be supported and/or rejected. In line with sampling process explained above, the following two sampling methods applied: *purposive* and *convenient* sampling.

6.4.3.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is based on relevancy (Gibson & Brown 2009:56) and can be defined as "a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative" (Babbie et al 2007:184). Purposive sampling requires the researcher to have knowledge of the participants involved and any bias that may occur in the selection of participants cannot be controlled (Cargan 2007:243). For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was applied in two ways: Firstly, since this study was specifically concerned with measuring and exploring the proposed conceptual framework in *leading listed* South African organisations, organisations that appeared in the *Financial Mail* SA Giants index based on financial performance were purposely selected. Secondly, since this study was based on a corporate communication perspective, only the senior

communication professionals in these organisations were purposely approached to participate in the study.

6.4.3.2   Convenient sampling

A convenience sample, also referred to as an accidental, available or opportunity sample, is drawn from the "units of analysis that are conveniently available" (Du Plooy 2002:114) or "readily accessible" (Cargan 2007:242). According to Mabry (2008:223), convenience sampling will always be a key consideration in any sampling strategy, since the willingness of participants could be limited or access to a site or documents could be restricted, which forces the researcher to conduct the study with the elements or participants that are available. In line with these arguments, convenient sampling was applied in this study because only those organisations that expressed their willingness to participate were included in the sample. Furthermore, one-on-one interviews were also only conducted with senior communication professionals who were conveniently available and actually willing to participate.

6.5   DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This section will focus on describing the first phase of the data collection process, namely the web-based survey, followed by a discussion of the one-on-one interviews which constituted the second phase of data collection.

According to Aldridge and Levine (2001:6), Singh (2007:69), Martins (2010:144) and Maree and Pietersen (2012:155), both web-based surveys and one-on-one interviews are examples of *survey research* which can be defined as "the assessment of the current status, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes by questionnaires or interviews from a known population" (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:602). The difference between the two data collection methods selected for this study is that the web-based survey focuses on obtaining *quantitative* data and is *self-administered,* that is, the respondents complete the questionnaire by themselves (Lighthelm 2007:184), while the one-on-one interview is *qualitative* and *interviewer-administered* in the sense that the researcher guided the interview (Martins 2010:143). It should be noted that, for the purpose of this study, the qualitative one-on-one interview should not be confused with an in-depth field research interview, where the researcher is interested in the actions of the participants in their natural environment (Babbie 2007:305). Instead, the researcher should be able to apply

the respondent's expertise to the process of OSR and further details of the conceptual framework, and the interview is guided by an interview guide (Martins 2010:162). The advantages of using survey research are that responses can be obtained from a large number of respondents and it providse strong generalisability because the survey is often conducted in the respondents' naturalistic setting (Allen et al 2009:11). According to Aldridge and Levine (2001:12), although a survey does not really allow the researcher to make causal inferences, thereby not providing "cause-effect relationships among variables" (Allen et al 2009:11), it does provide the researcher with descriptive material, which can be further explored. Hence the data collection approach for this study allowed the researcher to follow up and further explore the data obtained from the web-based survey by means of one-on-one interviews.

6.5.1 Web-based survey

Jansen, Corley and Jansen (2007:2) identify the following three categories of collecting survey data online: *point of contact*, where the respondent completes the survey on a computer provided by the researcher; *e-mail based*, which is a survey delivered via email to respondents and the data are manually coded by the researcher; and *web-based,* where the survey resides on a network server that is accessed via a web browser which does not require the researcher to manually code the data. A web-based survey was used in this study for the following reasons: It significantly reduces data collection costs; the manual data entry process is avoided; it eliminates interviewer bias; it increases the response to sensitive questions; it allows the incorporation of audio and visual material; and it offers higher quality data because it often incorporates system functionality that prohibits response errors (Ma & McCord 2007:9). Furthermore, since the respondents did not have much time to complete the survey, a survey method that provides a fast and effortless answering process was required. The purpose of the web-based survey was to measure the principles of the proposed conceptual framework among *several* senior communication professionals from different leading, listed South African organisations. The principles of the conceptual framework were therefore measured against existing stakeholder relationship practices of organisations that place a high regard on stakeholder relationship and management. This would enable the researcher to determine whether the principles of the conceptual framework could be supported and/or rejected and where possible amendments could be made as part of the process to constitute an OSR-building model. The data obtained from this survey would be used to guide the one-on-one

interviews. This survey allowed the researcher to obtain *various* inputs from senior communication professionals, which was not possible by conducting only one-on-one interviews.

6.5.1.1 *The design of the web-based survey*

Since a web-based survey is an example of a *server-side system*, in which the respondent completes the survey while he or she is connected to the Internet through a browser, and the "answers are ... transmitted to the server on a flow basis as each *submit* or *next* button is pressed" (Couper 2008:3), SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool to assist researchers to design and distribute surveys and to collect and analyse data, was used to host the web-based survey. The respondents were prompted to access and complete the survey via e-mail. The introduction sent to respondents is presented in addendum A. The SurveyMonkey program allowed the researcher to create a link to the respective questionnaires, which was included in the e-mail to the respondents. The respondents had four weeks to complete the survey and reminders to complete it were sent out twice during the four-week response period.

The following sections will focus on explaining the actual question types, response system, questionnaire categories and the measures employed to improve the quality of the questionnaire. The web-based survey, as per the SurveyMonkey design, is also presented in addendum A.

- **Question types utilised in web-based survey questionnaire**

The questions in the web-based survey were statement, closed-ended questions. Statements were utilised because the researcher aspired to determine the extent to which respondents had a particular attitude towards or perspective on a certain phenomenon (Babbie 2007:246). All 110 questions in the questionnaire were statement questions except questions A2, A6 and A8 in the biographical and demographical question category (section A of the questionnaire), which were closed-ended questions. This type of question allows the respondent to select an option from a range of options (Delport 2007:174). The advantages of closed-ended questions are that it provides a simple and quick answering process; it ensures uncomplicated coding and statistical analysis; and respondents are more likely to answer sensitive questions (Maree & Pietersen 2012:161). By contrast, the disadvantages associated with closed-ended questions are that the response options

provided sometimes guide respondents towards a certain answer; the desired answer may not be available; the questions could be misunderstood; the questions may lack detail; simplistic answers are sometimes provided to complex issues; and a respondent may answer the questionnaire even if he or she is not knowledgeable on the topic (Delport 2007:175; Maree & Pietersen 2012:161). However, in the current study, an effort was made to avoid some of these disadvantages: The respondents were contacted in advance to ensure that they had knowledge of and experience in stakeholder relations; the questionnaire was evaluated by a team of experts to ensure that the questions were understandable; and a brief overview at the start of the questionnaire and each category was provided to contextualise the questions more clearly.

- **Response system**

A multiple-choice response system, or more specifically, a multiple-choice, single response system (Cooper & Schindler 2003:251) was used in this study. This type of questions offers at least three fixed-alternative responses of which respondents should select the option that most accurately represents their opinion (Ligthelm 2007:398). The questions presented in the biographical category (section A) of the questionnaire were all examples of multiple-choice questions that gave the respondents three or more response options. Questions A6 and A8 in this category were "yes/no" questions, which were regarded as dichotomous responses that only gave the respondents two response options (Delport 2007:175; Lighthelm 2010:397). However, the response option "not applicable" was integrated into question A8 and could therefore also be regarded as a multiple-choice question because it offered three response options. Questions A1, A4, A6 and A8 in section A also included a "specify" response option.

For the remainder of the questionnaire a Likert scale response system was used, which is a type of multiple-choice question (Delport 2007:177). A Likert scale, according to Babbie (2007:246), is the ideal choice if statement questions are presented. This measurement method, developed by Rensis Likert in 1932 (Singh 2007:75), comprises a series of statements that highlight a respondent's favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the phenomenon under investigation (Ligthelm 2007:408). Besides the advantage that the design process of a Likert scale is relatively simple, the reliability can be measured together with the data collection process (Du Plooy 1996:82). The response options of the Likert scale provided in the questionnaire included "*disagree strongly*", "*disagree*", "*agree*"

and "*agree strongly*". The SurveyMonkey program allowed the researcher to compile these questions by selecting the "multiple-choice (only 1 answer)" option.

- **Explanation of web-based survey questionnaire categories**

The questionnaire consisted of four categories, namely biographical and demographic data; characteristics of the excellence communication function (theoretical foundation); strategic communication foundation; and the conceptualisation of an OSR-building model. The latter three categories represented the proposed building blocks of the conceptual framework. As part of the biographical and demographic category of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate the size of their organisation. The response options for this specific question were structured according to the Department of Trade and Industry's personnel parameters for micro, small, medium and large organisations which are defined according to the Small and Medium Enterprise Development (SMED) Council Resolution No. 1 Series of 2003 dated 16 January 2003 (Micro, small and … 2003). The questions in the questionnaire which related to each category and the response options are presented in addendum A. The objective of each questionnaire category is explained in table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Outline and objectives of the web-based survey questionnaire categories

Category	Subcategory	Objective of questionnaire category/sub-category
Section A: Biographical and demographic data	-	Because a questionnaire should always begin with a few "easy-to-answer" questions such as biographical detail, these questions were of integral importance since organisations involved in the study did not necessarily employ corporate communication professionals to build an OSR. The purpose was therefore to determine the specialisation, experience and management level of each respondent. The insights gained from this category would assist the researcher to confirm or reject the arguments posed in chapter 2 of this study regarding whether OSR building is a corporate communication function. In line with the excellence communication characteristics, it was also necessary to gain insight into the experience levels of the employees in their department.
Section B: Characteristics of the excellence communication function (Theoretical foundation)	-	This category specifically measured the *theoretical foundation building block* of the conceptual framework. The purpose of this category was to determine whether the characteristics of the excellence communication function were practised by senior communication professionals. Although some of the characteristics of the excellence theory were measured in the first category of the questionnaire (eg the importance of being an experienced and qualified communication professional and that the employees of the department should also be experienced and have formal communication qualifications) to ensure logical flow, this section specifically measured the characteristics of the excellence theory as outlined in table 3.4. The survey questions utilised in Grunig's excellence study for the heads of PR departments, were also used as guideline for compiling these questions.
Section C: Strategic communication foundation		This category focused on measuring whether the proposed corporate communication functions, proposed by the *strategic communication foundation building block* of the conceptual framework, were practised in order to serve as a basis for OSR building.
	Two-way symmetrical communication	This subsection integrated questions to determine whether two-way symmetrical communication is practised in the organisation since the proposal in this study related to whether corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective for successful OSR building. The questions focused on measuring the key characteristics of two-way symmetrical communication, namely a consideration of stakeholder interests when making organisational decisions; responsive communication and timeous feedback; collaboration and negotiation; interdependency; message consistency; openness, truthfulness and fundamentality; mutual understanding; a shared vision; and collaborative problem solving. Although "research" was also identified as a vital characteristic of two-way symmetrical communication, in order to avoid repetition, questions relating to research were kept for the category to follow.
	Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research	This subcategory focused specifically on determining whether research is an integral part of the entire OSR-building process. It was necessary to determine whether the organisations conduct research to identify strategic stakeholders; base communication plans and strategies on research; and whether strategies are evaluated afterwards to determine whether stakeholder

Category	Subcategory	Objective of questionnaire category/sub-category
		needs and expectations have been met. As per the arguments put forward in chapter 2, it is critical for environmental scanning to be used to identify issues of concern. However, to again avoid repetition, questions relating to issues management were kept for the following subcategory. Lastly, it was vital to determine whether the respondents and their departments were responsible for research activities, since the conceptual framework required respondents to either conduct research themselves or have direct access to the individuals and/or departments responsible for organisational research.
	Issues management	This subcategory focused on determining whether issues that are identified through environmental scanning are proactively resolved to avoid organisational crises, conflict and/or the formation of active publics which could hinder the OSR-building process. Again it was also essential to determine whether the respondents were responsible for identifying issues in their respective organisation(s).
	Reputation management	It was necessary to determine whether the respondents felt that the "reputation of the organisation" is a result of listening to and addressing stakeholder needs, and the importance of continuously managing the organisation's reputation to ensure successful OSR building. It was also vital to determine whether respondents regarded a positive organisational reputation (thereby the general perception of all internal and external stakeholders about the organisation) as a basis and starting point for building an OSR. Similar to the previous two subcategories, it was also necessary to determine whether reputation management was a task devoted to the respondents.
	Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge	In line with the excellence theory characteristics, this subcategory focused on determining whether a participative organisational culture was evident and measuring whether the organisation would only share knowledge once trust had been established with strategic stakeholders to support and/or reject the argument that knowledge sharing occurs once a mutually beneficial and sustainable OSR has been established.
Section D: Conceptualisation of OSR building		This section specifically measured the third building block, namely *conceptualisation of OSR building*. It was necessary to determine whether the proposed phases of the conceptual framework were evident in practice; and especially whether respondents agreed that, if maintained, an OSR could ultimately evolve into an OSP. Only the basic elements of each phase could be measured. The process of OSR building would be addressed in the one-on-one interviews.
	Strategic stakeholder identification	The aim of this subcategory was to first determine whether the respondents supported the definition of a strategic stakeholder and whether the organisation specifically emphasised building relationships with *strategic* stakeholders. The proposed strategic stakeholder identification methodology was also measured in this section. Furthermore, this subcategory measured whether formal stakeholder identification strategies were in place to identify strategic stakeholders and whether it was the respondents' responsibility to identify strategic stakeholders.
	OSR antecedents	In this subcategory, the respondents' inputs were required on whether the proposed OSR

Category	Subcategory	Objective of questionnaire category/sub-category
		antecedents existed.
	OSR development	Although it was not possible to measure the process and detail in each element of the OSR development phase, this subcategory focused on measuring the proposed elements of a foundational OSR and whether the process of building an OSR was the responsibility of the respondents.
	Stakeholder engagement	The aim of this sub-category was to measure the definition of stakeholder engagement and to determine whether stakeholder engagement could be regarded as an outcome of a foundational OSR.
	OSR maintenance	The purpose of this subcategory was to establish whether the argument that a foundational OSR should be maintained to grow in intensity over time could be supported. This category further measured the various OSR maintenance strategies proposed. This section would therefore enable the researcher to determine whether the rationale behind the proposed OSR development continuum, namely that a foundational OSR should be maintained to grow in intensity, could be supported. It was also necessary to establish whether it was the task of respondents to maintain an OSR.
	OSP	It was necessary to obtain respondents' inputs on whether a relationship between an organisation and stakeholder could evolve into a partnership if maintained over time. This subcategory also focused on measuring the proposed definition of an OSP.

The SurveyMonkey program allowed the researcher to create the above-mentioned categories by integrating different pages for each category. According to Maree and Pietersen (2012:160), it is essential to provide a brief overview of each questionnaire category to avoid confusion and ensure a logical flow. An introduction to the overall survey and overview to each survey category to contextualise each section and questions clearly were included in the questionnaire, as indicated in addendum A. This also contributed to make the questions more understandable, which is often one of the drawbacks of closed-ended questions, as mentioned earlier. The researcher was able to integrate these overviews in the Survey Monkey program by means of "descriptive text questions".

- **Quality of web-based survey questionnaire**

Various measures were implemented to ensure the quality of the questionnaire for the web-based survey. Firstly, the researcher made use of a panel of experts to evaluate the academic soundness of the questionnaire. This panel comprised the supervisor for this study and two other academics who are experts in the field of stakeholder relationship management. After the suggested changes had been integrated, a statistical consultant was appointed to evaluate the questionnaire to assess its statistical correctness, which included reviewing the phrasing of the questions to ensure that double-barrelled questions, that is, questions that combine two ideas (Singh 2007:71), were avoided. Other considerations included avoiding ambiguous questions; removing unfamiliar jargon; excluding unnecessary questions; and reviewing the overall wording of the questions (Singh 2007:71). The researcher also made sure that the questionnaire did not exceed 120 items (Maree & Pietersen). The statistical consultant also ensured that the questionnaire correlated with the intended statistical techniques to be used during data analysis. Further revisions to the questionnaire were made, and the questionnaire was then sent to the supervisor and statistical consultant for a final review. A pilot test was then conducted, which served as the third quality measure of this questionnaire. Gibson and Brown (2011:55) and Strydom and De Vos (2007:331) define a pilot test as a preliminary evaluation to enable the researcher to make adjustments to questions to ensure the optimal quality of the actual investigation. According to Babbie (2007:257), it is essential to pretest a questionnaire to identify any problematic areas such as ambiguous questions and also to determine whether the intended data collection methods are effective (Du Plooy 2002:93). The pilot test was specifically conducted to determine the completion time of the questionnaire; to establish whether the link to the questionnaire and navigation

between the various pages on the SurveyMonkey program worked properly; and to determine whether the questions were understandable and correctly interpreted. To ensure that the pilot test respondents were representative of the sample, three communication consultants at FNB completed the survey and suggested changes were reviewed and integrated.

To ensure that a questionnaire is congruent with the intended statistical analysis methods, Allen et al (2009:10) emphasise the importance of understanding the difference between quantitative variables and the type of variable classification that is used because there are "... implications for what types of statistical procedures can be run with a given combination of variables". These variable categories are often also labelled "measurement levels", since the process of assigning numerals to variables is known as measurement (Du Plooy 2002:117). Measurement levels will now be discussed in the context of this study.

6.5.1.2   *Measurement levels*

Both nominal and ordinal measurement are used, which, according to Allen et al (2009:10), are often described as *categorical*. In *nominal measurement*, values are distinguished from one another by different names, and normally consist of two or more categories (Maree & Pietersen 2012:148). Similarly, according to Levin, Fox and Forde (2010:11), nominal measurement involves naming or labelling, that is, classifying or categorising cases and counting the frequency of occurrence. Nominal measurement was only used for questions 6 and 8 in the biographical and demographic category. For the remainder of the questions, *ordinal measurement* was used, which is a level of measurement in which rank order is used to highlight the differences between variables (Du Plooy 2002:119), and it specifically involves scales that include level of agreement, such as the Likert scale (Maree & Pietersen 2012:148). Although the Likert scale was not used for questions A1-5, A7 and A9 in section A, these questions were also examples of ordinal measurement, as the response options of these questions could also be arranged in order and categorised, which is key in ordinal measurement (Maree & Pietersen 2012:148).

6.5.1.3 *Quantitative data analysis*

Babbie (2007:405) defines quantitative data analysis as the "… numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect". According to Kruger, De Vos, Fouché and Venter (2007:218), quantitative data analysis per se does not provide answers to the research and questions - analysed data only become significant when interpreted. However, prior to interpretation and constructing meaning, raw data must first be analysed. The initial analysis of the data entailed a *descriptive analysis* to obtain the frequencies and percentages of individual items, which is an example of univariate analysis since only one variable is measured (Tustin 2010c:646). According to Tustin (2010d:522), data description is usually the first step in the data analysis process to allow the researcher to conduct an initial examination of the data. The purpose of the descriptive analysis in this study was to determine what percentage of respondents agreed, strongly agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the items in each construct. Furthermore, two-way frequency tables were used to indicate the typical response for each construct (category and subcategory). *Inferential analysis*, which is an example of bivariate analysis that focuses on the analysis of two variables (Tustin 2010c:646), was further applied to statistically determine whether mean differences existed between groups. To obtain these mean differences, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Coetsee 2012), which Maree and Pietersen (2012:229) define as a statistical technique applied when two or more independent groups have to be compared on a single score. One of the assumptions of an ANOVA is that for each population (eg corporate communication, corporate affairs and other population categories as per the questionnaire), the response variable (section or subsection average) is normally distributed (Coetsee 2012). However, since the realised sample for the web-based survey was too small, it was deemed more appropriate to use a nonparametric procedure, namely the Kruskal-Wallis test. The nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test is based on the analysis of independent random samples from *k* populations, which tests the following hypotheses (Coetsee 2012; Black 1999:509):

H_0: All populations are identical.

H_a: Not all populations are identical.

The Kruskal-Wallis test statistic is based on the sum of ranks for each of the samples and this statistic is used to decide whether or not the null hypothesis can be rejected.

The rule of thumb is that when the $p - value < \alpha - value$, the null hypothesis is rejected. Because the $\alpha - value = 0.05$, the level of significance is 5%. In essence, if the null hypothesis is rejected it implies that there is enough statistical evidence that identified response groups displayed a different opinion towards a specific construct. By contrast, if the null hypothesis is not rejected, it implies that there is not enough statistical evidence to indicate the response groups have varied opinions on a construct.

These hypotheses will be tested and described as explained above in the reporting of the data in the following chapter. According to Allen et al (2009:10), studies with ordinal and nominal measurement, such as this study, often involve the application of nonparametric tests. It should, however, be noted that these tests are only applicable to the *realised sample*, and as stated earlier, they could not be generalised to the population of this study, since nonprobability sampling techniques were applied.

Furthermore, the strength of the linear association between two variables was measured by means of Pearson's correlation coefficient. This was specifically conducted to measure the correlations between certain elements of the model, for example, the excellence communication function and two-way symmetrical communication. According to Levin et al (2010:349), Pearson's correlation coefficient allows the researcher to determine the strength and relationship direction between two variables. The correlation coefficient, which is calculated as follows (Coetsee 2012), was used in this study:

The range of a correlation coefficient is between -1 and 1. If a correlation tends to be either -1 or 1, it means that a strong negative or strong positive linear correlation exists between the two variables. If the correlation coefficient is zero, it is an indication that no linear correlation exists between the two variables. In order to determine whether a correlation coefficient differs significantly from zero, the following hypotheses are tested:

$H_0: \rho = 0$ The population correlation coefficient does not differ from zero.

$H_a: \rho \neq 0$ The population correlation coefficient differs from zero.

When there is insufficient statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis, that is, the population correlation coefficient does not differ from zero, it implies that the two variables measured are not correlated. If there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, thus the correlation coefficient differs from zero, it implies that the two variables measured are correlated.

The computer software package, SAS version 9.3, was used to analyse the data which will be presented in pie charts and tables in line with the web-based survey questionnaire categories discussed in table 6.3.

6.5.1.4   *The reliability and validity of the web-based survey questionnaire*

Reliability refers to replicability (Janesick 2000:394), which is "a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result each time" (Babbie et al 2007:143). According to Delport (2007:163), reliability is not concerned with what is being measured, but how well a phenomenon is being measured. Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical construct correctly reflects the element it is supposed to measure (Delport 2007:160). Various methods of validity can be identified (Babbie et al 2007:146-147; Delport 2007:160-161; Daymon & Holloway 2011:92), namely face validity, content validity, criterion validity and construct validity. *Face validity* focuses on the face value of a measurement procedure, that is, whether the measurement technique looks as if it measures the intended variable. The questionnaire for this study was evaluated by a panel of experts and a statistical consultant to ensure a high degree of face validity. *Content validity* refers to the representativeness or sampling adequacy of an instrument, that is, the extent to which a measure includes the various meanings embedded in a particular concept. Input from the members of the panel, who were experts in the field of stakeholder relations and management ensured the content validity of the questionnaire. *Criterion validity* implies that there should be independent criteria to which the scores of an instrument can be compared. *Construct validity* involves determining the extent to which an instrument effectively measures a theoretically defined construct, and it

focuses on the relationships between variables. This was achieved in this study through item analysis, which is a measure to identify unsuitable items in a construct (Maree & Pietersen 2012:218). Such analyses are vital to identify problematic questions in the questionnaire that should be rectified to ensure accurate replication of the study in future.

A distinction should also be made between external and internal validity. According to Kohn (1997:9) and Mabry (2008:222), *external validity* in quantitative research refers to the ability to generalise findings to a larger population, while *internal validity* focuses on whether the methods that are used to generate findings can be trusted (Delport & Fouché 2007:353). Although the findings of this study could not be generalised to the population of this study, since nonprobability sampling methods were employed, it still provided insight into whether the principles of the model were supported in the leading listed organisations that comprised the realised sample. As mentioned earlier, pilot tests, which increase the reliability of a study (Delport 2007:163), were conducted with three communication consultants to ensure that each question in the survey was correctly interpreted. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha measure was applied to measure the internal consistency or reliability of a set of items (ie the various questions in each category and subcategory of the questionnaire) (Black 1999:279). This measure is based on the correlations between different items on the same scale. An alpha of between 0.6 and 0.7 is regarded as acceptable reliability and 0.8 or higher as good reliability (Coetsee 2012). A reliable questionnaire will have scores on similar items as internally consistent, while each of these items still contributes unique information to the proposed construct. Item analysis, as mentioned earlier, was further conducted to determine how each item (question) influenced the Cronbach alpha if removed from the construct (category). If the respective item negatively influenced the Cronbach alpha, that is, it was negatively correlated with the rest of the items, it was removed from the construct. These questions had to be reviewed to increase the replicability of this study in future.

6.5.2 One-on-one interviews

One-on-one interviews are "… conducted on a one-on-one basis to collect qualitative data from respondents" (Martins 2010:162). Greeff (2007:296), Gibson and Brown (2009:86), Alvesson (2011:9) and Thomas (2011:162) distinguish between three types of one-on-one interviews, namely unstructured, semistructured and structured interviews. An *unstructured* interview, also known as an in-depth interview, as mentioned earlier, is

characterised by the absence of predetermined questions where participants are provided with a "conversational space" to address issues relating to the topic under investigation (Gibson & Brown 2009:87). A *semistructured interview* can be defined as an interview in which the researcher utilises an interview schedule with predetermined questions to guide the interview, but not to dictate the interview (Greeff 2007:296). It also allows the researcher to deviate and ask follow-up or probing questions based on the participants' responses (Du Plooy 2002:177). In *structured* interviews, questions are asked in a structured predetermined manner, in the exact same order and wording for all participants (Gibson & Brown 2009:86). In this study, *semistructured one-on-one interviews* were conducted with the eight participants in the realised sample. The researcher considered the following requirements of semistructured interviews, which required the interviewer to focus on guiding the conversation around the research topic without distracting the natural flow of the discussion; to sense when a certain topic had been exhausted and when it was time to move to the next element of the interview; to help the participants to connect the various topics under discussion to see the collective whole of the interview; and to manage the time of the interview and evaluate the significance of information while it was being produced (Gibson & Brown 2009:88). In addition to these requirements, the researcher also *probed for responses* to make sure that the participants elaborated further on those answers that were either incomplete or unclear (Babbie 2007:269).

The following issues pertaining to the researcher-participant relationship as highlighted by Daymon and Holloway (2011:235-236) were also taken into consideration:

- The researcher and participant do not always work in a relationship of complete equality.
- Differences in age, status, knowledge and the goals of both the researcher and participant often contradict one another.
- The researcher-participant relationship should be built on mutual respect and a position of equality as fellow human beings.
- The researcher has to respect the manner in which participants supply answers and the researcher should regard participants as active participants in a social encounter as opposed to being passive participants.
- Difficulties may arise when the researcher has to interview participants in status positions (as was the case in this study), since these participants usually drive their

own agenda in the research. This requires patience on the part of the researcher and diplomatic and tactful phrasing of questions.

The advantage of the semistructured interviews is that "you can get the best of both worlds" (Thomas 2011:163), which implies that it gives structure to the discussion and affords participants the opportunity to introduce new topics at the same time (Greeff 2007:296). Further advantages and disadvantages associated with one-on-one interviews in general are indicated in table 6.4 (Greeff 2007:299; Babbie et al 2007:267).

Table 6.4: Advantages and disadvantages of one-on-one interviews

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Provide large amounts of data relatively quickly. • Provide data depth. • Provide opportunities for probing to encourage the participants to further elaborate.	• Require personal interaction which requires cooperation. • Participants may be unwilling to share information. • The researcher may ask questions that do not evoke the desired response. • Participants may not tell the truth or provide inaccurate answers.

The objective of the semi structured one-on-one interviews in this study was to further explore the trends identified in the web-based survey; address the detail of the conceptual framework's phases that were not possible with the web-based survey; and most importantly, to explore the process of OSR building, that is, the proposed sequential steps, and the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function.

The one-on-one interviews were conducted over a five-day period and the duration of each interview was approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted with the senior communication professionals at the following leading listed South-African organisations: FNB (two senior communication professionals); Absa; Barloworld; Reunert; Clover Industries; Life Healthcare; and Liberty Holdings. These participants all held senior management or executive positions in corporate communication, with two respondents specialising in stakeholder management and corporate affairs. The interviews were recorded by means of a dictaphone with prior permission from the participants. Although recording of interviews can make participants uneasy, it ensures that the researcher is not distracted by taking notes, it provides a complete record of the interview and the participants can follow the researcher's interest in the answers supplied (Kelly 2006:298). According to Babbie et al (2007:266), recording an interview is essential to ensure accurate interpretations and analysis. However, the dictaphone should be placed out of

sight so as not to unnerve the participants (Greeff 2007:298). A complete record of the interviews therefore enabled the researcher to compile a full transcription of each interview to facilitate data analysis. The researcher did the transcription, which allowed her to immerse herself in the data and focus on certain key issues (Daymon & Holloway 2011:234).

6.5.2.1 *The design of the interview guide*

According to Greeff (2007:296), the terms "interview schedule" and "interview guide" are often used interchangeably to refer to a question sheet to guide the interview, which provides the researcher with a set of predetermined questions to engage the participant(s). Similarly, Thomas (2011:163) defines an interview schedule or guide as a list of issues that need to be addressed during the discussion. However, Aldridge and Levine (2001:6) state that an interview *schedule* is used in structured interviews and an interview *guide* in semistructured interviews. An interview guide was therefore the preferred term for this study. The advantage of compiling an interview guide prior to the interviews is that it assists the researcher to think openly about what he or she aspired to achieve in the interview and compels the researcher to review any difficulties that may occur during the interview (Greeff 2007:296). Furthermore, an interview guide gives the discussion a logical order and allows the researcher to easily navigate between different parts of the discussion (Liamputtong 2011:76). The following sections will focus on question types and interview guide categories, as well as the measures that were employed to ensure that the questions in the interview guide were understandable and correctly interpreted.

- **Question types associated with a semistructured interview**

Besides the focused questions in the interview guide that will be asked on the basis of the categories identified in the literature to address the research problem, a semistructured interview also allows the researcher to ask other questions during the discussion to supplement the focused questions and to ensure the success of the interview. These questions, often referred to as filler questions, include, among others, throw-away, probing and follow-up questions as summarised in table 6.5 (Liamputtong 2011:77-78; Du Plooy 2002:176):

Table 6.5: Filler questions associated with an interview

Question	Description	Application
Throwaway questions	These questions are never analysed but are asked to keep the participants interested and to set the scene or counteract boredom and/or fatigue.	These questions can be integrated prior to the interview to ensure a relaxed atmosphere or at any time during the interview when the researcher feels that a break is necessary.
Probing questions	These questions are asked to further stimulate discussion on a specific topic to gain maximum insight into the issue, especially to obtain a better understanding, for example, "Why did it happen?"	The researcher should integrate these questions at any time to gain a better understanding of the participants' responses.
Follow-up questions	Similar to probing questions, the researcher asks follow-up questions to obtain more information on a response provided by the participants. However, these questions are more persistent, curious and direct, for example: "Do you mean that continuous contact with stakeholders is not important?" A level of interpretation based on the participant's response is thus evident.	These questions should be formulated to affirm certain responses.

Both filler and focused questions are predominantly *open*. Open-ended questions often start with the words, "what", "why", "where" or "who" and allow participants to answer the question in their own words. They also afford participants the opportunity to decide how the conversation should be developed (Keegan 2009:113). Open-ended questions are used to learn the participants' perceptions on certain issues (Du Plooy 2002:138).

- **Explanation of the interview guide categories**

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the one-on-one interviews was not only to address the trends identified in the web-based survey, but more specifically to explore the proposed process of OSR building presented by the conceptual framework. It was also necessary to address the finer details of each phase. In addition to the categories of the web-based survey (with the exception of the biographical and demographic category), a category focusing on exploring the general role of corporate communication and the OSR-building function would be integrated, and the category involving exploring the conceptualisation of OSR building would focus more on the sequential order of these phases, that is, specifically addressing the proposed OSR-building process. The results of the web-based survey would allow the researcher to address questions that the survey respondents had misinterpreted in order to further explore the trends identified and the process of OSR building. Although the one-on-one interviews were semistructured which

allowed the researcher to prompt, probe and develop new questions as the discussion progressed, these predetermined questions enabled the researcher to guide the discussion and the interview guide categories facilitated the data analysis process. A graphical representation of the proposed conceptual framework, as outlined in chapter 5, was also presented to the participants in conjunction with the questions to enhance their understanding of the proposed OSR-building process. The questions in the interview guide are attached as addendum B and the objective of each category is explained in table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Outline and objectives of the interview guide categories

Category	Subcategory	Objective of questionnaire category/subcategory
Section A: **General: The role of corporate communication in the organisation and as an OSR-building function**	-	This category would focus on determining whether corporate communication is regarded as a strategic function in the participants' organisations, and if so, what corporate communication contributes at strategic level. More specifically, this category would focus on determining whether OSR building should be the task of corporate communication professionals, and more importantly, whether it is necessary for corporate communication as a discipline to be regarded as a strategic function to ensure an adequate OSR. Furthermore, the aim of this category would be to determine the importance of an adequate OSR in contemporary society and in line with the participants' input on the level of importance, determine whether separate resources should be devoted to OSR building. Some of the questions in the biographical section of the survey would be explored to address these elements. Lastly, it would also be established how these organisations apply or aspire to apply chapter 8 of the King III Report to gain a better understanding of their current stakeholder relations and management practices.
Section B: **Characteristics of the excellent communication function (theoretical foundation)**	-	The trends from the survey obtained from this category would be specifically addressed in this section to determine whether the characteristics of the excellence communication function are evident in their organisations, and hence support and/or reject the proposed theoretical foundation of this study. Some of the information obtained from the biographical and demographic section in the web-based survey, such as the managerial level of the participants, level of experience and qualifications would also be explored in this section, because it was representative of the excellence communication function characteristics.
Section C: **Strategic communication foundation**		This section would specifically determine what is regarded as the most important (corporate communication) functions necessary to ensure successful OSR building. The trends identified in the survey would have to be further explored.
	Two-way symmetrical communication	It was deemed important to learn the participants' perspective on the characteristics and definition of two-way symmetrical communication and whether it is the essence of ensuring an effective OSR.
	Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research	Besides addressing the trends in the web-based survey data, this section would also focus on whether research is an important activity in sustaining an OSR and whether it is practised by the participants specifically.
	Issues management	These subsections would all focus on addressing the trends evident in the data of the web-based survey, and to determine whether these trends are practised in the participants' respective departments.
	Reputation management	
	Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge	
Section D: **Conceptualisation of OSR building: addressing the proposed process of OSR building**		This section would specifically focus on the proposed *process of OSR building* presented by the conceptual framework and specifically explore the proposed OSR development continuum.
	Strategic stakeholder	Based on the web-based survey's trends, it was deemed necessary to establish how strategic

Category	Subcategory	Objective of questionnaire category/subcategory
	identification	stakeholders are identified in their organisation, and whether this is consciously regarded as the first step in building an OSR. Furthermore, it would be determined whether the focus of the organisation is to only build relationships with strategic stakeholders. It would also be established whether generic steps, as proposed by the conceptual framework, could be accepted for all strategic stakeholders or whether different steps should be applied for different (strategic) stakeholders.
	OSR antecedents	In addition to addressing the trends, this section would determine what, if any, preconditions are necessary to ensure successful OSR building.
	OSR development; stakeholder engagement and OSR maintenance	This section integrated the key phases of the conceptual framework, since it was necessary to explore the OSR-building process. In addition to addressing the trends in the web-based survey on these three phases, the aim of this section would be to explore the proposed organisation initiation, partial mutual initiation and full mutual initiation across the OSR-building process. Most importantly, this section would endeavour to determine whether the proposed OSR development continuum and argument that a foundational OSR maintained over time could evolve into an OSP, could be supported. It would thus also be established whether participants supported the argument of OSR maintenance (thus that a desired OSR should be nurtured). Lastly, the proposed definitions of a foundational OSR, mutually beneficial OSR and a sustainable OSR would be explored.
	The OSP	Besides addressing the trends in the web-based survey on the key elements of an OSP, it was deemed necessary to determine the participants' views on what constitutes a partnership, and more specifically, if the proposition that a sustainable OSR that is maintained over time, could be regarded as an OSP and whether this should be explored. It was also necessary to determine whether mutual initiation on the part of both the organisation and stakeholder is experienced at this level. The definition of mutual engagement, proposed as advanced stakeholder engagement, would also be further explored.

The results of the web-based survey were studied prior to the one-on-one interviews, which allowed the researcher to further explore issues and/or possible misinterpreted questions evident in the survey data.

- **Quality of the interview guide**

Similar to determining the quality of the survey questionnaire, pilot tests were also conducted for the one-on-one interviews, which, according to Foddy (1993:185), are guidelines for evaluating the proposed questions of the interview guide. These evaluation questions included the following:

- Did the questions make the participants uncomfortable?
- Did the questions have to be repeated?
- Were the questions misinterpreted?
- Which questions were the most difficult to read?
- Did any sections of the interview seem to be too lengthy?
- Were there any sections in the interview that required further elaboration?

Three pilot one-on-one interviews were conducted with the same participants who had been used for the web-based survey pilot tests. Since the one-on-one interview participants all had background knowledge of the study because they had all completed the web-based survey, it was also important to use the same pilot test participants who had completed the web-based survey to accurately determine the quality of the questions of the one-on-one interview.

6.5.2.2 *Qualitative data analysis*

Qualitative data analysis involves "… reducing the volume of raw information, sifting from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (De Vos 2007:333). Data analysis is also concerned with integrating order, structure and meaning to the collected data; *the researcher has to search for statements in the data that relate to predetermined categories to contribute towards generating theory* (De Vos 2007:333). Similarly, according to Daymon and Holloway (2011:323), qualitative analysis is the process of searching for categories and patterns in the data collected by means of coding, which enables the researcher to relate the findings to concepts and themes identified in the literature "… to generate theory, new models or theory-based generalizations".

The data analysis method used in this study was a method identified by De Vos (2007:334) which is an integration of Creswell's (1998:142-165) analytical spiral, which implies that the researcher moves in analytic circles instead of applying a preset linear approach when analysing qualitative data, and Marshall and Rossman's (1999:152-159) data analysis process. Although this analysis process will be presented linearly, these steps can also move in circles, which emphasises the rationale for the integration of a circular and linear process (De Vos 2007:334). The following steps, which should only be considered as guidelines, represent the data analysis steps for this study (De Vos 2007:334-339): planning for recording the data; data collection and preliminary analyses; managing or organising the data; reading and writing memos; generating categories, themes and patterns; coding the data; testing the emergent understandings; searching for alternative explanations; and presenting the data. Each of these steps will be discussed in table 6.7 with specific reference to how it was applied to the one-on-one interview data in this study (De Vos 2007:336; 8; Marshall & Rossman 1999:153; 5; Creswell 1998:143-144):

Table 6.7: The one-on-one interview analysis process

Data analysis steps	Explanation of step and application to study
Planning for recording the data	This entails the researcher planning systematically for the recording of the one-on-one interview prior to data collection. This specifically implies that the researcher should obtain prior permission from the participants to *record* the interview, familiarise himself or herself with the dictaphone device that will be used for recording and perhaps also visiting the research setting where the interviews will be conducted. Furthermore, the research categories should also be in place as well as the coding method that will be used. In this study,, inline with the web-based survey, the interview guide was specifically categorised according to the phases of the conceptual framework to facilitate the data analysis process which had been tested by means of two pilot tests. This stage also underscored the importance of having further subcategories for each of these categories that wouldl be utilised in the data coding stage to essentially validate the proposed phases of the conceptual framework and the proposed OSR-building process. These subcategories were informed by the literature review on how each phase of the conceptual framework would be achieved.
Data collection and preliminary analyses: a twofold process	Qualitative data analysis is a twofold process, whereby the researcher first analyses data at the research site, and secondly, analyses data away from the site. The second phase of the data collection process would occur between the various interviews (if on different days) and visits to the various organisations as well as after all the data had been collected. The researcher would endeavour to transcribe each interview on the same day that it was conducted. Data collection and analysis is an intertwined process to build coherent interpretations of the data since the researcher is guided by initial understandings that have been derived from the literature review and web-based survey, which is then either affirmed, amended or expanded during the one-on-one interview data collection.
Managing and organising data	This represents the first step of the data analysis process away from the research site, as explained in the previous step, and includes organising the data by starting with an inventory of what has been obtained. The researcher should determine whether possible notes that were taken during data collection are complete and whether there is a need for possible further qualitative data

Data analysis steps	Explanation of step and application to study
	collection. The interview records must also be properly labelled to indicate the specific case and participants interviewed and the researcher needs to ensure that back-up copies of the recordings are made. This step also entails the finalisation of the interview transcription process.
Reading and writing memos	After the data have been organised the researcher needs to obtain a holistic picture of all the data collected and become immersed in the data. The researcher needs to read through the transcripts several times and make minor editing changes where needed to make the data more manageable. Writing memos entails writing down short phrases, ideas or key concepts while studying the various transcripts. The memo writing for this study would specifically involve the categories and subcategories relating to the key phases of the conceptual framework and the process of OSR building.
Generating categories, themes and patterns	This process requires the researcher to establish grounded categories of meaning. The process of creating categories involves the identification of regularities among the participants from the various organisations. Meaning emerges from these categories, which has internal convergence and external divergence, which implies that the categories are internally consistent but not separated. Since preliminary questions for the interviews were already loosely categorised according to the three proposed building blocks and key phases of the conceptual framework, it made this step of the data analysis process easier. This data analysis stage for the purpose of this study only required the researcher to integrate new themes or patterns obtained from the participants to these existing categories and subcategories and/or add more categories and/or subcategories where required.
Coding the data	A coding scheme needs to be applied to the interview categories. In this study, the coding scheme would be informed by the various elements and subelements of each of the interview categories, which represented the proposed phases of the conceptual framework. Data would thus be labelled according to these elements and organised into the various categories. Coding is subject to change – as the researcher codes the data, new understandings may emerge which could result in amendments to the original plan.
Testing emergent understandings	During the development of categories and themes and the process of coding, the researcher should start to evaluate the credibility of insights obtained from the data. This stage would involve the researcher starting to expand on the findings obtained from the web-based survey and determine whether these findings were in line with the literature. This stage was essential to determine whether the proposed phases of the conceptual framework could be accepted and where amendments and/or additions to these phases and the overall framework would be necessary to constitute an OSR-building model that would be implementable and congruent with contemporary organisational practices and serve as a generic model to explain the OSR-building process.
Searching for alternative explanations	Other explanations and linkages in the data would also need to be explored which should be identified and described. The participants may have mentioned other perceptions and views on the process of OSR building and the role of corporate communication in OSR building, which could possibly have been used to integrate new findings or reject and/or amend certain arguments proposed by this study or suggested for future research.
Presentation of data	This stage would entail the presentation of the quantitative findings according to the research categories. This stage for the purpose of this study would also entail obtaining a holistic view of both the quantitative and qualitative findings which would result in the presentation of an OSR-building model built on the OSR literature and insights from leading South African listed organisations.

Various theorists (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Janesick 2000; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers 2002; De Vos 2007) address the inappropriate usage of validity and reliability in qualitative research, and the following section will focus on achieving *trustworthiness* as the qualitative alternative to reliability and validity.

6.5.2.3 Trustworthiness

Morse et al (2002) developed *verification strategies* to establish reliability and validity in qualitative research. Verification is defined as the "process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain" (Morse et al 2002:9). These verification strategies aimed at achieving *trustworthiness*, as proposed by Morse et al (2002:11-12), are summarised in the table 6.8.

Table 6.8: Verification strategies to achieve trustworthiness

Strategy	Description
Methodological coherence	This strategy focuses on ensuring similarity between the research question and elements of the method. The interdependent nature of qualitative research requires that the selected research method should correspond with the data and the data analysis method.
Appropriate sample	The participants in the research must have knowledge of the research topic or should be those individuals who best represent the topic under investigation.
Collecting and analysing data concurrently	There should be mutual interaction between existing knowledge and what the researcher aspires to know.
Thinking theoretically	Ideas that emerge from the data are reconfirmed by new data, which stimulates new ideas which should also be verified by existing data.
Theory development	This represents the movement between data and theoretical understanding. Theory should be developed as an outcome of the research process and as a template for comparison that should stimulate further theory development.

To further emphasise the usage of trustworthiness as an alternative measure for conventional reliability and validity, Janesick (2000:393) specifically states that validity, reliability and generalising to a population should be replaced with qualitative referents, which can be achieved by focusing on *trustworthiness* (known as rigour in quantitative research) and is established through the elements of *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Morse et al 2002:5; Riege 2003:83). According to De Vos (2007:346), Lincoln and Guba (1985) matched these elements of trustworthiness to the conventional quantitative constructs of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity and emphasised how inappropriate these constructs are for qualitative enquiry. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability would be utilised as alternative measures for these quantitative constructs to determine the trustworthiness of the data obtained from the qualitative one-on-one interviews. These elements are defined below with an explanation on how each element wouldl be achieved for the purpose of this study.

- *Credibility.* Credibility is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research (Delport & Fouché 2007:353), and focuses on whether the method of inquiry ensured an accurate

identification and description of the subject. A detailed description showcasing the involvement of the variables and interaction will be entrenched in the data derived from the research setting (De Vos 2007:346). In the current study, the principles of the conceptual framework were based on an extensive literature review, and triangulation as a research approach ensured that the one-on-one interview categories and questions were guided by the web-based survey results. It should be noted that this study was credible *within the boundaries of the research setting, population and theoretical framework*, as proposed by De Vos (2007:346).

- *Transferability.* This represents the alternative for external validity or generalisability (Lincoln & Guba 1985:290). As mentioned earlier, the findings in qualitative research cannot be generalised to the population. The alternative, as proposed by Yin (1994:1) and De Vos (2007:346), is to *generalise to theory* which should also result in the *development of a theory* (Daymon & Holloway 2011:323), which was accepted for the purpose of this study. Furthermore, transferability is achieved when the whole data collection and analysis process is guided by the categories and subcategories obtained from the literature - this clearly illustrates the theoretical parameters of the study (De Vos 2007:346). Furthermore, triangulation also helped to achieve transferability in this study, because it increased the study's value in other settings (De Vos 2007:346).

- *Dependability.* This is the alternative for reliability, whereby the researcher "attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study as well as changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting" (De Vos 2007:346). According to Riege (2003:83-84), the following can be implemented to ensure dependability: Firstly, a dependability audit during the research design phase can be conducted which entails examining and documenting the inquiry process. It is necessary to determine whether the inquiry processes are applicable, understandable and well documented, and to implement measures to avoid research bias. Secondly, measures should be applied to safeguard against the researcher's theoretical position and biases during the research design. The following measures were applied in this study: The results of the web-based survey guided the categories and questions in the interview guide; three pilot interviews were conducted to evaluate whether the questions were understandable and correctly interpreted; and the researcher also avoided the inclusion of any biased questions based on her theoretical position during data collection.

- *Confirmability.* This is the alternative to objectivity. Confirmability focuses on whether the data help to confirm the general findings and indicate the implications (De Vos

2007:346). According to Riege (2003:84), it is necessary to conduct a confirmability audit during data collection and analysis - that is, the researcher needs to retain the raw data (such as recordings) and the auditor should determine whether the inferences based on the data are logical during data analysis and the quality of the findings needs to be reviewed. In the current study, the one-on-one interviews were recorded and retained, and a logical data analysis flow was ensured because the data were analysed according to the phases of the conceptual framework (which enabled the researcher to more accurately determine whether the findings corresponded to the theoretical propositions of the study).

The next section higlights the ethical considerations applicable to this study.

6.6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since this study obtained insights into the stakeholder management and relationship practices in leading, listed South African organisations, certain ethical issues had to be considered. Firstly, the researcher had to determine whether the survey respondents and interview participants preferred to participate anonymously, because there is always a possibility of a loss of standing or employment when confidential information is divulged (Stake 2000:447). Anonymity implies that the researcher does not reveal the identity of the respondents and participants or even the name of the organisation. This can be done, inter alia, by using pseudonyms, changing the names of the participants, protecting data by applying labels with letters and numbers and securely storing the research notes and transcriptions (Daymon & Holloway 2011:66-67). Although a list of participating organisations was provided, the anonymity of each survey respondent and interview participant remained confidential throughout the research process.

To address confidentiality issues, Stake (2000:447) argues that it is advisable to enter into a contract between the researcher and organisations, where the research boundaries are stipulated and the researcher assures the participants that the research is to be conducted purely for academic purposes. Furthermore, it is essential for the researcher to share draft documents with the participants to ensure that their views are accurately represented (Stake 2000:448). Again the researcher should obtain permission from the participants well in advance to record the interviews discussions, disclose facts and identities, and, in the compilation of a research contract, *informed consent* needs to be obtained. This basically implies that the participants must understand and accept the terms of the

agreement (Thomas 2011:69). To obtain informed consent, the researcher needs to, inter alia, disclose the nature and purpose of this study, the expected benefits, information on anonymity, confidentiality and the storage and presentation of data as well as the credentials of the researcher (Thomas 2011:69-70). Although formal research contracts were not drawn up for this study, because the survey respondents and interview participants respected the academic nature of the study, informed consent was obtained to disclose information and insights and to record the discussions. The respondents and participants' identities were also protected. To ensure that the facts were accurately presented, a draft document of the findings of the research was shared with the respondents and participants on request.

6.7   SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the methodology used to measure and explore the proposed conceptual framework's principles in practice.

It was indicated that this study was exploratory in nature and built from an interpretative research paradigm. Although triangulation by means of combining a quantitative web-based survey and qualitative one-on-one interviews was outlined as the research methodology, it was indicated that a predominantly qualitative research design would be followed. The purpose of the web-based survey, which constituted the first phase of data collection, would be to obtain inputs from several leading listed South African organisations regarding whether the principles of the conceptual framework were supported and/or rejected. The data obtained from this survey would inform the second phase of data collection, the one-on-one interviews, which would be conducted to address the trends indentified in the survey; explore the finer details of phases in the conceptual framework; and specifically address the process of OSR building. Since this study was primarily concerned with obtaining insights from corporate communication professionals who were regarded as stakeholder relations and management experts to determine whether the conceptual framework's principles could be supported and/or rejected, it was essential to purposively select respondents who were willing to participate in the study. The sample of the study comprised 53 senior communication professionals from leading listed South African organisations in the *Financial Mail's* SA Giants list for 2011. Only 36 respondents in the survey completed the web-based survey and eight participants in the realised sample agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. The nonprobability sampling methods employed to constitute the realised sample were purposive and

convenient sampling. Purposive sampling was first applied by selecting leading, listed South African organisations; and secondly, since this study was based on a corporate communications perspective, senior communication professionals from these organisations were specifically selected. Convenient sampling was evident since only organisations that were willing and available to participate in the survey and follow-up interviews were included.

In the discussion it was argued that both the web-based survey questionnaire and one-on-one interview guide were based on the three building blocks of the conceptual framework as identified in the literature, with specific emphasis on the phases of the conceptual framework. It was indicated that the web-based survey would be designed by means of the SurveyMonkey design program and would comprise 110 multiple-choice questions with a Likert scale as a response option. Various methods would be employed to ensure the quality of the questionnaire, which included the evaluation of the questionnaire by an expert panel from an academic perspective and determining the statistical accuracy of the questionnaire.   The measurement levels would be predominantly ordinal with a few nominal questions. The data analysis methods employed for the web-based survey would initially entail descriptive analysis by means of frequency tables.

It was further indicated how various inferential data analysis techniques would be applied, that is, Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the strength of the linear association between two variables and the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis tests to determine whether there were mean differences between the population groups (which could only be applied to the realised sample of the study). The SAS 9.3 version software program would be used to aid the data analysis process. The inputs of the expert panel, three pilot tests, the Cronbach alpha measure and item analysis are all methods that were applied to ensure the validity and reliability of the web-based survey questionnaire.

It was argued that the questions and categories for the semistructured one-on-one interviews would be guided by the results of the web-based survey and specifically integrated categories to explore the process of OSR building and the role of corporate communication in the organisation as an OSR-building function. The data analysis method proposed for this study was a combination of Creswell's (1998) analytic spiral, which was integrated with Marshall and Rossman's (1999) analysis process. Trustworthiness was presented as an alternative for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research, to

ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study. Credibility, which was described as the alternative for internal validity, was achieved through an extensive literature review and the application of triangulation as a research design within the boundaries of the research setting, population and theoretical framework of the study. Transferability, described as the alternative for generalisiability, was achieved in this study by generalising to *theory*. Dependability is defined as the alternative for reliability and was achieved in this study by means of the categories of the interview guide, three pilot interviews and the avoidance of biased questions.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of the ethical aspects that were considered for this study, which specifically focused on maintaining the anonymity of the survey respondents and interview participants.

The next chapter reports on and interprets the data obtained from the web-based survey and one-on-one interviews to determine whether the proposed conceptual framework's principles can be accepted and/or rejected to constitute a sequential, integrated, sustainable OSR (SISOSR)-building model that describes the OSR building process.

CHAPTER 7: DATA REPORTING AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

"Communicators are the relationship builders in an organisation but we need to move away from being messengers to being business partners to be taken seriously" (Interview participant 2012).

7.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter highlighted the methods that were used to analyse the data from the web-based survey and one-on-one interviews. This chapter bridges the gap between practice and theory by reporting and interpreting the findings obtained from leading listed South African organisations to determine whether the proposed principles of the conceptual framework, devised from the literature, could be supported. The outcomes of the second objective of this study, namely to measure and explore the principles of the preliminary conceptual framework against the stakeholder relationship-building and management strategies in practice, and the following subproblems and research questions are addressed in this chapter:

Subproblems	Research questions
To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice	Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relation strategies in practice?
To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically.	Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?

Firstly, a brief report on the relevant data obtained from the biographical and demographic category of this questionnaire will be presented. Secondly, the quantitative findings are reported on the basis of the categories of the web-based survey, which represent the various building blocks of the proposed model, namely the characteristics of the excellent communication function, the strategic communication foundation and the conceptualisation of OSR building. The findings from the strategic communication foundation building block will be specifically reported according to the following subcategories: two-way symmetrical communication; research: environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge. The findings relating to the conceptualisation of OSR building will be reported and interpreted against the following phases and subphases of the conceptual framework:

strategic stakeholder identification, OSR antecedents, OSR development stakeholder engagement, OSR maintenance and an OSP. The findings of the web-based survey will be predominantly presented in tables, with a few pie charts for the biographical and demographic section. Thirdly, the results of the one-on-one interviews will be reported and interpreted after the survey findings according to the categories of the interview guide, as discussed previously. Lastly, the findings obtained from both the survey and one-on-one interviews will be integrated to the proposed conceptual framework to constitute a sequential, integrated, sustainable OSR (SISOSR) model that describes the OSR-building process.

7.2 REPORTING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE WEB-BASED SELF-ADMINISTERED SURVEY

This section will be structured as follows: The codes that were developed for each category will be outlined; a report on relevant aspects of the biographical and demographic section that could supplement and/or guide further discussions will be provided; and the results of the various categories (constructs) as outlined above will be reported and interpreted. Furthermore, the reporting of each construct will provide frequencies of individual items; provide the Cronbach alpha for each construct and items that negatively influence the Cronbach alpha; provide descriptive statistics for all the constructs for specific identified response groups of the realised sample; report on the results of the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare the responses of these indentified response groups, which will further be clarified by two-way frequency tables; and indicate correlations between relevant constructs.

7.2.1 Coding

The following codes were developed for the categories and subcategories of the questionnaire to facilitate the data analysis process:

Table 7.1: Coding of the questionnaire categories

Questionnaire category	Code
Characteristics of the excellent communication function	SecBCoECF
Strategic communication foundation	
Two-way symmetrical communication	SecCTWSC
Environmental scanning and evaluation research	SecCESER
Issues management	SecCIM
Reputation management	SecCRM
Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge	SecCKSECoK
Conceptualisation of OSR building	
Strategic stakeholder identification	SecDSSI
OSR antecedents	SecDOSA
OSR development	SecDOSRD
Stakeholder engagement	SecDSE
OSR maintenance	SecDOSRM
OSP	SecDOSP

These codes will be specifically applied to sections 7.2.3, 7.2.4, 7.2.5 and 7.2.6.

7.2.2 Biographical and demographic information

The responses of seven of the items of this construct will be reported which are all relevant for further data reporting and interpretation, and include the following questions: question A1, which focuses on the specialisation of the respondents; question A2, which highlights the stakeholder focus of the respondents; question A3, which represents the managerial level of the respondents; and questions A6 to A9 which focus on the qualifications and experience of the respondents and the employees in their department, which are relevant for measuring the excellence communication function (see addendum A).

Figure 7.1 highlights the respondents' areas of specialisation.
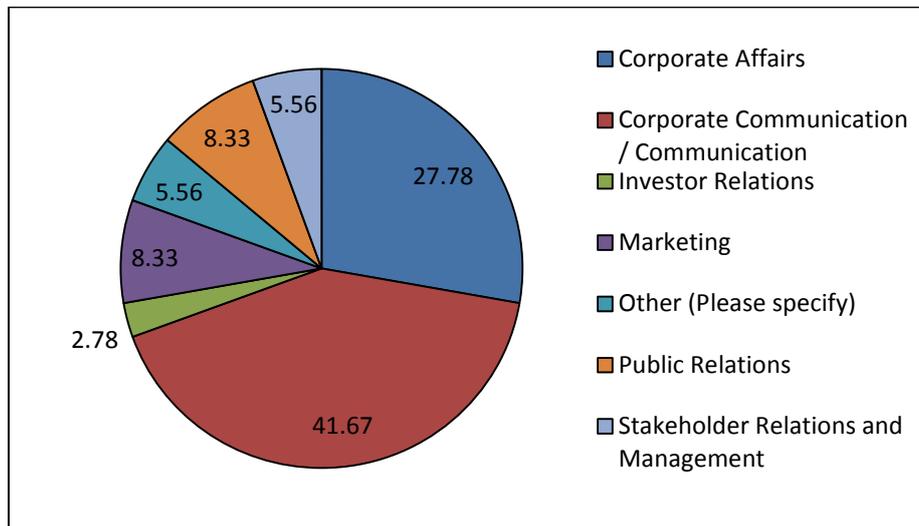
Figure 7.1: Respondents' areas of specialisation in the organisation

In figure 7.1, "Marketing" is included as an area of specialisation, which was not listed as such in the actual questionnaire. This option was integrated on the basis of the respondents' responses in the "other" response option and was integrated as a separate area of specialisation because most of the respondents who selected "other", specialised in marketing. The "other" option listed in the above table included two new indicated areas of specialisation, namely events management and corporate social investment. Figure 7.1 indicates that 41.67% of the respondents worked in the corporate communication/communication department and 27.78% in the corporate affairs department of the organisation. Although only 5.56% of the respondents worked in a separate stakeholder relations and management department, this indicates that some organisations are starting to devote separate resources to stakeholder relations and management, which affirms the strong emphasis on stakeholder relationship building evident in the literature. Since most of the respondents worked in the corporate communication/communication department, it will assist the researcher to affirm whether or not these respondents were actually responsible for OSR building, thereby determining whether stakeholder relations are the heartbeat of corporate communication (Luoma-aho & Paloviita 2010:49). If this is indeed so, this could emphasise the importance of practising corporate communication strategically, as emphasised in the literature chapters. The rest of the results for the remainder of the chapter will be reported for all the respondents collectively or according to the three main "response groups", that is, corporate communication and corporate affairs and other, which are a combination of the remaining specialisations as listed above. Hence, if reference is made to the "corporate

communication response group" or "corporate affairs response group", it includes the collective responses of all respondents who indicated that they either specialise in corporate communication or corporate affairs, and if reference is made to the "other response group", it includes the collective responses of respondents who indicated that they specialise in the remaining specialisation areas, as indicated in figure 7.1. Since the proposed model is built from a corporate communications perspective, the reporting of the results per response group will indicate more clearly whether the corporate communication professionals support the principles of the conceptual framework.

Figure 7.2 depicts the stakeholder focus in the respondents' departments.
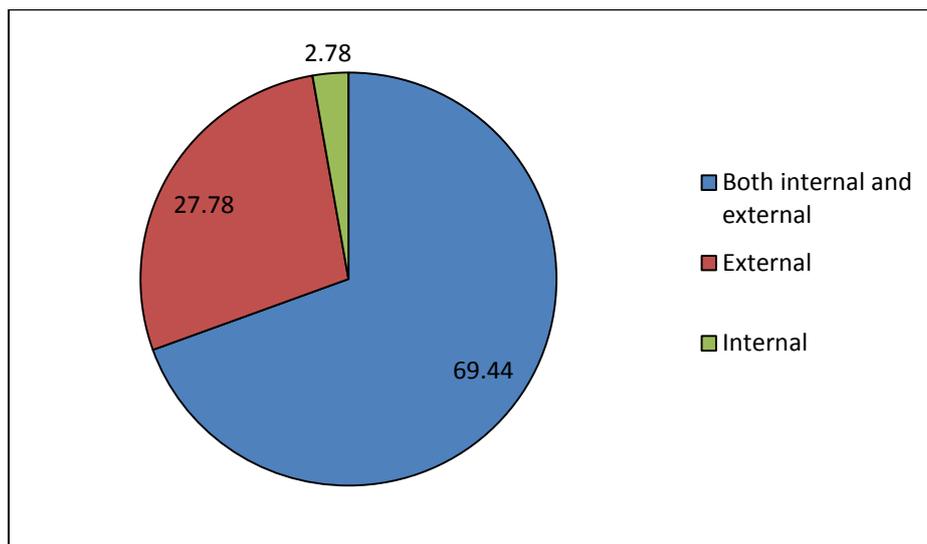
Figure 7.2: Stakeholder focus in the respondents' departments

Figure 7.2 indicates that 69.44% of the respondents were orientated to both internal and external groups, which is in line with the literature review where it was argued that a focus on both internal and external stakeholders supports a wider stakeholder outlook. This was highlighted in the discussion of the stakeholder concept and the importance of integrating all communication strategies and programmes for all stakeholder groups, underscored by the excellence communication function.

Figure 7.3 indicates the managerial level of respondents which is a vital consideration for this study for the successful implementation of the excellence communication function.
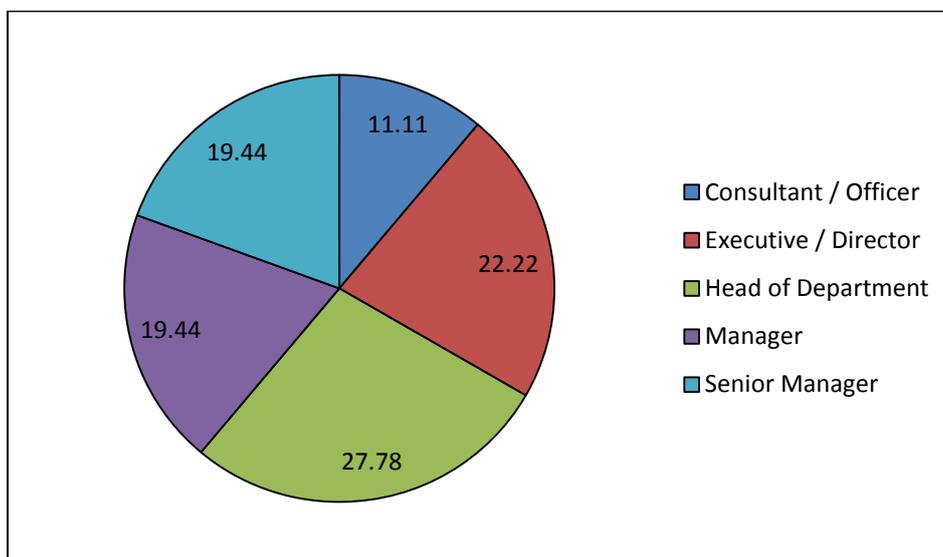
Figure 7.3: Managerial level of respondents

According to figure 7.3, only 11.11% of the respondents functioned at a technical, consultant level in the organisation. The respondents predominantly held senior positions, with 27.78% acting as head of department; 22.22% holding an executive or director position and 19.44% acting as managers or senior managers respectively. The results therefore indicate that the respondents predominantly filled top executive positions in the organisation. This is in line with the arguments on the excellence communication function characteristic put forward in the literature chapters, which emphasised the importance of having a strategic corporate communication professional to head the corporate communication department. It was also argued that it is more likely for individuals in senior positions to have access to the dominant coalition or to be part of the dominant coalition in the organisation, which is also a key requirement of the excellence communication function.

The typical responses to questions A6 to A9, focusing on the qualification and experience levels of the respondents and their employees in their department, are collated in table 7.2 and are significant in considering the excellence communication function (see addendum C for detailed results).

Table 7.2: Qualification and experience

Questions A6 to A9				
Question	**Focus of question**	**Typical response**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
A6	Communication qualification of respondents	Yes	24	66.67
A7	Level of experience of respondent	More than 5 years	27	75.00
A8	Communication qualification of employees	Yes	23	63.89
A9	Level of experience of employees	More than 5 years	19	52.78

According to table 7.2, 66.67% of the respondents indicated that they have a formal communication qualification, while 75% indicated that they have more than five years' experience in the communication industry. Furthermore, 63.89% indicated that the employees in their department who are responsible for stakeholder communication, had formal communication qualifications, while 52.78% affirmed that the employees responsible for stakeholder communication in their department had more than five years' experience in the communication industry. This confirms the following excellence communication function characteristics identified: "*the senior corporate communication executive must have the necessary knowledge for the corporate communication function to become a managerial function*" and "*the senior communication executive must have the knowledge to practise the two-way symmetrical model*", which implies, as emphasised in the literature, that the communication department must be headed and staffed by communication professionals. This means managers and practitioners should have the practical and academic knowledge of corporate communication, which is required for the successful implementation of the excellence function, and, in essence, the conceptual framework.

7.2.3 Characteristics of the excellence communication function (SecBCoECF)

To determine the internal consistency of the items in SecBCoECF, a Cronbach alpha measure was calculated and the Cronbach coefficient alpha for this construct was 0.79, which is regarded as being within the range of good reliability, as discussed previously.

The item analysis on how each item in the construct influences the Cronbach alpha, indicated that questions B6 and B8 did not correlate with the rest of the items, which had a negative influence on the Cronbach alpha. The Cronbach alpha indicated the exclusion of questions B6 and B8 from the construct. Question B6 asked the respondents whether their department functioned in isolation from other departments (eg marketing). The aim of the question was to determine whether each respondent's department functioned as a department in its own right, or whether it is integrated into another department, assuming that the respondents interpreted that there is no alignment between communication functions. The researcher realised that this question should be rephrased to avoid misinterpretation for future studies. Question B8 served as a leading question for B9, its aim being to determine whether the respondent's department had a stakeholder-wide outlook, not focusing on one stakeholder group only. The question was recoded (reverse coding), but still did not correlate with the rest of the items. The researcher felt that the question should therefore be removed for future studies, mainly because question A2 had already addressed this factor in that it required respondents to indicate whether the respondents' department was oriented towards internal or external stakeholders.

7.2.3.1 Typical response per response group

Table 7.3 depicts the results of the typical response awarded for SecBCoECF according to the three response groups as mentioned earlier, namely corporate communication, corporate affairs and other.

Table 7.3: Typical response for SecBCoECF per response group breakdown

SecBCoECF						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.97	0.41	2.67	2.87	3.33
Corporate affairs	10	3.20	0.21	3.00	3.23	3.33
Other	11	2.94	0.39	2.80	2.93	3.13

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

Table 7.3 indicates the mean value, 25th percentile, median, 75th percentile and standard deviation values on SecBCoECF per response group breakdown. The mean value provides an indication of the typical response in the data set. For example, the corporate communication response group's typical response for SecBCoECF is 2.97. The 25th percentile of 2.67 indicates that 25% of all the values in the data set is less than or equal

to 2.67, and 75% of the values in the data set is a score more than 2.67. The median is also the 50th percentile. Of all the values in the data set, 50% is less than or equal to 2.87, while 50% of all values in the data set has a score more than 2.87. The 75th percentile indicates that 75% of all values in the data set is less than or equal to 3.33, while 25% of all the values in the data set has a score of more than 3.33. The standard deviation, a measure that indicates what the average deviation from the mean value is equal to, indicates that the values for the corporate communication response group on SecBCoECF are on average 0.41 units from the mean of 2.87. For the purpose of this study it was deemed necessary to obtain an indication of the typical response that each of the above response groups awarded to the construct SecBCoECF. This indicated that the corporate affairs response group's typical response for SecBCoECF is 3.20, in comparison with the corporate communication response group with a typical response for 2.97 and other response group 2.94. This implies that corporate affairs agreed to the practice of excellent communication characteristics, in comparison with corporate communication and other, who also supported these characteristics, but not as strongly as corporate affairs.

7.2.3.2 *Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test*

As explained previously, to *statistically* determine whether there are mean differences between these response groups as discussed above, it was necessary to apply the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test to SecBCoECF. The results are summarised in table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecBCoECF

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for the variable SecBCoECF classified according to response groups					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	244.50	277.50	31.08	16.30
Other	11	180.50	203.50	29.04	16.41
Corporate affairs	10	241.00	185.00	28.24	24.10
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	3.93
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.14

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Based on the findings indicated in table 7.3, it could be argued that although the corporate affairs response group supported the characteristics of the excellence communication function more strongly, not enough statistical evidence was present to indicate that the three response groups had a different opinion of SecBCoECF, and it could therefore be concluded that all three response groups equally supported practising the characteristics of the excellence communication function.

7.2.3.3   *Interpretation of the findings on SecBCoECF*

Based on the discussion of the above findings, it can be argued that the respondents indicated that the characteristics of the excellence communication function were practised/were relevant in their departments, which implies that the proposed theoretical foundation of the model was in line with activities in practice. In conjunction with the support of these characteristics, it was also evident that both the respondents and the employees in their departments, responsible for stakeholder communication, did have the necessary academic qualifications and experience to practise communication properly, which are all key requirements for the successful implementation of the excellence function, as highlighted in the literature. In addition, the results indicate that most of the respondents' departments had a stakeholder-wide outlook, which supports the stakeholder concept of this study and the importance of aligning stakeholder programmes and strategies. The results of the survey also show that most of the respondents held senior, executive or director level positions, which enabled these managers to provide input at strategic level. As indicated, this is also in line with the literature, in which it was argued that corporate communication professionals' contribution at strategic level is essential to ensure successful OSR building. Further exploration of the practice of strategic corporate communication and the contribution of communication at strategic level in the organisation was required, and this topic was subsequently addressed in the one-on-one interviews. In

conclusion, the results indicate that the respondents supported the excellence function characteristics which are essential for this study since the application of these characteristics is an important precondition to ensure the successful implementation of the proposed conceptual framework. Further correlations between SecBCoECF and SecCTWSC, SecCESER and SecCKSECoK will be explored in section 7.2.6 because these constructs are of integral importance to ensure the successful implementation of the excellence function.

7.2.4   Strategic communication foundation

This section reports the results for the following constructs: SecCTWSC; SecCESER; SecCIM; SecCRM and SecCKSECoK.

7.2.4.1   *Two-way symmetrical communication (SecCTWSC)*

The Cronbach alpha for construct SecCTWSC was 0.74, which implies that the reliability of this construct was acceptable. The item analysis indicated that question C11 did not correlate with the rest of the items, and the removal of the item increased the Cronbach alpha significantly. The item was therefore excluded from the construct and the Cronbach alpha reported above. Question C11 required the respondents to indicate whether all communication messages to stakeholders were accurate, which measured the "truthfulness" characteristic of two-way communication, as highlighted in the literature review. One can assume that the question was misinterpreted, and a useful suggestion would be to rephrase the question for future studies in order to emphasise that messages to all stakeholder groups should be *factually sound*.

- **Typical response per response group**

Table 7.5 highlights the typical response awarded for SecCTWSC per response group.

Table 7.5: Typical response for SecCTWSC per response group breakdown

SecCTWSC						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.59	0.31	2.36	2.64	2.73
Corporate affairs	9	2.76	0.34	2.64	2.82	3.00
Other	10	2.86	0.14	2.73	2.86	3.00

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

Table 7.5 indicates that all three response groups had a neutral attitude towards practising two-way symmetrical communication, with the corporate communication response group displaying the lowest mean value of 2.59.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

Again, to more accurately determine whether there were mean differences between the answers of the three response groups, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test are indicated in table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecCTWSC

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecCTWSC classified according to response groups					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	195.50	262.50	28.57	13.03
Other	10	227.00	175.00	26.22	22.70
Corporate affairs	9	172.50	157.50	25.39	19.17
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	6.11
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.04

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The results indicate that there is enough statistical evidence to indicate that the three response groups had a different view of SecCTWSC. The mean score of 13.03 for the corporate communication response group was the lowest, in comparison with the highest mean score of 22.70 for the other response group and 19.16 for the corporate affairs response group.

- **Interpretation of the findings on SecCTWSC**

According to the literature review in this study, the neutral stance towards SecCTWSC, especially among the corporate communication response group, could be ascribed to the critique associated with the two-way symmetrical communication model as being a normative ideal and too idealistic, or that practising two-way-symmetrical communication is only applicable to certain situations. From the results, and in line with arguments in the literature review, it can be argued that the respondents' departments practised two-way communication with stakeholders and were concerned about their wants and needs, but from an *asymmetrical* viewpoint in order to the benefit of the organisation. This could explain the neutral stance of the respondents towards the compromising nature of two-way symmetrical communication to achieve mutually beneficial objectives. In line with the theoretical propositions of this study and the results of this construct, it could hence be argued that if two-way symmetrical communication is not practised by corporate communication professionals, a proper OSR cannot be built, and the core contribution of corporate communication to achieving organisational effectiveness, and hence be recognised as a strategic function, will not be realised. Since it was argued that corporate communication professionals should practise two-way communication if they aspire to build a sustainable OSR, the researcher realised that the practice of two-way symmetrical communication required further exploration in the one-on-one interviews because two-way symmetrical communication provides the basis of the proposed conceptual framework.

7.2.4.2   *Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research (SecCESER)*

The Cronbach alpha for SecCESER was 0.91, which is an indication of good reliability. The item analysis indicated that all the items listed in this construct were correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response awarded per response group for SecCESER is indicated in table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Typical response for SecCESER per response group breakdown

SecCESER						
Response group	N	Mean*	Std dev	25th pctl	Median	75th pctl
Corporate communication	15	2.56	0.39	2.29	2.71	2.86
Corporate affairs	9	3.06	0.58	2.71	3.00	3.29
Other	10	2.67	0.67	2.29	2.93	3.14

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

It is evident from table 7.7 that both corporate communication and the other response groups were neutral about conducting evaluation research and environmental scanning, while the corporate affairs response group predominantly agreed with the items in this construct.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test on the mean differences between corporate communication, corporate affairs and other are indicated in table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecCESER

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecCESER classified according to response groups					
Response group	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Corporate communication/ communication	15	205.50	262.50	28.63	13.70
Other	10	189.50	175.00	26.27	18.95
Corporate affairs	9	200.00	157.50	25.47	22.22
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	4.48
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.10

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Based on the results indicated in table 7.8, it could be argued that there was insufficient statistical evidence to indicate that the three response groups had varied opinions on SecCESER. Hence all three response groups seemed to equally support environmental scanning and evaluation research. However, since the construct was not strongly supported, the researcher realised that further exploration in the one-on-one interviews would be required.

It was also necessary to determine whether the respondents were actually responsible for stakeholder research activities in their organisation, since it is a requirement of the conceptual framework, as per the proposed strategic communication foundation, that the function responsible for OSR building should also be responsible for stakeholder research in the organisation, or have access to the individuals responsible for conducting research.

- **Measuring the responsibility of stakeholder research per response group**

The Kruskal-Wallis test applied to question C19 specifically required the respondents to indicate whether their respective departments were responsible for stakeholder research activities. Since this model was built from a corporate communication perspective, it was necessary to determine whether the corporate communication response group was specifically responsible for conducting stakeholder research. The results are indicated in table 7.9.

Table 7.9: Kruskal-Wallis test for question C19

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable C19 classified according to response groups					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	199.50	262.50	23.87	13.30
Other	10	184.00	175.00	21.91	18.40
Corporate affairs	9	211.50	157.50	21.21	23.50
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	8.78
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.01

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The results in table 7.9 indicated that enough statistical evidence was obtained to suggest that the three response groups had a different opinion on conducting research. Again, corporate affairs' mean score of 23.50 was the highest and corporate communication's mean score of 13.30 the lowest. Based on this result, the typical response for question C19 was determined by means of a two-way frequency table (see addendum D). For this analysis, the response options "agree" and "agree strongly" were combined to represent agreement with the statement, while "disagree" and "disagree strongly" were combined to represent disagreement about the statement. The results indicate that 100% of the corporate affairs response group agreed about the responsibility of conducting stakeholder research; only 40% of the corporate communication response group agreed and 60% disagreed about the responsibility of conducting research; and 70% of the other response group agreed about the responsibility of conducting stakeholder research, while only 30% disagreed.

- **Interpretation of the findings on SecCESER**

Overall, the respondents supported the necessity for conducting research in the OSR-building process, which supports the arguments posed in the literature that research is central in practising two-way symmetrical communication and for realising the excellence communication function. Furthermore, this also supports the fact that research is required to ensure the fulfilment of stakeholder needs in order to build a mutually beneficial OSR. However, the results also indicate that despite the corporate affairs and others response groups' support for conducting research, the corporate communication response group indicated that they were not responsible for conducting research in the organisation. As indicated in the literature, this could be ascribed to the core focus of corporate communication on measuring, analysing and influencing public opinion. This contradicts the argument posed in the literature that *corporate communication professionals* should participate in the strategic management of the organisation by conducting, inter alia, stakeholder *research*. This therefore affirms the theoretical proposition that corporate communication's worth as a strategic function is still not fully developed in practice, and pinpoints the need to emphasise corporate communication professionals contribution towards organisational effectiveness through OSR building, as emphasised in this study. Based on these results, the researcher realised that further exploration of the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function would be required in the one-on-one interviews. This would be critical for the successful implementation of the conceptual framework to identify strategic stakeholders; detect issues of concern and the emergence of reactive publics; obtain detailed information on a specific stakeholder group; identify strategic stakeholders' needs and relational expectations; and also to serve as a measure of relational quality as part of the OSR maintenance process.

7.2.4.3   Issues management (SecCIM)

The Cronbach alpha for SecCIM was 0.84 which could be regarded as reliable. The item analysis indicated that all items in this construct were correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response awarded per response group for SecCIM is presented in table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Typical response for SecCIM per response group breakdown

SecCIM						
Response group	N	Mean*	Std dev	25th pctl	Median	75th pctl
Corporate communication	15	2.87	0.56	2.60	2.80	3.40
Corporate affairs	9	3.27	0.49	3.00	3.00	3.60
Other	10	3.06	0.43	2.80	2.90	3.20

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

The above table indicates that both the corporate affairs and other response group agreed on the practice of issues management, with 3.27 and 3.06 mean scores respectively. Although the corporate communication response group appeared to have a more neutral opinion on conducting issues management, the mean score was 2.87, which could still be considered as agreement on issues management practices.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated the mean differences between the three response groups as set out in table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecCIM

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecCIM classified according to response group					
Response group	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Corporate communication/ communication	15	221.00	262.50	28.41	14.73
Other	10	176.50	175.00	26.07	17.65
Corporate affairs	9	197.50	157.50	25.24	21.94
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	3.04
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.22

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The above results indicate that there was not enough statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had a different opinion on SecCIM. It could therefore be argued that all three response groups equally supported the importance of issues management in building OSR and that issues management can be accepted as a vital corporate communication function for the proposed conceptual framework.

- **Measuring the responsibility of issues management per response group**

The Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine the mean scores per response group on question C24, which required the respondents to indicate whether issues management was the responsibility of their respective departments. The results are indicated in table 7.12.

Table 7.12: Kruskal-Wallis test for question C24

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable nnc24 classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	256.0	262.50	24.81	17.07
Other	10	131.0	175.00	22.76	13.10
Corporate affairs	9	208.0	157.50	22.04	23.11
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	6.54
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.04

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The above results show that there was enough statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had a different opinion about conducting issues management in the organisation. For this construct, the corporate affairs and corporate communication response groups had the highest mean scores of 23.11 and 17.06 respectively. The other response group had a mean score of 13.1. A two-way frequency table (see addendum D) indicated that 53.33% of the corporate communication response group agreed about the responsibility of issues management, while 46.67% disagreed, and 88.89% of the corporate affairs response group agreed with the practice of issues management, while only 11.11% disagreed. The other response group was the least supportive of conducting issues management, with only 30% agreeing and 70% disagreeing.

- **Interpretation of the findings for SecCIM**

Overall, the importance of issues management was supported by the respondents, especially the corporate affairs response group. Despite the other response group strongly disagreeing, both the corporate communication and corporate affairs response groups emphasised that they were specifically responsible for issues management in their organisation. The results correspond to the arguments in the literature review that a successful stakeholder-centric organisation requires effective issues management through continuous communication and coordination. Furthermore, as proposed by the conceptual framework, organisational issues identified through environmental scanning, which could range from the emergence of active publics, potential crises and/or conflict between relational parties, should be proactively managed as a continuous process to ensure the continuance of the OSR-building process.

7.2.4.4 Reputation management (SecCRM)

The Cronbach alpha for SecCRM was 0.78, which is regarded as reliable. The item analysis indicated that all the items in the construct were correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response awarded per response group for SecCRM is indicated in table 7.13.

Table 7.13: Typical response for SecCRM per response group breakdown

SecCRM						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	3.32	0.43	3.00	3.33	3.83
Corporate affairs	9	3.19	0.39	2.83	3.17	3.33
Other	10	3.17	0.36	2.83	3.08	3.50

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

The above table indicates that all three response groups supported the principles and relevancy of reputation management for OSR building, with the corporate communication response group having the highest mean score of 3.32.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated the following mean differences on SecCRM among the three response groups, as indicated in table 7.14.

Table 7.14: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecCRM

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecCRM classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	293.0	262.50	28.49	19.53
Other	10	157.0	175.00	26.15	15.70
Corporate affairs	9	145.0	157.50	25.32	16.11
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	1.15
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.56

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

From the above results it can be deduced that there was insufficient statistical evidence to show that the three response groups had a different opinion about SecCRM. It could thus be argued that all three response groups equally supported SecCRM. Similar to the previous two constructs, it was also necessary to determine whether these response groups were responsible for managing the reputation of the organisation, since one of the requirements of the proposed SISOSR model is that the function responsible for OSR building should also manage the reputation of the organisation.

- **Measuring the responsibility of reputation management per response group**

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine the mean differences for question C30, which required respondents to indicate whether their respective departments were responsible for the organisation's reputation management. The results are indicated in table 7.15.

Table 7.15: Kruskal-Wallis test for question C30

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable nnc30 classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	292.50	262.50	16.09	19.50
Other	10	144.00	175.00	14.77	14.40
Corporate affairs	9	158.50	157.50	14.30	17.61
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	5.05
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.07

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

These results show that although the p-value was greater than 0.05, which technically implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected, this was marginal, with a 0.02 difference. Hence it was still accepted that there was just enough statistical evidence to indicate that the three response groups had varied opinions about the responsibility of managing the organisation's reputation. A two-way frequency table (see addendum D) indicated that 100% of the corporate communication respondents agreed on the responsibility of reputation management in the organisation. Of the corporate affairs response group, 88.89% agreed about practising reputation management, and only 11.11% disagreed, while 70% of the other response group agreed and 30% disagreed on practising reputation management.

- **Interpretation of the findings for SecCRM**

The research indicated that all three response groups supported the principles of reputation management, especially the corporate communication response group. The corporate communication, other and corporate affairs response groups also indicated that it was their respective department's responsibility to manage the organisation's reputation. This therefore affirms the theoretical proposition made in the literature review that corporate communication plays an essential role in developing the organisation's reputation, and that corporate communication professionals as OSR builders should be responsible for reputation management. This also supports the argument that a positive organisational reputation, that is, the general perception of the organisation by all internal and external stakeholders, is a key precondition for building OSR with *strategic* stakeholders, and corporate communication professionals must continuously manage the organisational reputation. It could be argued that reputation management should be regarded as *relational capital* to ensure sustainable OSR development with *strategic* stakeholders.

7.2.4.5 *Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge (SecCKSECoK)*

The Cronbach alpha for SecCKSECoK was 0.87, which indicated good reliability. However, questions C31 and C32 were excluded from this construct because of their negative influence on the Cronbach alpha. The item analysis indicated that both questions C31 and C32 were not correlated with the rest of the items in the construct. In question C31, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the organisation allowed employees to participate in organisational business activities, while question C32 asked them whether the organisation's culture allowed employees to share knowledge. Both of these are key

elements of knowledge sharing allowed by a participative organisational culture. From the results it can be assumed that question C32 was misinterpreted by the respondents, because it was not clear to them with whom employees should share knowledge. The suggestion was that the question should be rephrased to ask whether employees share knowledge among themselves and the management of the organisation. Both questions C31 and C32 could also be rephrased for future studies to more accurately measure whether "communities of practice" are present in the organisation, which would entail employees being encouraged and supported to share information.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response awarded per response group for SecCKSECoK is summarised in table 7.16.

Table 7.16: Typical response for SecCKSECoK per response group breakdown

SecCKSECoK						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.84	0.73	2.33	2.67	3.33
Corporate affairs	9	2.48	0.56	2.00	2.33	3.00
Other	10	3.13	0.59	2.67	3.00	3.67

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

The above table shows that the other response group supported knowledge-sharing practices, with a mean score of 3.13 in comparison with the corporate communication and corporate affairs response groups' mean scores of 2.84 and 2.48 respectively.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated the following mean differences for SecCKSECoK between the three response groups, as indicated in table 7.17.

Table 7.17: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecCKSECoK

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecCKSECoK classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	262.00	262.50	28.34	17.47
Other	10	218.50	175.00	26.05	21.85
Corporate affairs	9	114.50	157.50	25.22	12.72
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	4.11
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.13

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The main results in table 7.17 indicate that there was insufficient statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had a different opinion on SecCKSECoK. However, to a lesser extent, one could conclude that all three response groups supported knowledge-sharing practices, which is arguably allowed by a knowledge culture in the organisation. One could also deduce that the respondents may have been more supportive of this construct if questions 31 and 32 had been phrased in a more understandable manner.

- **Interpretation of the findings for SecCKSECoK**

In the theoretical propositions discussed in the literature review, it was argued that the transfer of knowledge between the organisation and strategic stakeholders is necessary to contribute to sustainable OSR building. This is promoted by a culture of knowledge in the organisation – a culture that allows employees to create, share and utilise knowledge. As proposed by the conceptual framework, such a culture is also essential for the successful practice of the two-way symmetrical communication model and the realisation of the

excellence communication function. It was further argued that knowledge sharing between the organisation and strategic stakeholders will strengthen the foundational OSR so that it can evolve into a desired OSP. This knowledge sharing can only occur once a foundational OSR has been developed according to the contention in the literature that knowledge will only be shared once reciprocity, a good reputation, altruism and trust have been established. Although the results for this construct indicated that these statements could be supported (despite the misinterpretation of questions C31 and C32), the researcher felt that further exploration in the one-on-one interviews would be required to more accurately determine whether a knowledge culture was indeed evident in these organisations to allow knowledge sharing with internal and external stakeholders in order to strengthen OSR.

Although there was not always enough statistical evidence to prove this, the typical response tabulations indicated that certain constructs of the proposed strategic communication foundation (especially the *practice* of these corporate communication functions) were not fully supported by the corporate communication response group, in comparison with the other and corporate affairs response groups, which were more supportive. This seems to contradict the proposed conceptual framework which is built from a corporate communication perspective. As mentioned earlier, there could be numerous reasons for the corporate communication response group's neutral stance on some of the constructs proposed in the strategic communication foundation - hence the need for further exploration of the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function in the one-on-one interviews.

The next section will report the findings and interpretations of the proposed phases and subphases, which constituted building block 3 (the conceptualisation of OSR building) of the conceptual framework.

7.2.5 The conceptualisation of OSR building

The following sections will report the findings on the following constructs as per the survey questionnaire: SecDSSI, SecDOSA, SecDOSRD, SecDSE, SecDOSRM and SecDOSP.

7.2.5.1   *Strategic stakeholder identification (SecDSSI)*

The Cronbach alpha for this construct was 0.78, which is regarded as an acceptable level of reliability. According to the item analysis, all the items in this construct were correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response awarded per response group for SecDSSI is indicated in table 7.18.

Table 7.18: Typical response for SecDSSI per response group breakdown

SecDSSI						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.84	0.31	2.55	2.82	3.00
Corporate affairs	9	3.03	0.48	2.73	3.00	3.36
Other	9	2.88	0.28	2.82	2.91	3.09

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

Table 7.18 indicates that the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups supported the definition formulated for strategic stakeholders and the practice of strategic stakeholder identification. For this construct, corporate affairs had the highest mean score of 3.03, followed by the other response group and corporate communication response group with mean scores of 2.88 and 2.84 respectively.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The following mean differences between the three response groups for SecDSSI, as represented in table 7.19, were evident after the Kruskal-Wallis test had been applied:

Table 7.19: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDSSI

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecDSSI classified according to response group					
Response group	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Corporate communication/ communication	15	228.00	255.0	27.53	15.20
Other	9	155.50	153.0	24.62	17.28
Corporate affairs	9	177.50	153.0	24.62	19.72
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	1.25
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.53

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Since the p-value was 0.53, it could be argued that there was insufficient statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had varied opinions on SecDSSI. It could therefore be concluded that all three response groups equally supported the proposed definition of a strategic stakeholder and the process of strategic stakeholder identification. To determine whether the respondents were responsible for identifying strategic stakeholders in the organisation, another Kruskall-Wallis test was conducted, which will be addressed in the next section.

- **Measuring the responsibility of strategic stakeholder identification per response group**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test conducted for question D11, which required the respondents to indicate whether their department was responsible for identifying strategic stakeholders (a key requirement of the proposed conceptual framework), is summarised in table 7.20.

Table 7.20: Kruskal-Wallis test for question D11

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable nnd11 classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	214.50	255.0	22.02	14.30
Other	9	148.50	153.0	19.70	16.50
Corporate affairs	9	198.00	153.0	19.70	22.00
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	5.68
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.05

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Although the p-value for question D11 was not less than 0.05, which is the requirement for rejecting the null hypothesis, as explained in the previous chapter, it was equal to 0.05, and thus still regarded as sufficient to reject the null hypothesis. It could hence be argued that there was just enough statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had varied opinions on the responsibility of identifying strategic stakeholders. The corporate affairs response group had a mean score of 22.00 in comparison with the other response group whose mean score was 16.50. The corporate communication response group's mean score of 14.30 was the lowest. Further investigation by means of a two-way frequency table (see addendum D) indicated that 100% of the corporate affairs response group agreed on the process of identifying strategic stakeholders, 53.33% of the corporate communication response group agreed on the process of identifying strategic stakeholders, and 46.67% disagreed, while 66.67% of the other response group agreed on the responsibility of identifying strategic stakeholders, and 33.33% disagreed.

- **Interpretations of the findings for SecDSSI**

The corporate communication response group's neutral support for conducting stakeholder identification could be ascribed to the fact the corporate communication response group's mean scores for SecCESER and conducting research (question C19), which were key to SecDSSI, were the lowest. This could imply that the corporate communication response group was not responsible for conducting research in their organisation or seldom conducted research and therefore also did not strongly support identifying strategic stakeholders. This is in contrast to the theoretical dimensions of the literature review, which specifically indicated that corporate communication should be practised strategically, which can be achieved by means of, inter alia, *strategic stakeholder identification* through research. In order to test this more thoroughly, the researcher realised that further exploration would be required, which would be done in the one-on-one interviews to determine corporate communication's role in identifying strategic stakeholders and stakeholder research activities.

7.2.5.2   *OSR antecedents (SecDOSA)*

SecDOSA had a Cronbach alpha of 0.78, which indicates acceptable reliability. All the items in the construct were also correlated on the basis of the item analysis conducted.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response per response group for SecDOSA is indicated in table 7.21.

Table 7.21: Typical response for SecDOSA per response group breakdown

SecDOSA					
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	3.22	0.46	2.75	3.00	3.75
Corporate affairs	9	3.03	0.36	2.75	3.00	3.25
Other	9	3.14	0.33	3.00	3.00	3.00

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

Table 7.21 indicates that all three response groups supported SecDOSA, with corporate communication having the highest mean score of 3.22 and corporate affairs the lowest mean score of 3.03.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The mean differences for SecDOSA per response group are indicated in table 7.22.

Table 7.22: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDOSA

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecDOSA classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	266.50	255.0	26.20	17.77
Other	9	161.50	153.0	23.44	17.94
Corporate affairs	9	133.00	153.0	23.44	14.77
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.73
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.69

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Based on the results in table 7.22, one could deduce that there was insufficient statistical evidence to indicate that the opinions of the three response groups differed on SecDOSA. Hence the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups equally supported the existence of various OSR antecedents.

- **Interpretations of the findings for SecDOSA**

The results of SecDOSA indicate support for the proposition in the conceptual framework that certain conditions are necessary prior to the OSR development phase, that is, the

antecedents on which an OSR depends. These OSR antecedents, which should arguably be built on a positive organisational reputation, the practice of a knowledge culture and the excellence communication function, encapsulated by the practice of two-way symmetrical communication and identified through evaluation research, could therefore be collectively accepted as a subphase preceding OSR develop

7.2.5.3 OSR development (SecDOSRD)

SecDOSRD indicated good reliability with a Cronbach alpha of 0.82. As per the item analysis conducted, all the items in this construct were correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical response per response group for SecDOSRD is indicated in table 7.23.

Table 7.23: Typical response for SecDOSRD per response group breakdown

SecDOSRD						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	3.09	0.43	2.86	3.00	3.29
Corporate affairs	9	3.08	0.36	2.71	3.00	3.14
Other	9	3.05	0.39	2.86	3.00	3.14

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

According to the results in table 7.23, all three response groups agreed on the characteristics of an OSR, which, in essence, measured the proposed elements of an OSR as emphasised in chapter 3. The corporate communication response group had the highest mean score of 3.09 and corporate affairs 3.08 and the other response group a mean score of 3.05.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The following mean differences between the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups for SecDOSRD are indicated in table 7.24:

Table 7.24: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDOSRD

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecDOSRD classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	266.50	255.0	27.34	17.77
Other	9	142.00	153.0	24.45	15.78
Corporate affairs	9	152.50	153.0	24.45	16.94
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.24
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.89

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The p-value for SecDOSRD is 0.89, which implies that the statistical evidence was inadequate to suggest that the three response groups had different opinions on SecDOSRD. Hence all three response groups equally supported the proposed elements of an OSR.

- **Measuring the responsibility of OSR building per response group**

Question D22 specifically required the respondents to indicate whether they were responsible for building OSR in their departments. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test to determine the mean scores per response group for this question are indicated in table 7.25.

Table 7.25: Kruskal-Wallis test for question D22

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable nnd22 classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	235.50	255.0	23.86	15.70
Other	9	138.00	153.0	21.35	15.33
Corporate affairs	9	187.50	153.0	21.35	20.83
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	2.62
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.27

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The p-value for this question was 0.27, which implies that there was insufficient statistical evidence to substantiate the three response groups having a different opinion on the responsibility for OSR building. Hence, it could be argued that all three response groups answered this question in the same way. Although there was no statistical evidence to show that the response groups answered the question differently, the researcher felt that it would still be useful to determine what each response group's opinion on the responsibility for OSR was, since a key argument in this study is that OSR building should be the specific responsibility of corporate communication professionals. A two-way frequency table for this question (see addendum D) indicated that 77.78% of the corporate affairs response group agreed and 22.22% disagreed on the responsibility for OSRs. The corporate communication response group disagreed on this statement; only 46.67% of the group agreed on the practice of OSR building and 53.33% disagreed. Similarly, 55.56% of the other response group disagreed on the responsibility for OSRs, while 44.44% agreed. Hence the proposition in this study that corporate communication professionals are the OSR builders in the organisation was not strongly supported in practice.

- **Interpretations of the findings of SecDOSRD**

The results indicated that the OSR elements identified in the literature review, namely trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment and mutual understanding were supported by all three response groups. Despite this support, only the corporate affairs response group seemed to agree on the responsibility for OSR building. Surprisingly, the corporate communication response group disagreed on this responsibility, which contradicts the literature and the proposition in the conceptual framework that corporate communication makes organisations more effective through OSR building and that corporate communication's worth at strategic level is its ability to build OSRs. One can therefore infer that this may be ascribed to the fact that corporate communication's worth at strategic level in practice is not fully developed and is only starting to become relevant because of the current expectation that organisations should practise proper stakeholder relations management. This is evident, for example, in the inclusion of chapter 8 to the King III Report, which focuses on governing stakeholder relations. The researcher therefore felt that this issue merited further exploration in the one-on-one interviews.

7.2.5.4 Stakeholder engagement (SecDSE)

The reliability of SecDSE could be regarded as acceptable, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.62. The item analysis indicated that all the items in this construct were positively correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups' typical response for SecDSE are indicated in table 7.26.

Table 7.26: Typical response for SecDSE per response group breakdown

SecDSE						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.85	0.41	2.57	2.86	3.00
Corporate affairs	9	2.81	0.21	2.71	2.71	2.86
Other	9	2.73	0.25	2.57	2.86	2.86

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

According to table 7.26, all the respondents had a more neutral stance towards stakeholder engagement, with the corporate communication response group having the highest mean score of 2.85. However, since these mean scores were still close to 3.00, it could be accepted that the response groups supported the SecDSE construct.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The following mean differences between the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups for SecDSE are indicated in table 7.27:

Table 7.27: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDSE

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecDSE classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	257.50	255.0	27.20	17.17
Other	9	144.00	153.0	24.33	16.00
Corporate affairs	9	159.50	153.0	24.33	17.72
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.16
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.92

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicate that there was insufficient statistical evidence to argue that the three response groups' opinion on SecDSE varied. It could therefore be argued that all three response groups equally supported stakeholder engagement as an OSR outcome.

- **Measuring the responsibility of stakeholder engagement per response group**

To specifically determine whether it is the responsibility of the respondents' departments to engage stakeholders, another Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted on question C29 of this construct. Question D29 asked the respondents to indicate whether their respective departments were responsible for stakeholder engagement activities. The differences per response group for this question are indicated in table 7.28.

Table 7.28: Kruskal-Wallis test for question D29

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable nnd29 classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	213.0	255.0	23.06	14.20
Other	9	141.0	153.0	20.62	15.67
Corporate affairs	9	207.0	153.0	20.62	23.00
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	7.04
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.03

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Since the p-value for this question was 0.05, it could be argued that there was enough statistical evidence to indicate that the three response groups' opinions on the responsibility for stakeholder engagement were not identical. Corporate affairs had the highest mean score of 23.0 in comparison with the other and corporate communication response groups, with mean scores of 15.6 and 14.2 respectively. A two-way frequency table (see addendum D) indicated that 100% of the corporate affairs response group agreed on the responsibility for stakeholder engagement, and only 46.67% of the corporate communication response group agreed, and 53.33% disagreed on this

responsibility, while 55.56% of the other response group agreed, and 44.44% disagreed about the responsibility for stakeholder engagement.

- **Interpretation of the findings for SecDSE**

From the findings it is clear that the respondents had an overall neutral stance towards SecDSE that specifically measured the proposed definition of stakeholder engagement and the proposition of stakeholder engagement as an outcome of an OSR. Since the proposition of stakeholder engagement as an OSR outcome was unique to this study, the researcher deemed it necessary to explore it further in the one-on-one interviews. Furthermore, it was clear from the analysis of question D29 that stakeholder engagement was practised by the corporate affairs response group and to a lesser extent by the other response group. The corporate communication response group did not agree on the responsibility for stakeholder engagement, which the researcher decided to explore further in the one-on-one interviews to test the theoretical proposition that *corporate communication professionals* must engage stakeholders in organisational activities to ensure the development of a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP.

7.2.5.5   *OSR maintenance (SecDOSRM)*

The Cronbach alpha for SecDOSRM was 0.85, which was regarded as good reliability. All the items in this construct were positively correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical responses of the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups for SecDOSRM are indicated in table 7.29.

Table 7.29: Typical response for SecDORSM per response group breakdown

SecDOSRM						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.93	0.42	2.69	2.77	3.23
Corporate affairs	9	2.88	0.26	2.77	3.00	3.00
Other	9	2.88	0.36	2.85	2.85	3.00

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

Table 7.29 indicates that all three response groups appeared to have a neutral stance towards OSR maintenance. However, since the mean scores of all three response groups were just below 3.00, this could be accepted as collective agreement on OSR maintenance, with the corporate communication response group having the highest mean score of 2.93.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test**

The mean differences between the three response groups for SecDOSRM are summarised in table 7.30.

Table 7.30: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDOSRM

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecDOSRM classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	248.50	255.0	27.54	16.57
Other	9	157.00	153.0	24.63	17.44
Corporate affairs	9	155.50	153.0	24.63	17.28
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.05
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.97

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicates that the evidence was statistically inadequate to suggest that the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups' views on SecDOSRM differed. Based on this result, it could be argued that all three response groups equally supported OSR maintenance practices.

- **Measuring the responsibility of OSR maintenance per response group**

To measure the responsibility for maintaining an OSR in these response groups, another Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted on question D42, which asked the respondents to indicate whether their departments were responsible for driving the OSR maintenance process. The results are indicated in table 7.31.

Table 7.31: Kruskal-Wallis test for question D42

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable nnd42 classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	186.00	255.0	23.86	12.40
Other	9	154.50	153.0	21.35	17.17
Corporate affairs	9	220.50	153.0	21.35	24.50
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	11.84
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.002

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The test provided a p-value of 0.002, which implies that there was sufficient statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had a different opinion on the responsibility for OSR maintenance. The corporate affairs response group showed a mean score of 24.50, in comparison with the other response group with a mean score of 17.16. The corporate communication response group's mean score of 12.40 was the lowest. A two-way frequency table (see addendum D) indicated that the corporate affairs response group agreed 100% on the process of OSR maintenance, while the other response group indicated 55.67% agreement and 44.44% disagreement. Only 26.67% of the corporate communication response group agreed on the responsibility of OSR maintenance, with 73.33% disagreeing.

- **Interpretations of the findings for SecDOSRM**

All three response groups generally supported SecDOSRM, which specifically measured the proposed OSR maintenance strategies and the theoretical proposition that a desirable OSR should be maintained to evolve in intensity. The arguments posed in literature that a foundational OSR should be "nurtured" to ensure evolvement into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP, which represents the OSR development continuum, were thus supported by these findings. Despite this support, the Kruskal-Wallis test conducted on question D42 indicated that the corporate communication response group did not agree on the responsibility for maintaining an OSR, in comparison with the corporate affairs response group who agreed strongly on this responsibility. This contradicts the theoretical proposition formulated in the literature review which argued for a relational paradigm of corporate communication as an approach that focuses on the building, *maintenance* and enhancement of relationships between the organisation and its environment. Based on this and the argument that the excellence communication function emphasises that stakeholder communication strategies should be built on two-way

symmetrical communication for building and *maintaining* stakeholder relationships, the researcher decided to further explore this matter in the one-on-one interviews.

7.2.5.6 OSP (SecDOSP)

SecDOSP showed good reliability, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.83. The item analysis confirmed that all the items in this construct were correlated.

- **Typical response per response group**

The typical responses of the corporate communication, corporate affairs and other response groups for this construct are indicated in table 7.32.

Table 7.32: Typical response for SecDOSP per response group breakdown

SecDOSP						
Response group	**N**	**Mean***	**Std dev**	**25th pctl**	**Median**	**75th pctl**
Corporate communication	15	2.77	0.44	2.57	2.71	2.86
Corporate affairs	9	2.79	0.40	2.57	3.00	3.00
Other	9	2.71	0.44	2.57	3.00	3.00

* Disagree strongly = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Agree strongly = 4

According to the results in table 7.32, all three response groups had a more neutral opinion on the proposed definition of an OSP and whether an OSP could be regarded as the most desirable relational state. However, since all three mean scores were close to 3.00, this could be interpreted as collective support for this construct, with corporate affairs achieving the highest mean score of 2.79.

- **Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDOSP**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test are indicated in table 7.33.

Table 7.33: Kruskal-Wallis test for SecDOSP

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for variable SecDOSP classified according to response group					
Response group	**N**	**Sum of scores**	**Expected under H0**	**Std dev under H0**	**Mean score**
Corporate communication/ communication	15	236.50	255.0	27.34	15.77
Other	9	156.50	153.0	24.46	17.40
Corporate affairs	9	168.00	153.0	24.46	18.67
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.54
DF	2
Pr> Chi-square	0.76

H_0: The response groups are identical.
H_a: The response groups are not identical.
Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

A p-value of 0.76 was obtained for the Kruskal-Wallis test, which implies that the there was not enough statistical evidence to suggest that the three response groups had varied opinions on SecDOSP. It could therefore be accepted that all three response groups equally supported SecDOSP.

- **Interpretations of the findings of SecDOSP**

Evident from the results in table 7.33, it could be argued that the respondents generally supported the proposition that an OSP is the most desirable relational state, which, to a degree, does support the proposed OSR development continuum in which it was argued that an OSR should be maintained to strengthen and evolve into an ultimate OSP. It also implies that the proposal in the literature that an OSP is associated with a mutual process (thus mutual engagement), collaborative problem solving and stewardship could be supported. Furthermore, the research findings supported the theoretical proposition that the objectives of the partnership should have precedence over individual organisational and stakeholder objectives at this relational level. Since the proposal of an OSP and OSR

development continuum were unique to this study, the researcher decided to explore this further in the one-on-one interviews.

The typical responses for all the respondents collectively and per response group on all the constructs are included in addendum E.

As emphasised in the theoretical discussion, some of the proposed elements of this model are required for successful implementation, or are a key characteristic of another element of the conceptual framework. Various correlations between certain constructs in the strategic communication foundation and conceptualisation of OSR building will be reported on in the next section to further strengthen the relevance and applicability of the conceptual framework.

7.2.6 Correlations

This section of the data analysis will focus on measuring the strength of the linear association between certain constructs of the model through Pearson's correlation coefficient as explained earlier. Although it could be argued that all the building blocks of the proposed model collectively ensure a process for adequate OSR building, thereby implying that all the building blocks are interrelated, correlations were drawn between constructs in which an intrinsic relationship was evident to further strengthen the conceptual framework. The following correlations are indicated for the constructs of the strategic communication foundation building block: SecBCoECF and SecCTWSC; SecBCoECF and SecCESER; SecBCoECF and SecCKSECoK; and SecCIM and SecCESER. The rationale behind these correlations is explained below.

- *SecBCoECF and SecCTWSC.* The correlation between the excellence communication construct and the two-way symmetrical communication construct was regarded as important in supporting the arguments that the excellence communication function is built on the two-way symmetrical communication model; and that the excellence communication function proposal that all communication programmes for strategic stakeholders should be based on two-way symmetrical communication to build and maintain stakeholder relationships and that there is a need for a symmetrical system of internal communication.

- *SecBCoECF and SecCESER.* This correlation was required to support the argument in the literature review that the excellence communication function emphasises the fact that communication programmes for strategic stakeholders should be based on *research*.

- *SecBCoECF and SecCKSECoK.* This correlation was necessary because one of the integrated spheres of communication excellence is a participative organisational culture that allows input and feedback and a collective working relationship through the integration of a *knowledge culture* in the organisation.

- *SecCESER and SecCIM.* This correlation was necessary because environmental scanning is necessary to identify issues of concern that should be managed and resolved by means of issues management to avoid disrupting the OSR-building process.

All these correlations are indicated in table 7.34.

Table 7.34: Correlations between the constructs of the strategic communication foundation

Values	SecBCoECF & SecCTWSC	SecBCoECF & SecCESER	SecBCoECF & SecCKSECoK	SecCESER & SecCIM
Correlation coefficient	0.63	0.37	-0.34	0.34
p-value*	<.0001	0.03	0.02	0.08
Sample size	34	34	34	34

$*$ $H_0: \rho = 0$ The response group correlation coefficient does not differ from zero.
$H_a: \rho \neq 0$ The response group correlation coefficient differs from zero.

According to table 7.34, the p-values of the first three construct sets were all less than 0.05, which implies that the null hypotheses for all of them could be rejected at a 5% level of significance. Hence all the above construct sets were correlated and supported the arguments put forward earlier, which strengthens the proposed strategic communication foundation and, in essence, the conceptual framework. However, it should be noted that SecBCoECF and SecCKSECoK were negatively correlated, which implies that the respondents responded more positively to one construct and more negatively to the other. This could again be ascribed to the fact that two of the questions of SecCKSECoK were misinterpreted by the respondents, as explained earlier. The p-value for SecCESER and SecCIM was 0.08 which implies that the null hypothesis could not be rejected at a 5% level of significance. One could therefore infer that SecCESER and SecCIM were not

correlated. Although SecCIM was supported, the respondents adopted an overall neutral stance towards SecCESER, and the corporate communication response group specifically indicated that they were not responsible for conducting research in the organisation. The researcher decided to further explore the relevance of conducting research in the one-on-one interviews.

Correlations between certain constructs of the strategic communication foundation and the phases of the conceptual framework were also required, which included SecDSSI and SecCESER and SecDOSRM and SecCESER.

- *SecDSSI and SecCESER.* It was argued that evaluation research is required to realise the proposed strategic stakeholder identification methodology, and it should be conducted to identify salient stakeholders, where the benefit of building a relationship will exceed the costs and both parties will be highly involved in the relationship.
- *SecDOSRM and SecCESER.* It was proposed in the literature review that evaluation research should be specifically conducted during the OSR maintenance phase to determine the relational quality and whether relational expectations are being met.

The results of these correlations are indicated in table 7.35.

Table 7.35: Correlations between the constructs of the strategic communication foundation and phases of the conceptual framework

Values	SecDSSI & SecCESER	SecDOSRM & SecCESER
Correlation coefficient	0.45	0.21
p-value*	0.009	0.24
Sample size	33	33

$*\ H_0: \rho = 0$ The response group correlation coefficient does not differ from zero.
$H_a: \rho \neq 0$ The response group correlation coefficient differs from zero.

According to the results in table 7.34, the correlation coefficient for SecDSSI and SecCESER was 0.45 and the p-value 0.009, which was less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was thus rejected at a 5% level of significance. One can therefore conclude that the response group correlation coefficient differed significantly from zero, which means that SecDSSI and SecCESER were correlated and the theoretical proposition above thus strengthened.

The correlation coefficient for SecDOSRM and SecCESER was 0.21 and the p-value 0.24, which was higher than 0.05. The null hypothesis could not be rejected at a 5% level of significance, which implies that the response group correlation coefficient did not differ from zero, and SecDOSRM and SecCESER were not correlated. Although the respondents generally supported both constructs, the noncorrelation of SecDOSRM and SecCESER could be ascribed to the fact that some of the respondents indicated that their departments were not responsible for OSR maintenance or the process of conducting stakeholder research. The researcher decided to further explore this topic in the one-on-one interviews.

The key findings of the web-based survey are summarised in the next section.

7.2.7 Key findings of the web-based survey

The overall purpose of the web-based survey was to determine whether the principles of the proposed conceptual framework would be supported by several leading listed South African organisations. Based on these results, one could conclude that the principles of the conceptual framework were generally supported and in line with the OSR-building strategies in practice. The following considerations which relate specifically to the corporate communication response group were emphasised:

- Some of the principles of the model were notably stronger supported by the corporate affairs response group in comparison to the corporate communication response group;

- The corporate communication response group predominantly indicated that they were not responsible for conducting stakeholder research.

- The corporate communication response group did not agree with the responsibility for stakeholder engagement.

- Despite the theory emphasising that corporate communication professionals are responsible for OSR building and maintenance, the corporate communication response group indicated that it was not their responsibility to build or maintain OSRs.

- The corporate communication response group was the least supportive of the practice of two-way symmetrical communication in comparison with the corporate affairs and other response groups.

In order to increase the reliability and validity of these findings, the researcher decided to further explore this topic in the one-on-one interviews. The one-on-on interviews also

enabled the researcher to address some of the shortcomings associated with quantitative research, which some of the respondents indicated when they had completed the survey: "I have completed the questionnaire, but the challenge is that without being able to qualify each answer it becomes difficult to make sense of why one answers in a certain way" and "[the] response to some of the questions [was] not as clear cut." The one-on-one interviews therefore allowed the participants to elaborate on and contextualise their stakeholder relations and management practices to thus contribute to exploring the detailed process of the conceptual framework and the role that corporate communication plays as an OSR-building function.

The next section will focus on the findings of the eight one-on-one interviews.

7.3 REPORTING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Prior to reporting the insights gained on the various phases of the proposed conceptual framework, it was necessary to highlight the participants' views on the relevancy of an OSR towards achieving organisational objectives and changing organisational thinking, which justifies the significance of this study. The views of the participants included the following: "Exco is thinking in a very different way and it is all due to this newly implemented stakeholder management process"; "a need has been identified to establish a stakeholder engagement framework"; and "the sustainability of the organisation is key and stakeholder management forms the basis of organisational predictions."

The insights gained in the one-on-one interviews will be outlined according to the categories of the interview schedule, namely the role of corporate communication and as an OSR-building function, the strategic communication foundation and the conceptualisation of OSR building. The various subcategories for the latter two categories will also be included.

7.3.1 The role of corporate communication in the organisation and as an OSR building function

The aim of this category was firstly to explore whether corporate communication could be regarded as an OSR-building function in the organisation; secondly, whether corporate communication is practised strategically; and thirdly, the role that corporate communication

plays in the strategic management process of the organisation. These insights also relate to the excellence communication function that will be addressed in the next section.

The study was built on the proposition in the literature that corporate communication's understated worth to the organisation would start to become evident owing to the current emphasis on stakeholder relationship management, since corporate communication is focused on building mutually beneficial OSRs. This view was specifically supported as follows by two corporate communication participants: "Stakeholder relationship building should be a formally contracted responsibility of communicators. By doing this it gives a communication role some weight, you are moving away from simply being a messenger" and "I believe that corporate communication will stay relevant through stakeholder relations".

In the web-based survey, the corporate communication response group specifically indicated that they were not responsible for OSR building and maintenance, which, according to one participant, could be because "it is not one of those formally contracted responsibilities of communicators; we are the messengers". Other corporate communication participants ascribed it to the fact that corporate communication is often reduced to a media function that focuses on obtaining publicity for the organisation and managing the reputation of the organisation. One participant, for instance, stated the following: "essentially, communications will feed the strategy from my office and executives to the media". Another participant explained that "corporate communication is here slash marketing", which specifically contradicts the excellence theory characteristic which underscores the fact that corporate communication should be a function separated from other units and not a subfunction of another department. Furthermore, it was argued that the credibility of corporate communication as an industry is questionable since corporate communication professionals' body of knowledge is not really business oriented, which one stakeholder management participant explained as follows: "... you have to understand the structure of the business – that is specifically why I draw back and say that perhaps corporate communication should not be responsible for stakeholder relations as you propose, since communicators normally lack business skills". Other corporate communication participants argued as follows: "we also need to understand business as we are not taken seriously" and "I do recommend that all communicators should also do a business qualification such as a MBA".

In the discussion of the excellence theory it was stated that the communication department should be headed by a senior corporate communication professional with the necessary corporate communication qualification(s) and experience to practise corporate communication effectively (especially from a two-way symmetrical perspective). Although the corporate communication participants indicated that they could obtain business knowledge from practice, they indicated that it is perhaps necessary that corporate communication qualifications should be reviewed to also equip students with basic business skills. Such skills would promote the movement, as one participant argued, "from being communication consultants to being business partners ... walking with them, working through business challenges and their agenda". One participant actually said that "corporate communicators must contribute towards expanding their role and move beyond their mandate towards building relationships". Other corporate communication participants indicated that it is difficult to show the worth of corporate communication in achieving organisational objectives – "there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of corporate communication", which is also "dependent on the mandate of corporate communication".

As emphasised in the discussion on the excellence theory to ensure the successful implementation of the conceptual framework, the true value of corporate communication as an OSR building tool has to be demonstrated to executives because corporate communication and the dominant coalition should have the same worldview of two-way symmetrical communication. This, according to one corporate communication participant, can only be achieved if corporate communication professionals move out of their comfort zone of being media liaisons and messengers: "... it is your job to open the doors of integrating stakeholder relations as part of your mandate". Despite these comments, one of the stakeholder management participants actually stated that "group communications comes in to establish the stakeholder relationships prior to engagement …", while another participant said that "communication's responsibility is to create an initial interest and to position the organisation among stakeholders", which essentially highlights the fact that corporate communication professionals are actually the stakeholder relationship builders of the organisation. This supports the theoretical proposition that corporate communication's contribution at strategic level in the organisation lies in OSR building – stakeholder relations are indeed the heartbeat of corporate communication.

Commenting on the role of corporate communication in the strategic management of the organisation, one participant stated that "you need to sit on strategic committees to be

informed of business issues, and through your networks and your relationships and influence, you are able to introduce new business externally ... you should also do things to enhance the corporate reputation". This is in line with the theoretical discussion that emphasised corporate communication's contribution at strategic level as being part of the strategic management of the organisation to provide direction and help to formulate organisational objectives, by contributing knowledge obtained from stakeholders.

In the literature review it was also argued that communication should be practised strategically before it can contribute to organisational effectiveness. This was supported in the interviews, with one participant stating that corporate communication should be practised strategically since it "... presents the persona of the organisation to both internal and external stakeholders". This is in line with earlier views that corporate communication "... makes organisations more effective by developing relations with stakeholders in the internal and external environment". Practising strategic communication was defined by corporate communication participants as "being an advisor to business which is done by translating the strategy in terms of communication to help business achieve their objectives"; and "to manage the reputation of the organisation by teaching what the organisation does and where it is going and to advise business on what is happening out there ...". To be able to act as good business advisors and to manage the reputation of the organisation, the theoretical discussion indicated that the essence of practising strategic communication implies, inter alia, conducting research to proactively identify issues and strategic stakeholders. Corporate communication professionals should therefore use the knowledge gained from research and align it with the business strategy, as highlighted by the participants to create symmetrical corporate communication programmes to achieve business objectives.

7.3.2 Characteristics of the excellence communication function

In line with the above insights, this section will focus on discussing the views of the participants on the excellence communication characteristics.

As emphasised in the literature review, the excellence function indicates that the senior corporate communication professional should be a member of the dominant coalition, that is, the decision makers of the organisation, or should have a direct reporting relationship with the dominant coalition. This was specifically emphasised in the interviews, where the participants stated that "you require exco ownership of a stakeholder management

process"; "communication should be on executives' agenda"; "executive awareness that business cannot go forward without communication is needed"; and "exco buy-in is critical". Furthermore, one corporate communication participant argued that the head of the department must act as a *strategic advisor* to business, not merely communicating the strategies of the organisation to stakeholders. This is in line with the proposition that excellence corporate communication departments provide input in business decisions by providing them with information from the environment, the organisation and the organisation's relationship with the environment. This essentially implies that corporate communication professionals advise executives on formulating a business strategy that is congruent with happenings both inside and outside the organisation.

Another characteristic of the excellence function discussed in the literature review is that the senior corporate communication professional and his or her personnel should have the necessary academic and practical knowledge to ensure that the function is practised strategically. Although the interview participants supported the view that a formal qualification provides the necessary grounding, they considered the primary element to be experience. In commenting on the role of a formal qualification, the participants stated the following: "it probably plays a role – but my knowledge was self-taught and from experience with business" and "a communication qualification does provide guidance but you definitely have to have exposure to how communications work; bottom line, you need to be business orientated". These views relate directly to the issues raised earlier that corporate communication qualifications do not equip students with business skills. As one participant explained: "I recently tried to study communication science but the content was on a lower level, I am way past that"; while another corporate communication participant mentioned: "I feel that yes, we do lack business knowledge". Based on these findings one could conclude that the participants indicated that a communication qualification will give one the necessary grounding and initial credibility, but experience, which was also emphasised by the excellence function discussed earlier, is critical to effectively practise corporate communication - and hence to build an OSR.

In line with the theoretical proposition that all corporate communication functions should be integrated into a single department that provides a central means to coordinate programmes managed by different departments, one of the stakeholder management executives stated the following: "I manage the portfolio; I basically put the methodology in place, ensure alignment, provide advice and monitor engagement throughout". Similarly,

another participant commented that "it is essential to sing off the same hymn sheet, otherwise the message becomes distorted which leads to reputation issues".

Since it was argued that one of the requirements of the excellence theory is that a communication department should function as a department in its own right (ie not as a subfunction of another department), and the fact that the question was also misinterpreted by the survey respondents, the structure of the participants' departments was explored. This also relates to the proposed pragmatic contribution of the excellence theory to this study. It was apparent from the research that some corporate communication departments do provide the methodology, alignment, monitoring, advisory and reporting roles for all stakeholder groups. These departments are responsible for positioning the organisation's strategies, to build the reputation of the organisation and basically to have the capacity to put the methodology in place for OSR building. This also became evident in the discussions with the stakeholder management participants, who made comments such as "our stakeholder management department forms the central repository for the business"; "we are the library; we develop the frameworks, engagement plans, track and monitor the engagement, conduct measurement and analyses". Some corporate communication professionals also indicated that each corporate communication professional in their department was responsible for a different communication function and for *building* an OSR, *engaging* stakeholders and *maintaining* an OSR with their respective stakeholder groups, which is in line with the proposed excellence communication function and the overall conceptual framework. In congruence, one stakeholder management participant stated the following: "we have established the concept what we call a *stakeholder champion* who is a person who becomes accountable for the relationship with a specific stakeholder group, as each business unit functions as a different pillar of the business – each with its own balance sheet. The appointment of these stakeholder champions ensures message alignment and avoiding mistrust". Ideally, and based on this statement, one could argue that all the corporate communication professionals in the corporate communication department could act as *stakeholder champions* for their specific stakeholder groups.

In order to emphasise the characteristic of having a symmetrical internal organisational climate, one participant stated that "a sound internal organisational climate is essential for effective stakeholder practice – nothing can go external unless we have resolved the internal issues". In line with this, another participant had the following to say: "for me

effective communication is one that is not enforced, one where it becomes the culture of the organisation, regardless of what is happening within the organisation, people need to know that they can always air their views, they don't need an invitation. For me that is effective communication, it's an ongoing thing." This view specifically highlights the importance of having a symmetrical internal organisational climate as a basis for effective OSR building. This, according to the literature review, will allow employee empowerment, which will stimulate a high degree of employee satisfaction, trust and commitment among employees and is essential to realise a knowledge culture in the organisation to promote knowledge sharing once a foundational OSR has been built.

7.3.3 A strategic communication foundation

All the participants indicated that the proposed corporate communication elements are essential to ensure successful OSR building. It was further suggested that the *ethics and values* of the organisation should also be promoted. In the words of one interview participant: "relationships cannot be built with contrasting ethics and values between the organisation and stakeholder". As emphasised in the literature review, promoting the ethics and values of the organisation would be achievable through the application of two-way symmetrical communication since it is ethical by nature. The proposed corporate communication functions of the strategic communication foundation of the conceptual framework were fully supported, and the findings on each element are reported below.

7.3.3.1 Two-way symmetrical communication

Practising corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective was regarded as the basis of the proposed conceptual framework, and it was argued that it is essential for building OSP. This implies that organisations and stakeholders should not control one another's ideas, but instead adjust individual ideas and behaviour to one another. The inputs of the corporate communication participants were specifically required because the corporate communication response group was the least supportive of this construct, in comparison with the corporate affairs and other response groups in the survey. All interview participants stressed the fact that it is critical for OSR building, with comments such as the following: "if there is not two-way communication stream, you are not going to achieve anything; you will not know unless you ask"; and "two-way communications is very important as feedback and input will allow you to improve on current practices". Another participant said that one should "always provide enough information to enable your stakeholders to make informed decisions". This

statement is congruent with the openness, truthfulness and fundamentality characteristics of two-way communication, as explained in the theoretical discussion, which indicated that accurate and factually sound information should continuously be shared with strategic stakeholders, and this should arguably be aligned with the organisation's ethics and values.

7.3.3.2 Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research

The conceptual framework proposed that environmental scanning should be conducted to detect organisational issues of concern that could harm the organisation's reputation and the OSR-building process, and that evaluation research is relevant in stakeholder identification and OSR evaluation. One corporate communication participant expressed the following view: "all strategies should be based on research – we do not focus on hearsay, we have formal research methods in place, both short and long-term; it is important to *evaluate* but also to *analyse your environment*". In the literature review, it was pointed out that research, inter alia, should be applied to foster understanding and build an OSR. One participant stated that "research is continuous, it never stops – it is essential"; "you can only be on par if you are in touch with your research;" and "if you invest in research you are able to see what was done previously, what were the values derived from previous practices". Despite this recognition of the importance of research, it was evident from the survey that the corporate communication response group indicated that they do not conduct research. This could possibly be ascribed to the fact that, although it is regarded as ideal, the corporate communication participants stated that "we lack in [those] areas, we focus a lot on coming up with strategies and plans ... but very little research on measuring the success", and "there is a need to do focused research in terms of your end goals". One can infer from this that although it is not always a reality in practice, research is critical to the success of the proposed conceptual framework to identify strategic stakeholders, to conduct continuous environmental scanning and also to evaluate the OSR to determine whether relational expectations are in fact being met.

7.3.3.3 Issues management

This study proposed that organisational issues that are identified through environmental scanning should be proactively managed and resolved as a continuous process throughout OSR building to avoid disrupting the OSR-building process. The necessity of issues management for proper OSR building was generally supported during the interviews, but one interview participant, for example, had the following to say in this

regard: "We are not there yet – we need to be more proactive – in the ideal world we would like to use research to identify issues proactively". In support of issues management practices, one interview participant indicated that it is essential to "continuously identify vulnerabilities". Others also emphasised that having a sustainable OSR would actually assist the organisation to identify issues of concern.

7.3.3.4   Reputation management

This study proposed that a positive organisational reputation (ie the general perception of all internal and external stakeholders of the organisation) is an essential prerequisite for OSR building with strategic stakeholders, and it should also be managed throughout the OSR-building process. The participants agreed with this by stating the following: "Oh, it is very important, priority number one"; and "reputation management is a key task of communicators"; and "everything that we have done in the stakeholder management space has been about the reputation of the organisation". One interview participant also mentioned that one has to "engage with stakeholders to determine the reputational standing of the organisation". This statement is specifically in line with the theoretical argument that corporate communication professionals continuously manage the organisation's reputation by *listening to stakeholder expectations* and addressing concerns. These results stress the relevancy of conducting continuous research throughout the OSR-building process, and the findings also indicate that a positive organisational reputation was regarded as a critical component of the OSR-building process with strategic stakeholders.

7.3.3.5   Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge

As indicated earlier, this category required further exploration in the interviews since it was realised that the survey respondents had misinterpreted some of the questions on this construct. The interview participants stated that although not developed to its full potential, "we do have pockets in the business that continuously drive innovation and new product development"; "we have forums in the organisation for sharing best practice"; and "knowledge sharing depends on the personalities of people ... but I do agree, such sharing is the ideal situation for sufficient stakeholder relations". Some interview participants indicated the implementation of a knowledge culture also depends on the individuals: "we need to be flexible, it is not everyone that can share, we all have different personalities" and "some people are very strong in sharing ideas but you also have people who are very straightforward – everything is either black or white, they do not drive innovation". One

corporate communication participant mentioned that a knowledge culture is essential for an OSR, but stated that "you have to manage it; you need knowledge anchors in the organisation and people that will implement [this] knowledge". However, despite challenges to integrate such a culture, the participants generally regarded a knowledge culture as essential for OSR building: "Building stakeholder relations is not a one man's job – it is the organisation as a whole; be part of your culture." This is specifically in line with the participative culture sphere of the proposed excellence theory that emphasises that excellence cannot be built in isolation; a participative organisational culture is required to allow a collective working relationship and to achieve common goals.

7.3.4 Conceptualisation of OSR building

This section will focus on providing the insights gained on the actual phases of the proposed conceptual framework.

7.3.4.1 *Strategic stakeholder identification*

The participants mentioned that it may be difficult to focus on strategic stakeholders alone, or as one interview participant stated: "part of stakeholder methodology is to prioritise issues. But to prioritise issues alone is difficult if you have a stakeholder group next to it; the issues of a strategic stakeholder might not be that important at that stage ... we often tend to focus on the stakeholders that will have the biggest impact on the business at a certain point in time". This view specifically relates to the definition of a strategic stakeholder proposed in this study, that is, those groups that will always be evident and relevant over time; and where these stakeholders will always be essential to achieve the objectives of the organisation which therefore necessitates the implementation of a partnership relational approach with these stakeholders. To highlight the "issue prioritisation" mentioned by one interview participant, it should be noted that apart from the proactive OSR-building process with strategic stakeholders, the literature review emphasised that pertinent issues will continuously emerge and certain active publics will mobilise themselves around these events or secondary stakeholders may have urgent claims that have to be addressed. Although the conceptual framework did not focus on managing these active publics or secondary stakeholder claims, since the purpose of this study is to specifically suggest a *proactive* approach to OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders, issues management has been integrated into this model to monitor such events.

In order to emphasise the relevancy of the proposed strategic stakeholder identification methodology of this study, it was evident from the interview participants that formal stakeholder identification methods were definitely in place: "We use models such as the materiality test to define and categorise stakeholders", while other participants mentioned that risk and opportunity analyses are conducted to identify strategic stakeholders and that stakeholder mapping is utilised.

A few interview participants also mentioned that it is necessary to establish what these identified strategic stakeholder's perceptions of the organisation are, because this will influence the relational approach. One participant indicated that "... a stakeholder dipstick analysis was conducted. We went out to the market, internally and externally to the organisation, and measured the perception of the organisation among stakeholders. What was discovered was that in most cases, the stakeholder perceptions of our organisation were very different than what we [thought] the perceptions would be". It can thus be argued that besides identifying strategic stakeholders, it is also essential to determine these stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation for this could affect the OSR-building process.

7.3.4.2   OSR antecedents

All the interview participants supported the proposed OSR antecedents, namely trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequence and expectations. In conjunction with the organisation's reputation, *stakeholder expectations* were predominantly regarded as the main OSR antecedent, or as two interview participants explained: "Stakeholders definitely have expectations of the organisation prior to a relationship" and "reputation plays a huge role in stakeholder expectations". This emphasises the need for a positive organisational reputation as the foundation for successful OSR building with strategic stakeholders, as proposed by this study.

7.3.4.3   OSR development, stakeholder engagement and OSR maintenance

This section of the interview focused on addressing the process of OSR building, from the OSR development phase to OSR maintenance. It was also deemed necessary to obtain the interview participants' views on the proposed *OSR development continuum* and whether a *partnership* approach is relevant and applicable to strategic stakeholders, because these factors were unique to this study.

- **OSR development**

Since this study was concerned with the process of OSR building, exploring the proposed elements of a foundational OSR was of specific relevance to this research. Besides the OSR elements proposed by this study, namely trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment, and mutual understanding, a *reciprocal value system* or a *common value system* was also emphasised as a key OSR element by some of the participants. Having a reciprocal value system is also in line with the promotion of the ethics and values of the organisation, as highlighted earlier. Furthermore, having a *similar vision* was also emphasised by the participants as a crucial relational element. However, it could be argued that "sharing a similar vision" is in line with *relational expectations* that both parties have of the OSR, which was proposed as an OSR antecedent of this study. This could further be enhanced by achieving mutual understanding, which was suggested earlier as a key OSR element. The participants also mentioned *time and patience* as important elements of an OSR. One interview participant, for example, stated that "stakeholder relationships take time". In relation to this view, the element of time was proposed as a critical aspect of the conceptual framework to realise the proposed OSR development continuum, whereby a foundational OSR evolves into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an ultimate OSP *over time*. Moreover, the element of patience is also in line with the relational commitment element of an OSR, as suggested in the literature review, in which it was argued that both parties have to be committed to the objective of the OSR, which essentially requires patience. To tie in with the literature review, trust was mentioned as the most important OSR element and was supported by all the participants. One participant commented that "trust is established over time through continuous *relevant communication*"; while another participant aptly stated that "a stakeholder relationship is one of trust".

All the participants supported the proposed OSR development continuum, especially if the organisation aspires to building an OSP with strategic stakeholders. One participant did mention that an OSR could grow in intensity over time, but "only if it is well managed, it's about investing time and resources". This again underscores the need for support at executive level in the OSR-building process, as argued earlier.

The interview participants indicated that although most stakeholder relationships are built from an organisation's outward perspective, an OSR can also be initiated by stakeholders and not only the organisation, as suggested in this study. One interview participant

indicated that the initiation of an OSR also "depends on who has the resources", which suggests that the proposed "organisation initiation", "partial mutual initiation" and "full mutual initiation" should be revisited.

- **Stakeholder engagement**

In support of the unique proposition of this study that stakeholder engagement could be regarded as an outcome of an OSR, one of the interview participants stated that "a platform is required to start engaging; corporate communications create the initial relationship and position the organisation; the bait has been put out there"; and "if you have done your mapping and determined what type of a relationship you want to have, you cannot have haphazard engagement – engagement is very focused". These perspectives specifically support the proposition in this study that an OSR should be in place prior to stakeholder engagement.

In the interviews it became evident that, in practice, stakeholder engagement follows a predominant "issue-oriented" approach, whereby issues pertaining to a specific stakeholder group are identified after an OSR has been cultivated. This approach was explained as follows by one interview participant: "our stakeholder engagement process is very issues orientated ... instead of focusing on the day-to-day interactions, we focus on the deep-seeded stakeholder issues that are relevant to stakeholders and will impact our business strategy"; another participant stated that "... each issue addressed in stakeholder engagement has a strategic objective and targets to meet". These views indicate that stakeholder engagement, as proposed in the literature, could act as a method to further strengthen the OSR (which thus supports the OSR development continuum). This issue-based approach to stakeholder engagement entails the evaluation of the initial OSR to identify issues that will engage stakeholders. Similarly, another interview participant defined stakeholder engagement as "... a strategic process where you start the process of stakeholder inclusivity, it is about eventually partnering with other people to achieve desired outcomes". As emphasised in the literature review, this approach is in line with the principles of the King III Report, in which stakeholder inclusivity was emphasised as a key element of sustainability, and the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders are continuously considered when determining the best interests of the organisation. The relevancy of these findings to the proposed conceptual framework is that it could be argued that stakeholder inclusivity starts in the stakeholder engagement phase, and it will

be fully realised as the OSR strengthens, which for the purpose of this study, would be at OSP level. As mentioned in the theoretical discussion, the active communication and continuous involvement with stakeholders evident in the two-way symmetrical communication model can promote stakeholder inclusivity in practice.

- **OSR maintenance**

In line with the theoretical proposition of conducting evaluation research during OSR maintenance to determine whether relational needs and expectations are being met, one of the stakeholder management participants indicated that his organisation measures a relationship against the following principles: materiality, completeness, responsiveness, directness and parity, which, according to one interview participant, essentially focuses on determining the following: "How do I communicate? Am I clear in what I am saying? Do I address issues meaningfully? Do I actually listen and act as oppose[d] to only providing meaningless feedback? Is my communication effective? Is it relevant?" Further comments to support evaluation in the OSR maintenance phase, included the following: "we conduct relational proximity research to determine the health of a relationship" and "relationships with key stakeholders are continuously monitored". Participants also specifically stated the following: "include stakeholders to see whether relational needs are continuously being met", which underscores the importance of stakeholder inclusivity enabled by two-way symmetrical communication, as mentioned above.

As stated in the findings of the survey, the responsibility for OSR maintenance was not really supported by the corporate communication response group. This could be due to the fact that although it was regarded as a core element by the survey respondents and interview participants, it is seldom realised. One corporate communication participant specifically mentioned that "we do very little evaluation and measuring – but that is where I envisage we need to move". This reiterates the theoretical argument that OSR maintenance is an element that is essential for the partnership approach towards OSR building as presented in this conceptual framework to ensure that relational expectations and needs are being met.

7.3.4.5   *The OSP*

In support of the partnership approach to OSR building for *strategic* stakeholders, as proposed by the conceptual framework, one interview participant explained that the

"establishment of partnerships [is] only applicable to key stakeholders; if it was for operational stakeholders you only want to establish a working relationship, but you don't want to foster partnerships". According to some of the participants, the practice of stakeholder inclusivity in a partnership entails appointing *stakeholder panels* at organisational board level, which means that representatives of each strategic stakeholder group would be *actively involved* in decision making to represent their respective stakeholder groups. Inviting stakeholders to participate in such panels would promote *collaborative problem solving,* which was proposed as an element of an OSP.

The proposed two-way engagement at OSP level in the conceptual framework, which represents advanced stakeholder engagement where both the stakeholder and organisation involve each other in their business activities, was emphasised by the following views of the interview participants: a partnership entails an *advisory* function whereby both the organisation and stakeholder act as consultants to resolve one another's issues: "a partnership is where one consult *one another* for advice". Another participant specifically stated that "it's a state where both parties have the confidence to engage one another". It was also mentioned that a partnership "... makes you aware of opportunities and threats". This is in line with the stewardship element of an OSP proposed in the theoretical discussion, which emphasises mutual *responsibility* between the organisation and stakeholder to *report* on relevant happenings and issues in order to strengthen the OSP.

7.3.5 Key findings of the one-on-one interviews

The purpose of the one-on-one interviews was to address key trends in the web-based survey and the proposed conceptual framework in more detail, specifically focusing on the process of OSR building and the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function. Furthermore, the aim was also to integrate the key learnings and insights from leading listed South African organisations in order to constitute an OSR-building model based on theory and practice. The key findings that emerged from the interviews can be summarised as follows:

- Although not strongly supported by the corporate communication response group in the survey, the corporate communication interview participants did emphasise the importance of two-way symmetrical communication for an OSR. It was argued that besides the role in OSR building, the two-way symmetrical communication model

allows the organisation to follow a *stakeholder inclusive approach* and to promote the ethics and values of the organisation.

- In conjunction with the proposed corporate communication functions of the strategic communication foundation of the model, the promotion of ethics and values of the organisation was also a key requirement for OSR building.

- The perceptions that strategic stakeholders have of the organisation influence the OSR-building process.

- An OSR needs to be evaluated prior to stakeholder engagement to identify stakeholder issues which serve as "topics" for engagement and an OSR-strengthening tool.

- An OSR can be initiated by both the organisation and stakeholder.

- Executive buy-in is essential for the successful implementation of the proposed conceptual framework and the acceptance of corporate communication as an OSR-building function.

- Corporate communication professionals should act as "stakeholder champions" to ensure a successful OSR-building process.

- Corporate communication professionals need to acquire more business skills to be regarded as credible and hence for corporate communication to be accepted as a strategic function.

- Having a reciprocal value system is also an essential OSR element.

- Strategic stakeholders should be included in an OSR evaluation.

- An OSP emphasises stakeholder inclusivity.

- The partnership approach to OSR building was supported for OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders specifically.

The next section will focus on integrating these findings with the conceptual framework in order to constitute a sequential, integrated, sustainable OSR (SISOSR) model that describes the OSR-building process.

7.4 INTEGRATING INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE: A SEQUENTIAL, INTEGRATED, SUSTAINABLE OSR (SISOSR) MODEL

Based on the insights gained from the one-on-one interviews, which were guided by the trends in the web-based survey, the following amendments will be made to the proposed conceptual framework to constitute a SISOSR model that describes the OSR-building process.

- Firstly, the promotion of the organisation's *ethics and values* will be integrated as an essential corporate communication function of the strategic communication foundation, together with environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge.

- After the proposed strategic stakeholder identification phase of the SISOSR model, a *strategic stakeholder perception analysis (SSPA)* will be included because it will be necessary to study the perceptions of the strategic stakeholders prior to OSR building as this could influence the relationship-building approach. It should be noted that although it was argued earlier that the aggregate perceptions of all internal and external stakeholders should be positive (positive organisational reputation), the specific perceptions of the *strategic* stakeholders should be determined by means of this analysis. The SSPA will also inform the OSR antecedents, namely trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequence and expectations. Furthermore, it is possible that the strategic stakeholder perception analysis will also detect certain stakeholder issues that could be addressed in the stakeholder engagement phase of the model.

- To ensure the maximisation of *stakeholder inclusivity* and the implementation of the proposed *"stakeholder issues-based approach"* to stakeholder engagement, organisations have to take stock of the foundational OSR once it has been built. This means that the organisation needs to conduct *OSR evaluation* to identify strategic stakeholder issues that could be addressed in the stakeholder engagement phase of the model to further strengthen the OSR. It should be noted that this "stakeholder issue identification" is separate from the environmental scanning and subsequent issues management process of the organisation, which focus on identifying any organisational issues that may hinder the OSR-building process. Identifying stakeholder issues in an OSR evaluation will identify pertinent areas on which stakeholders would like to focus, for example, employees who have identified the need for a career development programme in the organisation. The sole purpose of OSR evaluation is to detect stakeholder issues as a means to strengthen the OSR. Further evaluation research, as proposed by this model, will still have to be conducted during OSR maintenance to measure the OSR quality and to determine whether relational expectations are being met.

- The initial proposition of *organisational initiation*, *partial mutual initiation* and *full initiation* of the OSR-building process will be replaced with *mutual organisation-*

stakeholder initiation throughout the OSR-building process. Although it often happens that an organisational-outward approach will be followed, that is, where the organisation is the driver of the OSR, this may be reversed in some instances, depending on the particular organisation and industry. Since this model adopts a generic, cross-industry approach, it will have to make provision for the possibility that the organisation may also be approached by a strategic stakeholder.

The graphic representation of the conceptual framework provided in chapter 5 is reviewed and adapted in figure 7.4 to incorporate the above amendments in practice in order to constitute the SISOSR model that proposes a partnership approach to OSR building with strategic stakeholders.
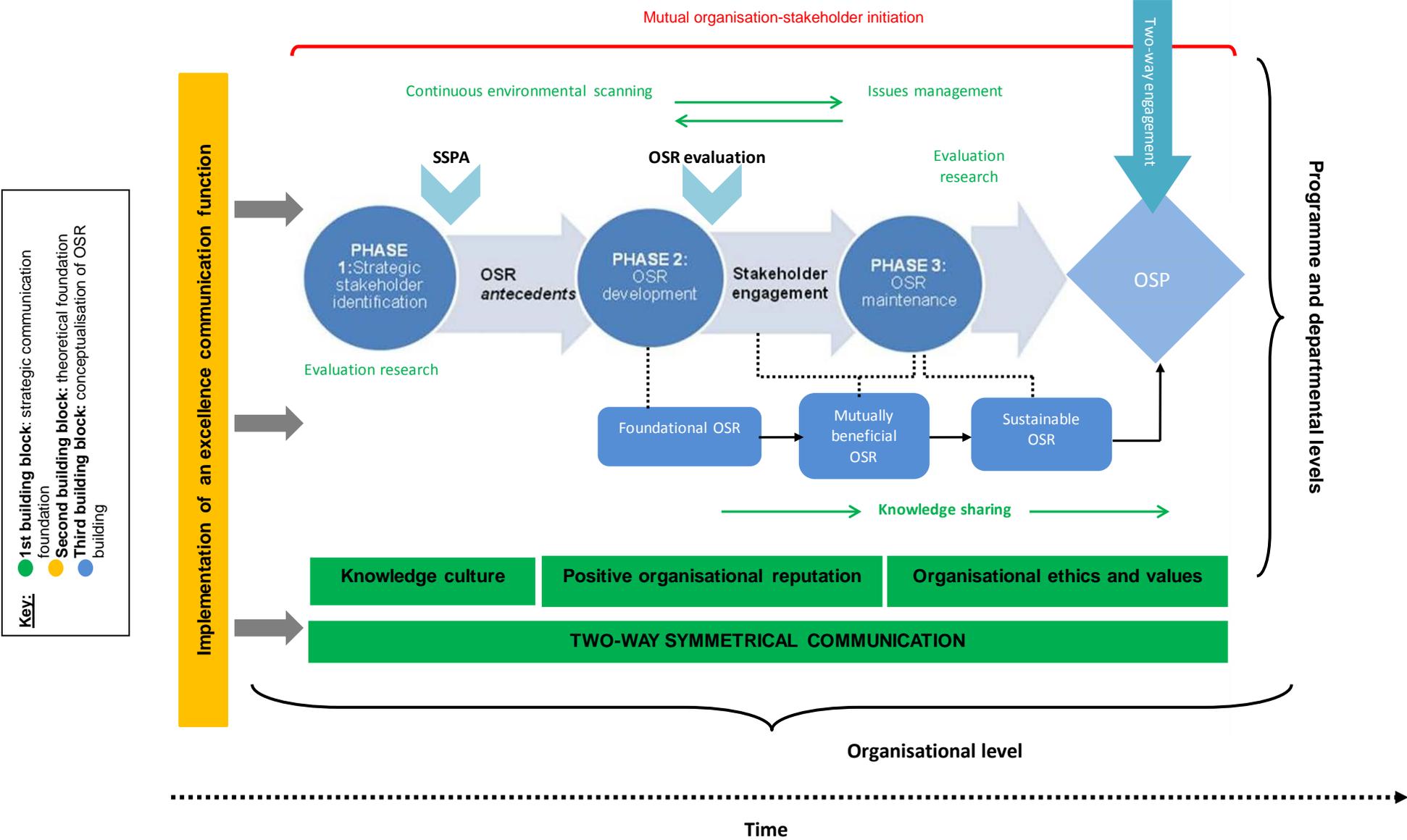
Figure 7.4: A sequential, integrated, sustainable OSR (SISOSR) model for building OSP

In line with the discussion on the OSR-building process set out in chapter 5, the above figure indicates that a partnership approach to OSR building with strategic stakeholders requires the establishment of a knowledge culture in the organisation and ensuring a positive organisational reputation that is aligned with the organisation's ethics and values. The corporate communication department requires the integration of the excellence communication function, which is made possible by adopting a two-way symmetrical communication worldview which the executives of the organisation share. Continuous environmental scanning should be conducted to detect issues of concern which should be managed to avoid organisational crises and the emergence of active publics that could damage the OSR-building process. The actual OSR-building process requires formal methods to identify strategic stakeholders, in which evaluation research plays a critical role to identify relational needs and expectations, followed by a strategic stakeholder perception analysis (SSPA) to determine the perceptions of these strategic stakeholders of the organisation, since this could affect the OSR-building approach. This analysis will also inform the various OSR antecedents on which a foundational OSR will be built. Once a foundational OSR has been established, which could be initiated either by the organisation or the stakeholder (mutual organisation-stakeholder initiation), it should be evaluated to identify stakeholder issues to engage stakeholders. This method is congruent with the process of knowledge sharing between the organisation and strategic stakeholders to strengthen the relationship into a mutually beneficial OSR. The OSR should further be maintained to allow the mutually beneficial OSR to evolve into a sustainable relationship. It is essential during OSR maintenance to conduct evaluation research to determine whether relational expectations are being met to allow the sustainable OSR to further grow into a partnership. At OSP level, both the organisation and stakeholder act as stewards for each other and collaborative problem solving and two-way engagement are promoted by stakeholders who become actively involved at organisational board level, which emphasises *stakeholder inclusivity*.

As indicated in the findings, executive buy-in of such an approach is required and it is driven by corporate communication specifically, which necessitates the following:

- The senior corporate communication professionals of the various communication functions in the corporate communication department should act as *stakeholder specialists,* which encapsulates the *stakeholder champion* concept mentioned by one participant. These stakeholder specialists should be responsible for OSR building,

stakeholder engagement and the OSR maintenance of their respective strategic stakeholder group(s). For example, an internal communication manager could focus solely on the employees of the organisation and an investor relations manager could deal with the organisation's investors. Hence, these senior corporate communication professionals should act as stakeholder specialists to provide a customised OSR-building process for each strategic stakeholder group. The SISOSR model therefore proposes the generic steps that should be followed to ensure the establishment of an OSP, which could be adapted according to each strategic stakeholder group.

- In line with the previous point, the effective implementation of the SISOSR model requires the following: a change in corporate communication as an industry and practice; corporate communication professionals should become more business cognisant; and corporate communication should be branded as a stakeholder relationship-building function. As one interview participant commented, this process would also entail that "corporate communication will have to be able to demonstrate its return on investment, you need case studies; it is a constant sell".

- A substantial change in the mindset of the organisation at board and executive level is required because the corporate communication department in the organisation needs to be expanded and elevated, since, according to one interview participant, "stakeholder relations takes time and resources". In line with the issues relating to the credibility of corporate communication, the term "corporate communication'" should be replaced with the term "stakeholder relations" in order to emphasise more effectively corporate communication's required contribution and to start moving away from the perception of corporate communication as a predominant media, publicity and messenger function. To implement the SISOSR model successfully in line with the characteristics of an excellence communication function, the following figure depicts the ideal structure for such a department:
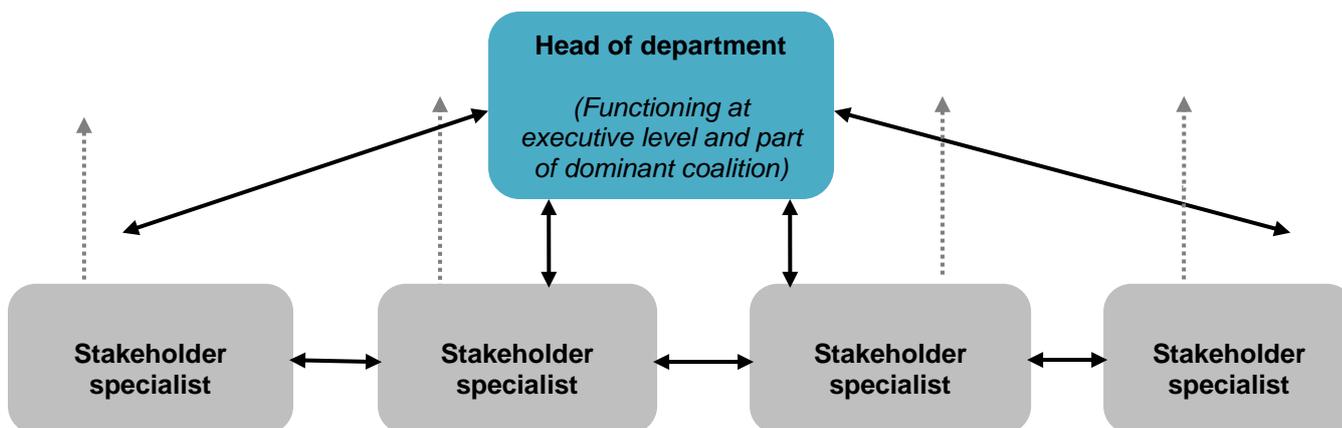
Figure 7.5: Departmental structure to facilitate the implementation of the SISOSR model

Figure 7.5 illustrates that the head of department should function at executive level and be one of the decision makers in the organisation. The head of department's unit serves as the *repository for all OSR-building methodology* from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective. This unit should manage the reputation of the organisation as whole, conduct environmental scanning and evaluation research and be responsible for issues management, aligned with the organisation's ethics and values, which are facilitated by a culture of knowledge in the organisation. The department as a whole will also conduct the first phase of the SISOSR model, namely strategic stakeholder identification, and assist strategic stakeholders with the SSPA and OSR evaluation later in the OSR development process. Once these strategic stakeholders have been identified, a different senior corporate communication professional should fulfil the role of stakeholder specialist for a specific strategic stakeholder, depending on the type of organisation and industry. Each stakeholder specialist is responsible for determining the OSR antecedents, OSR development, stakeholder engagement and OSR maintenance to ensure OSP development with their respective strategic stakeholder. The stakeholder specialists will also be responsible for devising communication programmes based on the research and stakeholder engagement for their strategic stakeholder. Since the SISOSR model suggests a generic OSP approach for strategic stakeholders, the stakeholder specialists could further customise the SISOSR model to their specific strategic stakeholder if required. It should be noted that the proposition of four stakeholder specialists in figure 7.5 is merely for illustration purposes and additional or fewer stakeholder specialists could be appointed, depending on the strategic stakeholders identified in the organisation.

However, it was proposed that an organisation would only have a few strategic stakeholders.

Furthermore, the arrows in figure 7.5 indicate the practice of two-way symmetrical communication throughout the department, which should also be practised throughout the organisation, to ensure message alignment. Stakeholder specialists should also have direct access to executive level if required, which is illustrated by the dotted arrows and the existence of an open organisational structure.

Another point that needs to be emphasised is the argument posed earlier that all strategic stakeholders should be of equal importance to the organisation – hence no prioritisation criteria (which are more applicable to secondary stakeholders and/or active publics) are suggested for strategic stakeholders. This study thus suggests that a different stakeholder specialist should be appointed for each strategic stakeholder group to ensure simultaneous OSP building with all strategic stakeholders and that these OSPs with strategic stakeholders could be essential to effectively address secondary stakeholder claims and/or to manage active publics.

Although not influencing the OSR process per se, the following changes to certain phases of the model and further insights pertaining to the implementation of the SISOSR model are suggested:

- A *reciprocal value system* should be included as a key element of an OSR in addition to trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment and mutual understanding.
- *Strategic stakeholders* must be included as part of the evaluation research during OSR maintenance to determine whether relational needs and expectations are being met.
- Based on the insights gained, the proposed definition of an OSP needs to be amended to emphasise the practice of *stakeholder inclusivity*, whereby members of the various strategic stakeholder groups are invited to be part of the board of the organisation. The proposed definition of an OSP earlier could be revised as follows: *An OSP is a foundational OSR practised over a long period of time to reach the level of two-way engagement, whereby stakeholders are actively involved at organisational board level to promote a mutual experience of stewardship and collaborative problem solving.* This revised definition highlights the fact that having stakeholder panels acting on the

organisation's board (thereby emphasising stakeholder inclusivity) will promote the proposed characteristics of collaborative problem solving, two-way engagement and stewardship of an OSP.

- It should be noted that the partnership approach towards OSR building proposed by the SISOSR model is applicable to an organisation's *strategic* stakeholders specifically. The secondary stakeholders of the organisation should be managed on a "prioritisation of needs and/or issues" basis, since there may not be a need for the organisation to maintain these relationships. However, to successfully address these secondary stakeholder issues, partnerships with the organisation's strategic stakeholders should be in place, and they will serve as the necessary basis for addressing these secondary stakeholder needs and/or issues. Although some of the principles of the SISOSR model will remain applicable, the successful management of secondary stakeholder needs and/or issues constitutes a different approach and stakeholder management model altogether. Furthermore, the emergence of active publics also requires a reactive management approach, which is a topic for possible future research.

It also became apparent in the one-on-one interviews that organisations predominantly endeavour to align their stakeholder relations and management plans with the principles of the King III Report, as outlined in chapter 2 of this study. One interview participant specifically indicated that "we used the principles of the King III report as our guideline, we used what is available instead of reinventing the wheel", while another stated the following: "we retro-fitted the principles of the King III to our business". Even the interview participants of organisations that have not yet implemented sufficient stakeholder management and relations strategies, had the following to say: "we need to adjust our policies to be in line with the King III". The alignment of the SISOSR model with the stakeholder principles of the King III Report will be indicated in table 7.36 to emphasise how the final SISOSR model could assist organisations to apply the King III principles. However, it should be noted that the purpose of this study was not to provide a model to help organisations apply to the stakeholder principles of the King III Report, *but to provide a process approach to OSR building in order to address the lack of research on how to build an OSR*. The table below merely highlights the fact that this approach to OSR building could aid organisations to successfully apply the principles of the King III Report and essentially illustrates the relevance and pragmatic contribution of the SISOSR model to contemporary stakeholder relations and management practices.

Table 7.36: Correlations between the SISOSR model and stakeholder principles of the King III Report

Principles	Explanation of principle	Application of principles in SISOSR
Principle 8.1: *The board should appreciate that stakeholders' perceptions affect a company's reputation.*	• Stakeholders are regarded as any group that can affect organisational operations or be affected by it. • Stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation constitute the reputation of the organisation. • Communication should be used to close the gap between stakeholder perceptions and the organisation's performance. • Stakeholders' interests and expectations should be addressed. • The board should be the custodian of corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships. • The board should identify important stakeholder groupings. • Stakeholder interests in the organisation are dynamic and could change.	The model proposes as the first phase the identification of strategic stakeholders, followed by a perception analysis (SSPA) to drive the OSR-building process. This model emphasises that a positive organisational reputation is a prerequisite for building OSR with strategic stakeholders. Continuous environmental scanning and evaluation research are promoted throughout this model in conjunction with the OSR evaluation to detect stakeholder issues and to ensure that stakeholder interests are being addressed. The successful implementation of this model depends on practising corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical perspective and to effectively contribute to the strategic management of the organisation. The corporate communication departmental head needs to function at executive level.
Principle 8.2: *The board should delegate to management to proactively deal with stakeholder relations.*	• Strategies should be developed to manage stakeholder relations. • The board should ensure that mechanisms and processes that support stakeholder engagement in organisational activities are in place. • Stakeholder engagement provides organisations with more information on stakeholders, external events and market conditions. • In addition to formal communication with stakeholders, other informal, continuous communication should be practised with stakeholders.	The SISOSR model highlights the importance of OSR maintenance, in terms of which each senior corporate communication professional needs to act as a stakeholder champion for his or her respective stakeholder group(s) which entails determining OSR antecedents, OSR development; stakeholder engagement and OSR maintenance. The corporate communication/stakeholder relations department provides all the methodology and guidance for its respective stakeholder specialists to build an OSP. Stakeholder engagement is also a means to strengthen the OSR. Continuous two-way symmetrical communication is promoted. The relevancy of research (environmental scanning and evaluation research) to obtain information on strategic stakeholders is supported, as well as OSR evaluation to detect stakeholder issues. Each stakeholder specialist also devises communication programmes for its strategic stakeholder based on research and stakeholder engagement.
Principle 8.3: *The board should strive to achieve the appropriate balance between its various stakeholder groupings, in the best*	• The board should find a balance to act in the best interests of the organisation and stakeholders. • Constructive stakeholder engagement also requires stakeholder participation. • Successful engagement is dependent on stakeholder	This model specifically promotes a partnership approach to OSR building whereby mutual concern for the OSR and stakeholder interests is continuously promoted. Stakeholder engagement specifically involves stakeholders providing input in business activities and the way the organisation

Principles	Explanation of principle	Application of principles in SISOSR
interests of the company.	support of good governance, the legal duties of the board and consideration of organisational interests.	and stakeholder could collectively work towards resolving identified issues. The model also proposes a higher level of stakeholder engagement at OSP level, namely two-way engagement. The success of the engagement process is also built on the concept of stakeholder inclusivity.
Principle 8.4: *Companies should ensure the equitable treatment of shareholders.*	• Equitable treatment of all holders of the same share classes is important. • Minority shareholders should be protected from abusive actions.	This resembles ethical organisational practices which make the two-way symmetrical communication applicable and relevant since it promotes ethical and honest communication practices, moving away from asymmetrical strategies. Promoting the sound ethics and values of the organisation and having a positive organisational reputation are also promoted as a key prerequisite for the OSR-building process with strategic stakeholders. A reciprocal value system between the organisation and stakeholders is also a crucial element of a successful OSR.
Principle 8.5: *Transparent and effective communication with stakeholders is essential for building and maintaining their trust and confidence.*	• Appropriate dialogue between the organisation and stakeholders should be fostered. • The organisation should provide complete, timely, relevant, accurate, honest and accessible information to ensure OSR building and maintenance. • Processes should be implemented to promote appropriate disclosure. • Organisations should communicate in an understandable manner through channels accessible to stakeholders. • The board should adopt responsible communicator principles. • The board should ensure that a proper stakeholder communication programme is in place to ensure that all stakeholders are properly informed, effective feedback systems exist, crisis management processes are in place and that the board should be timeously notified of burning issues that need to be communicated to stakeholders.	This model is built from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective that promotes open and honest communication. The two-way symmetrical communication model and the practice of the excellence communication function also promote responsible communication in order to foster responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency, as outlined in the literature. Corporate communication provides the methodology, monitoring and analysis of all stakeholder practices, aligned with the strategic intent of the organisation. Corporate communication professionals act as stakeholder specialists to build, engage stakeholders and maintain the OSR. Environmental scanning, evaluation research and OSR evaluation prior to engagement would also assist in detecting issues of concern that should be proactively addressed. Continuous issues management to detect organisational concerns is also promoted by this model.
Principle 8.6: *The board should ensure disputes are resolved as effectively, efficiently and expeditiously as possible.*	This principle specifically highlights procedures on how to effectively manage internal and external disputes.	This model integrates environmental scanning and issues management as part of the strategic communication foundation to address organisational issues as efficiently as possible to avoid hindering the OSR-building process. Symmetrical conflict resolution strategies have been proposed as part of issues management and as a measure for OSR maintenance.

7.5   SUMMARY

This chapter focused on data reporting and the interpretation of the findings of the web-based survey and one-on-one interviews. The aim of the survey and one-on-one interviews was to determine whether the principles of the proposed conceptual framework were congruent with the stakeholder relations practices of leading listed South African organisations in order to constitute a SISOSR model, and also to establish whether corporate communication is regarded as an OSR-building function.

The web-based survey, whose primary purpose was to determine whether the principles of the proposed conceptual framework could be supported, was answered by 36 senior communication professionals. The findings of the survey were reported in tables according to the following categories of the survey questionnaire: the characteristics of the excellence communication function; the strategic communication foundation, which includes two-way symmetrical communication, research, issues management, reputation management and a knowledge sharing enabled by a knowledge culture; and the conceptualisation of OSR building which included strategic stakeholder identification, the OSR antecedents, OSR development, stakeholder engagement, OSR maintenance and the OSP. The analysis of the survey entailed the following: the frequencies of individual items; the Cronbach alpha and accompanying item analysis for each construct; descriptive statistics for all constructs categorised according to three main response groups, namely corporate communication, corporate affairs and other; various nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare the responses of the three response groups and explain them by means of two-way frequency tables; and an examination of the correlations between various identified constructs. The results indicated that all the principles were generally supported by the respondents, and the conclusion drawn was that the principles of the proposed SISOSR model are congruent with stakeholder relations endeavours in practice. Since this study was approached from a corporate communication perspective, the results obtained from the corporate communication response group were of specific importance. These results indicated that some of the principles of the conceptual framework were supported more by the other and corporate affairs response groups in relation to the corporate communication response group. Despite indicating their support for research, building and maintaining the OSR, the corporate communication response group specifically indicated that they are not responsible for actually conducting stakeholder research, building the OSR, engaging stakeholders or maintaining the OSR. Further to

this, the corporate communication response group were the least supportive of practising two-way symmetrical communication.

Eight one-on-one interviews were conducted with senior communication professionals over a five-day period. The aim of these interviews was to explore the trends evident in the web-based survey; to study the details of the OSR model, which was not possible through quantitative research; and, most importantly, to address the process of OSR building and the role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function. The insights gained in the interviews were reported as follows, according to the interview guide categories: the role of corporate communication and as an OSR-building function, the strategic communication foundation and the conceptualisation of OSR building. The strategic communication foundation and conceptualisation of OSR building were reported according to the subcategories outlined above. Overall, the interview participants supported the partnership approach to OSR building, especially among an organisation's strategic stakeholders, as proposed in the literature review in this study. The principles and key phases of the conceptual framework were generally supported by the participants and the insights gained in the interviews resulted in the following amendments to the conceptual framework in order to constitute a SISOSR model: Ethics and values were added as an core element of the strategic communication foundation of the model; a strategic stakeholder perception analysis (SSPA) was integrated after stakeholder identification to measure the perceptions of the identified strategic stakeholders; OSR evaluation, which is separate from the evaluation research conducted in the OSR maintenance phase, was added after a foundational OSR has been built to identify stakeholder issues that should be addressed in stakeholder engagement; and the organisation initiation, partial mutual initiation and full mutual initiation of the model were replaced with mutual organisation-stakeholder initiation throughout the OSR-building process, because the research indicated that a strategic stakeholder and organisation can both initiate a relationship.

Further to these amendments, it was concluded that executive buy-in is essential for the successful implementation of the SISOSR model, which necessitates senior corporate communication professionals acting as stakeholder specialists for their respective strategic stakeholder; a change in corporate communication as an industry to equip corporate communication professionals with more business skills and the branding of corporate communication as "stakeholder relations"; and a change in the mindset of executives and board members of the organisation regarding the strategic role that corporate

communication should fulfil. Although not affecting the OSR process specifically, further amendments included the adding of a reciprocal value system as an OSR element; the inclusion of stakeholders as part of the evaluation research during OSR maintenance; and a revision of the proposed definition of OSP to highlight *stakeholder inclusivity*.

In conclusion it should be noted that the partnership approach to OSR building proposed by this model is only applicable to an organisation's *strategic* stakeholders. An organisation's secondary stakeholders require an issue prioritisation approach which constitutes a different stakeholder management model. Active publics also require a reactive management approach, which is a topic to be addressed in future research. However, it was argued that having an OSP with strategic stakeholders could aid in managing active publics and secondary stakeholder claims. As a measure to highlight the pragmatic relevance of the SISOSR model, the model was correlated with the King III Report's stakeholder principles, since it was evident from the research results that in practice, organisations are aligning all their stakeholder relations endeavours with these principles.

The next chapter will conclude the study by reviewing the purpose of the study, summarising the key findings, discussing the limitations and contributions of the study and making recommendations for possible future research.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

> "Corporate communication will stay relevant through stakeholder relations" (Interview participant 2012).

8.1   INTRODUCTION

In this study it was posited that OSR is increasingly becoming an indispensable organisational activity owing to, inter alia, the pressure being placed on organisations to be seen as good corporate citizens and to continuously report on organisational activities. This has resulted in organisations devoting more resources to stakeholder management and relationship endeavours in the organisation. Contemporary examples of this stakeholder emphasis were evident in the inclusion of chapter 8 on governing stakeholder relations in the King III Report, which all listed organisations are supposed to apply, and various stakeholder standards evident in the South African context, namely corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, corporate citizenship, sustainability and triple bottom line. Despite the importance of all of these, it was argued that there is a dearth of research on how to actually build an OSR.

Against this background, the aim of the study was to explore the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process, which was addressed by proposing a new OSR-building model that provides a generic, sustainable, integrated approach to building an OSP with strategic stakeholders as a function of corporate communication to contribute to organisational effectiveness. This was firstly achieved by exploring the existing literature on OSRs to determine the elements and process of OSR building to constitute a conceptual framework that offers a holistic, integrated perspective. In this process, strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance, which are often studied in isolation, were combined into a single conceptual framework. Secondly, the principles of this conceptual framework were measured and explored against the stakeholder relationship building practices of leading listed South African organisations. Since this conceptual framework was built on a corporate communications perspective, both the theoretical and empirical exploration focused on determining the role of corporate communication as a strategic OSR-building function in order to promote organisational effectiveness. This study focused on providing a proactive approach to OSR building for *strategic* organisational stakeholders specifically.

This chapter will review the study according to the various subproblems and research questions identified. This will be followed by a summary of the phases of the SISOSR model which includes insights from both theory and practice. The limitations and contributions of the study will be discussed and recommendations will be made for possible future research.

8.2   REVIEW OF THE STUDY

Table 8.1 highlights the purpose of each chapter that built towards the development of the SISOSR model in order to address the research problem of *exploring the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process and to address the need to develop and test a new model that offers a strategic, integrated approach for sustainable OSRs in order to build OSPs as a function of corporate communication to contribute towards organisational effectiveness.*

Table 8.1: Review of the study aligned with the subproblems

Chapter	Focus	Overview	Subproblem and research question addressed	Outcome
Chapter 1	Initial exploration of the literature to provide an orientation to the study and define the key concepts	This chapter provided an orientation and highlighted the need for this study, and explained the research problem, subproblems and objectives to be addressed. This chapter specifically provided an overview of organisational stakeholders to constitute a unique definition of strategic stakeholders and to emphasise that a *proactive* OSR-building approach is proposed as opposed to a reactive approach focused on organisational publics. Furthermore, OSR literature was also explored and a definition of an OSR formulated.	-	Although the main focus of this chapter was to provide an orientation to and illustrate the need for this study, a unique definition for strategic stakeholders was formulated
Chapter 2	Literature review	This chapter discussed corporate communication, in which stakeholder relations as the central task of corporate communication professionals was regarded as the key contributor to the increasing movement towards the realisation of the value of communication at strategic level. The chapter further highlighted two prerequisites for effective OSR building, namely the practice of corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective and the integration of essential corporate communication functions, namely environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge. The chapter also provided contemporary examples of the strong emphasis on stakeholder relations, which included, inter alia, the inclusion of chapter 8 on governing stakeholder relations in the King III Report.	*Subproblem:* To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically. *Research question:* Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?	*Building block 1: the strategic communication foundation* of the SISOSR model, which emphasises that corporate communication should be practised from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective and the integration of essential corporate communication functions that should be evident to ensure successful OSR building.
Chapter 3	Literature review	Chapter 3 provided a critical analysis of existing developmental or staged relationship models and theories. The proposed theoretical foundation was based on an integration of Freeman's stakeholder concept (specifically the normative paradigm and relational view); Ferguson's relational paradigm for PR; and Ledingham's relationship management theory, encapsulated by Grunig's excellence theory.	*Subproblem:* To explore the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship- building theories and models *Subproblem:* To determine whether existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated	*Building block 2: the theoretical foundation.* In essence, it was argued that the excellence communication function has to be integrated into the communication department to achieve the principles of the stakeholder concept, the relational paradigm and the relationship management

Chapter	Focus	Overview	Subproblem and research question addressed	Outcome
			approach to OSR building. ***Research question:*** What is the process of relationship building presented by existing relationship- building theories and models? ***Research question:*** Do existing relationship-building theories and models resemble an integrated approach to OSR building?	theory. It is also necessary to provide the ideal platform for OSR building and the successful implementation of both building blocks 1 and 3.
Chapter 4	Literature review	The main focus of this chapter was to explore the key phases of an OSR-building model, whereby strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance were integrated into one model. Two subphases were also proposed, namely OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement (proposed as an OSR outcome), which can be regarded as a unique contribution of this study. The elements of an OSR were also explored as well as an OSR development continuum in which four unique OSR types were developed, namely a foundational OSR, a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an OSP.	***Subproblem:*** To determine what elements constitute an OSR ***Subproblem:*** To determine the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process ***Research question:*** What elements constitute an OSR? ***Research question***: What are the phases of an OSR model to adequately describe the OSR-building process?	*Building block 3: conceptualisation of OSR building,* which emphasised the actual phases and subphases of the OSR-building process. This chapter also suggested that an OSR could grow in intensity over time, which constitutes the proposed OSR development continuum, and subsequently, a partnership approach to OSR building for *strategic* stakeholders, which is a unique contribution to this study. As part of this OSR development continuum, four unique OSR types were proposed, namely a foundational OSR, a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and an OSP.
Chapter 5	Towards a SISOSR model: a conceptual framework	This chapter dealt with the process of OSR building through the integration of building blocks 1 to 3 to constitute a conceptual framework that could be measured and explored in practice to develop an OSR-building model.	Although no specific subproblem and research questions were answered, this chapter focused specifically on the research problem to address the scarcity of research on how to build an OSR through the development of a conceptual framework that describes the OSR-building process.	The proposed process of OSR was explained through the integration of the building blocks in the preceding chapters, and a conceptual framework was developed to be measured and explored in practice.

Chapter	Focus	Overview	Subproblem and research question addressed	Outcome
Chapter 6	Research methodology	This chapter provided an overview on the methodology of this study. This study was exploratory and built from an interpretative paradigm. The study used triangulation as the research design, that is, the principles of the model was first measured in 36 leading listed South African organisations by means of a quantitative web-based survey, followed by eight one-on-one interviews conducted with senior communication professionals at leading listed South African organisations to explore the trends identified from the survey, the detail of the model, and most importantly, the process of OSR building. The one-on-one interviews were also used to explore corporate communication's role as an OSR-building function that necessitates the strategic practice thereof.	This chapter provided an overview of the methods required to address the following subproblems and research questions: *Subproblem:* To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice *Subproblem:* To determine whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically *Research question:* Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relation strategies in practice? *Research question:* Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?	The research methodology required to measure and explore the conceptual framework in practice was explained.
Chapter 7	Data reporting and interpretation: integrating insights from practice to the conceptual framework	This chapter focused on reporting and interpreting the results obtained from the web-based survey and one-on-one interviews, and, most importantly, to integrating key insights into the conceptual framework.	The following subproblems and research questions were explored in *practice*: *Subproblem:* To determine whether the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice *Subproblem:* To determine	The development of a SISOSR model that describes the OSR-building process.

Chapter	Focus	Overview	Subproblem and research question addressed	Outcome
			whether OSR building is regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically. ***Research question:*** Will the proposed phases of an integrated, sequential process for OSR building resemble stakeholder relations strategies in practice? ***Research question:*** Is OSR building regarded as a function of corporate communication that should be practised strategically?	
Chapter 8	Conclusion	This chapter summarises the key findings of this study, based on theory and practice, aligned with the research problem and objectives of this study. Various contributions, the limitations of the study and recommendations for possible future research are also discussed.	This chapter emphasised how the main research problem of this study, namely *to explore the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process and to address the need to develop and test a new model that offers a strategic, integrated approach for sustainable OSR in order to build OSPs as a function of corporate communication to contribute towards organisational effectiveness,* was addressed*.*	This chapter summarises the findings of the study and provides an overview of each of the proposed phases of the SISOSR model, based on the theory and practice. Furthermore, besides explaining the unique contributions of this study to the discipline of corporate communication, this chapter also makes recommendations for future studies that could be conducted to continue research on OSR building.

In line with the above, the following section will focus on summarising the key findings of this study on which the SISOSR model is built, by providing a brief overview of the insights from *theory and practice* for each phase and subphase of the SISOSR model. The process of OSR building for strategic stakeholders will described as set out in chapter 5, which for the purpose of this study, constituted a partnership approach to OSR building.

8.3 A SUMMARY OF THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE SISOSR MODEL: INSIGHTS FROM THEORY AND PRACTICE

This section will elaborate on the characteristics of the excellence communication function (building block 2) which are essential for the successful implementation of the SISOSR model, in conjunction with practising corporate communication from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, and the integration of the essential corporate communication functions of the strategic communication foundation (building block 1). This will be followed by a summary of the key phases and subphases of the model which constitute the conceptualisation of OSR building (building block 3). Lastly, the key characteristics of the SISOSR model will be summarised.

8.3.1 The excellence communication function

The excellence communication function encapsulates the principles of the stakeholder concept, the relationship management paradigm and the relationship management theory. The excellence communication function supports having a stakeholder mindset, according to which research should arguably be conducted to identify strategic stakeholders and develop communication programmes for these stakeholders (the stakeholder concept); the *relationship* between the organisation and stakeholders should be central to the excellence theory (the relationship management paradigm); it should be built on the two-way symmetrical communication process to allow the establishment of mutually beneficial OSR (the relationship management theory and stakeholder concept); and it should emphasise the importance of practising corporate communication strategically and its contribution to the overall strategic management of the organisation.

The excellence theory's contribution is twofold to ensure successful OSR building and to provide the necessary means to elevate corporate communication as a strategic OSR-building function. Firstly, the *strategic contribution* focuses on corporate communication professionals contributing to the overall strategic management of the organisation through environmental scanning and providing inputs in formulating the organisation's mission and

vision and drafting organisational objectives. Furthermore, communication programmes for all stakeholders should also be managed strategically by conducting evaluation research to identify strategic stakeholders and implementing symmetrical communication programmes. In essence, the strategic contribution of the excellence theory to this study is that it elevates corporate communication *as an OSR-building function* to the desired strategic level of the organisation.

Secondly, the *pragmatic contribution* focuses on the implementation of the excellence function in the corporate communication department to ensure successful OSR building, and it thus contributes to making the SISOSR model more implementable. To successfully implement the excellence communication function at organisational, departmental and programme levels to ensure successful OSR building, and in essence, to brand corporate communication as an OSR-building function, the following would be required: Corporate communication professionals must become more business oriented, which implies changes in the corporate communication industry (starting at educational level) and practice as a whole by branding corporate communication as an OSR-building function and hence moving away from the predominant messenger and media liaison roles associated with corporate communication professionals.

Furthermore, a change in the mindset of executives and board members would be necessary since substantial resources and time would be required to implement the changes and to expand the corporate communication department to allow successful OSR building. Executive buy-in is essential because both the department and organisation as a whole need to approach all stakeholder actions from a two-way symmetrical communication worldview. The successful implementation of the excellence communication function in a corporate communication department, or as proposed, a "stakeholder relations department" would require the head of the department to have extensive experience to lead the department from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective. Each senior corporate communication professional, or stakeholder specialist as proposed in this study, should focus on a specific strategic stakeholder group. These stakeholder specialists would be responsible for determining the OSR antecedents; OSR development; stakeholder engagement; and OSR maintenance, to ensure OSP development with their respective strategic stakeholder. The stakeholder specialists would also be responsible for devising communication programmes based on the research and stakeholder engagement for their strategic stakeholder. If required, these stakeholder

specialists should have direct access to the executives (besides the head of department) of the organisation. It was posited that the stakeholder relations department should provide the methodology for OSR building from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, and this department should be specifically responsible for managing the reputation of the organisation as whole, conducting environmental scanning, conducting evaluation research and applying issues management. The department as a whole would also conduct the first phase of the SISOSR model, namely strategic stakeholder identification, and assist strategic specialists with the SSPA and OSR evaluation later in the OSR development process. The internal symmetrical communication model practised by the organisation as a whole would further allow the practice of an internal knowledge culture to ensure knowledge sharing both internally and externally, aligned with the ethics and values of the organisation (which should also be promoted by the stakeholder relations department as a whole).

8.3.2 The strategic communication foundation

Based on the above discussion it is evident that the "stakeholder relations department" should practise two-way symmetrical communication and be responsible for specific corporate communication functions as outlined in building block 1 of the SISOSR model. These functions should be practised at organisational level in the organisation.

8.3.2.1 *Two-way symmetrical communication*

Two-way symmetrical communication was defined in this study as *an open and interactive communication process built on a mutual consideration of interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) to encourage sustainable, mutually beneficial OSR development.* The SISOSR model requires that corporate communication (or renamed as stakeholder relations) should be practiced from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective, and serves as the foundation for the successful implementation of the SISOSR model. The essence of two-way symmetrical communication is the notion that organisations and strategic stakeholders should move away from controlling one another's behaviours to achieve individual objectives, towards actions that promote the attainment of mutually beneficial objectives. The focus is therefore on the OSR itself, which is in line with Ferguson's relational paradigm, as opposed to individual goal fulfilment. This is essential for the successful implementation of the proposed OSR development continuum whereby a foundational OSR grows in intensity over time to an ultimate OSP. The characteristics of two-way symmetrical

communication include the following: consideration for stakeholder interests when making organisational decisions; responsive communication and timeous feedback; collaboration and negotiation; interdependency; message consistency; openness; truthfulness and fundamentality; mutual understanding and shared vision; and collaborative problem solving. The two-way way symmetrical communication model also underscores the importance of *stakeholder inclusivity* as highlighted in the King III Report and promoted by the SISOSR model, where it is suggested that strategic stakeholders should be included in decision making and the interests and expectations of strategic stakeholders should be continuously considered in order to guide organisational decisions.

8.3.2.2   Essential corporate communication functions

The following corporate communication functions should be the responsibility of the stakeholder relations department to ensure successful OSR-building with strategic stakeholders: environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge; and promoting the ethics and values of the organisation.

- **Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research**

Research was included as a critical component of the model and should, according to the SISOSR model, be applied as follows: Firstly, environmental scanning should be applied throughout the OSR-building process to detect organisational issues of concern that could hinder the process. Secondly, evaluation research was proposed for the purpose of this study as a two-pronged approach. Firstly, it should be conducted during the strategic stakeholder identification phase to determine strategic stakeholders' relational needs and expectations (presented as an OSR antecedent). Secondly, it should be employed to measure OSR quality during OSR maintenance to determine whether these needs and expectations are continuously being met. Both environmental scanning and evaluation research are separate from the stakeholder perception analysis (SSPA) (to determine strategic stakeholder perceptions of the organisation) conducted after the strategic stakeholder identification phase and OSR evaluation (to identify strategic stakeholder issues) which is conducted directly after a foundational OSR has been built. Research is therefore a critical function that assists the whole OSR-building process.

- **Issues management**

It was indicated that overall organisational issues, which could range from potential crises, conflict between relational parties and/or the formation of active publics, detected through environmental scanning and other stakeholder interactions, need to be managed by the stakeholder relations department to avoid damage to the organisational reputation and disrupting the OSR-building process. As part of issues management, various integrative conflict resolution strategies were proposed which include cooperating, being unconditionally constructive and saying win-win or no deal. Besides issues management assisting in the development of OSR, it was also emphasised that having sustainable OSR will also assist the organisation to identify and manage issues more effectively.

- **Reputation management**

Based on existing arguments in the literature, it was indicated that a positive organisational reputation – that is, the general perception held by all internal and external stakeholders – should be a prerequisite for OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders. Furthermore, the reputation of the organisation should continuously be managed by the stakeholder relations department, which could largely be achieved by the various stakeholder specialists *listening* to and successfully addressing stakeholder needs. It should be noted that the proposed SSPA that would be conducted once the strategic stakeholders have been identified, would specifically determine the *strategic* stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation at the start of OSR development.

- **Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge**

It was indicated that to successfully build OSRs with strategic stakeholders, a sound internal organisational climate is essential, which for the purpose of this study, was seen as a culture that allows employees to share knowledge and participate in decision making. This can be promoted by means of a symmetrical internal communication system (also a characteristic of the excellence communication function). This knowledge sharing should also be included in the external stakeholder OSR-building processes to build towards an OSP. It was proposed that knowledge sharing between a strategic stakeholder and organisation will only occur once a foundational OSR has been established, since knowledge is usually only shared once reciprocity, a good reputation, altruism and trust

have been established. Knowledge sharing between the organisation and strategic stakeholder could serve to strengthen the OSR.

- **Ethics and values**

In terms of the SISOSR model, all OSR endeavours should be aligned with the organisation's ethics and values. This was emphasised in the one-on-one interviews where the interview participants stressed that organisations cannot build an OSR if a conflicting value system is in place. Because two-way symmetrical communication is by its very nature ethical, it will help the organisation to align all its OSR activities with the organisation's ethics and values.

On the basis of the excellence communication function and strategic communication foundation, the next section will briefly summarise each phase of the proposed SISOSR model, which constitutes the third building block of the model, namely conceptualisation of OSR building.

8.3.3 Conceptualisation of OSR building

The new proposed SISOSR model promotes a partnership approach to OSR building for *strategic* stakeholders specifically from an integrated perspective, which incorporates the following into a unified model: stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance as key phases, and OSR antecedents, SSPA, OSR evaluation and stakeholder engagement as subphases. Each of these phases and subphases of OSR building, which occur at both programme and departmental levels, are discussed below.

- **Phase 1: strategic stakeholder identification**

In this study, a strategic stakeholder was defined as those *internal and/or external organisational groups that have a continuous high degree of stakeholder salience with which the organisation shares a reciprocal interest that should be nurtured through proactive, mutually beneficial relationship building to ensure organisational survival.* It was posited that since this study presented a generic OSR-building model, specific strategic stakeholders were not suggested because strategic stakeholders tend to differ in each organisation and industry. It was also argued that an organisation would only have a few strategic stakeholders. The focus on strategic stakeholders specifically emphasises two

crucial aspects of this model, which differ from existing OSR models. Firstly, the model proposes a *proactive* approach to OSR building, which indicates that the model is not based on active publics that mobilise themselves around certain situations. In line with this, the model is also not focused on secondary stakeholders, because these stakeholders should be managed according to an issue prioritisation approach that constitutes a different OSR-building model. However, an OSP should arguably be in place with strategic stakeholders to effectively address secondary stakeholder concerns and to manage active publics. Secondly, the definition of a strategic stakeholder moves a step closer to addressing the need for a more specific definition of an organisational stakeholder, which is one of the key shortcomings of Freeman's stakeholder concept.

The model also indicates a specific strategic stakeholder methodology for identifying strategic stakeholders, which actually combines the elements of the situational theory of publics, cost-benefit analysis and TSIS. The strategic stakeholder methodology suggests that a high degree of stakeholder salience should be evident to include power, legitimacy and urgency and the benefit of the potential relationship should exceed the cost. Also, a high level of involvement should be evident between the strategic stakeholder and organisation. The strategic stakeholder methodology in the SISOSR model should ideally be viewed in conjunction with the characteristics of strategic stakeholders, evaluation research of the strategic communication foundation and the SSPA. Although each stakeholder specialist should apply these criteria to identify strategic stakeholders, it is proposed that, in the light of ultimately establishing an OSP, strategic stakeholders should experience these organisational criteria in the same way.

- *Strategic stakeholder perception analysis (SSPA)*

After the process of strategic stakeholder identification, the perceptions of these strategic stakeholder groups should be analysed because it could affect the OSR-building approach. These perceptions will also assist the organisation to define the OSR antecedents. It should be noted that the "*general* perceptions of all internal and external stakeholders" which constitutes the reputation of the organisation, is different from the SSPA which is concerned with determining the perceptions of *strategic* stakeholder specifically as a starting point for OSR development.

- ▪ *OSR antecedents*

Certain preconditions were highlighted prior to the development of a foundational OSR. Besides the excellence communication function and strategic communication foundation that serves as the basis for OSR building, the OSR antecedents identified include the following: trustworthiness; organisation-stakeholder association; mutual consequence; and the expectations of both the strategic stakeholder and organisation. These antecedents should be detected by means of evaluation research and could also be potentially informed by the SSPA.

- • **Phase 2: OSR development**

This phase constitutes the development of a *foundational OSR*, which was defined as *the result of the management of common interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) over time in order to achieve mutually beneficial goals through a high degree of reciprocity and continuous two-way symmetrical communication*. This should also be seen as the first or basic relational stage proposed by the *OSR development continuum* which pinpoints four unique OSR types. According to the OSR development continuum, a foundational OSR that is nurtured will grow in intensity over time to a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR, and ultimately, an OSP. It was further indicated that a foundational OSR should include the following OSR elements: trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment, mutual understanding and a reciprocal value system.

Although the SISOSR model predominantly suggests an organisation-outward approach, it was indicated that an OSR could also be initiated from both the organisation and/or strategic stakeholder. Once a foundational OSR has been established, *knowledge sharing* between the organisation and strategic stakeholder may start, because it was argued that knowledge will only be shared once a good reputation, trust, altruism and reciprocity have been established. Knowledge sharing arguably provides a method to strengthen the foundational OSR into a mutually beneficial OSR, which was described as an *acknowledgement that both the organisation and strategic stakeholders are mutually dependent in achieving their relational objectives and ensuring survival,* and this is characterised by a *high degree of reciprocity, compromise and true concern by the organisation and stakeholder for the wellbeing of each other*.

- ▪ *OSR evaluation*

According to the SISOSR model, once a foundational OSR has been established, the OSR has to be evaluated to detect strategic stakeholder issues that could be addressed during stakeholder engagement as a measure to strengthen the OSR and hence, to form a mutually beneficial OSR, the next relational stage of the proposed OSR development continuum. It was argued that this OSR evaluation differs from evaluation research that should be conducted during OSR maintenance, which should specifically be a measure to determine OSR quality and whether or not relational expectations have been met. OSR evaluation is also separate from the environmental scanning and issues management to identify overall *organisational* issues, since OSR evaluation is concerned with identifying *strategic stakeholder* issues.

- ▪ *Stakeholder engagement*

Although the concept of stakeholder engagement is not new, it was presented as an OSR outcome (another unique contribution of this study), and constituted a subphase of the model preceding OSR maintenance. A foundational OSR has to be in place to allow the process of stakeholder engagement, since stakeholder engagement entails advanced relational actions whereby the strategic stakeholder can participate in the organisation's business activities. The SISOSR model hence proposes a two-dimensional approach to stakeholder engagement, which indicates that the second phase of stakeholder engagement – that is, two-way engagement in which both the organisation and stakeholder are involved in each other's business activities – can only be achieved at OSP level. Stakeholder engagement should follow an issue-based approach, in the sense that the organisation should engage stakeholders on pertinent issues of interest as identified in the preceding OSR evaluation. This subphase also indicates that stakeholder inclusivity should be enhanced by two-way symmetrical communication. Once stakeholder engagement has occurred, the foundational OSR has now strengthened into a mutually beneficial OSR, which is the starting point for the OSR to evolve into a sustainable OSR.

- • **Phase 3: OSR maintenance**

Although the proposition evident in literature that a relationship is dynamic and continuously in flux was not rejected, it was argued for the purpose of this SISOSR model that a desired relational state (foundational OSR) should be maintained and thus nurtured,

to ensure that it will grow in intensity to an ultimate OSP. This is the OSR maintenance phase. Various existing OSR maintenance strategies were accepted by this model to maintain an OSR, which include access, openness/disclosure, positivity, assurances of legitimacy, networking and sharing tasks. This phase also represents evaluation research which should be applied to determine whether relational expectations and needs are being met. Although conflict resolution was proposed as a continuous process that forms part of issues management, it was also considered as an OSR maintenance strategy. This phase also represents the development of a sustainable OSR, which was described as *a relational state whereby the organisation and stakeholder act in each other's best interests which is evident through shared meaning and decision making to achieve mutually beneficial objectives. Both the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) observe the benefit of cooperatively working towards achieving relational objectives.*

- **The OSP**

An OSP was presented as the ultimate stage of the OSR development continuum and was uniquely defined as *a foundational OSR practised over a long period of time to reach the level of two-way engagement, whereby stakeholders are actively involved at organisational board level to promote a mutual experience of stewardship and collaborative problem solving.* According to the SISOSR model, an OSP represents two-way engagement, stewardship, collaborative problem solving and stakeholder inclusivity. Based on this argument, stakeholder panels should ultimately be developed where strategic stakeholders can provide input at organisational board level. These panels should be included in all organisational decision making.

The key characteristics of the new SISOSR model will be highlighted in the next section.

8.3.4 The key characteristics of the SISOSR model

The SISOSR model was presented as *sequential*, *integrated* and *sustainable* (the acronym for this model) and arguably provides a *strategic, generic* and *proactive* OSR-building process for OSP development:

- *Sequential.* The SISOSR model provides a phased, process approach to OSR building, where one phase is dependent on the successful completion of the previous phase. Strategic stakeholders should be identified and an OSR developed, which should be

maintained so that it can evolve into an OSP. The aim of developing such an evolutionary, phased approach to exploring the elements of an OSR was to address the lack of existing OSR models to describe the OSR-building process.

- *Integrated.* This study integrated stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance as three key phases, and OSR antecedents, SSPA, OSR evaluation and stakeholder engagement as subphases, into a unified model as a measure to effectively explain the process of OSR building. This signifies a move away from existing perspectives which often study these concepts independently.

- *Sustainable.* To promote a sustainable OSR process, which is not always evident in existing models, this model specifically promotes a partnership approach to OSR building with strategic stakeholders, which can be achieved through the practice of two-way symmetrical communication.

- *Generic.* Although the model was specifically developed for strategic stakeholders, it does not focus on a specific strategic stakeholder group and can be applied to both internal and external strategic stakeholders. Furthermore, the model is generic in the sense that it is not industry specific or bound to a specific communication situation.

- *Proactive.* Since this model focuses on strategic stakeholders, it suggests a proactive approach to OSR building. It cannot therefore be applied to secondary stakeholders that require an issue prioritisation approach or active publics that require a reactive management approach. This study highlights the fact that models that focus on building relationships with organisational publics, which are evident in the existing OSR models, will not necessarily require a sustainable approach, since the objective of such relationships would arguably be to only establish a working relationship and not to build towards partnerships with these publics.

- *Strategic.* This SISOSR model was built from a corporate communication perspective to emphasise the fact that the contribution of corporate communication to achieving organisational effectiveness lies in OSR building which necessitates a strategic approach since the success of organisations is largely dependent on the stakeholders' perception of the organisation.

The next section will discuss the limitations of this study.

8.4   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations apply:

- The SISOSR model should be regarded as normative because it portrays the ideal OSR development process. It should be noted that not all OSRs will follow such a linear, progressive path as presented by the OSR development continuum. However, the SISOSR model specifically highlights the conditions necessary for a successful OSR building process to build towards establishing an OSP.

- Since the focus of this study was on OSRs, it required extensive qualitative exploration into the stakeholder management and relations processes of organisations. However, owing to the reluctance of organisations to participate in the interviews because of the senior communication professionals' level of seniority and concomitant confidentiality issues, a revised research approach had to be adopted. However, the revised approach of applying triangulation as a research design through a web-based survey and one-on-one interviews did provide the researcher with an adequate overview of stakeholder relations strategies and plans in practice to enable the researcher to draw specific conclusions on the process of OSR building.

- Some of the questions in the survey were misinterpreted by the respondents, which meant that the researcher did not gain accurate insights into these questions. However, since the researcher analysed the results per construct, this did not substantially influence the results.

- The results of the quantitative web-based survey could not be generalised because of the low response rate of 36 respondents and the application of non-probability sampling methods. The low response rate also limited the researcher to applying certain statistical analysis techniques.

- The SISOSR model was not a customised approach for specific strategic stakeholders since the objective of this study was to provide a generic set of OSR principles to address the lack of guidance on how to build an OSR for customisation to certain strategic stakeholder groups, organisations and industries.

- In line with the previous limitation, since this study proposed an OSR-building approach for *strategic* stakeholders, it tended to give a one-sided approach. One should keep in mind that organisations need to be able to manage a web of stakeholder claims, which implies that secondary stakeholder claims and active publics' issues should also be managed in conjunction with maintaining the OSP with strategic stakeholders. However, the OSP with strategic stakeholders should be in place as a necessary foundation to successfully prioritise secondary stakeholder claims and manage the emergence of active publics.

8.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The main contribution of this study is the new SISOSR model which provides an integrated, holistic, partnership approach to OSR building for strategic stakeholders to address the lack of existing research describing the process of OSR building. The SISOSR model is based on the unique integration of the following three building blocks: Firstly, the *strategic communication foundation* presented the practice of corporate communication (or renamed as stakeholder relations) from a two-way symmetrical communication perspective and the integration of various corporate communication functions that should arguably be included as a prerequisite for proper OSR building. Secondly, various relationship theories were integrated to form the *theoretical foundation* of which the SISOSR model is a pragmatic representation. Thirdly, new and existing OSR concepts to provide a phased, process approach to OSR building were integrated to constitute *a conceptualisation of OSR building*. In addition to the contribution of the model as a whole, specific elements thereof were emphasised that make a unique contribution to the field of OSR and corporate communication in addressing the need for a process that describes the actual OSR-building process. These elements include the following:

- In this study, it was reiterated that models are theories in action, and the SISOSR model can be regarded as an original pragmatic representation of the theoretical foundation of this model, which was a unique integration of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder concept from a normative paradigm and relational view, Ferguson's (1984) relational paradigm and Ledingham's (2003) theory of relationship management, which were encapsulated in the principles of the Grunig's (1984) excellence theory.

- This study presented a unique sustainable, *partnership approach* to OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders, built on the proposed characteristics of two-way engagement, stakeholder inclusiveness, stewardship and collaborative problem solving, from which a unique definition of organisational-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs) was developed. Furthermore, regarding the OSP approach, one of the findings emanating from this study is that the objective is often to only establish a short-term working relationship with organisational publics or secondary stakeholders, which therefore questions existing so-called "sustainable" relationship-building models with organisational publics.

- The SISOSR model could be used as basis for developing working relationships with secondary stakeholders and managing active publics, which would follow a reactive issue prioritisation approach.

- The new definition of a strategic stakeholder could be regarded as a starting point to address the need for a more specific description of an organisational stakeholder, one of the key shortcomings in Freeman's stakeholder concept.

- A unique contribution of this study is that once a desirable OSR state has been established, it should be maintained and nurtured to grow in intensity over time, and that a foundational OSR may evolve into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR and ultimately, an OSP, which constitutes the proposed *OSR development continuum*.

- Although stakeholder engagement is not a new concept, in this study, it was uniquely presented as an *outcome of OSR*, which is not emphasised in the existing OSR models. A further two-dimensional approach to stakeholder engagement was originally proposed on the basis of the argument that stakeholder engagement should occur after an OSR has been built and that *two-way engagement* should only be experienced at OSP level.

- This study suggested an integrated approach to OSR building to address the lack of existing research on how to build an OSR. Concepts that are usually studied in isolation, that is, strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance, have been integrated into one model to provide step-by-step guidance in the OSR-building approach.

- A *reciprocal value system* has been added to the existing elements of an OSR.

- A *strategic stakeholder perception analysis (SSPA)* was proposed prior to identifying OSR antecedents to determine the identified strategic stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation because this tends to affect the OSR approach to be implemented.

- This study further emphasised and illustrated corporate communication's contribution as an *OSR-building function* to achieve organisational effectiveness, which is also evident in the literature on the topic.

- In line with the above contribution, the model further provided possible solutions to improve the credibility of corporate communication professionals in practice which should arguably be seen as essential to "brand" corporate communication as an OSR-building function. These solutions include the following: corporate communication professionals becoming more business oriented, starting at educational level; changing corporate communication to "stakeholder relations" to highlight its core function; and most importantly, changing the mindset of executives and board members about the significance and role of corporate communication as an OSR-building function and the resources that should be devoted to this function. This would essentially require

corporate communication professionals and senior corporate communication professionals to adopt the same two-way symmetrical worldview.

- The concept of *stakeholder champions*, which is evident in practice, was adapted and applied to a corporate communication context to indicate that each corporate communication manager should focus on a different strategic stakeholder, and act as a *stakeholder specialist*.

- This model addresses the shortage of existing OSR models that have failed to provide guidelines on the pragmatic implementation of the model by proposing the ideal departmental structure (although not new) to facilitate the OSR-building process proposed by the SISOSR model. This structure entails the corporate communication or, ideally, the stakeholder relations department, providing the methodology for OSR building and each stakeholder specialist should be responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with his or her respective stakeholders. The head of department should function at executive level, and when required, each stakeholder specialist should also have access to the executive level.

- The implementation of the SISOSR model could assist organisations, inter alia, to apply the stakeholder principles of the King III Report which should be particularly relevant to organisations operating in the current business environment regulated by stakeholders' expectations.

Although the SISOSR model as a whole constitutes the core contribution of this study, figure 8.1 will depict the contribution of the SISOSR model at the following three levels; the reiteration of existing views and concepts in the literature; the utilisation of existing corporate communication and OSR concepts and elements which were uniquely applied; and the presentation of newly developed elements and concepts.

Reiteration of existing arguments and concepts

- Corporate communication should be regarded as an OSR-building function to contribute to organisational effectiveness, which necessitates practising corporate communication strategically.
- Corporate communication professionals should have representation at board and executive levels.
- The model promotes stakeholder inclusivity, which is a key concept of the King III Report and is evident in the literature.
- Various existing OSR concepts, including stakeholder identification, OSR development, OSR maintenance, OSR antecedents and OSR outcomes were integrated into the model.
- The departmental structure proposed for the implementation of the SISOSR model is similar to existing departmental structures and again reiterates the importance of having communication representation at executive level to ensure successful OSR building.

Unique application of existing corporate communication and OSR concepts and elements

- The model higlights key existing corporate communication functions that are specifically applicable to OSR building, which constitutes the strategic communication foundation building block of the model.
- The theoretical foundation building block presents a unique integration of existing relationship theories.
- Strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance were integrated into a unified model and two subphases, namely OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement , were also presented as subphases to form the third building block of the SISOSR model, namley, conceptualisation of OSR-building.
- Stakeholder engagement was uniquely presented as an OSR outcome.
- The concept of stakeholder champions was applied to an OSR context where it was argued that corporate communication professionals should act as stakeholder specialists for their respective strategic stakeholders.
- Existing concepts were used to develop four new OSR types, namely a foundational OSR, a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainble OSR and an OSP.

Newly developed elements and concepts

- A two-pronged approach to stakeholder engagement was proposed, namely stakeholder engagement and two-way engagement.
- A new definition for strategic stakeholders was formulated.
- A unique definition of organisational-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs) was formulated, based on the key characteristics of two-way engagement, stewardship, stakeholder inclusivity and collaborative problem solving that were identified.
- A partnership approach to OSR building with strategic stakeholders was proposed, and it was subsequently suggestedthat an "issue prioritisation" approach for secondary stakeholders and active publics should be applied.
- An evolutionary process for OSR building whereby OSR should grow in intensity over time was promoted by the *OSR development continuum* which proposed the sequential development of a foundational OSR, mutually beneficial OSR, sustainable OSR and OSP.
- A reciprocal value system was also integrated as an OSR element.
- Strategic stakeholder perception analyis (SSPA) and the concept of OSR evaluation (which is different from the evaluation research proposed in the OSR maintenance phase) with the specific aim of identifying issues for stakeholder engagment were developed and also integrated as subphases in the model.

Figure 8.1: Three-level contribution of the SISOSR model

8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following factors could be considered for future research:

- The principles of this model could be used as a basis for a customised OSR-building model for a specific strategic stakeholder group, organisation and/or industry.
- To test the workability of the SISOSR model, a longitudinal study could be conducted whereby the model could be implemented at a selected organisation and the OSR developments could continuously be monitored over time against the proposed phases of the model. However, the principles of the model first had to be measured and explored, which was the purpose of this cross-sectional study.
- More insights in terms of OSR building in practice could be obtained with a larger population.
- This model could be used as a basis for the development of a model for working relationships with secondary stakeholders that should adopt an issue prioritisation approach or active publics that require a reactive management approach.
- This study could be replicated to determine whether the same results could be obtained. However, the questions mentioned in chapter 7, which were misinterpreted by the respondents, should be revised according to the specified suggestions.
- During data collection it became apparent that various organisations make use of PR/communication agencies as opposed to in-house corporate communication professionals. The perspective on OSR building could perhaps be obtained from these agencies and compared with the views of in-house corporate communication professionals.

8.7 SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to explore the lack of and address the gaps in existing literature on OSR-building models that describe the OSR-building process through a partnership approach with strategic stakeholders. The new proposed SISOSR model provides an original integrated perspective, and it was posited that strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance should be combined into one model to offer a phased, step-by-step guideline for OSR building. The SISOSR model could also lay the necessary foundation to develop working relationships with secondary stakeholders and/or to manage active publics. Since this study was approached from a corporate communication perspective, it should be emphasised that the value of corporate

communication, as an OSR-building function contributing to organisational effectiveness could be elevated to a strategic function.

The main contribution of this study is probably best explained in the words of Maak (2007:329–330): "... businesses and their leaders are increasingly held accountable for what they do – and fail to do so by multiple stakeholders and society at large ... good stakeholder relationships are key to organisational viability and business success". These words capture the very essence and uniqueness of this study.

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ADDENDUM A: Web-based survey questionnaire

ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: Questionnaire for senior communication professionals

The aim of this questionnaire is to measure the principles of a proposed model for organisation-stakeholder relationship building against the stakeholder relationship strategies of leading South African organisations to determine whether the elements of this proposed model could be accepted and/or rejected. The opinions of *senior communication professionals*, thereby corporate communication, public relations or communication managers that fulfil the highest position in the communication department / unit are specifically required since it is argued that stakeholder relationship building is the core function of corporate communication. However, some organisations might not be structured as such and have senior communication managers for different communication units; a separate stakeholder relations and management unit; a distinction between internal and external communication managers; or have corporate affairs managers or investor relations managers responsible for stakeholder relations and management. Since the focus of this questionnaire is on the process of organisation-stakeholder relationship building, the inputs of all of these managers need to be obtained and will be collectively referred to as *'senior communication professionals'* as it is argued that all of these managers require sufficient communication skills, thereby being 'communication professionals' to ensure optimal stakeholder relations and management practices.

Please note that this questionnaire is answered anonymously and information obtained from this will be treated confidentially. *The data will be used for research purposes only.*

INSTRUCTIONS:

1.The statements proposed in the questionnaire must be measured against the practices in your organisation. For example, if you disagree with an option, it implies that the specific statement is not relevant, not considered or not being applied in your organisation and vice versa.

2.Please note that this questionnaire is based on strategic stakeholders - those groups that are essential for organisational survival and that will always be present and relevant over time. Strategic stakeholders could include internal and/or external organisational stakeholders. If your department/unit only focuses on one stakeholder group, please consider this group when answering the questions.

3.The questionnaire consists of four pages (sections). Kindly respond to all questions by selecting the appropriate option. Always press the 'next' button after each page to register the respective page's answers.

4.Should you not be able to complete the survey in one sitting, you can complete the survey at a later stage. However, the link must be accessed on the same computer and you have to complete a full page of questions and press the 'next' button to register the questions that you have already answered. You therefore cannot exit the survey to complete later if you have not completed a full page.

5.Upon the completion of the entire survey, please press the 'done' button to register the survey as complete.

6.Please note that the final results of this study will be made available to respondents on

request. The questionnaire requires the following aspects:

Section A: Biographical data

The remaining sections of this questionnaire focus on measuring the various elements of a proposed organisation-stakeholder relationship (OSR)-building model:

Section B: Characteristics of the excellence communication function

Section C: Strategic communication foundation

Section D: Conceptualisation of OSR-building

SECTION A : BIOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

These questions focus on measuring your area of specialisation, level of management and departmental structure.

Directions:
Please consider each statement carefully and give your honest opinion based on the situation within your organisation. Indicate your viewpoint by ticking the appropriate box:

* 1. Indicate the department within the organisation that you work for:

⬛ Corporate Communication / Communication

⬛ Stakeholder Relations and Management

⬛ Corporate Affairs

⬛ Public Relations

⬛ Investor Relations

⬛ Other (Please specify)

> [   ]

* 2. Is your function within the organisation orientated towards internal or external organisational stakeholders or both groups?

⬛ Internal

⬛ External

⬛ Both internal and external

* 3. Indicate your managerial level within your organisation:

⬛ Executive / Director

⬛ Head of Department

⬛ Senior Manager

⬛ Manager

⬛ Consultant / Officer

*4. Select the industry that your organisation operates in:

- Mining & Construction
- Banking or other financial services
- Insurance
- Property
- Retail
- Food & beverage
- Health & Pharmaceuticals
- IT & Telecommunications
- Other (please specify)

*5. Indicate the size of your organisation:

- Micro: 1-9 employees
- Small: 10-99 employees
- Medium: 100-199 employees
- Large: More than 200 employees

*6. Do you have a formal communication qualification?

- Yes
- No (please specify your qualification(s))

*7. Indicate your experience within the communication industry:

- Less than 2 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years
- Not applicable

*8. Do the employees within your department, responsible for stakeholder communication, have formal communication qualifications?

- Yes
- Not applicable
- No (please specify alternative qualification(s))

*9. Indicate the experience of the employees in your department, responsible for stakeholder communication, within the communication industry:

- Less than 2 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years
- Not applicable

SECTION B: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION FUNCTION

This category focuses on measuring James Grunig's excellence communication theory to explain the value of corporate communication for the organisation and to identify the specific characteristics of corporate communication that contribute towards organisational effectiveness. The principles of this theory are regarded as the foundation for an effective organisation-stakeholder relationship building model.

Directions:

Please consider each statement carefully and give your honest opinion based on the communication situation within your organisation. Indicate your viewpoint by ticking the appropriate box:

*1. You report directly to the top management of the organisation

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*2. You provide input in setting organisational objectives

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*3. You provide input in organisational decision making

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*4. You have access to the decision makers of the organisation

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*5. You are part of the decision makers of the organisation

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*6. Your department functions in isolation from other departments e.g. marketing

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*7. Your department communicates with all organisational stakeholders

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*8. Your department communicates with one stakeholder group only (e.g. media or investors)

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*9. Different communication strategies are developed for different stakeholders

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*10. Communication strategies are based on research

☐ Disagree strongly   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Agree strongly

*11. Measurable objectives are set for the implementation of communication strategies

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

*12. All communication strategies are aimed at establishing two-way communication between the organisation and its stakeholders

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

*13. Communication strategies for stakeholders are aligned with the strategic intent of the organisation

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

*14. The success of communication strategies are measured after implementation

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

*15. The organisational culture of the organisation allows input from employees

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

*16. A collective working relationship between you and the employees of your department is evident

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

*17. A collective working relationship between management and employees are evident in the entire organisation

  🔲 Disagree strongly   🔲 Disagree   🔲 Agree   🔲 Agree strongly

SECTION C: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOUNDATION

This category focuses on measuring elements related to two-way symmetrical communication; environmental scanning and evaluation research; issues management; reputation management; and knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge as essential corporate communication functions that are implemented before, during and after OSR-building.

Directions:

Please consider each statement carefully and give your honest opinion based on the communication situation within your organisation. Indicate your viewpoint by ticking the appropriate box:

TWO-WAY SYMMETRICAL COMMUNICATION

* 1. Decisions are guided by both organisational and stakeholder interests to achieve mutual understanding

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 2. Decisions are predominantly guided by organisational interests

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 3. Information is shared with stakeholders as soon as it becomes available

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 4. Input from stakeholders prior to decision making are obtained

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 5. The organisation and stakeholders collaborate to achieve mutually-beneficial objectives

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 6. The organisation and stakeholders are both willing to compromise to achieve mutually-beneficial objectives

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 7. The organisation and stakeholders collectively find solutions to problems

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 8. The organisation and stakeholders are both willing to compromise to achieve mutually-beneficial solutions

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

* 9. A level of interdependency between the organisation and stakeholders is continuously managed

⬚ Disagree strongly ⬚ Disagree ⬚ Agree ⬚ Agree strongly

*10. **The communication messages of the organisation are consistent with the actions of the organisation**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*11. **All communication messages to stakeholders are accurate**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*12. **Core organisational issues relevant to stakeholders are disclosed to stakeholders**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AND EVALUATION RESEARCH

*13. **Research is conducted to identify organisational issues that could harm the organisation-stakeholder relationship**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*14. **Research is conducted to obtain detailed information on stakeholders**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*15. **Research is conducted to identify the needs of stakeholders**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*16. **Research is conducted to determine stakeholders' expectations of the organisation**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*17. **Research is conducted to evaluate whether identified stakeholder expectations are continuously being met**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*18. **Research is conducted to evaluate whether identified stakeholder needs are continuously being met**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*19. **You (and your department) are responsible for stakeholder research activities within the organisation**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

*20. **Organisational issues are proactively identified**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*21. **Issues are resolved to avoid the formation of organisational crises**

⬦ Disagree strongly   ⬦ Disagree   ⬦ Agree   ⬦ Agree strongly

*22. Issues management is essential to the organisation-stakeholder relationship building process

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*23. Issues management is essential to ensure the maintenance of existing organisation-stakeholder relationships

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*24. You (and your department) are responsible for issues management of the organisation

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

*25. The reputation of the organisation is the result of listening to stakeholder concerns

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*26. The reputation of the organisation is the result of addressing stakeholder concerns by means of planned strategies

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*27. The reputation of the organisation should continuously be managed to build towards sustainable stakeholder relationships

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*28. Sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationships will contribute towards building a strong and consistent reputation for the organisation

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*29. A positive organisational reputation is a prerequisite for sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationships

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*30. You (and your department) are responsible for reputation management of the organisation

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

KNOWLEDGE SHARING ENABLED BY A CULTURE OF KNOWLEDGE

*31. The culture of the organisation allows employees to participate in organisational business activities

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*32. The culture of the organisation allows employees to share knowledge

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*33. Knowledge will only be shared between the organisation and stakeholders when trust have been established

Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*34. Stakeholders will only share information with organisations that have a positive organisational reputation

Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*35. Knowledge between the organisation and stakeholders will only be shared when a sustainable relationship between the organisation and stakeholders has been established

Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

This section specifically measures the phases of the proposed organisation-stakeholder relationship (OSR) building model that integrates stakeholder identification; organisation-stakeholder antecedents; organisation-stakeholder development; stakeholder engagement and organisation-stakeholder maintenance into one integrated process.

Directions:

Please consider each statement carefully and give your honest opinion based on the communication situation within your organisation. Indicate your viewpoint by ticking the appropriate box:

STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

*1. Strategic stakeholders can be considered as 'those groups that are essential for organisational survival'

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*2. Strategic stakeholders can be considered as 'those groups that will always be present and relevant over time'

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*3. Strategic stakeholders and the organisation are dependent on one another for survival

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*4. Strategic stakeholders' actions are always in line with the organisation's values

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*5. Strategic stakeholders' actions are always socially acceptable

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*6. The organisation attends to the needs of strategic stakeholders in a timeous manner

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*7. The benefit of the relationship between the organisation and strategic stakeholder must always exceed costs for both the organisation and the stakeholders

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*8. A mutual interest between the organisation and strategic stakeholders exists

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*9. It is the goal of the organisation to build relationships with strategic stakeholders specifically

⬛ Disagree strongly ⬛ Disagree ⬛ Agree ⬛ Agree strongly

*10. Formal methods are in place to identify strategic stakeholders

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*11. You (and your department) are responsible for identifying strategic stakeholders

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER ANTECEDENTS

*12. A successful organisation-stakeholder relationship depends on whether both the stakeholder and organisation regard one another as trustworthy relational partners

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*13. A successful organisation-stakeholder relationship depends on whether the stakeholder and organisation can associate with one another

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*14. An organisation-stakeholder relationship is likely to develop when both the organisation and stakeholder s' actions have consequences on each other

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*15. Both the organisation and stakeholder have certain expectations of one another that should be met in the relationship

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A relationship between the organisation and a strategic stakeholder is characterised by the following:

*16. A high level of trust

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*17. A mutual acceptance between the organisation and the stakeholder where one will influence the other

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*18. The fulfilment of relational expectations of both the organisation and the stakeholder

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*19. The desire of both the organisation and the stakeholder to maintain the relationship

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*20. A mutual understanding between the organisation and the stakeholder

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*21. The organisation that drives the initial relationship building process with stakeholders

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*22. A process that is driven by you (and your department)

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

*23. Stakeholder engagement can be considered as the endeavours that the organisation undertakes to involve stakeholders in organisational activities

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*24. Stakeholder engagement focuses on involving stakeholders in organisational decision making

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*25. Stakeholder engagement focuses on involving stakeholders in organisational problem solving

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*26. Stakeholder engagement forms part of the organisation-stakeholder relationship building process

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*27. Stakeholder engagement is experienced after an organisation-stakeholder relationship has been established (it is considered as an outcome of an organisation-stakeholder relationship)

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*28. Once a sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationship has been established the stakeholder will also start to involve the organisation in their business activities

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*29. You (and your department) are responsible for stakeholder engagement activities

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

*30. An organisation-stakeholder relationship requires maintenance to ensure sustainable relationships

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*31. The maintenance of organisation-stakeholder relationships ensures stronger relationships over time

  ⬜ Disagree strongly   ⬜ Disagree   ⬜ Agree   ⬜ Agree strongly

*32. **A direct reporting relationship between the organisation and stakeholders is evident (there is no third party intervention)**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*33. **Open communication is continuously practiced between the organisation and its stakeholders**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*34. **Endeavours are implemented by the organisation to ensure that stakeholders are continuously satisfied**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*35. **Only valid requests are made between the organisation and stakeholders (requests that are in support of the organisation-stakeholder relationship)**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*36. **Continuous commitment of both the organisation and stakeholders to the relationship is evident**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*37. **The organisation builds networks or coalitions with the same groups as the stakeholders**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*38. **Knowledge is shared between the organisation and its stakeholders**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*39. **Tasks to achieve objectives are shared between the organisation and its stakeholders**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*40. **Evaluation strategies are implemented to determine whether relational objectives have been met**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*41. **Strategies are in place to manage possible conflict that could damage the organisation-stakeholder relationship**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

*42. **You (and your department) are responsible for driving the organisation-stakeholder relationship maintenance process**

   Disagree strongly   Disagree   Agree   Agree strongly

THE ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP

A sustainable relationship between the organisation and a stakeholder that has been maintained over time could be characterised by the following:

* 43. Both the organisation and the stakeholder are likely to initiate actions (not just the organisation)

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

* 44. Both the organisation and the stakeholder allow participation in each other's business activities

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

* 45. A mutual process to achieve shared objectives

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

* 46. Collaborative problem solving

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

* 47. The organisation-stakeholder relationship take precedence over the self interests of the organisation and the stakeholder respectively

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

* 48. Both the stakeholder and the organisation act in the best interest of each other

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

* 49. It is the desired relational state between the organisation and the stakeholder to ensure optimal achievement of objectives

   🗋 Disagree strongly   🗋 Disagree   🗋 Agree   🗋 Agree strongly

ADDENDUM B: One-on-one interview guide

*Note: In conjunction with asking the below questions, a graphic illustration of the SISOSR model was presented to participants to ensure a thorough comprehension of the proposed **process** of OSR building, which was the main aim of the one-on-one interviews. These questions were only used as a guideline, and the interviewer was guided by the conversation.*

QUESTIONS	NOTES
SECTION A: General: Role of corporate communication in the organisation and as OSR building function	
What is your position and in the organisation and the function of your department in the organisation?	
Should stakeholder relationship building be the responsibility of *corporate communication* / *communication* executives specifically? What is the case within your organisation?	
Is corporate communication regarded as a strategic function in your organisation?	
What constitutes as a 'strategic function' of the organisation?	
What do you think is corporate communication's contribution or your department's contribution on strategic organisational level? Thus, does the value of practicing corporate communication strategically lie within stakeholder relationship building?	
Do you feel that OSR is important in contemporary society? If so why?	
Do you feel that the organisation should devote separate resources to OSR? If so, how could this be achieved?	
If your organisation has separate resources devoted to OSR, or a different department manages OSR, is there alignment between this department and corporate communication?	
How does your organisation aspire to or apply to Chap 8 of the King III report, 'governing stakeholder relationships'?	
SECTION B: Characteristics of the excellent communication function	
Most of the respondents report directly to the top management of the organisation or has access to the top management of the organisation. Is this the case in your organisation? In terms of OSR building, why do you think this is important?	
The literature indicates that communication executives /corporate communication should *contribute to the strategic management of the organisation*. How could this be achieved / is it done in your organisation?	
To be part of the strategic management of the organisation requires communication executives to provide input in organisational objectives and decision making:	
a) Some respondents indicated that they do not provide input in setting organisational objectives. Do you? Do you think it is essential to practice successful communication and	

essentially, build sustainable OSR?	
b) Most of the respondents did however indicate that they provide input in organisational decision making. Do you? Is it essential to ensure successful communication and OSR building? Why do you think it receives precedence over setting organisational objectives?	
Do you think a formal *communication* qualification is essential to ensure sufficient stakeholder relations and management? Are there other qualifications relevant that will equip you with the necessary skills to sufficiently build OSR?	
Do you think it is important for a communication department to be headed by a professionally qualified and experienced communication executive or could that person be qualified in a different field?	
Does your department function as a department separated from other related functions such as sales and marketing?	
In light of the above, are all communication functions for various stakeholder groups [thus linking with stakeholder concept – stakeholder wide mindset] integrated into one department? Do you think it is important that one department manages communication with all stakeholder groups?	
To practice excellent communication it is essential to *practice communication strategically.* What do you regard as 'practicing communication strategically'?	
Some respondents indicated that communication strategies are not measured after implementation and some indicated that these strategies are evaluated – what is the case in your organisation? Why is it important?	
Most respondents indicated that the culture of the organisation allows participation and input from employees. Why do you think is this important? For OSR building specifically?	
The respondents indicated that a collective working relationship is evident within their departments and the organisation. What do you think is the role of a collective working relationship within your department and the organisation? Is it essential for successful communication with stakeholders and for OSR building? Why?	
SECTION C: Strategic communication foundation	
What are the elements of strategic communication (what constitutes strategic communication)?	
What, according to you, are the most important functions of (corporate communication) to ensure successful OSR building?	
Respondents were neutral on the following phases of the model: two-way communication, research and knowledge transfer – why?	
Two-way symmetrical communication	
Define two-way communication. Elaborate on the practice of two-way communication in your organisation.	
Is two-way communication the essence of sufficient OSR?	

Is it necessary for the organisation as a whole to practice two-way communication in order to practice sufficient two-way communication with the stakeholders? Why?	
What do you regard as the most important characteristics of two-way communication?	
Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research	
Do you regard research as an important activity to sustain OSR? If so, why?	
Is your department responsible for research to detect stakeholder needs? If not, who is responsible for it and are there alignment between your department and individuals responsible for conducting research?	
What do the stakeholder research activities entail? Explain the process of research in your department and organisation.	
Issues management	
Is your department responsible for issues management? If not, does your department have access to individuals responsible for issues management?	
Explain how issues management is conducted in your organisation.	
What role does issues management play in the OSR building process?	
Reputation management	
Is your department responsible for managing the reputation of the organisation? If not, who is responsible? Do you have access to these reputation managers? How is reputation management done within your organisation?	
What role does an organisation's reputation play in the OSR building process? Thus could the reputation of the organisation be regarded as an initial attractor for the OSR building process?	
Knowledge sharing enabled by a culture of knowledge	
Does the culture of the organisation allow employees to participate in the organisation – business activities etc. Thus, is their input valued?	
Is knowledge shared among the employees of the organisation? Thus are new ideas and innovations shared within the organisation – do employees have access to management to share ideas?	
What is the role of a participative internal organisational structure for OSR building?	
Do you think that knowledge will only be shared between the organisation and stakeholders once trust has been established? Thus when a sustainable OSR has been built?	
Could such knowledge sharing between the organisation and stakeholders strengthen the OSR (to ensure that it evolves into OSP)?	
SECTION D: Conceptualisation of OSR building: Addressing the proposed process of OSR building	
Strategic stakeholder identification	
Define a strategic stakeholder.	

Do you have formal stakeholder identification processes in place? Is it your department's responsibility to identify strategic stakeholders? Define and explain these processes.	
Could the identification of strategic stakeholders the first step in building OSR?	
Should the focus of the organisation be to only develop and maintain relationships with *strategic* stakeholders?	
This study proposes a generic model for strategic stakeholders. Do you feel that there are different steps for different stakeholders in the OSR building process?	
OSR antecedents	
What preconditions, if any, are necessary / should be in place to ensure the start of an OSR? [Trustworthiness, organisation-stakeholder association, mutual consequence and expectations in conjunction with the prerequisites of a positive organisational reputation and knowledge culture, collectively form the antecedents for OSR which are encapsulated by two-way symmetrical communication principles]	
OSR development; stakeholder engagement and maintenance	
Is your department responsible for OSR building? (Corporate communication is regarded as the OSR building function – however very little of the cc respondents indicated this)	
Do you feel that the organisation is the key initiator of the OSR building process?	
This study proposes that an OSR grows in intensity over time, and that a basic OSR, namely, a foundational OSR should be maintained to grow and evolve into an OSP. Do you agree? Do you feel that it is realistic?	
Should a relationship be maintained, thereby nurtured to grow and develop, or do you rather feel that it is in constant flux?	
What constitutes a *foundational OSR*? What are the building blocks or elements of an OSR?	
Elements of an OSR: • What does it mean to have trust between a stakeholder and the organisation? What constitutes trust in an OSR relationship? How is trust established? When will trust be established? • Does an OSR depend on the acceptance between relational partners that one might influence the other and/or that one will be responsible for structuring relational objectives (control mutuality)? When will this acceptance of influence be evident? • Is it important that the awards of the relationship should be distributed fairly? (relationship satisfaction) • What level of commitment should be evident between the relational parties to sustain an OSR? (commitment) • Should there be a balance between the level of power and authenticity between the relational parties to sustain an OSR (mutual understanding)	
What do you regard as outcomes of an OSR?	

Define stakeholder engagement. Would *stakeholder engagement* only occur *after* a foundational OSR has been built? Could it therefore be considered as an outcome of OSR?	
What constitutes a *mutually-beneficial OSR*?	
Once a mutually beneficial OSR has been established, do you think that the stakeholder also start to partake in the initiation process?	
Do you feel that it is the next relational phase that will be achieved upon the maintenance of a foundational OSR? Is it corporate communication's responsibility (or your department) to maintain OSR?	
What constitutes a *sustainable OSR*?	
Is a sustainable OSR the result of a mutually-beneficial relationship maintained over time?	
OSP	
Define a 'partnership'	
Do you think that an OSR should eventually and ideally be considered as a partnership between an organisation and stakeholder?	
Could an OSP be considered as a sustainable relationship built over time?	
Once a partnership has been established will the goals of this partnership take precedence over the self-interests of both the organisation and stakeholder?	
Once an OSP has been established, is there mutual initiation between the organisation and stakeholder?	
Will mutual engagement, where both organisation and stakeholder partake in one another's business activities, occur when an OSP has been established?	

ADDENDUM C: Results for questions A6-A9 on all response options:

Question A6				
Response option	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Frequency**	**Cumulative Percent**
No (please specify your qualification(s))	12	33.33	12	33.33
Yes	24	66.67	36	100.00

Question A7				
Response option	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Frequency**	**Cumulative Percent**
3-5 years	4	11.11	4	11.11
Less than 2 years	2	5.56	6	16.67
More than 5 years	27	75.00	33	91.67
Not applicable	3	8.33	36	100.00

Question A8				
Response option	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Frequency**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not applicable	5	13.89	13	36.11
Yes	23	63.89	36	100.00

Question A9				
Response option	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Frequency**	**Cumulative Percent**
3-5 years	7	19.44	7	19.44
Less than 2 years	1	2.78	8	22.22
More than 5 years	19	52.78	27	75.00
Not applicable	9	25.00	36	100.00

ADDENDUM D: Two-way frequency tables: Typical score per response group for specific questions

Key: Frequency
Percent
Row Pct
Col Pct

Question C19 per population			
Population			**nnc19**
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	0	9	9
	0.00	26.47	26.47
	0.00	100.00	
	0.00	40.91	
Corporate communication	9	6	15
	26.47	17.65	44.12
	60.00	40.00	
	75.00	27.27	
Other	3	7	10
	8.82	20.59	29.41
	30.00	70.00	
	25.00	31.82	
Total	12	22	34
	35.29	64.71	100.00

Question C24 per population			
Population			**Nnc24**
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	1	8	9
	2.94	23.53	26.47
	11.11	88.89	
	6.67	42.11	
Corporate communication	7	8	15
	20.59	23.53	44.12
	46.67	53.33	
	46.67	42.11	
Other	7	3	10
	20.59	8.82	29.41
	70.00	30.00	
	46.67	15.79	
Total	15	19	34
	44.12	55.88	100.00

Frequency Missing = 2

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Key:	Frequency
	Percent
	Row Pct
	Col Pct

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Question C30 per population			
Population			**Nnc30**
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	1	8	9
	2.94	23.53	26.47
	11.11	88.89	
	25.00	26.67	
Corporate communication	0	15	15
	0.00	44.12	44.12
	0.00	100.00	
	0.00	50.00	
Other	3	7	10
	8.82	20.59	29.41
	30.00	70.00	
	75.00	23.33	
Total	4	30	34
	11.76	88.24	100.00

Question D11 per population			
Population			**Nnd11**
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	0	9	9
	0.00	27.27	27.27
	0.00	100.00	
	0.00	39.13	
Corporate communication	7	8	15
	21.21	24.24	45.45
	46.67	53.33	
	70.00	34.78	
Other	3	6	9
	9.09	18.18	27.27
	33.33	66.67	
	30.00	26.09	
Total	10	23	33
	30.30	69.70	100.00

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Frequency Missing = 2

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```
Key:  Frequency
      Percent
      Row Pct
      Col Pct
```

Question D22 per population			
Population			**Nnd22**
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	2	7	9
	6.06	21.21	27.27
	22.22	77.78	
	13.33	38.89	
Corporate communication	8	7	15
	24.24	21.21	45.45
	53.33	46.67	
	53.33	38.89	
Other	5	4	9
	15.15	12.12	27.27
	55.56	44.44	
	33.33	22.22	
Total	15	18	33
	45.45	54.55	100.00

Question D29 per population			
Population			**Nnd29**
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	0	9	9
	0.00	27.27	27.27
	0.00	100.00	
	0.00	42.86	
Corporate communication	8	7	15
	24.24	21.21	45.45
	53.33	46.67	
	66.67	33.33	
Other	4	5	9
	12.12	15.15	27.27
	44.44	55.56	
	33.33	23.81	
Total	12	21	33
	36.36	63.64	100.00

Frequency Missing = 3

```
Key: Frequency
     Percent
     Row Pct
     Col Pct
```

Question D42 per population			
Population			Nnd42
	Disagree	*Agree*	*Total*
Corporate affairs	0	9	9
	0.00	27.27	27.27
	0.00	100.00	
	0.00	50.00	
Corporate communication	11	4	15
	33.33	12.12	45.45
	73.33	26.67	
	73.33	22.22	
Other	4	5	9
	12.12	15.15	27.27
	44.44	55.56	
	26.67	27.78	
Total	15	18	33
	45.45	54.55	100.00

Frequency Missing = 3

ADDENDUM E: Typical score overall and per response group

The MEANS Procedure

Variable	N	Mean	StdDev	25th Pctl	Median	75th Pctl
SecBCoECF	36	3.03	0.37	2.80	3.07	3.30
SecCTWSC	34	2.72	0.30	2.64	2.73	2.91
SecCESER	34	2.73	0.56	2.29	2.86	3.00
SecCIM	34	3.03	0.52	2.80	3.00	3.40
SecCRM	34	3.24	0.40	3.00	3.17	3.67
SecCKTECoK	34	2.83	0.68	2.33	2.67	3.33
SecDSSI	33	2.90	0.36	2.64	2.82	3.09
SecDOSA	33	3.14	0.40	3.00	3.00	3.25
SecDOSRD	33	3.07	0.39	2.86	3.00	3.29
SecDSE	33	2.81	0.32	2.57	2.86	2.86
SecDOSRM	33	2.90	0.36	2.69	2.85	3.08
SecDOSP	33	2.76	0.42	2.57	2.71	3.00

The MEAN7S Procedure

Variable	N Obs	Variable	N	Mean	StdDev	25th Pctl	Median	75th Pctl
Corporate affairs	10	**SecBCoECF**	10	3.20	0.21	3.00	3.23	3.33
		SecCTWSC	9	2.76	0.34	2.64	2.82	3.00
		SecCESER	9	3.06	0.58	2.71	3.00	3.29
		SecCIM	9	3.27	0.49	3.00	3.00	3.60
		SecCRM	9	3.19	0.39	2.83	3.17	3.33
		SecCKTECoK	9	2.48	0.56	2.00	2.33	3.00
		SecDSSI	9	3.03	0.48	2.73	3.00	3.36
		SecDOSA	9	3.03	0.36	2.75	3.00	3.25
		SecDOSRD	9	3.08	0.36	2.71	3.00	3.14
		SecDSE	9	2.81	0.21	2.71	2.71	2.86
		SecDOSRM	9	2.88	0.26	2.77	3.00	3.00
		SecDOSP	9	2.79	0.40	2.57	3.00	3.00
Corporate communication	15	**SecBCoECF**	15	2.97	0.41	2.67	2.87	3.33
		SecCTWSC	15	2.59	0.31	2.36	2.64	2.73
		SecCESER	15	2.56	0.39	2.29	2.71	2.86
		SecCIM	15	2.87	0.56	2.60	2.80	3.40
		SecCRM	15	3.32	0.43	3.00	3.33	3.83
		SecCKTECoK	15	2.84	0.73	2.33	2.67	3.33
		SecDSSI	15	2.84	0.31	2.55	2.82	3.00
		SecDOSA	15	3.22	0.46	2.75	3.00	3.75

		SecDOSRD	15	3.09	0.43	2.86	3.00	3.29
		SecDSE	15	2.85	0.41	2.57	2.86	3.00
		SecDOSRM	15	2.93	0.42	2.69	2.77	3.23
		SecDOSP	15	2.77	0.44	2.57	2.71	2.86
Other	11	**SecBCoECF**	11	2.94	0.39	2.80	2.93	3.13
		SecCTWSC	10	2.86	0.14	2.73	2.86	3.00
		SecCESER	10	2.67	0.67	2.29	2.93	3.14
		SecCIM	10	3.06	0.43	2.80	2.90	3.20
		SecCRM	10	3.17	0.36	2.83	3.08	3.50
		SecCKTECoK	10	3.13	0.59	2.67	3.00	3.67
		SecDSSI	9	2.88	0.28	2.82	2.91	3.09
		SecDOSA	9	3.14	0.33	3.00	3.00	3.00
		SecDOSRD	9	3.05	0.39	2.86	3.00	3.14
		SecDSE	9	2.73	0.25	2.57	2.86	2.86
		SecDOSRM	9	2.88	0.36	2.85	2.85	3.00
		SecDOSP	9	2.71	0.44	2.57	3.00	3.00