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The M-Net Face of Africa competition: A study on the evaluation of a public relations success story from the African continent

ABSTRACT

The M-Net Face of Africa competition was conceived as a platform for African models to showcase their talent to the international fashion world, and to present a positive image of contemporary Africa. Other goals of this competition were to comply with M-Net's social responsibility in the greater African community where the broadcasting company functions, and to develop *inter alia* television broadcasting programmes for M-Net's rapidly increasing audience across the African continent. The Excellence Study (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995) formed the theoretical basis of the present study. This study argues that public relations (PR) contributes to organisational effectiveness by "using programmes to build relationships with the strategic constituencies of an organisation" (Grunig, 1992:65).

The major theoretical concept in the present study was the public relations campaign built around the M-Net Face of Africa competition, and the following three constructs were identified for the purposes of the present study: the seven steps in the PR campaign, the goals/objectives of the campaign and the evaluation thereof.

The research goal of the study was to evaluate the M-Net's Face of Africa public relations campaign by means of a standard, internationally accepted evaluation model for public relations programmes. It was established that M-Net has never formally and scientifically

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evaluated this PR programme, although it is generally accepted and referred to as an international PR success story. It presented itself as an ideal research opportunity and afforded the researchers the opportunity to: (1) determine the method(s) and/or model(s) M-Net has thus far used to evaluate the competition; (2) present these findings; (3) discuss these findings in terms of the suggested international evaluation model for public relations programmes/campaigns such as the M-Net Face of Africa campaign; and (4) formulate recommendations for both formative and summative research for future similar public relations campaigns.

1.   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The M-Net Face of Africa competition was devised in 1997 by M-Net – an independent, commercial broadcasting company based in South Africa – to create television programme material that would appeal to its rapidly increasing audience across Africa and to afford promising fashion models from the African continent the opportunity to grace the catwalks of the world and to attain international success.

In complying with the core business requirement (the production of television programmes) the competition also gave M-Net's management the opportunity to fulfil its corporate social responsibility by becoming involved in community-oriented activities by promoting fashion models - and the fashion industry - from Africa (Heyns, 1999).

Today, the M-Net Face of Africa competition is a well-established and well-known annual M-Net public relations campaign with other supporting public relations projects and activities (such as fashion and jewellery designing) running continuously throughout the year. The campaign is still expanding.

Being, in essence, a social upliftment programme, a unique feature of the M-Net Face of Africa competition is that the models entering do not need to have any previous modelling experience. "Between the casting sessions and the regional finals the candidate is taught the necessary skills and she would have received a thorough grounding in modelling by the time she makes her appearance on the semi-final catwalk" (Anon., 1999). Casting sessions are conducted all over Africa and the most promising models are chosen to compete in the regional finals of East, West, Northern and Southern Africa. Twelve models are chosen from the regional finals to go through to the grand finale – a gala event where the winner is announced (Mokwena, 1999). This event is seen by M-Net as the public relations activity/event that forms the core of the overall public relations campaign built around the M-Net Face of Africa television programme.

The first competition was held in 1997. Five months of regional finals led to the glamorous gala function at the Elephant Hills Intercontinental Hotel at the Victoria

Falls in Zimbabwe where the first Face of Africa was crowned. She was Oluchia Ongweaba from Nigeria (Anon., 2000). It was televised live on M-Net to 42 countries, a first in television history in Africa.

The reactions of the viewers and other stakeholders (M-Net's internal stakeholders, the media and stakeholders from overseas beauty and fashion houses) to the programme were – according to M-Net management - extremely positive. M-Net received congratulatory telephone calls, letters and faxes from all over the continent and the mass media coverage far exceeded management's expectations. The marketing director and the programme coordinators realised that they had come up with a winning formula and increased the scope for the 1998 competition. It proved to be an even bigger success: "No one could have anticipated the way in which the M-Net Face of Africa competition took off" (Pretorius, 1999).

The M-Net Face of Africa competition was turned into a comprehensive public relations campaign with the gala crowning event still seen by management as its main public relations activity, but now it also has other supporting activities, such as the Haute Couture and Jewellery projects for young designers, introduced in 2000.

2.   RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

M-Net's management sees the Face of Africa competition as a public relations success story and, judging by the continuous expansion of the competition, there is no denying its success. The campaign has, however, never been formally and scientifically evaluated as a public relations effort. In terms of its present extensive scope - and the large budget involved - this public relations campaign from the African continent presents itself as an ideal research opportunity for South African Corporate Communications scholars.

With the above-mentioned in mind, the goal of this study was to evaluate the M-Net Face of Africa campaign by means of a standard, internationally accepted evaluation model for public relations programmes. Following from this, four research objectives were formulated: (1) to determine the method(s) and/or model(s) M-Net has thus far used to evaluate the competition; (2) to present these findings; (3) to discuss these findings in terms of the suggested international evaluation model for public relations programmes/campaigns such as the M-Net Face of Africa campaign; and (4) to formulate recommendations for both formative and summative research for future similar public relations campaigns.

Before this could be done, the major concepts and constructs of the study needed to be clarified.

3.   CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

The theory of excellence in public relations and communication (Grunig, 1992) forms the theoretical framework of the present study. This theory identifies a set of general attributes of excellent management, which contribute to organisational effectiveness (by implication, organisational effectiveness can be seen as one of the key objectives of strategy), and then their implications for the management of the communications and public relations functions. This study also demonstrates how the performance of excellently managed public relations functions contributes to improving an organisation's overall effectiveness (and by implication, the achievement of organisational goals). Within this framework, an explanation will be provided on how public relations programmes should be managed strategically in order to contribute to organisational effectiveness.

The major concept of the present study is the *public relations campaign* built around the M-Net Face of Africa competition and the similarly named television programme. The major constructs of the PR programme – i.e. the seven steps in the campaign - will be discussed under heading 7. The remaining two important constructs are the *goals/ objectives* of the public relations campaign and *evaluation*. The former are important as an evaluation of public relations campaigns entails the determination of whether the set objectives were achieved. These two constructs will be discussed respectively under headings 7.2 and 7.7 as part of the seven steps in a public relations campaign.

4.   DEFINITION OF TERMS

4.1   Public relations

The shortest, but probably the most comprehensive, definition of public relations (PR) is the definition of Grunig and Hunt (1984:6), which states that public relations is "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics".

Another definition of the Public Relations Institute of the United Kingdom (Gregory, 1996:15) states that "public relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say, and what others say about you". According to this definition, public relations practice is the discipline that looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support as well as influencing opinion and behaviour.

For the purposes of this article, the definition of the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA, 2000) is used: "Public relations is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders".

The essence of the above-mentioned and various other definitions is the principle that public relations must be planned. It is a deliberate, carefully considered process. It also requires sustained activities that involve initiating and maintaining the process of mutual understanding. Therefore, public relations involves dialogue between the organisation and its various publics in its search to listen to and understand each other.

According to Haywood (1991:77), it is not the results, objectives or strategic decisions that produce results in public relations. Neither is it knowledge, because it is unfortunately true that the people with the most knowledge of public relations are not necessarily those who execute it the best. The core value of public relations is that effective public relations actions must be taken: developing effective public relations programmes and campaigns that support organisational goals can achieve this.   To this end, the major concept of the article, the public relations campaign, will be discussed. But, the terms programme, campaign, plans, activities and projects need to be clarified first.

4.2   Public relations programme or campaign?

Kendall (1992) distinguishes between the terms programme and campaign: programmes are seen as continuous and campaigns as time-limited. This distinction – although not necessarily universally recognised - has important implications in terms of the evaluation of the public relations effort. "The campaign planned for a month, six months, a year, or even two years is much more subject to measurement of effect and tends to involve greater precision in planning and executing than a continuing program that has no clear beginning and end" (Kendall, 1992:9).   Within a particular public relations campaign, different plans, activities and/or projects can be implemented to support the goals and objectives of the campaign.

"Campaigns are co-ordinated, purposeful, extended efforts designed to achieve a specific goal or a set of interrelated goals that will move the organisation toward a longer-range objective expressed as its mission statement" (Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2000:434).   According to them, PR campaigns are designed and developed to address a specific issue.

5.   CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As noted previously, the M-Net Face of Africa competition gave M-Net the opportunity to fulfil its corporate social responsibility by involving the communities in Africa through the promotion of the fashion models, and in later years of the competition, fashion and jewellery designers from the continent.

According to Lubbe and Puth (1994:173), corporate social responsibility can no longer be relegated to a 'sideline speciality' of public relations and is therefore an essential element of the M-Net Face of Africa competition. In the opinion of Mersham, Rensburg and Skinner (1995:82), it has become the *only* way in which the South African business sector can ensure its survival in a turbulent South Africa in transition (own emphasis). Helleiner in Mersham *et al* (1995:95) states that apartheid has been a key barrier to economic development in South Africa. The government deserted the social problems affecting the majority of South African citizens, limiting access to land, education, training and credit. Wagenaar in Mersham *et al* (1995:95) adds that the only establishment able of saving South Africa from economic and social collapse is business. M-Net as a business organisation became involved in the social and economic upliftment of the African continent, by promoting the beauty and design from the continent to the rest of the world.

Corporate social responsibility has in the past been equated with good citizenship and corporate conscience. Simply stated: "corporate social responsibility is a generic concept referring to the business organisation's concern and active two-way involvement with social, economic and political forces which influence the environment within which it exists" (Lubbe & Puth, 1994:179-180).

According to Skinner and Von Essen (1999:345), the field of corporate social *investment* (CSI) has evolved out of the broader field of corporate social responsibility. Corporate social investment, according to Visagie (1993:6), could be defined as: "a company's response to the outcry from the broader society in which it operates with the aim to address certain constraints placed on the corporate entity by society." The first constraint is the body of legislation that affects the practice of business. The second is the general attitude that the consumer/community has towards the company and their willingness to support or not to support the company by purchasing or boycotting the company's products and/or services. The third constraint is society's socio-economic environment: it is almost impossible for a company to be profitable in a society that has generated into a state of disorder, chaos and anarchy (Visage: 1993). From a corporate viewpoint, the true intention of CSI is therefore to support, through socio-economic involvement, the development and upholding of a socio-economic and socio-political environment that is conducive to the pursuit of valid economic growth.

Grunig (1992) describes CSI as a concept of symmetrical communication, which is fundamental: it is communal interdependence of business and society. It guarantees relations between business and community through effective communication. "If excellent organizations are to be socially responsible, they need excellent public relations to help make them that way" (Grunig, 1992:241).

Therefore, corporate social investment or involvement can no longer be ignored in an effective, two-way public relations programme in any country, especially in a post-apartheid new South Africa.

6.   THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING A PR CAMPAIGN

A very important aspect of any PR programme, campaign or PR is its planning. Most definitions of public relations emphasise the overall *planning* of the public relations campaigns. In fact, since the First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations held in Mexico City in 1978, definitions emphasising the implementing and sustaining of *planned* PR activities in order to manage the relationship between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders were used in describing the then young organisational activity called public relations (Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron, 2000).

As public relations matured as an emerging profession, its changing definitions reflected a process of evolution. Presently, public relations seen as a managerial function is enjoying wide attention (Wilcox, *et al.*, 2000:3-7). Despite shifting emphasis, most authors agree on key components or words in defining public relations, such as: public interest, two-way communication, management function and mutual understanding. The words: "deliberate and planned programmes" or "planned and sustained PR programmes" are inevitably included in these lists (Broom, Lauzer & Tucker, 1991:223; Cultip, Center & Broom, 1994:3-6; Grunig, 1989:18; Grunig, 1992:4; Grunig & Hunt, 1984:6; Ihator, 1999:33; Newsom, *et al.*, 2000:2; Seitel, 1989:10: and Wilcox, *et al.*, 2000:3ff).

The advantages of planning a public relations programme, according to Simon (1986:190), are threefold: (1) it elucidates problems; (2) it provides a blueprint and a schedule; and (3) it prevents misunderstanding/misapprehensions.
Planning a public relations campaign does not necessarily ensure success, but it definitely improves the probability of success. The planning and evaluation of the success of a campaign go hand in hand. Since it is the objectives of a campaign that are evaluated, it is important to have a clearly established set of measurable objectives set out in the PR campaign. There should be agreement on the criteria that will be used to evaluate success in attaining objectives. Also, the campaign should not only be evaluated at the end of the campaign: formative evaluation or in-process evaluation is also important. Kendall (1992:330) emphasises this monitoring of the campaign while it is being implemented in order to determine how it will be evaluated. Schweitzer (in Wilcox *et al.*, 2000:192) states this as follows: "Evaluating impact/results starts in the planning stage. You break down the problem into measurable goals and objectives, then after implementing the program you measure the results against goals".

7.   THE STEPS OR PHASES OF A PR CAMPAIGN

Different authors ascribe different numbers to the steps or phases in a public relations campaign. After reviewing the applicable literature, it can be concluded that the minimum number would possibly be four: *research, planning, communication in action* and *evaluation.* Others (Haywood, 1991:99-106; Kendall, 1992:7-8; Rogers, 1996:21; and Skinner & Von Essen, 1999:136) see it as more comprehensive and would include anything from seven to ten steps, of which the following are the most common: situation analysis, setting goals and objectives, determining target audiences, developing the message, specifying strategy and activities, determining the budget and finally conducting an evaluation.

For a campaign to be executed successfully, these steps (from defining the situation to the evaluation) need to form a cohesive workable campaign that will produce results (Gregory, 1996:137). The public relations campaign is thus the blueprint from which the practitioner functions and from which management can evaluate the campaign.

The M-Net Face of Africa public campaign will now be discussed in terms of seven elements/steps in a typical public relations campaign.

7.1   Define the situation

Valid objectives cannot be set without a clear understanding of the situation that prompted the public relations campaign. Any well-planned programme must, according to Palin (1986:2), start with a simple question, "why"? What does the practitioner want to achieve with the programme? The reasons for undertaking any PR programme should be well defined and clearly stated.

As part of the situation analysis for the Face of Africa competition, prior to the introduction of the television programme by the same name, M-Net undertook two types of preliminary research: (1) content analysis of press clippings gathered by M-Net's internal research department disclosed considerable negative stereotyping of African models in the rest of the world; and (2) focus group discussions among M-Net viewers revealed that the public wanted to see more corporate social involvement on the side of M-Net in community-oriented activities.

According to Simmons (1990:57) and Langbaum & Langbaum (1999:36-37), three types of situation often dictate the conducting of a public relations programme: (1) the organisation must implement a remedial programme to overcome a problem or situation that negatively affects the organisation; (2) the organisation needs to conduct a specific one-time project; or (3) the organisation wants to reinforce an

ongoing effort to preserve reputation and public support. The findings from M-Net's internal preliminary research indicated that the first and third situations apply in the case of M-Net.

The fact that viewers (a strategic stakeholder for M-Net) have negative perceptions regarding M-Net's involvement in the upliftment of the community, i.e. their social responsibility, can be considered a strategic issue for M-Net. Strategic issues are viewed by Steyn & Puth (2000:47) as developments, events or trends that are seen to be consequential by an organisation's management, because of their potential to influence the achievement of the organisation's strategy. According to the typology of strategic issues developed by the same authors (2000:67–68), this strategic issue can be classified as an organisational issue Type 1 – where communication is not the cause of the problem, but can provide a solution.

The decision by M-Net's management to produce the Face of Africa PR campaign can be seen as a concerted effort to practise their social responsibility. Not only will the television programme material appeal to its rapidly growing audience across Africa, but it will also create awareness of the potential of African models and afford them the opportunity to gain success in the international fashion arena.

The M-Net Face of Africa campaign's objectives (i.e. *organisational* objectives following from the corporate situation analysis) were firstly to create as much programme material suited to their rapidly growing target audiences across Africa and secondly to give models the opportunity to attain international success. Thirdly, in so doing, M-Net would also fulfil its social responsibility commitment. "The competition reflects M-Net's commitment to foster a positive image for Africa, create new opportunities and engender a spirit of community in the many African countries where it broadcasts" (Heyns, 2000).

7.2　Set the PR objectives

As stated before, the *public relations* objectives, as opposed to the organisational objectives, will be discussed in detail as they form another major construct of the present study as PR campaigns are evaluated in terms of meeting the stated objectives.

It is particularly important that public relations objectives complement and reinforce the organisation's objectives. Dozier (in Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:184) emphasises this by saying: "The prudent and strategic selection of public relations goals and objectives linked to organisational survival and growth serves to justify the public relations programme as a viable management activity." If an extensive issues and stakeholder analysis precedes the planning phase, the setting of objectives is greatly simplified.

Once the situation or problem is understood, the next step is to establish objectives for the programme.

The following criteria can be set for the objectives of a programme according to Simon (1986:198) and Wilcox, *et al.* (1998:184): they must relate directly to the basic objectives of the organisation; they must be more specific than general; and they must be set in order of importance and timing. Objectives spell out the key results that must be achieved with each public to reach the programme goal (Cutlip, *et al.*, 2000:385). They should therefore be stated in terms of campaign outcomes (impact) instead of outputs (process). Output or process objectives represent the work to be produced, i.e. what the corporate communications practitioner must do, whereas impact or outcomes objectives are concerned with what the organisation wants the stakeholders to do, or how they should change (Steyn & Puth, 2000:84-85). In other words, PR objectives should not be the "means", but rather the "end".

The decision by M-Net to develop a PR campaign based on the Face of Africa television programme is an example of the PR function's use of communication to contribute towards solving organisational problems. This is done by the specific PR objectives of the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign, i.e. creating awareness of M-Net's involvement in the African community and changing viewers' attitudes towards M-Net, and increasing their (and the public's) support for M-Net as a commercial broadcasting company in Africa.

Although the objectives of the PR campaign were set by M-Net, they were not stated specifically and clearly, nor were they set in order of importance and timing.

7.3   Determine the target audience

After the "what to say" has been decided on in the 'objective of the PR campaign part' and before one decides on "how" it will be said in the 'methods part', the missing part is the target audience: "to whom" will the message be sent?

A thorough understanding of the primary and secondary publics is essential if a programme's objectives are to be accomplished. Such knowledge also provides guidance on the selection of appropriate implementation strategies and tactics that would reach these defined audiences (Wilcox, *et al.*, 2000:150).

One of the greatest challenges of the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign was the determination of the target audiences: the whole of Africa was basically targeted and for all practical purposes, the whole world where satellite equipment is available.

The target audiences were finally identified through market research and divided into two main categories: the primary target audiences were the models coming only from Africa and the African media; and the secondary audiences were the viewers of M-Net, beauty houses and sponsors.

7.4   Create the theme and the messages

It stands to reason that the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign has an African theme. Different shades of brown are used as the colour scheme. Throughout the campaign and in the television programme, a mysterious atmosphere is created with the graphical design. The slogan associated with the campaign is "From Kinshasa to Cairo, Abidjan to Zanzibar .... the search continues ...". In the gala events of the campaign, the African focus is reinforced with the use of a secondary theme suiting the venue and host country. This secondary theme still relates to the overall African feel, for example, with the gala event in Namibia in 1998, the secondary theme was "The African desert".

The overall public relations message must be short, direct and concise. It should be repeated many times and in a wide variety of ways - in a written, visual and oral fashion – to ensure an impact on the target audience (Nolte, 1974:315, Wagner, 1999:3, Wilcox, *et al.*, 1998:9).

The overall message of the campaign is that the project assures the rightful place of African models in the international model world. Within this key message, specific messages were developed for the different stakeholders. For example, specific messages were developed for the illiterate and the sophisticated viewers, although these messages complemented each other and were all derived from the overall PR campaign message.

M-Net used a wide variety of media to communicate the Face of Africa campaign message(s) - ranging from the Internet for the sophisticated audiences, to radio for the illiterates in the villages of Africa. The messages were very audience-oriented and appeared to have suited the various audiences well. The challenge of the messages was in the adaptation of both the content and the medium to reach the wide spectrum of illiterate to highly literate target audiences in the best possible manner. Through careful planning and research, M-Net had striven to succeed in this task.

7.5   Implementation strategy and PR activities

A strategy statement describes how, in concept, an objective is to be achieved, providing guidelines and themes for the overall campaign. One general strategy may be outlined or a campaign may have several strategies, depending on the objectives and the designated audiences (Simmons, 1990:67). The strategy element of a PR campaign

should provide the framework for its activities, as well as the time schedule for implementing the activities.

In the words of Skinner & Von Essen (1999:139): "PR activities are the tools of communication. They transmit the appropriate message to the target audience". These activities can range from personal, individual contact to employing mass media, and the scope of these activities can include the following: "plant tours, scientific symposia, public speaking engagements, authoritative briefs submitted to government agencies and committees, individual letters to persons or groups, media releases, press conferences, radio interviews and house journals" (Skinner & Von Essen, 1999:139). This list is by no means exhaustive - it can also include many other activities such as promotions, corporate advertising, audiovisuals, educational programmes, brochures, community programmes, functions, sponsorships, exhibitions, special events, employee reports, staff newsletters, annual reports, meetings, etc.

In the case of the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign, a variety of activities were employed in order to convey the broad scope of messages to the wide range of diverse target audiences implementing different, appropriate media.

The main activity of the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign is a special event - the gala evening - where the winner of the competition is announced. As the special event is an important activity in the total campaign, it will be discussed in more detail.
Event management is seen as a public relations responsibility, forming part of the public relations plan as the major activity. Special events have been part of public relations and publicity campaigns since the existence of public relations as a profession, but only became an important public relations and marketing instrument in the early 1980s (Yeshin, 1997:174).

On the lowest level, event management is the creation, implementation and administration of short-term activities designed to improve the image of the organisation and the relations with its publics (Wragg, 1992:176; Wilcox et al., 1998:245). On the highest level, a special event can be a major public relations tool as in the case of the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign.

The goal of special events, according to Skinner and Von Essen (1999:432), is to improve communication with target publics in order to attain one or a combination of the following goals: to create awareness; raise funds; obtain publicity; promote products; build interpersonal relationships; and publicise the role of the organisation in the community. All of the above, except fund-raising, would apply to the Face of Africa PR campaign.

7.6   Draw up a budget

No public relations campaign is complete without a budget. Before the practitioner can expect to obtain approval of the campaign, he/she must be prepared to answer the important question of "How much will it cost?"

Developing a budget for a public relations campaign is always difficult. The two main considerations, according to Hainsworth and Wilson (1992:14), are the following: the activities planned and the cost of the execution of these activities.

The M-Net Face of Africa campaign has one of the largest budgets for such a programme in Africa. According to Heyns (2000), the budget for the campaign is between R10 million and R12 million annually. This includes the production of the TV programmes. It is interesting to note that the programme is not profitable at all (Mokwena, 2000).

7.7   Review and evaluate the campaign

Evaluation is another major theoretical construct of the present study and will be discussed in greater detail.

Many authors suggest the use of evaluation or measurement research in public relations (Cole,1997; Lubbe & Puth,1994; Mersham, Rensburg & Skinner,1994; Newsom, *et al.*, 2000; Skinner & Von Essen, 1999; & Wilcox, *et al.*, 2000).

In the past decade, considerable progress has been made in evaluation research providing the PR practitioner with the ability to tell clients and employers exactly what has been accomplished. More sophisticated techniques are being used, including computerised news-clip analysis, survey sampling, and attempts to correlate efforts directly with sales. Today, the trend towards more systematic evaluation is well established (Newlin, 1991:2). There is increasing pressure on all organisational functions – including public relations – to prove their value to the "bottom line".

Kitchen (1997:284) sees evaluation research - the objective of which is to measure public relations aspects such as effects, messages and the adjustment of public relations campaigns - falling into three categories: (1) commercial, which justifies the budget spent; (2) simple effectiveness, which is focused on the output effectiveness of the programme; and (3) the objective effectiveness, which measures whether a programme/ campaign has reached its objectives and created the desired effects.

The latter refers to the measurement of results against established objectives set during the planning process. It can be defined as "the systematic assessment of a program

and its results. It is a means for practitioners to offer accountability to clients – and to themselves" (Wilcox, *et al.*, 2000:191). The evaluation element of a plan relates back directly to the stated objectives. This is the reason for objectives having to be measurable in some way to be able to show clients and employers that the purpose was accomplished. Consequently, evaluation criteria should be realistic, credible, specific and in line with client or employer expectations. The evaluation section of a campaign plan should restate the objectives, and then name the evaluation methods to be used.

After implementation, evaluation research plays an important role in monitoring the effectiveness of the campaign and making adjustments based on research results.

Two types of evaluative research are identified within the field of public relations: formative evaluative research and summative evaluative research (Kendall, 1992; Pavlik, 1987; Steyn & Puth, 2000; & McElreath, 1997). Formative research refers to research conducted to assist practitioners to formulate better plans for implementation, and serves as a tool to improve future efforts. This type of research is usually conducted prior to a campaign, but is better used throughout a campaign to monitor progress and effectiveness. On the other hand, summative research is designed to measure whether the goals (broad, long-term and overall targets) and objectives (short term, specific, measurable and achievable) were met. This type of research is best used throughout the life of a project but mostly to summarise the results of a public relations campaign (Stroh & Leonard, 1999:5).

Various models have been suggested to evaluate public relations programmes/campaigns. MacNamara (1992:19), for instance, developed the macro communication model. This model is in a pyramidal form, which rises from a broad base of inputs to public relations programmes, through outputs, to results where the top represents the objectives achieved. Noble (in Kitchen, 1997:290) suggests a model based on the dimension of evaluating media relations, and Lindenmann (1993:2) suggests a yardstick model, which evaluates different stages in a programme. Cutlip, *et al.*, (2000:436ff.) developed a seven-step model that divides the programme impact of public relations on three levels with different steps in each. Each step of the model contributes to increased understanding and adds information to assess effectiveness. The latter model will be the basis of this study's evaluative research and will be discussed in greater detail elsewhere.

These are some ways of evaluating a public relations campaign. It is however important to recognise that there is no simplistic method for measuring the effectiveness of a public relations campaign. Depending on which level of measurement is required, an array of different tools and techniques is required to assess public relations success in terms of impact properly.

8.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

8.1   Research design

In the goal/objectives of the present study, it was proposed that the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign would be evaluated by means of an internationally accepted evaluation model. It was stated that although this campaign was informally regarded as a PR success story from the African continent, there was no scientific evidence to substantiate this claim. The formulated objectives of the present study were to determine the methods/models that M-Net used to assess its PR campaign, to report its findings and to discuss these results in terms of a recognised PR evaluation model. The last objective stated was to make recommendations for future studies - on both formative and summative evaluation - of public relations campaigns.

The methodology followed by the present researchers was first to present an evaluation model for public relations programmes/campaigns, such as the M-Net Face of Africa campaign. Hereafter, personal interviews were conducted with the executive team of the M-Net PR campaign in order to (i) establish the research techniques/methods M-Net has followed to assess the Face of Africa campaign and (ii) evaluate the Face of Africa PR campaign within the identified three phases of the evaluation model presented in this study. Lastly, recommendations for future formative and summative evaluation of PR campaigns are made.

8.2   The PII evaluation model

The model selected for the present study is the PII (preparation, implementation and impact) evaluation model of Cutlip, Center & Broom (2000:436ff) for public relations programmes or campaigns (see diagram 1).

This model necessitates both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Quantitative research is seen as "hard data", as opposed to "soft data" of qualitative research. Quantitative research is usually very structured, and has closed ended and forced choices (Bryman & Cramer, 1994:17). This type of research is descriptive or explorative, and usually valid and reliable. Pauly (1991:125) recommends the use of two types of research methods in one research project.

The PII model is a step-by-step model that offers three levels or phases of evaluation, namely *preparation, implementation* and *impact*. The three bottom steps are in the preparation evaluation phase, assessing the information and strategic planning; the next four steps are in the implementation evaluation phase, evaluating and assessing tactics and efforts; and the last six steps evaluate impact and provide feedback on